



MUSEUMS AND CULTURAL HERITAGE IN ZIMBABWE

Needs analysis of the sector:
skills gaps & shortages

Research findings to inform the development of future
programmes in the Museums and Cultural Heritage
sector in Zimbabwe






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Contents

About the cultural skills team	7
Background and research aims	7
The museum sector in Zimbabwe	9
Skills providers	13
Skills gaps and shortages	14
Appendix 1 – List of participating organisation	20
References	20

A photograph of a large, dark brown terrazzo sculpture of a tortoise. The tortoise is depicted in a walking pose, facing left. It is positioned behind a metal railing, and its reflection is visible in a pool of water in the foreground. The background shows a wall made of light-colored rectangular tiles.

Terrazzo sculpture of tortoise depicted besides the front of the Human Sciences museum. Generally the portrayal of a tortoise in sculptures, folklore and literary works represent many values associated with ubuntu(humility, wisdom, patience, perseverance etc)

Foreword

This report is indebted to the contributions of many who helped us define directions and identify critical issues. It is my hope that the research adds valuable market knowledge of cultural skills needs in Zimbabwe. The research explored the skills gaps and shortages within the Museums and Cultural heritage Sector.

This research provides evidence-based findings to inform the development of new products and programmes in the sector. The names of those participating in the research are included at the end of this report. We would like to acknowledge their valuable contribution and continued support in the sector.

Director, British Council

Sam Harvey



Gareth Nyandoro - Ihohoho Namadzibaba Ishimairi



About the Cultural Skills team

From museums to music, fashion to film, the skills that support the artistic process are vital to the development of a thriving cultural sector around the globe. Skills range from technical specialism, to leadership and management; policy and qualification development, to youth engagement and English language.

The Cultural Skills team strengthens cultural relations between the UK and the rest of the world through sharing knowledge and developing mutual benefit. With UK and international partners, the unit works to build sustainable cultural skills programmes that develop the skills of those practitioners and institutions across the whole of the UK and internationally, supporting the artistic, social and economic benefits of a thriving and dynamic cultural sector.

<https://www.britishcouncil.org/cultural-skills-unit>

Background and research aims

As part of the larger Cultural Skills research project in Sub Saharan Africa, research has been undertaken in Zimbabwe to explore the skills gaps and shortages in the museums and cultural heritage sector. This preliminary piece of research provides an initial understanding to inform future skills

training programmes and products for professionals and young people.

In collaboration with British Council Zimbabwe, anecdotal evidence and preliminary conversations with museum and heritage professionals identified a potential opportunity to provide programmes with an impact for the sector and the wider cultural sector in Zimbabwe. As such, the research project had the following objectives:

- Identify the technical and transversal skill gaps in the sector
- Locate the professional shortages, if any
- Collate the current provision in educational and skills training for the sector
- Identify the market demand for paid programmes for professionals and young people
- Understand and outline the relevant cultural policies and museums operations frameworks
- Identify areas of potential impact by the British Council from professionals in the field
- Identify potential partners and co-investors
- Identify the most appropriate business model for future programming
- Provide recommendations on programme topics and structure, as well as target audience

To respond to the preliminary identification of a potential opportunity in country, a researcher from Cultural Skills worked alongside British Council colleagues in Zimbabwe to develop the research tools, aims, and methodology. This research will inform prioritisation of skills needs and development of various programmes.



Mode of Transport: Young boys riding a tamed oxen

The research methodology

The research includes four main strands; desk research, face to face interviews, focus group discussions, and an online survey. Each strand of the research is detailed below.

Desk research

This involved collating and analysing relevant information, articles, and previous local and regional research to understand more about the museum sector in Zimbabwe as well as the cultural sector in general. Additionally, it was an opportunity to identify what, if any, previous research had identified as skills gaps in the sector.

Face to face interviews

We spent ten days in Harare, Bulawayo, and Gweru conducting face to face interviews. In total, we spoke to 27 individuals representing 20 organisations. Participants included policy makers, senior staff at national museums and galleries, and organisational directors. Additionally, we spoke to organisations affiliated with the sector through funding or corporate portfolios.

Focus group discussions

We conducted a total of 5 group discussions with 35 technical staff of museums, galleries, and the national archives. Participants included middle

managers, curators, specialists, marketing managers, and exhibition designers. Additionally, we spoke to 22 young creative people over 3 focus group discussions to understand their perspective of entering into the cultural sector and their opinions on the museums and heritage sector.

A list of organisations who took part in the research can be found in appendix 1.

Online survey

In order to ensure that the research covers a wide geographic area, we sent out an online survey to a range of cultural practitioners from across Zimbabwe. The survey sought to put some of the findings from the interviews to the test. In total, 51 individuals took part in the online survey. While every effort was made to include experts from across the museums sector, time and financial constraints made it impossible to cover every profession and subsector. Nor was it possible to undertake interviews in every key town and city. While we did visit three of the five national museums in Zimbabwe, we only spoke on the phone to professionals from the ones we did not visit. Subsequently, while this report provides illustrative insights into emerging skills gaps and shortages, it is not a comprehensive mapping of the heritage sector in Zimbabwe.

Finally, the final number of collected surveys cannot be identified as a statistically significant number and will therefore be used as to illustrate the qualitative findings as opposed to

triangulating them. The number of surveys could be due to several reasons, including lack of access to internet connections and computers, the small size of the sector, and the potential lack of knowledge of how to engage with the sector.

Research limitations

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Front view of Amagugu International Heritage Centre. Murals used as learning aids on indigenous history and culture.

The Museum Sector in Zimbabwe

The museum sector within the wider economy

The economic situation in Zimbabwe has affected most sectors. Due to a number of governmental policies in the late 1980s and early 1990s, inflation rose steadily with rates reaching the triple digits in 2008. However, after a move to legalize the use of foreign currency in 2009, and with the majority of citizens and corporations moving to the use of the US dollar, the economy has stabilized and citizens are now once again able to regain their purchasing power.

Despite this recent positive change, the museum sector in Zimbabwe continues to suffer. There is a general lack of job opportunities within the predominantly governmental museum sector and this is compounded by general job cuts in the sector. More importantly, budget

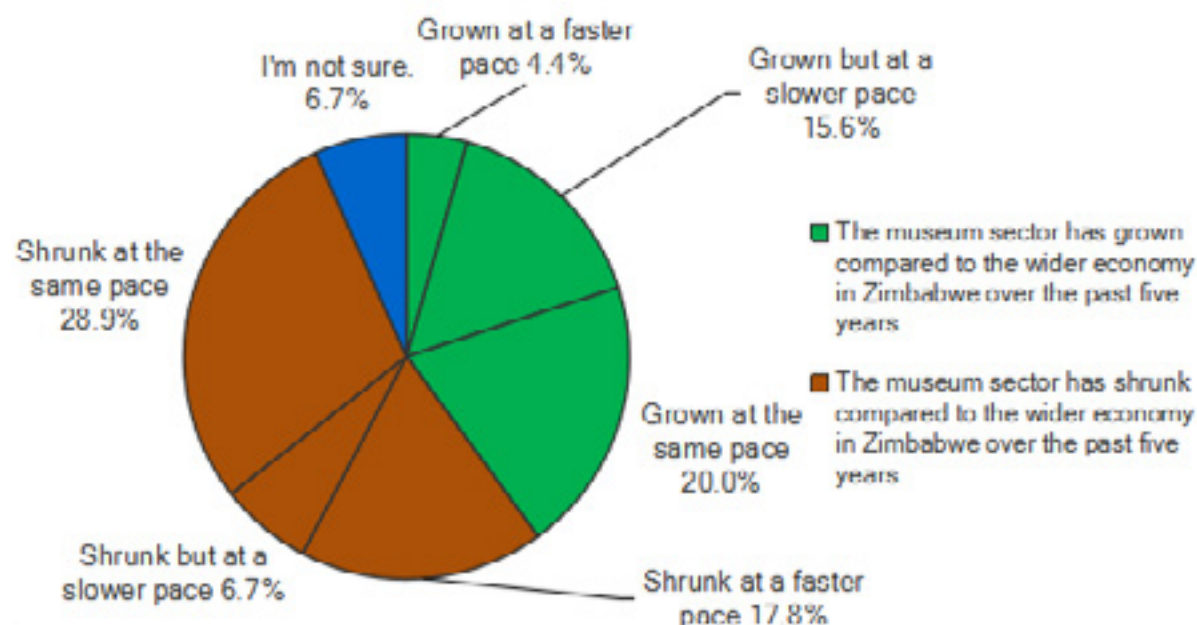
cuts from training, exhibition, and development budgets have all affected the sector. More than one third of survey respondents agreed that the museum sector has shrunk in the last five years in comparison to the wider economy, and another third agreed that it had remained the same. Less than one fifth of the respondents viewed the sector as having grown in the last five years. When probed further, respondents were able to divide the growth and shrinking rates further, as

displayed in Figure 1 below. Qualitative interviews with research participants were able to provide more insight into the reasons behind the seeming lack of growth in the sector in Zimbabwe.



Snail and pangolin being part of the terrazzo sculptures standing in the reflecting pools besides the Human Sciences Museum entrance

Figure 1 – Perceptions of the museum sector in Zimbabwe over the past five years





View of a terrazzo sculpture depicting a praying mantis besides the Human Sciences Museum entrance

What does the museum sector look like?

The museum sector in Zimbabwe has fallen successively under several different ministries since the country's independence in 1980. Newly created in September 2015, the Ministry of Rural Development, Promotion and Preservation of National Culture and Heritage aims to gather the culture and heritage portfolio under a dedicated ministry. National Monuments and Museums of Zimbabwe is the department directly associated with all public heritage sites and museums.

Zimbabwe's five world UNESCO heritage sites, five National Museums, and three National Galleries all fall under this ministry, which has previously carried the sole financial responsibility of their

operations. However, within the current economic conditions, budget cuts have reduced their programme operations as well as their training and development budgets. While this is a challenge, it has also provided these well-established institutions with the opportunity to work collaboratively with various funders and has pushed them to seek out new and sustainable methods of operations.

The national museums in Zimbabwe operate on a geographic and thematic approach, where each venue represents a specific geographic region and theme. The southern region is looked after by the Masvingo Great Zimbabwe museum, the central region is looked after by the Military Museum of Gweru, the Museum of Natural History operates in Bulawayo in the western region, Harare's Museum of Human Sciences looks after the northern region, and the Mutare Museum is responsible for the eastern region of Zimbabwe. The main challenge facing the majority of the public institutions is, according to research participants, the inability to regularly change or enhance current exhibitions, and the inability to provide regular programming, both due to decreased budgets in development and training. The educational programming at museums is mostly comprised of school visits to the museum sites as part of mandatory school activities.

The National Galleries operate as quasi-governmental institutions as they fall under the same ministry as the museums but have a larger degree of financial and operational control. The National

Gallery of Harare, the National Gallery of Bulawayo, and the National Gallery of Mutare organise exhibitions, artist exchanges, artist development, and educational programmes in a robust and regular manner. Additionally, the national galleries are able to establish collaborations and partnerships with other galleries, both regionally and internationally, as well as access funding through various donor bodies.

When we talk about the museum sector, unless otherwise stated, we include art galleries and sites of archaeological interest as part of this.

The role of Zimbabwe's cultural heritage

The UNESCO World Heritage Convention lists five sites in Zimbabwe inscribed on the World Heritage List. There are three cultural sites, the Great Zimbabwe National Monument, Khami Ruins National

Monument, and Matobo Hills; as well as two natural sites, Mana Pools National Park, and Mosi-oa-Tunya (Victoria Falls) [UNESCO World Heritage Convention on Zimbabwe: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/zw>].

Despite on-going economic and political challenges, all UNESCO sites were ratified successively between 1986 and 2003. While the tangible cultural heritage of Zimbabwe is clear, much of the intangible heritage and indigenous culture has scarcely been preserved. Locations such as the Amagugu International Heritage Centre in the Matobo region

works on documenting, preserving, and promoting the indigenous cultural heritage of Zimbabwe by engaging with the public through educational and cultural programmes[Amagugu International Heritage Centre <http://www.amaguguheritage.org/who-we-are/>]. That being said, many research participants identified the need for more contemporary readings of Zimbabwean heritage at the national museums, some of which carry information in exhibitions and displays from the pre-independence era. Additionally, some participants highlighted the importance of telling the Zimbabwean story by and through Zimbabweans; the skill of effectively articulating this story is institutionally lacking. Indeed, the biggest strength in Zimbabwe is the rich and diverse heritage itself.

***We need home-grown ideas of how to collect our stories. Museums now are just looking after what was given to them, not finding our own stories. There's nothing post-independence or post 1975. They're fire fighting, fixing, instead of focusing on their main goals. The country is trying to be someone else from a different perspective.'* – Research participant.**



The sector's relationship with the state

The need for cultural institutions and heritage sites to move away from financial dependency on the state was identified by all participants. The move towards developing more sustainable methods of operation is now challenged with a lack of training opportunities and access to potential partners and co-investors. As such, a future programme developed to address skills gaps and opportunities in Zimbabwe should work on establishing immediate results-driven skills gaps training in this area, with a focus on long-term establishment of partnerships and collaborations.

Some participants also discussed the challenge of governmental bureaucracy which slows down the process of change and hinders some access to opportunities for both professionals and institutions as a whole. As such, any future programmes should be mindful of this challenge by allowing plenty of time to work through this bureaucracy and endeavouring to establish relationships with the appropriate governmental bodies.

The funding gap

In addition to a reduced allocation of funding from the responsible ministry and department, the national museums and

galleries in Zimbabwe have also been challenged with the departure of previous funding bodies from the country, including the Norwegian and Swedish cultural aid agencies. Other large donors, including the EU, have shifted some thematic focus to other developmental priorities in the region. As such, there is a gap in terms of funding for training in the sector which provides an opportunity for future programmes to be developed for training of current professionals. This will enable the enhancement of the sector, as well as improve the economic contribution of the sector to the overall economy, which in the long term could provide incentive for the creation of more job opportunities to meet the demand expressed by those wishing to enter into the sector.

Research participants identified that skills training in alternative methods of income generation, business and financial models, and creative sustainability methods are all needed at this point in time to help them focus their efforts in enhancing and expanding their operations.

***'We have failed to adapt to the changing environments mainly due to government priorities to other sectors. So the arts and culture sector has been marginalised in terms of funding, prioritisation, and promotion, from local authorities and even the private sector.'* – Research participant**

UNESCO World Heritage Convention on Zimbabwe: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/zw>
Amagugu International Heritage Centre <http://www.amaguguheritage.org/who-we-are/>



Masimba Hwati - Urban Totems



Woman grinding millet. Part of meal preparation for households.

Skills providers

Museum education courses

In terms of museum and cultural heritage programmes at universities in Zimbabwe, there are several options for individuals wishing to pursue this line of work. Midlands State University, Zimbabwe Open University, Great Zimbabwe University, Chinoy University, Lupana State University, and NUST all offer programmes which cover museum studies, archiving programmes, museum

management, curatorial skills, and cultural heritage.

More specifically, discussions with the Midlands State University's Archaeology, Cultural Heritage and Museum Studies highlighted the efforts by the academic staff to enhance and modernise the current curriculums at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Future programme development in the area of education and curriculum engagement should aim to work with institutions like Midland's State

University to compound impact levels.

However, what is more common in the field is for professionals working in the sector to have a specialisation in archaeology or history, with a thorough knowledge of the collections and monuments themselves, rather than specific museology expertise. While this knowledge of the collections is essential to the understanding and development of strong museums, research participants often highlighted that a strong knowledge in management, transversal and museology skills is also needed to create a more effective and efficient sector. This includes business development, marketing, programming, curatorial, guest relations, and managerial skills specific to the sector. The main critique of the current provision of formal educational opportunities for the sector is the theoretical nature of all courses, the lack of practical exposure, and the lack of continued formal education outside post-graduate degrees.

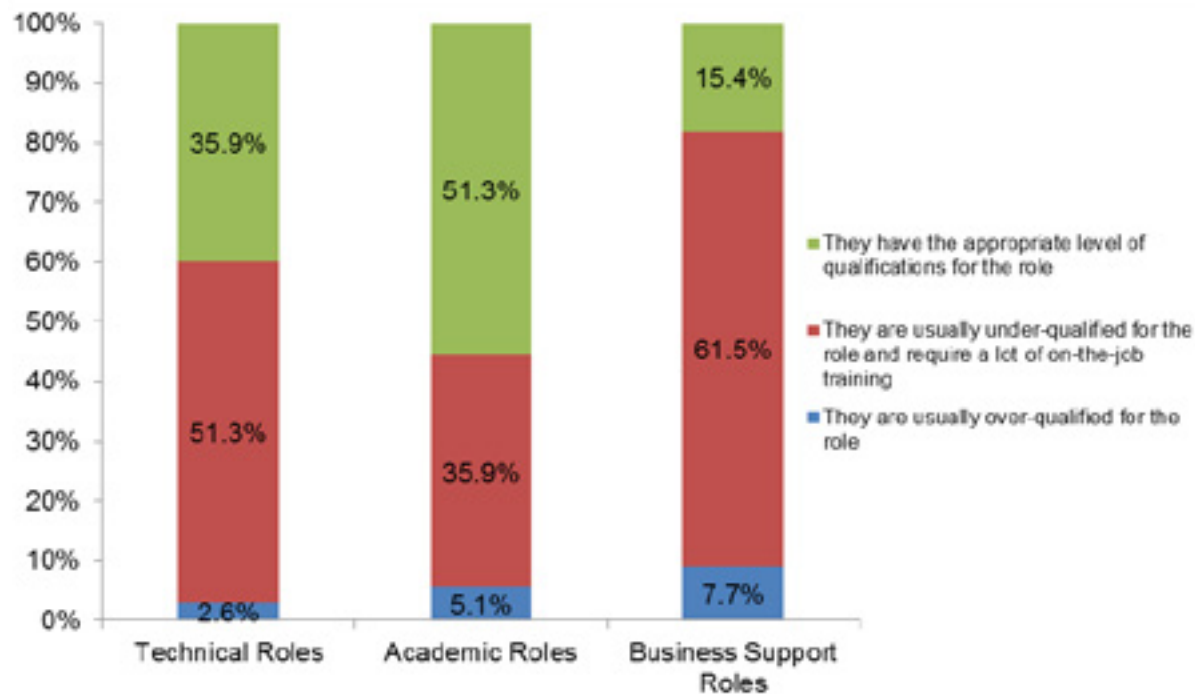
Interview and focus group participants identified that they are often unable to find continued professional development programmes to enhance their skills within Zimbabwe. They are often required to travel abroad to neighbouring countries to access suitable courses, but are unable to do so due to a lack of financial means. Additionally, their organisations are unable to fund them to attend these programmes. Similar to face to face participants, 56% of survey respondents identified that they would look into options available at

universities or further education colleges to learn a new skill related to their role. Additionally, 69% of survey participants felt that the museum sector in Zimbabwe suffers from a shortage of skills providers for certain skills.

Preparedness and qualifications for work

Over half of all survey participants, and the majority of face to face interview participants, identified that recent school and university graduates were overall not well prepared to work in the museum and cultural heritage sector. When probed further, participants explained that while graduates have the appropriate level of qualifications for academically focussed skills such as curating and archiving, they are under-qualified for business support roles (such as marketing and business development) as well as for technical roles (such as exhibition design) and require a lot of on the job training.

Figure 2 – How well qualified are school and university leavers for roles in different areas of museum work?



Sample size: 39 respondents

Supporting recent graduates

While attachments and work placements are common and often mandatory for university students, research participants explained that the low quality of learning which happens at the attachments affects their impact. Additionally, the real disconnect happens when students graduate and are unable to find jobs due to the small size of the sector as well as the hiring freeze at all museums. The

funding crisis for national institutions means that while the museums, archives, and galleries are able to take on unpaid or stipend-based work attachments for students for up to a year, they are unable to retain that knowledge and build on their investment due to a lack of available vacancies and a shortage of funding opportunities.

Young people with whom we spoke at group discussions also identified that it was often difficult to understand the sub-sectors and the different professions involved in the museums and heritage

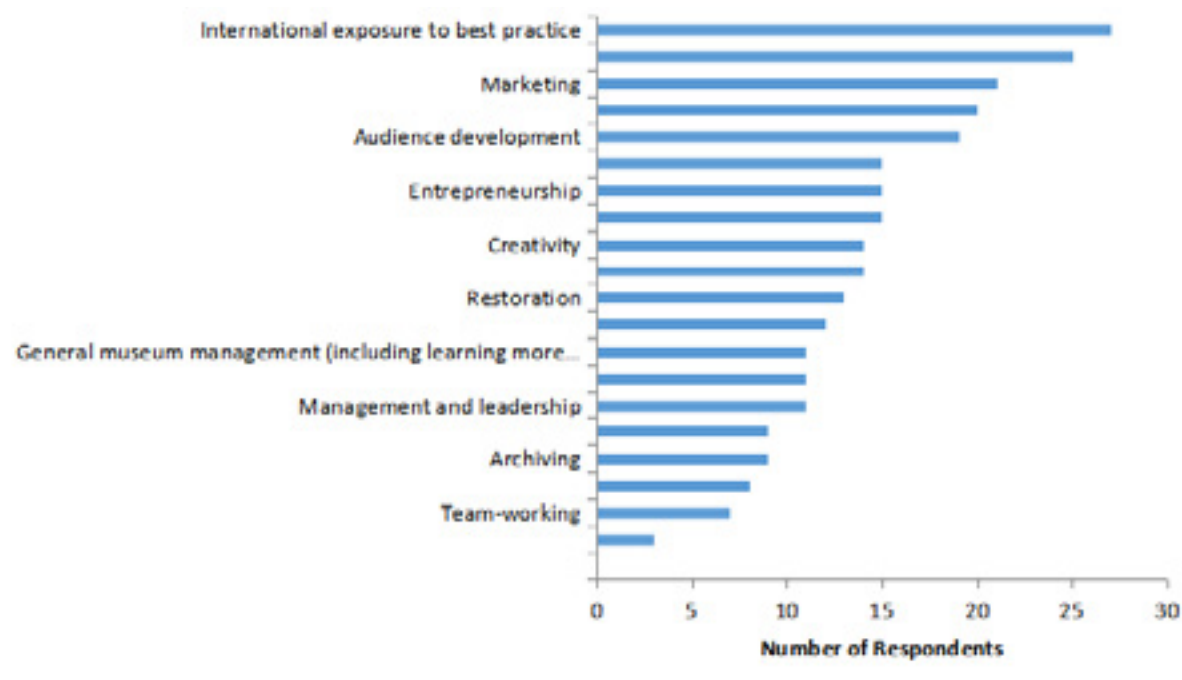
sector. They explained that while jobs at these institutions seemed stable and had good benefits as they are governmental jobs, they identified that they lacked the knowledge of what the career paths look like outside of being a historian or ethnographer.

Skills gaps and shortages

The research sought to understand exactly where the gaps lay with regards to skills in the museum sector. The following figure illustrates the responses

which survey participants gave. Similar to responses by interview and focus group discussion participants, the following skills were identified to be the most missing in the sector: digital technologies, marketing skills for the sector, business development skills, audience development, project management, and financial skills (including budgeting and income generation). While not a specific skill, exposure to international best practice was often highlighted as an important missing area. Both interview and survey participants identified that there are not enough opportunities for professionals in the sector to learn about professional benchmarks around the world to enhance their standards and reach an international level.

Figure 3 – What kinds of qualifications, skills or experience are missing from the museum sector?



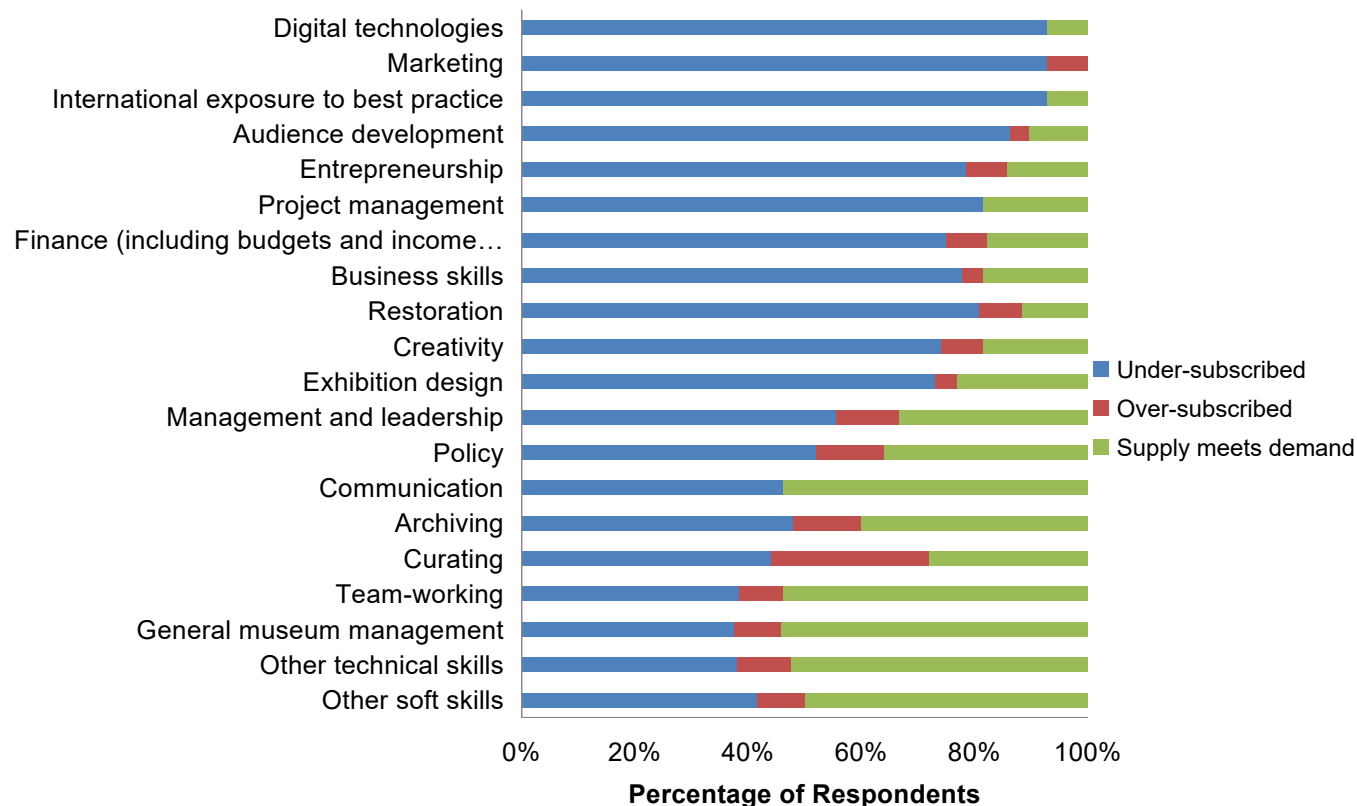
Sample size: 34 respondents

When asked if the sector suffers from a shortage of suitable qualified, skilled, or experienced professionals to fill certain roles, 82% of survey participants and many interviewed participants said yes. When probed further, survey respondents identified that the top three under-subscribed areas of technical skills are exhibition design, restoration, and project management skills. Survey respondents also identified that the top under-subscribed areas of transversal skills are marketing, digital technologies, business

and finance skills (including income generation).



Figure 4 – Which skills are over and under-subscribed within the museum sector, and which are about right?



Sample size: 28-33 respondents

Interview participants and technical staff who participated in group discussions were able to expand further on the skill gaps and shortages, explained further below.

Business related skills

Research participants, especially technical staff within established museums

and galleries, were keen to highlight the necessity in establishing a business mind set within their organisations. They believe that as places which have relied on governmental financial support in the past, they need to move away from this model into an income generating model. This includes the need to learn skills in proposal writing, fundraising, financial management, business planning, and effective resource management. They

also highlighted the need for all staff members to understand how to look at museums as businesses – from front of house staff, to shop staff, to the curators and exhibition developers.

The decrease in funding opportunities through traditional sources due to economic and political difficulties – including foreign funding bodies like the Norwegian and Danish funding bodies

– means that some professionals in the sector were quick to highlight self-reliant business modelling as being more vital than fundraising and proposal writing.

Many respondents identified that while business skills are important, financial skills in budgeting, forecasting, and accounting were often missing. Professionals in the field learned about financial skills often through on the job training or studied finance but not in a way that is directly related to the museums and heritage sector. Some respondents explained that it was time to think seriously about income generation as part of the move towards treating museums as businesses.

Additionally, it was highlighted throughout all interviews that learning marketing skills specific to the sector were needed. Many marketing professionals who are currently based at museums develop their skills by learning what it means to market a museum on the job as they mostly come from a background in corporate marketing. Participants identified that digital skills should work hand in hand with marketing skills to move museums into the use of modern technologies, including social media and relevant communication technologies. The majority of institutions in Zimbabwe currently do not employ the use of social media or digital technologies in their work and marketing professionals are still learning about its effective use, especially within promotion and collections departments. This includes skills such as website development and database management. The Museum of Natural History in Bulawayo provides a good

example of best practice in the country in terms of its marketing department's use of social media and digital technologies for audience engagement, and would be a good partner in the development of future programmes around this specific skills training opportunity. Additionally, gallery professionals spoke of the necessity of learning about online buying and selling, alongside correct pricing models, to enhance their income generation chances. While some institutions identified that it would be a challenge to fund any expensive equipment or software needed, a practical understanding of the skills needed would place professionals on a better standing and would allow them to engage better with local audiences as well as enhance connections with international counterpart

In relation to archiving departments, which many professionals felt were sufficient and had well qualified individuals, practitioners felt that there is a wealth of international best practice available in digital skills for the archiving subsector, including electronic data management, digital library management, preservation for fragile audio-visual formats, database training for ICT, database creation and maintenance, and data security which could be rolled out in Zimbabwe to further enhance this sub-sector.

Participants often spoke of the need to address the above skills – business development, marketing, and digital skills – at the forefront of any skills development, as they are the skills which will enable sustainable continuation of the

established sector.

'National Museums is very knowledgeable right at the top. What's missing is marketing, new technologies to showcase, [and] creative use of social media. There are great custodians but lacking in the newer skills needed.' – Research participant

While the sector has the advantage of strong collections and a rich cultural heritage, the engagement with the community and the average Zimbabwean is sparse. Audience development and engagement was identified as a missing skill which needs to be addressed so that museums can move from being seen as only places for school learning and into an interactive experience for all Zimbabweans and others who visit. The way in which the economic situation has affected the international tourism industry in Zimbabwe means that new methods need to be utilised to engage with the domestic tourist. Professionals were keen to learn about how to engage with different kinds of people, digitally as well as at the museums and sites. This is an area which cut across collections display, exhibition development, museum management, guest relations, and online engagement. Some participants indicated that this skill could be beneficial alongside marketing skills as museums need to both bring in larger audiences and learn to engage with them better.

Additionally, participants highlighted the importance of effective communication skills in an internal setting to ensure that all staff members understood more about



7th Class Steam locomotive Bulawayo – Mbalabala Special

the responsibilities and achievements of fellow staff members, as well as gain insight into the collections and archives of the institutions. Participants believed this would also help in marketing the museums and engaging with various community members. This is a skills need which could be addressed through examples of best practices in communication styles on institutional levels.

Many participants explained that project management skills would raise the standard of everyone's work and make the sector a more impactful one. This includes skills such as project planning, timelines, budgets, execution, and communications. This is another skill which participants felt could be addressed through examples and workshops of international best practice in management styles.

Museum management

Many participants identified that the professionalization of the sector can be achieved by a more thorough understanding of museology. The directors and managers of museums are often scientists, historians, archaeologists, and specialists in the field, who are able to greatly enrich the collections and the calibre of information presented at the institutions.

However, participants explained that a better understanding of museum studies and cultural heritage studies would greatly enhance the level of effective management at the museums. Participants also explained that museum management should be a mandatory skill for all middle and senior management professionals. Professional monument site management skills were also highlighted by some participants as an area of need. If explored further as a possible skills programme opportunity, the local context and history will have to be taken into central consideration.

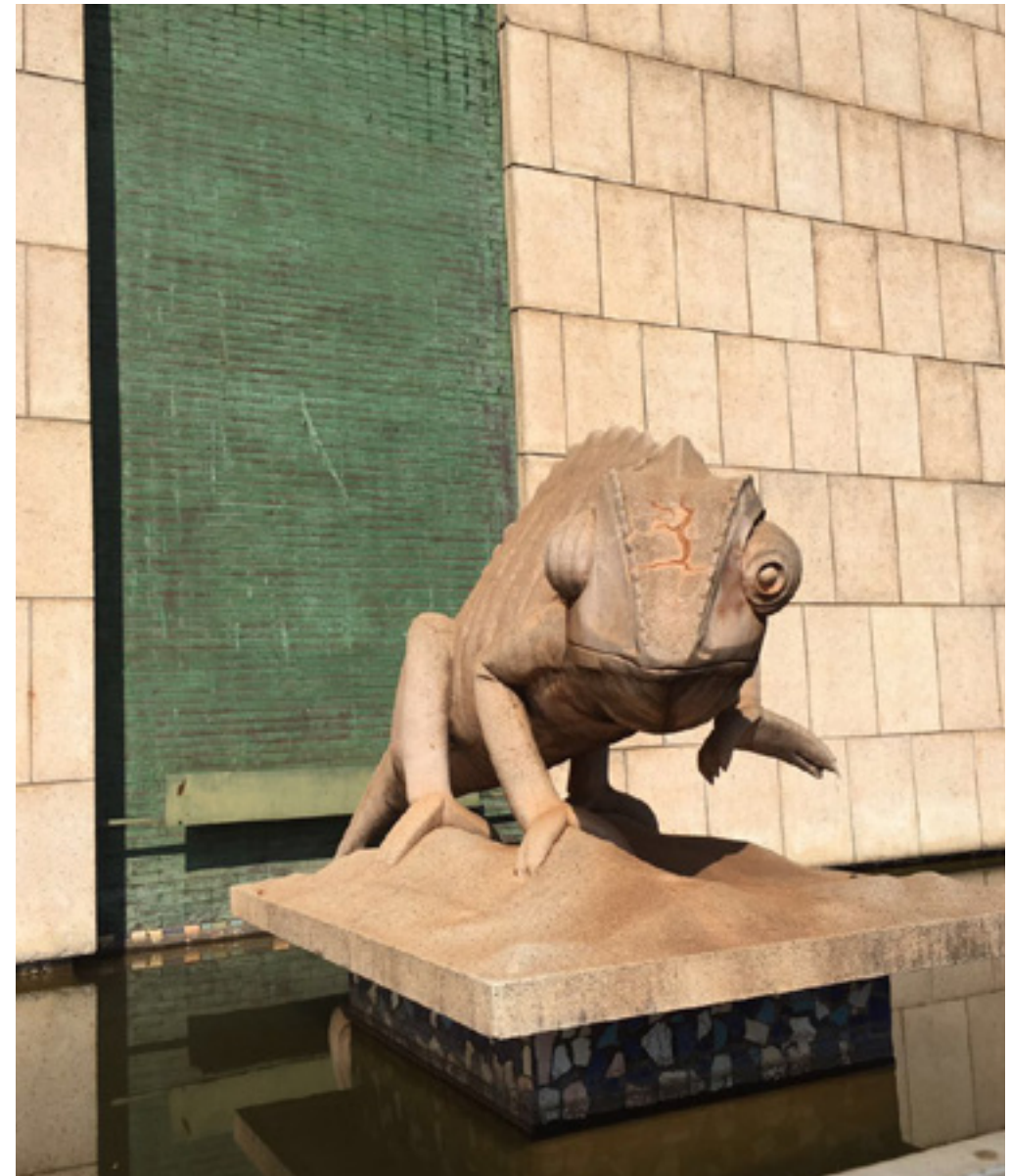
Technical skills

Generally speaking, participants identified that the specialist ethnographers at each museum are also the collections managers and they curators of their respected area of expertise. While this means that the rich heritage is generally

well preserved, participants identified that curatorial and collections display management skills in their own right need to be learned to enhance the capacities of the professionals already in place. Many institutions are unable to hire curators individually and therefore must rely on the experience of their specialists instead. This has worked well previously but was still identified as an area which could be improved.

In terms of exhibition development and design, many participants identified that the artists and designers at the museums are very knowledgeable. However, two challenges face them: development of new and innovative exhibitions, the lack of a pedagogical understanding of exhibition development (most professionals have learned on the job and from others before them), and a general shortage in experts to fill these positions. There is a general worry that the small number of exhibition experts in Zimbabwe will eventually retire and will not have others to take their place. Exhibitions teams at each museum are usually very small, if they exist at all.

Most participants identified the importance of storytelling as part of the exhibitions development process. This is a skill which participants felt is missing almost entirely. While this could be an interesting area of a skills training programme, it must take into consideration the local context, history, and what many participants coined “telling the Zimbabwean story”. Often, there is a wider challenge of inaccessible collections which are centrally state-controlled. Skills in



Terrazzo sculpture of a chameleon showcased besides the front of the Human Sciences museum entrance.

government engagement and policy advocacy were identified as potential areas of development which could impact the sector positively. There is a need to increase access to available collections so that specialists and collections managers can create new exhibitions and displays.

Some participants also identified the need to raise the professional standards and introduce innovative international best practice in the areas of documentation, conservation, preservation and restoration. With the specialist knowledge and wealth of monuments and artefacts available, many research participants felt that it was a setback to continue using old methods of documenting collections and conserving artefacts. Some specialists such as taxidermists and archivists explained that old techniques are proving to cause more damage than benefit. This is due to a combination of a lack of funding and mismanaged resources as well as a lack of knowledge and training in new and improved methods.

Finally, education and outreach programming skills were generally identified to be doing well overall but in need of updates. Participants explained that the majority of those involved in educational programming at museums are educators and ex- teachers, which means they enjoy a wealth of skills in creating educational programmes for students and young learners especially. However, professionals in those departments highlighted that they would like to be able to learn more about new and interesting ways of portraying information to various

audience members and engaging with those outside the formal education system, not just school children. This included interest in mobile community museums, programming for different people and age groups, and interactive learning methods.



Appendix 1 – List of participating organisations

Alliance Francaise
 Amagugu International Heritage Centre
 Culture Fund
 Delta Beverages
 EU Delegation, Governance Section
 Great Zimbabwe Museum
 Midlands State University, Department of Archaeology, Museums and Heritage
 Military Museum in Gweru
 Museum of Natural History in Bulawayo
 Mutare Museum of Antiquities
 National Archives
 National Arts Council of Zimbabwe, Gweru
 National Gallery of Zimbabwe
 National Gallery of Zimbabwe in Bulawayo
 National Museum of Human Sciences
 National Railways of Zimbabwe
 National University of Science and Technology, Dept. of Records and Archives Management
 Railway Museum
 Village Unhu
 Zimbabwe German Society

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Men drinking traditional beer - beer drinking was, and still is, a group process in tandem with the communal nature of African societies.





