

# **Performing Arts Administration and Management in Vietnam - A Comparative Study**

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## **Abstract**

In accordance with internationalisation in education in Australia, this paper investigates how applicable Australian training courses might be in meeting demands of other countries in the Asia Pacific region. Stemming from the fact that Vietnam had not developed any training course in arts and culture management, and also to examine performing arts administration and management in the current environment in Vietnam, a comparative study between Hanoi, Vietnam and Sydney, Australia was carried out to explore which management methods were utilised in performing arts organisations, and the need for training arts leaders in Vietnam. The suitability of pertinent training packages and tertiary arts management courses from Australia perspective are examined to determine whether then could be adapted to arts administration training in Vietnam. Case study approaches were employed, using judgmental sampling with some cases in Hanoi, and in Sydney. Some arts administrators involved with managing music-oriented organisations were interviewed utilising a life history approach. In addition, relevant documents and regulations in the arts field were analysed to lay a foundation for comprehending the operation and management of performing arts organisations in Vietnam. It is expected that this research will propose some pertinent arts management training courses in Australia to contribute to the area of arts management and the development of the entertainment industry in Vietnam, as well as obtain mutual benefits for both Vietnamese and Australian education.

## **Introduction: the Development of Arts Training**

This paper sets out to investigate performing arts administration and management, and the training for performing arts leaders in the current environment in Vietnam through presenting a case study of the Vietnam National Symphony Orchestra and the potential implications for the Australian training system.

There has been a rapid change both locally and globally in arts and entertainment today (Deakin University, 1996) including changes in culture, economy and society that have significantly influenced arts organisations and artistic activities. Two important changes are cultural policy in general and a decline of financial support from governments in particular (Casey, Selwood, & Policy Studies Institute., 1997; O'Hagan, 1998; Pick, 1986; Radbourne & Fraser, 1996; Rentschler, 1999, 2002; Soutar, Close, Australia Council., Donovan Research., & BIZTRAC (Firm), 1997). Moreover, an increasingly competitive environment where there are various types of entertainment, has become a serious challenge for the development of arts organisations. Not surprisingly, crises in the arts have happened in many countries in Europe, the United States, Australia, and Asian countries (Mulcahy, 2001; O'Hagan, 1998; Reiss, 1974). It is not unusual to hear of recent events such as: the near ending of funding for National Endowment for the Arts in Washington DC; the closing of the Schiller Theatre in Berlin, cutbacks in funding for the arts in Britain; and the sale of parts of the collection by the major arts museums in New York (O'Hagan, 1998)

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Australia can also serve as an example, as government at both Federal and State levels recently have adopted a stance that "the arts industry must become more business-focussed in order to survive and thrive" (Soutar et al., 1997), and arts companies also face the fact that they have been receiving less funding from governments (Rentschler, 1999, 2002; Rentschler & Katsonis, 1996). Notwithstanding, Rentschler (1999) argues that these challenges have created a unique environment for strategic changes in arts organisations to confront financial difficulties, especially for non-profit organisations. However, one understands it, the necessity for arts organisations to be more self-supporting has now become more evident (Soutar et al., 1997), and arts organisations are becoming both product-oriented, and market-oriented (Colbert, 2002; Rentschler, 1999). Evidently, changes in culture and society in the arts environment have affected not only management styles but also the role of arts leaders, especially in response to cultural policy initiatives (Colbert, 2002; Maddern, Buttrose, & Carclew Youth Performing Arts Centre., 1984; Radbourne & Fraser, 1996; Rentschler, 2002). Arising from these issues, a need for professional training for arts managers to make them highly skilled professionals was inevitable (Daniels, 1977; Radbourne & Fraser, 1996; Rentschler, 1999, 2002; Rentschler & Katsonis, 1996).

## **Vietnamese Performing Arts -- The Changing Context of Policies for Arts Organisations**

Vietnam presents a case which is in general terms similar to the above cases but also strikingly distinct. Vietnamese performing arts has undergone a profound transition period, with alterations in accordance with the changes in socio-economic development in the *doi moi* process<sup>1</sup>. Before the 1980s, during the period of the subsidised economy, most performing arts organisations were able to conduct their activities and attract audiences with cheap or free tickets, thanks to subsidies provided by government and a limited range of entertainment activities. In 1990s, Vietnamese government was the only funding source for almost arts and cultural organisations in the country, even though this budget was rather small compared with government's other sectors investment (Do, 1994; Le, 2002).

The author states that the funding for culture and information sector was the least compared with other sectors in the early 1990s (Do, 1994). After turning to the market-oriented economy, the Vietnamese government significantly cut the funds for the cultural sector, due to economic difficulties. Lidstone and Doling (2000) in their report "Arts Management in Vietnam" point out that "from 1988 onwards the government reluctantly decided that hitherto generous state financing for arts and culture organisations should be reduced, and in some cases abolished altogether in favour of self-financing" (p.7). As a result of diminishing funds, many theatres, whose main activities were dedicated to the preservation of Vietnamese traditional songs, dances and dramas, and development of the Western classical music and ballet, have struggled. Many traditional arts companies as well as high arts organisations only managed to perform once a year, and some of them even had to abandon their activities entirely, and reduce their personnel in the early 1990s (Lidstone & Doling, 2000). These authors added that other arts organisations opted for commercialisation of their activities to attract more audiences, whilst yet more have been obliged to disband altogether. Awareness of the business dimension of artistic activities as well as the role of arts in social life was not much assessed, and cultural sectors were thought of as a non-productive or non-profit area (Do, 1994). As a result, the budget for culture in general and for performing arts in particular remained modest (Do, 1994; Hoang, 1993).

## **Significance of the Research - Why Does Vietnam Need Arts Administration?**

Most Vietnamese arts organisations relied heavily on government funding, based on the theory that "if we have government funding, we have performances, and without government funding, no performances" (Do, 1994). Recently, Vietnamese government has provided investment more for both Vietnamese and Western arts development, especially through subsidies for Vietnamese traditional

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<sup>1</sup> "The term *doi moi* in Vietnamese literally means renovation and refers to the process and consequences of pursuing an open market while maintaining the principles of socialism as interpreted by the Communist Party of Vietnam" (Nguyen & Sloper, 1995:39)

arts, symphonic music and ballet. Nonetheless, the funding remains still quite limited, and can not sustain artists living costs or maintain the viability and quality of their artistic activities. At the same time, these arts types have been losing their audiences in the more competitive environment. Parallel to great economic reforms after the launching the *doi moi* policy, the arts community has had more land to develop, including more autonomous, more freedom in performing, and more artistic topics and so on. At the same time, it is necessary for arts leaders to obtain management skills to adapt successfully to the new, more competitive economic environment. This became more vital when the Vietnamese government sought to tackle this problem [funding difficulty for arts organisations] through its policy of 'Socialisation' after careful discussions at the 8<sup>th</sup> Party Congress of 1997 (Lidstone & Doling, 2000; Vietnamese Government, 2000). The main theme of 'Socialisation' policy is "to optimise the value of existing government subsidy through the more efficient mobilisation of arts management manpower and to diversify resources for both creation and investment in the arts" (Lidstone & Doling, 2000:7). Subsequently, the government cut funding for some popular arts organisations first, and will cut funding for other types of arts in the near future. These changes clearly pose more challenges for arts organisations that have been dependent upon government sponsorship for many years, but equally highlight arts administrators' role, and the need to provide appropriate curricula and/or training courses for them (Le, 2002; Lidstone & Doling, 2000).

Obviously, Vietnamese performing arts have been making great endeavours to transform themselves from being almost fully subsidised by the government into financially self-sustaining organisations in accordance with the new policy of 'Socialisation'. Finding causes and solutions to help smooth this transition is very important (Dong, 2000). No doubt, this transition requires specialised arts management skills, which will significantly improve the matching of cultural achievements to audiences' tastes, and increase financial viability in the market economy, while still ensuring artistic quality, not just commercialisation (Le, 1996, 2002). As Vietnam modernises its economy, some important questions have thus arisen:

- *What type of management and administration should be implemented to enhance the development of all types of performing arts?*
- *Which skills do arts administrators and managers need?*
- *In what ways should they improve to survive and adapt to the changing world?*
- *Which forms of training modes are suitable for them in order to meet those new demands?*

## **Aims of the Research**

In order to answer these questions, it is suggested that Vietnam needs more specialists and researchers in a range of areas, equipped with modern management practices and more effective and flexible skills. This need for highly trained personnel necessitates a shift away from narrow and non-realistic modes of training towards more flexible, attractive and effective forms of education. My research, therefore, will investigate:

- *How such training applies in Australian performing arts administration and management, including the critical examination of specific training packages and/or available training courses in this area*
- *Adapting this form of training for the Vietnamese context*

Deriving from these aims, the study will investigate the history and current state of performing arts administration and management in Vietnam. Examining changes in the economy and politics in Vietnam that relate to the shift in support for the arts will form part of the answer to the question of how these changes affect the sets of skills that arts administrators and managers now require. Changes in the education and training sector in Vietnam and Australia in the last decade will form a background for fully understanding the role of training in promoting social and economic growth. Furthermore, examining the growth of pertinent training packages for arts leaders will be good preparation to see what can be adapted from Australia to suit the Vietnamese context. In addition, personal interviews with key participants and policy actors will be conducted in order to discern which direction performing art administration and management should take in order to correspond with Vietnam's present and future economic situation and its political position in the world.

Beginning in the 1990s, there has been a shift in arts organisational definitions to emphasise leadership and the importance of audience services (such as meeting the needs of the audience regarding booking tickets, parking, performance time and so on) - "to serve society and its development by means of study, education and enjoyment" (Rentschler, 2002:48-49). Therefore, arts leaders' manifold roles become essential to obtain these outcomes, and to adapt to the changing world. Arts leaders gain their skills not only through their experience, but also via training courses. In order to have a clearer picture of education and training role in the social growth, it is necessary to further discuss the reform of education and training systems in both Vietnam and Australia, its roles and effects in human capacity development, and whether such specific training courses can meet the demand of the labour market.

## **The Broader Context of Education and Training System and Arts Administration Training in Vietnam**

As with the cultural arena, the Vietnamese education system has been undergoing continuous changes over almost twenty years, since the Vietnamese government launched the '*doi moi*' policy (renovation) in 1986 pursuant to the Resolution of the 6<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam (Nguyen & Sloper, 1995). This reform yielded significant changes and is considered as a turning point to the country's development (Kelly, 2000; National Centre for Social Sciences and Humanities, 2001). The process of *doi moi* in Vietnam has notably affected all aspects of life, and general and education and training in particular. Before the *doi moi* reform, Vietnam's development model was based on a centrally-planned economy in which power was concentrated on the State -- considered at that time as the most effective mechanism -- to guide the development process in all aspects of socio-economic life (National Centre for Social Sciences and Humanities, 2001; Warner, 2001:1-4). Despite some achievements, free market transactions and individual liberty of doing business were virtually stamped out, which unfortunately encouraged 'red-tape subsidised' central planning mechanisms, and in turn blunted the development of individual capabilities and people's active participation in socio-economic areas (National Centre for Social Sciences and Humanities, 2001).

Since *doi moi* in the mid-1980s, one of the remarkable changes has been a profound shift of the country's economic mechanism, which is now pursuing an open-door policy: integrating into the international economy, and allowing private sector involvement in all areas of development, but preserving the socialist orientation with state controls (Kelly, 2000; National Centre for Social Sciences and Humanities, 2001; Nguyen & Sloper, 1995; Warner, 2001). Obviously, education and training are imperative factors to contribute to these achievements (Ministry of Education and Training, 2001; National Centre for Social Sciences and Humanities, 2001). Allocating the crucial role to education and training in the preservation, development and continuation of human civilisation, the Vietnamese government regards education and training to be the key means to narrow the gap between Vietnam and other countries in term of economy and information (Ministry of Education and Training, 2001).

Needless to say, both education policies and the system have been considerably changed after the launch of *doi moi* (Nguyen & Sloper, 1995). First, before the *doi moi* reform (in the period of 1945-1980s), state-owned schools were the only model in the education system. As a result of the *doi moi* reform process, new forms of education and training have been developed simultaneously with the public sector, which has encouraged the setting up of new semi-public, people-founded, private schools in kindergartens, and basic education, and higher education. Non-public schools and institutions (private schools) cover nearly all their operation costs from student fees (Kelly, 2000). On one hand, this can encourage competition among schools to increase the quality of teaching and to compete for students by providing relevant forms of education that in turn should encourage student achievement. On the other hand, this reform does not automatically ensure the quality of teaching staff or students outcomes, which is regarded as a major concern and challenge for contemporary Vietnamese education and training (Ministry of Education and Training, 2001:5-7; National Centre for Social Sciences and Humanities, 2001:39; Tran, 1999:1-2; World Bank, 1996:5). Many private schools are considered as refuges for those who fail public schools entry test, because requirements to enrol private schools as well as teaching quality appear looser.

Secondly, the new policy allows public institutions to levy tuition fees, though only within rather stern limits, and charge for other goods and services sold to the public (Kelly, 2000; Research Institute for Asia and the Pacific, 2003; Tran, 1999; World Bank, 1996). Unfortunately, it is apparent that levying tuition fees inhibits equitable access to higher education for those from low-income families (National Centre for Social Sciences and Humanities, 2001:39; World Bank, 2002:2). In addition, a report from the World Bank (2002) points out that the quality of vocational and technical education (VTE), to some extent, is hampered by the organisation and structure of this sub-sector. The majority of VTE is a state-driven system that "suffers from fragmented management, and has a large number of uncoordinated external supporters, and does not systematically respond to the needs of the labour market" (p.2). This report also suggests that to modernise general education, employers need to exercise more responsibility to provide short, practical technical training to their employees, through in-service and related technical training. Moreover, to obtain vocational training reforms, many programs have been carried out such as opened various forms of school, created education units, implemented scientific research to improve the material and technological conditions of training, and teaching and managerial quality (Pham, 1998).

Another important change is that education expenditure increased somewhat over recent years, although the state had to reduce its total outlays due to the economic difficulties in the 1990s (National Centre for Social Sciences and Humanities, 2001:38; World Bank, 1996:39-64). Moreover, funds and loans from international organisations such as WB, ADB, AusAID have continuously assisted Vietnamese education and training. Thanks to the high appreciation of the role of education and training in human resources development, nearly 94% of the population of 15 years of age or over is literate; there has been a significant increase in education enrolment rates for the whole population, and in the number of students studying in tertiary level of education and vocational training sector in recent years (Freeland & Grannall, 1996; Ministry of Education and Training, 2001; Pham, 1998; World Bank, 1996).

### **Arts Management Training in Vietnam - A Current Project of the Ford Foundation**

In the performing arts field, Vietnam has given more emphasis to nurturing of musical and artistic directors, composers, and related areas in the entertainment industry such as recording and sound technicians, rather than developing training courses or degrees in arts management. Indeed, Vietnamese education and training has not offered degree training courses for arts leaders, nor had many projects that study the skills necessary to manage the arts. This is notwithstanding the fact that the arts have become a 'sector of industry' (Create Australia, 2000; Reiss, 1974), and have attracted more and more research.

Vietnamese arts managers and administrators tend to obtain management skills from their working experience or learning from jobs, being mentored, and their own talent, rather than on a formal training course in arts management. In this case, their skills might become outdated if they can not meet, and adapt to changes in the arts market. The findings from Vietnamese case studies in this research confirm limitations and shortcomings in management methods of arts managers due to consequences of subsidised economy. Clearly indicated that arts administrators has no systematic knowledge from formal arts administration training courses while those courses have been offered widely in the UK, Australia especially United States. It can be seen that this could pose serious problems for attempts to become self-sustaining in the current changing arts environment as well as become challenges for development of entertainment industry in the period of market economy in Vietnam.

Having assessed the limitations of in the arts and culture sector in Vietnam, the Ford Foundation has recently funded a project - "Curriculum Development in the Management of Arts and Culture in Vietnam in a Market Economy Context" (2000-2004). The project's activities include sending students to institutes in Australia and the UK to receive formal arts management training, as well as study tours in United Kingdom, United States and Australia to look for a appropriate modal of arts administration training to employ to Vietnamese context. In addition, arts administration seminars, case studies designed to provide managerial skills for arts leaders, as well as to develop arts management curriculum in Vietnam (Lidstone & Doling, 2000; Visiting Arts, 2001). The study tour in Australia showed that Australia's arts contemporary shares commons with Vietnamese counterpart such as

many arts organisations keep receiving funding from the government, though Australian arts organisations tend to be more privatistic. The result of the Ford Foundation project indicated that arts management training courses in Australia and the UK appear pertinent to Vietnamese arts training environment rather than United State modals where arts companies are private and independent on government funding.

## **The Reform of Education and Training System in Australia - Arts Management Training in Australia**

Australia is among those countries with a well-developed education and training system. The reform, that took place about fifteen years ago, helped facilitate the development of its education system. As a result, a range of training courses have become available at many universities in Australia, including specific arts management training. In addition, economic and cultural globalisation have presented challenges to the Australian education and training system in recent years (Welch, 2002) in ways that Vietnam too is facing. Lastly, Australian multiculturalism is increasingly taking on an Asian perspective. Deriving from the assumption that training courses in Australia may have covered various issues, which addressed concerns on arts management from other countries, especially in Asia Pacific area, Australia was employed as a good sample to investigate, and to adapt its available arts management training courses for the Vietnamese context.

Like other developed countries, the Australian government recognises the importance of education in improving its people's social and economic condition and in providing personal development, and hence the betterment of the overall living standard of the population (Clare & Johnston, 1993). Paralleling the Vietnam reform era, the Australian education and training system, to some extent, has also implemented policies of decentralisation, and privatisation into the education system in the last decade. Although the private sector provides education and training, the Australian governments (state and federal) still dominate markets for the production and supply of education and training services (Welch, 1996). Education can be seen as both consumption and investment goods and should be organised to reduce inequality of opportunity (Clare & Johnston, 1993: 34-35) although in practice, inequalities are not always reduced (Welch, 1996). Despite increasing competitiveness, the exposure of Australian industry to international education, and self-managing schools in educational system, Australian education has arguably reached a state of crisis that has frustrated and disappointed number of parents, teachers and students (Australian Science and Technology Council., 1988; Welch, 1996).

Training in arts management field has been emphasised in Australia over the 1990's although it has not seen such high demand as other courses such as computer science or accounting. Some universities such as Deakin University offers a course called Master of Business Administration specialised in 'Arts and Entertainment Management' (Deakin University, 2002); University of Technology, Sydney offer 'Master of Management in Arts Management' (University of Technology Sydney, 2003), Queensland University of Technology provides 'Master of Creative Industries' (Arts Management & Creative Enterprise) and many other universities all over Australia. These courses appear to provide in-depth knowledge on management skills, and especially focus on business and entrepreneurial skills which are important for arts leaders and their organisations to survive in a new digital age with less or no government funding. NSW Department of Education and Training has also developed a training package<sup>2</sup> that provides the basis for practical, relevant and accessible training that can be served in locations and at times to suit the needs of individuals and enterprises (Create Australia, 2000, 2002). In addition, these training packages are assessed through feedback from those who use training packages for a specific application, to identify how successful the training packages are in meeting learner requirements (Training Development Unit Industry Program and Services, 2001).

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<sup>2</sup> "Training packages are comprehensive, integrated documents which provide national benchmarks and resources for delivery, assessment and qualifications in vocational education and training" that are designed to "build closer links between work and learning (or articulate those links). Training packages strongly encourage a significant work related component in the training" (NSW Vocational Education and Training Accreditation Board, 1999)

However, the outlines of Arts Management programs in the some universities emphasise that the course includes accounting, law, marketing, organisational management is designed for the arts environment in Australia. In the line with internationalisation in Australia education, the question poses here are whether these arts management courses meet demands of arts management training in Asian training markets in general and Vietnam in particular while focus on the Australian arts context.

## **The Modern Arts Manager: Entrepreneurialism in Arts Leaders**

As indicated in the previous sections, in response to the changes of arts environment, the growth of the arts, the challenges contemporary of arts organisation (Daniels, 1977; Rentschler, 2002; Voegeli, 1975), arts managers obviously should identify and 'read' environmental signals to survive and ensure success for their organisations and people who work in it (Deakin University, 1996). The questions are which skills do arts leaders need, what are the roles of arts leaders now, and why do they need formal training courses. In the next sections, some viewpoints will be examined, and ask which theories will be most appropriate for my research. My view of the arts managers' role is close to the theory of entrepreneurial arts leaders of Rentschler (2002).

Rentschler (2002) identifies a theoretical framework that provides arts leaders with a crucial focus that will enhance their capability to efficiently fulfil their mission in the more and more competitive environment. She has made the point that the framework for entrepreneurship --'the entrepreneurship model' -- in arts organisations includes three parts: role of *variance*, *viability* and *vitality* that will achieve a balanced leadership approach.

Role variance (person) is an aspect of the people-centred viewpoint. Role variance includes patterns of leaders' behaviour that guide the organisation in its alignment with creative programming and funding diversity needs of the arts organisation. Viability (place) is an aspect of both the people-centred and the object-centred viewpoints. Viability includes such factors as focus on the mission, people and productivity, planning and core management of the aesthetic product, and co-ordination and flexibility. Vitality (product) relates to the product or creative output of arts organisations. Vitality includes issues such as competitiveness of the organisation, levels of accessibility to the organisation, external relations, identity and distinctiveness (p.55).

Rentschler theorises that there are four roles for arts leaders: entrepreneur, managerialist, custodian and impresario. According to this theory, an entrepreneurial arts leader needs to have creative ideas and be willing to change directions or funding to establish new programs and risk-taking ventures. She/he needs to master analytical, organisational, and administrative skills, and more importantly, achieve satisfaction of artistic creation through a less structured, less meticulous and more emotionally artistic in implement ideas. Being a custodian, the arts leader needs to apprehend how to combine conservation and directorial functions and to inherit the past heritage within funding constraints (Rentschler, 2002:55-65). These above skills are fine, but I would argue that these need to be set in a somewhat wider context as the arts play an important role in society. Australia's major performing arts companies, for example, make not only a contribution both directly and indirectly to the Australian economy, but also to Australian cultural life (Department of Communications Information Technology and the Arts, 1999) (DOCITA). The report of the DOCITA emphasises that activities of the major performing arts companies enrich Australian life, and help to build its image as an innovative, sophisticated nation that fosters creativity and diversity.

## **Credentialism**

Parallel with the demand of changes in arts environment that has forced arts managers to always update their management skills, Collin's work on credentialism also helps to explain why arts manager needs to be trained.

As a result of changes in the application of new forms of technology, requirements of jobs have changed; expectations of occupational success are some reasons that have affected people's

education. Also, educational requirements for jobs have changed over time and become more specialised (Collins, 1979). Further training is considered a useful way to provide and improve human capital. Hence, people have been eager to follow training courses to meet the demands of society. However, Collins also claims that education is “an artificial device for monopolising access to lucrative occupations” (p.9). The patent of qualification has become a need for people to show their credentials used as a means to achieve good positions and high wages (Collins, 1979; Dore, 1976).

Collins (1979:12-13) argues that educational requirements of jobs in industrial society increase because the proportion of jobs requiring low skill is decreasing, and the same job needs to be upgraded to meet changes of technology and environment. Thus, individual rate of return has significantly increased, and consequently, those who fail to get a degree, or gain a degree from a less illustrious university in some cases, are treated in a similar brutal way (Economist, 2002). Understandably, demand for further training has become the trend in our society. It has been argued that with education, people can indicate not just that they are being educated, but also that they are better educated than the others. Therefore, to some extent, education is like a race where everybody runs faster (Economist, 2002). Also, Collins (1979:193) further confirms that “the technical training rhetoric is a response to the crisis of the credential market rather than a substantively significant change in educational content”. The diploma disease and chasing qualifications or ‘qualification-escalation’ are consequences of this situation (Dore, 1976), and may not always yield the specific training needed by arts administrators.

It is apparent that education also takes the form as a market sector especially under the effect of globalisation and the constraints of funding for universities (Welch, 2002). It is argued that universities must embrace the marketplace, and become customer-focused, business enterprises in order to survive and prosper in a rapidly changing world with a limited funding (Currie, 1998). Therefore, universities and educational institutions investigate the demands of the labour market, and in turn design training courses not only to satisfy those demands but also to ensure investment in education. Equally, there is an argument that “expenditure on education... is to be thought of as an investment in mankind...The returns on education, both individually and socially, are at least as high as those in physical capital” (Vaizey and Debeauvais, 1961:38, cited in Dore, 1976:2). Crowley (1998) argues that higher education becomes exportable and more commodity-driven named edu-business, while a university is not a business, because the essential purpose of each are incompatible. Overall, education and training are multifunctional in promoting social growth. It provides not only human capital and necessary skills for job requirements of human resources for society, but also a potential market for entrepreneurs. As indicated, however, education is more than an investment, and many individuals engage in learning with little thought of financial gain, especially in the arts.

## **Case Study - The Vietnamese National Symphony Orchestra**

Cases [arts organisations] were examined in depth to understand their complexity, and at the same time the broader context of government funding. Case-studies of performing arts organisations in Hanoi and Sydney were selected by purposive or judgmental sampling. Performing arts organisations in Vietnam and Australia were selected as follows:

### **In Vietnam**

*The Vietnamese Symphony Orchestra*

*The Youth Theatre*

*The Vietnam National Puppetry Theatre*

### **In Australia**

*The Sydney Symphony Orchestra*

*The Brandenburg Orchestra*

In this paper, only the Vietnamese National Symphony Orchestra (VNSO) is presented as findings from Vietnamese case study.

The VNSO is the biggest symphony orchestra in Vietnam that performs symphonic music, chamber music, stage music, music for radio, movie, television as well as records music. In addition, the VNSO



implements educational programs to introduce and to extend the knowledge and an appreciation for the symphonic music, and in turn to widen and draw more Vietnamese audience.

The finding shows various angles of the VNSO operations. The management board of the VNSO includes: Managing Director, Artistic Vice Director and Administrative Vice Director. All of them are knowledgeable and experienced in management positions in the arts field for up to 30 years.

The Managing Director and Administrative Vice Director of the VNSO were interviewed to identify current management and administration methods in their organisation, how they obtained management skills, which qualifications they earned and their own views about the need for arts management training in Vietnam. These findings provide an understanding of the current environment of Vietnamese arts organisations and its management in the market economy, and also provide information about how to design a relevant training mode for arts leaders in Vietnam.

In the position of the Managing Director of the VNSO, Mr T. has worked in a wide range of performing arts organisations for about 30 years where he gained management experience. He obtained an art qualification in Vietnamese theatre acting and another qualification in Vietnamese traditional music. Talking about his working history, he said:

*I was in the management position of an arts group when I was 27 years old (now he is 60 years old) and I had ever worked in a musical group, then taught in the College of Theatre, and became the Director of Vietnam Theatre and Vice Director of the VNSO and finally moved up to Director of the VNSO*

This illustrates that Mr T.'s working experience was involved with different types of music groups/arts organisations or colleges during both periods -- the move from the subsidised economy to the market-oriented economy. Obviously, each group requires appropriate management skills depending on its function and size. Furthermore, turning to a market-oriented economy means that he and his management board are obliged to change administration skills in order to adapt to the new and challenging environment. He told the VNSO has met challenges in the transition period:

*Managing the arts organisation in the market economy in Vietnam now is quite hard, as it requires the arts manager to have flexible skills, understand artists and manage in very competitive environment with many different types of entertainment as well as arts companies or arts groups. It is more challenging, as we did not receive any management course, and knowledge in fundraising, marketing, sponsorship and audience attraction in arts organisations are quite fresh for us. This is because we get used to relying on subsidy from the government.*

The interview data from the Director and Vice Director of the VNSO indicates that learning on the job or from practical working experience plays the most important role to gain management skills. The interview provided the participant's viewpoints of how they gained management skills and what are good ways to obtain those competencies. The results are good sources to assist policy makers to investigate industrial demands to design pertinent courses for those demands. Mr T. told:

*I think my management skills mainly learned from my experience or learned on the job. No training course taught me those skills. I started to work in management positions for more than 30 years, and I had very good experience in working with different types of arts organisations, and to work with artists and publics. I just learned management experience by myself.*

Other managers of the VNSO revealed the similar message with Mr T. Apparently, managers of the VNSO rely on their practical experience rather than any management training courses that may assist them to learn management skills in the shorter time, and achieve more effective organisational performance. However, the Administrative Vice Director had participated in seminars on arts management sponsored by the Ford Foundation. Being asked about his comments of these seminars, he said

*These seminars were quite useful for us because they provide us knowledge about fundraising, finding sponsorships, marketing and so on. However, seminars organised in a week were too short for us to understand deeply this knowledge. We need longer courses such as an undergraduate*

*program or few month courses for arts leaders or potential arts administrators to study and/or upgrade their management knowledge.*

The Managing Director believed that

*To survive in the current environment with inadequate subsidy from the government and especially when the Vietnamese government is going to apply 'socialisation' policy, we need highly trained personnel equipped with modern management practices and more effective and flexible skills. Moreover, we also need to improve artistic quality to international standard and find sponsorships to have more repertoires, to upgrade the orchestra, and to improve artists' salary. Therefore, I think training in arts management may provide diverse skills for arts leaders to achieve those goals.*

The above findings showed shortcomings of management modes in arts organisations in Vietnam. Some questions raised from the interviews are:

- Can Australian universities or education provide some alternative training modes for Vietnamese arts management training market such as off-shore program or distance learning or short training workshops/seminars, or TAFE programs, or undergraduate/postgraduate levels in arts management for both students and arts leaders?
- What do Australian universities need to change to serve high needs of international students in arts management training especially countries in the Asia and the Pacific while arts management courses are likely to focus on arts environment in Australia?
- Which are arts administration training courses in Australian institutes able to be adapted for the Vietnam context, and if so, to what extent?

It is hoped that case studies from Australian arts organisations may provide an insight to answer these questions.

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