

The unfulfilled promise of education for creative economy in Brazil

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Abstract

The aim is to examine why the promise that education for creative economy could be the engine for socioeconomic development – present in the academic work on creative economy and the political discourse of some leaders and political parties – remains unfulfilled in Brazil. The central argument indicates that the promise was unfulfilled because the maintenance of rigid curricular guidelines in basic, secondary and higher education limits the development of skills and abilities to deal with the constant transformations of creative economy. The unfulfillment of this promise can also be explained by the fact that the financial crisis – motivated by the adverse international economic situation and the political chaos caused by allegations of corruption and misappropriation of funds by politicians and businessmen – made the Brazilian government reduce investments in research and the maintenance of public institutions. The private institutions of basic and secondary education which prepare students for creative economy charge high monthly fees, which is not affordable for the greatest part of Brazilian population, and the Brazilian state does not seem to work to extend this education model for other public and private schools. Many private universities also suffer from the limitation of student financing programs. The transdisciplinarity among the three knowledge pillars of creative economy – technical / scientific, cultural / creative and business pillars –, as well as the valuation of traditional knowledge and practices and the formation of critical thinking in the light of political-economic and socio-cultural dynamics, is being ruined in Brazil.

Keywords: creative economy; Brazil; private education; public education; financial crisis; political crisis.

1. Introduction

Defined as one of the most dynamic set of productive activities in the world, creative economy reflects new forms of organization of production and consumption and is characterized by a logic of innovation in a system of continuous innovation. It encompasses sectors that produce goods and services based on texts, symbols and images, as well as activities guided by creativity and talent, such as crafts, design, fashion, audiovisual, music and book industries and the new industries of software and video games (Miguez, 2007). These industries are based on culture, which, according to the 1988 Brazilian Constitution, is a fundamental right related to development. The interaction between development and culture has been strengthened in the political debate in Brazil during the 2000s, specially after the 2004 UNCTAD meeting in São Paulo (Silva, 2012). However, even before the promulgation of the 1988 Constitution, Brazilian economist Celso Furtado (1984, 2008) argued that development was an endogenous social process that lead to human creativity, which was conditioned by cultural structures. Although creativity was restricted to a utilitarian

dimension which imprisoned human freedom during the industrial civilization of capitalism, Furtado indicated that this could change. In his view, social organization, which was also a result of human creativity, could allow people to explore creativity toward the generation of income and jobs and social inclusion in a new era (Sawaya, 2008).

During Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's government (2003-2010), the revitalization of the Ministry of Culture (MinC, its acronym in Portuguese) was accompanied by a wider conception of culture, seen as symbolic expression, the right to citizenship and a potential field for sustainable economic development. These changes allowed MinC to support multiple cultural expressions and expand access to analog and digital communication, which created more favorable conditions for the development of creative industries. The institutionalization of creative economy in Brazil occurred in the first term of president Dilma Rousseff (2011-2014), with the creation of the Secretariat of Creative Economy (SEC, its acronym in Portuguese), which aimed to formulate and implement policies that could stimulate creative economy in the country and combine economic growth and social inclusion (Marchi, 2014). According to the SEC action plan, creative economy was built upon the cultural, social and economic dynamics from the cycle of creation, production, distribution / circulation / dissemination and consumption / enjoyment of goods and services. The SEC plan also indicated that Brazilian creative industries should promote the protection of the diversity of national cultural expressions to guarantee their originality, strength and potential for growth and ensure social, cultural, environmental and economic sustainability for future generations. The establishment of creative economy as a development vector would take it as a cultural process which generates innovation and a promoter of productive inclusion (SEC, 2012).

However, SEC was eliminated in 2015, and, until the end of 2017, the economic relevance of culture – recognized in the notion of creative economy – was still conceived as fundamental to national development by the Culture Ministers. However, they did not emphasize the institutionalization of a new specific body for creative economy, so that strategic decisions related to such economy – presented in the SEC plan – were abandoned, relegated to the background or diluted and emptied into other concepts, such as “economy of culture”, which was a priority for most ministers and sometimes considered as synonymous with “creative economy” (Jesus, 2018). In Brazil's 2018 presidential elections, there has been little deepening and detailing of the proposals on issues related to creative economy in the candidates' government plans and programs, which reveals that, for political parties, creative economy would not be the engine of national development. The elected president, Jair Bolsonaro, did not even mention creative economy in his proposals (Jesus, 2019).

The gradual marginalization of creative economy by some of the most important political actors in Brazil has effects in many areas, such as education. Education is fundamental to the development of creative and innovative skills. The education for creative economy should be based on a multidisciplinary perspective and encompass sensitivity, entrepreneurial attitudes, social and communication skills, understanding of sociocultural dynamics and market and political analysis. However, the insufficient stimulation of interdisciplinarity and transversality of the acquired knowledge, the low promotion of the development of artistic and critical aptitudes and the reduced investment in innovation become more visible in Brazil, as well as the non-incorporation of contents linked to creative competencies into current

educational programs, the difficult interaction between technical schools and social initiatives and the problems for incubators and research centers in creative economy to maintain their activities (Hearn & Bridgett, 2010; Jesus & Kamlot, 2018).

The aim of the article is to examine why the promise that education for creative economy could be the engine for socioeconomic development – present in the academic work on creative economy and the political discourse of some leaders and political parties – remains unfulfilled in Brazil. The central argument indicates that the promise was unfulfilled because the maintenance of rigid curricular guidelines in basic, secondary and higher education limits the development of skills and abilities to deal with the constant transformations of creative economy. The unfulfillment of this promise can also be explained by the fact that the financial crisis – motivated by the adverse international economic situation and the political chaos caused by allegations of corruption and misappropriation of funds by politicians and businessmen – made the Brazilian government reduce investments in research and the maintenance of public institutions. The private institutions of basic and secondary education which prepare students for creative economy charge high monthly fees, which is not affordable for the greatest part of Brazilian population, and the Brazilian state does not seem to work to extend this education model for other public and private schools. Many private universities also suffer from the limitation of student financing programs. The transdisciplinarity among the three knowledge pillars of creative economy – technical / scientific, cultural / creative and business pillars –, as well as the valuation of traditional knowledge and practices and the formation of critical thinking in the light of political-economic and socio-cultural dynamics, is being ruined in Brazil.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Creative economy and basic and secondary education in Brazil

In the light of the greater economic relevance of cultural and creative resources, developing countries such as Brazil would have to rethink the foundation of knowledge from a model based in the preparation of a standardized labor force to a more flexible one, which stimulates the use of innovation to solve problems in the professional areas and the society (Florida, 2002, 2005). Advanced intellectual and creative skills that connect interdisciplinarity and independent thinking are required from the earliest stages of the educational process and in secondary education. With the linkage among arts, humanities and sciences, such skills can be motivated by methodologies that include technologies and extra class cultural activities into the educational process and stimulate independent actions, creative and imaginative engagement and research skills (Venturelli, 2000). The collaboration on multiple platforms may also lead to learning and innovation based on collective intelligence networks that stimulate cooperation and innovation in systems based on experience, participation and talent development, which encourage students to become social agents (Araya, 2010).

In Brazil, some competences should be strengthened in students in basic and secondary education for creative economy, such as scientific and creative thinking, which means to exercise intellectual curiosity and make use of the sciences' own approach, including research, reflection, critical analysis, imagination and creativity to investigate causes, elaborate and test hypotheses, formulate and solve problems and create

solutions (including technological ones) based on the knowledge from the different areas. Students should also develop communication abilities, which make them able to use different languages – verbal, body, visual, sound and digital languages –, as well as the knowledge of artistic, mathematical and scientific languages to express and share information, experiences, ideas and feelings in different contexts and produce meanings that lead to mutual understanding. The knowledge of digital culture is also important, because it can make students more capable to understand, use and create digital information and communication technologies in a critical, meaningful, reflective and ethical manner in diverse social practices (including school ones) to communicate, access and disseminate information, solve problems and play a leading role in personal and collective life. Students should also be able to argue based on reliable facts, data and information to formulate, negotiate and defend common ideas, views and decisions that respect and promote human rights, social-environmental awareness and responsible consumption at the local, regional and global levels, with an ethical position in relation to self-care, other people and the planet. They should also value the diversity of cultural knowledges and experiences and appropriate knowledge and experiences that enable people to understand the relations of work market and make choices aligned with the exercise of citizenship and their life projects, with freedom, autonomy, critical awareness and responsibility. They should welcome and value the diversity of individuals and social groups, their knowledge, identities, cultures and potentialities, with no prejudice of any kind. Other competences relate to empathy and cooperation, cultural repertoire, responsibility and autonomy and knowledge about the physical, social, cultural and digital world to understand and explain reality, continue to learn and collaborate to build a fair, democratic and inclusive society (NAVE, 2018).

Although the Brazilian Education Plan recognizes the necessity to define educational systems that support knowledge and learning in continuous cultural innovation, it also makes clear that Brazilian educational system did not effectively deal with innovation, since it was extremely based in an industrial model – a division into isolated topics and disciplines towards the formation of a workforce for the traditional activities of the economy – and focused on a reproductive logic. The educational infrastructure does not explore deeply how to promote innovation in basic and secondary schools, develop transdisciplinarity since the earliest stages of the educational process nor promote the encouragement of the interaction between technical schools and social initiatives (Jesus & Dubeux, 2018). Even though SEC emphasized the relevance of the stimulus to transversality by bringing together concepts related to cultural, technological and business areas (SEC, 2012), the educational model of the industrial age still prevails (Reis, 2008).

2.2. Creative economy and higher education in Brazil

Brazil must deal with strong economic crises, which shows that innovation becomes necessary to boost economy recovery. In this context, creative industries may contribute to the promotion of innovation, as well as the creation of job and income opportunities. The linkage of creative competencies into current educational programs and the strengthening of incubators and research centers in creative economy would have an essential role in the process of recovery. In some specific parts of the country, public and private institutions have intensified the relationship of creative economy to innovation to support creative

initiatives through partnerships with universities and the stimulus to incubators and creative education centers. This favors local and regional development in the basis of a “triple helix”, which engages the government, the market, and the higher education institutions in efforts for the development of capacities for creative economy (Etzkowitz, 2009).

In the development of the “triple helix”, the three actors – the government, the market and higher education institutions – interact across boundaries in the first phase, and their interaction is mediated by organizations and contractual offices. In the following phase, the helixes are defined as different communication systems. The interfaces among them operate on a distributed mode that produces potentially new forms of communication, such as in cases of technology transfer. In the third phase, the institutional spheres of the higher educational institutions, industry / business and government, in addition to performing their traditional functions, assume the functions of others, with the education institutions playing the role of regional or local organizers of innovation (Leydesdorff & Etzkowitz, 1998).

In Brazil, public universities were important actors in the proposals of the “triple helix”. However, in the 1980s and 1990s, private higher education became a major force in the education realm regarding the promotion of innovation and economic growth (Altbach & Levy, 2005). In Brazil, private higher education has consolidated since 1996, including approximately 2,000 universities, university centers and colleges distributed throughout its territory, but mostly in the Southeastern, Southern and Midwestern regions. 1996 represents a turning point for private higher education in Brazil, because it was the moment of the introduction of a fund which allowed young people to have access to loans to study in private higher education institutions (Sampaio, 2000; Bezerra, Niskier & Batourina, 2017).

Higher education institutions – public or private – face multiple challenges in Brazil, such as sustaining quality standards, attracting the best staff, remaining flexible, passing rigid audits for accreditation and adapting to numerous changes in regulations (Soares, 2002). When education for creative economy is taken into consideration, higher education institutions must obey the principle of inseparability of teaching, research and extension (Barreyro, 2008), but the financial crisis – motivated by the adverse international economic situation and the political chaos caused by allegations of corruption and misappropriation of funds by politicians and businessmen – made the Brazilian government reduce investments in research and maintenance of public institutions. Besides, with the drastic limitation of the resources for financing contracts in private institutions from 2015 on, most students from low-income classes were excluded from entering higher education and were not able to keep studying. Many students opted to leave university to cut costs (Jesus & Dubeux, 2018).

3. Methodology

The bibliographic research consisted of reading, selecting and organizing topics on the general aspects of the crisis of basic, secondary and higher education sectors in Brazil and evaluating their impact on the education for creative economy. The next step was the research of the political and economic context that motivated the crisis of the education sector in Brazil and evaluate how barriers for the full potential of education for creative economy as an engine for development were created and consolidated. At this step, I used information released by governmental institutions, such as the Ministry of Education (MEC, its

acronym in Portuguese) and statements and data from government officials and higher education institutions' managers, drawn from the media and think tanks, as well as the official websites of basic, secondary and higher education institutions.

4. Results and analysis

4.1. *The unfulfilled promise of basic and secondary education for creative economy*

In basic and secondary education, public and private institutions face a common problem: the existence of rigid curricular guidelines, which still reflect aspects of an industrial perspective of education and are insufficient for the development of skills and abilities to deal with the constant transformations of the creative economy (Jesus & Dubeux, 2018). The lack of investment in creative economy in basic and secondary education is also motivated by the economic and the political crises Brazil faces. The elements make more difficult the development of transdisciplinarity and the access to innovation for creative sectors for a great part of the Brazilian population. Regarding the first crisis, given the fall in the price of commodities of which Brazil remains extremely dependent, policies to encourage consumption continued in force by Brazilian government, but the side effect of this was an imbalance of public accounts, which undermined Brazilian credibility and limited the amount of money to invest in strategic sectors, such as education (Jesus & Kamlot, 2018). Because of this reality, it became harder to finance projects for the development of artistic and critical aptitudes in students from the basic and secondary education, as well as innovation and the reduction of Brazil's dependence on commodities (Jesus et al. 2018).

In public institutions, the decadence of basic and secondary education and the ability to promote creative economy come as a result of fiscal crisis in many parts of the country, as well as corruption schemes – which deviate resources that should be used in schools' equipment and infrastructure and teachers' salaries and preparation – and discontinuities caused by government changes (Jesus & Kamlot, 2017, 2018). The lack of resources compromises the necessary technological structure necessary for the development of creative activities, and teachers are also not prepared to deal even with more ludic activities, which are low-cost and no-cost actions that could be applied by educators in many schools in Brazil and stimulate creativity. It is important to say that Brazil has some emblematic initiatives that show the possibility of developing education for creative economy in public institutions, which strengthens the students' technical, creative and critical abilities, but there are not many institutions of this type. One of the main examples is the NAVE Project in Rio de Janeiro and Recife, a program oriented to the research and development of educational solutions using the communication and information technologies in high school and educating students for professions in the digital area. The full-time activities carried out by NAVE intertwine technology, cultural activities and citizenship with the school life and encourage students to critically appropriate the main languages and techniques for creative economy. Nevertheless, NAVE is a result of the construction of partnerships between the government and the private sector, which can bring alternatives for funding activities in times of political and economic crises. Today, these partnerships face many difficulties to be constructed and maintained in many parts of the country because of the non-favourable political and economic context, which makes more difficult the implementation of partnerships in the light

of the crisis faced by many of these companies – that limits the resources available for creative education – and the involvement of many of these companies in corruption schemes revealed by the Operation Lava Jato, a set of investigations underway by Brazilian Federal Police, which began in March 2014. The operation investigates crimes of active and passive corruption, fraudulent management, criminal organization and obstruction of justice, among others (Jesus et al, 2018).

In private institutions of basic and secondary education, the main focus remain in the preparation of the students for the entrance exam in universities, with a scarce preoccupation with the development of artistic or creative competences, as well as a more critical view on the deep social issues in Brazilian society, such as corruption and the unequal income distribution in the country and its effects. It is necessary to highlight that some private schools develop a model of creative education compatible with international standards, such as Eleva, a private school in Rio de Janeiro based on three pillars: academic excellence, with the focus on discipline and logic and statistical thinking; life intelligence, which means the ability to communicate, put self-knowledge in practice and participate in group work; and global citizenship, including the transversal work with issues related to identity, diversity, ethics, justice, health, environment and sustainability (Eleva, 2019). However, many private schools still have to adapt their creative proposals to fit into the rigid curricular guidelines and charge high monthly fees to maintain their infrastructure and services, which is not affordable for the greatest part of Brazilian population. The Brazilian state also does not seem to work to extend this education model for other public and private schools and make them more accessible to Brazilian people.

4.2. The unfulfilled promise of higher education for creative economy

As in basic and secondary education, the higher education institutions face the problem of having to follow the national curricular guidelines which do not always contemplate the development of abilities and competences for creative sectors, specially the development of critical, artistic and creative thought in the logic of the prioritization of the work market demands for more specific technical and business abilities.

In public institutions, there are clear challenges to the “triple helix” model. Brazilian science is going through a difficult time, largely due to the sharp cut in resources that occurred in recent years and accentuated in 2019. With reduced funds, it is difficult to make scientific production have a significant impact on the public management and the productive system. The Brazilian innovation index remains extremely low. While some developed countries allocate up to 5% of GDP for the area of innovation, the 2018 budget for innovation in technology, science and innovation in Brazil was the lowest in the decade (Soares, 2018). The cuts directly and deeply affect agencies that support research and infrastructure projects for researchers and teaching and research institutions (Moreira, 2018). The fiscal adjustment reached sectors that contribute to innovation, which compromises the entry of Brazil into the most advanced sectors in terms of innovation (Casarin, 2018). In May 2019, the Brazilian government cut funds for basic activities in federal universities all over the country, as well as resources of agencies that contribute to the development of science and knowledge in Brazil, such as the Brazilian National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq, its acronym in Portuguese).

The involvement of companies in cases of corruption revealed by Operation Lava Jato compromised

the allocation of funds for innovation. The generalized crisis affects the employment and reflects the greater economic instability and risk associated with existing businesses, as well as damages the generation of new ventures and limits the creation of jobs. Numerous innovation projects in public universities that relied on government support lacked funds or were closed, so the government was not able to promote a political, economic and institutional environment that would encourage public universities to invest even more in science, technology and research. The dismantling of internationally renowned research groups and the “brain drain” to other countries could affect young scientists and seriously compromise Brazilian future (Lewer, 2017).

Many private universities suffer from the limitation of student financing programs (Alves Filho, 2017). As the number of unemployed people remain high and salaries are low, students are less able to afford the tuition fees of a higher education course at a private institution. Such students have a hierarchy of priorities in their expenses, and basic ones such as rent and food are in a higher position than education. To cut costs, students end up not entering universities or choose to abandon them in the light of their reduced income (Jornal do Comércio, 2017). Besides, many institutions said they were “restructuring” or “bringing new flexible and modern academic models” to justify the changes that impact not only the lives of dismissed teachers, but also those of the contracted ones, who faced the reduction of their salaries. The payment for many professors has also been irregular for months. The crisis is also characterized by the overcrowding of some classrooms and the greater adherence to distance education by students who cannot afford more expensive classroom-based courses (Basilio, 2017). The cuts of resources in agencies that contribute to the development of science and knowledge in Brazil also affected private institutions. Regarding graduate courses, the number of specific programs dedicated to creative economy is still very small. One of the most renowned courses is the Executive Master of Science in Creative Economy, offered by the Superior School of Advertising and Marketing of Rio de Janeiro (ESPM-Rio, its acronym in Portuguese). However, there are no PhD courses in Creative Economy in Brazil up to this date.

5. Conclusion

It is possible to conclude that the promise that education for creative economy could promote socioeconomic development – present in the academic work on creative economy and the political discourse of some leaders and political parties – remains unfulfilled in Brazil. Rigid curricular guidelines in basic, secondary and higher education created obstacles to the development of skills and abilities to deal with the constant transformations of creative economy. The financial crisis Brazil faces – which can find its roots in the adverse international economic situation, the corruption and the misappropriation of funds by politicians and businessmen – made the Brazilian government reduce investments in research and maintenance of public institutions. The private institutions of basic and secondary education which offer preparation for creative economy charge high monthly fees, which is not affordable for the greatest part of Brazilian population, and there seems to be no political will to extend this model for other public and private schools. Many private universities also suffer from the limitation of student financing programs.

In the light of this situation, the transdisciplinarity among the three knowledge pillars of creative economy – technical / scientific, cultural / creative and business pillars –, as well as the valuation of

traditional knowledge and practices and the formation of critical thinking in the light of political-economic and socio-cultural dynamics, is being ruined in Brazil. It is necessary, therefore, the presence of leaders that recognize not only the relevance of talents and individual skills of creative students, but of new technologies, and develop policies that enable and support these talents. To achieve that, the debate on public policies must include training and qualification, research, development and regulation of virtual platforms, for example. Regarding training and qualification, the dissemination of information and communication technologies and the use of multidisciplinary management practices should also be encouraged (Bakhshi, 2014).

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