

Politics and Arts Administration in Taiwan

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ABSTRACT. The training of arts and cultural administrators in Taiwan is related to the development of Taiwan's cultural sector and the centralized system of its government. In this top-down system, the government has long played a leading role in the development of the arts, cultural policies, and industries. The purpose of this article is to examine elements of historical events and factors causing change in the environment to discover the characteristics of arts/cultural administrators, the skills needed for arts/cultural administrators, and the development of curriculum. The researcher divided the historical development of Taiwanese arts administration into three waves. The first wave is from 1949 to 1980, the second wave is from 1981 to 1990, and the third wave is 1991 through the present. Through a discussion of various historical events, factors concerning arts administration and its training system are discovered. In conclusion, after reviewing Taiwan's development in the area of arts administration, one finds that viewing arts administration as a profession is a relatively recent phenomenon. The training of arts administrators and curators in the visual arts was the first area to develop. Training for performing arts administrators was not emphasized until the 1980s. Graduate programs of arts administration in universities have been promoted only since the middle of the 1990s.

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205

Constitution of the Republic of China was adopted in 1946, and in Chapter 13, Section 5: Education and Culture, Articles 164, 165, and 166 describe the basic principles of promoting arts and cultural enterprises:

Funds earmarked for education, science, and culture shall be, in respect of the central government, not less than 15 percent of the total national budget; in respect of the Provincial government, not less than 25 percent of the total Provincial budget. Educational and cultural foundations established in accordance with law, and their property, shall be protected. (Council of Cultural Affairs 1995)

In 1997, the fourth amendment of the Constitution eliminated the minimal percentage for education, science, and culture. But the government still considered these sectors, compulsory education in particular, a budget priority. Both central and local governments were given authority over the large arts institutions. The responsibility for promoting arts activities, as well as training professional staff, is also controlled by governmental agencies.

The development of Taiwanese arts administration can be separated into three waves: 1949 to 1980, 1981 to 1990, and 1991 to the present. Through a discussion of the historical and political events that marked these periods, the rationales for training in arts administration can be better understood.

THE FIRST WAVE (1949–80)

The defeat of the government of the Republic of China and its flight to Taiwan marked the beginning of the first wave. The Kuomintang (KMT) regime had to maintain political stability and reconstruct an economy in order to survive in Taiwan. The KMT controlled both the central government and the military from its new capital in Taipei. When Chiang Kai-shek assumed power in 1950, he installed martial law with the Emergency Decree (*History of Taiwan* 1997); for the next decade, the KMT predominantly devoted itself to defending Taiwan from the mainland regime.

All resources, including literature, music, and visual art, were used as propaganda tools against the Communist mainland (Council of Cultural Affairs 1998). All publications, performances, and artworks were expected to feature concepts opposed to the mainland regime by emphasizing patriotism and even the eventual recovery of the mainland from the Communists. The main purpose for supporting the arts was to use cultural activities to enhance the struggle “against Chinese Communists.” Social education was also part of this program (Council of Cultural Affairs 1998).

The Social Education Act was adopted in 1953 and amended in 1959 and 1980 (Council of Cultural Affairs 1995). The act specified the building of social education halls to develop cultural activities. Several social education halls were established in 1953, and they were among the few presenting

centers that provided performances and exhibitions at that time. The major performing arts in Taiwan were traditional forms of opera and puppetry, usually presented outdoors when temples had feasts, such as those celebrating Mazu's birthday. The apex of Taiwanese opera and puppetry performances was in the 1960s, and the performances were moved to indoor theaters at that time (Lin and Lee 1998). Between 1956 and 1958, the government built not only several presenting centers but public museums such as the National Museum of History, the National Taiwan Arts Education Institute, and the National Museum of Natural Science, which promoted social education and Chinese culture (Chen 1997).

The years between 1949 and 1960 marked a period of economic recovery, while the government continued to oppose the Chinese Communists. The Taiwanese people were overwhelmingly concerned with their economic survival. Arts activities, audiences, and facilities were few, the government controlled most facilities, and the government funded arts activities primarily to promote social education and anti-Communist messages. Privately funded performances were associated with local religions and entertainment. No true arts managers existed. In the public sector, civil servants filled this role; in the private sector, the arts were family businesses and were "managed" by leaders of those families, who worked to keep sound relations with temples and the government. From 1960 to 1970, Western concepts and thoughts that significantly influenced artistic activities, especially in literature, permeated Taiwanese arts culture. Modern dance from the United States, avant-garde art, Western theater, and modern music also developed in Taiwan. In 1962, Taiwan established its first television station; in ten years, it became the most popular venue for entertainment (Lin and Lee 1998).

The National Palace Museum, attached to the Executive Yuan, completed its new building in 1965, which housed precious Chinese art and cultural artifacts dating back 7,000 years, making it the center of Chinese art and culture study (National Palace Museum 1999). In contrast, the mainland government commenced the Cultural Revolution in 1966 with the intent of destroying traditional Chinese culture. In 1967, President Chiang Kai-shek responded by establishing the Committee of Cultural Renaissance to preserve historical sites, literature, and traditional values (Council of Cultural Affairs 1998).

Although the economic situation in Taiwan became better, the diplomatic tension between China and Taiwan was still serious in the 1960s. Western ideologies, modern art forms, and the Cultural Revolution created many conflicts that threatened the development of the arts and culture industry in Taiwan. The number of facilities, groups, activities, and artists increased, but audiences themselves seemed not to grow as significantly. As television became the dominant form of entertainment in the 1970s, audiences for the live performing arts gradually declined.

Cloud Gate Dance Theatre was established in 1973. The founder and artistic director, Hwai-Min Lin, combined the Chinese opera aesthetic and modern dance movement for his choreography to create a unique dance style. One goal of this organization was to make Chinese dance and Chinese stories more broadly accessible (Chan 2000). The success of the Cloud Gate Dance Theatre brought audiences back to theaters and reminded people of their ancient heritage of traditional art forms. This organization was also the first to use professional stage managers and arts managers in Taiwan (Chan 2000).

In order to strengthen economic development and enhance the quality of Taiwanese life, the government started building cultural facilities in 1977 (Council of Cultural Affairs 1998). The purpose was to create broadly accessible centers that would include libraries, museums, and performance halls. Establishing the cultural centers marked the first time that the central government assisted local governments to develop cultural programming (Council of Cultural Affairs 1998).

During a period of relatively tranquil relations with the mainland, Taiwan continued to develop its infrastructure and build a stable economic foundation for the next decade. Modernized private arts organizations presented programming that differed from that offered by traditional performing arts organizations and public arts and cultural organizations. During this period the government began to regulate artists, arts, and cultural organizations as well as introduce more arts activities and public arts and cultural facilities. These developments created a complex arts and cultural industry, which granted more legitimacy to the role of professional arts managers. Overall, external political, economic, and cultural factors fostered change and influenced the development of the arts and cultural industry during this wave. Cultural activities were viewed as an important tool to educate citizens, stabilize society, and enhance people's spiritual life.

Economic growth and the growing influence of Western arts contributed significantly to the development of the arts and cultural industry during the 1960s. While having an impact on artistic creation, these developments exacerbated conflicts between local/traditional arts and foreign/modern arts. In this decade, the Taiwanese embraced Western culture and local, indigenous arts began to lose their audiences. The increase of cultural facilities, the impact of TV culture, and the setting of regulations were major factors in changes that occurred in the period from 1971 to 1980.

Because they represented traditional values and beliefs, the government supported cultural facilities such as museums and social education halls. On the other hand, new regulations encouraged the private sector to set up cultural and arts organizations. Cloud Gate Dance Theatre and Shin-Shiang Arts Agency demonstrated the growing capability of the private sector at the end of the 1970s.

Arts managers in the decades from the 1950s to the 1980s, especially those in the public sector, usually had to have experience in political or educational administration before they were assigned as curators or arts and cultural administrators. During these 30 years, however, their duties evolved from those related to political concerns to educational concerns and finally to artistic and cultural considerations. Due to the need for more public servants to serve cultural organizations, the government created a library and museum administration test as part of the National Examination in 1962 (Sue 2001).

THE SECOND WAVE (1981–90)

The second wave of arts administration development in Taiwan lasted from 1981 to 1990. The rise of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) in 1986 ended the one-party system in Taiwan, and with it went the Emergency Decree and martial law. In 1987, the National Security Law diminished hostile relations with the mainland (*History of Taiwan* 1997), and since November 1989, Taiwanese residents have been allowed to travel to mainland China. In 1990, President Lee Teng-hui announced the termination of the “Period of Mobilization.” This technically ended the state of war with the mainland (*History of Taiwan* 1997).

The Enhancing Culture, Education, and Entertainment Activity Act, passed in 1978, was the blueprint for establishing the Council of Cultural Affairs (CCA) as the first national cultural agency (Council of Cultural Affairs 1998; 21st Century Foundation 1994). The establishment of the CCA testifies to the principle that cultural activities should be independent from political and national security agendas. As a result, cultural affairs can be implemented more efficiently and effectively through this organization (Council of Cultural Affairs 1998). Although the Ministry of Education’s Social Education Branch is still responsible for several national libraries, museums, cultural centers, and international cultural exchange affairs, the CCA is in charge of the greatest number of cultural policies, regulations, activities, and industries. The CCA is a branch of the Executive Yuan. The overall mission of the CCA is to plan, promote, coordinate, and evaluate programs pertaining to the cultural affairs of the Republic of China (Council of Cultural Affairs 2000).

In its first ten years, the CCA focused on four areas: preserving cultural heritage, promoting various arts activities, developing local cultural centers, and analyzing issues in cultural development. Each area involved private participation and localization at different levels. In this decade, the CCA implemented the Preserving Cultural Heritage Act, increased arts audiences, established local cultural centers, and promoted and organized a long-term plan for Taiwan’s cultural development.

The Preserving Cultural Heritage Act of 1982 proclaimed that objects, historical sites, buildings, folk arts, religions, beliefs, and customs should be preserved, maintained, and propagated by various ministries. It also encouraged the private sector to establish museums or exhibition centers for preserving objects and rewarded people for doing related research (Council of Cultural Affairs 1995). The CCA hosted, supported, and sponsored many arts activities in the first decade; it established cultural festivals, invited famous dance, opera, and theater masters as well as theater groups to perform in Taiwan, and held workshops for learning and sharing various arts disciplines (Council of Cultural Affairs 1991). In 1985, the CCA created a committee for developing local cultural centers. Committee members visited local cultural centers regularly and suggested the direction of development. The particular features of each county and city were used to design themed museums. Those museums united with local industry and specific craft arts in presenting and preserving traditional local culture (Council of Cultural Affairs 1998).

The Monitoring Statutes of Cultural and Arts Foundations of 1985 (amended in 1990) listed the basic goals that a foundation should address (Council of Cultural Affairs 1995). From 1988 to 1990, eighty-seven foundations were established, accounting for 27.8 percent of all foundations created between 1949 and 1990. This development reflected the fact that the government would no longer be the only authority to determine the nature of cultural activities. And one could certainly argue that the more open the political situation, the easier it is for the private sector to become involved.

The end of martial law in 1987 opened up Taiwanese society and spurred a great deal of growth in the arts and culture industry. The flourishing of experimental theater reflected a renewed emphasis on human rights. Small-scale theaters began to be popular in the 1980s when Yi-wei Yao, the master of modern theater in Taiwan and a member of the Ministry of Education's Theater Appreciation Committee, initiated the first competition of experimental and small-scale theater (Lin and Lee 1998; Chan 2000). The fall of martial law also freed more groups to discuss political issues, engage in social movements, and perform on the street or in public places. Prior to 1987, a script could not be produced until a government censor had approved it. Now artists enjoyed greater freedom of expression. Finally, the termination of martial law opened a communication channel between mainland China and Taiwan. The first two by-products of this communication were the resumption of family travel and new policies encouraging cross-strait cultural exchanges (Council of Cultural Affairs 1998). Taiwan's attitude toward the People's Republic of China changed dramatically from one marked by cultural battles and competition to one marked by efforts to share cultural experiences peacefully.

During the 1980s, the arts and cultural industry developed significantly with help from the private sector, as seen in the increase of arts activities,

private arts organizations, and private arts and cultural foundations, as well as a general increase in freedom of expression for artists. A stable economy and political atmosphere aided the industry's prosperity, and the government enthusiastically encouraged these developments. The arts no longer functioned as a propaganda tool; therefore, there was broader and freer artistic creation. The increasing wealth and leisure time of the Taiwanese people brought more audiences to arts activities and more buyers to arts markets.

While the first wave favored skilled public administrators, this new period demanded good business managers, such as those adept at planning and decision making, organizational management, human resource management, communication, fundraising, marketing, government relations, leadership development, artistic programming, financial management, and facility management, as well as those with legal skills. Public arts organizations are generally large in scale, so planning and decision making, organizational management, human resource management, and financial management skills are necessary. Accordingly, the Taiwanese government recognized the importance of these skills, and in 1984 the CCA began holding workshops for museum and theater personnel to enhance their professional knowledge (Council of Cultural Affairs 1991). Two universities offered a course called "principles of arts administration" at the undergraduate level.

THE THIRD WAVE: ARTS AS A NEW WAVE

Since 1991, the cultural effect of the termination of martial law has moved to different levels. Multiculturalism has become more popular, as elementary schools have begun using different dialects, and the arts and culture profession has seen an increase in ethnic arts exhibitions and performances. Producers now present Taiwanese folk songs and music to a wider range of audiences (Lin and Lee 1998) and broadcast TV programs, news, and advertisements in diverse languages, and to a more diverse audience, to attract various ethnic groups. Arts service organizations such as associations, societies, and foundations have appeared in dramatically increasing numbers following amendments to the People's Organization Act in 1989, 1992, and 1993 (Ministry of Interior 2000). The growth of these service organizations reflects not only a strong influence from the private sector, but also a growing consideration of the skills necessary for the management of nonprofit arts organizations.

Cross-strait cultural activities have flourished in this wave, particularly after guidelines were established in 1993 and 1994. These activities include Taiwanese/Min-Nan Opera workshops, the Chinese Symphony Orchestra (from the mainland) visiting Taiwan, and exhibitions of Chinese arts and other projects initiated by cross-strait museums. Scholars have also become interested in the different aesthetics of mainland China and Taiwan and

have sought to promote better cultural understanding (Council of Cultural Affairs 1998).

Programs related to community culture had begun in Taiwan after World War II. The Ministry of Interior announced an initiative in 1994 to enhance cultural development both in facility construction and programming. The CCA also established “Community Building” as major goal in 1995–99. The four guiding principles of this goal were developing cultural activities for communities, remodeling traditional buildings in communities, enhancing cultural facilities for communities, and building a themed museum for each community—all with the intent of integrating culture and industry unique to each county or city into arts through various cultural activities (Council of Cultural Affairs 1998). Arts and cultural administrators assumed the role of bridge builders by communicating with different stakeholders and coordinating programs within the community.

Since each county or city has its unique cultural situation, the CCA encouraged each cultural center to become a local “arts council” to assist in presenting activities and implementing policies. Staff members of local cultural centers needed to be able to plan, organize, communicate, promote, and direct these initiatives. Accordingly, the CCA trained arts administrators in the use of management concepts so that they could implement the CCA’s directives. Given the limited staff of local cultural centers, the government found it necessary to train volunteers to assist in the realization of national as well as international goals.

The government amended two early regulatory laws—the Standard of Free Income Tax for Educational, Cultural, Welfare, and Charitable Institutes and Organizations in 1992 and the Regulations of Managing Performing Arts Business and Performers in 1994—and expanded them again before the decade was out. Those statutes encouraged the establishment of private performing arts organizations and museums, arts foundations, service associations, and corporate sponsorship.

The National Culture and Arts Foundation (NCAF), established in 1996, became the largest foundation sponsoring arts and cultural activities in the nation. Although the NCAF claims to be a private foundation, the initial endowment was from the CCA. Current funding sources include the CCA, an endowment, and donations from other public and private benefactors (Council of Cultural Affairs 1995; Lin and Lee 1998). The NCAF’s objectives are “assisting and organizing cultural and arts activities, making grants for cultural and arts activities, awards for cultural and arts accomplishments, and providing other services to the cultural and arts communities” (National Culture and Arts Foundation 1999).

The government developed international cultural exchanges in the 1990s and opened cultural centers in New York and Paris in 1991. These two

centers regularly held exhibitions and performances to introduce Taiwanese and Chinese culture to foreigners. They also contacted local artists, inviting them to perform or exhibit in Taiwan. Between 1991 and 1997, the CCA administered the International Performing Arts Organization Sponsor Plan to support and assist excellent performing arts groups in touring internationally (Council of Cultural Affairs 1998). These groups needed to have the proper characteristics to represent the distinct culture of Taiwan. They also needed to have strong arts administrators who could work and communicate with a wide variety of nations.

With the new “two-day weekend” program announced by the central government in 1998, the CCA planned many domestic cultural activities to enrich people’s leisure time. The CCA’s activities included enhancing facilities, promoting cultural tourism in communities, supporting touring arts organizations, training more volunteers, and providing information on available activities through news media, Internet, and brochures (Council of Cultural Affairs 1998). This period also saw a change in small-scale theaters, the growth of young dance groups, increasing numbers of small- and medium-sized museums and galleries, greater funding from corporations, and more legislators devoting themselves to arts and cultural policies.

There were between fifty and sixty private, small- and medium-sized museums established in the 1990s. Private galleries also increased in number. Economic growth was the main factor in the increase of private collections (Chen 1997). This growth encouraged corporations to donate funds to arts organizations in the 1990s, although this is still not a common practice in Taiwan. Corporations prefer to give funds to arts organizations with prestigious reputations that match their corporate images and that enhance their public images (Liu 1998). This is a pattern that typically characterizes corporate sponsorship internationally (Mulcahy 2003).

Cultural issues also attracted political and legislative attention in the middle of the 1990s. During Chen Shui-bian’s term as mayor of Taipei (1994–98), he emphasized cultural policies and proposed the creation of a Taipei cultural council. However, the recommendation was not passed until Ma Ying-jeou won the mayoral election in 1999. The Taipei cultural council was the first city cultural council in Taiwan. The result is that some legislators view themselves as “cultural legislators,” focusing on the setting of cultural policies.

CONCLUSION

The third wave, with its fast-changing cultural environment, has tremendously affected the development of arts administration in Taiwan. Growth in the field suggests the need for more specialized training in arts and cultural administration. Organizations expanded in size during this period and the complexity

of tasks increased. Arts administrators must now deal with many different layers of administration and relationships both inside and outside of organizations. Leaders in the arts and culture industry should still emphasize management practices and leadership skills when planning for the future. External factors, such as competition, technology, economics, and legal and political change have also significantly influenced the need for the development of arts administration education. The Asian Financial Crisis hit in 1997, and arts organizations faced a funding cutback from both the government and the private sector. The competition among arts organizations hit the highest point. Technology developments, especially the Internet, also demand that the industry evolve. Arts organizations must catch up with the changes in technology or they will suffer in the competitive environment. Additionally, international touring of exhibitions and performances not only presents the unique culture of Taiwan but also serves as a diplomatic tool to build better relations with other countries. These challenges have forced arts and cultural administrators to seek enhanced professional training in order to deal with such complex developments.

This period (1991 to present) saw an increased recognition of the importance of arts administrators and a consequent appreciation of arts administration as a profession. Many arts administrators who received formal arts administration training in foreign countries such as the United States and Britain came back to Taiwan to work. The “original” arts administrators, who have accumulated their experience for 10–30 years, have begun thinking about in-service training as the demand for more professional arts administrators increases.

It was in this period, too, that Taiwanese arts administrators finally developed the necessary repertoire of skills to meet the international standards of the industry—a repertoire that includes planning and decision making, organizational management, human resource management, communication, fundraising, marketing, government relations, leadership development and team building, artistic programming, educational programming, financial management, legal awareness, information analysis and research, and digital publishing. Advocacy is also an important skill for both public and private administrators. Communication skills, initially only needed to work within organizations, have expanded, first to allow administrators to work among different organizations, and now, finally, to partake in international collaborations and negotiations. Needless to say, English and other foreign languages became necessary tools for international exchange programs.

Fundraising and marketing skills have become essential for private arts organizations, especially when the economy has faltered. Public arts organizations have also sought cooperation from other industries, leading to the development of outreach programs and community collaboration projects. Museums have developed programs for educating young audiences, although performing arts organizations generally lack the resources to design education programs.

Information analysis and research skills became popular because of a growing need to supply evidence demonstrating accountability. Computer literacy became a basic skill in this wave, and it is one that is now essential in securing an arts administration position.

After the government rebuilt Taipei's National Palace Museum in 1965, the training of arts administrators and curators quickly developed (National Palace Museum 1999). It was not until the 1980s, however, that Taiwan focused on training for performing arts administrators. Graduate programs in arts administration in universities have been promoted only since the middle of the 1990s. The Arts Education Act of 1997 included arts administration education as a category of arts education. This act accelerated the establishment of graduate arts administration programs in Taiwan. Clearly, these positive trends need to be extended if Taiwan's cultural sector is to be responsive to both popular needs at home and international competition.

KEYWORDS

arts administration, arts administrators, curriculum development, skills, training

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