Arts Management in India

A first-of-its-kind study addressing challenges in formal education for arts management in India

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is a first-of-its-kind study in India that looks at formal education and skilling challenges in the cultural sector from the perspective of working professionals and arts management aspirants. The study identifies requirements in the arts management education landscape and work within the cultural sector, while mapping existing gaps, skilling needs and barriers to the entry of professionals in the cultural sector.

The research methodology comprised interviews, focus group discussions and public events, involving 126 respondents. We interviewed a diverse group of stakeholders – students, cultural professionals and those who are either aspiring to enter the field (henceforth referred to as arts management aspirants) or have transitioned into it – from Mumbai, Delhi and Bengaluru. As part of our primary research, we also curated formal open-table public events in Mumbai and Delhi, involving established and emerging professionals from the cultural sector. The research was also supported by a thorough review of existing literature on arts management in India.

Gaps and Barriers

Through this study, we found that while India has some training diplomas and fellowships on arts management, there are no university-led degrees or diplomas on the subject. Research findings pointed towards the lack of adequate training institutions and programmes as being one of the top three gaps in arts management. There are connected programmes available, which offer very specific training in niches such as conservation, Indian art and aesthetics, museum studies or art history. However, these programmes only focus on specific sub-sectors instead of providing a macro-level perspective on the cultural sector, and rarely offer training in practical and transversal skills such as management, marketing, project planning, policy, etc.

As an alternative to formal training programmes, mentorship and apprenticeship can provide the crucial development framework for cultural professionals by imparting guidance and knowledge. However, the sector lacks formal mentorship and apprenticeship programmes, and respondents felt that the absence of mentorship is a massive gap that could otherwise prove to be an important on-the-job career development tool.

Respondents identified inadequate sector knowledge, including information on growth numbers of the cultural sector, published placement rates, pay scales, as another key gap, which made it challenging for them to take an informed decision about their career choice. Furthermore, the lack of recognition of the arts and culture as a formal 'sector' or 'industry' was seen to challenge the legitimacy of work in this area as a profession. Consequently, the sector also suffers from an absence of a standardised work culture, which generates uncertainty in areas of pay parity, job opportunities, growth figures and data on the sector, and quality standards of delivery of work in the sector.

Because of the ambiguous nature of career progression in the cultural sector, respondents found it challenging to invest in an expensive international degree in arts management. In the absence of information on placement structures and salary slabs, opting for a formal arts management is considered a high-risk investment with unclear returns. Findings also highlighted the legitimacy of arts management as a stable profession as a serious barrier to accessing skilling opportunities. In addition, 20% of the total respondents highlighted inadequate pay and low salaries as key barriers that hinder their entry and growth in the sector.

In sum, the respondents sought more information about the cultural sector that would:

a) help them understand the scope and scale of the sector;

b) give them an idea about job prospects, including career options, growth paths and pay scales; and,

c) enable access to industry faculty, events, mentorship and guidance in the cultural sector.

Recommendations

Any recommendations need to be context specific, considering the way India's cultural sector operates, and the way education and learning functions in India. With that in mind, key recommendations include:

Recommendations for the Cultural Sector:

a) *Short modules and workshops on arts management with institutional partners:* Arts institutions can seek out like-minded funding and educational partners for year-round modules/ workshops for in-house staff training and development. Educational partners could include organisations conducting diploma programmes and fellowships such as SDA Bocconi, ATSA and others; university departments delivering liberal arts programmes and training institutions under the Government of India.

b) *Professional life skills for the cultural sector:* This module could be conducted over the weekend or during the evenings, focusing on consulting and project management for freelance professionals.

c) *Create best-practice case studies, guidelines and processes:* We recommend a practice-oriented and participatory research project as a collaboration between cultural sector practitioners and researchers to create a set of materials that record best practices for processes as well as guidelines that the sector can use to develop itself and work efficiently. This recommendation would not only augment the severe lack of information sharing about the sector but also contribute to widening SDA Bocconi's role as a thought leader in India. It could be made possible by developing resources on best practices and processes of working in the cultural sector.

2. INTRODUCTION - THE RESEARCH

This is a first-of-its-kind study in India that looks at formal education and skilling challenges in the cultural sector from the perspective of working professionals and arts management aspirants. The study identifies requirements in the arts management education landscape and work within the cultural sector, while mapping existing gaps, skilling needs and barriers to the entry of professionals in the cultural sector.

The Art X Company undertook the study on behalf of SDA Bocconi Asia Center, a pan-Asian hub in Mumbai that has been delivering executive education and postgraduate programmes designed by Italy's SDA Bocconi School of Management since 2012.

The primary objective of the study is to identify the skilling needs of cultural sector professionals and the barriers faced by those who aspire to access upskilling opportunities and higher education in arts management in India. The insights from the study will help identify the scope and rationalise the need for Arts Management training programmes in India. Research for the study was undertaken across three cities in India: Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru. A secondary goal of the study is to shape the SDA Bocconi Asia Center's strategy for their new programme, the International Programme in Arts Management (IPAM), launched earlier this year.

The study highlights the current training needs and opportunities to further enable and strengthen the relevance of the IPAM course. The report provides specific recommendations for the SDA Bocconi Asia Center as it looks to build a strong foundation in formal training systems for the arts management sector. At the same time, the study also makes significant recommendations to address the broader educational needs of the Indian cultural sector.

The study used a mixed-methods approach, which encompassed in-depth interviews and discussions with 22 cultural sector professionals (including arts managers, independent consultants, students and those who aspire to work in the sector). Two focus-group discussions and public-events held in Mumbai and Delhi also contributed to our research methodology.

While our study provides wide-ranging insights into educational needs, job prospects and upskilling gaps in arts management space, an exhaustive mapping of the educational requirements in the cultural sector in each city and region was out of scope. Neither the authors nor the SDA Bocconi Asia Center assume any warranty for the accuracy, completeness or use of the findings, owing to the fact that the study is based on a small data set and that its statistical validity remains a challenge. Readers are, therefore, responsible for assessing the relevance and accuracy of the study's content based on their understanding of the subject.

2.1   BACKGROUND OF STUDY AND CULTURAL SECTOR OVERVIEW

There is a common joke about higher education in India: A father tells his daughter, "*You can study any subject as long as it is engineering.*" For long, conventional wisdom in the country has held that a degree in the sciences (medicine, engineering) or business management guarantees a stable career and a well-paying job devoid of risks.[1] On the other hand, disciplines like liberal arts and humanities are looked down upon as they are considered to generate comparatively erratic sources of income.

However, this scenario has undergone a change in the last few years, as the number of students opting for courses in humanities have registered an increase, while the enrollments in fields like engineering and medicine have either increased marginally or have decreased.[2,3,4] According to a 2014-15 report by India's Ministry of Human Resource and Development, "At the undergraduate level the highest

number (40%) of students are enrolled in Arts/ Humanities/ Social Sciences courses followed by Science (16%), Engineering and Technology (15.6%) and Commerce (14.1%)."[5] The trend could also be indicative of the fact that humanities courses are less resource-intensive as compared to the sciences. While it is important to provide a larger context of ongoing interest in pursuing humanities as an area of study, this paper mainly focuses on *arts management*.

Where do arts administrators work?	And what do they do?
museums	marketing
think tanks	management
artist residencies	programming
galleries	education/outreach
festivals	fundraising
orchestras	research/analysis
foundations	operations
arts councils	cultural policy
theater companies	patron services
dance companies	consulting
presenting organizations	production
opera companies	finance
cultural ministries	community arts
arts education centers	advocacy
...and more!	

Image Source: Association of Arts Administration Educators[6]

The cultural sector in India is vast, comprising museums, galleries, biennales, art fairs, film festivals, music concerts, stage productions and allied activities. A look at the festival market indicates a steady growth over the past decade. India sees more than 200 literature festivals and 20-25 top line music and food festivals produced each year. In 2018, the size of the visual arts market in India stood at ₹14.6 billion[7], while the size of the performing arts industry stood at ₹236 billion, in 2012. It is set to grow to ₹275 billion in 2018 with an expected CAGR of 2.5%.[8]

Additionally, arts and culture (national heritage) is the fifth largest area of investment for corporate philanthropy under the new CSR rules, which came into effect on 1 April 2014. As per these rules, companies with either a net worth of ₹500 crore or revenue of ₹1,000 crore or net profit of ₹5 crore should spend 2% of their average profit on CSR including culture.[9] Private philanthropy in India has also been on the rise, with funding from private individuals having recorded a six-fold increase in recent years – approximately ₹36,000 crore in 2016, up from approximately ₹6,000 crore in 2011.[10] Conflating the above data with the rise in the number of private art foundations, initiatives and museums [11,12], it can be concluded that there is a potential demand for management of these initiatives and organisations. Moreover, such a thriving market provides a range of options for various stakeholders, from corporate sponsors to arts professionals, to take advantage of this growth.

FORMAL EDUCATION IN THE ARTS

A bulk of the training in the arts in India comes from courses and degrees that are university-led and focused on the *practice* of theatre, music, visual arts, dance and related fields. In addition, on-the-job training, and short-term training in the form of workshops, fellowships and short courses also aid the development of skills of these professionals.[13] Broadly careers in the cultural sector span that of a *practicing artist*, which involves skill-based learning, and the *arts administrator*, which includes administration and management of the organisations and projects within the cultural sector. Since this

study primarily covers arts management, we narrow our focus on the training of arts administration or managerial professionals.

Arts administrators can be categorised into two types: the technical professionals and operational/managerial professionals. Technical professionals, who work mainly in transversal areas such as lighting, production, make-up, sound etc, can be trained either at one of the several Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) or on the job (often informally). Managerial professionals and those at the helm of cultural organisations also develop their skills on the job, which is often complemented by a degree or a course in related fields such as media and publishing, production, film-making, museology and art history. In the visual arts sector, for example, some of the job profiles would range from gallery manager, outreach coordinator, artist manager and the like. The scope of such roles is fairly broad.

Technical professionals in India enter the cultural sector through informal apprenticeships, because there is a lack of alternatives to acquiring formal training and induction of new entrants. These professionals form the backbone of events and artistic productions across all sectors. Either they work as employees of cultural organisations or with a team of specialised vendors/ service providers, who are hired for sound, light, set design and production. Many technical professionals work their way up the ranks after gaining experience. As they gain success and grow in their roles, the junior staff and entry-level technicians learn from them, which creates a cycle of an informal system of in-house training.

Professionals in managerial and leadership positions often tend to come from established higher education institutions, with degrees related to their line of work. Many of those professionals at the top-tier will have gained experience and exposure to international practices outside of India through education, short courses and travel, before taking up these roles in the cultural sector in India. While this trend highlights a socio-economic difference between most technicians and arts managers, the equally bigger concern is a shortage of organisations that can provide training for skills in arts management in India. In fact, there is no formal degree available in arts management in India, neither at the undergraduate or postgraduate level. The few postgraduate courses that are available (such as the M.A. in Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology at St Xavier's College in Mumbai; MA in Curatorial Practice: Film, Media & Visual Arts at Srishti Institute of Art, Design & Technology, Bengaluru; or M.A. in Arts and Aesthetics at Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi), cover broad areas such as conservation, study of arts and aesthetics, heritage and art history. The few training opportunities to gain arts management training that exist in India include diplomas and fellowships by the ARThink South Asia (ATSA) fellowship, Strategic Management in the Art of Theatre (SMART) by India Foundation for the Arts and India Theatre Forum, and a Diploma in Arts Management offered by Chennai-based museum DakshinaChitra.

Given the lack of training avenues, several students and aspiring arts management professionals end up pursuing higher education abroad. However, the downside to studying in a country with a completely different cultural market ecosystem is the inability of graduates to apply context and implement the strategies and management styles back in India. To a certain extent, this struggle often renders the foreign degree irrelevant.

In 2014, a report by the Ministry of Culture's High Powered Committee (HPC) identified the industry of arts administrators in India as a relatively new sector that is not just growing but also being recognised as a viable career option. "*Till very recently, the formal study of cultural administration, of the performing arts and the professional choice of managing the arts was very rare among young people; today there are many bright people who have put aside lucrative professions to work in a world of cultural action, out of their love for the arts. Their knowledge and passion are second to none, and their numbers are growing*," the report noted. The HPC report also refers to the quality of staff as one of the primary aspects of the cultural administration of the country, stating that the Ministry of Culture is

lacking a support system of human capital in the form of expert opinion that other industries like agriculture and commerce have actively invested in.

It is against this background that this white paper aims to outline the gaps, skilling needs of the cultural sector professionals and barriers faced by those who aspire to access upskilling opportunities and higher education in arts management in India. The next two sections will attempt to address these concerns through analysis of the data gathered during the study.

2.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The research approach adopted for this study was inductive reasoning, which used multiple premises and experiences of the study participants, and combined them to reach specific conclusions. The research objectives of the project are outlined below:

> o To identify skill needs and gaps of arts management aspirants and cultural professionals
> o To identify barriers faced by them in accessing upskilling opportunities and higher education in arts management
> o Provide recommendations for both sector stakeholders and SDA Bocconi Asia Center

Data collected by our team was used to explore the existing challenges faced by cultural professionals, identify themes and patterns and create a conceptual framework of recommendations for sector stakeholders ranging from educational institutions (SDA Bocconi Asia Center) to private and public cultural organisations.

2.3 GLOSSARY

a) Cultural Sector: The cultural sector is one that traditionally relies heavily on public funding for the core activities and institutions of the sector. [14] The general arts or cultural sub-sectors that attract heavy public funding include national monuments, heritage monuments, museums, arts schools, cultural institutions of national importance, and government cultural institutions. Public funding for these sectors and institutions is premised on the general recognition that public funding of culture is desirable to ensure access to culture, cultural diversity and a flourishing sector. [14]

b) Creative Industries: International cultural economic studies from the 1970s to the 1990s have explored the formalisation of this sector into a contributor *"of the modern economy where culture is produced and distributed through industrial means"*[15], terming it as cultural industries. In the late 1990s, the term "creative industries" came to formally proposed first in the UK by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), and then by UNESCO, where thirteen cultural sub-sectors were seen as "*applying the creativity of individuals and groups to the generation of original cultural product, which may have commercial value either through direct sale to consumers or as intellectual property*" termed as "cultural and creative industries".

c) Creative Economy: Since the last two decades, research has been dedicated to exploring the contribution of the cultural sector and related industries into the economy of a nation including jobs, direct revenue growth and indirect economic spillover into related sectors such as tourism and digital industries. This contribution is formally termed as the 'Creative Economy'.[16]

d) <u>Arts Management Education:</u> Formal system of training to initiate a professional or student's entry into the cultural sector.

e) <u>Arts Management Professional:</u> A salaried employee or a consultant either working with an organisation or independently, and whose primary role involves managing any of the cultural sector's activities and events.

f) <u>Technical Professional:</u> Those involved in production and technical aspects of the cultural sector in terms of event management, including stage and film production, sound and stage design etc.

g) <u>Upskilling:</u> The practice of acquiring additional skills, often pursued by a working professional.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the use of qualitative research tools including literature review, one-on-one interviews, focus group discussions and experimental events, where a diverse range of participants and cultural professionals discussed the gaps in arts management training in India. We undertook this research in three phases: preparation and desk research; fieldwork (comprising interviews, focus group discussions and public events); and finally drawing analytical insights from each of these, which culminated in the report's production.

3.1 RESEARCH TOOLS AND LIMITATIONS

The research tools that were used are as follows:

1. *Desk Research* – A literature review was undertaken to understand the educational and professional landscape we are operating in.
2. *Structured Interviews (both in-person and telephonic)* – These interviews were undertaken while ensuring the intersectionality across gender, work experience and cultural sub-sectors (Theatre, Music, Dance, Museums & Heritage, Visual Arts, Arts Services, among others). Suggestions from influencers and stakeholders were sought and the snowballing method was used to add to the list of research subjects.
3. *Focus Group Discussions (across Mumbai and Delhi)* – Participants were selected at random, in line with maintaining the intersectionality across gender, work experience and cultural sub-sectors, while ensuring, to the most possible extent, that the participants were not known to each other.
4. *Public Events (across Mumbai and Delhi)* – Two public events comprising invited speakers from the India Art Fair, Sanskriti Foundation, Godrej India Culture Lab, IAM: Indian Art Market, apart from established cultural entrepreneurs, was organised. The discussions were enriched by the participation of cultural sector professionals, belonging to a wide variety of sub-sectors, who attended the event.

Broadly, the participants that we identified for the study were at three stages of their career in the arts. These included undergraduate students pursuing courses in the arts/ liberal arts/ culture studies; professionals who have been working in the sector for a period of 3-10 years; and professionals from related fields who have either recently entered the cultural field or plan to work in the cultural sector. Together, 126 cultural professionals shared their inputs for the study, including 26 participants of the interviews and group discussions.

<u>Limitations</u>

The scope of the study was quite limited, relying on a small data set as it covered Mumbai, Delhi and Bengaluru. Because it was not a pan-India study, we cannot make claims to the statistical validity of its quantitative data. However, we suggest that qualitative data of the ecosystem be looked at by way of supporting insights gleaned through the study's interviews. The various topics covered in this research paper are not comprehensive, but they offer an overview of some of the pressing issues in arts management. This report, therefore, is best seen through the thematic format of a "white paper", as an "*authoritative report or guide that discusses issues on a certain subject along with a solution on how to solve them*".17

4. SKILL GAPS IN ARTS MANAGEMENT

We initially outlined the entry routes of cultural professionals into the sector to track their learning journeys. Broadly, there are two pathways through which professionals enter the cultural sector. The first relates to the understanding of and access to the cultural sector by aspirants who have gained them through social and cultural capital afforded by their own social networks and family connections. Social capital and cultural capital emerged in the 1980s as concepts presented in the essay 'The Forms of Capital', by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1985), and include both economic resources that one gains from being part of a network of social relationships and non-economic sources such as knowledge, skills, and education. These benefits comprise social mobility, which often translates into apprenticeship and job opportunities for such aspirants. Along with drive and passion for the arts, these aspirants' inclination to enter the sector is framed by the perceived value that these social and cultural relationships generate.

The second pathway into the sector is taken by those aspirants, who "accidentally stumble upon an arts-related opportunity". This can be in the shape of a volunteering opportunity, a fellowship or an internship. Although this pathway is also reliant on social capital and networks to a certain extent, the professional's career growth is likely to be more organic than defined as in the former pathway. Most respondents of the study felt that while access to the sector was relatively easy, the career progression after posed certain challenges.

Respondents felt that their career progression within the sector was somewhat unclear and they often felt unsure about their next career move. Lack of awareness about available training courses in arts management, scoping the breadth of existing career options, and absence of formal mentorship and apprenticeship programmes were the main reasons that augmented this feeling. Furthermore, the lack of recognition of the arts and culture as a formal 'sector' or 'industry' was seen to challenge the legitimacy of work in this area as a profession. Consequently, the sector also suffers from an absence of a standardised work culture, which generates ambiguity in areas of pay parity, job opportunities, growth figures and data on the sector, and quality standards of delivery of work in the sector.

The study's 126 respondents comprised interviewees, FGD participants and attendees to the public events. According to them, the top three gaps faced by arts management professionals are:

- o Lack of education options and avenues for accessing information on skilling opportunities
- o Inadequate sector knowledge that would allow them to take legitimate and informed decision about a career in the arts
- o Skill gaps in specific areas

4.1 LACK OF ADEQUATE TRAINING PROGRAMMES

Nearly all respondents felt that lack of formal courses on arts management posed a significant gap in the development of cultural professionals and their ability to build scale and advance their work.

> *I was not aware about arts management courses when I was younger. So, I have no formal training in managing the arts, artists or funding. However once you start working it becomes difficult to leave a job and pursue a course. I have to then figure out whether to take an evening or a weekend programme; full-time programmes are challenging to go back to.*
>
> *– Siddhanth Arora, communications professional and editor, Mumbai*

While there are a few fellowships and diploma programmes that have emerged in the last decade, these are not adequately advertised or promoted on prominent public platforms or in the media. There are no specific websites, magazines or online platforms catering to the formal education needs of the sector that can keep the aspirants informed about their potential career options. If at all, updates about new training programmes and opportunities tend to be shared within a closed group of people.

As an alternative to formal training programmes, mentorship and apprenticeship can play the crucial development framework for cultural professionals by providing guidance and knowledge. However, the sector lacks formal mentorship and apprenticeship programmes, and respondents felt that the absence of mentorship is a massive gap that could otherwise prove to be an important on-the-job career development tool. Coupled with a lack of formal education and skilling opportunities, cultural sector professionals have to be self-motivated enough to grow in the sector.

> *Despite an organic growth, I feel like I am struggling with a vision, specifically mentorship. Because my path is not prescribed, it doesn't follow a pattern. I have to rely on myself to figure out the next milestone of my career.*
>
> *– Shivangi Kumar, project consultant, Bengaluru*

> *I would love to have someone guide me, especially who has a lot more experience in the arts or running a company. Instead I've had to just wing it and learn everything on the job.*
>
> *– Sherin D'Souza, dance professional, Mumbai*

4.2 SECTOR KNOWLEDGE, PERCEPTION AND CAREER GROWTH

Study respondents cited the lack of access to knowledge about the sector as a significant gap. There is limited visibility of the growth in the cultural sector by way of published placement rates, pay scales and sector knowledge (statistics on growth of the Indian art market or reliable statistics on the size of the cultural sector). These factors contribute to the lack of legitimacy of the cultural sector as a viable career option.

As earlier noted, respondents found it easy to enter and access the sector. However, there exists a "perception" of the sector as being "elitist, unwelcoming to outsiders and not lucrative enough". 50% of interviewees and discussion participants have emphasised on the "perception of the sector as inaccessible". It is important to note that respondents from sub-sectors such as visual arts, museums and heritage, held this view more strongly than respondents from other sub-sectors such as music, theatre and dance. In addition, 20% of the total respondents highlighted inadequate pay and low salaries as key barriers that hinder their entry and growth in the sector.

A significant finding also pointed to the informal nature of the cultural sector, where leadership is hierarchical and career progression unclear. Respondents gave examples of several known cultural sector organisations, with a clear hierarchy, informal hiring processes, and where career growth is not clearly defined. Typically, hiring also takes place based on references. Cultural sector job advertisements are not adequately publicised either.

> *There are hierarchical structures in place. Reaching a senior position will take forever in the arts, because it's not a corporate/ capitalist or incentive-based structure, in which you can make your way up slowly and steadily. However, there's no formal system in the arts. Someone younger can be at a senior level too. While that's not a bad thing it can affect and impact the career growth of others in the organisation.*
>
> *– Pooja Ashok, programmes specialist, Delhi*

There are challenges in the way arts organisations are built and run. It is relatively easy to hire junior staff but there is limited focus or the ability to build the second level of senior management. This is because many of these organisations commonly rely on one person or a group of senior people at the top. Such a work environment translates into the senior management spending much of its time micro-managing operations, leaving little time for strategy, vision, business development and other higher-level, long-term focus areas. Likewise, there are many arts leaders, apart from being prominent creative professionals and artists, who have over a period of time, become leaders of initiatives, collectives or organisations, without any leadership or management training or experience. There is also little to no formal training being offered within the organisation.

Moreover, there is a serious lack of skilled workforce in the market, which often leads to on-the-job learning for most working professionals. According to a recent article in *The Hindu BusinessLine*, "*Only around 10 per cent of India's workforce is trained which includes 3 percent formally trained and 7 percent informally trained.*" This compares poorly with a more than 50 per cent formally trained workforce in developed countries, including 53 per cent in China. The India Skills Report 2016, states that "only 37 per cent of the Employability Skill Test takers (below 30 years) were found employable."[18] This is a worrying trend that highlights the limits of informally trained labour workforce. Hence, after working for 3-8 years in the sector, cultural professionals feel the need to access formal training and upskilling in their work, preferably rooted in a legitimate degree or programme with a promise of strong career prospects.

In a sector that is devoid of formal arts management training, and where on-the-job learning is a critical way to succeed, lack of sectoral knowledge coupled with ambiguous growth trajectories have created significant learning gaps for many professionals.

4.3 SKILL GAPS IN SPECIFIC OPERATIONAL AREAS

The study's respondents identified the following four major skill gaps in arts management:

  a. Strategic Planning and General Management
  b. Financial Planning and Fundraising
  c. Marketing and Audience Development
  d. Technical & Production Skills

Strategic Planning and General Management

The professional practice of arts management, which includes strategic planning and application of management principles, is a significant skill gap in the cultural sector. Consequently, organisations do not use long-term planning and strategy to guide their functions and activities. This leads to inadequate development processes and systems, resource wastage, reduced productivity, among other negative outcomes.

While there is an arts management programme (the ATSA Fellowship), only a handful of cultural professionals in the sector have pursued it as the fellowship intake is limited to 15 each year across South Asia. Instead, most senior leaders in the sector have picked up leadership and management skills on the job, along with having undertaken degrees or short courses abroad. Therefore, learning the "tricks of the trade" of leadership was an important requirement by the respondents.

Arts management is a relatively new space in India, having only emerged in the last few years, and it continues to be practiced in an ad-hoc manner rather than following processes and guidelines. Overall, it was felt that training in arts management would be valuable.

Financial Planning and Fundraising

Of all the skill gaps identified, financial planning and fundraising were among the biggest concerns flagged by the study's respondents. It has been noticed that organisations have insufficient understanding of designing and executing a successful fundraising strategy. Likewise, organisations found it difficult to execute other tasks such as asking for sponsorship, writing grant-funding applications and accessing government funding. Respondents reported that they could not develop financial planning and fundraising skills on the job either, which include pricing, ticketing and developing revenue models.

> " *I've been in the sector for 10 years now and I know how the crafts industry works. If there is a course on financial planning which teaches me how to scale up my business, I will pursue it. But there is no such course on the subject.* "
>
> *- Ravi Manocha, entrepreneur, Delhi*

Marketing and Audience Development

The third skill gap is marketing and reaching the audience, especially through digital marketing. There is an assumption that it does not require skill or training in marketing communications. Other methods and strategies, including systems of data collection, analytics, marketing, designing customised programmes to build audiences were also found to be lacking.

There is a lack of know-how about technologies and tools (such as ticketing, event programming, production of events, conservation, awareness and updates on social media platforms, softwares and how best to use them) that can make the cultural sector more efficient.

> *Like the IT industry, certain people are hired to do a certain job, you can't ask them to do something else. Similarly, digital media and social marketing need a specific kind of expertise, and that is something every professional would not have.*
>
> *– Simran Vohra, project coordinator, Delhi*

Technical and Production Skills

Respondents repeatedly highlighted the lack of skilled manpower as a major gap in executing tasks, especially since event planning and production are at the centre of activities in the cultural sector. Professional production skills were found to be limited to a few senior and 'known' professionals in activities such as film screenings, literature/ music festivals, gigs as well as art exhibitions.

Respondents also pointed out that there were few processes or protocols in place for event management-related tasks. Instead, the junior staff were generally put on the job and solutions were found as they went along. Respondents also reported the affliction of the "one-person army syndrome", which colloquially implies a single individual being tasked with varied tasks requiring completely different skill sets and levels of expertise.

> *I have worked in a plethora of roles, such as archiving and documentation, liaising with the restorer, writing social media posts and running off to a curatorial meeting — all in one day. It has been nerve-wracking, I probably needed therapy on multiple occasions.*
>
> *– Shefali Oberoi, gallery manager, Delhi*

5. NEEDS AND BARRIERS

After recognising and formulating the skill gaps, interview respondents were further probed to articulate their "needs" that would help them overcome the gaps outlined. The study's respondents also articulated major barriers that they encountered in accessing training programmes and upskilling opportunities.

Here's an overview of the NEEDS outlined by the respondents and detailed below:

Cultural Sector Professionals	Professionals from a related field	Students
o Introduction of formal training and creation of processes	o Access to and understanding of the cultural sector	o Wider knowledge of the art market and cultural sector
o Mentorship and skilling	o Mentorship and expert guidance on utilising their existing skills and experience in	

	their current jobs in the sector	
o Wider knowledge of the art market and cultural sector		

5.1 CULTURAL SECTOR PROFESSIONALS

Needs

Respondents felt that fostering an environment of learning within cultural organisations leads to professional growth of both the employees and the institution. Respondents also stressed on the urgent need to have defined processes and systems within organisations, which are based on local and international best practices and speeds up the learning trajectory of individuals working across different departments. It is also observed that while formal mentorship has significant benefits, it can also supplement learning and growth in the absence of adequate formal learning opportunities.

A majority of the respondents highlighted how working in the arts is possible only for "a privileged few" and how low salaries also create a barrier to entry for several aspirants.

> *The reality is that people who have privilege can access these institutions. You're getting money from home and you can sustain yourself, and you can get this tokenistic capitalist culture going for yourself. It is extremely hypocritical as reality on the ground is that all the institutions are self-serving, and while they earn a lot very little is paid to employees.*
>
> *– Aparna Sarkar, programme coordinator, Mumbai*

Respondents stressed the need for better pay and well-defined salary structures in the cultural sector, which would help them make informed decisions about their growth and stability while choosing a career in this field.

The findings also pointed to a significant lack of access to a pool of comprehensive industry-driven knowledge. A felt need was that of a platform which brought to light the growth of and developments in the sector that would help them understand the cultural sector's scope, increase their knowledge about its functioning and its relationship with other sub-sectors such as music, dance, theatre, visual arts, design etc. Cultural professionals also pointed to the need for a sustainable network of their community.
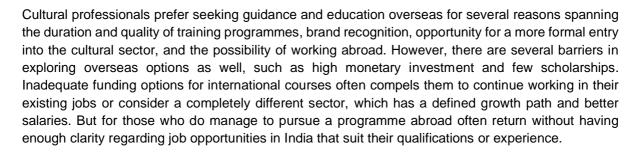
Barriers

Cultural sector professionals outlined three main barriers to access skilling opportunities:

- o Relevance of available arts management programmes in India and abroad
- o High monetary investment for higher education
- o Value for Money for investment in higher education

Respondents said the few local existing fellowships and diplomas, such as the ATSA fellowship, diploma at DakshinaChitra and the Creative and Cultural Businesses Programme (CCBP) at IIMA, may not always be relevant to their career either in terms of content, duration or the format. For example, the CCBP is focused solely on creative businesses. ATSA is an application-based, short-term fellowship opportunity and not a paid programme, while DakshinaChitra is focused a lot more on visual arts and heritage as opposed to performing arts. Because of these lacunae in training, professionals seek overseas programmes as the next best option for their upskilling needs.

> *The courses in India that are available cater to beginners and not mid-career professionals like me. There is no availability of these kinds of offerings here. I know there are some programmes like ATSA, but how are they relevant to me?*
>
> *–Shivangi Kumar, project consultant, Bengaluru*

Cultural professionals prefer seeking guidance and education overseas for several reasons spanning the duration and quality of training programmes, brand recognition, opportunity for a more formal entry into the cultural sector, and the possibility of working abroad. However, there are several barriers in exploring overseas options as well, such as high monetary investment and few scholarships. Inadequate funding options for international courses often compels them to continue working in their existing jobs or consider a completely different sector, which has a defined growth path and better salaries. But for those who do manage to pursue a programme abroad often return without having enough clarity regarding job opportunities in India that suit their qualifications or experience.

In this respect, respondents said they found it challenging to connect their learning (whether in India or abroad) to prospects of career growth in India's cultural sector. These successes could be measured in terms of placement rates, promotions, exploring entrepreneurship and so on. Most of these terms are rarely used in the context of growth in the cultural sector. Other factors, such as the absence of a well-defined career trajectory, often add to the ambiguity of their prospects in the cultural sector.

> *Going abroad to study and coming back to the Indian cultural sector, which is so small and doesn't operate properly, is a huge risk and barrier. If it wasn't for the funding that I got, I wouldn't have considered the course at all.*
>
> *–Swati Marwah, archivist, Delhi*

5.2 PROFESSIONALS WHO HAVE TRANSITIONED INTO THE SECTOR

Needs

This group comprises professionals who either aspire to join the cultural sector or have transitioned into it. Respondents under this category belonged to a wide section of sub-sectors such as dance, design and visual arts. The needs outlined by this group must be seen in the context of their reasons behind joining the cultural sector – primarily, it is the pursuit of "a fulfilling professional experience," especially their creative interests, which they found to be lacking in their previous professions (e.g. our interviewees came from the worlds of finance and shipping).

Respondents under this category felt that an understanding of the cultural sector's functioning and networking with its leaders, senior practitioners and veterans, would make it easier for them to enter

the industry. This could be related to the gap highlighted earlier in the study, regarding inadequate information about cultural sector-related developments. In addition, respondents specifically highlighted the uncertainty on what sub-sectors are included in the cultural sector. For example, are design and advertising part of the cultural sector? Where does digital media and gaming fit in? They added that a better understanding of sub-sectors or genres in the cultural sector would be helpful in navigating the sector, engage in cross-sector learning and aid in career growth.

> *Mentorship, attending seminars, pursuing short programmes or courses focused on theory, internships with other arts organisations – My counterparts in the cultural sector abroad have studied these things; they are a part of their trajectory and growth in the arts sector. They haven't just dropped into the sector from nowhere.*
>
> *– Sherin D'Souza, dance professional, Mumbai*

Respondents highlighted specific areas of skilling (such as strategic planning, digital marketing, project management) for intervention. Based on our research, we found that upskilling in these areas would help these professionals take up new roles in the cultural sector.

Barriers

- o Little awareness about professional courses in the arts and cultural management sector
- o No accessible guidelines or knowledge pools about growth and stability in cultural sector
- o Lack of formal mentorship or apprenticeship programmes in the sector

These courses and networks help them understand the scope of the industry, which helps in determining whether the industry is worth entering or not. Training and networking also help in providing a platform where they can gauge, modify and adapt their existing management skills to the arts and cultural context. Respondents added that formal education validates their training, skills and overall knowledge about the sector, besides acting as an accelerator for their job prospects.

> *There are no degrees and courses that help someone in my position or who wants to join this industry. Even if there are courses that I am aware of, I don't know about the quality of the curriculum being taught. Are experienced professionals teaching these courses? And what about connecting theory to practice?*
>
> *– Sherin D'Souza, dance professional, Mumbai*

> *An employer can take you seriously because of a Master's degree or PG certificate, and they may assume that you have in-depth knowledge. The candidate might not be good at the job, but they get more respect because of the qualification.*
>
> *– Neha Sachdev, events programming, Mumbai*

Needs

This group included respondents who are studying about the cultural sector and aspire to build a career in this space. As highlighted earlier in the literature review, India has seen a spike in students opting for humanities and liberal arts programmes. Moreover, liberal arts courses have found support from unexpected quarters. According to education and career counsellor Viral Joshi, "Some of the biggest names in Indian industry such as Anand Mahindra have come out in support of liberal arts and a number of universities offering this curriculum are backed by reputed industry names."[19]

Since the students are still a few years away from building a career in the sector, they pointed to a desperate need for more information about the cultural sector that would:

a) help them understand the scope and scale of the sector;
b) give them an idea about job prospects in the cultural sector, including career options, growth paths, and pay scales;
c) facilitate access to industry faculty, events, mentorship and guidance.

In addition, students also felt that they needed more avenues to experiment and engage with different sub-sectors. Stronger volunteering/internship programmes were also identified as a key need. These programmes also enable students to understand the nature of work and give them practical knowledge of working in the cultural sector, thereby increasing their chances of getting employed.

> *My exposure to the 'arts' industry, so to say, is through my college professors. One thing that I know is that the arts space is diverse. The conventional understanding that one should be a performing artiste or should have learned classical dance or music to be in the field does not make sense anymore.*
>
> *– Muriel Claris, arts student, Mumbai*

Barriers

This group mirrored views of other respondents regarding the lack of formal training courses, niche programmes, and career opportunities. They were equally concerned regarding the legitimacy of arts management as a stable profession.

However, students have overcome this barrier by turning to social media, which makes access to sector experts much easier. These respondents prefer contextual training while in college or through online courses, and do not want to rely too much on learning while being employed. For the student respondents, money or success is not an immediate priority. Their immediate priority, as a starting point, is gaining in-depth knowledge of the sector.

In terms of sector growth, the student respondents, like their counterparts in the study's target groups, said that they know there is no linear path to success in the cultural sector. They added that their exposure through internships and projects have given them a glimpse of the sector's functioning.

However, these challenges do not seem to discourage them as they are looking to experiment across a wide range of practices before moving to specialised roles.

> ❝
>
> *Experience in India and abroad would be very different. Different teachers or faculty members change the way you look at the course. Also, arts management as a course is not available in India. Combination of curation & visual arts, literature and economics, art and architecture… a liberal arts way of looking at education in arts management would also help.*
>
> *– Harish Kumar, architecture student, Mumbai.* ❞

6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CULTURAL SECTOR

The key findings of the study were used as a source for developing recommendations for the wider cultural sector. The recommendations below are divided at two levels keeping in mind the access needs of cultural sector professionals and others who are looking to join the field.

AT UNDERGRADUATE AND POSTGRADUATE LEVELS

Typically, aspirants who are interested in building a career in the cultural sector would be looking for more clarity on how to navigate the job market in the sector. They include young people who are due to complete their formal education. We recommend the following two avenues for them to make this journey easy:

- Resources on careers in the cultural sector: This can take the form of career counselling, placement visits, written resources on various careers in the cultural sector to help them identify career pathways. Organising regular visits by industry professionals as guest faculty would also give them access to developing alternative narratives of careers in the sector.

- Avenues for stronger, formal apprenticeship programmes: A formal apprenticeship programme gives students practical grounding in the skills and experience required for the sector. It also allows formal and seamless integration of student-driven cultural work into the sector, with clear mandates of pay, learning possibilities for interns, and ensuring entry of diverse professionals. On the other hand, it helps employers, who typically operate small businesses in a high-risk environment, to benefit from fresh thinking as well as training existing staff to develop and lead new teams. Integral to this approach will be several recommendations for inclusion in a formal apprenticeship setup such as: a recruitment programme at the college level; clear job descriptions; pre-employment training for aspirants; zero-tolerance towards unpaid internships; and developing apprenticeship frameworks for potential employers.[20]

FOR WORKING PROFESSIONALS IN THE CULTURAL SECTOR

Professionals working in the cultural sector have specific needs in relation to both gaining new skills as well as seeking growth in their career trajectories. We recommend three pathways towards fulfilling these needs:

a) Upskilling Programmes: There is a need for tie-ups with cultural organisations and academic institutions to build formal skilling programmes for cultural sector professionals. Cultural organisations, across all employee strengths, should strategise about the upskilling needs of

employees. Upskilling should be integral to their HR policies, which will help them retain promising talent. Depending on the size of the organisation, a range of upskilling strategies can be adopted, including MOOCs, workshops, in-house training sessions, events and conferences on arts management. For tie-ups, academic institutions would be required to understand the needs and financial capabilities of cultural organisations and offer value across all levels -- from free lectures to formal structured training modules.

b) <u>Mentorship and Networking:</u> The sector urgently needs a formal mentorship and networking avenue. Mentoring enables cultural professionals from across backgrounds to get valuable guidance that they need to navigate their growth in the cultural sector. At the same time, mentorship provides access to informal knowledge systems and industry news.

Networking, on the other hand, breaks down the artificial boundaries between disparate cultural sub-sectors, generating possibilities for collaborations. Through networking, early-to-mid-career professionals gain access to a wide range of cultural sector leaders and professionals, thereby disrupting the 'elite' art world of the cultural sector, which is a key barrier identified in this paper.

There are only a handful of companies who have designed programmes and policies for nurturing talent and building a pipeline of future leaders and managers. In addition, many professionals either work in small companies or on a project/ freelance basis – a working model that further reduces the chances of mentorship in a rapidly changing sector. Instead, respondents of our research mentioned that they relied on informal support, for instance, a former boss or colleagues/friends in their network. Given that there is no industry association or other organisation acting as a 'connector' in the sector, a platform could provide that opportunity. It could act as a bridge between different sub-sectors and genres in the cultural space, apart from creating mentoring opportunities in companies.

c) <u>Form a formal body/ an association:</u> From an employment perspective, the cultural sector is relatively informal with no formal body or association representing its interests. Several recent controversies, such as #MeToo[21], claims of plagiarism in theatre[22] and censorship[23], would have benefited from a strong association. A unified voice, as representative of the sector, would have enabled quick learnings and offered solutions to problems faced by the sector because of these controversies. An association representing the interest of cultural sector workers would also consider other important issues, such as recommending industry pay scales, pay parity, paid internships, addressing issues of precarity in cultural labour[24], and interfacing with the states on skill development among others.

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