E.C.C.O. Sustaining professionalism, recent developments.

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Abstract.

The discussion on employment; updating and upgrading trainings can be approached from two perspectives; from that of the educational deliverer who is trying to develop
Or
 upgrade courses and curricula at third level in order to produce qualified, professional Conservator-Restorers fit for access to and exercise of the profession as determined internationally or from the perspective of the individual who in seeking recognition of professional competence, requires training and education that will allow him to practice as a professional Conservator-Restorer and who, in search of employment or promotion may also require recognition and validation for experience and expertise gained in the field via hands on training, internships, international courses.

Both perspectives speak to a professional sector that has radically grown and developed in the last fifty years and one which has become clearly identifiable. The work of E.C.C.O. has been contributory to this professional self-determination within Europe. This paper will put into context the political mandate of E.C.C.O. to determine and promote the professional status of the Conservator-Restorer and to define the Conservator-Restorers' specific role in the care and protection of cultural heritage amongst other sectoral players. It will describe the way in which the two perspectives described above have converged in E.C.C.O.'s most recent work on writing the competences for access to and exercise of the profession

Key Words: .....

.On behalf of E.C.C.O. I would like to thank you for the invitation to address this symposium. E.C.C.O. is a confederation of twenty European professional Conservation-Restoration organisations with approximately 5000 members. Our membership consists solely of professional Conservator-Restorers. This demographic speaks to key issues of identity, professionalism and mutual recognition. How these issues are realised within the political and legal framework of the European Union is the work of E.C.C.O.

E.C.C.O. was formed in 1991 to give voice to a fledgling professional community seeking to negotiate the status and role of Conservation-Restoration as a distinct discipline with a specific remit in the field of cultural heritage. Membership Statutes and the *Professional Guidelines* drawn up in 1993 and revised in 2004 have been seminal in fostering and uniting this professional community. By articulating a code of ethics and practice, the *Guidelines* demonstrate professional self awareness that is voluntarily subscribed to by member organisations. The *Professional Guidelines* also state that access to and exercise of the profession requires a Masters degree or its equivalent in Conservation-Restoration education and training. The role of education has always been a touchstone for the promotion and development of the profession, not only to ensure the transmission of a growing

canon of specialist knowledge but also to increase the possibilities for further research and collaborative studies. It may come as no surprise to note that some of those same members who founded E.C.C.O. established Conservation-Restoration departments in universities across Europe and have gone on to create the European Network for Conservation-Restoration Education ENCoRE to which E.C.C.O. maintains close links.

In the intervening years, the context of the world in which the Conservator-Restorer works has also grown and developed; interaction with and understanding of cultural heritage has been shaped by significant Conventions and Charters issuing from the Council of Europe and UNESCO. To date, all the European Framework Programmes for Research have made available funds specific to developing new methodologies and technologies for the safeguarding of cultural heritage from which the Conservation-Restoration community has benefitted. On the ground this has translated into a greatly expanded community in which sectoral interests are beginning to appear. Formalised delivery routes of education, growth in dedicated research and greater public spending on cultural heritage have led to an increased range of activities and specialisms within Conservation-Restoration. These include the Conservation Scientist, the Preventive Conservator, the specialist in Disaster Planning and Risk Assessment and even the Collections Manager. There are also levels of practice that have traditionally translated into career grades within the public service, i.e. the Conservation-Restoration Technician, but which in more recent years may reflect a formal level of educational qualification.

This last observation highlights another issue. The profession of Conservation-Restoration is not regulated and operates within the free market that is the European Union. National sovereignty over cultural heritage takes precedence in EU law which has led to uneven conditions of practice across the EU. Some countries regulate for the care and safeguarding of public heritage in the public domain by legislating for the education and professional requirements for the practice of Conservation-Restoration. In most countries, however, this protection is advocated through professional bodies who, through their political work and with the support of E.C.C.O., negotiate for professional recognition and support from appropriate government ministries. Protection of heritage in the private domain generally remains dependent on the goodwill and sensibilities of the owner.

To help provide some framework for practice, the legal and professional responsibilities of the Conservator-Restorer towards other parties involved in the preservation of cultural heritage were analysed. Funded by the European Commission DG X under the Raphael Programme, the results of the APEL Project (Acteurs du Patrimoine Européen et Législation) were published in 2001 and provide an overview of the legal frameworks regulating the preservation of cultural heritage.

Continuing the effort to develop a legal framework, E.C.C.O., with the support of the International Centre for Conservation in Rome, ICCROM, and the participation of ENCoRE, has been working on a European Recommendation for the Conservation-Restoration of Cultural Heritage. The Recommendation comes within the scope of the regulatory framework developed by the Council of Europe in relation to the conservation and preservation of cultural heritage. The Recommendation details the nature of Conservation-Restoration identifying it 'as one of the essential factors in ensuring the transmission of cultural heritage to future generations'. The document stresses that high quality interventions can only be ensured through systems of professional qualification including continuing professional development as the basis for recognition of the people, firms and organisations in charge of Conservation-Restoration.

Mutual recognition of professional qualifications

The lack of equivalence in levels and types of qualification across the EU has been a considerable impediment to mutual recognition of professional status. This has not only been an internal problem for E.C.C.O. but is set

against the backdrop of an EU Services Directive which seeks to encourage the movement of all professionals across EU borders. While E.C.C.O. *Guidelines* and Membership Statutes have helped by providing terms of reference for professional membership, differences in educational delivery, curricula, duration and length of education provision, and of rights to accredit professional practice, have continued to dominate this issue.

Developing out of an agreement between the Ministers of Education of EU member states in 1999, a common European Higher Education Area (EHEA) was established to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of higher education in Europe. The Bologna Process, as it is now known, demands that each education programme is described in terms of the qualification it provides against a set of Learning Outcomes scaled across 8 levels. Each of the reference levels of this European Qualifications Framework, requires a description of what is distinctive about qualifications classified at that level in terms of knowledge, skills and competence.

The first five EQF levels correspond to school education, the last three correspond to what is commonly understood to be a 3-year undergraduate Bachelor degree education programme (level 6), a 2-year postgraduate Master's degree programme (level 7) and a 3 year doctorate research programme (level 8). As yet post-doctorate development is not included in this hierarchy, and there is no mechanism for recognising lifelong learning.

The development of the EQF reflects a shift in the delivery and appraisal of education from a teacher-centred approach to a student based one that expresses the outcome of a course of study in terms of what the student is expected to 'know, understand and be able to demonstrate after completion of a process of learning'. This shift has necessitated that professional bodies also engage with the process by defining the access requirements for their individual professions from which the levels and types of qualifications can be developed and calibrated.

E.C.C.O. engaged with this process in 2008. A mandate from the General Assembly agreed unanimously that entry point to the profession, as agreed by this organisation's *Professional Guidelines*, corresponded to EQF Level 7. A subsequent meeting with ENCoRE to discuss how the generic Descriptor for level 7 could be interpreted formalised the approach of both organisations. At its core is a dialogue between the profession and the education providers through the prism of the EQF. E.C.C.O. approached the work in terms of professional requirements for entry to the profession and ENCoRE approached it in terms of the education needed to meet that requirement.

Professional Competences.

Between 2008-2010 a working group was set up. The work concentrated on profiling the actions that determine the nature of our work assessed through the rubric of knowledge and skill as a process of learning. Simple statements of knowledge, skills and competences were avoided from the outset. They were considered as being too general to be meaningful while running the risk of becoming too rigid and prescriptive, thus possibly becoming an impediment to the creation of new knowledge and hindering the development of the profession. The work was published last May as *Competences for Access to the Profession of Conservation-Restoration* and is available from E.C.C.O. A condensed summary of the work is presented here.

A conceptual map was developed which examines the Conservation–Restoration process as a decision-making narrative that evolves through examination and diagnosis, leading up to direct intervention or preventive action if required, after which post-intervention processes are considered. Presented diagrammatically as a central spine, an analytical progression is suggested which follows accepted ethical principles and from which the various related activities emerge.

The map explicitly acknowledges the need for research and documentation at every stage of the decision making process (see also E.C.C.O. 2001), which are some of the guiding principles of professional Conservation–Restoration and which gives it its academic status.

Knowledge Skills and Competence

The rubric of knowledge, skills and competence as a hierarchy of learning is used to interrogate the Conservation-Restoration process as mapped. Competence is interpreted as the combination of knowledge and skill together with experience that allows the professional Conservator–Restorer to deliver work consistently and responsibly. The scales used for knowledge and skills are described below.

Taxonomy of knowledge

Evaluation of Knowledge

The taxonomy developed by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001), based on the original work by Benjamin Bloom (1956), has been used for this purpose. It contains the following knowledge (cognition) scale:

1. *Remembering* - to know something exists and where to find it.

2. *Understanding* – to be able to comprehend something in its context and make associations between things

3. *Applying* – to be able to use knowledge in an appropriate context in order to achieve a desired result in a predictable way.

4. *Analysing* – to be able to apply knowledge in a critical way using a level of awareness that allows one to explain the results, i.e. to reconstruct how the result was achieved. Decision making comes out of analysis, which although coming from the application of an analytical approach lacks experience.

5. *Evaluating* – to apply knowledge in order to measure a situation in terms of its broader context and in relation to determining future outcomes. This allows results to be weighed up in terms of decision-making and a broader managerial context. Evaluation comes from experience.

6. *Creating* – a broad width of knowledge and experience which allows one to extend the boundaries of knowledge. This requires highly developed foresight and meta-cognitive understanding.

Type of Knowledge is classified as follows:

A. *Factual* – of or relating to a piece of information presented as having objective reality
B. *Conceptual* – of or relating to, or consisting of abstract or generic idea generalised from particular instances
C. *Procedural* - of or relating to a particular way of accomplishing something or of acting
D. *Meta-cognitive* – transcending (more comprehensive than) conscious intellectual activity – typically exhibited by an experienced practitioner.

Each level is a development in learning behaviour arising directly from the preceding level. Using these classification systems, each activity box has been given a set of coordinates relating to the level and type of knowledge required. In applying the knowledge scale and category it became apparent that level 7 must be determined relative to levels 6 and 8, not only within the scope of formal academic education but also acknowledging the expertise that may be acquired following years of work and continuous professional development (CPD).

Evaluation of Skill

Manual dexterity in the practical application of diagnostic techniques and the execution of conservation and restoration treatments, as an essential requisite of professional practice, is measured in terms of skill. Almost everything a Conservator–Restorer does contains an element of skill. A colour coded scale of skill has been proposed by E.C.C.O. and has been used to evaluate all actions, across the framework.

1. *Basic Skill* – is when a person possesses only the ability to carry out basic tasks in a complex Conservation–Restoration process. They are unlikely to possess an in-depth knowledge of any subject area required to carry out the task unsupervised and may not be aware of many of the ethical rules that apply. They operate well within the boundaries that are laid down by the profession.

2. *Intermediate Skill* – is when a person possesses a higher level of skill both in terms of its breadth and depth. They are expected to possess basic skills across the whole field of expertise, be able to place different concepts within that field, and to have knowledge of the rules. They are able to carry out basic Conservation–Restoration tasks unsupervised and work within a team on complex problems.

3. *Proficient Skill* – is when a person is expected to possess adequate skill to carry out Conservation–Restoration processes autonomously and understands the spirit of the rules that govern that field. They are capable of carrying out tasks and processes to a level that is acceptable within the profession, but may not work as effectively as an experienced Conservator–Restorer and may not possess adequate skill to carry out the most difficult tasks.

4. *Expert Skill* – is when a person possesses a comprehensive ability to carry out tasks and undertake processes within their field of expertise. They are able to also carry out tasks and undertake processes proficiently in associated fields. They will be able to apply knowledge and the understanding of processes in a new and innovative way and will be able adapt and create new methods within the field of Conservation–Restoration.

Each level has been assigned the following colour coded on the strategic map.

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|---|
| Basic Skills = Blue |
| Intermediate Skills= Green |
| Proficient/cognitive Skills = Yellow |
| Expert/meta-cognitive Skills = Pink |

The resulting map for level 7 is presented here.
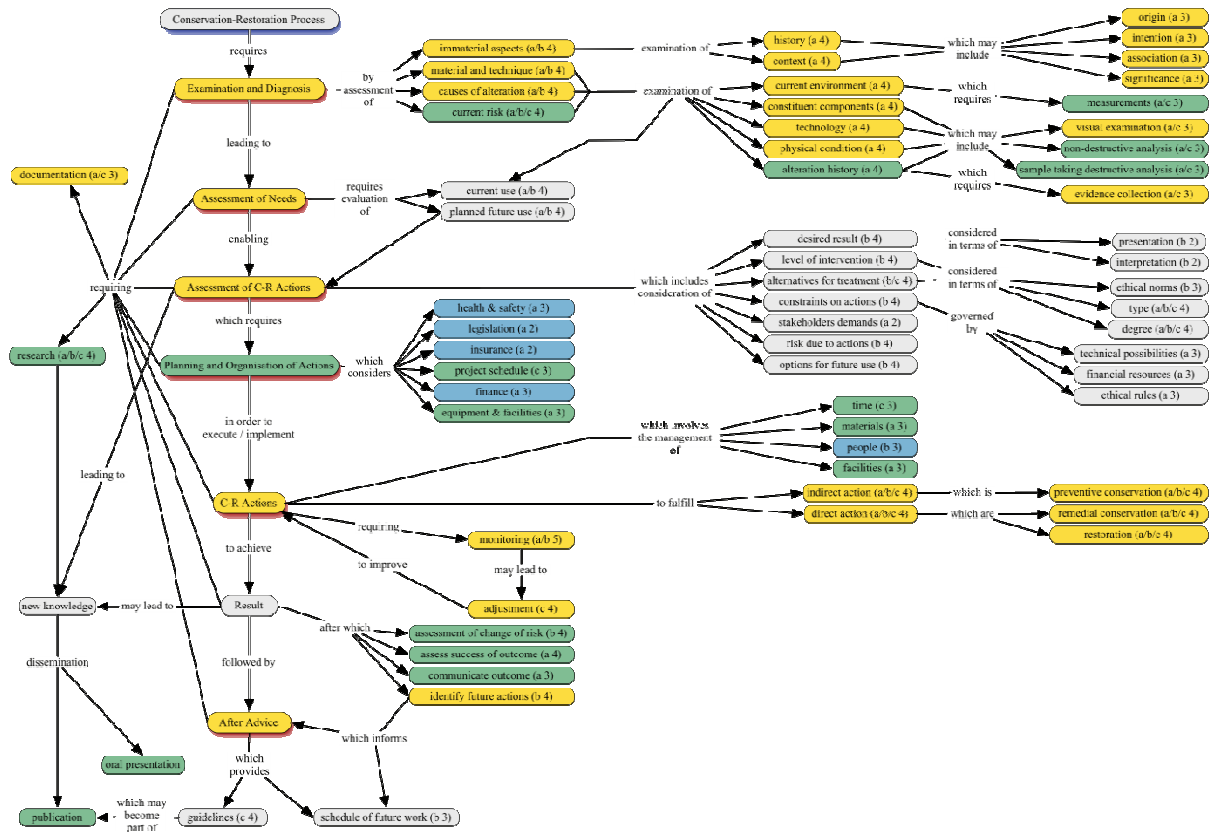
Map of level 7

The map shows that the type of knowledge at this level is **mostly conceptual** (B) **and procedural (C)** and that this level of knowledge allows the practitioner **to apply** their knowledge (3) and **analyse results** (4).

EQF level 7 is therefore interpreted as working within the range of Conservation–Restoration processes that are well established and familiar, they are only beginning to examine the processes themselves. Someone entering the profession rarely 'creates' new ways of addressing Conservation–Restoration problems. The practitioner is not an expert in their field as their work is yet to become meta-cognitive. Whilst they possess sufficient critical awareness to change and adjust a process, they may only be able to analyse the results without evaluating the process itself.

Someone with an EQF level 7 qualification entering the profession possesses a range of **skill between intermediate and proficient/cognitive, the greatest level of skill is where the Conservator–Restorer interfaces directly with the** denser areas of yellow correspond directly to the analysis and treatment of the cultural heritage.
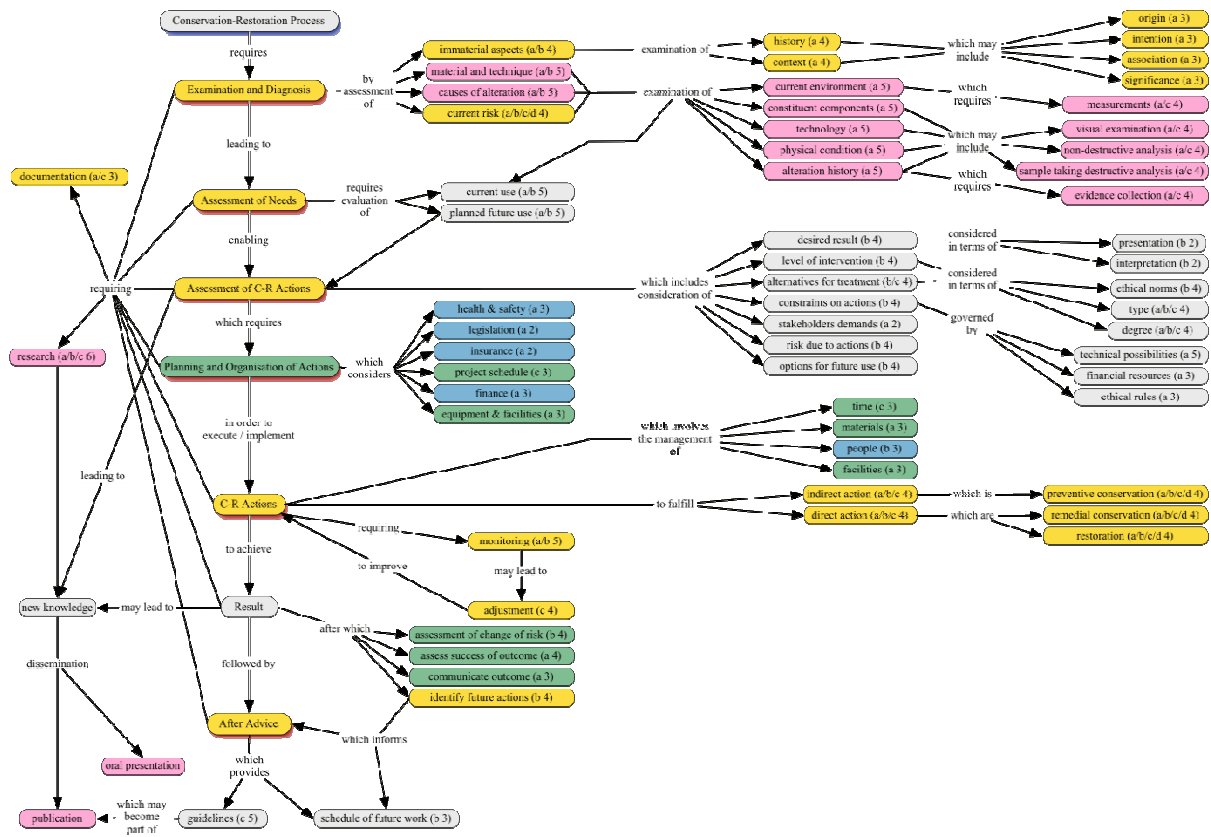
Map of Level 8

For comparative purposes a map of level 8 is shown. Level 8 represents the highest level of learning in a range of cognitive activity that is evaluative and creative. A considerable difference between evaluation and analysis is recognised between Level 7 and 8. Evaluation presupposes experience and the ability to assess the validity and reliability of the analysis itself. The map also reflects an increase in skill which the colour coding makes immediately apparent.

The development of skill and knowledge past level 7 is specific to each Conservator-Restorer. When EQF level 8 is achieved through a PhD research programme it can also have the effect of narrowing the field of specialism. Whilst the broad knowledge remains similar or expands across a wider area at the same competence as level 7, the level of competence in the research field will be definition increase markedly, making the person more specialised. It is possible for the practitioner to become a leading expert in a particular area but not increase their expertise in other areas.

If the framework represents a nexus between the education providers and the profession it is also hoped that it can be used as a tool for professional self-assessment in relation to continuous professional development. As knowledge and skill are expressed as a hierarchy of learning, by using the framework the Conservator-Restorer, irrespective of specialism, should be able to recognise the level and scope of their competences by mapping and evaluating their activities which brings me to my last point.

Under the recommendation on the EQF member states are encouraged to promote the validation of lifelong learning. To quote: 'It is only when member states have accepted to validate such informal learning that

classification in one of the EQF levels will be possible'. Informal learning as a route to the profession has been historically recognised by most European countries and E.C.C.O. addressed this issue in its *Professional Guidelines* considering that 'To maintain the standards of the profession the Conservator-Restorer's professional education and training shall be at the level of a Master's degree or recognised equivalent'. In some EU countries this equivalency has been mediated through the accrediting function of individual Conservation-Restoration bodies. The professional body has assumed a role in the validation of professional expertise. However, although accreditation is recognised as a system of professional self-regulation, where such systems are in operation, they are not calibrated with EQF levels and lie outside national accrediting frameworks. It is hoped the work on professional competences represents a starting point from which this work might be done and opens out the discussion on the role and nature of our professional bodies.

Finally, I would like to conclude by putting our work into the most recent interpretation of culture and heritage as expressed in the Framework Convention on the value of Cultural Heritage for Society referred to as the Faro Convention of 2005. Robert Palmer, Director of Culture and Cultural and Natural Heritage, Council of Europe states in his introductory essay:

'Heritage is not simply about the past; it is vitally about the present and future. A heritage that is disjointed from ongoing life has limited value. Heritage involves continual creation and transformation. We can make heritage by adding new ideas to old ideas. Heritage is never merely something to be conserved or protected, but rather to be modified and enhanced. Heritage atrophies in the absence of public involvement and public support. This is why heritage processes must move beyond the preoccupations of the experts in government ministries and the managers of public institutions, and include the different publics who inhabit our cities, towns and villages. Such a process is social and creative, and is underpinned by the values of individuals, institutions and societies'.

These are challenging ideas. They serve to remind us that the work of the Conservator-Restorer is not culturally neutral, that it is a value-based activity; a cultural dynamic between the nature and role of the object and the 'cultural ecology of its communities'. If 'heritage is never merely something to be conserved and protected but rather to be modified and enhanced', Conservator-Restorer's are to be acutely aware that their actions are a participation in this cultural dialogue and that the meaning and reason for any intervention arises out of it and will necessarily inform the outcome.

It is hoped that the conceptual map contributes to this dialogue. Linking 'interconnected cognitive processes' to specialist activities clearly illuminates the trans-disciplinary nature of our profession; a humanistic academic tradition and scientific empiricism combines with a high level of practical skill and need for manual dexterity. These disciplinary arenas are all the more essential in determining the role of conservation-restoration into the future and are essential components in the educational delivery of the professional practitioner.

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