THE BOARD-EXECUTIVE RELATIONSHIP IN PRIVATE MUSEUMS IN TAIWAN

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ABSTRACT

Approximately 218 museums are private, established by a juridical person, including Stiftung, corporation, nonprofit associations, and individuals in Taiwan. The number of private museums increasing dramatically was a phenomenon of the past twenty years due to the termination of the Emergency Decree and the growth of economics. Therefore, how boards operate in private museums in order to enhance the performance of organizations is of considerable concern to many people. The research questions are as follows: How's the situation of board governance in private museums? How's the relationship between the executive director and the board? What are the most difficulties and challenges that private museums encounter in board governance? Three theories which are highly relevant to the governance of nonprofit boards: the Stakeholder theory, the theory of Stewardship, and theory of Resource Dependency are reviewed. Case studies were chosen as the research methodology. Methods of data collection were document analysis, questionnaire and interview.

Keywords: board governance, private museums, board attributes, roles of executive director

The Board-Executive Relationship in Private Museums in Taiwan

According to the Chinese Association of Museums, there are approximately 473 museums in Taiwan (Chinese Association of Museums, 2005). Among them, 254 are public museums, operated by the various ministers of national government, departments of special municipality, city governments, public organizations, public universities/public schools and other state-owned enterprises. On the other hand, approximately 219 museums are private, established by a juridical person, including Stiftung (foundations, private universities, religious groups, etc.), corporation (be subordinate to the corporation or registered as Limited Liability Company, theme parks' museums are included), nonprofit association and individuals such as: artists, descendants or family members of celebrities. The number of private museums increasing dramatically was a phenomenon of the past twenty years due to the termination of the Emergency Decree and the growth of economics. The termination of the Emergency Decree represents the fact that the central government releases its power to the local governments and private sector. Therefore, the amount of nonprofit organizations increased, and those organizations contributed largely to the society since 1980s'. Moreover, the growth of economics represents the richness of private collections. More and more people are willing to share their collections to the public; more private museums are established (Chen, 2008; Han, 2008).
The main regulation to regulate the operating structure of private museums in Taiwan is "Regulations Regarding the Establishment of and Special Recognition for Private Social Education Institutes," enacted in 1961 and last amended in 2010, affiliated to the Ministry of Education. Article 6 points out "... and information on the supervisor must be reported to the special municipality's educational authority, or the county or city government, for future reference." Article 7 requires those private museums' facility sites and office buildings to show the following documents:
1) A certificate of ownership.
2) A right of use certificate.
3) A court-notarized contract for the lease or loan of the property for 3 years or more.
Article 10 requires that a private museum shall establish a Board of Directors. However, a juridical person's private museum is not required to additionally establish a board of directors. Article 11 lists the number of board directors: seven to fifteen. After establishing the board of directors, the founder shall transfer all business concerning the private museum to

the board of directors. Article 15 illustrates the bylaw of board, such as board directors' qualifications, terms, nomination, appointment, dismissal, and re-election; the duty of chairperson of the board; the number of meetings to be held, procedures for convening meetings, selection of the presiding chairperson and so on. Article 16 describes the duty of board directors: Hiring and dismissal of the executive director of the museum; auditing of the institute's business plans; custody and to make use of funds; fundraising; auditing of budgets and final accounts, and supervision of financial matters (Ministry of Education, 2010). If the museum is operated by a Stiftung, it needs to follow "the Set-up Permission and Supervision Guidelines of Educational Affairs Foundation by the Ministry of Education" (Ministry of Education, 2003), "The Set-up Permission and Supervision Guidelines of Arts and Cultural Affairs Foundation by the Ministry of Culture" (Ministry of Culture, 2012), or other city's regulations. Therefore, how boards operate in private museums in order to enhance the performance of organizations is of considerable concern to many people. Effective board governance needs to be highlighted in management of private museums. The research questions are as follows: How's the situation of board governance in private museums? How's the relationship between the executive director and the board? What are the most difficulties and challenges that private museums encounter in board governance?

Literature Review

Rentschler, Radboume and O'Connell (2003) mentioned three major theories which are highly relevant to the governance of nonprofit arts boards. They are the Stakeholder theory, the theory of Stewardship, and theory of Resource Dependency. The Stakeholder theory emphasizes the importance of an organization's response to the needs of various stakeholders rather than the interests of one group. Applying the theory to boards of private museums, the composition of board members in arts organizations ideally should be complex, including representatives from government, business, the arts, and diverse people in the community (Cornforth, 2003; Radbourne, 2003). The concept connects with Zahra and Pearce' (1989) board's attributes. Four board attributes: composition (size/ outsider vs. insider/ minority), characteristics (directors background/ board personality), structure (committees, organization/ flow of information/ leadership), and process (meetings/ CEO-board interface/ consensus/ evaluation/ formality) are identifiable in non-profit sector.

The theory of Stewardship focuses on the director, or senior administrator, acting as a faithful steward of the organization's shareholders/stakeholders—a function that can define the relationship between the executive side and the governance side of the organization (Rentschler, Radboume and O'Connell, 2003). Caers, Bois, Jegers, Gieter, Schepers, and Pepermans (2006) view the stewardship theory to be seen as a limiting case of the agency theory. According to Jensen and Meckling (1976), a principal-agent relationship is defined as "a contract under which one or more persons (the principal(s)) engage another person (the agent) to perform some service on their behalf which involves delegating some decision making authority to the agent" (p. 308). Literature often delivers the role of the principal to the board of directors, which contracts a manager to run the organization in the interest of the stakeholders (Caers, Bois, Jegers, Gieter, Schepers, and Pepermans, 2006). Traditionally, agency theory assumes that "these principal-agent relationships will be characterized by a conflict between the interests of the principal and those of the agent, and that the agent will be motivated to pursue her own goals" (Caers, Bois, Jegers, Gieter, Schepers, and Pepermans, 2006, p. 26). While agency theory assumes that managers are self-interested, the stewardship theory advances that managers can be trustworthy and intrinsically motivated by desire for accomplishment, acknowledgment, self-actualization, self fulfillment, power, and affiliation (Lawal, 2012).

Resource Dependency Theory is the study of how the external resources of organizations affect the behavior of the organization (Wikipedia, 2012). The procurement of external resources is an important tenet. Developing resources for the successful operation of organizations is the responsibility of the organization's directors (Rentschler, Radboume and O'Connell, 2003). The role of board of directors under this theory is that of "Boundary –Spanners" who apply their individual external network of contacts to attract all kinds of indispensable resource that the organization needs (Lawal, 2012).

Among those three theories, the usage of power by the board and executive in private museums is highlighted in this research. According to Golensky (1993), the board and executive constitute a kind of partnership, which implies a relationship between equals. However, conflicts may occur due to organization structures, roles, attitudes, and stereotypes, arising over a scarcity of resources, or between rival groups and coalitions. Golensky (1993) generalizes four emerging themes related to board-executive relationship: (1) Board-Executive Communication: the importance of communication more frequently. (2) Executive Assets: the executive director's influence comes from professional status and expertise, administrative authority and responsibility, full-time commitment to the organization, length of tenure, access to and control over information, and information relationships with key individual inside and outside the agency. (3) Board-

Executive Congruence: the category of congruence deals with agreement in philosophy and style rather than with operational considerations of defined roles and responsibilities. (4) Board-Executive Role Expectations: responsibilities for both sides must be defined clearly.

Hoye and Cuskelly (2003) identify board's four responsibilities: to determine mission, to identify strategy, to articulate appropriate board-executive officer relationships, and to manage community relations. On the other hand, executive directors' responsibilities are to undertake boards' commission. Finally, Murray, Bradshaw, and Wolpin (1992) identify five patterns of governance: CEO-dominated, chair-dominated, fragmented-power, power-sharing, and powerless.

With these theories in mind, a theoretical framework is established which includes three themes: (1) attributes of the chair as well as board of trustees' roles and performances; (2) curator/executive directors' attributes, roles and performances; (3) the usage of power among the chair/board of trustees and executive directors. Two sets of similar interview questions and surveys are developed according to this framework, one for executive directors and the other for board members. The congruence between executive-board directors can be discovered through comparing two sets of answers. The powers—responsibilities and authorities—of boards and executive directors are examined.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Case studies were chosen as the research methodology. A case is an intensive analysis of an individual unit (e.g., a person, a group, or event) stressing developmental factors in relation to context. Case studies may be descriptive or explanatory. The explanatory type is used to explore causation in order to find underlying principles. The purpose of a case study is to clarify, define and understand the "how" and "why" of various social issues (Yin, 2009). In this research, the case means "board-executive relationship in private museums in Taiwan." Methods of data collection were document analysis, questionnaire and interviews. Document analysis focuses on board events that happened in arts organizations and museums.

Two experience experts, Han Pao-Teh and Liao Jen-I were interviewed. Han used to be a curator both in private and national museums, a chair of board and board members in private museums, and a university professor in museology. Liao was appointed as a director of Taiwan Culture Center in Paris, and a board member as well as a curator in a private museum.

Questionnaires were designed to collect information/opinions from a group of people in order to describe some aspects or characteristics of the population (Salant and Dillman, 1994). There were five parts of the questionnaire: museums' overview, executive directors' attributes and roles; attributes of the chair and board of trustees' roles, the power usage among board-executive directors, and demographic information of respondents. Questions can be organized into three types: Likert Scales, multiple choice and open-ended questions. Questions were sent to three scholars (panel of experts) for content credibility. Thirty private museums are selected as samples of the pilot test. Those museums are subordinate to a foundation with more stable board structure. Each organization is sent 4 questionnaires, two for executive side: senior administrative staff (executive directors or staff members who work with board members). The other two encouraged chairman or board members to fill out the survey. Approximately one hundred and twenty (30x4) questionnaires were sent out in June 2012, 6 organizations replied, and 12 questionnaires were returned by the end of August, 2012. Among them, eight executive staff members filled out the survey. The Cronbach α value of the pretest is 0.89, which proves that the questionnaire has a high validity.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Initial research findings are generalized according to the pilot test data and interviews. According to the pilot test, responding museums were established since 1990-2006. The result corresponds to the literature. Most founders are individuals and family members. One foundation is established by various family members of the 228 Incident. The endowment of foundation is from 2 million to 500 million NT dollars. The annual budget of those museums is around 1-5 million NT dollars. One museum has 98 full-time staff members, the others have around 1-7 full-time staff. Based on the theoretical framework, the initial findings of research are organized into three parts: (1) attributes of the chair as well as boards' roles and performances; (2) curators/executive directors' attributes, roles and performances; (3) the usage of power among a chair/board trustees and executive directors/curators.

Attributes of the chair as well as board of trustees' roles and performances

Most chairmen are the founders, and they are entrepreneurs, artists, descendants or family members of artists, religious leaders or collectors. Their ages and educational background vary. Most of them are over 55 years old and males are more than females.

The number of board trustees is from 9-17 people. Most trustees are dominated by males. Their ages are over 46, and mainly concentrate on 56-65. Half of the trustees in some museums' are over 65 years

old. Most boards do not have sub-committees. Staff members appointed by and who report directly to the board are curator, executive director, accountant, or secretary. Most board members are recommended by other board members. They accepted their positions because they are family members, friends of the founder, experts in museum or cultural affairs, or desired to be more associated with a specific art form. Therefore, the Chair makes the most decision.

The board of trustees understanding their roles is an essential issue in private museums. What do board trustees and executive directors/curators regard as essential capacity for an ideal board? All respondents selected the following four answers: capacity to see the big picture, critical analyzing skills, interpersonal skills and fundraising. However, the board members actually own the following skills: interpersonal skills (67%), critical analyzing skills and financial management (50%), capacity to see the big picture and understanding of stakeholder groups (42%). Fundraising skills only obtains 33%.

The following questions involve a Likert Type Scale, there was a scale from 1-7; "1" representing "strongly disagree" and "7" representing "strongly agree." For each question, a mean score of over 4 indicates a result that is significant. Most board of trustees indicates that they understand the difference between governance and management as well as their roles and responsibilities (5.7). They also understand their organizations' vision clearly (5.4). The board has a clear idea of what information it needs (5.7). The information received by the board is in a form that allows all board members to fully comprehend the organization's position and performance (5.2). The board conducts a formal performance evaluation of the general manager and any other staff it appoints directly at least once per year (5.0). The board has explicitly stated its performance expectation of the general manager (5.8). Once policies and strategic direction are agreed, the board leaves the general manager and staff to go about their business (5.5). The board researches issues relevant to the organization (4.8). There is frequent debate within the board about ideas and the future directions of the organization (5.1).

Regarding the board's performance, the board undertakes an annual review designed to improve its own board performance (5.0). The board undertakes activities, such as planning retreats designed to improve its own board performance (4.6). The board has adopted explicit statements that describe the organization's purpose, values, strategic direction and priorities (5.2). The board has written performance objectives against which it assesses its own board performance (5.4). The board understands the part it must play in the success of the organization (5.2).

The board has adopted policies that describe its own role and responsibilities, and define how it will operate (eg. job description, code of conduct etc) (5.0).

Han (2012) observed private museums' operations and points out that the most important duties of a chair and board of trustees are to have clear vision and mission of the museum. They need to explain their expectations clearly to the executive directors when hiring them. Ability of fundraising and donating money to the museum is an important capability for a chair and board members. Maintaining enthusiasm to the museums all the time is also essential in board governance. Finally, a chair and board members need to find the best executive director/curator for the organization.

The answers of "greatest strengths of your Board" from respondents are: has strong artistic vision, share same vision with executive side, communicating well, not intervening management affairs, trust, owe resources.

What are the greatest challenges and difficulties that a Board has encountered in the governance? Han (2012) mentioned that private museums normally do not receive funding from the government. Thus, financial and funding issues are major challenges. Private museums haven't received the support from the public. The donation from the community is short; the founder/chair needs to invest his money each year. Once the founder/chair faces financial crises, the museum will shut down also. Therefore, the board needs to decide the budget for the organization and monitor it well. Additionally, two respondents indicated that board members took no action when the organization encountered difficulties. Some respondents thought board members were too busy to attend board meetings.

Fifty-eight percent of respondents believe that the degree of their board engagement in their organizations is characterized to "Engaged." The board can provide insight, advice to director/CEO/ management team; guides & judges director/CEO; seeks industry expertise to add value to decisions; takes time to define roles & behaviors required by the board & boundaries of director/CEO responsibilities. Finally, respondents (68%) thought that their board was mainly accountable to the chair.

Curators/executive directors' attributes, roles and performances

According to respondents, some private museums' curators equal to executive directors in their foundations; others may be two different individuals in these two positions. Liao (2012) served museum is the example of this case: the founder's son is the chair of the board; the executive director is the chair's relative; and the curator is an expert from the museum community. The executive director of the foundation can suggest the action of the curator.

Generally speaking, curators are males more than

females; most curators/executive directors are over 36 years, and mainly concentrate on 56-65, with post graduate degrees. Golensky (1993) mentioned that the executive director's influence comes from professional status and expertise. The data of the pilot test indicates that curator/executive directors' profession are related to arts, education, literature and community development. Most curators/executive directors are appointed directly by the founder/ chair.

What do board trustees and executive directors/ curators regard as essential tasks for an ideal curator/ CEO? Ninety-two percent of the respondents selected the following answers: to develop a sound relationship with the board in order to execute the board's function effectively; to plan and execute the organization's policies and affairs efficiently; to maintain the balance of the organizational finance. However, what are actual tasks the curator/CEO is taking? Sixty-seven percent of respondents chose "to plan and execute the organization's policies and affairs efficiently." Fifty-eight percent selected "to develop a sound relationship with the board in order to execute the board's functions effectively." Fifty percent chose: to maintain the organizational core tasks and values, to maintain the balance of the organizational finance, to confirm and review the organizational performance to meet the expectation of the public, and to plan the long-term strategy for the organization.

Regarding challenges that the curator/CEO encounter, the mean score of the following nine items are over 5: to develop a sound relationship with the board in order to execute the board's function effectively (5.7); to deal with the outside challenges with the board members (5.1); to plan and execute the organization's policies and affairs efficiently (5.7); to maintain the organizational core tasks and values (5.5); to maintain the balance of the organizational finance (6.0); to confirm and review the organizational performance to meet the expectation of the public (5.4); to cultivate and develop human resources for the organization (5.8); to plan the long-term strategy for the organization (5.6); to create positive organizational culture to develop employees' potential towards the organizational goal (5.8).

What factors affect the curator/CEO's performance? "Personality" have the highest mean score 6.0, followed by "Organizational characteristics"(5.6), " Environment"(5.4), "Relationship with the board" (5.3), and "Salaries and welfare"(4.0). The greatest difficulty that curators/executive directors encounter is: financial problems and communicating with governments.

The respondents believe that the greatest strengths of their curators/executive directors are: being professional, high-profile communication ability, taking full responsibility, hard working, coordinating things well, and fulfilling tasks form the board. Sixty-Seven percent of respondents believe that the degree of their curators/executive directors' engagement in their organizations is characterized to "Engaged." They provide insight, advice to the board; seeks industry expertise to add value to decisions; takes time to define roles & behaviors required by the board & boundaries of director/CEO responsibilities. Their curators/executive directors are mainly accountable to their chairs.

Han (2012) emphasized that curators/executive directors should have knowledge related to museum profession and management. They need to follow the vision and mission set up by the boards. If the curator thinks that the mission needs to be modified, he needs to report to the board. Once policies and strategic direction were agreed, the board left the general manager to do their business. Executive directors/ curators should have administrative authority to hire his staff members. Length of tenure is important for curators/executive directors. Thus, the board needs to regulate clearly. Building sound relationship with outsider and to be a representative of the museums are the curators/executive directors' responsibilities. Finally, Han (2012) points out that curators/executive directors' engagement in their organizations should be characterized to "Intervening" – intensely involved in decision making around key issues.

(3) The usage of power among the chair/board trustees and executive directors/curators

Traditionally, agency theory assumes that a conflict between the interests of the principal and those of the agent. According to the respondents, for private museums in the survey in which the most cases for risks that can be controlled by the curator/ executive director, the board has defined the limits or "boundaries" within which the director/ executive director is required to operate (e.g. in relation to financial management, asset protection, communication and support to the Board, etc) (5.5). Boards have thought about doing that (5.4). Additionally, information dissemination in the board is good: "Information flows quickly among board members" (5.3). The situation in which "important information often gets withheld by on this board" (2.5) seldom happened.

However, conflicts still take place all the time. Collecting news from the internet, the research generalized several types of conflicts:

The disagreement between the chair and the executive director/curator; the duties are not clear on both sides. Who is the representative of the organization? Both of them thought they are the "boss/leader" of the organizations.

Should the chairman of the board need to have remuneration? Or are they volunteers?

The executive director/curator has no authority in a chair-dominated organization.
Some board members were disappointed by the performance of the executive director.
The Executive director used budget inappropriately or the organization encountered financial deficit
Han (2012) mentions that most private museums in Taiwan are chair-dominated especially in the beginning. Other board members may advise some suggestions, but just for references. If the executive director hired is highly professional, the power will shift to him/her, after he builds a trust relationship with the chair and the board. Liao (2012) also points out the more money the board donated to the museum, the more power the board member can own to the museum.
However, the boards' power of oversight seems to be still developing. The mean score of "The curator/ executive director's compliance with the board's expectations of organizational purpose is being monitored regularly" is 4.9. "The director/CEO's compliance with the board's expectations of finance is being monitored regularly" is 5.0. Han (2012) suggested that a board can have a person who is responsible for the financial management in museums. Regarding curators/executive directors' salary, from eight responding museums, four of them give no compensation to curators/executive directors. One thought the salary is reasonable, one is unreasonable, the other two with no comments. The range of compensation is: three curators/executive directors are less than 500,000 a year (NT dollars) and four curators/executive directors are among 900,000 to 120,000 a year (NT dollars). Only three museums evaluate curators/executive directors' performance. This response presents two possibilities. One is that most boards in Taiwan believe that the curator/ executive director will follow their directions; the other implication may be that boards may not pay much attention to professional staff evaluation.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, most of the board members understand the difference between governance and management as well as their roles and responsibilities. Respondents viewed that capacity to see the big picture, critical analyzing skills, interpersonal skills and fundraising are essential skills for board members. However, the board members actually own the following skills: interpersonal skills, critical analyzing skills and financial management. Many board members do not have fundraising skills and have little connection with other resources. Most board directors have defined the limits or "boundaries" between them and executive staff members. Few boards conduct formal performance evaluations for themselves or for their curators/executive directors. Board members seldom research issues relevant to their organizations. Finally, the relations between the boards and their communities are underdeveloped. Still, many boards are chair-dominated in Taiwanese private museums.
The data of the pilot test indicates that curator/ executive directors' profession are related to arts, education, literature and community development. Most curators/executive directors are appointed directly by the founder/ chair. Mostly, curators/ executive directors focus on planning and executing the organization's policies and affairs. They seldom plan the long-term strategy for the organization.
The respondents believe that the greatest strengths of their curators/executive directors are: being professional, high-profile communication ability, taking full responsibility, hard working, coordinating things well, and fulfilling tasks from the board.
Suggestions for this research and governance in private museums are as follows: First, the definition and position of private museums should be distinct. Can private museums be "public good?" The government in Taiwan does not value the private museums and regulations are not clear. The number of private museums that the research applied is from private associations. Many private museums do not complete their legal registration for the status claimed. Private museums need to present their influence and connection to the society. For example, when Han was the curator at Museum of World Religions, he proposed "Life education" as the main mission of the museum to the board. Everyone needs to learn it in his life (Han, 2012). Thus, communities can recognize the importance of the museum. Second, evaluation for board members and curators/executive directors should be established. Several aspects can be considered: the degree of mission achievement, participation, access to the public, satisfaction of visitors, and support from the society, such as donation and volunteer hours. Third, board members should have a clear idea about: serving on a board is more than a social experience. Board members share collective responsibility of fiscal and programmatic perspectives of the organization's performance. Board members thus have a legal and moral obligation to keep themselves fully informed on the organization's operation. The potential for friction between the board and the executive has forced an increasing number of private museums to realize that neither board nor CEO is the "boss." The board-executive relationship should be a strong and stable partnership.

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