

Discuss the Management Issues in the Book Community Arts

Hua Hua

Graduate University of Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar, CO16052, Mongolia

Abstract: This paper examines the key management issues discussed in *Community Arts* by Martin Comte (2012), focusing on the Australian context. It explores the central role of funding, the importance of volunteer coordination, and the responsibilities of local governments and communities in supporting the development of community arts. The paper highlights ongoing challenges such as financial instability, attracting and retaining volunteers, and the evolving skill set required of community arts managers. It also addresses the transformative impact of digital technology and social media in enhancing community engagement and communication. Through a review of practitioner experiences and expert contributions, the study emphasizes the cultural, social, and therapeutic value of community arts, and underscores the need for stronger institutional support and innovative management approaches to ensure its sustainability and growth.

Keywords: Community Arts; Arts Management; Cultural Development; Volunteer Coordination; Digital Technology in Arts; Australia Arts Policy.

1. Introduction

Community arts defines as ‘a general term for a group of cultural activities which the practitioners recognize as having common features but whose precise boundaries remain undrawn’, and it appeared in Australia since early 1970s. Now, it is not only a part of art, but also a part of people’s life and culture. Indeed, community arts become more and more important in our society. Although community arts has developed nearly 200 years in Australia, it still facing many challenges, and needs more attention from governments and other agencies. This paper uses the book *Community Arts* (Comte, 2012) as the source, discuss the management issues that are presented or implicit in the range of contributions.

2. Discussion

2.1. Funding is the Most Important Role and Challenge in Community Arts Management

Seek for funding is one important feature of community arts movement in the history of community arts in Australia, and it is still a primary issue for community arts management now. Sources of funding are ‘government (Commonwealth, State and Territory), local councils, and the non-government or philanthropic sectors.’ As Martin Comte and David Forrest mention in ‘Community Arts in Australia: An Overview’: ‘Fundraising has also become the bugbear of many involved in community arts; indeed, for some it is seen to be diversionary’ (Comte, 2012, p6). According to Dunphy (2010), funding has always been very important for the development of community arts. Initially the union groups would arrange concerts one a week. This would give the armatures the practice they needed once a week. Then 1970, there was a prominent trade union leader, George Selaf, he was deeply involved with providing an outlet to entertain the working class in the area of Footscray. Governments, local bodies and private donations have always fulfilled the costs of community arts. Lack of funding has put an end to many useful projects. But community arts have always thrived on

whatever funding and donations have been received. Funding and accountability matters go hand in hand. Whenever some organization provides funding then they are justified in asking for accountability of the funds, so as to know that funds has been properly utilized. There are a number of organizations that offer funding to such activities in Australia. There is the Australian council, which was initially a standalone board, but now has a Community Cultural Development Board. On the other hand, according to Verity Higgins’s article, the arts funding program can cooperate with government to help people access and apply for the funds (Comte, 2012, pp98-101).

2.2. Volunteer is an Essential Part in Community Arts Management

As similar with other kind of arts, community arts also relying on a large number of volunteers who are ready to take uncompensated work. In fact, without out the support of volunteer, many community arts movements would not happened. Due to the Dakini Maddock mentions that ‘volunteers are the life-blood of many organisations and this one is no different’ (Comte, 2012, p105). Moreover, how to manage the group of volunteers effectively and reasonably has become a new task to community arts manger. The rules of manage volunteers is also become more and more professional and systemic. As Martin and David said: “as any organization today knows, the world of volunteerism is now governed to some extent by rules and regulations that never existed in past. Even ‘employing’ volunteers is another task that community arts managers must oversee” (Comte, 2012, pp6-7). On the other hand, people also can learn some useful things through the work experience of volunteer. As Marion Matthews, who lived and worked in rural Victoria for the past thirty years, said: “people were just gob-smacked on learning what the experience had been for our volunteers” (Comte, 2012, p93).

2.3. The Influence of the Local Governments and the Local Societies

The local government is an important role in the local

cultural development which a phenomenon that communities engage in. As Jon Hawkes, the author of 'Challenges for local cultural development', said: "government may be the biggest threat to local cultural development, but it is also its greatest hope" (Comte, 2012, p26). The local governments can do a lot about the development of the community arts. It is a responsibility of the local government to encourage and support the community arts activities by providing the adequate resources. It is seen as a horrible situation that some of the major institutes, people can say opera and the ballet, who can easily produce box office far beyond those who are functioning in the group of people, are getting more financial support from government.

Local societies refer to the activities involving the creative side of the people (like singing, dancing, cooking, plays and dancing etc). Local societies also have a major role to play in the development of the cultural or community arts. There have been a number of organizations on local and state level, but they have been wiped out because of the lack of funds and donations. In Victoria however there is the Cultural Development Network, and it is still operating and has now developed somewhat to a national level.

2.4. The Major Challenges for Community Arts Manager Now and Future

No matter now or future, the major challenges facing by community arts managers is always funding, especial the funding from government. For example, Maggie Maguire, who has worked in the community based arts and cultural industry for over thirty years, mentions the biggest challenge for her is that 'currently we are denied any recurrent government funding, now that is both a blessing and a hindrance' (Comte, 2012, p37). Jennifer Barry, who has 20 years experience as a manager, also thinks money is a big challenge, and 'governments are far more aware these days than they were back in the '70s about the role that the arts can play in community wellbeing and in developing and engendering good places for people to live' (Comte, 2012, p54). The most pressing pressure for Bo Svoronos is also get the financial resources to achieve an ambitious and idea, to secure appearances in major festival programs and produce a media and marketing campaign within a short time-frame (Comte, 2012, p136). Moreover, Marion believes that 'funding is a major challenge', and 'another challenge is getting funding bodies to recognise the level of community engagement' (Comte, 2012, p88).

The other major challenges that faced by community arts manager are:

- To prove that it is necessary for the people to participate

- To show that these are important basis of a society.

- To work so hard with these arguments that the government or the state is forced to accept and support them.

- To maintain a cohesive relationship with the local government, the community, the society and the world.

- And then these cultural actions become widely accepted and become independent parts of the society.

- How to attract and retain volunteers

2.5. The Skills Needs for Community Arts Manager

During the development of community arts, the job as community arts manager has become a formal and professional career. As a result, it is needs more professional skills and abilities to work as a successful community arts

manager. Deborah Milligan, who worked as the Gippsland-based Regional Arts Development Officer for Regional Arts Victoria since 2006, suggests that the community arts manager need to 'juggle different needs and dreams, different desires, different processes and different ways of working', and also need to 'take into account different ways of seeing, and interpreting, the world' (Comte, 2012, p115). Maggie and Marion point out that patience is an important skill needed for a community arts manager. Marion also thinks energy is another important one which Jennifer indicates it as the most important skill. Both Jon Hawkes and Deb Milligan consider the community arts manager requires the ability to listen. The other important skills needed for managers are flexibility, humor, passion, fair, equitable, a capacity to select the right people to be on the team and a ability to be able to change, adapt and be resilient in the face of change.

2.6. The Influence of New Technologies

The new technologies such as Facebook, Twitter, webs or app have great implication for community arts in modern society now. These social media support a new community platform to link with the public and community arts directly and quickly. According to Maggie's words: "We invest quite a lot of energy and time on technology – especially on our web page, because we know it is a major communication tool" (Comte, 2012, p48). Jennifer thinks 'the role of the Internet which has democratized the means of production for popular culture, creativity and expression' (Comte, 2012, p60). She also likes Facebook and all the social media. As she said: "we're finding it a wonderful way of getting information out incredibly quickly, and we're getting a response" (Comte, 2012, p63). For instance, she used an online platform to build a community that will discuss areas of curation. The social media created by the new technologies can support an online community to everyone. In addition to, Marion thinks the implication of new technologies is 'much broader', and as a community arts manager 'have to embrace it, use it and deliver on it' (Comte, 2012, p96). She also indicates that 'there are some really exciting things that can happen in the development and presentation of the arts through such mediums, too' (Comte, 2012, p96).

2.7. The Value of Community Arts

There is a rising international gratitude of the worth of culture, together with the arts, to communities and persons all over the world. The United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) proclaims that, 'everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, and to enjoy the arts and share in scientific advancement and its benefits' (Comte, 2012, p66). More recently, UNESCO, in the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, offers a clear link between culture and human rights: 'Cultural diversity can be protected and promoted only if human rights and fundamental freedoms, such as freedom of expression, information and communication, as well as the ability of individuals to choose cultural expressions, are guaranteed' (UNESCO, 2001, Article 2.1). Jon Hawkes has put forward a 4 pillars model and the 4th pillar is that of the cultural dimension. The "community arts" is as necessary for the human race as bio diversity is important for nature. Pascual (2008) argues that the connectedness of the human beings adds value to the cultural or community arts. It may be said that the leading growth example is yet to fully understand the significance of cultural strength and miscellany.

Community arts can ‘engaging artists to work with people in communities who are not well’ (Comte, 2012, p46). Maggie uses the art project, which link with Children’s Hospital and running across the State, to indicate that community arts might help people get out of hospital earlier. As a result, it will be saving money. Trauma recovery was helped by Arts and crafts. Theatre groups, plays, music literature, and all such activities help in conflict resolution. People traumatized by war can also be healed by the potential healing effects of the performing arts. The mental health agency PRADET is exploring possibilities for arts therapy in its work with women who have experienced sexual assault and family violence (Kendall, 2009).

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, the development of community arts needs the support from the local governments, the local societies, the communities, the local artists and the public (especial the volunteers from public). The government is the most important role in community arts and local cultural development. It not only the major source of funding, but also the major provide of policy to encourage or restrain the development of community arts and local cultural. The community arts managers will face different challenges depend on they current position and situation. While, no matter now or future, the common and major challenge for

them is funding. On the other hand, some most important skills needed for a community arts manager are patience, energy, flexibility and so on. The influence of new technologies is obvious and advantageous, and the community arts managers pay more attention to use these social media to promote they community arts projects. Moreover, the value of community arts is broad, such as human right, people’s health and social wellbeing benefits.

References

- [1] Comte, M., 2012. ‘Community Arts’. Australian Scholarly Publishing Pty Ltd.
- [2] Dunphy, K. (2010). How can the impact of cultural development work in local government be measured? Towards more effective planning and evaluation strategies. *Local-Global*, 7(2010), 92–111.
- [3] Kendall, S. (2009). PRADET, Dili. Personal communication, July 17.
- [4] Pascual, J. (2008). Cultural policies, human development and institutional innovation, *UNESCO E-journal of Multi Disciplinary Research in the Arts*, 1 (2), 9–21. Retrieved from <http://www.abp.unimelb.edu.au/unesco/ejournal>.
- [5] UNESCO.(2001). Universal Declaration on Cultural Divershttp:// portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID =13179 & URL_DO= DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201. htmlity. Geneva: UNESCO. Retrieved from.