

## Education as Tool for the Development of Creative Industries in Slovakia

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### Abstract

*Education is widely accepted as important source of future economic growth and is strongly supported by public sources. Most of this support is oriented toward traditional education and industries. However, several studies show importance of creativity education as important feature for innovation and future growth.*

*This article represents an output of the research about the creative industries support policy in Slovakia in the field of education activities. It is containing basic literature overview comparing support policies for traditional sectors and the creative industries. We analyzed conceptual documents at the national level and basic strategic documents in the regions and selected cities of the country. We also realized several interviews in different creative economy industries. We found out the most important support in the field of education should not be related to creativity itself, but more on the complementary skills as ICT or entrepreneurship. We also found very limited role of universities in creative industries success stories.*

**Key words:** Support Programs, Creative Industries, Support Policy, Education

**JEL Classification:** R58, I21, Z18

### 1 Introduction

Creativity is not a new phenomenon in economics, but it has been gaining importance last years. As a policy concept, it started to be used only since 1997 in Great Britain (DCMS, 1998). Despite of that there are already many support programs in various countries, which reflect the increasing importance of supporting this sector (UNCTAD, 2008). Representative examples may be found in particular support systems of the UK, Finland, the Netherlands, Spain or Austria (HKU, 2010). However, most of them are still just in the implementation phase with low level of evaluation of these support programs. The support policy is not clearly connected to other state or regional policies and there is a high duplicity in these programs (Fleming, 2007). Many countries also used only “copy paste” strategies, without clear understanding of their own creative industries development.

Most of the research was done on the most developed countries that is why we would like to look more closely on country, where more traditional industries are dominant. The main aim of the article is to identify adequate policy measures for creative industries in the field of human resources. Several researches were conducted already in Slovakia that examined for instance the

role of creative industries in the development and importance in employment (Blahovec - Hudec, 2012), but also their typical concentration in largest cities of Slovakia (Chovanec - Rehak, 2012). While however, we have not experienced any research of creative industries in the context of promoting education as one of factors not only of their development but the overall development of the country's economy. Therefore, the aim of this research paper is to examine creative industries regarding to adequate policies in the field of education and human resources to support them. To meet this objective, we provide a brief literature overview about the different approaches to support traditional vs. creative industries, later on we deal with the experiences of education support in the context of creative industries in Slovakia. The empirical part of the paper consists of an analysis of the current needs in this field in the Slovak Republic.

## **2 The Role of Education in the Development of Creative Industries**

Creative industries work on the basis of different principles than some traditional industries. Unlike traditional sectors where significant role play big enterprises, in creative industries dominate self-employed entrepreneurs and small businesses. Their number varies according to different types of industries. There are sectors of creative industries, where the proportion of self-employers is two times higher than the number of self-employers in traditional sectors (HKU, 2010). For instance in design is this share of self-employment approx. 30% and in some sectors of art over 60% (Markusen - Gadwa, 2010). For the creative industries was a high concentration in large cities recognized, moreover these sectors prove to be substitutes of several traditional industries (Cooke and Lazzaretti, 2008). The products of these sectors are characterized by uniqueness and also an unpredictability of their further development (Fesel, 2007). Subjective value of these products for different people also plays an important role in this context (HKU, 2010). It also leads to the fact that in many cases - contracts tend to be short, the work is irregular, income is unequally distributed (Banks, 2009). As regards the innovations in this sector, are rather a natural part of the business cycle and not exactly an embodiment of purposeful research activities (Potts, 2009). Innovations are often results of a combination of technological and non-technological activities, often arise as products of pilot laboratories (Fesel, 2007).

All above mentioned aspects strongly influence the types of measures used in the support programs and particular measures. With the increasing importance of creative industries in national economies grows the number of various types of measures to support their development like financial aid, tax benefits, export supporting policy and also institutional support. Another form of support policy in the field may be the support of education and human development. It belongs to traditional instruments of regional policy, but certainly not tailored to the requirements of the development of creative industries. The main reasons lie in the special characteristics of the labor force working in these sectors (Gunnel - Bright, 2010). Many countries and regions tried to improve their education system to be more supportive for creative industries.

Based on the literature, a summary of education support measures is provided in the Table 1. Measures are aimed at promoting the development of creative industries in the context of supporting education and human capital development. The measures are divided according to the type of education process and also based on territorial level of the policy. On this basis, we distinguish a support of formal education, lifelong learning, improving of quality of labor force.

This may be supported at different territorial or policy levels, like national, regional and local policy measures.

**Table 1 Measures to support creative industries in the field of education and human development**

Measures	National level	Regional level	Local level
<i>Formal Education</i>	Building strong university with flexible curriculum for creative industries Support of cooperation between universities and private companies Interdisciplinary programs	Creativity and entrepreneurship in high school ICT education support Interdisciplinary programs (networking, social interaction)	Creativity and entrepreneurship in elementary schools ICT education support
<i>Lifelong Education</i>	Requalification programs in the field of creative industries Education standards for creativity education	Support of talented individuals Organizing competitions for individuals in creative industries	Training programs Voluntary courses in creative industries sectors
<i>Measures Related to Education of Quality of Workforce</i>	National award for „best“ in selected creative industry fields Support of export of creative industries	Mentor’s programs Supporting culture activities	Local community development activities Support of traditional culture activities Creative incubators

Source: Own summary based on cited literature.

All measures must be implemented in line with present role of creative industries within regional or national development strategies. Each measure has its own strengths and weaknesses in support creative industries development, so in depth studies of local environment is necessary to properly design adequate support policies.

### 3 Methodology

We analyzed existing need for support and existing support for creative industries in the field of education and labor force development in Slovakia. The whole research was done through the form of sectorial and regional case studies of different creative sectors in different regions of the Slovak Republic under the project “Creative economy – national and regional conditions and stimuli”. The whole project team realized more than 100 interviews within the project with different companies from various creative industries in Slovakia in order to evaluate also their educational needs and compare it with existing support. Interviews were more broadly oriented, but we will concentrate only on education related issues in this article.

We choose these 6 sectors:

- Advertising,
- Architecture,
- Fashion,
- Design,
- Performing Arts
- Information Technologies.

Interviews were mostly done with owners of the companies. The companies were from whole Slovakia. Size of companies varied from self-employment to company of 200 employees. We try to identify the key needs of these sectors and also present support policy measures in the field of skills improvement and human resources development. We also try to identify the role of support policies and role of education in the success stories within these industries. The results presented later represent a summary of conducted interviews across the broad research of creative industries.

#### **4 Education as Tool for the Development of Creative Industries in Slovakia**

The role of creative industries is taking shape in Slovakia just in recent years. Despite the fact, that there is no systematized support of creative industries, the starting steps were made. The first document in Slovakia was submitted to the government for approval in year 2011 under the title 'Initial Concepts for Supporting Cultural and Creative Industries in the Slovak Republic' by the Ministry of Culture of Slovak Republic (MCSR, 2011). It was the first conceptual political document in this country, which contains an introduction to the given issue, provides statistics about the country regarding to the development of creative industries. This strategic document presents the planned intervention and possible types of measures for supporting this sector in Slovakia (MCSR, 2011). One of the priorities is related to education which ultimately leads to creativity. However, there is no clear and detailed plan how to do it and why to do it.

The result of the conducted research through the interviews is an evaluation of successful companies in terms of their human resources and education support. In this context occurs often a similar pattern.

The driving force of the company is its owner, which is in the most cases the business owner for over 10 years. He/she is the carrier of creativity and new ideas. The owner is responsible for the most profitable contracts for the company. The majority of the surveyed companies started with a small number of employees while the most successful of them already employs entire teams of creative people. Despite of that, the position of the owner of the company is still crucial for the success of the whole company.

This above mentioned position of the owner also diminishes the role of universities in the education of creative workforce. The cooperation with universities is very limited and due to lack of needs there is also no pressure from private companies to the universities to produce more skilled people. Formal education plays a very minor role in the success stories in the creative industries. The Performing Arts sector was the only one where university plays more important role and there are many ties with business, partly because many of teachers have of work for

private business in the segment. The lower role of universities in formal education could be also results of very narrow teaching with quite strict curriculum while creative profession needs much more interdisciplinary approach.

Due to very high number of small companies and different sectors in the case study, we expected fragmented requirements for creative workforce skills. Surprisingly, there were nearly none. Most of the owners do not have any requirement or is not able to formulate special requirements for their creative workforce. The companies usually have special requirements only in the case of some professions which are not directly connected with creative work such as accountant, economist or machine operator. For such professions, according to the managers of companies, important are a university degree and some specific knowledge related to their work.

On the contrary, for a manager of the company is required to be creative, having talent and ability to communicate with clients. These characteristics are much more substantial than a university degree. In addition to these skills, according to respondents, are the flexibility and ability to work with specific software programs very crucial. This is also reflected in the selection of employees where informal contact and previous work references and experiences play much more important role than formal education in the field. It is even more supported by the fact that most of companies' owners also do not have formal education in the field of their business.

According to the interviews conducted, the so called formal education of creative employees is nearly totally missing during their work. They basically do not participate on training, conferences or any similar formal education activities. Again, these formal trainings are typical only for the non-creative fields of company's action such as training on legislative changes. Most of respondents state "learning by doing" as a form of improving their creative skills. They learn by internal brainstorming and communication with clients or other employees during their creative work. This fact also makes much harder to identify the needed skills for a job applicant in such a company.

Without identification of these skills, any formal support, training programs or educational activities cannot be properly designed and may be probably a waste of public money. Also most of the interviewed respondents are much more concerned with legislative boundaries for development of their business as for the quality of workforce and their skills.

There were only two exceptions regarding to the requirements and needs of companies operating in the sector of creative industries. Companies require skills in information and communication technologies (ICT) and entrepreneurship skills to a significant extent. Most of managers consider the creativity of their employees and themselves as sufficient, but in reality is they creativity limited by their ability to 'translate' their creativity into real outputs. To be able to do this, they need proper ICT skills. Entrepreneurship skills are missing mainly in the case of self-employment or small companies. Many small entrepreneurs consider themselves as very well trained in their own field (e.g. architecture, design, fashion), but they do not know how to sale their products, how to identify market niches or how to analyze the competition. Without these skills they are much less competitive, especially compared to foreign companies active in their field. Fashion designers are a clear example of this. They are substantially skilled, but they do not know how to build their own branches, so they usually have only their own selected customers and are not able to expand more. Another issue related to business skills is very limited export. Nearly none of the

interviewed companies is able to done or expand their business abroad. They consider this a very hard and risky step, so their businesses are limited to their region or Slovakia only. The support of business skills related to export may be also good way to strengthen abilities of creative industries in Slovakia.

Similar to the above mentioned, a career managements is a particular issue within creative industries workers. There is no 'clear' career path in creative industries; jobs have been changed very regularly. Missing requirements for workforce could also indicate lack of proper knowledge to expand further. Most of companies have only local or regional customers and do not try to expand into new territories or even abroad. They are 'locked in' in the sense they do not feel they need to have more knowledge or capabilities. They contribution to local development is rather limited; therefore the effect of public support oriented directly to them is quite questionable.

Generally, the existing success stories in creative industries in Slovakia suggest that instead of concentrating effort on 'creative education' could be much more effective to focus on searching for talents. The most of the respondent from interviews came to the conclusion that creativity should be born, but it cannot be learn. The aim of policy should be to identify creative entities and support their development rather than trying to 'teach' creativity to everyone.

### 3 Conclusions

The majority of the identified needs of creative industries in the field of education in Slovakia is similar to previously founded facts in other studies. We found out that the most important support should not be related to creativity itself, but more on complementary skills as ICT or entrepreneurship. These two skills were the only, where the public support could play substantial role. We suggest creating support schemes for creative skilled workers to be able to participate on these educational activities. Otherwise, the public support should be focused more on creation of proper legislative and business environment.

The role of formal education is very limited at present time. Universities must play more active role in development more flexible curricula and increase cooperation with private companies. We must also take into account, that support of creative industries cannot be considered automatically as good for economic development. It's also important to understand relations among creative industries, policy support measures and external spillovers to other part of the economy. The level of development of creative industries in Slovakia is still in the beginning and all requirements could be managed within existing schemes rather than to create new ones especially for these sectors. Also the support of creativity in traditional sectors which are export oriented could be more effective way to achieve higher economic development.

Very interested is also the fact that enterprises predominantly support thesis of "born" creativity. If this is true is still unsolved in the scientific debate, however is has strong consequences for policy. First, as some studies (UN, 2008) also support need for more creativity in education, would be also desirable to better understand the view of the management of creative companies in Slovakia. This could help to formulate adequate support policies. Second, it increase the importance of right selection and support of creative individuals, either in their formal education as well as in their abilities to establish own enterprises.

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