

## Skills for the creative industries

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### Introduction

The creative industries are attracting growing attention across the world, as they are increasingly seen, not only as important economic sectors in their own right, but also as one of the drivers of economic growth and productivity across the economy as a whole. In the UK, as in many other countries, the creative industries are growing faster than almost any other sector of the economy. The [Creative Productivity Index](#) recently published by the Asian Development Bank finds that low- and middle-income economies in particular will benefit from policies to increase creative inputs.

UNESCO's [2013 Creative Economy Report](#) refers to creative industries as “forms of cultural production and consumption that have at their core a symbolic or expressive element” (p. 20). Jobs in the creative industries are economic “activities involving cultural creativity and/or innovation” (p. 21). The creative industries are a powerful means to take on the “new development pathways that encourage creativity and innovation in the pursuit of inclusive, equitable and sustainable growth and development” (p. 15).

Creative economic activity has a positive impact on development: because people's creative skills are often rooted deeply in culture, traditions and history, creative industries do not only have an impact on *economic* development but are strongly linked with *social, cultural and sustainable development*, with creative workers being “enablers, as drivers of more inclusive, sustainable and meaningful development” (Bokova 2013).

### 1. How can we turn the expansion of creative economies into an advantage for technical and vocational education and training?

Governments, keen to maximize the economic potential of the creative industries, seek to nurture them by creating an environment in which they can thrive. Key to this is ensuring there exists a workforce which has the knowledge and skills necessary to support the employment needs of the sector and, as technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is primarily concerned with the acquisition of knowledge and skills for the world of work, the creative industries are a major opportunity and a challenge. To realize the opportunity, TVET needs to consider the needs of this emerging workforce while learning from the experience of other countries in tackling these issues.

## 2. What are the creative industries and how do we reach them?

We need to define the workforce we are trying to reach if we are to be able to analyse its needs. It is usual to define the creative industries as those companies and organizations whose output is creative – for instance handcraft, fashion, design, performing arts, software development, publishing, acting, radio and TV production. This focusses attention on a group of companies that tend to be very small, highly fragmented and where the majority of the workforce is carrying out creative functions. This approach also focusses attention on intellectual copyright. However, recent analysis argues that the number of people carrying out creative functions in general industries comprises a much bigger workforce than that found in the creative industries themselves, and that such workers have the same generic skills needs as those in the creative industries.

While there are standardized vocational pathways and protected job definitions for creative jobs in many countries, there is also a great deal of activity happening in informal settings. We will therefore look at the different vocational pathways that lead to creative jobs and ask: which workers are we trying to reach and how are their jobs defined? What are the problems of dealing with the training needs of small companies operating in a highly fragmented market? What lessons can we learn from other sectors?

## 3. What skills are required in the creative industries?

The creative industries frequently require a combination of highly specialized knowledge combined with transferable, generic skills. Are we able to define those transferable and generic skills? Are they unique to the creative sector? For instance, the McKinsey 2014 report on skills development across Europe concluded:

*Employers have a list of skills that they want and need; to a significant degree, this list is consistent across industries. Specifically, employers are eager to hire people with general professional skills, such as problem-solving. They are also looking for such qualities as good work ethic alongside 'soft' skills such as teamwork and interpersonal skills – employers across every country and every sector consistently believe that not nearly enough young people show basic competence in these areas. (p. 47)*

So are the skills required in the creative sector the same as those employers now look for across all sectors? How are these skills best acquired? What are the various degrees and learning models present in the creative skills sectors, and what are their advantages and disadvantages? What can we learn from the way people acquire skills in the creative sectors that can be relevant to TVET and skills training in general? Are there reliable mechanisms for assessing whether someone possesses creative skills or is developing them? What models of training and education within TVET are particularly effective in this field and what examples can we learn from?

#### 4. What more do we need to know?

The development of effective TVET approaches to the Creative Industries should be based on intelligent research. But do we know what we need to know? For instance, how does creativity at work/school influence the progress and personal development of TVET workers/students? At what age can young people begin to acquire such skills? Do we know enough about pathways into the creative industries to give career advisors the confidence to outline them as an option to young people, steering those with the potential into the further training and development that is required? What role does the physical and social environment and management style play in the nurturing of creativity? How can the understanding of employers be improved to maximize the creative potential of their employees? The creative industries are changing rapidly, and is the TVET sector able to keep pace?

#### Join us!

Join us on the UNESCO-UNEVOC e-forum to discuss the role of skills in the creative industries with participants from all over the world. The virtual conference will be moderated by Paul Collard, CEO of [Creativity, Culture and Education](http://www.cce.org.uk) (CCE) based in Newcastle upon Tyne, United Kingdom.

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#### About the moderator



Paul Collard is Chief Executive at Creativity, Culture and Education (CCE), an international foundation dedicated to unlocking the creativity of children and young people in and out of formal education, based in Newcastle upon Tyne, United Kingdom.

He has over 30 years' experience of working in the arts and is an expert in delivering programmes that use creativity and culture as drivers of social and economic change. He works internationally as advisor to governments, regional authorities and cities on their work with children and young people.

Paul also has a particular interest in the role of arts and culture in urban regeneration. Some of the recommendations contained in his 1987 report for the UK Government are now commonplace in culturally led urban regeneration projects.

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