The Pedagogy of Arts Leadership

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Abstract

This presentation will embrace a broad definition of leadership as “a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (Northouse, 2004, p.3). Four aspects of strong leadership will be addressed: (1) being credible professionals, (2) understanding the issues facing the arts and being prepared to discuss them from multiple perspectives, (3) understanding the broad spectrum of constituents with whom arts leaders must interact; and (4) approaches to developing specific arts leadership skills. These four areas will be examined and discussed in the context of a graduate program in arts leadership that has been in place since 1995.

Introduction

Leadership can be defined in numerous ways; however, a simple definition seems appropriate for the context of this presentation. Northouse defines leadership as “a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (Northouse, 2004, p.3). Leadership in the field of the arts and arts education takes many forms and dimensions, ranging from instructional leaders in schools; to educational leaders in arts organizations such as museums, symphonies and community arts groups; to management positions in all types of arts organizations. Effective leaders in the arts require preparation in an arts field as well as preparation in leadership.

Leadership development in the arts has often not been dealt with straightforwardly. More frequently, it has been haphazard and without focus in both undergraduate and graduate programs as well as in actual practice. Far too many leaders in the field find themselves in their positions, not because of specific preparation and education in leadership, but because of happenstance. Consequently, far too many leaders in the field rely on their own resources to
develop their leadership skills rather than formal preparation and do so while on the job or solely through professional development opportunities. While on-the-job training can be valuable and professional development is essential, they should not be the basis for preparing leaders in the arts.

Leadership development needs to be addressed on several levels. General leadership issues should be a part of the undergraduate preparation of artists and arts educators, and I applaud the efforts that are being made here at Rhodes College. The College is visionary in developing and supporting the Center for Outreach in the Development of the Arts which gives undergraduates with leadership interests in the arts an opportunity to begin their formal preparation. This model needs to be replicated in undergraduate arts programs throughout the country. Opportunities are also needed at the graduate level for those who are not as fortunate as the students at Rhodes College and for those students who want to develop their leadership skills to the next level. While most graduate opportunities tend to focus on arts administration and/or arts management, there are programs that provide opportunities for graduate students to take a broader look at leadership, and I will describe one of those for you during this presentation. Additionally, there is a critical need for opportunities for those already in arts leadership positions to hone their leadership skills through professional development opportunities while continuing in their positions.

Educational opportunities to formally prepare for leadership positions in the arts are important and should be available to students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. What should constitute an educational program that empowers one to influence a group of individuals to achieve a common goal? In my view, four components are essential: (1) being a credible professional, (2) understanding the issues facing the arts and being prepared to discuss
them from multiple perspectives, (3) understanding the broad spectrum of constituents with whom arts leaders must interact; and (4) developing specific arts leadership skills.

**Credible Professionals:** Becoming a credible professional is best accomplished with a solid education in one or more of the arts, beginning at the undergraduate level and continuing through graduate study in a field of specialization. Maintaining one’s credibility as a professional in the arts is a life-long process and must continue throughout one’s active career. This can and should occur while one is developing their leadership abilities; one does not follow the other nor does one proceed the other. In my judgment, an arts leader who has not distinguished himself or herself in their chosen field of the arts struggles constantly to gain the respect of those whom they lead. Validation of this accomplishment is achieved most readily by earning degrees that are appropriate within each arts field and remaining active as a professional once the degrees are earned. This is why I believe that arts management/administration and arts leadership programs are better as certificate programs that accompany traditional degree programs rather than as stand alone degree programs in and of themselves.

**Understanding the Issues:** In order to be a credible professional and an effective arts leader, one must understand the issues related to the arts and arts education and be prepared to address them from multiple perspectives. An approach that I often find useful is to brainstorm the issue(s) with colleagues to make sure that your identification of the issue(s) is as focused as possible. Then write a clear statement of the issue, getting feedback from someone who may not be as familiar with the issue as you are. If it is clear to them what the issue is, you have succeeded in formulating a clear statement of the issue. If they have questions, you may need to revisit the issue and restate it so that the lay person can clearly understand what you are
promoting. Remember that most of your advocacy and political action efforts are going to be directed toward people who are not professionals in the arts.

Once you have a clear statement of the issue or issues that you will be addressing, work on a well-articulated justification. Build a case for why support or change is needed in the identified area, delineating why you think this is an issue that is worthy of a major advocacy effort or political action. Stating goals for your advocacy efforts is a good idea in that it will help you focus your efforts. Also, state what your expected outcomes for the advocacy effort or political action are; these should be closely linked to your goals.

It is important to do research on your issues. You need to understand each issue from all perspectives, the one that you are promoting as well as those your opposition may have. Make sure that you as an arts leader know all of the positives as well as all of the negatives related to the issue(s). Get the facts that support all perspectives on the issue(s). If you can address the issue thoroughly and clearly from all perspectives, you will be able to support your position as well as be prepared to refute positions that may be presented by the opposition. To be familiar with all points of view related to the issue(s) requires that you do a thorough analysis of the issue(s). Examine it from multiple perspectives, noting differing points of view or different philosophical stances related to the issue. Be sure that you examine all sides of the issue; think about the position(s) that those who may oppose your effort will take.

While it is easy to know the issue thoroughly from your perspective, it is essential that you also know the other side of the issue, i.e., what the opponents to the issue believe and why they believe it. It is easy to get caught up in your passion for the cause only being familiar with the side of the issue that you support.
Understanding the Constituents: In order to be an effective leader in the arts one has to understand the different groups with whom you will be working. First and foremost, you need to understand your constituents. Get to know them - become involved in the activities and organizations in which they participate, become a part of the community. If you work with an organization that is governed by a board, it is critical that you get to know your board. Know as much about them as you can. Know their interests, both professional and personal; know something about their families; know something about other organizations in which they are involved. If you work with an organization that is governed by elected officials, e.g., a city council, you also need to understand something about the individuals who comprise the various governing bodies. More importantly, you need to understand the processes by which decisions are made and policies are formulated. While you should not be expected to abandon your personal politics, it is probably wise to remain non partisan in your work with the governing body.

If you are going to be involved in advocacy and political action efforts as an arts leader, and I can assure you that you will be, you need to fully understand the target audiences for your efforts and how decisions are made in the various arenas. If you are working with local, state or national officials, understand the legislative process and know where the legislators stand on issues related to your concerns. If you are working with school boards to influence arts education programs, know how the school board works and know where the board members stand in relation to the issues you are promoting. Knowing as much as possible will help you focus your efforts and use your time and resources wisely.

If you are going to be involved with working with the corporate and business community, as you no doubt will be, particularly in the area of fund raising and support, learn about the
executives as well as the businesses. Know what their values are, what they are interested in, and whether they have a record of support for the arts. Figure out in advance how what you are doing, as an arts leader, compliments and enhances what they are doing from a business or corporate perspective. Figure out how you can help them achieve their dreams while helping you achieve yours.

Two audiences that are often overlooked by arts leaders are volunteers and the press. Both are critical and can often make or break your efforts as an arts leader. It is important to know something about your volunteers. Try to understand why individuals give their time and money to support your efforts and what they expect in return. The press is a particularly important audience to understand and know how to work with. They can make or break your efforts as an arts leader. Cultivate the friendship of editors and reporters. Know how they like to receive information, what level of detail they want, and in what format(s) they like to receive information. It is very important to respect their wishes. Any effective arts leader must know how to work effectively with the press as they are critical to getting your activities before the public; they can do more to promote or deter one’s efforts than any other single group.

Understanding your constituents can be a time consuming process. However, it is essential that an effective leader know as much about the individuals and groups with whom they work as possible. Effective working relationships with a wide variety of groups and individuals are critical to advancing the arts.

**Developing Leadership Skills:** There are many models for developing the essential skills that effective arts leaders need. As indicated earlier, many of the formal programs focus on management and administration and many result in degrees in arts management and arts administration. While these have and will continue to make a substantial contribution in the area
of developing arts leaders, I believe that we need to cast the net more broadly. We need to empower a broader group of individuals as arts leaders. To do this demands a different approach. It must start with the undergraduate preparation of arts students and continue through graduate school. What is being done here at Rhodes College is an excellent example of integrating leadership preparation into the undergraduate curriculum.

As an example of how this can be done in graduate school, I will describe the program that we have developed at the University of North Texas through the North Texas Institute for Educators on the Visual Arts (NTIEVA).¹ Since the Institute’s founding in 1990, it has been concerned with developing leaders in art education at the graduate level. Early in the Institute’s efforts, it was apparent that leadership was critical to conducting effective staff development and implementation of a comprehensive arts education program in the consortium member schools. It also became apparent that teachers as well as most museum educators did not consider themselves to be leaders or to have leadership abilities. To address this issue, leadership training sessions for teachers and museum educators were established and conducted on a regular basis. These sessions evolved into a formal university seminar on leadership development that was

¹ The Institute’ work has been focused on staff development and implementation of a comprehensive approach to teaching the visual arts. The Institute was established as one of the original regional institutes of the Getty Center for Education in the Arts. The work of the Institute has addressed (1) the development of curriculum and instructional materials which successfully integrate the visual arts into all areas of the curriculum while maintaining the integrity of the visual arts as a unique field of study, (2) staff development programs for art specialist teachers, classroom teachers, and school administrators, and (3) the process of leadership development to determine the most effective methods for preparing others to provide quality staff development and guide quality implementation efforts. Throughout all of NTIEVA’s efforts, the use of museum resources and the use of technology have been an integral part of the development and implementation of curriculum as well as in the staff development and leadership efforts. The Institute’s efforts in these areas have been supported by the development of a nationally-recognized newsletter and website; extensive curriculum materials in comprehensive art education, and high quality support materials for teaching art. The results of the work from 1990-1996 are reported in the comprehensive evaluation report prepared by the Getty Education Institute entitled The Quiet Evolution: Changing the Face of Arts Education (1997). From 1996 - 2001, the Institute was involved in a national project, Transforming Education Through the Arts Challenge (TETAC) supported principally by the Annenberg Foundation and the J. Paul Getty Trust, that focused on effecting school reform with the arts at the center of the curriculum. The results of that project are reported in Transforming Education Through the Arts Challenge: Final Project Report (2002).
required of selected individuals in the schools and museums with whom we were working. Based upon these experiences, it became readily apparent that more preparation was needed in leadership than could be provided in one seminar.

In 1995, with the generous support of the Edward and Betty Marcus Foundation, the Institute, in collaboration with the School of Visual Arts at the University of North Texas, initiated a formal program of leadership – The Marcus Fellowship Program, focusing primarily on preparing leaders in arts education for museums and schools. The program was designed to provide opportunities for the development of professional leadership in art and museum education with a strong technology component built on a school/museum/university model of collaboration.

The program was a competitive, state-wide effort designed to provide a core of well-trained leaders to work throughout the state of Texas to improve the quality of visual arts education in both school and museum settings. It was planned for individuals who had (1) a strong interest in the area of art museum/school collaboration and technology; (2) a demonstrated commitment to work extensively toward professional development for teachers and implementation of a comprehensive approach to visual arts education; (3) a commitment to expand their knowledge through graduate course work in the School of Visual Arts at the University of North Texas that provides in-depth experiences in comprehensive visual arts education and museum education, leadership, advocacy and political action, and technology training; (4) a willingness to serve a three month internship in an art museum, a community arts organization, or a public school setting with previous Marcus Fellows and previous NTIEVA participants serving as preceptors for the internships when possible; and (5) a commitment to working full-time in art education and/or museum education in the State of Texas for a minimum
of two years following completion of the fellowship (This stipulation was added with the Marcus IV group in 1998).

The Marcus Fellows Program provided excellent support\(^2\) for up to five carefully selected individuals each year who devoted their full-time efforts to the program. The Foundation has funded the fellowships in three year cycles. Over the next eleven (11) years, fifty three (53) graduate students completed the program which was concluded in August of 2006. As the Marcus Fellowship Program was drawing to a close, the Robert and Ruby Priddy Charitable Trust stepped forward to support an expanded program of arts leadership development for both visual arts and music students. Since the fall of 2005, the Institute has collaborated with the School of Visual Arts and the College of Music at UNT in preparing a broader range of arts leaders through the Priddy Fellowship in Arts Leadership. While similar to the Marcus Fellowship Program, the Priddy Fellowship Program is designed to include a broader base of leadership opportunities that includes performing arts groups and community based arts organizations. The Priddy Fellowship Program also allows us to recruit nationally.

The rationale for the Marcus Fellows Program and the Priddy Fellowship Program in Arts Leadership is based on the belief that a comprehensive education in the arts should be a part of the general education of every student and that effective use of community resources should be a part of that education. The Programs were designed to build upon NTIEVA=s extensive experiences in nurturing school/museum/university collaborations and upon the nationally recognized graduate programs in art and art education, including the Art Museum Certificate Program, and music and music education at the University of North Texas.

\(^2\) Each Fellow was provided a $15,000 stipend, health insurance, tuition and fees, a travel allowance of $2,500 for attending professional meetings and professional development workshops, a private work space with state-of-the-art computer equipment, technology assistance, secretarial assistance, and general support such as copying, mailing, general office supplies, and telephone.
What does the content and structure of the Fellowship Program look like? Each Fellow completes thirty-six semester hours of work, including a three-month internship, during the twelve month period. The nine-month plan for the course work for the Fellows addresses the following areas:

- issues in comprehensive arts education with primary emphasis on music and the visual arts;
- issues related to arts organizations;
- the use of technology in the development of instructional materials and instructional delivery systems, including the development of web pages and the development of interactive computer programs;
- issues in advocacy and political action;
- research and evaluation in arts education;
- the history and theories of arts education; and
- the development and implementation of professional development materials.

Approximately one-third of the course work combines music and visual arts students for courses applicable to all Fellows; one-third serves one discipline or the other; and one-third represents initiatives of individual students as they develop special leadership interests or continue their work to be credible professionals in the field. The two courses that the art and music students take together are specifically designed for the leadership program. They are Politics and Advocacy in the Arts and a course in Multi-media in the Arts. Additionally visual arts students are required to take a research course in art education, a course in the history of art education, a course in curriculum and assessment, and three guided electives. Music students are required to take a Philosophy of Music Education Course, a Sociology of Music course, and four guided electives.
During the final three months of the Fellowship, students serve in a full-time internship in an arts organization, a community arts group, or a K-12 school setting, preferably in the Southwest, although sites anywhere in the country may be considered. The internship sites are carefully selected with a focus on utilizing art museums, performing arts groups, community arts organizations, and schools that have previously worked with NTIEVA, the School of Visual Arts or with the College of Music. A preceptor at the internship site is identified who works closely with the School of Visual Arts and College of Music faculty to develop a Memorandum of Understanding prior to beginning the internship, supervise the actual internship experience, and evaluate the Fellow’s performance. Because a key goal of the program is to develop leadership abilities, a crucial component of the internship is the opportunity for the Fellows to work independently, albeit within the context and constraints of the host institution.

I would like to describe in a bit more detail the Politics and Advocacy course which is designed to help the students develop specific leadership skills. The course addresses many of the issues that I have spoken about and involves a set of carefully directed learning experiences that engage students in exploring important issues in the arts and arts education and understanding the constituencies with whom they will be working. The culminating activity for the year-long course focuses on developing specific leadership skills and involves the creation of a fully developed advocacy plan. The development of the plan initially involves the writing of a case description in which the students describe the case or situation for which the advocacy plan and the tools will be developed. They are required to give the context in which the advocacy or political action effort will take place; the individuals, organizations, or other entities involved; and the social, political, and cultural climate of the situation. Within this context they are required to (1) identify the issues and the audience(s) to whom the issues will be addressed; (2)
write a detailed analysis of the issue(s), exploring it from all perspectives; (3) build a case for why support or change is needed in the identified area, delineating why they think the issue(s) is worthy of a major advocacy effort or political action; (4) articulate goals for the advocacy; and (5) describe the expected outcomes for the advocacy effort or political action. Once the theoretical framework for the Advocacy Plan has been established, each student is then required to: (1) identify the activities that s/he would engage in to bring about the desired outcome; (2) develop a tool kit which includes the support materials necessary for the identified activities; a press packet and a one page written testimony are required as are other tools such as brochures, posters, power point presentations, TV spots, and supporting research information for three of the identified activities. Finally, the student is required to develop a time line, a budget, and an evaluation for the plan.

**Evaluation of the Marcus Fellows Program**

In 2004, a comprehensive evaluation of the Marcus Fellows Program was conducted by external evaluators, E. Louis Langford and Erin Jasinski Compton, whose services were engaged by the Edward and Betty Marcus Foundation to coincide with the completion of the tenth year of the program. The ten-year evaluation of the program concluded that the “Marcus Fellowship is effective in preparing well-qualified art museum educators and public school art specialists to assume positions of leadership in Texas. Fellows who complete the program are better able and more motivated to effect positive changes in art education than they were prior to enrolling in the program.” In Langford’s opinion, “The Marcus Fellows collectively have the potential to make a profound impact on art education as it is practiced in Texas schools and museums” (Langford & Compton, 2004, p.3)
While the Fellowship Program was deemed a success, several areas of needed improvement were identified. Most were issues that the faculty members were acutely aware of but unable to address because of limited resources. One recommendation of the report was that more be done to improve levels of communication and collaboration after completion of the program to insure the potential for effecting statewide changes as a group. While significant networking has occurred, it has most often been between and among one or more Fellows and not the Fellows as group (Langford & Compton, 2004, pp. 35-36). Closely related to this was a repeated request from the Fellows to assemble on a regular basis. The Institute was able to facilitate one meeting in the summer of 2001 (Ulbrich, 2002). The report also noted the limiting effect of requiring a two-year post program employment commitment and recommended that this be reconsidered by the Foundation. Other recommendations included reducing the academic load required of the Fellows; visiting on an on-going basis the goals shared by the Institute, the Fellowship program, and the Division of Art Education in the School of Visual Arts; making efforts to include more small, mid-sized and remote sites; and to revisit the recruitment efforts of the Fellowship program, especially as it relates to attracting minorities and men to the program (Langford & Compton, 2004, pp. 36-39).

The Langford evaluation reported a high degree of satisfaction with the internship by the Fellows, the preceptors, and the UNT faculty (Langford & Compton, 2004, pp. 18). The report indicated that the Fellows generally felt that their academic work and their NTIEVA experience prepared them well for their internships. Likewise, a high percentage of the fellows (77%) felt that the level of opportunities afforded by the internships to apply what they had learned were good to excellent (Langford & Compton, 2004, pp. 19). When asked about the extent to which the skills learned or reinforced during the internship carried over into post-fellowship work, 89%
responded with good to excellent (Langford & Compton, 2004, pp. 20). The most serious concern voiced by the supervisors was that the internship was too brief.

**Employment:** With regard to employment, “circumstances . . . changed for most of the Fellows after completing the Fellowship. Only 8% of the Fellows . . . had the same employer that they did prior the Fellowship. Sixty-seven percent (67%) reported that the Fellowship experience altered their career paths in some way. Thirty-eight percent (38%) reported that they had substantially changed the type of job that they do, e.g., school to museum, and teacher to administrator” (Langford & Compton, 2004, pp. 32). Where do they work? In a wide variety of places, including museums, schools, community agencies, and the federal government. One has assumed the directorship of a museum, one has served as an Interim Director of a Museum, several are Directors or Curators of Education, several are program directors or coordinators of specific aspects of education programs, and some are staff members in museum education programs. Almost half of the Marcus Fellows work in education. One is a school administrator, several are art specialists in elementary schools, some are full-time elementary and secondary teachers, and some are full-time university faculty. One is president of her computer software company and one has been hired by the federal archives to developing on-line educational programs based upon holdings in the archives, and one is the director of proprietary learning center. Some are involved in community arts organizations and some have combined family responsibilities with active roles as community arts volunteers,

**Pursuit of Degrees:** All fifty-three (53) students who entered the program completed it. While the Fellowship did not require that a student pursue a graduate degree, most, in fact, have pursued and completed either a masters or doctoral degree. Forty-five (85%) entered the program with a bachelors degree; eight (15%) entered with a masters degree. Seven of the eight
in the latter group pursued a doctoral degree. Three (43%) have completed the degree and four (57%) are actively pursuing the doctorate. One student entered the program with a bachelors degree, completed the masters and is actively pursuing a doctoral degree. All of the masters degree students have either completed the program are actively pursuing completion.

_Successes of the Marcus Fellows:_ The achievements of the Marcus Fellows are impressive; they have been very active. They have made many formal presentations regarding art education at the local, state, and national levels. Several have written successfully funded grants and the 1996 Fellows class collaboratively published a book, _Experience Art: A Handbook for Teaching and Learning with Works of Art_, with Professor Emeritus Nancy Berry. The Fellows have published book chapters, refereed journal articles for state and national journals, and written curriculum packets for exhibitions that have been published by major museums in the state. They have also been quite active in digital publications.

The Fellows have also assumed active roles in their communities and throughout the state as advocates for the arts. Examples of their involvement include service as a member of the Board and chair of the visual Arts Committee for the community’s Kennedy Center Imagination Celebration 2000; service as a trustee for the South Texas Art Institute and as a member of that group’s Education Committee and Exhibition and Collections Committees; service as a trustee for the Texas fine Arts Association in Austin, Service as the Museum Education Division Chair of the Texas Art Education Association; service as a member of the Conference Planning Committee for the TAEA; and service as a member of the Advisory Board for the Ice House Cultural Center, a Latino Community effort in Dallas, to mention but a few examples.

The Fellows have also received many awards, including Teacher of the Year Awards in their schools and Art Educator of the Year Awards by the Texas Art Education.
The Marcus Fellows have quickly assumed leadership roles in art education in the state of Texas and have become strong advocates for art education. While their individual achievements are remarkable, one of the most impressive aspects of the program is the networking that has occurred among the Fellows. This has occurred without significant involvement of the Institute. In addition to engaging in collaborative efforts, they network among themselves, providing assistance and information and general support to each other in their day-to-day work and activities.

**Priddy Fellowships in Art Leadership**

While the first group of Priddy Fellows completed the program in August of this year, they have already begun to make their mark. One has assumed a position as general manager of a symphony, one as marketing director for a symphony, three are teaching in K-12 schools, one has assumed an administrative position in a school district, one is a community services advisor for a foundation, and three are continuing with their graduate studies. The Priddy Fellowship program has provided the opportunity to expand beyond Texas in recruitment, internship placements, and employment.

**Summary**

The eleven years of work with the Marcus Fellowship Program and the more recent experiences with the Priddy Charitable Trust Fellowships in Art Leadership, clearly demonstrate that preparation in arts leadership can be successfully incorporated into graduate education in the arts. The achievements of the students who have participated in these programs provide strong evidence that such experiences can empower arts students to influence individuals to achieve a common goal in a broad array of arts and education environments and at many levels of leadership.
References


