

The role of audiovisual production schools in the creative economy of Tuxtla Gutiérrez.

El papel de las escuelas de producción audiovisual en la economía creativa de Tuxtla Gutiérrez.

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Anette Diep Rodríguez

University of Guadalajara. Mexico

anette.diep.rdz@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-9570-2715>

Abstract:

This text analyses the relationship between formal education in audiovisual media production and its influence on the creative economy in Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas. Using a cost-consequence economic evaluation methodology, it examines how three key institutions, the Autonomous University of Chiapas (UNACH), Pablo Guardado Chávez University (UPGCH) and Descartes University, generate measurable economic benefits in the area. The study includes analysis of student enrolment data and interviews with administrators to obtain up-to-date information on the student population in Tuxtla Gutiérrez. In summary, it is proposed that audiovisual media education in Tuxtla Gutiérrez is fundamental to strengthening the local creative economy, not only because of its direct contribution to the market, but also because of its capacity to foster social and cultural processes that have tangible economic value.

Keywords: Creative economy. Schools. Audiovisual production. Formal training. Economic impact.

Resumen:

El presente texto analiza la relación entre la educación formal en producción de medios audiovisuales y su influencia en la economía creativa en Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas. Empleando una metodología de evaluación económica basada en Coste-Consecuencias se examina cómo tres instituciones clave, la Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas (UNACH), la Universidad Pablo Guardado Chávez (UPGCH) y la Universidad Descartes, generan beneficios económicos medibles en la zona. El estudio incluye análisis de datos sobre la matrícula estudiantil y entrevistas con directivos para obtener información actualizada sobre la población estudiantil en Tuxtla Gutiérrez. En síntesis, se propone que la educación en medios audiovisuales en Tuxtla Gutiérrez es fundamental para fortalecer la economía creativa local, no solo por su contribución directa al mercado, sino también por su capacidad para fomentar procesos sociales y culturales que poseen un valor económico tangible.

Palabras clave: Economía creativa. Escuelas. Producción audiovisual. Capacitación formal. Impacto económico.

Introduction

Studies on the relationship between education and the economy are relatively recent, with interest in holding international meetings, forums and round tables to discuss the effects of the educational economy and so-called human capital emerging only after the Second World War (Del Campo Villares and Salcines Cristal, 2008). Even more recent is the concept of the creative economy, which dates back only to the 1990s and encompasses everything from creation and production circles to the distribution of goods and services related to the mix of culture, art and technology, resulting in the use of creativity as a raw material (Gomes, 2018).

This text explores the relationship between formal education in the creative audiovisual sector and its impact on the creative economy of the city of Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas. This impact can be measured using a cost-consequence economic evaluation methodology (Parera, 2009, p. 9), which consists of presenting a list of the results benefited by the educational activity being analysed, together with their costs in Mexican pesos (MXN). Thus, the hypothesis of this article is that formal education in audiovisual production drives the local creative industry, attracts funding, and helps consolidate a production ecosystem in the region. This will be analysed by mapping specialised educational institutions and their population density, as well as their relationship with their direct, indirect, and induced economic contribution within the locality.

Audiovisual production schools in Tuxtla Gutiérrez

According to the website México Histórico, if we want to talk about formal education in the audiovisual field in Tuxtla Gutiérrez, we need to go back to the 1970s, when the University Centre for Film Studies was founded at the Autonomous University of Chiapas (UNACH). This institution became a crucial training ground for new filmmakers, as mentioned on the same website: "From here, projects emerged that sought to tell the stories of indigenous peoples and the social struggles they faced, issues that resonated in the national and international context of the time." (Méjico Histórico, n.d., para. 6)

However, today, this school no longer exists on the map; rather, it seems to have disappeared from history almost completely. A simple Google search reveals no information about the centre. What does stand out, however, is an article written for the digital newspaper DesInformémonos, in which Noe Pineda (2024) aptly titles his text *El cine que irrumpió desde sitios donde no hay escuelas de cine* (Cinema that bursts forth from places where there are no film schools). Reading the article, it is clear that it highlights the important work carried out by Ana Ts'uyeb, Xun Sero, María Sojob, Gabriela Ruvalcaba and Liliana K'an, as they are filmmakers who have emerged from indigenous communities outside the era when the Centre for Cinematographic Training (CCC) with Patas or Ambulante dedicated themselves to reaching the most remote parts of the country to train future audiovisual talents. As mentioned in the following article:

Why was it so significant that Li Cham (Morí) won the award for best documentary feature film at the Morelia International Film Festival? Not only because it was the first time a Tsotsil film had achieved such recognition, but there are other reasons too, although I would like to highlight just a few. The young woman who does the sound, Lorena, did not come from film school. She trained herself by producing radio programmes, attending workshops, and spending hours in the field. She did not go through *Ambulante* or *CCC con patas*. The cinematographer, José Alfredo, undoubtedly one of the best in Chiapas, is a reference point for younger filmmakers from indigenous communities. He has collaborated on several notable projects and is the founder of the communications team for the civil organisation *Las Abejas de Acteal*, and he does not live in San Cristóbal. The director, Ana, has also been an exceptional case, like many others. Together with her brother, they are the first generations in their family to pursue a university degree, trained by producing and taking workshops. They are not part of the *Ambulante* or *CCC* generation either. (Pineda, 2024, para. 1)

In addition to the previous article, there is a recent interview with Gustavo Trujillo Vera, a prominent filmmaker and film critic from Chiapas. In this interview for the newspaper *El Sol de Chiapas*, he mentions that there is no degree programme dedicated to film within the state, which limits opportunities for young talent (Farrera Garzón, 2024). Based on the above statements, then, if there is no record of any film school in Chiapas, what does the term 'audiovisual production schools' refer to in this article? Well, the approach that will be used to determine formal functional training within the scope of universities based in Tuxtla Gutiérrez will be that proposed in the book *El cine comunitario en América Latina y el Caribe* (Community Cinema in Latin America and the Caribbean), where "Training is a comprehensive action that goes beyond merely technical instruction, including social, cultural and political training modules, which determines audiovisual media as a tool that contributes to social change." (Gumucio, 2014, p. 136).

In this way, we can think not only of audiovisual education from film degrees, but also from all those courses related to film creation, such as communication or digital animation, as long as they contribute holistically to audiovisual creation.

It is pertinent to add to this exploration that the main theorist who has spoken about the importance of education for the creative economy is Rey (2018), who describes this economic sector as everything that involves great cultural power, the capacity for massive expansion, and a major economic impact. According to his position, this description includes television, film, music, new media, and the arts education that shapes them. This is because, according to the author, the creative industries depend on the formation of sensibilities, aesthetic abilities, and expressive skills that are developed through school experience ().

The population density of audiovisual schools

In order to write this article, it was necessary to request direct contact with institutions in the city of Tuxtla Gutiérrez that offer education related to audiovisual production, as enrolment and graduation data are not publicly available on the internet. Contact was made with the following schools: Pablo Guardado Chávez University, which offers a degree in Animation and Digital Content Design; Descartes University of Science and Technology, which offers a degree in Film Creation; and the Autonomous University of Chiapas, which offers a degree in Communication.

These are the universities that offer in-person academic programmes related to audiovisual production within the city, and from which we know that graduates have previously participated in short film competitions or festivals (Gómez, 2023). Therefore, together with their curriculum, it can be verified that they develop sufficient film language skills to produce materials within this field.

After scheduling interviews with the people in charge of each of these schools and formal training centres, the information about population density was clarified. When talking about population density within a school, the aim is to find out how many students are enrolled in each of the degree programmes or engineering courses mentioned in the list above. Using the information obtained through interviews and transparency reports, Table 1 was created, which contains the number of students per degree programme, as well as an approximation of how much these numbers represent in relation to the direct income of each university.

During the interviews, the relevant question about the professional development of graduates was also raised. However, in answering this question, various biases were noted, as the departments responsible for outreach, academic trajectories, and/or graduate follow-up do not have complete information due to the difficulty of contacting each of the former students.

Another phenomenon mentioned in the interviews was the so-called brain drain, which according to the Glossary on Migration (International Organisation for Migration (IOM), 2019) refers to "the depletion of human capital in a specific professional field or economic sector as a result of the emigration of skilled workers from this professional field or economic sector to another country or to another region within the same country". The problem caused by the brain drain is that the workforce that could result from this formal education ends up working outside Tuxtla Gutiérrez, reducing the economic impact that could benefit the locality. This will be revisited later in the research when discussing the induced impact.

Table 1. Prepared by the author based on interviews with managers and students.

UNIVERSITY	NUMBER OF ACTIVE STUDENTS	AVERAGE MONTHLY TUITION	TOTAL MONTHLY INCOME FROM TUITION
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Pablo Guardado Chavez University (UPGCH)	138	\$4,441.50	\$612,927
Descartes University of Science and Technology (UDescartes)	25	\$4,900.00	\$122,500.00
Autonomous University of Chiapas (UNACH)	2160	\$650	\$1,404,000.00
TOTAL	2643	—	\$5,428,690.00

Note: Prepared internally based on interviews with administrators and students.

The total average monthly tuition fee has been left blank

because it is not a factor that influences the economic impact.

Based on the information obtained, it is clear that UNACH is undoubtedly the school with the highest enrolment, as is often the case with public education institutions. In contrast, the Bachelor's Degree in Film Production has an extremely low number of students, as this is the only active cohort at the moment, given that the school was closed for at least five years and is now reactivating its work.

The direct economic contribution of audiovisual production schools

According to the guide provided by PricewaterhouseCoopers S.L (PwC, n.d.) on how to conduct a comprehensive economic impact study, it is essential to review three types of impact: direct, indirect, and induced. In this paper, we will begin by breaking down the direct impact of schools offering audiovisual training, referring to the production and employment generated in those sectors that are direct recipients of the universities (PricewaterhouseCoopers S.L (PwC), n.d., p.4). This also includes the taxes generated and, therefore, the contribution to the Gross Domestic Product.

In this regard, universities are an important source of employment. At UNACH alone, there are 508 full-time professors and a total of 4,451 employees, including academic and administrative staff (Chiapas State Government, 2025). Of these, according to data provided by the university's Transparency Unit, 226 workers belong exclusively to the Faculty of Humanities, which offers a Bachelor's Degree in Communication.

The hourly wage for a university lecturer at this institution is MXN \$114.00 for a tenured lecturer (Glassdoor, n.d.), with up to 20 hours per week, giving a total of MXN \$9,120.00 per month. Meanwhile, if one participates in the call for full-time lecturers, according to its statutes, a base salary of £21,745.75 per month is granted (UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE CHIAPAS, 2024).

As a public institution, the university's Transparency Unit also details the number of teachers who have a base salary or who are trusted, so it is possible to obtain an approximation of the direct impact generated solely by the UNACH Faculty of Humanities, as its data is freely accessible. However, for the rest of the schools, it was necessary to ask the responsible managers directly. The coordinator of Cinematography UDescartes (personal communication, 2024) was unclear about teaching fees, but mentioned that much of the curriculum comes from the centre of the country, which increases costs.

Likewise, the coordinator (personal communication, 2024) clarified the dynamics of linking foreign teachers with local teachers, mentioning that the initial weeks are staggered with only local teachers and later foreign teachers are included, so they end up working 3 months and not 4, as corresponds to the regular period. Similarly, foreign teachers apparently earn more because their travel expenses and other services are also added, although local teachers could have a similar income if they added up enough class hours.

Table 2 was compiled using the data collected. It is attached below and serves as a comparison with the direct income from the student population served by the audiovisual area. It can be seen that the only degree programme that is not profitable, according to the return on investment (ROI) analysis¹, is Communication, offered by UNACH.

Table 2. Average salary of employees and teachers in the audiovisual area at universities.

¹ It is calculated using the following formula: $ROI = (Net\ profit/Investment\ cost) \times 100$. *Net profit* is considered to be the income generated from tuition fees, and *investment cost* is considered to be the total sum of salaries per university. It is a financial metric used to determine the profits or losses generated by a project.

UNIVERSITY	NUMBER OF ACTIVE TEACHERS IN THE FIELD	AVERAGE SALARY	NUMBER OF ADMINISTRATIVE EMPLOYEES IN THE FIELD	AVERAGE SALARY	AVERAGE SALARIES BY UNIVERSITY
Pablo Guardado					
Chavez University (UPGCH)	18	£7,200.00	4	£7,000.00	£157,600.00
Descartes University of Science and Technology	8	\$11,000.00	3	\$10,000	£118,000.00
Autonomous University of Chiapas (UNACH)	137	13,854.02***	89	£13,134.83	£3,067,000.61
TOTAL	203	£52,954.02	135	£49,434.83	£3,801,500.61

Note: Prepared internally based on interviews with managers and students.

*Approximate salary based on various comments made during personal interviews.

**Source: Government of the State of Chiapas (2025)

***Source: National Transparency Platform (2025)

The indirect and induced economic contribution of audiovisual production schools

Economic theories that approach the analysis of the economic contribution of education in society have focused mainly on explaining its productive contribution, only partially and in isolation addressing issues that go beyond the monetary, as it also involves: the development of a socialising mechanism that will boost students' skills in the workplace, institutional support to obtain better jobs, investment by the students themselves in their professional practices, among other factors that indirectly or inducedly affect local economic development (Del Campo Villares and Salcines Cristal, 2008, p. 55-59).

With regard to the investment made by students during their studies to carry out their audiovisual projects, according to one of the graduates of the Animation and Digital Content Design Engineering programme at UPGCH in 2024 (personal communication, 14 November 2024), the investment in the production of the medium-length film evaluated for his degree, together with other students who made up his team, is estimated at approximately MXN 70,000. Similarly, another graduate

from the same institution (personal communication, 1 March 2025) mentions that the final presentation event for the degree project, in which a group of 30 students has been involved, has a budget of more than one hundred thousand Mexican pesos for its successful completion.

Although the amounts mentioned are not reflected in student fees, they do constitute a significant part of the cash flow within the city of Tuxtla Gutiérrez, as they form part of purchases made for the production of their final projects. Such purchases may include: stationery, technological equipment, office rent, food, transport, and even fees for individuals who are not active students at the institution. It should be noted that another sector of the industry could begin to get involved here, not only education, but also the value chain that follows audiovisual production. As mentioned in *The Economic Impact of the Audiovisual Industry in Latin America*:

The supply chains of the audiovisual industry include many other creative and non-creative industries. Therefore, the spending of companies working in the audiovisual industry sector will have an explicit ripple effect in other areas, and the overall economic effect will be greater than that of the initial expenditure. (Inter-American Development Bank and Netflix, 2023, p.37)

This takes into account that only degree projects for two generations of the same university have been considered, so it can be concluded that the sum of all graduate projects at the local level will constitute a significant amount of indirect and induced contribution.

The second part that is considered when evaluating the indirect impact of the education economy is the skills or tools that are obtained after formal studies and that increase the chances of obtaining employment. Currently, Mexico contributes approximately 7% of the gross domestic product (GDP) of the animation industry in Latin America and around 5% worldwide. When considered together with information technology, this sector represents about 39.5% of the national GDP (U-TAD, 2022). In Tuxtla Gutiérrez, there is only one formally recognised animation studio known (La Brújula Audiovisual, 2024), but the city's residents are aware that there are also several advertising and marketing companies that employ most of the graduates in communication and animation.

Image 1. Example of a vacancy for communication graduates.



Note: Impulsarte para crecer, 2025

Image 2. Example of a vacancy for animation graduates.



Note: Vio Camacho, 2025

A review of the job vacancies shows that a bachelor's degree in communication or animation engineering is an essential requirement for obtaining permanent employment in these agencies. Graduates with a bachelor's degree in film production have also been identified who have founded their own production companies and are engaged in audiovisual entrepreneurship. According to the coordinator of this programme (personal communication, 2024), the degree provides

students with both technical and commercial tools so that they can develop their creativity in both advertising and narrative fields.

As no specific information has been obtained regarding the graduates of the universities included in this study, it is not possible to obtain exact figures on the impact of this industry. In addition to this, the aforementioned brain drain also has a negative impact on these figures, as the coordinator of the UDescartes Film Production degree programme (personal communication, 2024) mentions that of the 54 graduates of the programme, only 6 remain actively working in Tuxtla Gutiérrez.

Conclusions

The analysis carried out shows that formal education in audiovisual production in Tuxtla Gutiérrez plays a decisive role in strengthening the local creative economy. Although the offer is limited compared to other regions of the country, existing universities have played an important role in the development of specialised education, contributing to the professionalisation of young talent and the promotion of a growing cultural industry in Chiapas. Likewise, they have managed to configure a training ecosystem that directly and indirectly influences the local creative sector.

In direct economic terms, the institutions analysed represent a significant source of job creation and revenue generation through tuition fees, academic salaries and institutional operations. Likewise, their educational activity is linked to other sectors through indirect effects, stimulating dynamics such as audiovisual equipment rental, creative services, local commerce and the formation of emerging production companies. However, this study recognises important limitations. The first is the difficulty in accurately measuring indirect effects, given that these involve broad sectors that are poorly documented in the Chiapas context, such as the specific GDP of the regional audiovisual industry, or the monetary flow involving broader sectors with limited availability of hard data.

The second is the absence of mechanisms for tracking graduates, which makes it impossible to estimate the induced impact of their work. Even so, qualitative evidence indicates that many graduates participate in independent projects and ventures that enrich the city's audiovisual fabric, even though their trajectories have not been systematically recorded. There are success stories of graduates who start their own local audiovisual production companies and, at the same time, generate more employment opportunities for subsequent generations, suggesting a strengthening of the industry in the medium to long term.

These limitations must be addressed in future research, as there is a recognised need to build graduate tracking systems, a lack of comparative information on the creative economy in entities with characteristics similar to Tuxtla Gutiérrez, and limited information on the economic impact of the local audiovisual industry. Overcoming these shortcomings would allow

for more robust evaluations and the formulation of cultural public policies that integrate education, production, and the audiovisual industry in a coordinated manner.

In conclusion, this phenomenon is gradually consolidating a sustainable and autonomous cultural ecosystem in the region. The role of educational institutions is reflected not only in the technical training of new generations, but also in their ability to generate jobs, cash flow and empower creative ventures that contribute to the local economy. Although there are still gaps in information that limit the accurate measurement of its economic impact, the evidence observed suggests that audiovisual education in Tuxtla Gutiérrez is a strategic driver for the creative development of the state. For this growth to continue and translate into a more robust industry, it will be essential for public policies, the private sector, and academic institutions themselves to coordinate efforts around professionalisation, talent retention, and the development of more comprehensive evaluation mechanisms.

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