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Employment Practices and Institutional Inertia in the Arts Sector:

The Roles and Skills of Arts Managers in Building Organizational Capacity and Creating Public Value

Anne Kershaw, Hilary Glow, Kim Goodwin

Introduction

The arts and culture sector faces ongoing disruption and precarity as a result of rapid changes in the external environment. Even before the disruption wreaked by Covid-19, funding uncertainty, shrinking audiences, and a lack of workforce diversity impacted the development of sustainability and resilience in the sector. It follows that organizations need to develop the capacity to renew their resources and innovate at pace with external environmental changes (Ambrosini and Bowman 2009). Dynamic capabilities, defined as a set of recurring organizational processes that facilitate an organization's ability to "integrate, build and reconfigure internal and external competences to address rapidly changing environments" (Teece et al. 1997, 516), have been proposed as a way to enable organizations to enact such changes.

While the "mediation of artists and the public" (Dewey 2004, 13) has been taking place for thousands of years, the academic discipline of arts management has undergone rapid change and expansion since emerging in the 1960s (Dewey 2004, 2005; Sikes 2000). Dewey argues that the practice of arts management is subject to four paradigm shifts: globalization (which she terms "world system"), definitions of arts and culture ("arts system"), the growing cultural policy field ("cultural policy system") and arts funding models ("art funding system"). These paradigm shifts call for arts managers with capabilities to proactively respond to changes in the sector. For Dewey, the skills and aptitudes needed by arts managers include the ability to manage international

interaction and represent cultural identity (in response to the world system), promote innovative methods of audience development (arts system), exercise effective strategic leadership (cultural policy system) and foster a sustainable mixed funding model (art funding system). Dewey (2004) emphasizes the ability of arts managers to exercise effective strategic leadership, given the rate of change in the creative sector. However, she observes that the learning of new skills and capacities in the creative sector tends to be reactive and focused on learning by doing.

Our article contributes to this growing field of scholarly inquiry in two ways. First, drawing from the literature, we outline the particular set of skills and competencies that the new generation of arts managers (entry level to middle management) need in order to strategically respond to rapidly changing environments, leading to sustainable development for the sector. Second, we present the results of a survey of 45 Australian arts and cultural organizations, which collected data on the skills and capabilities that the sector values and prioritizes as core to its long-term growth and sustainability. To this end, we aim to bring the literature into dialogue with the attitudes of survey participants.

The article proceeds in four sections. The first section reviews the scholarly literature on arts management skills and the changes in the sector that managers need to either drive or respond to. The next section presents the research design employed by this study of arts organizations and peak bodies. The succeeding section presents key findings from the analysis of the survey data.

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The concluding section adopts an institutional theory approach to understanding the survey data and to establish what this knowledge signals about the skills required to respond strategically to rapidly changing environments.



Literature Review

Arts Management Skills

Along with the work of Dewey (2004, 2005) and Sikes (2000), there has been some attention paid to the skills and capabilities needed by arts managers. In particular, Cuyler (2013) and Cuyler et al. (2020) point to the need for arts management graduates to have the skills necessary to service culturally diverse communities and argue for the need for arts management programs to focus on recruiting diverse students. Attention has also been given, particularly in the United States, to the evolution of tertiary arts administration programs (Laughlin 2017), their curricula (Galligan 2013; Mers 2013; Varela 2013), and their response to the increased internationalization of arts management, along with the interdisciplinarity of the field, drawing from diverse methodologies and expertise (Jung 2017). Cuyler and Hodges (2015) look specifically at the expectations of arts management students undertaking internships to make recommendations about how such experiences might inform curricula and the design of internship programs. In another key study focusing on career paths, Inglis and Cray (2012) argue that the employment history of arts managers tends to share three characteristics: “commitment to artistic

values, little initial knowledge of the career roles they eventually filled and a lack of visible, structured paths to their eventual positions as managers in the arts” (p. 30). However, despite the insights of these studies around the training of arts managers, and the relationship between values and career success, there remain gaps in our understanding of arts management skills in relation to employability. First, the most recent research focuses on graduate employability and career expectations, particularly in the flexible workforce, and consequently looks at the graduate education perspective (e.g., Bridgstock 2011; Bridgstock et al. 2015; Cuyler et al. 2020; Goldsmith and Bridgstock 2015; Varela 2013). Second, other than recent investigations into the impact of social capital on arts management careers (Richardson et al. 2017), the role of intermediary agencies on skill development (Munro 2017) and workforce decision-making processes regarding career advancement (Eikhof 2017), there has been little consideration of the skills required of established arts managers aiming to progress to more senior roles.

Sectoral Changes That Impact the Work of Arts Managers

Workforce challenges

In the cultural and creative industries, being subject to crises or external jolts is commonplace. Australia is typical of anglophone countries in the regularity, and increasing severity, of cuts to public arts funding (Eltham 2016; O’Connor 2016). The impact of the ensuing crises has called into question the viability and sustainability of small-to-medium-sized enterprises (Caust 2017).

ABSTRACT

This article examines what the arts sector needs from arts managers to build capacity in order to respond to the changing external environment. The authors investigate employment practices that help organizations to be strategic and sustainable and to deliver public value. Through a survey of Australian arts organizations and peak bodies, they identify the workforce challenges facing the sector and the arts management skills prioritized by employers. They compare these findings with the skills and capabilities identified in the literature. Their analysis reveals that employers look for a disappointingly narrow set of skills to meet immediate demands and reach short-term solutions. Rather than building resilience, the sector is manifesting resistance to change and inertia in the face of uncertainty. The authors argue that workforce employment strategies need to allow for the valuing of more creative, diverse, and entrepreneurial skills and for the arts/cultural workforce to be understood by employers as a critical constituent of its dynamic capabilities.

KEYWORDS

Arts/cultural sector workforce, organizational change, institutional theory, dynamic capabilities, public value theory, arts management

Underlying the funding cuts are issues of public value, relevance and cultural vibrancy in the arts – concerns that we explore in some detail in the sections that follow. By explicating how these issues are manifested in current employment practices, we identify the gaps between the current set of skills that employers are hiring for and the kinds of skills and capacities that are required for an organization to build sustainability and resilience in the face of ongoing disruption and precarity.

A growing body of literature points to systemic inequality as a defining feature of work and of labour markets in the cultural and creative industries – a situation likely to be exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has negatively impacted a sector already “often operating on the margins of financial sustainability” (OECD 2020). The largest contribution to the analysis of social mobility and class comes from British researchers, whose study unequivocally concludes that “the [cultural and creative industries] have a significant over-representation of those from professional and managerial social origins, not only compared with the general population, but even compared with other professional and managerial jobs” (Laurison and Friedman 2016; see also Eikhof 2017; O’Brien and Oakley 2015; O’Brien et al. 2016, 2017; Taylor and O’Brien 2017).

Cuyler et al. (2020) note the homogeneity of the global demographic profile of graduate arts managers who “self-identified primarily as white, female, able-bodied, heterosexual millennials” (p. 6). Cuyler et al. not only raise concerns about a workforce that is drawn from a narrow and non-diverse base, but also point out that the high cost of tertiary qualifications (and the frequently compulsory inclusion of unpaid internships) acts as an inhibitor to diversity amongst graduates and, as a result, “arts management remains a viable career only for the affluent,” which helps explain the “lack of diversity regarding disability, gender, racial and sexual identity across the respondent cohort, and across the field” (p. 14).

Public value: Audience development, relevance, cultural vitality

The issue of organizational sustainability and innovation capability in the arts can also be understood from the perspective of public value. Public value identifies the common good that results from the work of strategic and entrepreneurial public managers (such as the managers of publicly funded arts organizations) (Moore 1995; Moore and Benington 2011). It acknowledges that the public sector services both

upstream audiences (government and funding bodies) and downstream audiences (service users and taxpayers) (Wensley and Moore 2011). This triadic relationship highlights the role of service users in acting as “legitimators and testimonial providers” for the receipt of public value (Bovaird and Loeffler 2012, 1122). While in the private sector value is created and acknowledged through the relationship between the firm and its consumers, in the public sector the influence of government and funding bodies (upstream audiences) makes public value a three-way process of recognition (Moore 1995; Moore and Benington 2011).

Public value theory emphasizes the need for public institutions to look outside their own organization to determine the value and relevance of the services they offer, with priority given to value that is identified and acknowledged by citizens (Alford and O’Flynn 2009; Moore 1995). An underlying cause of the challenges facing the arts sector is the sector’s lack of political support, which, Holden (2006) argues, results from the dysfunctional relationship between the public, politicians and arts professionals. Stronger alignment between the values of arts organizations and their audiences, both upstream and downstream, is essential in order to legitimate the role of arts and culture (Holden 2006; Moore 1995; Wensley and Moore 2011). The emphasis on arts advocacy, which provides research into and documents public support for the arts, seen in the work of agencies such as Americans for the Arts (2019), Arts Council England (2014) and the Australia Council for the Arts (2020), can be viewed as evidence of the need to better demonstrate the value of the arts. Current interest in issues such as audience engagement (Harlow 2014), social inclusion (Kawashima 2006) and cultural vibrancy (Australia Council for the Arts 2010) is evidence of the need to increase the public value available from the arts (Croggon 2016; Holden 2006; Moore and Moore 2005).

The sustainability challenges impacting arts organizations suggest the failures and limitations of previous public management models, particularly New Public Management (NPM), which is grounded in the application of narrow business practices drawn from the commercial sector (Moldavanova and Goerdel 2018; O’Flynn 2007; Osborne et al. 2014). NPM borrows from the commercial sector’s concept of sustainability with its emphasis on shareholders and the need for competitive advantage – priorities that can negatively impact the mission of public sector organizations and their capacity to deliver value to both current and future generations (Moldavanova and Goerdel 2018). Holden

(2006) argues that gaining greater public value for the arts (which he defines as cultural value) will require “courage, confidence and radicalism on the part of professionals in finding new ways to build greater legitimacy directly with citizens” (p. 10). To deliver better public value, arts managers need to have an outward focus that draws on strong relational skills, the capacity to operate in networks and collectives, and accountability regarding a broad range of public expectations (Moldavanova and Goerdel 2018; O’Flynn 2007; Osborne et al. 2014).

Leadership

The third significant factor that influences an arts organization’s ability to innovate and develop sustainability is the role of arts and cultural leadership. Price (2017) points out that the notion of cultural leadership emerged in the early 2000s in the United Kingdom, when there was “a strong sense of managerial crisis at a national level in the cultural sector” (p. 6) due to a number of major cultural institutions (such as the Royal Opera House, the British Museum and the Royal Shakespeare Company) experiencing serious organizational and governance difficulties. Over the past 20 years, the literature on arts leadership has proliferated, with many scholars noting the preponderance of “charismatic” leaders in the cultural sector (Caust 2018; Fitzgibbon 2001; Hewison 2004; Nisbett and Walmsley 2016; Price 2017). Hewison (2004) argues that the pressure on arts organizations to constantly deliver short-term results in a complex and rapidly changing environment can make the appointment of charismatic leaders more appealing, since “only heroic leadership appears capable of overcoming all the obstacles and difficulties that are inherent in the system” (p. 163). As Price (2017) points out, “this can lead to flawed recruitment processes and excessive tolerance of the foibles of those who seem, outwardly, to represent the desired silver bullet solution” (p. 10).

Caust (2018) and Rentschler and Geursen (2004) identify other ways of framing and understanding the role of arts and cultural leadership, particularly in terms of the sector’s focus on innovation and entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship is often associated with the creative and cultural industries; Rentschler and Geursen (2004) suggest that it is inherently linked to organizational ability with regard to creative programming and revenue generation and that it involves “idea generation, innovation, processing, strategy and creative outputs” (Moss 2011, 163). Similarly, creativity and innovation (which Brkić [2009] suggests has

become a unified term) reflect the individual generation of novel and useful ideas (creativity) and the organizational ability to implement or disperse them to a wider group (innovation) (Amabile 1988). Caust (2018) elaborates on the connection between innovation and leadership: “Arts organizations have a mission to produce or exhibit ‘art’ and they therefore need to structure their organization (or institution) as an environment that supports this and provide the leadership that encourages it . . . art leaders . . . need to be focused on developing an environment that supports creative, innovative and artistic outcomes” (p. 18).

While arts leadership has been seen as a key element in the focus on organizational innovation, it has also been understood by scholars as playing a significant role in the development of a strategic focus on sustainability or the organizational ability to adapt and survive over time (Caust 2018; Chong 2009). For Hewison (2004), the financial precarity of arts organizations, along with regulatory constraints and ever increasing competition in the marketplace, produces a “siege mentality” with attendant workforce difficulties such as recruitment, retention and career structure. Characteristically, those with leadership roles in the arts and culture sector must learn to manage a workforce that is “underpaid, understrength and over-stretched” (Hewison 2004, 160) while also recognizing the need for self-efficacy and resilience, or the ability to keep going despite organizational challenges or personal setbacks (Goodwin 2019; Reid et al. 2016).

Hewison (2004) goes on to propose a typology of leaders – transactional, transformational and relational – and recommends the last of these as most ideal, as these leaders tend to work as enablers, sharers and communicators. Relational leadership is not restricted to hierarchical positions, but instead leadership is viewed as occurring in relational dynamics throughout the organization (Uhl-Bien 2006); the relational leader, then, acts as an antidote to the sector’s apparent predilection for charismatic leaders or, as Hewison (2004) describes them, “heroic” leaders who thrive in an environment that favours quick results. Hewison poses the question of whether the notion of leadership promulgated through business schools is appropriate for arts and cultural organizations, as they are “value-based enterprises, but the values are other than those of value for money . . . If subsidised institutions exist to fill the gaps created by market failure, it seems unreasonable to make them subject to the disciplines of the market that has failed them” (p. 164).

The issue of the role of leadership in facilitating an arts organization's ability to innovate and develop sustainability is highlighted and problematized in the work of Keeney and Jung (2018). Addressing the issue of global leadership amongst arts managers, Keeney and Jung find that some arts organizations prioritize traditional leadership traits in their employment practices and thus fail to value other leadership qualities, including cultural intelligence: "Specifically, job ads for senior-level arts leaders signal a limited scope of leadership, prioritizing leadership behaviours, functions, and duties over leadership qualities related to cognition, motivation, and learning attitudes" (p. 239). This finding is confluent with our own research: peak bodies and arts organizations, when asked about the workforce challenges facing the arts and culture sector, tended to prioritize a narrow set of skills to meet immediate demands, and failed to prioritize those management skills that are likely to enable change in the operation of arts organizations.

In response to this assessment of the literature on the skills of arts managers and the critical issues impacting the sector, our research investigates two questions:

- Which arts management skills are valued by the arts and culture sector?
- How does the arts and culture sector respond to the key issues impacting the sector as identified in the literature (see Figure 1), in terms of the management skills it seeks (see Figure 3)?



Methodology

This case study of the skills of arts managers in the Australian arts and culture sector (conducted prior to the Covid-19 pandemic) involved three research cohorts across three phases of data collection and employed focus groups and surveys (see Table 1). The study involved an industry advisory board, peak bodies and arts organizations. Arts organizations were defined as those responsible for the development of cultural programming (such as theatre companies and visual art studios) and/or the presentation of cultural programming (such as venues). Peak bodies were those with a sector-development role – for example, professional associations and industry lead organizations. Peak bodies were included as a research cohort for their field-level perspective, drawing on the notion of an organizational “collective” that constitutes a recognized area of institutional life. The field comprises suppliers, consumers,

regulatory agencies and like organizations (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). While peak bodies are representative of their disciplines or member bodies, they sit outside a specific organizational context (Greenwood et al. 2002). Arts organizations, in contrast, are where decisions about workforce development are enacted and where the skills and capabilities of arts managers are practised.

Involvement of an industry reference group ensured that the investigation was relevant to the practice of arts management rather than being a “highly utopian” research activity (Alvesson and Ashcraft 2009). It also enabled member checking (Stake 1995) or respondent validation (Bazeley 2013), which allowed the arts sector to comment on the accuracy and credibility of the research. The research design focused on the principles underlying decision-making in the hiring practices of entry-level to middle-level arts managers; it examined employment practices related to operational roles and did not include board involvement in executive hiring. Hence the study focuses on the early-career work of arts managers, and while we recognize that these practices have implications for the future executive leadership of arts organizations, this matter is beyond the purview of the present research.

TABLE 1

OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH DESIGN			
Research cohort	Industry reference group (phase 1)	Peak bodies (phase 2)	Arts organizations (phase 3)
Description and rationale for inclusion in study	Representatives from a range of art forms and organizational structures Involved in member checking and ensuring industry relevance	Field-level perspective: bodies with a sector-development role – e.g., professional associations and industry lead organizations	Organizational perspective: bodies responsible for the development of cultural programming (such as theatre companies and visual art studios) and/or presentation of cultural programming (such as venues)
Data collection	Focus groups/ meetings to consider research design and pilot surveys Recruitment for phases 2 and 3	Telephone survey involving 16 peak bodies Recruitment for phase 3	Online survey completed by 29 arts organizations

Data collection was undertaken in three phases utilizing a mixed methods approach. Phase 1 involved consultation on and input into the survey design through meetings with an industry reference group comprising representatives from a range of art forms and organizational profiles, who advised us on the key human resource (HR) issues they perceived to be important for the sector. Phase 2 involved a telephone survey with 16 peak arts bodies from across Australia representing a range of artistic disciplines and professional stakeholder groups, including visual arts, theatre, music, regional arts and multicultural arts. The phase 2 telephone conversations ranged between 30 and 60 minutes in length, with data directly input into an online survey tool for analysis. Phase 3 involved the distribution of an online survey to 29 arts organizations. Participants in the online survey were recruited by the peak bodies involved in the telephone survey, who distributed the online survey link to their membership and their networks. In total, 29 organizations took part in the phase 3 survey, with 23 completing all sections; a profile of the participating organizations is presented in Table 2.

During the telephone and online surveys (phases 2 and 3), respondents were asked to rate, on a Likert scale, a range of key sector challenges in relation to the employment and management of staff and the skills and competencies required of arts managers in the future. Respondents were

TABLE 2

PROFILE OF PHASE 3 RESPONDENTS (N = 29)	
Characteristic	Count
Art form	
Dance	3
Music	3
Performing arts	7
Visual art and craft	5
Design	1
Festivals and events	2
Other	6
Size (number of staff)	
1–9	15
10–19	6
20–50	5
51–100	1
101–200	2
Location	
Regional	3
Metropolitan	24

provided with a free text option to add comments and observations prompted by the survey. Participants from arts organizations (phase 3) were asked two additional questions requiring them to nominate the top five skills and competencies needed by both new entrants and arts managers in the future. The industry reference group (phase 1) advised that the terms “new entrants” and “arts managers” would be widely understood by respondents. While cognizant of the debates around the difference between the concept of leadership and that of management, and the disassociation of leadership from organizational role and hierarchy within management and arts management research (Caust 2003), data collection focused on practical applications from an organizational structure perspective. “New entrants” were generally seen as playing a junior role in the organization, while “arts managers” work at all organizational levels and are expected to have leadership and managerial

TABLE 3

OVERVIEW OF SURVEY DESIGN (PHASES 2 AND 3)		
Overview of survey design	Peak bodies (n = 16) (phase 2)	Arts organizations (n = 29) (phase 3)
Means of administration	Telephone survey with data entered into online survey by researcher	Online survey
Organizational profile	–	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respondent role • Organization role and function • Full-time equivalent staff • Geographic location
Key sector challenges in relation to employment and managing staff	Rating of a list of factors using a Likert scale of 1–5 where 5 is a significant challenge and 1 is an area of little or no significant concern Free text option – identify additional challenges	
Skills and competencies required by arts managers in future	Rating of a list of factors using a Likert scale of 1–5 where 5 is important and 1 is not relevant Free text option – identify additional skills and competencies	
	–	Of the listed future skills and competencies, identify the five most important skills required of <i>new entrants</i> in the arts and culture sector
	–	Of the listed future skills and competencies, identify the five most important skills required of <i>managers</i> in the arts and culture sector
Further comments	Free text option – further comments and observations prompted by the survey	

capabilities. The online survey (phase 3) also collected data profiling the respondent organizations (role, art form, size, geographic location). An overview of the survey design is provided in Table 3. Survey data were subject to statistical analysis, while the qualitative data and interviews were subject to thematic coding and narrative analysis.



Findings

HR Issues Facing the Sector

Peak bodies (phase 2) and arts organizations (phase 3) were asked about the workforce challenges facing the arts and culture sector. Both cohorts were asked to rate a range of HR issues that had been identified by the industry reference group (phase 1) (see Figure 1). The results show that funding concerns and the health and well-being of staff were central issues for both peak bodies and arts organizations.

Conversations with peak bodies during the telephone surveys (phase 2) suggested that the appeal of work in the arts, and the ready supply of qualified graduates, made it relatively easy to recruit managers. It also appeared that arts organizations (phase 3) generally had poorly developed HR capacity. Our findings suggest that these two factors contribute to the limited strategic approach to staffing in the arts. There was little acknowledgment of staff or managers as a resource that could bring about change in the sector and tackle issues relating to public value and leadership. The need to address poor or unfair employment practices was not highlighted in survey results. Rather, staffing was seen to be a cost issue accompanied by a duty of care to the well-being of staff.

While phase 2 responses indicate a narrow and conservative approach to workforce development, conversations with peak bodies during the survey suggested a more complex understanding of the potential of arts managers and a need for change. An anomaly in the telephone survey data is that, beyond their survey responses, peak bodies appeared to recognize the need to alter the profile of arts managers and increase their dynamic and innovative capabilities. For example, notes taken during the telephone survey record the following comments from a range of respondents:

- Diversity is a major point of discussion – arts management practitioners are increasingly being drawn from a narrow field.
- A big concern is Indigenous employment and

women in leadership roles.

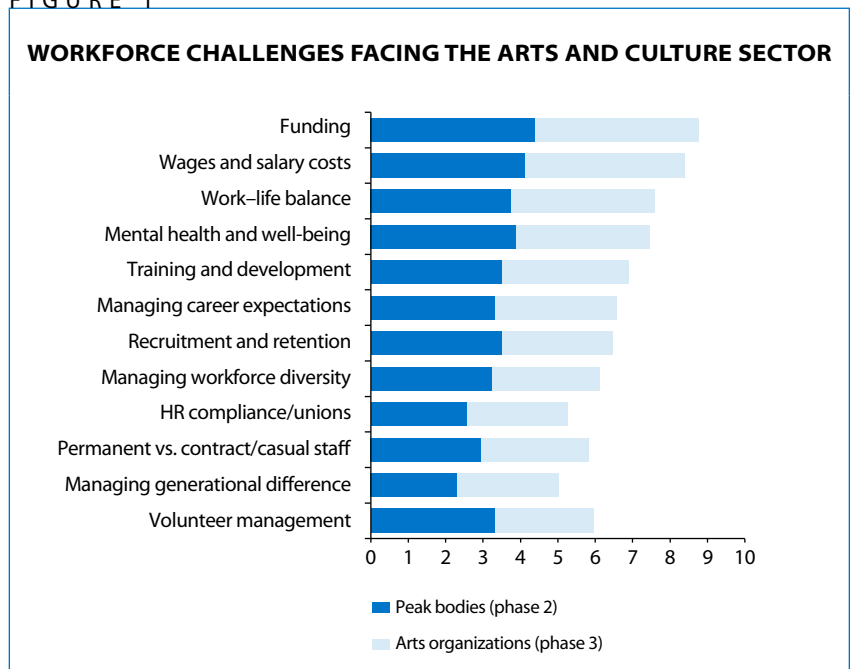
- There is a discrepancy between what is valued and what should be valued in arts managers.
- What arts administrators need is creative leadership and a breaking out of hierarchical leadership models.

A possible impediment to a more dynamic approach to the skills needed in arts managers may be the level of stress and fatigue experienced in the sector. The under-resourced and multi-tasking nature of work in the arts is highlighted in the following open text feedback from the arts organization online survey (phase 3): “People not [working] in the arts think it is a glamorous industry. It isn’t. You write documents and ponder over budgets. You deal with crap [organizational] legacy from years of being poorly managed. You empty the bins. And mop the floor. For crap money. You need to thrive on the challenge of working out how to turn a pile of shit into gold. You need to love this sector and all the broken fragile souls in it. You need to know how to listen. And problem-solve. And be flexible and adaptive. You need to know how to negotiate.”

Skills Needed by Arts Managers in the Future

Peak bodies (phase 2) and arts organizations (phase 3) were asked to rate the skills and competencies needed by arts managers in the future from a list compiled by the industry reference group (phase 1) (see Figure 2). Responses suggest that neither peak bodies nor arts organizations prioritized particular skills and capabilities;

FIGURE 1



instead, there was a tendency for all areas to be considered important. The lack of distinct priorities in the responses may suggest that the arts and culture sector displays limited nuance and strategic thought regarding the skills and capabilities needed by arts managers.

To investigate specific areas of skill and capability required of arts managers, two additional questions were put to arts organizations (phase 3). The online survey asked respondents to nominate the top five skills needed for both entry-level arts management and senior arts managers. The responses are presented in Table 4. The skills emphasized for entry-level staff were communication skills, resourcefulness, collaboration, customer relationship management and engaging with artists/creative processes. Conversely, the skills required of senior managers were strategic planning, leadership, revenue generation, communication skills and financial management. There was little support for arts managers, at any level, to have skills that favour diversity initiatives, entrepreneurship, community outreach, risk-taking or reflective practice, with all these receiving three nominations or fewer.

The management skills that are valued in the arts sector (judgement and decision-making, engaging with artists/creative processes, communication, resourcefulness, strategic planning, leadership, managing career expectations) suggest a conservative industry culture in which organizational survival and the status quo are priorities. Skills that are likely to encourage or enable change in the operation of arts organizations (supporting diversity, community outreach, innovation, entrepreneurship) were not seen as important for the arts sector broadly, nor were they highlighted as valuable attributes for either entry-level staff or senior arts managers.

FIGURE 2



TABLE 4

INDUSTRY, ENTRY LEVEL AND MANAGERIAL SKILLS COMPARISON		
Most important future skills for industry (weighted average) [peak bodies (phase 2) and arts organizations (phase 3) combined]	Most important skills for entry-level employees (open list) (arts organizations: phase 3)	Most important skills for managerial employees (open list) (arts organizations: phase 3)
Resourcefulness	Communication skills	Strategic planning
Communication skills	Resourcefulness	Communication skills
Revenue generation	Customer relationship management	Leadership and team management
Collaboration	Working with artists/understanding the creative process	Revenue generation
Strategic planning	Collaboration	Financial management and budget control

To gain a deeper understanding of the survey data, the priority skills identified by peak bodies and arts organizations were sorted according to the emerging arts management paradigms and associated change management capabilities identified by Dewey (2004, 2005) (illustrated in Table 5). This revealed that managerial skills and capabilities aligned with the world system were not prioritized by peak bodies or arts organizations at any stage in a manager's career. Skills and capabilities associated with the arts funding system were prioritized by arts organizations,

but only in relation to established managers. Management skills aligned with the arts system and the cultural policy system were prioritized by peak bodies, while arts organizations associated these capabilities specifically with entry-level managers. Arts organizations identified the need for senior managers to have the broadest range of skills, prioritizing skills and capabilities aligned with the arts system, the cultural policy system and the arts funding system.



TABLE 5

COMPARISON OF PRIORITY ARTS MANAGEMENT SKILLS ACCORDING TO EMERGING ARTS MANAGEMENT PARADIGMS				
Emerging paradigm impacting on arts and cultural managers (Dewey 2004, 2005)	Change management capabilities (CMCs) required by arts managers (Dewey 2004, 2005)	Future skills and competencies (peak organizations: phase 2)	Top 5 skills for entry-level managers (arts organizations: phase 3)	Top 5 skills for senior managers (arts organizations: phase 3)
World system: awareness of diversity and need to operate in heterogeneous contexts	Managing international cultural interactions Representing cultural identity		–	–
Art system (definitions of arts and culture): changing artistic activities and stratification	Promoting innovative methods of audience development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with artists/ understanding creative processes (ranked 2) Communication skills (3) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication skills (ranked 1) Customer relationship management (3) Collaboration (4) Working with artists/ understanding creative processes (5) Marketing and social media (8) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication skills (ranked 4)
Cultural policy system (growing field of cultural policy): broader government interest in cultural policy with an emphasis on community	Exercising effective strategic leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Judgement and decision-making (1) Resourcefulness (4) Strategic planning (4) Leadership (4) Managing expectations (5) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resourcefulness (2) Judgement and decision-making (6) Self-management (7) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic planning (1) Leadership (2)
Arts funding system (arts funding models): need for new funding models requiring an ability to foster a sustainable, mixed funding model	Fostering a sustainable mixed funding system		–	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revenue generation (3) Financial management (5)

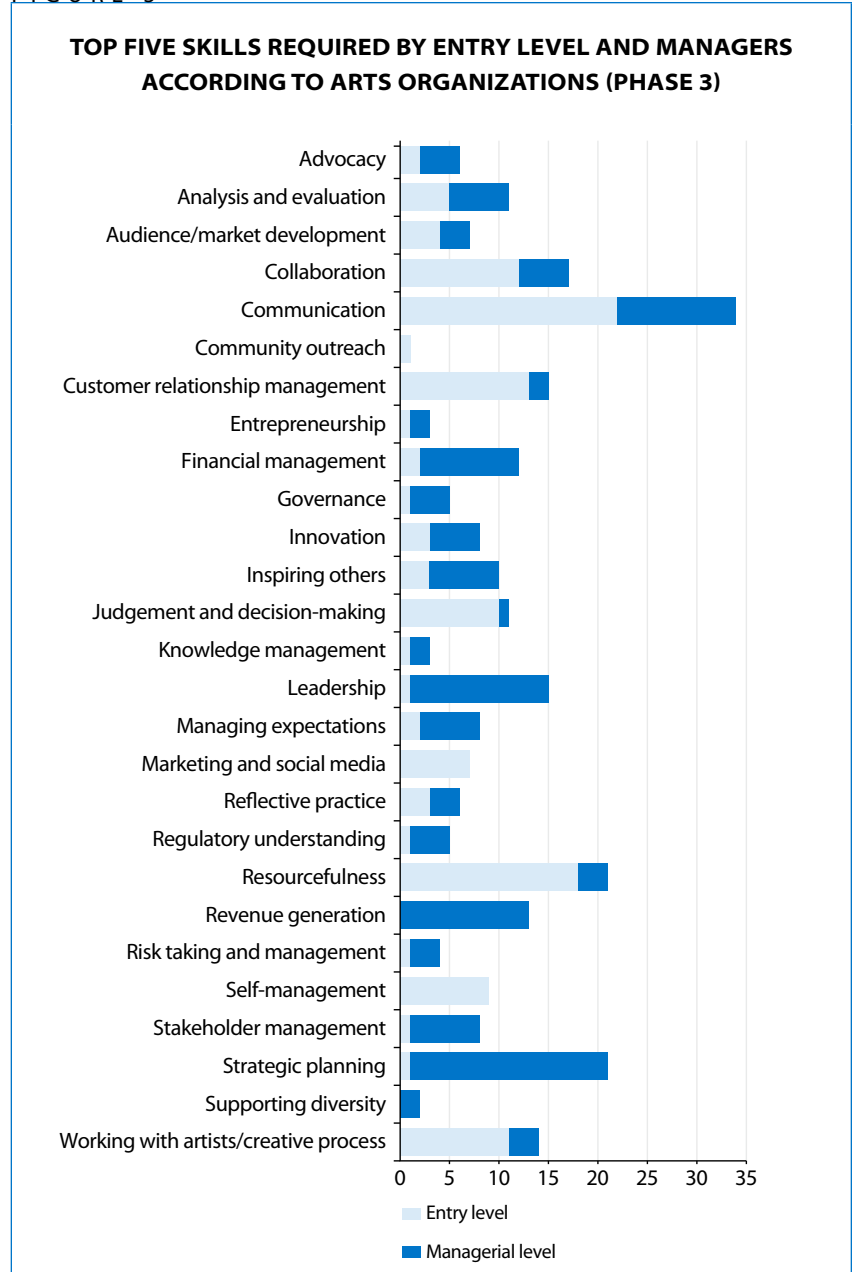
Discussion

Institutional Resistance to Workforce Change

One means by which to understand the gap between the skills required of arts managers and the challenges confronting the sector is institutional theory. Institutional theory accounts for the ways in which organizations resist change and conform to accepted ways of working (Greenwood et al. 2002, 2014). Organizations strive to follow the models and expectations of their profession or sector, regardless of the practicalities of this way of working (Meyer and Rowan 1991). The mechanisms by which this conformity is achieved are referred to as “institutional logic” or “template” (Battilana et al. 2009; DiMaggio and Powell 1983) or as path dependency in which an established sequence of events comes to constitute a self-reinforcing process (Garud and Karnøe 2013). An inhibitor to changing the skills and capabilities for which arts managers are recruited is therefore “institutional inertia,” or resistance to new ways of operating (Battilana et al. 2009; DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Suddaby and Greenwood 2005).

Our results suggest that peak bodies and arts organizations were partially able to theorize the issues facing the sector but were unable to “diffuse” these changes into workforce development decisions within arts organizations (Greenwood et al. 2002). According to Greenwood et al.’s (2002) six stages of institutional change, government funding cuts and crises affecting the sector provide a “precipitating jolt” (stage I) to institutional change. In the Australian arts sector, “deinstitutionalization” (stage II) is perhaps signalled by the demise of arts organizations that cease to be viable as a result of government funding cuts. In this context, deinstitutionalization involves the withdrawal or disappearance of organizations from the field, rather than the emergence or ascendance of new players. However, it is at the theorization stage (stage IV) that interruption to the institutional change process is most apparent. Although peak bodies and arts organizations are able to specify general organizational failings in relation to the workforce issues facing their sector, the managerial skills they seek are those associated with a traditional business model of arts management or an NPM approach to public services (Bendixen 2000; Moldavanova and Goerdel 2018; O’Flynn 2007). The theorization stage of institutional change is incomplete due to an inability to justify workforce development and diversification as potential means of diversifying audiences, or the “gaining of moral and/or pragmatic legitimacy”

FIGURE 3



for workforce development solutions. The diffusion of these changes would be evident in peak bodies and arts organizations prioritizing skills and capabilities aligned with Dewey’s (2004, 2005) notion of world system and identifying diversity initiatives, entrepreneurship, community outreach, risk-taking or reflective practice as priority skills for arts managers. Without fully theorizing the changes needed to diversify audiences, “diffusion” (stage V) and “reinstitutionalization” (stage VI) are not possible and the institutional change process is not realized (Greenwood et al. 2002).

While innovation and entrepreneurship leading to audience diversification is identified as a priority for the sector, this aim does not influence

workforce development practice or become established as a new model of practice. Innovation and entrepreneurship are not factors that have influenced the context in which decision-making about the employment or advancement of arts managers is undertaken, with structural barriers remaining despite a range of initiatives aimed at enhancing diversity and opportunity in the cultural and creative industries (Eikhof 2017). Evident in the present study is the gap between rhetoric and action. The distinction between change in rhetoric and change in practice (Suddaby and Greenwood 2005) means that new models of the skills required of arts managers have not been highly institutionalized; their value is not yet communicated or received as an objective fact (Zucker 1991). Meyer and Rowan (1991) suggest that this gap is a “decoupling” mechanism that enables organizations to separate their formal structures from their actual work, a way of building the “myth” of their organization while ensuring the efficiency of their work.

In some sectors, peak bodies and professional associations are regarded as advocates or facilitators of institutional change (Adler and Kwon 2013; Greenwood et al. 2002; Lefsrud and Suddaby 2012). However, it is difficult to identify arts sector bodies filling this role in relation to audience diversification and workforce development. Peak bodies do not appear to influence the gatekeepers who control access to jobs and opportunities in the sector (Eikhof 2017). Peak bodies gave stronger support than arts organizations to some issues related to audience diversification (community outreach and customer relationship management); however, on other relevant issues their support was weaker (audience development and innovation). It is possible that the lack of strong and consistent leadership by peak bodies in relation to workforce development aligned with audience diversification contributes to the lack of change within the sector.

Institutional theory offers a range of explanations for the decoupling of rhetoric and action in relation to the employment of arts managers and the failure to diffuse changes to employment practices. The decoupling of rhetoric and action regarding changes to employment practices may be the result of multiple or conflicting institutional logics/templates, change being early in the adoption process, weak capacity to implement changes, or resistance to endemic reform (Bromley and Powell 2012). Further research into why changes to the employment of arts managers are not diffused and ways to rectify the situation would be valuable, not only from a scholarly perspective but also because of the management implications.

Dominance of NPM Approaches to Arts Management

Our findings also highlight the need to better conceptualize the skills and capabilities required of arts managers (Moldavanova and Goerdel 2018). An innovative and nuanced understanding of the role that managers can play in effecting change and responding to the pressures facing organizations appears to be lacking in the sector. The absence of priority skills that align with Dewey’s (2004, 2005) world system suggest that the sector is not considering its own dynamic nature or the impact of these changes on the work done by arts managers. The lack of a strategic approach to human resource management (HRM) in the arts sector is a factor in the predominance of NPM thinking and the reliance on traditional private sector business skills (Moldavanova and Goerdel 2018). To challenge such thinking, it is imperative that the essential task of arts management be seen less as “the efficient and effective management of things” and more as a continuous process of critical engagement with the context in which arts organizations operate (Glow 2010).

The continued emphasis on charismatic rather than relational leaders may be evidence of the influence of NPM on the arts sector. The skills emphasized for senior managers – particularly strategic planning, revenue generation and financial management – are characteristic of charismatic and transformational leadership styles. Skills that align with relational leadership styles (such as supporting diversity, entrepreneurship, community outreach and reflective practice) are not prioritized in the sector, even though these leadership styles have greater value within arts organizations (Hewison 2004). Arts managers with a capacity to function as relational leaders are more likely to increase workforce diversity and deliver public value.

Implications for Management

One way to address the failure of decision-makers to value the opportunities offered by a diverse workforce is to consider the role of strategic HRM in arts organizations. In their discussion of German theatre practices, Eikhof and Haunschild (2007) argue that HR activities in the arts are highly personalized rather than strategic: “Individuals are expected to continuously (re)construct their own way of balancing artistic and economic logics of practice and thus maintain a position viable with respect to both the business and the artistic field. Consequently, standardised management tools and best practice examples are of little use in this and other

industries depending on the economization of artistic goals” (p. 536).

This argument is supported in the Australian context where research into HRM practices in the performing arts suggests that organizations take a welfare and compliance approach to workforce practices, with little evidence of strategic HR planning or activity (Opara 2016). Opara (2016) found that arts organizations had a number of constraints that restricted their ability to implement sound HRM practices: limited resources to undertake HRM activities, high levels of precarity and casualization in the workforce, financial insecurity as a result of funding and revenue fluctuations impeding long-term planning, and over-reliance on employing people motivated by passion, commitment and shared endeavour, thus lessening the perceived need for talent management. Arts organizations are also subject to the “double curse”: being unskilled and lacking awareness of it (Dunning et al. 2003). This combination of highly motivated employees, labour-intensive work, and precarious working conditions is a key characteristic of arts and cultural work in late-capitalist economies (Arvidsson et al. 2010; McRobbie 2016). In the present study, these HRM challenges were magnified in smaller organizations but were also found in large companies with complex administrative systems, suggesting that the industry context is driving HRM decision-making.

The arts sector workforce should be strategically managed according to labour needs that respond to challenges that are specific to the arts and opportunities that are unique to arts organizations. In addition, arts managers need to be able to address inequality within the sector (Eikhof 2017; O’Brien et al. 2016) and secure endorsement of their receipt of public funding (Wensley and Moore 2011), capabilities that require excellent interpersonal skills and a relational leadership style (Hewison 2004).



Conclusion

This article argues that there is a disconnect between the workforce-development practices of arts organizations and the long-term needs of the sector. Skills that are likely to encourage or enable change in the operation of arts organizations (for example, supporting diversity and entrepreneurship) were not seen as important by our respondents and were not highlighted as valuable attributes for arts managers.

But a business-as-usual approach will not suffice. Funding cuts threaten the viability of many Australian arts organizations, and this in turn signals the unsustainability of the current situation (Caust 2017). To diversify revenue streams, demonstrate relevance and public value, and produce authentic and distinctive artworks, the sector will have to diversify its audiences (Harlow 2014; Kawashima 2006; Mar and Ang 2015; Wiggins 2004). However, changing the social profile of audiences involves organizational change; new and different forms of practice must emerge, along with institutional entrepreneurship on the part of managers with the requisite skills.

Along with the task of diversifying audiences, the sector faces challenges in workforce diversity, which is also linked to organizational sustainability, because it offers new and strategic resources as well as being a source of entrepreneurship. According to social capital theory, arts managers who come from a different social milieu to their colleagues will bring connections to a new range of stakeholders and social capital (Inkpen and Tsang 2005; Moldavanova and Goerdel 2018; Oh and Bush 2016). These new networks offer resources that are valuable and that represent a competitive advantage (Barney 1991).

However, arts organizations appear to be resistant to the innovation and entrepreneurship associated with diversification of audiences and workforces, and to lack an understanding of how their employment practices are perpetuating the status quo. Creation of inclusive workplaces, where diversity and representation are cornerstones of development strategies for both the workforce and audiences, is central to organizational and sectoral growth and sustainability. Investigation of the role and influence of an organization’s board would be a valuable extension to the present study. Creation of inclusive workplaces in the arts and culture sector requires a commitment to interrogating and disrupting the organizational decision-making practices that underpin deeply embedded organizational norms and values (Eikhof 2017; Moldavanova and Goerdel 2018; Richardson et al. 2017). We argue that workforce development and current employment practices are deeply embedded and conservatizing forces in the arts and culture sector; profound disruption is called for if innovation, public value and sustainability are to be achieved.

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