The Role of Educational Mechanism in Driving Creative Economy: Missing Linkages between Educational Policy and Creative Workforce Development

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Abstract. Prosperity of creative economy relies on human capability development. An effective education policy is responsible for generating human capable of serving creative industries requirement. This study is concerned with developing a better understanding of the dynamic education mechanism that enhances the improvement of human capital in creative economy context. This paper also identifies two essential issues underpinning education policy in driving creative economy. While, national creative strategic alignment ensures mutual movement of creative infrastructure. Collaborative partnership of education stakeholders is vital to leverage human creativity, technical and entrepreneurial skills. With key attributes identified, this study proposes necessary guidelines for Thailand education policy to better support the rise of Thai creative economy.

Keywords: Creative Economy, Creative Workforce, Educational Policy.

1. Introduction

Recently, the concept of creative economy has been discussed widely as an alternative approach driving sustainable economic development [1]. Creative economy focuses on driving those industries, which their productions are based on creativity. Many countries have established national creative economy policies to push forward the growth of creative industries and creative business for instance Australia, UK, USA, China, Korea, Singapore and India. Even though, creative economy has been focused as an essential mechanism driving economic growth. There is no consensus on the definition of creative economy. [2] defines creative industries as ‘those requiring creativity, skill and talent, with potential for wealth and job creation through the exploitation of their intellectual property’. [3] stresses the creative industries as industries that include the cultural industries plus all cultural or artistic production, whether live or produced as an individual unit. In [3]’s perspective, the creative industries are those in which the product or service contains a substantial element of artistic or creative endeavor. [1] defines creative industries as those involved in the creation, production or distribution of goods and services that use creativity and intellectual capital as primary inputs. [4] further states that creative industries are “the cycle of creation, production and distribution of goods and services that use creativity and intellectual capital as primary inputs”. [4] also classifies creative industries into four categories including heritage, arts, media and functional creation. [5] focuses on the creative resources as located in local (indigenous) culture, rather than in the production processes of global creative industries. The notion of creative economy primarily enhances local economic development. Hence, nation can achieve sustainable economic and social development. Nevertheless, the activities concerning human capacity development have not explicitly been mentioned. The objective of this research is twofold. Firstly, it aims to explore the role of education activities in supporting creative economy development. Secondly, it seeks to portray potential adjustment for Thai education policy to effectively enable the advancement of creative economy in Thai context.

2. Creative Economy and Human Capital Development

2.1. Creative economy and educational policy

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In order to improve creative capability, [4] indicates four elements working dynamically to produce creative outcomes. These elements are human capital, cultural capital, structural capital and social capital. Among these attributes, human capital is a primary factor driving the success of creative economy. [6] indicates that the growth of creative economy relies very much on creative people. [7] and [8] argue that creative capacities lie within all human beings. Hence education is critical to the creative infrastructure. [9] identifies the characteristics of creative class, people who is essentially creative driven with creative skills and occupations. Florida summarizes three attributes of creative class including creativity, skills and entrepreneurship. [4] also stresses that the concept of creative economy underscores the importance of creativity and intellectual capital in economic development. While the paradigm of creative economy covers a broad view of human creativity, creative industries focuses on essential skill level to turn creativity for success.

[10] states that “education reform must, at its core, make schools into places where human creativity is cultivated and can flourish”. [11] portrays the changing role of education to move from the focus of labor-intensive to mind-work. [12] further identifies several aspects concerning education activities supporting creative economy including networks, learning methods (apprenticeship) and students-amateurs. [13] demonstrate the role of creative occupations in local regional development and suggest collaboration between education institutes and communities. In order to improve human capability, it is inevitable to discuss the role of education activities at all levels. [14] suggests that a contemplation of educational reform to support citizens with appropriate capabilities and skills needed to advance nations’ social and economy. However, the success of educational reform must be conducted with alignment of national economic policy.

3. The Movement of Creative Economy in Thailand

The movement of creative economy in Thailand has begun since in 2001 with launching of One Tumbon One Product (OTOP) program. The second movement was made in 2003, when the government decided to establish the Office of Knowledge Management and Development (OKMD) to gather indigenous knowledge and promote creativity throughout the nation. OKMD works in collaborations with seven independent organizations including Thailand Creative and Design Center, Thailand Center of Excellence for Life Science, National Center for the Gifted and Talented, Thai Knowledge Park (TK Park), National Discovery Museum Institute, Center for the Promotion of National Strength on Moral Ethics and Values, and National Institute for Brain-based Learning to ensure that creativity, technology development and cultural innovation are developing in the same direction. Nevertheless, the term creative economy was mentioned only around five years later. Regarding to the study of [15], in 2008 Thailand creative industries contributed around 32 billion US dollars in sales and more than around 9.7 billion US dollars in value added. Creative industries in Thailand accounted for 9.53% of the total Gross Domestic Product with value added accounting to 2.86% of GDP in 2008 [1]. Creative industries also employed 875,500 workers. In 2009, government started to get more serious about driving creative economy development in Thailand.

Recently, Thai government has paid attention to value-added capacity through minimizing the use natural resource, utilizing the knowledge, talents, management as well as creativity to add and modify creative and cultural resources. The government expects to increase the share of GDP contributed by creativity from 12% to 20% by the end of 2012. In recent National Social and Economic Development Plan 11th (2012-2016), necessary issues supporting creative economy development are mentioned. These issues are knowledge creation, innovation, knowledge commercialization and increase learning opportunities in both formal and informal education, life-long learning [16]. Though, the government has stressed the strong intention to drive creative economy, but there are no explicit guidelines for educational parties to both conduct their strategies and initiate mechanisms to support the new economic notion.

4. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual development framework of this study focuses on the growth of creative economy, which relies on suitable human capabilities. The study focuses on human as primary valuable input enhancing creative products/services performance both through creative business employment and creative entrepreneur [1], [4], [7], [10]. (See Fig. 1) In order to produce human with creativity and appropriate skills needed by
creative and cultural industries. Educational institutes must ensure that they contain both horizontal and vertical linkages [17]. While horizontal linkage implies making collaboration and partnership with local community and public sector [18] vertical linkage refers to ensuring suitable continuous accumulated knowledge and skills from primary school level to university level [19]. Furthermore, even though each organization work independently but they all must work collaboratively with the same objectives to produce effective creative workforce [2].

By reforming education at both basic and higher level along with education research, nation will be able to provide their citizens with the capabilities and skills needed to advance their society. At the primary school level, the skills needed to think critically, analyze problems and solutions, and work collaboratively are skills that should be taught through formal education [10]. Activities to ensure students’ skills set development that match the industrial requirements must be designed and integrated with the curriculum. Furthermore, education institutes have to consistently create opportunities for students to gain necessary experiences prior their graduations [12]. Vocational schools have to provide space for students to practice their entrepreneur skills. Moreover, practitioners must be considered as a main mechanism in curriculum development to ensure that students will learn and practice up to date skills. Finally, essential to a creative economy is the realization that continual learning, even after formal education, is vital to continuing development [11].

5. Research Methodology

This study relies on qualitative research method to explore complex relationships, mechanisms and movements in educational policy. Regarding to [20], qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct and methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or a human problem. [21] also argue that that qualitative research provides a stronger basis for analysis and interpretation when the facing with unstructured problem. In order to determine the elements of education activities and policy, the study employs a group interview as data collection method. The method of focus group is selected to explore understanding meaning and description of a select group on specific issues [22]. The focus group involves stakeholders from both public and private parties including representatives from Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment, Office of the Educational Council, Office of Vocational Education Commission, Office of The Basic Education Commission, The Office of Higher Education Commission, Schools Accredited Schools, Vocational Schools and Universities.

6. Findings

In Thailand, Ministry of Education has Educational Act 1999 which covers all essential issues focusing on creativity, student-centered, life long learning, skill development, apprenticeship and entrepreneurship. However, there is no evidence of linkage between Educational Act 1999 and national creative economy policy. Even though, the government has commenced several policies, programs and activities on creative
economy. But the term creative economy in Thailand is still dubious. Most of officials from the Ministry of Education are not familiar with the objectives of creative economy in Thailand. Hence, there has not been an attempted to align education policy with creative economy policy. For Thailand, there are several issues concerning an establishment of education policy that can effectively support the development of creative economy.

First and foremost, it is essential to emphasis the importance of creative economy as an alternative approach contributing to both social and economic development in Thailand. All stakeholders must be aware of the potential benefits creative economy can provide to Thailand. Furthermore, Ministry of Education must be adaptive and flexible to follow the movement of strategic change at a national level and conduct educational policy accordingly. Furthermore, at the policy level effective strategic management system must be organized to monitor progress and update new technical activities to drive effective education policy. Project based teamwork with representatives from diverse stakeholders including public, private, education, and professional bodies must be formed to ensure collaborative working environment to enhance education policy implementation. The emphasis of higher education policy, and associated funding agencies at present is not sufficient to fully encourage and stimulate higher education’s multifaceted contribution to the growth of the creative economy.

For education institutes at all level, strategic management which taking national policy into account must be conducted and communicated throughout the organizations. Moreover, primary and high schools should pay attention on creating communication, self-learning, creative thinking problem solving skills to students. Vocational schools are prime responsible for producing creative workforce hence they should focus on producing professional excellence and entrepreneurial skill development. Moreover, vocational schools should focus on increasing students’ academic skills so that they will be able to further their study in the future. University must increase interactive activities with private sectors so that present industrial requirements can be integrated in curriculums.

7. Conclusion

Thai government is hoping to leverage the nation economy to a more advanced economy that can provide higher per capita income and greater quality of life for Thai people. Creative economy is clearly the new approach to stimulate sustainable economic development from local level. However, the success of creative economy relies on effective development of human capital. It is importance to develop education system that can foster creativity so that new knowledge and creative people can be generated. This must start at policy level to provide strategic directions to all stakeholders with clear objectives to produce human resource with creative thinking, skillful with business management skills. First and foremost, it is essential to emphasis the importance of creative economy as an alternative approach contributing to both social and economic development in Thailand. All stakeholders must be aware of the potential benefits creative economy can provide to Thailand.

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