

Exploration of Current Trends of the Arts Policy in America: Within the Economic and Educational Aspects

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to explore and analyze the current trends of the arts policy in America within the aspects of economics and education. There are five parts in this article of the arts policy in America, including background, ideology and effects, contents, analysis and a conclusion. Study and observation have led to several conclusions. The trends of the arts policy in America are strongly socially centered. Economics and education are two main trends. Economically, the policy emphasizes promoting global trade, tourism and rural economics. Educationally, the policy stresses improving students' learning achievements in grades K-12, prepares them for the workforce through art, and strengthens their reading and literacy. The advantages of the policies are based on cooperation between the arts and the social-economic environments to increase the citizen's workforce, opportunities and job income to enhance the benefits and prosperity in the artistic and cultural industry; improvement of economic and cultural development in the communities, and strengthening the country's economic and competitive power in the world. However, there are some problems in the current arts policy in

America. If the economic benefits and instrumental values of arts are emphasized too much, the arts policy is likely to lose the subjects and essentials. Also, the artists' creative trends and the public's aesthetic tastes are subject to being controlled by the business market. How to get the advantages and avoid the disadvantages in leading trends of the arts policy deserves deep consideration.

Keywords: Arts Policy, Arts Education Policy, Arts Policy in America, Arts Education Policy in America

Following the expansion of economic competition and the public values of arts, new concepts of cultural industry, creative industry, and art management have generated quickly. Because of increasing international interaction, the arts policy in America has been changing dramatically. The purpose of this paper is to explore by literature interview the activity of current trends of the arts policy in America within the economic and educational realms, including background, ideology, and contents. Additionally, analysis is conducted in order to systematically understand the trends and content of current American arts policy. As a result, this will provide a government reference.

1. The Background of America Arts Policy

The federal government adopts a free and open attitude in arts policy. It follows the autonomy of every state government and encourages groups' and individuals' free development. (Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in San Francisco Cultural Division, 2004)

In order to encourage development of the arts, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), funded by the federal government, was established in 1965. The purpose is to offer accessible channels for the arts to improve public learning, and establish a partnership between arts organizations. The goals are to gain access to artistic excellence, to improve arts learning, and to develop partnerships for the arts. The main approach is to offer the benefits of culture, education, and

economy to people of every state through related arts service and grants. More than 2,000 awards and grants are given annually in excess of \$100 million, funding the arts in all 50 States and six U.S. jurisdictions, including rural areas, inner cities, and military bases. (National Endowment for the Art, 2006a) In 2006, the NEA had a budget of \$124 billion (National Endowment for the Arts, 2006b)

In order to encourage state and local organizations to offer the rewards and grants to promote the arts, the NEA helped states establish state and regional arts agencies through the establishment of new state law. Moreover, every state establishes and implements its own arts policy to cooperate with the NEA. However, there is no relationship between the federal government and state arts agencies. (Cultural Division relationships Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in San Francisco,2004)

As to the annual budget of every state arts agency, an average 84% of the total budget is from legislative appropriations, 8.6% is from NEA funds, while 6.2% is from other sources. (National Assembly of State Art Agencies, In 2006, state arts agencies managed nearly \$390 million. However because economic situations and legislative appropriations vary from state to state each year, instability can occur, causing unpredictability in the annual budget. As an example, the grants of the Ohio Art Council given by Ohio State Government in 2003–2004 were 21% less than what they were in 2000 (Ohio Art Council, 2006). This challenge forces arts agencies in the state to seek additional financial support.

As to arts education, the U.S. Department of Education on the federal level and the States' departments of Education on the state level are responsible for Arts education in America. Departments of Education within each individual state are the competent authorities that decide teaching content and standards in arts education grades K-12.

2. The Ideology of Arts Policy in America

Ideology is the most important factor in policy making. Current arts policy in America involves these basic concepts:

2.1. Establish an Economic System Based on the Arts

Art economics has established itself as its own discipline. The concept of economy as an approach to arts has been applied to many fields. The value of application of aesthetic and creative characteristics to the development of new products, resulting in great rewards for the industry, has been confirmed. Moreover, no matter whether in the city or a rural area, arts always plays the role of a potential contributor. Prosperity in arts and culture not only enhances career opportunities and salary but also increases national tax revenue and local or national recognition. (National Governors Association, 2001)

Implementing this idea is a great asset to public economic life. For example, the nonprofit arts industry generated \$134 billion, including \$ 24.04 billion of federal and local tax revenue, which supports 4.9 million jobs per year.(Americans for the Arts, 2002) Because it is a great contribution to the country and society, improvement of the economy by means of the arts is important. The three concepts of arts policies in America are listed below:

2.1.1 Promote Internal Trade and Tourism through Arts

Every state in America has some regions with individual cultural characters. These areas are often considered as offering a better quality of life and greater cultural prosperity. However, some rural areas also have faced the challenges of economic development because of factors such as distance from the city, insufficiency of basic frame constructions, failure of the city's economic market, and loss of human resources to the city. The state government will solve the problems through arts. Rural areas often develop various arts and cultural industry with some assistance to become productive economic sectors. An arts-based economy can enhance state efforts to diversify rural economies, generate revenue, improve the quality of life, attract visitors, increase business investments, and draw talent. These inspire the economy in rural areas. (National Governors Association, 2005a)

The public's support of cultural tourism plays a crucial role in the current economic market. Arts attracts tourism; "cultural tourism" increases local economic growth by utilizing local historical and cultural resources to draw visitors. This can draw many democratic and international visitors and increase state and local income. For example,

nonprofit arts organizations in Florida reported the total spending of \$616.7 million, helping to attract cultural tourists to the state. These tourists spent \$2.9 billion, an average of \$349 each as compared to \$291 spent by non-cultural tourists to Florida. (The Council of State Governments, 2000) Arts and culture tourism had a great impact in improving local economy and industry. (The Council of State Governments, 2000)

Besides the economic growth in local areas, the whole country attains benefits. Statistically, 92.7 million Americans traveled in the United States in 2000, including 30 million U.S. travelers who lengthened their trips because of cultural events and activities. (National Travel Survey, 2001) Cultural tourists spent 38% more money (\$631 per trip) than the average U.S. traveler (\$457 per trip). (National Travel Survey, 2001) The American economy has been strengthened by putting arts into the tourism policy.

2.1.2 Improve Business through Arts

As international trade and investment treaty negotiations by the federal government progress, governors will be called upon to promote their states' businesses in a tight budget environment. Several states are incorporating arts and cultural exchanges into their international trade and business development approaches (National Governors Association, 2003) These activities are building a network of personal ties, or "a human infrastructure," that is an indispensable tool for expanding trade. Relationships of understanding, respect and trust with other nations will not alone guarantee expanded trade development, but they can form an effective foundation upon which trade partnerships rest. (National Governors Association, 2003)

Arts activities and the related products directly and indirectly improve the business development in America. In other words, arts activities are business activities. Therefore, arts activities and related products can improve the business. According to the survey, "American consumers spent more than \$10 billion on admissions to performing arts events in 1999. That adds up to \$2.8 billion more than admissions to motion pictures and \$2 billion more than spending on spectator sports." (Birch, 2002) Besides, the commercial tax from the arts industry and the related business development draw much income to government.

Because arts can highly increase the living quality of community environment, it not only establishes the cultural characters in community, but also impacts business and investments in the housing market. According to the investigation, in the new economy, a business success depends on its ability to recruit good skilled workers. Both companies and workers consider arts and cultural life when relocating. According to a survey in 1998, “more than 1,200 high-tech workers examined the most important factors associated with taking a new job. The quality of community life was the second most important factor after salary and more important than benefits, stock options or company stability.” (The New England Council, 2000) Arts and cultural development play the core role in renewing rural areas and communities. The generation, exhibition, and performance of arts can attract business visitors' and new residents' coming and consuming. Government tax revenues increase and communities become more attractive.

2.1.3 Create Work Opportunities through Arts

In the current prosperous situation in cultural industry, art is a catalyst to create new work opportunities. Many careers are related to arts, such as creative arts, publishing, video, music, computer software, web site designing, advertising, motion picture, broadcast media, automobile design , architecture , teaching, management, etc.

America's creative industries are our nation's leading export with over \$60 billion annually in overseas sales, (Birch, 2002). As to the man power in America, 2.7 % is in arts, more than in agriculture. According the statistics in 2000, there are 2 million full-time artists. As to the business of arts activities and products, they also offer job opportunities, new knowledge and artistic public spaces for the local residents. (National Governors Association, 2001)

The arts support more than 245,000 jobs throughout the six states of New England, which is 3.5 percent of the regions total job base, or more than the region's software or medical technologies industries. (The New England Council, 2000) The arts industry exhibited 14 percent growth over a four-year period, much higher than New England's overall economic growth of 8 percent. (The New England Council, 2000) Additionally, in Colorado, “Colorado nonprofit arts workers pay \$1.7 million in state income taxes. Beyond the nonprofit sector, the nonprofit

and commercial arts sectors comprise more than 27,000 workers, or 1.59% of Colorado's workforce." (Western States Arts Federation, 1998)

As to New York, "nearly one percent of employment in New York is generated directly and indirectly from the arts, providing 174,000 jobs to the state's residents. The arts provide a total impact of \$13.4 billion, with \$4.1 billion of this impact coming from nonprofit organizations, or nearly four times as much as the impact of commercial theater." (The Alliance for the Arts, 1997) In 2000, "profit and nonprofit arts and cultural organizations created the economic benefit about US\$ 14.5 billion. The cultural industry offered 130,000 jobs." (The Alliance for the Arts, 2002)

According to the above numbers, the job needs through arts are offered for the residents. This is one of the important factors for government to invest and make policy.

2.2. Enhance the Student's Learning Achievements through Arts

Arts discipline improves learning in the other disciplines and prepares the future workforce. The arts policies in education in America are geared toward improving the quality of arts education, preparing the future workforce and reading and literary activities.

2.2.1 Improve Student Achievement and Intelligence

Arts education not only improves arts knowledge and skill but also helps other disciplines. As to general students, according to research, "in a national sample of 25,000 students, those with high levels of arts learning experiences earned higher grades and scored better on standardized tests than those with little or no involvement in the arts, regardless of socioeconomic status." (Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, 1999)

Besides the positive effects in learning achievements, for normal youth, attending arts learning programs can positively help establish self-image, respect of others, and cooperation. Additionally, "the arts instill foundation skills like reasoning, decisions making, creative thinking, and problem solving." (National Governors Association, 2002) These proficiencies are important in establishing healthy personalities and prepare for future careers. (National Governors Association, 2002) Therefore, arts has a great impact on student achievement and

individual development. This improves arts being a core discipline.

2.2.2. Prepare the Workforce through Arts

Various working proficiencies are always required in the work place, including good communication, problem-solving skills, and basic management skills. Dr. Elliot W. Eisner (Eisner, 2000) identifies key competencies of cognitive growth that are developed through an education in the arts. These include: perception of relationships, skills in finding multiple solutions to problems, attention to nuance, adaptability, decision-making skills, and visualization of goals and outcomes. These can help students for preparing the future workforce.

2.3. Promote Reading to Reduce the Literary- Reading Decline

Reading and literary activities are important for two main reasons. Strong reading habits enhance skills required in the 21st-century workplace, such as high literacy and analytical thinking. Besides, “literary readers have been shown to be more likely than nonreaders to pursue social and civic activities such as volunteering and attending sporting events. Therefore, literary reading may enhance community life and civic engagement.” (National Governor Association, 2006)

According to the research, “Reading at Risk (A Survey of Literary Reading in America), “less than half of the adult American population now reads literature. In the past 20 years, the decline in literary reading parallels a decline in total book reading, especially for the young... At the current rate of decline, literary reading will virtually disappear in the next half-century.” (National Endowment for the Arts, 2004) Therefore, it is important and urgent for the US government to promote reading literary.

3. The Content of Arts Policy in America

In order to complete the main concepts of the arts policy, the content of arts policy of the Federal government can be illustrated by its economic and educational aspects:

3.1. The Arts Policy in Economy

3.1.1 Develop International Trade and Tourism through Arts

Some states in America have international collaboration and exchange in arts and culture in international trade and business development to look for the bigger scope of the competitive markets. Some states have successful strategies, such as initiating cultural exchanges with foreign countries, developing sister-state relationships, including cultural leaders on trade missions, making grants to communities and educational institutions, creating state-level commissions and signing bilateral agreements. (National Governors Association, 2005)

3.1.2. Strengthen the Rural Economy

Every state has regional rural characteristics. Arts play an important role in the economic development. Arts can renew the community and help regional revolution or evolution. Many states adopt a series of approaches of economic development based on arts, including: (a) integrate the arts into state economic-development planning; (b) use traditional entrepreneurship and economic-development tools, including incubators, start-up capital, and training; (c) attract the arts community by offering incentives, supporting business collaboration, and improving physical infrastructure; (d) use higher-education systems in training and business assistance efforts; (e) integrate the arts into planning and marketing to build sustainable tourism; (f) helping fund rural programming and providing incentives for other entities; (g) use the wide variety of federal resources available (National Governor Association, 2005b)

3.2. The Arts Policy in Education

3.2.1. Strengthen the Educational Quality of Grade K-12

Present George W. Bush signed the new educational law “No Child Left Behind” (The White House, 2001). After that, the elementary to high schools started to actively renovate. The purpose of this law was to enhance the quality of education. There are six purposes: create a culture of achievement, improve student achievement, develop safe schools and strong character, transform education into an evidence-

based field, enhance the quality of and access to postsecondary and adult education, and establish management excellence. (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). The US department of Education followed this law to ask Grades K–12 for to enhance learning achievement; arts was drawn into the content of the related policy.

According to National Assessment of Educational Progress 1997, there are three main policies in arts education of the Federal government (Education Commission of the State, 2005): adding grants for arts education, establishing a National Art Standard, and conducting the assessment research about planning and implementing arts education in grades K–12.

Additionally, according to research findings of the Education Commission of the State in 2005, current arts education in American states have four trends: state content standards in the arts, schools/districts required to provide arts instruction, arts courses required/optional for high school graduation and arts required for certification of regular teachers. (Education Commission of the State, 2005)

3.2.2. Enhance the Development of the Working Power through Arts

Some states focus on cultivating the workforce, developing an arts-based educational program for both common and at-risk youth.

(a) Design Arts-Based Educational Programs for the Common Youth.

Some states create arts-focused programs to support schools in developing individual comprehensive development and teach skills for a career. In Connecticut, there was the Arts -- HOT (Higher Order Thinking) Schools Program which was an educational process that creates child-centered schools through the arts. In Mississippi, the Whole Schools Project expanded regular classroom instruction to include the arts and promotes collaborations between arts and classroom teachers to create arts-infused instruction. In Ohio, there was a Spectra's + program which was a methodology that places the arts in the daily curriculum as a basic subject. (National Governors Association, 2002)

(b) Design Arts-Based Educational Programs for the At-Risk Youth.

After-school programs have joined forces with the arts to bridge this gap and foster a developed workforce. The programs have been successful through a simple combination of the arts, academics, and social counseling, and the reinforcement of necessary soft skills.

Gains in self-esteem, discipline, problem solving and decision-making -- all skills necessary to actively participate in today's workforce -- have also been noted. Therefore, some states designed arts-based educational programs for the at-risk youth. In Florida, in 1989, there was a multifaceted arts studies and crime prevention program, Success through Academic and Recreational Support (STARS), for at-risk youth that offers a variety of classes, including modern dance, African Folk dance, poetry, creative writing and vocal arts, as well as tutorials in math, reading, and computers. (Reno, 1998) In Massachusetts, it offered an arts program to served disabled children, school dropouts, homeless youth, young people facing neighborhood violence, court-involved youth, runaways, and pregnant or parenting teens. (National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, 2000) In New York State , it had El Puente Leader Center which has an after-school and weekend program in arts to help the youth's development. (National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, 2000)

(c) Design Arts-Based Training-Workforce Programs for Confined Youth.

There are some educational programs for confined youth through arts for preparing work skills. Alabama had "Writing Our Stories: An Anti-Violence Creative Writing program". The program arranged local writers to three bridewell to instruct the 12-15-year-old youth writing novels. (National Governors Association, 2002). Washington established the Experimental Gallery which had collaborated with the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services and the Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration to open arts classes for the confined youth in six bridewells. After 12-18 classes, the learners exhibited the arts works to share with community citizen. (Coming Up Taller, 2006)

3.2.3. Strengthen Reading and Promote Literature

In order to reduce the reading risk, the NEA invited the Institute of Museum and Library and Arts Mid-West to collaborate in holding the national activities of "Big Read". The purpose was to develop reading and literacy through encouraging reading and revising literature in the role of American culture. States could take three major approaches to promoting reading and literary activities. The NEA provides many programs for strengthening reading. States can take three major approaches to promoting reading and literary activities: developing the literary infrastructure in the state through networks, partnerships, state

agency collaboration, state libraries, literary organizations, publications, and individual artist programs; using the state's literary assets to boost interest in local literature by recognizing and promoting native and local authors through awards, publications, broadcasts, and readings; and engaging communities in literary activities by offering book clubs, film series, and family reading programs at libraries, workplaces, and other community centers. (National Governors Association, 2005c)

4. The Analyses of Arts Policy in America

4.1. The Trends in Arts Policy in America

According to the above exploration, the trends of arts policy in America generally are in both economy and education.

The ideology of arts policy in America emphasizes three points: establishing an economic system based on the arts, enhancing the student's learning achievements through arts, and promoting reading to reduce the literary-reading decline.

The content of arts policy in America includes economic and educational aspects. Economically, the arts policy focuses two parts: developing international trade and tourism through arts, and strengthening the rural economy. Educationally, the arts policy emphasizes three points: strengthening the educational quality of grade K-12, enhancing the development of the working power through arts, and strengthening reading and promote literature.

4.2. The Advantages of the Arts Policy in America

From the above exploration of arts policy, the benefits of this policy have been found as below:

1. Implement art to daily life through the integration of arts and socio-economy: Because the trend of this policy focuses on linking and interaction, arts is not only an independent academic principle but also in close relationship with life.

2. Improve the developments in community and country via arts to improve economic and cultural life: This trend of policy emphasizes

the development of economy through arts. Not only do individuals and government get the economic benefits but also enhance the quality of life and improve the arts in daily life.

3. Increase public support in arts policy and encourage people to learn arts by expanding the public value in arts: The trend of the policy expands the arts value to economy and career through traditional aesthetics, enjoyment, and self-satisfaction in performance. This improves government's and legislature's willingness to put arts into the policy. Additionally, the people have more willingness to learn arts.

4. Increase the learning achievement in arts through the requirement of good quality of arts education by administrative policy system: Because many states call for the implementation of an arts curriculum in K-12, the employment of arts teachers, teaching according to the curriculum standards, and the learning achievements in arts would raise highly.

5. Increase at-risk youth's abilities for the workforce and adjustment to society. The problems of at-risk are always a tough issue. It is valuable to learn and promote the arts-based educational programs to effectively help the at-risk get proficiency in work power and social adjustment.

4.3. The Disadvantages of Arts policy in America

The arts policy in America has the above advantages, but it also has at least two disadvantages:

1. If the value of arts as a tool is stressed too much, the value of arts as the main subject will diminish: If the value of arts as a tool was stressed only to increase economic development and work power, the value of arts as art will diminish. For example, if the meaning of the heritages' existence is only for improvement of the growth of tourism, and the meaning of music performance is only for a busy atmosphere in the market, arts policy will become subordinate -- a supporting role. Also, arts education will become marginal.

2. If the system of meeting the market need is stressed too much, the market would control public opinion and affect people's choices, directly affecting creativity. Therefore, the autonomy and creativity of the arts works could possibly diminish and the trend become banal.

The public will follow the tendency of fashion. When the arts works are commercial, virtual, and copied, people become confused regarding legitimate arts works vs. fake arts works their corresponding values.

Exploration of Current
Trends of the Arts
Policy in America:
Within the Economic
and Educational
Aspects

5. Conclusion

The trends of the arts policy in America are strongly socially centered. Economics and education are two trends. The ideology of arts policy in America emphasizes three points: establishing an economic system based on the arts, enhancing the student's learning achievements through arts, and promoting reading to reduce the literary-reading decline. The content of arts policy in America includes economic and educational aspects. Economically, the arts policy focuses two parts: developing international trade and tourism through arts, and strengthening the rural economy. Educationally, the arts policy emphasizes three points: strengthening the educational quality of grade K-12, enhancing the development of the working power through arts, and strengthening reading and promote literature. Every approach has numerous strategies mentioned as above.

The advantages of the policies are based on the cooperation between arts and social-economic environments to increase the citizen's workforce, opportunities and job income, enhance the benefits and prosperity in the artistic and cultural industry; improve economic and cultural development in the communities, and strengthen the country's economic and competitive power in the world. However, there are some problems in the current arts policy in America. If the economic benefits and instrumental values of arts are emphasized too much, the arts policy is likely to lose the subjects and essentials. Also, the artists' creative trends and the public's aesthetic tastes are subject to being controlled by the business market. How to get the advantages and avoid the disadvantages in leading trends of the arts policy deserves deep consideration.

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Exploration of Current
Trends of the Arts
Policy in America:
Within the Economic
and Educational
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