BENEFITS OF USING QUALITATIVE ETHNOGRAPHIC METHODOLOGY IN THE EVALUATION OF PRESERVATION TRAINING PROGRAMS PERFORMANCE IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: A CASE STUDY OF THE NORTHEAST REGION OF BRAZIL

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Volume 61

2015

TEXTOS PARA DISCUSSÃO

N° 61

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Abstract: Establishing parameters for evaluating performance of preservation training programs in developing countries has so far proven challenging to institutions and professionals. Evaluators of training programs set within harsh social, economic and political contexts where heritage preservation is not usually seen as an essential component of the urban development need to be mindful of issues of poverty and social inequality when establishing appropriate quality levels for training programs. Evaluations conducted in such environments demand personal reflections and in-depth understanding of the social context implying that program evaluations should not depend entirely on formal quantitative methods. Gathering information through qualitative specifically through ethnographic methodology provides in-depth insights into the experiences of individuals, groups and communities and highlights otherwise 'invisible' issues. The aim of this paper is to present some of the benefits of utilizing ethnography for performance evaluation of conservation training centers that is based on 'more realistic' standards. In this paper we draw on an ethnographic, evaluative case study conducted in cities situated in North-Eastern Brazil considered world heritage sites by UNESCO..

Palavras chave: education preservation, ethnographic methodology.

1. INTRODUCTION

Many problems need to be overcome in developing countries into order to be able to envision a sustainable context for cultural heritage. In many regions and countries key issues of daily life involve basic healthcare, poverty reduction, education, civil and political rights. These may be assessed by considering the number of hospitals and clinics, the amount of government assistance for food and clothing, school and university access, and active judicial and civil enforcement. When people are faced with poverty, heritage preservation is not generally seen as an essential component of the social urban or rural development process.

When conducting an exploratory ethnographic case study of training centres located in northeastern Brazil between 2010 and 2011, we noticed two principal issues: (1) the difficulty in managing the training centers, which may be attributed to the strong

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[1] Chapter 7 of the book "Preservation Education: Sharing Best Practices and Finding Common Ground". Was published and the edited by Barry Stiefel and Jeremy Wells. This book was an outcome of a conference with the same name held in Providence, Rhode Island, USA in September 2012.

influence of the harsh poverty-related context, and (2) the extent to which these contexts impact on the performance of training centers as well as on the quality of conservation works. This socio-economic and political background appears to have a strong effect on the provision of sustainable preservation processes making impracticable initiatives of development promotion and consequently affecting negatively the outcomes of programs.

A commonly shared perception of interviewees in the study was that program outcomes did not meet local communities' and market demands. Identifying reasons for this situation was not an easy task as there is a lack of documentation indicating social, economic and cultural impacts of the programs on local communities and preservation system. A review of pertinent literature in the field identified that program evaluators seem to adopt almost exclusively quantitative rather than qualitative evaluation methods for cultural heritage training programs. Whilst quantitative data are undoubtedly useful for measuring the successful execution of goals, context-specific qualitative aspects affecting training programs have so far been largely ignored in the existing official reports. The aim of this paper is therefore to discuss the potential of utilizing ethnographic methodology in naturalistic settings to evaluate the performance of conservation training centers which seems essential for ensuring successful conservation practices and initiatives that promote sustainable development. Furthermore we investigate the influence of the local contexts on the establishment of indicators for program evaluation.

2. CONSERVATION TRAINING PROGRAMS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF EVALUATIONS

According to the Guidelines for education and training for the conservation of monuments, ensembles and sites (ICOMOS 1993, Par. 1), conservation is a cultural, artistic, technical and craft activity based on humanistic and scientific studies and systematic research. Conservation practices demand well trained people with appropriate skills to lead interventions and to deal with decision-making processes that take into account the complexities of the field. Thus, training for conservation is a fundamental part of the preservation system.

The International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) states in the document "Training Strategy in the Conservation of Cultural Sites" that the aim of training is to:

> "… guarantee that conservation management is applied to heritage resources taking into consideration the qualities and values of each heritage site, as well as their specific condition, the cultural, social and economic context, and the risks that each site may meet. Training should provide the skills that are required by the professionals, crafts, or administrations involved; training should also facilitate collaboration between different disciplines, and the communication with the general public. While training should be understood in relation to specific needs in each area, the response may be obtained in different forms, at the international, regional, national, or local level[2].

[2] International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property – ICCROM, Training Strategy in the Conservation of Cultural Sites (revision). (Rome: ICCROM, 2010), 5, accessed 08 October 2010, http://cif.icomos.org/pdf_docs/Documents%20on%20line/Training%20strategy%201995.pdf.

Based on Jukka Jokilehto's[3] and UNESCO's[4] statements it can be concluded that conservation and preservation training programs are vital since these programs are responsible for preparing specialized professionals who will develop and implement preservation initiatives, leading efforts and teach others how to operate within the heritage processes. There are international recommendations such as the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, in article 5[5], which suggested that to ensure effective and active measures for the protection, conservation and presentation of the cultural and natural heritage, each government should foster the establishment and development of national and regional centers for training in the protection, conservation, and presentation of the cultural and natural heritage. The quality of these training centers depends on regular evaluations.

Program evaluation has gained importance within the preservation field given that institutions, sponsors and stakeholders are progressively more interested in adequate and convincing data as a means to attain public recognition and support[6]. Evaluating and monitoring are important processes within the strategic planning[7]. However, while analyzing official documents produced in the last two decades by training centers situated in cities considered world heritage sites in Brazil, we observed that these tasks are often neglected by training centers. During the fieldwork for this research, we identified a growing concern amongst professionals involved with training programs in Brazil regarding the ways preservation education is being conducted. From their point of view, the effectiveness of training courses seemed particularly affected by political and economic pressure, resulting in the deviation between current goals and the socio-cultural purposes of preservation education initiatives. It appears therefore, that when developing training programs in poor areas utmost efforts must be employed to establish appropriate quality levels as problems not directly related to heritage issues, also require attention and action so as to overcome them.

The document *Guidelines for education and training in conservation of Cultural Heritage* [8] indicated that there is still a considerable gap between the stated importance of developmental or monitoring assessment and its actual deployment, mainly caused by the prevalent beliefs and culture in organizations with respect to assessment. The need to evaluate conservation training centers performance is timely, principally since it provides

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[3] Jukka Jokilehto, "Built Heritage Conservation Education: An International Perspective to Conservation Education," (ICOMOS, CIF – International Training Committee, 2006), accessed 21 January 2010, http://cif.icomos.org/pdf_docs/Documents%20on%20line/Built%20Heritage%20Jokilehto.pdf .

[4] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization – UNESCO, Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. (Paris: UNESCO, 1972), 03, accessed 10 October 2009, http://whc.unesco.org/archive/convention-en.pdf.

[5] UNESCO, 1972

[6] Isabel V. Alonso and Valerie M. Meurs, "Assessing the Performance of Conservation Activities", in Measuring Heritage Conservation Performance, ed. Silvio Zancheti and Katriina. Similä, (Rome, Italy: ICCROM, 2012), 1.

[7] Fatima Furtado, "O Processo de Monitoramento, Avaliação e Controle de Projetos", in Gestão do Patrimônio Cultural Integrado, ed Silvio Zancheti. (Recife, BR: Ed. Universitária da UFPE, 2002), 164.

[8] International Council on Monuments and Sites – ICOMOS, Guidelines for Education and Training in Conservation of Cultural Heritage (Draft document/under revision). International Training Committee (CIF)/ICOMOS. (Rome: ICOMOS, 2011), 09, accessed 03 April 2011, http://cif.icomos.org/pdf_docs/Documents%20on%20line/GUIDELINES%20FOR%20EDUCATION%20AND%20TRAINING%20IN%20THE%20CONSERVATION.pdf.

feedback relating to processes and effects on programs participants[9]. Designing and gathering information involves appropriate evaluation strategies taking into consideration the particular context including all related stakeholders as training and education in cultural heritage matters requires social involvement and integration into national systems of education at all levels[10]. The challenge for evaluators is obtaining the best and most useful information possible for the people who need it for monitoring, controlling, improving and decision-making. In addition evaluations need to be readable and accessible for interested parties otherwise they are useless.

3. INFLUENCE OF THE LOCAL CONTEXT ON CONSERVATION TRAINING PROGRAM EVALUATIONS

Silvio Zancheti and Katriina Similä stressed that one of the greatest challenges for heritage institutions has been the development of instruments for assessing the performance of conservations actions.[11] The performance and their impacts of training centers must be assessed based on objective parameters, as they have to comply with legal and technical frameworks. At the same time, there is a need to develop a holistic approach to program evaluation based on social practices and cultural pluralism, as conservation must respect the complexities of local contexts.[12] Thus, it is essential to take into consideration issues affecting the outcomes of evaluations that are not only based on statistics but also include qualitative indicators. Factors, such as, the effects of the economic context on preservation training, the interrelationship between programs and political and institutional systems, as well as the social impact of training programs upon target populations must be considered whilst developing training programs evaluations.

Regarding the economic context, scarcity and instability of resources is generally reported as a cause for not implementing evaluation mechanisms. There is an ever-present lack of resources in developing countries especially of the financial kind. Financial obstacles prevent poor nations from implementing solutions to various problems caused by fiscal and financial difficulties, in a timely fashion.[13] Obtaining resources for heritage preservation initiatives, therefore demands strong political articulation and institutional efforts. It can therefore be concluded that for training centers, the provision of resources is a constant concern. Many countries lack specific governmental programs that provide finance for heritage training programs. Resources required for implementation and maintenance often come from private and public stakeholders, both national and international. Often these resources prove insufficient when it comes to management

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[9] Michael Q. Patton, Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods (London: Sage, 2002).

[10] International Council on Monuments and Sites – ICOMOS, Krakow Charter: Principles for Conservation and Restoration of Built Heritage. (Rome: ICOMOS, 2000), accessed 24 October 2011, http://lecce-workshop.unile.it/Downloads/The%20Charter%20of%20Krakow%202000.pdf.

[11] Silvio Zancheti and Katriina Similä, *Measuring Heritage Conservation Performance*. (Rome: ICCROM, 2012), v.

[12] International Council on Monuments and Sites – ICOMOS, *Guidelines on Education and Training in the Conservation of Monuments, Ensembles and Sites.* (Rome: ICOMOS, 1993), accessed 19 August 2009, http://www.icomos.org/charters/education-e.pdf.

[13] Dora A. Guzmán, "Processo de Financiamento de Projetos de Conservação Urbana", in *Gestão do Patrimônio Cultural Integrado,* ed. by Silvio Zancheti. (Recife, Brazil: Ed. Universitária da UFPE, 2002), 273-278.

tasks such as monitoring and evaluating the programs and keeping track of graduate students.

Local political attitudes impact strongly on the implementation of conservation evaluation mechanisms based on qualitative parameters since transparency is not a common practice in heritage policies in developing countries.[14] Whilst analyzing data generated from the research fieldtrip, we noted a discrepancy when comparing official reports and evaluations with interview comments made by insiders: whilst quantitative data indicated that conservation training centers had relative success in preparing graduates through practical programs research participants' interview-comments stated that in reality the courses did not provide the necessary training and skills for graduates to properly operate in the civil market. On the one hand, programs face socio-cultural challenges affecting their performance and interfering with the overall quality of the professional training; on the other hand there seems to be a lack of interest from governments in quality assessment resulting in resistance by institutions to the reporting of qualitative data.

What institutions officially report is strongly affected by political pressure. Particularly in northeastern Brazil and in other regions with similar socioeconomic context, people feel pressured by the political domain as local politicians always expect positive quantitative results, even if their validity and reliability are questionable. In that sense, institutions and stakeholders in general are groups put at potential risk by evaluations. Guba and Lincoln identified stakeholders' tendency 'to act to protect' their interests when they feel their stakes may be jeopardized by an evaluation should there be negative findings.[15] Thus, evaluation reports often suppress relevant qualitative information thereby leading to unrealistic assessments.

A detailed review of literature (such as training centers annual reports and financial sponsors' reports) conducted during this research indicated that current reports and evaluations lack detailed investigations of the interactions of training centers and local people, although evaluating the impacts of training centers performance on local communities social development is known to be fundamental for the preservation process. It is a gap to be filled as planning and conservation management strategies in theory have to be developed in relation to the perceived quality and value of a heritage resource based on a consensus of the population.[16] Evaluations should be useful for indicating to what extent the programs are attending involved communities needs.

Our goal for emphasizing qualitative evaluation methodologies in this paper is not to be critical of quantitative approaches rather we are concerned about which methodology is more likely to yield the meaningful, realistic and useful information for supporting preservation training efforts. Conducting evaluations of preservation training centers that draw on information provided directly by insider professionals, students, stakeholders and sponsors is likely to provide a comprehensive, in-depth and relevant account for those with an interest in improving the training programs performance.

Monitoring and evaluating programs is an important management task to be carried out at all stages of training program development which as recommended by the Guidelines for Education and Training for the Conservation of Monuments, Ensembles

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[14] Zancheti and Similä, *Measuring Heritage,* 1-14.

[15] Egon G. Guba and Yvonna S. Lincoln, *Fourth Generation Evaluation* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1989), 51.

[16] ICCROM, 2010.

and Sites[17], regular evaluation of conservation training programs by peers is a necessity. According to the Training strategy in the conservation of cultural sites,[18] it is important to conduct continuous monitoring and assessment involving both, students and teaching staff, in forward planning and continuous improvement. Indicators are essential tools for evaluations and cannot be developed in an isolated manner. Efficient indicators should always be defined within a managerial context, and conceived as tools designed to orientate and improve specific procedures of training courses.[19] The effective use of indicators requires cautionary attention to what these indicators represent and focus on a training program's role within the heritage system. Regarding the challenges to be overcome for evaluations of heritage programs, Wells raised an important discussion about the need "to understand what should be measured in order to define the nature of heritage conservation performance".[20] The difficulty is how to define relevant, proper indicators. Indicators for heritage training program evaluations depend on the context in which they are applied and are influenced by how associated persons deal with key issues. Purpose and expectations of evaluations define what kind of information is needed and what should be the level of writing.[21]

4. THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF EMPLOYING ETHNOGRAPHY IN PRESERVATION TRAINING PROGRAM EVALUATIONS

Qualitative methodologies are derived from the field study traditions of anthropology specifically from the methodological tradition of ethnography.[22] The philosophical roots of ethnographic methods emphasize the importance of understanding the meanings of human behavior and the social-cultural context of social interaction which sits well within the context of the critical constructivist and social constructionist paradigm.[23] These paradigms promote the development of empathetic understanding based on subjective experience, and understanding the connections between personal perceptions and behavior.[24] Ethnographic approaches take into consideration the character of the interdisciplinarity of cultural studies, which is helpful for understanding social relations and cultural practices through critical analysis. Gaining knowledge from

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[17] ICOMOS, *Guidelines for Education and Training for the Conservation of Monuments, Ensembles and Sites* (Rome: ICOMOS, 1993).

[18] ICOMOS, *Multi-disciplinary Collaboration in Conservation Projects in the UK Based on ICOMOS Guidelines for Education and Training in the Conservation of Monuments, Ensembles and Sites.* (Rome: ICOMOS, 2010), accessed 13 November 2011, http://cif.icomos.org/pdf_docs/Documents%20on%20line/ cotac.pdf.

[19] Herb Stovel, Monitoramento para o Gerenciamento e Conservação do Patrimônio Cultural, in *Gestão do Patrimônio Cultural Integrado*, ed. by Silvio Zancheti. (Recife, BR: Ed. Universitária da UFPE, 2002).

[20] Jeremy Wells, "Using Sequential Mixed Social Science Methods to Define and Measure Heritage Conservation Performance", in *Measuring Heritage Conservation Performance*, ed. by Silvio Zancheti, and Katriina Similä. (Rome: ICCROM, 2012), 165.

[21] Michael Q. Patton, *Qualitative Research*.

[22] Michael Q. Patton, *Qualitative Research*.

[23] Peter C. Taylor, Elisabeth Settelmaier and Bal C. Luitel, Multi-paradigmatic Transformative Research as/for Teacher Education: An Integral Perspective, in K. Tobin, B. Fraser & C. McRobbie (Eds.), *International Handbook of Science Education*. (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer, 2012).

[24] Peter C. Taylor and Milton Medina. Educational Research Paradigms: From Positivism to Pluralism. *College Research Journal, 1*(1), 1-16 (Philippines: Assumption College of Nabunturan, 2011).

the context and understanding phenomena through the meanings local people ascribe to them is an essential feature of high quality evaluations. Field techniques such as participant observation, in-depth interviewing, detailed description, and case studies typically include portrayals of the world as understood by the people studied, as well as the researcher's own understanding.[25] For the development of training program evaluations based on qualitative methodologies, some concepts are important as these evaluations demand more sensibility to deal with the multidisciplinary aspects of local contexts.

4. 1 The Link Between 'Responsive' Evaluations and Ethnography

'Responsive evaluation' is an approach that emphasizes the importance of personalizing and humanizing the evaluation process. In their seminal work "Fourth Generation Evaluation Guba and Lincoln integrated ethnographic inquiry and responsive evaluation into an overall framework for improving the usefulness of evaluation results.[26] For the purpose of evaluating preservation-training programs, the depth of the ethnographic inquiry permits the evaluator to be especially sensitive to the differing perspectives of all related stakeholders. This sensitivity allows the evaluator to gather data and report findings based on those differences.. Associating responsiveness to ethnographic evaluations allows strong stakeholders involvement.[27] Responsive evaluations include identifying issues and concerns, observing and gathering information straight from participants, through direct, personal contact, portraying realities that are easily understandable and rich with description.[28] In that sense, findings in ethnographic responsive evaluations are created, not discovered.[29] This creation is an emergent construction, resulting from a joint effort amongst all stakeholders. It is not merely about investigating the context, but also about contributing to the empowerment of stakeholders involved and the possible transformation of the studied reality.[30]

4. 2 Ethnography – Everything Starts in the Field

Fieldwork is a central activity of ethnographic evaluation methods.[31] It allows direct and personal contact with people and programs in their own environments. It is a naturalistic methodology[32]which means that data are generated in naturalistic contexts without trying to 'control variables'. Getting close to people and local situations permits us to make sense of social facts. Fieldwork allows for firsthand information and helps

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[25] David A. Erlandson, Edward L. Harris, Barbara L. Skipper, and Steven D. Allen, *Doing Naturalistic Inquiry: A Guide to Methods.* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1993).

[26] Egon G. Guba and Yvonna S. Lincoln, *Effective Evaluation: Improving the Usefulness of Evaluation Results Through Responsive and Naturalistic Approaches.* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1981).

[27] Egon G. Guba, and Yvonna S. Lincoln. *Guidelines and Checklist for Constructivist (a.k.a. Fourth Generation) Evaluation.* 2001, accessed 23 January 2012, http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/ archive_checklists/constructivisteval. pdf.

[28] Guba and Lincoln, *Fourth Generation Evaluation.*

[29] Erlandson et al., *Doing Naturalistic Research.*

[30] Peter Taylor, *Transformative Research.*

[31] Michael Q. Patton, *Qualitative Research.*

[32] Erlandson et al., *Doing Naturalistic Research.*

develop a holistic perspective. In the field of naturalistic evaluation, ethnography is a qualitative methodology which aims for a cultural interpretation based on understanding a cultural group from an insider's perspective, intending to explore and provide a detailed in-depth description of everyday values, behaviors, perceptions and practices (thick description) as an attempt to explain the webs of meaning of a specific community.[33] Ethnographic studies have the following characteristics:[34]

- observations takes place in a natural setting (naturalistic approach);

- evaluators aim at understanding how an event is perceived and interpreted by the people in a specific community, trying to interpret the situation from the perspective of the participants (constructivist approach);

- evaluators rely on observations of interactions and interviews with participants in naturally occurring situation;

- studies are "holistic" and "hermeneutic" whereby the researcher moves between seeing the data as a whole in order to get a basis for understanding the parts and vice versa;

- evaluators do not formulate hypotheses prior to conducting the evaluation. The theory emerges concurrently with the data collection – the theory is grounded in the data (Grounded Theory).

An ethnographer's goal is not just to report events and experiences: he/she involves documenting people's beliefs and practices from the participants' own perspectives.[35] The emphasis in this representation is to allow critical categories and meanings to emerge from the ethnographic encounter rather than through imposing existing models.[36] According to Hammersley and Atkinson ethnographic studies investigate a small number of cases, perhaps just one case, yet study them in detail. There is a strong emphasis on exploring the nature of particular social phenomena rather than setting out to test hypotheses about them. They are primarily unstructured, uncoded data at the point of data collection. The analysis of data involving explicit interpretation of the meanings and functions of human actions[37]

4.4 Research Strategies Used in Ethnography

The aim for evaluators undertaking ethnographic evaluations is to use qualitative methods and techniques when conducting a relevant, meaningful, understandable, useful, reliable, and believable evaluation. The goal in qualitative data gathering and analysis is constructing a comprehensive, holistic portrayal of the social and cultural dimensions of a

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[33] Brian A. Hoey, *What is Ethnography?*, accessed 12 March 2012, http://www.brianhoey.com/General %20Site/ general_defn-ethnography.htm.

[34] Lusia M. Nurani, Critical Review of Ethnographical Approach, *Jurnal Sosioteknologi.* 14 (7), Agustus 2008, accessed 01 May 2012, http://www.fsrd.itb.ac.id/wpcontent/uploads /5%20Lusi%20 Ethnography%20 Approach.pdf.

[35] Francis J. Riemer, Ethnography Research, in *Qualitative Research: An Introduction to Methods and Designs*, ed. Stephen D. Lapan, Marylinn T. Quartaroli, and Francis Riemer. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2008).

[36] Brian A. Hoey, *What is Ethnography?*

[37] Martin Hammersley and Paul Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice.* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 248.

particular context.[38] Qualitative methods include collection and analysis of a variety of empirical materials, such as personal experiences explored through in-depth interviews, grounded theory practices and observations.

- **Interviews:** They can be described as a conversation with a purpose.[39] Interviews are helpful for understanding and putting into a larger context the interpersonal, social and cultural aspects of the environment. A common practice in qualitative research is the use of semi-structured interviews, guided by a set of basic questions and issues to be explored. Data from open-ended interviews consist of direct references from people concerning their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge.

- **Grounded theory practices:** in preservation training programs evaluations, it is important that the evaluator generates theories from holistic data gathered through ethnographic inquiry. The purpose is helping program staff and decision makers to understand how the program functions, why it functions as it does, and the way in which the impacts/consequences/outcomes of the program flow from programs activities, providing relevant information useful to their efforts to improve their programs.[40]

- **Observations:** The data from observations encompass detailed descriptions of programs activities, participants' behaviors, staff actions, and the full range of human interactions that can be part of program experiences.[41] Observational data (direct or participant observation) portray the big picture of the context where the program is set. Despite being a relatively time-consuming and expensive evaluation strategy, it provides depth and detailed data. Also, qualitative evaluators must be skilled observers, able to read nonverbal messages, sensitive to how the interview setting can affect what is said, and carefully attuned to the nuances of the interviewer-interviewee interaction and relationship.[42]

4.5 Ethnographic Evaluation Reports

Qualitative evaluation reports seek to generate useful and credible information. This may contain detailed descriptions of program implementation; analysis of major program processes; description of different types of participants and different kinds of participation; descriptions of how the program has affected participants; observed changes (or lack thereof) outcomes, and impacts; and strengths and weakness of programs as reported by related people.[43] It must also be written in a highly descriptive way, sufficiently for interested readers to understand it – Thick description provides a level of detail that allows readers to draw informed conclusions and compare one context to others. Narrative writing styles make the text accessible and understandable.

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[38] Erlandson et al., *Doing Naturalistic Research.*

[39] Erlandson et al., *Doing Naturalistic Research.*

[40] Michael Q. Patton, *Qualitative Research.*

[41] Erlandson et al., *Doing Naturalistic Research.*

[42] Fatima Furtado, *O Processo de Monitoramento.*

[43] Guba and Lincoln, *Fourth Generation Evaluation.*

4.6 Challenges to Overcome in Developing Ethnographic Evaluations

As Guba and Lincoln stated, evaluation is a form of inquiry whose end product is information.[44] During this research experience we experienced several challenges that qualitative-ethnographic evaluations impose to evaluators. For a large and significant set of data and evidences the researcher needs to spend enough time (how long is 'enough'?) interacting with the studied object for obtaining data that allow the development of rigorous and strong analysis. Thick description demands original analysis and specific conclusions, demanding prolonged engagement, which can involve much time and costs.[45] Qualitative approaches also demand certain level of involvement with the context. This is a subjective and tenuous line, easily traversable. As Wolcott stated that "with too much distance and perspective, one is labeled aloof, remote, insensitive, superficial; with too much familiarity, empathy, and identification, one is suspected of having 'gone native'". [46]

Another sensitive point is, in developing qualitative-ethnographic evaluations from the researcher's own interpretive standpoint, we have the huge moral responsibility of not only investigating and writing about an issue, but also of interpreting and representing 'real' people. This is a delicate position, as representation has ethical implications.[47] Even with all good intentions, representing others is always complicated and can be contentious. We can help and we can harm, depending on the way we express our position as researchers.

According to Wolcott, the ethnographer's purpose is to learn record and portray the culture of the other group.[48] However, what does culture mean? Besides being a highly subjective concept, the meaning of culture for a group can be very different from the researcher's interpretation. In our experience two situations can compromise a study: (1) during this investigation, we observed that participants sometimes behaved in a contradictory ways; what people actually did could be different to what they said they were doing in the interviews; what they said they should be doing, and what meaning they assigned to such behavior.[49] On the other hand results also depend on the fieldworker's interpretation that is always imbued and influenced by her own background. Given the high degree of subjectivity that qualitative evaluations demands, the methodology strongly reflects our own life stories. Finally, qualitative evaluators need to be mindful when observing, recording and analyzing the data, so as to allow us to identify potential errors.

5. CASE STUDY – EVALUATING A CONSERVATION TRAINING PROGRAM IN NORTHEASTERN BRAZIL

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[44] Guba and Lincoln, *Fourth Generation Evaluation*, 52.

[45] Fatima Furtado, *O Processo de Monitoramento*.

[46] Harry Wolcott, Ethnographic Research in Education, in *Complementary Methods for Research in Education*, ed. Richard Jaeger. (Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association, 1997), 56.

[47] Soyini Madison, *Critical Ethnography: Method, Ethics, and Performance.* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2005).

[48] Harry Wolcott, *Ethnographic Research in Education.*

[49] Ibid.

Conducting an ethnographic study of training-centers in northeastern Brazil was helpful for understanding the particular situation in that area. Qualitative data were generated through exploratory research and fieldwork investigating in depth conservation training centers located in world heritage sites in the target region. The evaluation captured individual differences and unique variations in depth, in context, and holistically.[50] Ethnographic strategies involved semi-structured interviews, collection and review of specific document analysis and direct observations. Feedback from technicians and governmental heritage institutions was also regarded as important input. For the interviews, recorded by audiotape, semi-structured approach was used to investigate local beliefs and perceptions. The sample consisted of twenty-eight participants located in six training centers at five historical cities in the northeast region of Brazil, knowledgeable and key informants involved in the training centers' activities and the local communities.

The adoption of ethnographic methods such as observational techniques and in-depth interviews allowed recording events as they occurred. Interviewing and observation mutually reinforced the findings as they were a bridge to understanding the major themes involved in the evaluation. The many histories that surround the context were revealed its complexity. For each participant the reality seemed different and interpreted differently depending of his or her level of involvement.

An ethnographic approach demanded a higher degree of concern from the evaluator, not only with the technical, but also with the deeper implications, such as the theories that are the foundation of the research, the level of the researcher's reflection and the required perspective of historicity of the studied phenomena.[51] The aim was to reach the essence of phenomena and comprehend them in their entirety, even if a relative entirety, as this research approach demands an immersion in the research field, a long permanence in this area, as well as an expanded analysis time.

Whilst current reports demonstrated mostly qualitative data related to the number of resources invested and certificates afforded, data analysis generated by this investigation demonstrated important insights about the impact of political, economical, educational and social issues on the training centers' performance. It is not possible, within the scope of this article, to discuss all factors which impact on the performance of training centers; however, some factors familiar to professionals working in developing countries can be cited:

- The influence of the political context on the management of training centers: It was possible to identify a common notion from all interviewees of this investigation that there is a lack of political interest for preservation. Preservation is a long and costly work where the correlation between invested resources and the results achieved are not politically advantageous. Moreover, political discontinuity is another important issue affecting the centers' performance. Programs and projects discussed, developed and executed by an administration are impacted by political leadership changes. With the change of a political leader at every new election, there is always a change of staff that follows. The new staff generally does not continue ongoing projects or plans that were discussed and developed in the

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[50] Michael Q. Patton, *Qualitative Research*

[51] Jefferson Mainardes and Maria Ines Marcondes, Reflexões sobre Etnografia Crítica e suas Implicações para Pesquisa em Educação (*Educação e Realidade*, 36 (2011): 425-446 maio/agosto 2011), accessed 20 April 2012, http://www.ufrgs.br/edu_realidade>

previous administration. This discontinuity generates a tendency for governmental departments to develop short-term projects that can be implemented and start generating results within a maximum of four years from its inception. However, preservation training is a long, systematic and continuous process. The training of apprentices demands time for involvement with the work environment, from sensitisation and appropriation of their culture to the learning of specific technical procedures.

- The training centers' interactions with local communities: We have observed that there is low interaction between the training centers and the local communities in which they are inserted. In interviewing professionals, it was clear they recognize the importance of social participation in training processes but stated how difficult it is to include local community representatives in these processes in developing countries. This is usually caused by political decisions and lack of understanding or interest from the local people. However, the local community affected by the interventions is the main stakeholder of the preservation system. According to Juarez de Paula any preservation strategy needs to allow local communities participation, in order to render people "capable of identifying potentialities, opportunities, comparative and competitive advantages, problems, limits and obstacles to their development, from which they can choose vocations, establish goals, determine strategies and priorities, monitor and evaluate results, in order to gain the required capacity to plan and manage, in a shared manner [with governments], the process of local development." [52]

- The lack of preparation of the faculty body, technicians and managers: The lack of knowledge by administrators, managers, technicians and teachers about the methodological, technical and legal framework which govern preservation practices also affect the training. It was observed in the training centres under investigation, teachers and craftsmen teaching without the appropriate method and approach to preservation as well as administrators, managers and technicians who demonstrate a lack of knowledge of technical procedures, legislations, project management and budgeting. Many of whom are engaged in training programs based on the positions they hold in politics, and not on merit or knowledge of the craft. Without expertise, the teaching efficacy is harmed and the training becomes under serious threat of providing inconsistent information. It is not possible to lead conservation training without such knowledge; otherwise, people are being qualified alienated from the local and global contexts which dictate conservation practice.

- The training centers technical and theoretical efficacy: Currently, the Brazilian government is focused on certifying the largest number of people possible within the shortest period of time feasible. Thus, there is a strong tendency to implement training courses significantly shorter than traditional ones. This may be affecting the quality of learning and teaching, as well as placing professional into the market who are not sufficiently prepared for preservation practices. This tendency also leads to the development of scopes focused mainly in technical procedures

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[52] Juarez de Paula, *Desenvolvimento e Gestão Compartilhada.* (2005) accessed 12 February 2013, http://www.biblioteca.sebrae.com.br/bds/BDS.nsf/3093035CA1CC0D4C83257 640006A272E/$File/NT00042956.pdf.

and practices, while preservation training demands a much deeper understanding of theoretical, cultural, social and historical matters.

- The lack of follow-up of graduated students: Another issue identified in the research is that there has been no monitoring of the students after their graduation. Without it, there is no feedback for the process. It is not possible to know if the student is applying the knowledge in the market, if the knowledge received is adequate or sufficient, or whether they as professionals meet the requirements of the market. This highlights the importance of establishing qualitative analysis and evaluation of training programs based on socioeconomic impacts and effective changes in cultural values and practices. There is also a need to develop more effective mechanisms for monitoring, taking into consideration the practical, educational and social level of the programs.

- Management issues: The context in which training programs are inserted impacts on their management. This scenario is comprised of a collection of disarticulate and fragmented departments and actions. Such situation compromises the comprehensiveness of interventions, the legitimacy of attributions and institutional responsibilities. During this research, it was possible to observe that the most successful programs were the ones developed and managed under a shared management system. In those, various institutional partners sought intersectoral integration of preservation policies, the active participation of all related stakeholders, social participation in formulating goals and financial cooperation of public and private, national and international partners.

Applying qualitative methods for evaluating performance of the preservation training programs was useful to produce knowledge based on specific contexts. Constructing interpretations based on insider heritage professionals' experiences provided important insights and brought to the fore issues initially invisible to the outsider. Since through this research experience we could identify that quantitative data were not portraying accurately all aspects of the context, generating qualitative data allowed for gathering high-quality information directly from people's experiences, activities, perspectives, perceived impacts, and other subjective information from the point of view of participants, staff and others involved in and knowledgeable about the training programs being evaluated. Data generation was not constrained by predetermined categories of analysis, which contributed to the depth and detailed qualitative description of programs situations, events, people, interactions, and observed behaviors.

Taking into consideration the qualitative results of the research it is possible to more assertive develop guidelines for improving the management and effectiveness of the teaching/learning process of conservation training centers in the given context.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Powerful instruments, qualitative evaluations go beyond traditional and potentially meaningless measurements.[53] Ethnographic methodology allows for

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[53] Michael Q. Patton, *Qualitative Research*.

evaluations to be situated within a holistic approach, to give nuance, to illuminate complexities and issues by presenting the situation as a whole. This systematic understanding is vital for overall and systemic understanding, identifying the interdependence of different subsystems involved. It is helpful for better understanding how training programs behave in a larger context and indicates how they could be managed.[54]

Despite being founded on subjective aspects of the context, evaluations based on qualitative methodologies allow for more "realistic" results and impacts demands deep and detailed understanding of the complexities of the field through multiple perspectives and different viewpoints. This information provides new insights into the experiences of individuals, groups and communities and highlights otherwise 'invisible' issues.

Good evaluations demonstrate in-depth understanding of the context where the conservation training programs are being developed, meaning the evaluation should not be dependent entirely on formal quantitative methods. It is understandable that quantitative data is politically important as the relationship between invested resources and the quantity of graduate people are commonly used for indicating social and economic development of local communities. However, it is also important to establish indicators to show the quality of teaching, learning effectiveness and the application of knowledge in the 'real world'. It is necessary to establish valid ways to assess whether training programs goals have been achieved or not. Otherwise, figures grow but where is the quality?

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[54] Neil Ne Browne and Stuart M. Keeley, *Asking the Right Questions: A Guide to Critical Thinking.* (6th ed). (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2001).

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