

Impactful Creativity: The Role of Entrepreneurship Education in Driving Sustainable Development in the Cultural and Creative Industries

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The cultural and creative sector is one of the most dynamic sectors of the Portuguese economy, contributing to job creation, innovation, social development, preservation of cultural heritage, and the promotion of the country's image across the globe. Entrepreneurship in the cultural and creative industries (CCIs) plays a crucial role in creating new opportunities for employment and revenue generation. Therefore, entrepreneurship education is receiving increasing attention as a means to contribute to the sustainable development of the cultural and creative sector. Underpinned on an Erasmus+ Project, FENICE 'Fostering Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Cultural and Creative Industries through Interdisciplinary Education', the present research contributes to the discussion on the main challenges of entrepreneurship education for the CCIs. Using a qualitative research design, this exploratory study employs a focus group with purposeful sampling as the research method. An online focus group was conducted in February 2023, with 11 participants identified as renowned professionals and experts in various cultural, artistic, and creative fields in Portugal. Preliminary results suggest that creatives are perceived, by nature, as entrepreneurial-oriented and often motivated by passion and a sense of mission. However, they also face a generalized lack of perspective on how products/services from the CCIs should be capitalized or how different monetization models may apply to them, especially when culture is perceived more as a symbolic than a capitalizable good. For many cultural and creative entrepreneurs, difficulties arise when understanding how business or project management tools can contribute to their professional growth within the CCIs.

Entrepreneurship education; Entrepreneurial mindset; Cultural and Creative Industries; Creative Economy

1. Introduction

The cultural and creative industries (CCIs) have become a focal point of the creative economy, encompassing various interpretations of cultural and creative entrepreneurs. Terms such as 'cultural entrepreneurship', 'arts entrepreneurship', and 'creative entrepreneurship' are often used interchangeably, highlighting economic activities aimed to produce goods and services with aesthetic and symbolic value (Hausmann & Heinze, 2016). Entrepreneurship education for the sustainable development of the CCIs has gained greater attention as a means to promote new employment and revenue generation opportunities, especially for local communities and small businesses. By fostering creativity, innovation, and critical thinking, entrepreneurship education empowers individuals to develop and refine their artistic abilities while understanding market demands and consumer preferences. The European Commission (2011) highlights the role of the creative sector at both the national and transnational levels due not only to its potential as a driver of innovation and growing economic weight but also for its social and cultural significance.

1.1 Problem statement and aim of the study

This study aims to contribute to the discussion on entrepreneurship education for the CCIs and its role in driving sustainable development. This study is part of a broader research project developed within an Erasmus+ Project entitled FENICE, ‘Fostering Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Cultural and Creative Industries through Interdisciplinary Education’. This project aims to promote cooperation, innovation, and exchange of good practices among Higher Education Institutions from five countries in enhancing the quality and relevance of business education for the CCIs, fostering their innovative potential and social impact. This paper, in particular, explores the main challenges of entrepreneurship education for the CCIs, considering the profile of cultural and creative entrepreneurs, the training needs of future professionals and entrepreneurs for the cultural and creative sector, and the issues surrounding the monetization of cultural and artistic expressions.

The paper is organized into five sections. The introduction presents the context and aim of the study, followed by the literature review, which explores the concepts of creativity and creative entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship in the CCIs, and educating entrepreneurs for the cultural and creative industries. The methodology of the study, based on a qualitative approach, is presented in the third section. The results from the focus group with renowned professionals and experts in Portugal's various cultural, artistic, and creative fields are summarized in section four, followed by the conclusions and discussion in the last section of the paper.

2. Literature review

1.2 Creativity and creative entrepreneurship

Creativity and entrepreneurship are deeply intertwined, as they both involve generating and implementing new ideas and sharing characteristics such as curiosity, self-confidence, risk-taking, and vision. Although creativity is a complex phenomenon with multiple and subjective definitions, it may be described as the ability to think outside the box, to make connections between seemingly unrelated concepts, or to generate novel and valuable ideas, solutions, or products (Ward, 2004; Bujor & Avasilcai, 2016). Creativity is not limited to artistic endeavors; it also plays a crucial role in problem-solving and innovation, which is why it is often posited as a driving force behind entrepreneurship (Dietrich, 2019; Fillis & Rentschler, 2010). In turn, entrepreneurship is the process of turning those creative ideas into a successful business venture.

Within the scope of the CCIs, entrepreneurial creativity is driven by intrinsic motivation (e.g., interest, enjoyment) and the desire to seek out new opportunities. The term ‘creative entrepreneur’ refers to entrepreneurs involved in the creative industries’ business activity. These entrepreneurs are focused on creating and exploiting creative or intellectual capital and investing in their talent and the talent of others (Bujor & Avasilcai, 2016). Creative individuals are more likely to envision new opportunities, take calculated risks, and adapt to changing circumstances, all of which are crucial traits for successful entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship offers a platform for creative minds to turn their imaginative ideas into tangible ventures, driving economic growth and societal progress and fostering a culture of innovation (Fillis & Rentschler, 2010).

1.3 Entrepreneurship in the Cultural and Creative Industries

Schulte-Holthaus (2018) positions entrepreneurship as a method of human behavior that connects possibilities for living with economic performance, particularly salient in the context of the creative industries. However, there has yet to be a consensus on the precise definition of entrepreneurship within the CCI. Overall, entrepreneurship in the cultural and creative sector is identified by considering broader characteristics from general entrepreneurship theory, such as opportunities, innovation, novel combinations, and organizational creation, along with critical mechanisms, including passion, lifestyle, bricolage, and symbolic value (Hausmann & Heinze, 2016; Schulte-Holthaus, 2018).

Cultural and creative entrepreneurs play a crucial role in economic development, challenging traditional business models. However, they often encounter challenges as they balance business economics with cultural and creative values. One of the challenges lies in the fact that traditional distinctions between entrepreneurs, managers, self-employed workers, and freelancers are absent in the CCI. Some authors view cultural entrepreneurs as freelance artists

and workers compelled to act as entrepreneurs, while others see it in project management and execution of individual events (Hausmann & Heinze, 2016).

Werthes et al. (2017) reveal that CCI professionals develop entrepreneurial skills over time. Initially, they have a dominant CCI identity, but gradually, they form their entrepreneurial identity by incorporating aspects of traditional entrepreneurial behavior while maintaining their CCI identity. This process of gradually shaping an entrepreneurial identity involves a fusion of creative and business-oriented traits. In this sense, cultural and creative entrepreneurs are expected to evolve, showcasing their ability to adapt and integrate entrepreneurial practices into their unique creative pursuits.

1.4 Educating entrepreneurs for the Cultural and Creative Industries

Entrepreneurship education proliferated in Europe and the United States through specific courses or at the University level. Zimmerer and Scarborough (2010) assert that the expansion of entrepreneurship in a country is directly linked with the role of universities in implementing entrepreneurship education initiatives. Higher education is responsible for nurturing the younger generations to learn more about entrepreneurship, as entrepreneurship education positively influences the entrepreneurial intentions of undergraduate students (Astiana et al., 2022).

Entrepreneurship education is the process of applying knowledge, skills, and attitudes to cultivate entrepreneurial traits and behaviors. It emphasizes the creation and operation of enterprises and the exploitation of untapped opportunities to create customer value. In this regard, it goes beyond teaching students how to start their own businesses and focuses on creating a learning environment that promotes creativity, independence, risk-taking, and responsibility. Entrepreneurship education aims to equip individuals with the ability to turn ideas into action, which involves fostering innovation, leadership, and organizational building skills (Durão et al., 2023; Gautam & Singh, 2015; Majkova & Kljucnikov, 2017). Not surprisingly, creativity is recurrently presented as an essential trait of any entrepreneur, together with other character traits such as responsibility, courage, determination, reliance, scholarship, and perseverance (Deáková et al., 2010; Majkova & Kljucnikov, 2017).

Learning entrepreneurship requires student-centered models that cultivate creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration, all crucial for entrepreneurial success. The Experiential Learning Theory (c.f. Kolb, 1984) emerges as an essential teaching approach to entrepreneurship as it provides a practical and hands-on approach to learning. This model enables students to actively engage in learning by applying theoretical knowledge to real-world situations. Students gain insights and develop an entrepreneurial mindset through activities like business simulations, case studies, team projects, and mentor interactions. This model also encourages students to take risks, learn from failures, and adapt to changing circumstances, which are fundamental qualities for successful entrepreneurs (Durão et al., 2023).

3. Methodology

This paper is grounded in a broader qualitative study investigating the role of Higher Education Institutions (HEI) in promoting students' entrepreneurial spirit in the cultural and creative sector in order to provide more efficient career counselling to graduates who wish to develop new business ideas for the CCIs. This exploratory research seeks to reveal the perceptions of renowned professionals and experts in various cultural, artistic, and creative fields in Portugal, and the purpose of this paper is to describe the main challenges that creative entrepreneurs face. An online focus group was conducted in February 2023, with 120 minutes and 11 participants. The purposefully selected participants (70% male, 30% female) include cultural managers, curators, visual artists, audiovisual performers, professionals of the publishing industry, film festival organizers, directors of innovation centers, educators, and project developers/strategists of the cultural and creative sector. This focus group was organized as part of a project funded by the Erasmus+ Program of the European Union. This academic initiative was conducted from November 2020 to April 2023, and aimed to enhance the quality and relevance of business and art education for the CCIs in five program countries: Bulgaria, Romania, Portugal, Greece, and Serbia.

4. Findings

The extant literature posits that creative businesses are more active than other types of businesses in promoting innovation, and entrepreneurs are more likely to upgrade their creative potential due to their predisposition to seek new opportunities. However, creative entrepreneurs face challenges such as balancing artistic expression, financing, and business development (Fillis & Rentschler, 2010; Bujor & Avasilcai, 2016).

Table 1 summarizes participants' insights on the attitudes and skills that should be enhanced or developed through entrepreneurship education in the cultural and creative industries (CCIs). Their insights were derived from the participants' discourse in the focus group. The participants, who have diverse profiles ranging from visual artists to cultural managers or CCI strategists, particularly emphasize the significance of networking and the ability to establish strategic partnerships to access resources and opportunities when entering the labor market. The other two characteristics that gather higher consensus among the participants are market orientation or an opportunity-focused mindset (as participants stress the importance of being open to identifying and seizing opportunities by recognizing the need to capitalize on cultural and creative work) and persistence and curiosity (characteristics that are by default associated with entrepreneurial-oriented individuals, and which are deemed relevant to find innovative solutions and navigate the challenges posed either by the entrepreneurial journey and the CCIs).

Table 1. Attitudes and skills promoted through entrepreneurship education: summary of participants' insights.

Participants (short profile)	Relevant attitudes and skills to be enhanced or developed											
	Critical thinking and strategic vision	Persistence and curiosity	Independence	Risk-taking/ risk management	Adaptability/ dealing with change	Market orientation/ opportunity-focused mindset	Project management – planning, managing, and marketing	Pricing/budgeting creative work and financial literacy	Effective leadership and communication	Networking/ ability to establish strategic partnerships	Access funding and capital	Safeguarding intellectual property rights/ legal literacy
P1: Visual artist, cultural manager, project developer	x	x		x					x			
P2: Visual Artist, audiovisual performer, teacher						x	x	x		x	x	x
P3: Visual artist, curator, cultural manager, teacher							x	x		x	x	
P4: Manager the publishing industry, project developer, teacher		x				x	x		x	x	x	
P5: Cultural manager, project developer	x	x	x	x	x					x		
P6: Innovation center director, project developer, and strategist for the CCIs						x	x	x	x	x	x	
P7: CCIs' NGO representative, creative director in an ad agency			x		x	x	x					x
P8: Innovation center director, project developer, consultant	x	x	x	x	x					x		
P9: Film festival organizer	x	x	x			x				x		

P10: Film festival organizer	x	x								x	x	
P11: Project developer, strategist for the CCIs						x				x		x

Source: Own authorship

The findings of this research unveil early-stage gaps in understanding the concepts of technical project management, planning, promotion, finance, training and even in understanding what creative work specifically means. Even though the cultural sector continues to be considered secondary compared to other fast-growing economies, the concept of creative industry has legitimized cultural and creative activities beyond their symbolic value, extending the importance of creativity to other areas. It is essential to value the results of creative work and perceive them as economic and tradable goods. However, they need to be more dynamic and generate more value, with a higher market orientation and search for new opportunities. Therefore, creative entrepreneurs face several dilemmas when monetizing cultural and creative products. Striking a balance between artistic integrity and commercial viability can be challenging, as they aim to preserve their work’s authenticity and cultural value while appealing to a broader audience and committing to a pricing strategy. Navigating the ever-changing market demands and trends while maintaining a sustainable business becomes particularly challenging due to the subjective value that creative products often carry. Additional barriers arise due to the pressing need to access funding and capital and safeguard intellectual property rights, a crucial condition yet challenging to enforce in a digital age of easy reproduction and distribution.

Given these challenges, creative entrepreneurs should possess a strong understanding of intellectual property and the ability to manage critical talents and the creative process. They should also exhibit traits such as self-control and self-belief, an opportunity-focused mindset, risk-taking, persistence and curiosity, feedback usage, the ability to work with change, decision-making, and independence. The creative process often involves overcoming challenges and setbacks, making persistence essential for overcoming obstacles and bringing artistic visions to life. When combined with persistence, curiosity underpins continuous inspiration and innovation, empowering entrepreneurs to adapt, learn and thrive in the dynamic and competitive world of the CCIs. However, as supported by previous research (Fillis & Rentschler, 2010; Bujor & Avasilcai, 2016), these characteristics may vary depending on the specific creative industry sector. For example, while some qualities may be valid for IT, publishing, and advertising entrepreneurs, they may not apply to artists such as painters, sculptors, or actors with different creative processes.

In light of this, and although entrepreneurship education is a widely studied discipline, the design of pedagogical models that more specifically address the needs of the cultural and creative sectors is advised. Participants highlight that creative entrepreneurs require a diverse skill set within the planning, management, and marketing domains. Strategic planning skills aid in setting goals and outlining steps to achieve them, while financial acumen enables responsible budgeting and cash flow monitoring. The importance of financial literacy is highly stressed, reinforcing the idea that it is necessary to understand the CCIs based on what they represent in themselves individually but also as a whole sector, profitable and transversal connected to other sectors. Moreover, risk management is vital for making calculated decisions and mitigating potential pitfalls and uncertainties while safeguarding the success and sustainability of their venture. Effective leadership and communication are also essential in conveying ideas clearly when working in teams. Market research provides insights and valuable connections, and basic knowledge about marketing and branding aids in reaching a broader audience and establishing a recognizable identity. Creative entrepreneurs should also be skilled in entrepreneurial networking and the exploitation of networks. They should be able to leverage their connections and resources to identify and capitalize on opportunities (Fillis & Rentschler, 2010; Lee, 2015). In this regard, participants also highlight the distinctive role that partnerships, joint projects, and the use of intermediaries play, valuing collaboration rather than competition. Networking and establishing strategic partnerships are crucial for entrepreneurs in the CCIs. These connections provide access to essential resources, including funding and expertise, and facilitate collaboration with other creatives. Such collaborations often lead to innovative projects and diverse offerings. Networking also expands market exposure through joint marketing efforts and cross-promotion, helping entrepreneurs reach new audiences. Additionally, strategic partnerships can open doors to distribution channels, enhancing creative ventures’ visibility and market presence. Consistently with previous studies on the entrepreneurial potential in the CCIs (Porfirio et al., 2018), entrepreneurial role models and mentoring,

primarily embodied in knowledge sharing and interaction between peers, are also referred to as key, serving as inspiration and guidance for aspiring entrepreneurs, helping them develop the necessary skills and mindset for success.

In addition to cultural and regulatory barriers, the economic climate, or the institutional environment, and as emphasized by previous studies (e.g., Porfirio et al., 2018), various personal factors are presented as influencing entrepreneurial cognition and behavior, such as motivations (namely the desire for economic autonomy), risk attitudes, self-efficacy, and self-satisfaction in entrepreneurship. For participants in this study, attitude stands out as a key and unlocking element. Many young people/students show little entrepreneurial spirit and do not perceive their creative work as business-oriented or possess the knowledge to seek funding opportunities or pursue the desired economic autonomy. On the other hand, professional internships often build bridges to professional settings, arousing students' urgency of entrepreneurial intent. Promoting interaction with local agents and cultural brokers is also deemed essential, as well as the ability to build and manage personal brands through the creation of portfolios and integration into collaborative practices.

5. Conclusion

Entrepreneurship in the CCIs is a dynamic and evolving field characterized by various interpretations and identities. Scholars are exploring mechanisms and drivers influencing entrepreneurial behavior within the creative sectors, aiming to bridge the gap between creative expression and economic performance. Cultural and creative entrepreneurs play a pivotal role in challenging traditional business models while shaping their entrepreneurial identities, a fusion of creativity and entrepreneurial spirit. As research in this area develops, a deeper understanding of the unique entrepreneurial dynamics within the CCIs will emerge.

Creative entrepreneurs are often described as investors in talent, combining creative flair with entrepreneurial talent to build successful business empires (Bujor & Avasilcai, 2016). However, the study results suggest that they need to overcome the lack of fundamental skills that increase the chances of success and sustainability of their business ventures. Creatives are naturally entrepreneurial-oriented and often moved by passion and a sense of mission. However, there is a lack of perspective that products/services from the CCIs should be capitalized, as culture is seen more as a symbolic than as a capitalizable good. For many creative entrepreneurs, there are difficulties in perceiving how entrepreneurship tools can or do contribute to their professional growth within the CCIs.

Entrepreneurship education is crucial in fostering sustained development in the cultural and creative sector and ensuring the success of new businesses and entrepreneurs in the CCIs. Entrepreneurship education is a discipline that promotes the development of an entrepreneurial culture and endows individuals with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to identify and pursue opportunities, such as strategic planning, financial management, marketing, and networking. However, from a general perspective, focus group participants consider that despite HEI's investment in promoting innovation and entrepreneurship, it is still clearly insufficient. Educational approaches are not totally adequate, and some are eventually outdated. Experiential learning approaches, in particular, empower aspiring entrepreneurs to participate actively in their learning process, fostering essential skills through real-world experiences and have proven valuable results in various sectors. However, further research is still necessary to understand how entrepreneurship education should be tailored to the specific needs of creative entrepreneurs and the CCIs. By instilling an entrepreneurial mindset and equipping students with essential business skills, entrepreneurship programs empower them to navigate the complexities of the creative market and successfully monetize their cultural and artistic creations, contributing to the growth and sustainability of the cultural and creative industries.

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