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# Nurturing Filipino creativity: Philippine education policies in support of the creative industries

The future of the creative industries shows much promise in the Philippines. According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the creative industries more than doubled its size from 2003 to 2012 (UNCTAD, 2016). Thus, its development is now carefully monitored, and programs are being created by different government agencies, with the goal of making the Philippines competitive in the creative field versus other countries in the region.

Despite the continuous growth of the sector, the expected increase in financial outcomes is quite low as the creative industries in the Philippines and Southeast Asia do not seem to be maximizing their growth potential due to the absence of structures and policies for business development, piracy, and the general lack of entrepreneurial spirit (Fleming, 2017). Thus, the role of education has become important in the development of those involved in the culture cycle of creation, production, dissemination, transmission, and the consumption/participation of cultural and artistic products and services (Sigdel, 2017).

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With these developments, I decided to examine the existing cultural education policies and programs of several government agencies and their roles pertaining to the development of the creative industries; I sought to discover convergence points for these institutions to prepare a conducive business environment for the future movers of the creative industries to thrive. In this research, I interviewed key officials assigned to the implementation of cultural education policies and programs of the Department of Education (DepEd), Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Technical Education Skills and Development Authority (TESDA), the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

In the Philippines, estimates of the output generated by creative and cultural industries exhibit modest increases over the years. In 1999, the contribution of the industry to GDP, based on the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) figures, was 3.84%. It grew to 4.82% in 2003 and to 13.8% in 2006 (DTI, 2012).

To date, government agencies, spearheaded by the NCCA, have conceptualized plans and have created mechanisms to implement these directions. Several pieces of legislation based on the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) have been crafted. The most anticipated is the establishment of the Department of Culture (DoC), which will be tasked to develop, manage, and implement policies and strategic decisions on Filipino culture (Escudero, 2017).

Given the bright prospects of the industry, the education sector in several ASEAN countries has responded by playing the crucial role of fueling the creative industries, acting as a source of fresh talent while also providing jobs for arts practitioners. In the Philippines, the educational system triumvirate is composed of DepEd, CHED, and TESDA, all of which directly coordinate with NCCA and DTI for policy development and program creation. All these agencies have instituted programs and activities to support the creative industries according to their respective mandates. The program status and points for collaboration are discussed below:

## **Policies and Programs: Identification, Status and Assessment**

### **National Commission for Culture and the Arts**

As the lead agency for culture and arts, the NCCA maintains programs and policies with education-related agencies. The National Cultural Heritage Act of 2009 initiated by NCCA incorporated national cultural treasures and important cultural properties in the basic education system, and mandated DepEd to devise cultural heritage programs for all Filipinos in all modes of education. Under the Philippine Cultural

Education Program (PCEP), NCCA offers the Master's Degrees in Cultural Education, Teaching the Arts, and Arts Management for public school teachers, artists and cultural workers, and a Certificate Program in Culture-based Governance for local government unit employees. It also supports the development of artists and cultural workers through its grants program for creative projects, and the National Living Treasures program, with the intent of encouraging masters to become arts teachers (Philippine Cultural Education Plan, 2017) at the Schools of Living Traditions (SLTs) managed by NCCA and DepEd. The SLTs are community-managed centers of learning where cultural masters pass on their artistic/traditional knowledge and skills to the young members of the community. This is considered a best practice of the country in terms of merging the importance of cultural education and indigenous knowledge (M. Tellano, personal communication, August 11, 2017).

From 2015 to the present, the NCCA has also hosted fora on creativity and the Philippine creative industries, and has helped develop the Philippine Cultural Statistics Framework. There is a good deal of effort being done by the NCCA towards the development of the industry since the commission started. Nevertheless, it needs to focus its resources to keep pace with the industry in terms of artist support, audience development, research, education and training.

### **Department of Trade and Industry**

The DTI currently supports the creative industries in its own capacity through the Board of Investments (BOI). The BOI processes tax holidays and duty-free importations specifically for some of the creative industries that seek their assistance (i.e. animation, film production, and game development). DTI's Export Management Bureau supports such businesses during international trade shows, while its Philippine Trade Training Center provides capacity building programs for business owners (P. Tajon, personal communication, August 9, 2017).

Since 2006, DTI has supported the creative industries through: (1) funding events and projects, such as animation film festivals, pitching competitions to acquire funding for filmmakers, networking for the Game Developers Association of the Philippines; (2) the Philippine Startup Ecosystem Development Program; (3) the Create Philippines trade shows; and (4) the organization of the Creative Economy Council of the Philippines. It has also played an active role in the development of the Philippine Cultural Statistics Framework, and in spearheading the development of Creative Cities in the country (Tajon, 2017).

Today, the agency sees that its efforts are sufficient for the industry, but improvements need to be made on the level and the coverage of industries that they support. The three education-related agencies, and the NCCA, consult DTI for masterplans, as well as industry associations and technical panels in relation to cultural education policies. However, the level of engagement is wanting, as meetings and consultations are not regular.

### Department of Education

The shift to the K-12 educational system in the basic and secondary education has benefited the creative sector. The improved BE curriculum has shown noticeably good results, as students have become more receptive to artistic content and are more appreciative of the arts (C. Magboo, personal communication, 2017).

The NCCA – DepEd Cultural Education Program (NDCEP) helped integrate arts and culture in the educational system, improve the Basic Education (BE) curriculum and the Special Program for the Arts (SPA), develop cultural education programs, teacher training, training modules and instructional materials (DepEd, 2016). The SPA (with 185 schools nationwide) continues to harness the exceptional talents of young artists from various regions, in different art forms (“Special Program in the Arts,” n.d.). The department also hosts the National Festival of Talents, an annual activity that gives students the opportunity to exhibit their talents in technical-

vocational and artistic skills (“National Festival of Talents,” 2016).

DepEd offered the Arts and Design Track for Grades 11-12 in 2016, with approximately 4,400 enrollees in 110 schools in 2017 (Geronimo, 2016). This track is perceived as a unique feature of the K-12 system as the curriculum focuses on a comprehensive approach to the design and creative industry, to equip the students with middle-level technical skills (C. Magboo, DepEd, personal communication, 2017).

The department sees that its creative industry-related programs are already adequate. Nonetheless, the policies to strengthen their connections with other government agencies need improvement, particularly on: (1) the support of local government units for SPAs, SLTs, and Arts Track; (2) the contribution of HEIs to provide qualified teachers in the arts; and (3) the promotion of the creative sector for the relevant DepEd programs in creative industries.

### Commission on Higher Education

The Commission on Higher Education impacts the culture and creative industries through the monitoring of standards and regulation of courses and curricula related to the culture and arts delivered by the higher education institutions (HEIs). From 2004 to 2016, CHED recorded an average of 105,124 graduates of culture and arts-related disciplines per year (NCCA, 2017).

CHED memorandum order (CMO) 20,s.2013 included Art Appreciation in the revised General Education (GE) Curriculum (Commission on Higher Education, 2013b). Likewise, 19 HEIs and the NCCA supported the offering of the Master’s Degree programs in Cultural Education and Teaching the Arts, which continues to help address the need for more basic education teachers in the arts (“Philippine Cultural Education Plan,” 2017). It also offers the Expanded Tertiary Education Equivalency and Accreditation Program (ETEEAP), a comprehensive educational assessment program based on HEIs that gives equivalencies to knowledge and skills gained by

practitioners from relevant work in the creative sector (CHED, 2016).

CMO No. 9, s. 2013: Enhanced Policies and Guidelines on Student Affairs, advocates the provision of mechanisms to promote Philippine culture and the arts in coordination with other government agencies, and the establishment of offices for culture and the arts in all HEIs. In 2017, CHED and NCCA launched the SALIKHA Creative Grants, which provided funding for faculty affected by the K-12 transition to engage in arts research or creative projects to promote and advance Philippine arts and culture (NCCA, 2017b).

CHED's programs reinforce the foundations of the creative industries and strengthen the capabilities of educators in teaching culture and the arts, from accrediting culture and arts courses in undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate levels, and research. However, there are no tracer studies on the actual contribution of the graduates from these programs to the creative workforce. The level of implementation of new policies, particularly those that support the general education and appreciation of culture and the arts, is also wanting.

### Technical Education and Skills Development Authority

TESDA supports culture and the creative sectors through: (1) the General Appropriations Act 2016 Special Provision for the agency to include traditional skills and Vocational Education Training (TVET); and (2) the coordination with NCCA and the Philippine Fiber Industry Development Authority for the implementation of this provision. As of June 2017, 785 training regulations related to the creative industries have been promulgated. The most recent policy is the TESDA Board Resolution No. 2015-15 covering the prioritization of skills and qualifications for training regulations development in various sectors to include Creative/Traditional Arts. (E. Talavera, personal communication, August 14, 2017).

TESDA also takes pride in its consultative approach in developing their training regulations and training curriculum for traditional arts with the indigenous people. However, the agency has expressed the lack of available experts in traditional arts who are able to undergo both the rigorous process of writing training regulations, and can actually teach the artistic skills. (E. Talavera, personal communication, August 14, 2017).

### Inter-agency Points for Collaboration

Several opportunities for collaboration were cited in the role of academe in the creative industry. From the perspective of the industry sector, the following were proposed to the academe: (1) strengthen the young artists' understanding of intellectual property, (2) provide idea incubation labs, (3) involve foreign practitioners in training teachers and entrepreneurs in new technology, (4) provide relevant academe-industry partnerships and active on-the-job training in the creative industries, and (5) update course offerings to match the current needs of the market (P. Tajon, personal communication, August 9, 2017).

More collaborative and synergized programs and policies are needed from DepEd, TESDA, and CHED. Statistics and research on the concerns of culture and arts-related policies have yet to be gathered and shared among their circles. Lastly, there is an expectation for NCCA to take the lead in the industry direction setting, the standardization of the creative sector's definition and scope, the identification and communication of the sectors' needs and concerns, and other emerging trends from the sector.

### Recommendations

Given the various inputs raised by these government agencies, regular coordination should be made across these departments to better plan existing efforts, to ensure that the industry is served well, and to avoid duplication of effort. It is important for them to agree on the operational definition of the creative industries, its domains, and the framework to be used for

purposes of standardizing the gathering and monitoring of data. Quantitative and qualitative studies should be regularly done to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the policies and programs and the relationships among agencies.

The K-12 system has brought about shifts in learning paradigms and priorities for the creative sectors. DepEd and NCCA have opened up a number of opportunities for young artists and arts practitioners through the SLT, SPA, and the Arts Track. Although perceived to be adequate, the efficiency of these programs should be studied to establish better mechanisms. Public awareness on the long-term benefit of these programs should be in place, since these are new concepts for most Filipinos (Samodio, 2016).

NCCA must assert its authority as the forerunner in culture and the arts, to lead a more organized sector representing the diverse sub-industries related to culture and the creative industries, recognized by other government agencies and international organizations. Thus, the prospects of the creation of the DoC is indeed timely to facilitate better coordination among agencies, considering the new directions on the creative industries in the PDP (P. Tajon, personal communication, August 9, 2017).

There is more room for collaboration between NCCA and CHED, and this can be done through drafting a CMO to strengthen the promotion of culture and arts in HEIs with regard to the harmonization of cultural programs with the NCCA's Philippine Cultural Education Program, support for researches on the creative industries, support of HEIs in gathering data for the Cultural Statistics, enhancement of EETEAP in the creative fields, support for the structure of cultural offices, and welfare of student artists.

With the existing policies and programs in support for culture and the creative industries in TESDA, the improvement and accessibility of their services to the sector may still be explored by using information and communication technology and open distance learning for the arts-related courses. Academe-

industry linkages may be strengthened via apprenticeship with arts companies, cultural masters, and experts in creative industries that are highly dependent on new technology. In addition, all agencies concerned should be responsible for gathering data to evaluate the emerging fields that need to be supported in terms of training regulations, curriculum writing and review, to cover the full range of career opportunities in the sector.

Finally, it is also crucial that a unified strategic communications plan be made for the various publics, to dispel the notion that careers in the creative arts are not viable, through highlighting the opportunities that the creative industries may bring to individuals and to the entire economy.

## Conclusion

This study explored the important role of education and training in developing the Philippine creative industries, and proposed solutions to arrest the growing concerns on the supply of creative manpower in the country and the need for more relevant and updated methodologies to keep pace with the sector's rapid growth.

With the current fragmented approach to creative skills, management and entrepreneurship, academe-industry linkages need to be further strengthened in all modes of education. Considering the Philippines' weak national brand identity, the education sector should aggressively promote culture and the arts among the youth as future consumers of creative services and products; and nurture environments that foster creativity to harness their artistic talents.

In conclusion, the lack of structure and governance in organizing the programs and policies of each of the education-related agencies continue to hinder the industries' potential to soar in the global market. Thus, the value of sectoral collaboration between the creative sector, the business sector, and the education sector should be further emphasized to strategize unified directions which will drive the success of the Philippine creative industries.

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