Skills and Training Required for Museum Professionals in the Changing Environment Surrounding Museums - Cases in the United Kingdom -

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The purpose of this research is to analyze the strategic issues in a UK sponsored art museum context, how the skills needed for art professionals evolve in response to changes in the external environment, and what kind of training are given to fill the skills gap. It was carried out not only from a museum studies point of view but also from a management studies point of view, thus, the intention and hope is for this research to contribute to the development of interdisciplinary research on museums between museum studies and management studies.

It was found that UK curators perceive that various external environmental changes are going on. The emphasis is on budget cuts which are supposed to be interrelated to other factors of environmental changes such as competition and the volatility of museum revenue. As for the influence of external environmental changes on museum missions and strategies, museum missions have not been changed except for some minor tweaks over time. The statutory fixture of museum missions by the Museums and Galleries Act 1992 exists in some museums. Museum strategies have been periodically changed responding to environmental changes. The statutory fixture of museum strategies by the Museums and Galleries Act 1992 exists in some museums but tends to be the exception.

In this research, the author created a conceptual model where three forces are supposed to motivate museum professionals to acquire benchmark skills: vertical forces to deepen the existing curatorial skills, horizontal forces to broaden museum multi-functional skills, and upward forces to enhance management & leadership skills. It was found that the important skill sets that must be developed are perceived differently across museums. One view is that deepening the existing curatorial skills is continuously important, whereas another view is that all the three forces are important, especially enhancing management & leadership skills. It was also found that having an academic background in the curator’s field of expertise
is perceived as very important. The existence of UK-specific skills and museum-specific skills is found to be in the depth of expertise related to the collections of which the curators are in charge.

In regard to the training requirements, it was found that museums do nothing for new curators prior to entry to the museum. Therefore, pre-entry training is conducted solely by universities except for internship opportunities. As for the university education contents, it was found that the study modules do not look like they reflect the importance of museum multi-functional skills and management & leadership skills. The modules based on traditional curatorial skills were found to be the majority except at the University of Leicester. When the author widens scope of university education other than museum studies, much higher profile of art history and archaeology schools, especially those of top-notch universities was numerically confirmed.

The contents of in-house museum training, formally an unknown area were clarified. The post-entry induction training is conducted by each museum, which is not for deepening curatorial skills but for familiarizing new entrants to rules and regulations of the museums. It is also found that the short term remedial training is tailored for the mid-career curators to learn how to manage employees, which includes outside training by universities and third party institutions. Museums provide senior management curators with training on a case by case basis. Some museums do not even have training programs for senior management curators. The senior management training also includes outside training by universities and third party institutions. As for third party institutions, Clore Leadership Program has a high profile among museums and curators, but CPD training by Museums Association was found to be useful for administrative staffs who would like to upgrade their career up to curatorial level, therefore not for curators.

At a glance, the traditional curatorial skills are taught in universities and on the job training is conducted in museums. What museums expect to universities is deep expertise on collection area. Museum multi-functional skills are taught by museums in their in-house training, but sometimes by universities and third party institutions. Management & Leadership skills are taught case by case by museums, but sometimes museums utilize universities and third party institutions.