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Educational needs in cultural and arts entrepreneurship of women from marginalised backgrounds: A needs analysis for a social design intervention

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Abstract

Despite the recognition that cultural and creative industries can foster significant economic potential and are one of Europe's most dynamic sectors, contributing to the creation of millions of jobs across the European Union, there is a noticeable lack of cultural and arts entrepreneurship programmes of study. The project CREATION (Cultural and Arts Entrepreneurship in Adult Education), funded under Erasmus+ Strategic Partnerships for adult education, seeks to redress this situation through a social design intervention comprising the development of a framework for adult education for the creative and cultural sectors across Europe, with a specific focus on aspiring women entrepreneurs from marginalised backgrounds (migrants, refugees and asylum seekers). This study provides a needs analysis to inform the identification of the required educational needs for the target groups. It comprises desk research of the related literature plus data from an online survey. The synthesis of the prominent themes that emerged from this study indicates the need for a multifaceted instructional design approach that combines both the essential generic skills in entrepreneurship and acknowledges the structural, contextual and educational challenges that are characteristic of the target groups.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Education, Women, Marginalised, Culture, Arts

Introduction

The creative industries are the focus of different lifelong learning programmes across Europe that aim to address adult training needs for a future workforce in a sector that requires a set of diverse skills to engage with cultural and arts entrepreneurship. In a study by Essig (2017, p. 21), the author reminded us that education for cultural and arts entrepreneurship has moved on from the early 'pioneering phase' and is now transiting the 'conceptual phase', where related education is further defined, necessitating a 'robust body of empirical research'. The view that education, skills and relevant training are not sufficiently addressed in the sector was also identified in a comprehensive report by the Culture Unit of the Utrecht School of Arts written for the European Commission (2010). The authors argued that the proliferation of entrepreneurship education programmes in recent years have commercial success as the sole purpose. They do not cater to the creative industries where creative and cultural outcomes are considered more significant than financial outcomes (2010, p. 10; Bridgstock, 2012, p. 129). For this article, the terms 'cultural and arts entrepreneurship', 'arts entrepreneurship' and 'entrepreneurship in the cultural and creative sector' refer to similar endeavours and are used interchangeably and as they appear in the reviewed literature.

The rationale for engaging with the early 'conceptual phase' of cultural and arts entrepreneurship was articulated as a policy priority area by the European Union in 2007. The European Commission's document on a European Agenda for Culture in a Globalizing World (2007) made an explicit connection between the contribution of the cultural industries and the creative sector in general and growth and employment. Subsequently, in the same document, the European Commission set as a specific objective to "...Promote capacity building in the cultural sector by supporting the training of the cultural sector in managerial competences, entrepreneurship..." (2007, p. 9). This objective stems from the recognition that the cultural and creative industries can foster significant economic potential and are one of Europe's most dynamic sectors, contributing around 2.6 % to the EU GDP and provide quality jobs to around 5 million people across the European Union (EU) (European Commission, 2010, p. 2).

Following on from the acknowledgement that the sector can contribute towards growth and employment, the project CREATION (Cultural and Arts Entrepreneurship in Adult Education, www.creationproject.eu), funded under Erasmus+ Strategic Partnerships for adult education, seeks to develop a social design intervention comprising a framework for adult education for the creative and cultural sectors across Europe with a specific focus on aspiring women entrepreneurs from marginalised backgrounds (migrants, refugees and asylum seekers). The purpose of this article is to provide a needs analysis that informs the development of the appropriate pedagogical framework for the target group. This needs analysis comprises two parts. First, desk research was undertaken on literature, including appropriate European Union (EU) documents, to track down useful existing pre-published information. Second, an online survey in the form of a questionnaire (Appendix 1) was undertaken (n = 55) for two months in early 2020, inviting representatives from academia, the cultural and arts sector and entrepreneurs as well as others to comment on their perceptions on what the required set of skills is for the target group. The outcomes of this needs analysis derived from the synthesis of both these parts, i.e. the literature review and data from the online questionnaire.

Literature review

The project CREATION identified marginalised women to include all those with a migrant, refugee and/or asylum seeker background. The European Institute for Gender Equality, however, provides a *raison d'être* for what makes these groups marginalised. Marginalised groups are those that within a given culture and context are at risk of being subjected to multiple levels of discrimination due to the interplay of different factors including their social status, sex, gender, age, ethnicity, religion or belief, health status, disability, sexual orientation, gender, education, income, or living in various geographic localities. Being a member of such groups or even being perceived to belong to them increases the risk of inequalities in terms of access to rights and use of services in a variety of domains, such as access to education, employment, health, social and housing assistance, protection against domestic or institutional abuse, and justice (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2020).

In the context of entrepreneurship, marginalised groups were identified in a study by the Enterprise Research Centre (2018) to include the following four groups: a) migrant entrepreneurs, b) ethnic minority entrepreneurs, c) women entrepreneurs, and disabled entrepreneurs. Each one of these groups is confronted with unique challenges in addition to those faced by entrepreneurs. For example, migrant entrepreneurs tend to lack understanding of the culture of their new country and combined with poor language skills they are unable to access the support available for new entrepreneurs (Enterprise Research Centre, 2018, p. 8). Ethnic minority entrepreneurs are confronted – among others – with racism, unawareness of available sources of finance, low adoption of Information and Communication Technologies as well as dealing with language and cultural differences (Enterprise Research Centre, 2018, p.

13). The lack of relevant education and managerial skills combined with having to operate in a predominantly male-dominated sector, are among the issues that impede women entrepreneurs. There are also overlaps with the previous groups in terms of difficulties in accessing finance and support (Enterprise Research Centre, 2018, pp. 14-16). Lastly, disabled entrepreneurs dealing with a wide variety of physical and/or mental disabilities, in common with previous under-represented in the sector groups – and among other challenges – struggle to access specialist advice and start-up funding (Enterprise Research Centre, 2018, p. 18).

The academic literature on entrepreneurship, in general, is extensive. However, the related literature on entrepreneurship in the cultural and creative industries is limited (Chang & Wyszomirski, 2015, p. 11). A meta-analysis of this literature by Hausmann and Heinze (2016) indicates that this literature comprises mostly theoretical/conceptual approaches to the topic and case studies. The second point to note from this meta-analysis – and something identified by a few authors – is the lack of an agreed understanding and commonly accepted definitions of entrepreneurship in the cultural and creative sector and what this entails. However, the overlapping areas in these varied definitions suggest that entrepreneurship in the sector entails, in a broad sense, a variety of cultural activities, diverse artistic outputs and products, cultural enterprises and the creation of tangible cultural capital. In a meta-analysis by Chang and Wyszomirski (2015, p. 24), the authors attempted a ‘preliminary’ definition based on their analysis that encapsulates the term in the following description: “...[arts entrepreneurship is] a management process through which cultural workers seek to support their creativity and autonomy, advance their capacity for adaptability, and create art as well as economic and social value.” This description is adopted as a working definition for this needs analysis, and it serves as a useful stepping stone to help identify the skillset required to foster entrepreneurship among aspiring women entrepreneurs from marginalised backgrounds.

In a broad report by the Directorate-General for Enterprise and Industry of the European Commission (2008, p. 26), the expert group comprising a multinational team of European experts acknowledged that there are different emphases on how and what to teach, depending on disciplinary differences. However, the expert group recommended that the common elements of Higher Education (HE) entrepreneurship, irrespective of disciplines, should entail instructional programmes that foster, among others, creativity, innovation, a proactive attitude, decision-making and leadership skills and an ability to work with uncertainty and recognise opportunities. The same report concluded that traditional instructional methods do not relate well with the development of entrepreneurial competencies, and multi-disciplinary partnerships are an essential element for the development of enterprising abilities (2008, p. 29).

In a study from the United Kingdom with a specific focus on how entrepreneurship is delivered in HE for the creative industries (Clews, 2007), the author highlighted the prevalence and significance of project-based and work-based learning. Although this study did not seek to identify the range of competencies taught to learners in the creative industries, it identified the significance of soft skills such as networking, team-building and team-working (Clews, 2007, p. 51). The learners who participated in this study identified as core competencies of entrepreneurship education for the creative industries good commercial skills, business management and good communication skills and as desirable attributes the ability for opportunity spotting and problem-solving (Clews, 2007, pp. 56-58). Similarly, it is argued that entrepreneurial failures in the sector are due to “a lack of strategic thinking, finance, and opportunity recognition skills” and “shortcomings in business management skills, market knowledge and networking skills (Thom, 2016, p. 6).

The characteristics of entrepreneurship in the cultural and creative industries were elaborated upon by a report produced by the Utrecht School of the Arts (2010). Although the focus is on providing an

understanding of the sector from the perspective of related industries, it is possible to discern the 'transversal problems' that are common to these industries (Utrecht School of the Arts, 2010, p. 6) and thus identify some areas to address through educational programmes. A major theme that emerged from this report highlights the challenge that small creative enterprises are confronted with if they want to expand. Networking and clustering to benefit from a collective position are options to pursue because in the cultural and arts sector many professionals are likely to be self-employed (Bridgstock, 2012, p. 124).

Other challenges include access to knowledge about market opportunities, appropriateness of business models, knowledge of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), locating funds and seeking financing. These themes are part of the recurring skills noted in the literature on entrepreneurship. For example, in an extensive study by Thom (2016, p. 13) the 'crucial' entrepreneurial skills were identified as the abilities to think creatively, apply strategic thinking and planning, recognise and realise opportunities, network, exercise leadership and understand finance and marketing. For reasons of convenience, we will refer to these recurring general skills as generic, i.e. they form an important component of all programmes of study in entrepreneurship.

What hinders the identification of specific learning needs, vis-à-vis entrepreneurship for women as well as minority ethnic groups, is the lack of extensive research in this area (Chreim, Spence, Crick, & Liao, 2018; White, 2018). We take for granted the need for generic skills, but there are indications that due to contextual factors (culture, ethnicity and religion) these skills can be negatively skewed concerning women and ethnic groups (Chreim et al., 2018, p. 4). For example, in a report that specifically focused on women's entrepreneurship (Halabisky, 2018), the ability to locate funds and effectively seek financing was identified as a characteristic challenge for women entrepreneurs, who are confronted with greater difficulty in this area than men (Henry et al., 2007, p. 246). This applies across all EU states (Halabisky, 2018, p. 14).

The educational value of mentoring is identified as a generic element for all entrepreneurship studies, on the premise that it can facilitate guidance and support while at the same time it is perceived by learners as offering exposure to real-life practice (Final report of the expert group, 2008; Halabisky, 2018, p. 18). The significance of mentoring to address the challenges women are confronted with is an oft-repeated theme in the literature on policies that support women entrepreneurs (Henry et al., 2007, p. 262; Bridgstock, 2012, p. 132). Mentoring – by successful women entrepreneurs – is explicitly proposed for aspiring ethnic women entrepreneurs, who are often confronted with the combined disadvantages of gender and ethnicity. While the generic educational challenges are common among all groups, mentoring for ethnic women can offer, among other things, insights into non-business issues, such as dealing with perceived gender expectations within certain cultures and managing a work/life balance regarding childcare (Chreim et al., 2018, p. 9).

A concept used in the literature to describe the dimensions of ethnic entrepreneurship is 'embeddedness'. This relates to the spectrum of social agencies and networks and structural parameters (the politico-institutional and socioeconomic environment) that host the aspiring entrepreneur and the degree to which the latter encounters these either as obstacles or as advantages (Chreim et al., 2018, p. 2; Rath, & Swagerman, 2016, p. 154). The implications for education in cultural and arts entrepreneurship for women from marginalised backgrounds are not immediately obvious. Awareness of 'embeddedness' and all that this entails does, however, point towards a multi-level skillset that includes the ability to evaluate opportunities within the respective socio-political contexts.

Emergent themes

For two months in early 2020, a total of fifty-five (n = 55) respondents answered the online questionnaire (Appendix 1). The data were gathered through convenience sampling due to time limitations, and this infers the possibility of a sampling error and lack of representation of the target population. However, the sampling process can also be considered as a wide delimitation. The authors deliberately sought a wide-ranging spectrum of opinions, inviting all those who consider themselves informed on the subject, irrespective of their background, to complete the questionnaire.

For the first question of the online survey, most respondents (36.36%) identified themselves as professionals. Some indicative descriptions they provided to qualify their professional roles include teacher of English as a second language, project manager, freelance consultant, product developer, trainer, linguistic mediator, professional in the field of cultural heritage and architecture and vocational education expert. The second-biggest category of participants (29.09%) was academics, and among the listed disciplines were textile printing, architecture/design for built environments, inclusive design, fashion design and design and multimedia. The third group in size was entrepreneurs (18.18%), followed by those that did not identify with any of the previous categories and listed themselves as 'others' (9.09%). The last and smallest group comprised of postgraduate students (7.27%).

After repetitions and redundancies were removed, the outcomes from the second question (Appendix 1) were mapped (Table 1) and classified according to the following four divisions: a) Personal attributes; b) Personal skills (hard and soft); c) Structural/contextual challenges; and d) Distinctive issues for cultural and arts entrepreneurship. Predictably, the replies to the second question confirmed the range of generic skills that are an important component of all programmes of study in entrepreneurship and are identified in the literature review. This mapping exercise also provides a list of distinctive social, structural and educational challenges that are unique to cultural and arts entrepreneurship for women from marginalised backgrounds.

Personal attributes	Personal skills (hard and soft)	Structural / contextual challenges	Distinctive educational challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Courage • Confidence • Perseverance, persistence • Grounded, strong sense of self • Self-efficacy • Diligence • Resilience • Assertiveness • Adaptability, flexibility • Willing to take risks • Motivation, passion • Be a dreamer, have a vision • Open-minded • Emotional intelligence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Ability to learn • Persuasiveness • Presentation skills • Creative thinking, problem-solving, critical thinking • Networking • Budgeting, business planning, accounting • Management • Negotiating • Teamworking • Interpersonal skills • Leadership • Digital marketing, social media skills • Fundraising • Use of technology • Public speaking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to systems and services • Cultural and gender inequalities • Integration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intercultural competencies • Mentoring • Ability to recognise, analyse and question the power structures that marginalise • Overview of actualities in culture and creative industries • Basic knowledge of art history

- Understanding of social processes
- Knowledge of IPR

Table 1: Mapping of attributes, skills, and contextual and distinctive educational challenges.

Selected indicative statements from the respondents illustrate how the respondents perceived some of the items in Table 1. For example, "... [women from marginalised backgrounds] need opportunities, access to systems, services and education to be able to learn about which skills they have and can build on and to be exposed to cultural, arts and other sectors as part of that learning. From this exposure, awareness there are discovered interests to pursue and pathways to take" (Respondent #50). And "They [women from marginalised backgrounds] need to be well networked beyond their locality and community. This often needs to be done with the support of a cultural intermediary/support person to help make connections and 'translate' key information. Women from marginalised backgrounds often experience discrimination for structural reasons rather than through a lack of their skills and competencies. In other words, it is not all about their skills but it is about the environment, the social and cultural inequalities in society" (Respondent #43). Last, "... [women from marginalised backgrounds] must be well-aware of their rights and [be] able to defend them. Strategic thinking, communication skills and creativity [are needed]" (Respondent #16).

Next, the respondents were asked to rank (1 = Lowest, 12 = Highest) in terms of importance twelve skills identified in the literature review. Figure 1 represents this ranking. The total value for each item in the chart represents the cumulative average of choices among all the respondents. As an overview, the differences between all of them can be considered minimal, and this suggests not a prioritisation in terms of the educational value, but rather a pedagogical framework that incorporates all of them or at least as many as possible.

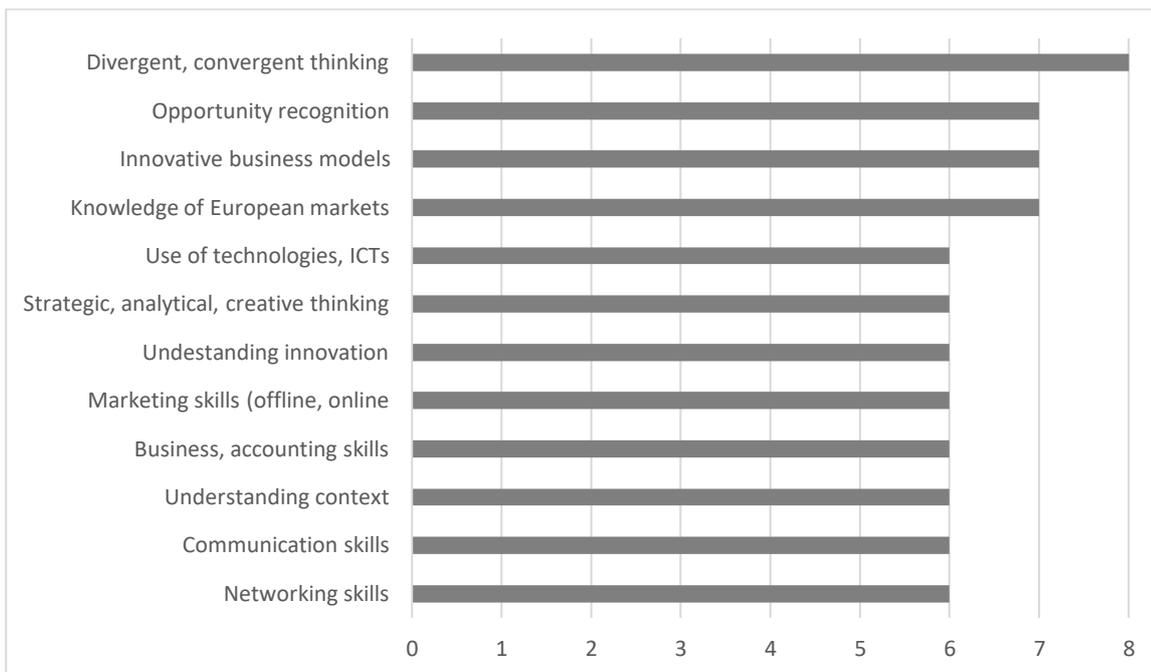


Figure 1: Ranking of skills.

The last question of the online questionnaire sought qualitative data on what the respondents perceived to be the characteristic challenges and opportunities for women from marginalised backgrounds to succeed as cultural and arts entrepreneurs. Repetitions, redundancies and overlaps were removed, and replies that offered insights and something not previously identified is quoted as stated.

“They [women from marginalised backgrounds] might be stuck with a label that chokes their creative process by making them create only about their marginalising context. Having a point of view and a message doesn't mean you are stuck with your identity and can only create about yourself and your reality. Artists imagine (Respondent #55).”

“...They [women from marginalised backgrounds] are locked in downward spiral ecosystems that punish ambition/risk-taking and reward submission/status-quoting. To name just a few of the components of this ecosystem: political and social power, gender, race, class, legitimacy, elitism, language, literacy, education, information, exposure, access, finance, social and financial capital ... What they do have in their favour is talent, cultural and social literacy, commitment, intelligence (tactical and emotional), spiritual strength/ wisdom, resilience and a strong sense of self (Respondent #53).”

“...There are also opportunities to change the context of the status quo/establishment and apply out of the box thinking to create new, unique, and unexpected industries/creative businesses and practices (Respondent #50).”

“...The main challenge is to convince yourself to become an entrepreneur, especially for women from marginalised backgrounds. Culture and arts are emerging business sectors where interesting opportunities can arise, therefore entrepreneurial and innovative training is necessary to support those women in meeting this challenge (Respondent #24).”

Conclusion

This needs analysis aims to inform a social design intervention comprising the development of an appropriate pedagogical framework in cultural and arts entrepreneurship for women from marginalised backgrounds. The synthesis of the prominent themes that emerged from the literature review and the data from the online questionnaire points towards the need for a multifaceted instructional design approach that combines both the essential generic skills in entrepreneurship and an acknowledgement of the structural, contextual and educational challenges that are characteristic of the target group. Ideally, the instructional strategies and overall pedagogical framework to be developed will approach these themes as intertwined and interconnected, but also recognising the unique challenges that confront women from marginalised backgrounds.

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Appendix 1

Question 1: Are you a) An academic/researcher? In what discipline? b) A professional? What is your occupation? c) An entrepreneur? d) Other? Please provide a brief description.

Question 2: In your view, what are some skills and competencies women from marginalised backgrounds need to succeed as cultural and arts entrepreneurs?

Question 3: Rank each item below separately in terms of importance for women to succeed as cultural and arts entrepreneurs (1 = Lowest, 12 = Highest).

Strategic, analytical, creative thinking

Divergent, convergent thinking

Opportunity recognition

Understanding innovation

Understanding context

Communication skills

Innovative business models

Marketing skills (online/offline)

Knowledge of European markets