Institutionalized, Mandated Dual Leadership in Nonprofit Arts Organizations: One Conceptualization of the Phenomenon and its Implications for Organizational Effectiveness

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Abstract

Traditionally theorists argue that a single person in the leadership role is the most effective. But recent literature on distributed, shared, and co- leadership examines leadership structures of multiple individuals. To date, these investigations involve self-chosen, emergent leadership situations that permit an organic and customized development of relationships, and support the motivation to collaborate. This paper reports on a segment of a continuing case study research project looking at a mandated and institutionalized model of distributed leadership currently in use in nonprofit arts organizations. Responsibilities for each leader are institutionalized by tradition; those in the role are mandated, chosen by a third party; and the structure has inherent potential for conflict. Analysis of two cases suggests that a trusting relationship reduces the effect of differences in power status, thus reducing destructive conflict. Variations of this influence organizational effectiveness.

Keywords

Distributed Leadership, Nonprofit Arts Organizations, Organizational Effectiveness.

Introduction

Traditionally, scholars have argued that leadership roles should involve only one person for maximum effectiveness (Fayol, H., 1949; Locke, E. A., 2003; Weber, M., 1924/1947). In contrast to this wisdom, nonprofit performing arts organizations have evolved a dual leadership structure over the last century (Peterson, R. A., 1986). Reports indicate that there has been debate about the stability of this structure in the sector[1].

However, the management literature in both the academic and practitioner domains have recently shown interest in the phenomenon of leadership when more than one individual shares this role (Heenan, D. A. et al., 1999; House, R. J. et al., 1997). Variously referred to as distributed, shared, co- and collaborative or collective leadership, there are a number of theoretical, empirical and practitioner publications on how multiple leadership structures work and what impact they have on followers, stakeholders, and organizations (Gronn, P., 2002; Heenan, D. A. et al., 1999; Pearce, C. et al., 2003a;2003b). As yet, however, understanding of multiple leadership structures is in its nascent stage (Conger, J. A. et al., 2003; Day, D. V. et al., 2004).

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Investigations of the phenomenon to date have focused on organizations where individuals themselves choose a leadership structure that involves more than one person (Court, M., 2003b; Heenan, D. A. et al., 1999; Pearce, C. et al., 2003a). What is missing from this literature is a study of any settings where leadership labour is institutionally divided according to function, where the leaders are chosen by a higher authority (i.e. they are mandated), and where the leaders are situated in a vertically responsible role. Such a structure is found in many nonprofit performing arts organizations. In contrast with situations where leaders choose to share power and where responsibilities are not institutionally determined, a mandated, institutionalized type of dual leadership appears to be susceptible to distinct challenges. Inherent role conflict from the functional division of labour and a potential lack of agency from a mandated relationship is de-motivating and generates problems within the leadership structure. This conflict in turn may have an adverse impact on the organization's effectiveness. The research segment outlined in this paper looks at cases of two nonprofit performing arts organizations to investigate some specific dynamics of this leadership structure. It is suggested that a trusting leadership relationship mitigates the effect of power differences in conflict. In contrast, distrust can generate destructive conflict because power status differences between the duo are used to intensify the conflict. There is an impact on organizational effectiveness, as a result.

With the intention of contributing to the developing theory on distributed leadership an extensive study using case study analysis (Eisenhardt, K. M., 1989) is examining the following research questions:

1. What are the characteristics of a dual leadership structure that is mandated, and institutionalized?
2. What are the antecedents that lead to variations of mandated dual leadership?
3. What are the consequences for organizational effectiveness of the variations in this type of leadership?

Analysis of several cases to date has generated another subset of questions that this paper investigates in the interest of contributing to management and leadership of nonprofit arts organizations:

1. What inherent power differences exist in an institutionalized and mandated leadership structure despite ostensibly equal organizational relationship?
2. What factors inhibit or encourage use of these power differences in conflictual situations?
3. What are the consequences for organizational effectiveness of the variations in this type of leadership?

The following section provides an overview of the foundational leadership literature. While the leadership literature is vast, this ongoing study situates itself within a very recent development of the field that is concerned with several leaders of the organization or group. The term that appears to be gaining dominance in this growing field is distributed leadership.

Literature Review

Leadership theorists in the late 19th and early 20th centuries placed an emphasis on "command and control" (Pearce, C. et al., 2003a). A unifying theme in early research was the quest for insights on how to create greater efficiency in organizational life (Fayol, H., 1949; Weber, M., 1924/1947), and the assumption shared within this work was that a single individual served as

the organization's leader. This very pervasive assumption continues to appear throughout the leadership literature (Gronn, P., 2002; Pearce, C. et al., 2003a; Sjostrand, S.-E. et al., 2001).

Studies in traits, situations and types of leadership have all assumed that leadership is represented in a single individual (Bass, B. M., 1985; House, R. J., 1977; House, R. J. et al., 1996; Stodgill, R. M., 1974). Over the last two decades, charismatic or transformational leadership has become a particularly dominant feature in the leadership literature (Hunt, J. G., 1999; Lowe, K. B. et al., 2001). This theoretical approach focuses on one leader whose personal vision and values become the motivational forces for the whole organization (Bass, B. M., 1985; Bennis, W. et al., 1985; House, R. J., 1977). The leader/follower dyad, a standard unit of analysis in the literature, also reflects the root assumptions of individual leadership (Pearce, C. et al., 2003a). While other approaches to leadership have developed in contrast to charismatic leadership (like leader-member exchange (Graen, G. B. et al., 1995)), they remain concerned with an individual leader.

A partial departure from a focus on the lone leaders is present in the literature on "top management teams" which observes how the composition, values and dynamics of the group of senior managers of an organization impact on strategy (Finkelstein, S. et al., 1996; Hambrick, D. C. et al., 1984). However, while this approach studies group behaviour, it too is imbued with an understanding that there is a CEO who is *primus inter pares*. Still, many considerations of top management team theory provide very useful points of reference for the research in this study, particularly the notion of status differences in this paper.

In reaction to the assumption of single leaders in the leadership field, and based on observations that organizations can be run by more than a single leader, a number of theorists have independently begun to examine the nature of multiple leaders. Several terms have been used to describe multiple leadership situations, including distributed, shared, leader, co-leadership, and collaborative leadership.

"Distributed" leadership is treated most extensively in the educational leadership literature (Court, M., 2003b; Gronn, P., 1999) and is defined broadly and diversely through a taxonomy developed by Gronn (2002). This approach is influenced by democratic principles or empowering perspectives; advocates in the educational leadership field argue that its impact improves educational experiences for students (Court, M., 2003a; 2003b).

"Shared" leadership (Pearce, C. et al., 2003b) is rooted in the social psychology literature concerned with teams or groups, and is focused on increased creative outcomes of emergent and informal leadership within a work group. Pearce and his colleagues argue that, in contrast to vertical leadership, work group dynamics will organically generate a variety of leaders from within the group, and that this process enhances the achievement of the group.

"Co-leadership" (Heenan, D. A. et al., 1999) is about two executives (usually a CEO and COO, or a mentor situation) with a self-recognized sense of synergy; they address together the increased complexity of contemporary environments. Heenan and Bennis (1999) claim that this results in improved leadership effectiveness.

"Collective" or "collaborative" leadership (Alexander, J. A. et al., 2001; Denis, J.-L. et al., 2001; Huxham, C. et al., 2000) develops through organizational partnerships or joint ventures, and involves the challenges of ambiguous authority and environmental evolution. A capacity to collaborate across organizational boundaries at the senior leadership level improves the success of the strategic organizational partnership (Huxham, C. et al., 2000).

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All of the perspectives on multiple leadership structures investigated by scholars to date examine emergent, self-chosen or uniquely configured multiple leadership situations. In contrast to the traditional belief that the single leadership is the only effective structure, these perspectives argue that the presence of this structure would also contribute to some type of effectiveness (Day, D. V., 2004). However, none of this literature has investigated the impact on organizational effectiveness of a structure that has been institutionalized over time, and where two executive leaders with separate, specified responsibilities are chosen by a higher authority (i.e. not self chosen or emergent) such as a Board of Directors. The trust and power dynamics of such institutionalized mandated dual leadership as found in nonprofit performing arts organizations is the specific concern of this paper.

In the mandated, institutionalized approach found in arts organizations, two characteristics are distinct. First, the division of labour has already been well established over time, prior to selection of the individuals, and is symbolically representative of different traditions imbued with oppositional values (management in the performing arts and the artistic craft) (Chiapello, E., 1998; Chong, D., 2002; Peterson, R. A., 1986). For example, in nonprofit performing arts organizations, an artistic director would usually regard aesthetic values to be most important, and the executive director would find that economic values like financial stability and marketability are priorities. There may be limited common ground in which to work.

Second, both leaders are chosen individually by an authority other than themselves. This means that the two leaders often work with different tenures, and may have been chosen for organizational reasons, with no considerations for compatibility within the leadership relationship. The potential for conflict between the two leaders appears to be greater than is the case in situations of emergent and self-chosen leadership structure because the co-leaders may lack control over the choice of characteristics of the individual with whom they share power. There may be limited motivation to collaborate in contrast to the self-chosen models.

Since the key factors for successful collaboration found in the shared or distributed literature are eliminated (the ability for leaders to select one another and to mutually negotiate the division of labour), other factors must exist for the leadership to work together well. Anecdotal evidence in the field of performing arts organizations suggests that mandate, institutionalize leadership structures *can* be collaborative, but are not universally so.

In summary, we propose two research opportunities: 1) to extend theory about distributed leadership by investigating cases of institutionalized, mandated leadership structures found in nonprofit arts organizations and examining certain factors that increase the impact on organizational effectiveness and 2) to contribute to understanding of effectiveness for practitioners in nonprofit performing arts organizations.

Methodological Approach

Why Case Study Analysis?

Case study analysis (Eisenhardt, K. M., 1989; Miles, M. B. et al., 1994; Yin, R. K., 2003) was chosen for this ongoing study for several reasons: it is an appropriate method to develop a contribution to theory (Eisenhardt, K. M., 1989), it includes the context effectively (Bryman, A. et al., 1996), and it can examine different levels of analysis with ease thus facilitating an analysis of the whole organization (Eisenhardt, K. M., 1989; Rousseau, D. M., 1985).

Leadership is a phenomenon that crosses levels of analysis. Leadership scholars have long argued and worked within the assumption that a study's focus should not remain within one level alone. House and colleagues argue in favour of "meso" theory – that is theory that crosses at least one, if not two or more levels of analysis (House, R. J. et al., 1995).

This ongoing research study includes constructs that exist at different levels. For the focus of this paper, there is an organizational level construct (organizational effectiveness), individual level constructs (power status) and dyad level constructs (trusting relationship). This range across levels frames the whole organization, even-though the unit of analysis is the leadership structure (i.e. the dyad level). This structural focus argues for a case study method of research in order to examine that dyad (Eisenhardt, K. M., 1989).

Research Context

Nonprofit arts organizations are of interest for the practical objectives of this study. They are also useful as sites for the case studies in the broader theoretical considerations of the study because a form of institutionalized, mandated dual leadership has been in place in these organizations for over a century. The leadership structure involves an artistic director and a general manager or executive director, both hired by and jointly responsible to the Board of Directors (Peterson, R. A., 1986).

Since this ongoing study intends to develop theory, the choice of each arts organization as a site for case study was made for theoretical reasons, as opposed to random sampling (Eisenhardt, K. M., 1989). Factors that are obvious distinguishing characteristics of an organization, of its environment or of its leadership duo have been considered in the choice of organization in order to control for those considerations in the study. Choosing organizations by these factors ensures that the full range of different types of organizations and duos are considered. If there is similarity found across these considerations, the validity of any theory developed in this ongoing research becomes more secure. These factors are organization size, organizational funding contexts, organizational purpose (i.e. type of art form), the leaders' respective tenure length, leaders' founder status, and leaders' educational and experience backgrounds.

The research on this leadership phenomenon continues but, initially, two organizations have been chosen for analysis because of their contrasting nature and their ability to provide data that looks at issues of trust and power differences. In the choice of organizations for data collection, there was an express effort to find at least one organization where the leadership duo is a highly regarded entity and perceived to be very collaborative. Further efforts were undertaken to explore an organization where the leadership duo is not functional and had limited success in communicating and making decisions. This provides data on contrasting leadership relationships and allows some understanding of what impact this might have on the effectiveness of the organization.

One organization is based in Eastern Canada and is very large. The other is located on the West Coast and is much smaller. These organizations represent very different funding environments and contrasting arts disciplines. Both Artistic Directors had been in place over 10 years and have experienced considerable box office success. Both spend extended lengths of time in the rehearsal studio and one is a creative artist. The Executive Directors have been with the organization about 4 or 5 years. Neither Executive Director had previous experience in this kind of role nor do they have any formal training or education in management. Both had some management experience in arts organizations prior to their role as Executive Director, with one

having been an artist. This paper reports on suggestions arising from the analysis of these two cases.

Data Collection

Unstructured hour-long[2] interviews (McCracken, G., 1988) were used to examine a range of perspectives from individuals in and around the organization. A total of 9 or 10 interviews were undertaken for each organization. Both leaders were interviewed, as well as the chair of the Board of Directors, two other members of the Board that might have insights on how donors and corporate sponsors might think, two or three members of staff that have both internal and external perspectives on the organization, an artist associated with the company, and finally, the appropriate officer at the federal funding organization for professional nonprofit arts organizations.

The interview question format involved open questions about leadership, the specific leadership relationship of the particular organization, leadership style in the organization and how various stakeholders in and around the organization would perceive the organization's effectiveness and the leadership in the organization. These interviews were all taped and transcribed providing documents for textual analysis.

As well, documents that reflect the dynamic of the leaders and how they communicate to a range of stakeholders were collected. These might include grant applications to the federal arts council, Board minutes or reports to the Board from the two leaders, and annual reports that would be shared with the membership of the organization. The use of a variety of sources about the leadership and stakeholder impressions contributes to the reliability of the research (Eisenhardt, K. M., 1989; Yin, R. K., 2003).

Data Analysis

Analysis of the data from the two case studies followed advice from Miles and Huberman (1994) and Coffey (1996). Themes were identified through the analysis of each case. Repetition of themes that occurred across interviews and across sources within the case provided the basis for summarizing and developing ideas. Bundling and abstracting these themes through a distillation process followed, all the while observing how the themes relate to each other. Summarizing the threads of the themes that emerge enabled the production of an accurate and rich narrative of the case (Coffey, A. et al., 1996; Miles, M. B. et al., 1994; Strauss, A. et al., 1998).

The following section provides a brief description of the two cases, focussing on the dynamics of trust and power difference.

Results

The themes that emerged from the case analysis indicate a pattern of trust and distrust that appears to influence the use of power differences during conflict within the duo. Despite the apparent equality of the two leaders' positions in the organization because they jointly report directly to the Board, there are differences in status resulting from tenure, experience in the role, functional responsibilities, organizational history and individual relationships with the Board of Directors. Implications for internal organizational effectiveness occur, once power differences are used in the conflicts arising from decision-making. The links between power differences,

trust and internal processes leading to organizational effectiveness appear in the data; the individual case narratives about these issues are outlined below. Short discussions of power differences, trust and organizational effectiveness follow with references to the three tables outlining dimensions of these constructs. The tables summarize the appropriate data found in the two cases

Summary from the Cases

In Case One, the Artistic Director (AD) stated clearly that without the Executive Director's (ED) proactive capabilities supporting his ideas of developmental projects for the organization, he would not have been successful. The trust was manifested in both directions in this partnership (the interaction is respectful both publicly and personally) and this behaviour was acknowledged by both staff and Board during interviews with them. The AD felt that the ED, by the nature of professional responsibilities and past history of the organization, had more power in relation to the Board. The ED was aware of the more junior status from age, tenure and artistic stature. But neither appeared to use their differences in power through the potentially conflicted process of programming and organizational planning. Evidence indicates that they argue from time to time behind closed doors, but this conflict is never public and does not affect the nature of the ongoing decision-making process.

In contrast, Case Two provides a portrait of distrust, power related behaviour, and destructive conflict. The AD began the relationship by allowing the ED a year to learn the role. With no previous experience at this level of leadership, the ED was junior to the AD. Unfortunately the expectations were too difficult to achieve. The ED was perceived as unreliable, distrust developed, resulting in the ED's defensive withdrawal from active leadership in the organization. As a situation with an AD whose creative ideas are key to the identity of the organization, Case Two demonstrates how power derived from a close association with the mandate of the organization is used to justify unplanned production cost overruns – behaviour that was destructive to the organization as a whole. The AD's powerful personal behaviour further aggravated the relationship of the two leaders, politicizing the planning and programming processes and causing considerable strain for the staff. Two events ended this destructive process: first, the ED, using a more intimate presence with the Board, confronted them with the need to intervene in the operations of the organization because of the AD's behaviour; and second, the ED resigned, leaving for another organization, thus forcing the Board to address the problem in an even more strategic fashion but leaving the organization without leadership on the management side for about four months.

Power Status Differences

In nonprofit arts organizations, two leaders are formally hired by Boards of Directors and placed equally in the structure of the organization. Both are responsible to the Board and have a range of staff and contracted craft workers and artists reporting up to them. However, a number of factors may provide one or the other leader with variations in status. In the two cases studied for this paper, the analysis indicates a range of factors that might suggest power differences inside the organization and with certain stakeholders. Table 1 provides a list of these factors and supporting data from each case.

Top Management Team literature (Finkelstein, S. et al., 1996) reiterates some of these factors, particularly tenure, and professional status. However, the relationship in these cases is unique because of the role of the artistic mandate. The AD's artistic taste, and the artistic activity of the organization establishes a certain market position with audiences and funders, generating a

public profile the AD that can put them in a superior position. On the other hand, the ED may share a business orientation with Board members, and this mutual orientation may provide the ED with better access to this ultimate governing function for the organization.

Table 1:
Power Status Differences

	CASE ONE	CASE TWO
AGE	-different generations (ED younger)	-similar generation
TENURE IN POSITION	-AD is double ED	-AD is double ED
TENURE IN ORGANIZATION	-AD started career in organization -ED started career in organization but about 20 years later	-came to organization as AD
ROLE IN RELATIONSHIP TO ARTISTIC MANDATE	-AD chooses repertoire and directs some work-"new coat of paint" (AD) – leadership has been incremental to tradition of organization	-AD creates work -style of work and way of working with artists is very distinctive and has changed public profile of company
HISTORY OF RELATIONSHIP	-AD mentored ED in organization as future leader as artist -"father-son" (Bd member), "good friends for years" (Staff)	-some familiarity in sector meetings and touring -close relationship is new and unproven: "you've got a year" from AD to ED
HISTORICAL CONNECTION WITH BOARD	-very established organization -AD role has been disciplined by Board in past -"ED always has the power with the Board" (AD)	-young organization -history of AD instability when current AD arrived – loyalty is very appreciated -past disputes between AD and ED have been resolved by Board in AD's favour
CURRENT CONNECTION WITH BOARD	-"AD was afraid to come to Board meetings, but now …"(Board member) -AD actively attends all Board and committee meetings -"speak to ED 3xday and AD once/week" (Board chair) – AD more distant -ED is much loved and universally appreciated by Board because of achievement and growth	-ED working hard for respect from Board -"Board will give AD all he wants" (ED) -AD rarely attends Board meetings but resolves to do more
AD ROLE IN CHOICE OF ED	-ED identified by Board after AD promoted ED through different artistic and administrative roles	-AD expressed great interest because of functional competence -current ED is previous ED'S recommendation to Board

Trusting Relationship

Table 2 provides an overview and description of the factors from the case data that are part of a trusting relationship. The literature on trust while varied and extensive, consistently discusses the notion of vulnerability (Bigley, G. A. et al., 1998; Rousseau, D. M. et al., 1998). In a structure with the division of labour traditional found in this sector, the two partners have significant dependencies. Each needs the other, either to produce an attractive quality product for audience and stakeholders, or to find the resources to finance product production. It is a close circle of dependence, and each is quite vulnerable to the other in their ability to function in their roles. The data reflects this notion of mutual vulnerability.

Table 2:
Trusting Relationship

	CASE ONE	CASE TWO
EXPECTATIONS OF ED	-previous ED's departures were negotiated -Board hopes for learning in new ED -AD hopes to retain relationship -comparators are negative	-general management should be learned quickly and great success for functional area -previous comparator is positive
VULNERABILITY OF AD	-reputation as leader of organization versus as an artist is important -reputation as an artist is established -some sense of vulnerability	-personal reputation as creative artist is developing -personal sense of vulnerability is great due to other blocks in career
VULNERABILITY OF ED	-first job in management but can fall back on artistic accomplishments	-first job in management and going back to functional management is symbolic of failure
CONFLICT MANAGEMENT	-behind closed doors and healthy arguments (Staff and Board) -"differences" but not arguments (AD) -demonstrate mutual public respect and caring (staff and Board)	-private differences at first but becomes more open -private differences -disrespect communicated to staff -staff and artists experience tension
COMMUNICATION	-very frequent and daily -direct and unfiltered	-decreasing frequency -refusal by AD and avoidance by ED to talk or meet -staff conduit

Organizational Effectiveness

There are many external symbols of organizational effectiveness in the field of nonprofit management and the criteria are varied depending on the assessor (Herman, R. et al., 1999). Internal processes are more difficult to assess. But, in these cases, the data evidences

variations in internal process effectiveness. The connection to external perceptions of effectiveness is examined in the larger study. Table 3 provides an overview of these factors.

Table 3:
Organizational Effectiveness

	CASE ONE	CASE TWO
PLANNING	-undertaken together and by whole organization	-ED undertook the process alone –by choice and then because of lack of communication between ED and AD
FINANCIAL HEALTH	-positive	-lack of collaboration risks significant deficit until Board leadership intervenes
COMMUNICATION WITH BOARD	-equal preparation before Board meetings and mutual support while in presence of Board	-alone with Board President
LEADERSHIP	-staff and artists secure in knowledge of collaborative relationship -authority of both leaders secure	-staff increasingly aware of break down in communication -staff develop direct links with AD -loss of authority by ED
EXTERNAL RELATIONS	-process runs effectively with respect by all	-deadlines for funding do not have appropriate attention risking appropriate funding

Future Research

The data from the two case studies suggests that trust reduces or eliminates the need to use power status within the leadership relationship in the normal moments of conflict that occur in the planning and management process of nonprofit arts organizations. Although the suggestions provided in this paper are well supported by the data, validity needs to be confirmed by the larger study of eight cases. And further abstraction is needed to develop this particular element as part a larger model examining the full dynamic of the leadership duo.

Implications

For practitioners, Boards of Directors of nonprofit arts organizations may find the insights about the relationship dynamics of the leadership duo useful when hiring, and individuals in these leadership roles may find the perspectives from the research helpful when considering how they function together.

Summary

While still in its early stages of development, this study provides some theory development regarding the nature of and implications for organizational effectiveness for nonprofit performing arts organizations where a structure of mandated and institutionalized dual leadership has been

well established. A trusting relationship between the two leaders aids in reducing the normal conflict that occurs in these situations. As a result, leaders do not feel the need to make use of any differential in power that might exist between them. This reduces the conflict intensity, and reduces interference in the organization's planning and management processes. This dynamic stands at the core of a conceptualization of a mandated, institutionalized dual leadership.

Acknowledgements

Notes

[1] Conversations with Executive Directors of disciplinary service organizations in Canada have indicated that in certain disciplines this debate is of great interest. As well there have been recent changes from dual to single leadership structures in some high profile organizations. In contrast, there have also been recent changes from single to dual structures. There appears to be no consensus on this topic.

[2] While interviewees were told that the interview would be only one hour long, there were a number of individuals who chose to talk for longer. A few interviews have been two hours long. No interviews were under one hour in length.

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