
**INFUSING ENTREPRENEURSHIP WITHIN NON-BUSINESS DISCIPLINES:
PREPARING ARTISTS AND OTHERS FOR SELF-EMPLOYMENT AND
ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

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Abstract

The demand for interdisciplinary and cross campus courses has increased substantially over the past few years resulting in increased program offerings and modifications to existing coursework in universities across the nation. This is very clearly evident in the arts realm. However, there is no clear agreement of knowledge, skills and abilities deemed important to the success of self-employed artists and arts entrepreneurs. This essay presents qualitative data collected from personal conversations and other data collected over the past several years from students and faculty members engaged in lessons learned from The Coleman Foundation Faculty Fellows Program, a national initiative of The Coleman Foundation. Building upon the lessons learned from this initiative a framework is presented to embed entrepreneurship content across several arts subjects. Suggestions for conceiving and designing entrepreneurship course content are portrayed. The “modules” approach to the infusion of entrepreneurship within the arts and other disciplines are presented. Assessment methods to measure the impact of using such modules to infuse entrepreneurship are explained. Pedagogical constructs and pedagogical resources are presented. The implications for future research are postulated and suggested.

Introduction and Background

Sarasvathy and Venkatraman (2011), Patzelt and Shepherd (2011), and McMullen (2011), among others, seem to agree that entrepreneurship is a force for creating a better world. Dale Meyer stated that there are a number of “elephants in the room” when discussing entrepreneurship education, and he suggests that one of these “elephants” is a perception that entrepreneurship is not the property of B-schools (2011). Supporters of Meyer’s statement argue that a significant number of start-ups arise from non-business disciplines, thus entrepreneurship is an interdisciplinary endeavor. Regardless of where entrepreneurship belongs and how it should be positioned in higher education, it is safe to say that over the past two decades efforts to spread entrepreneurship education across campuses have taken root. One such effort is the Coleman Foundation Faculty Fellows Program launched in 2009 and funded by the Coleman Foundation Incorporated.

The Coleman Foundation Faculty Fellows Program promotes the infusion of entrepreneurship across non-business disciplines, the education of artists, and preparation of them for self-employment. The Foundation supports entrepreneurship education across non-business disciplines, supports having faculty infuse entrepreneurship content in their courses, and helps prepare students for a possible career as an entrepreneur in their chosen field of study. Further details of the program, examples of syllabi, and other content are available at the website www.colemanfellows.com. This essay discusses the infusion of entrepreneurship in arts curricula.

To further explain the infusion of entrepreneurship content into the arts realm, consider the myth of the starving artist romantically pursuing the muse in a cold-water garret that seems embedded in the psyche of human beings even now (Rich, Roberts, et al., 2002). The fact is, artists, artisans, actors, producers and novelists have found ways to function in the world of

commerce without sacrificing their love and passion of art. Such self-employed or freelance artists and others who own arts-based businesses are entrepreneurs in the arts and culture.

Rembrandt Van Rijn (1606–1669) is considered an important, influential Dutch artist of the seventeenth century; his extraordinary production is equal to that of other significant European artists. When we think of Rembrandt, we think of a great painter, but he was also a teacher and an arts entrepreneur. He earned large sums of money from the sale of his works - especially commissioned portraits and prints. Like many entrepreneurs, he experienced both great wealth and financial difficulties.

Although still debated, there exists support for the left-brain/right-brain dominance concept for thinking patterns, as suggested by Jarrett (Christian, 2012). Educators, policy makers, and leaders of industry tend to agree with Daniel Pink's suggestion that traditional roles of leaders in organizations are shifting thinking patterns from left-brain reliance to right-brain reliance (2005). Steve Blank, Silicon Valley Entrepreneur, suggested that right-brain behavior seemed to contribute to innovation and innovative behavior (Blank, 2011). Regardless of which side of the left-brain/right-brain dominance argument one chooses, it can be agreed that it is the well-connected coordinated flow of information between the two hemispheres of the brain that seem to make the connection between business and arts effective and productive.

However, the universe of arts education and universe of entrepreneurship education do not seem to overlap in schools. There exist perceptions and myths that prevent various artists from becoming arts entrepreneurs. Still, since the 1990s there has been a concerted effort in the United States to link arts and entrepreneurship disciplines. In 1999, I was given an opportunity to establish curriculum and develop pedagogical content at Columbia College to find common areas of interest and content within the individual disciplines of arts and entrepreneurship.

A collection of lessons learned from the trials and tribulations of this pedagogical journey of the past fourteen years are presented in this article. Addressing this challenge with the skills of a business owner/entrepreneur/artist, this journey allowed me to achieve both success and failure in my quest. My successes and failures also stem from an initiative to coordinate and lead a national charge to integrate entrepreneurial thinking, knowledge, and skill-sets within arts education at the tertiary level.

Students' Perspectives

Over the past decade, I have been fortunate to interact with numerous artists interested in obtaining entrepreneurial skills at events like the Self-Employment in the Arts and CEO conferences (see www.selfemploymentinthearts.com, www.c-e-o.org) These student-based conferences are designed to initiate activities that go beyond the learning that occurs in the classroom, to "service learning" and "experiential learning." Students and entrepreneurs from all types of industries and trades are brought together to facilitate the exchange of entrepreneurial knowledge and skills. The following ten "points" are synthesized from more than approximately 370 conversations with students. These are guiding thoughts as educators pursue options to educate art students.

1. Arts students do not think about themselves as the "starving kind;" only their parents seem to.
2. Arts students demand entrepreneurship knowledge and skill sets.
3. Arts students see courses in accounting, law, marketing and management as designed to prepare students for corporate jobs. None of these arts students wanted to work for

- medium and big corporations. Rather, they want to practice their art form more than anything else and are willing to sacrifice for this goal.
4. Most of them did not see themselves as “Entrepreneurs.” They are interested in self-employment, rather than starting a business, growing it and then selling it. There is normally no exit strategy for artists and arts businesses.
 5. When students hear about Facebook, EBay, Twitter, Groupon, etc., they make it clear that they are interested in bread and butter entrepreneurial businesses rather than such high-techs and gazelles.
 6. The “commercial art” vs. “art for art sake” debate is not a concern for students. Students perceive this as a discussion within the community of arts educators rather than the community of students.
 7. Students are concerned about their own aesthetic values and connecting with their audiences as artists, more so than as business owners. For artists, the primacy of creating art is important, and making huge profits is less important.
 8. Arts students are not opposed to working as waitresses, production assistants, and such minimum wage jobs to support their creative endeavors.
 9. If given a choice between making a lot of money and pursuing their passion as artists, students would rather put their passion first than worry about money.
 10. Instead of focusing on revenues, arts students are more concerned with aesthetics, ethics, the “purity” of art, and impact on environment than non-arts students.

These conversations gathered from the students I talked with need further exploration to separate opinions from facts. Such an undertaking is underway, but we do not have the time to wait for the results. We need to continue to develop effective pedagogy coursework to address the needs of arts students now.

Pedagogical Challenges

As Program Coordinator of the Coleman Fellows Program, I took on the charge of developing a process for designing modules to establish a pedagogical base for infusing entrepreneurship into the Fellows’ coursework. From the time I led the formation of a Special Interest Group (SIG) within The United States Association of Small Business and Entrepreneurship (USASBE), to the time I built undergraduate and graduate degree offerings in Arts Entrepreneurship directly and indirectly at several institutions, this path has been filled with pedagogical pitfalls and challenges. It was a Coleman White Paper on the topic of Entrepreneurship in the Arts that provided a way of exploring a twin track proposition, namely a track for students engaged in arts education seeking a means of survival as self-employed artists and entrepreneurs and a track for students who were business majors seeking to engage the arts as a commodity and wanting to become arts business owners (Rich, Roberts, et al., 2002). While artists populated one group, non-artists populated the other group. Though at the time this approach seemed to make sense, looking back I realize that this was a mistake primarily because non-arts students seemed to have failed as artists, but wanted to hold on to the idea of a peripheral association with the arts.

Faculty resistance to pedagogy integration

Andrea Haussmann (2010) questioned the impact entrepreneurship education and training has on long-term success of cultural start-ups. Internationally and in the U.S., researchers seem

to agree that it is the beneficiary of arts entrepreneurship education is the economic viability of arts and cultural industries that benefit from arts entrepreneurship, education, and training, not just individual arts entrepreneurs. This distinction is what we need to examine further (Beckman, 2007; Mandel, 2011). Perhaps viewing this from a culture and arts funding policy perspective could be one approach. Regardless, to increase the chance of success of start-ups within the arts and cultural sector, arts education needs to integrate management, leadership, and business skills rather than trying to integrate arts education within business programs.

At the time, some business faculty expressed opinions that arts students were incapable of understanding business concepts, gaining business knowledge, and skills. Based on my experience of teaching numerous arts students over the years I can say with confidence that this is absolutely not true. The perception that arts students will not be successful in their business endeavor to become a business owner is misplaced. Arts students make a choice. They choose not to pursue a career as an accountant or a lawyer, for example. As one student said to me, "It is not that I cannot learn how to develop a balance sheet, but I choose not to. I would rather hire an accountant or a CPA and monitor them and supervise them for outcomes that I define and expect from my enterprise as an arts entrepreneur, so please teach me to do that effectively," (personal conversations, 2000 - 2010). The challenge then is to help arts students develop business skills allowing them to be successful. Artists should be able to, as an example, review financial statements, understand them, and ask the correct questions. To advance arts entrepreneurship, the latter approach is better. Starting with accounting students and asking them to learn to draw or play music or some other art form will not better serve arts entrepreneurship. Over the years I have heard several arguments and suggestions around how to teach non-artists arts appreciation and thus enable them to become arts entrepreneurs. But I have come to realize that doing so is ill conceived. Instead, we have to focus on pedagogy that infuses entrepreneurship in to the arts curriculum. My efforts to integrate these two different areas of pedagogy were augmented with the formation of The USASBE arts special interest group in 2001.

Trends In Integrating Arts and Entrepreneurship

Since 1999, when this journey started for me, arts entrepreneurship has achieved national and international recognition as a serious topic of research and education in higher learning. There is still work ahead, but we seem to agree that there exists content and substance that defines arts entrepreneurship. According to the Acton Foundation for Entrepreneurial Excellence based in Austin Texas, entrepreneurs are heroes.¹ I view artists who become entrepreneurs similarly. The Julliard School of Music and several Ivy League institutions have embraced entrepreneurship in the arts as a suitable topic to be included in the curriculum.

Groups such as Association of Arts Administration Educators (AAAE) and USASBE have embraced arts entrepreneurship as a segment of larger disciplines. Based on USASBE¹ membership over the years since its inception, 2001, there are hundreds of arts entrepreneurship courses. According to members of the USASBE Arts Entrepreneurship Special Interest Group, estimates are as high as 450 arts entrepreneurship courses.

As educators, we need to take a closer look at these courses and also address some of the academic/structural barriers that may prevent arts entrepreneurship from becoming a concentration, emphasis, or major at graduate and undergraduate levels. When I proposed a

¹ See actonhero.org

² See <http://www.aacsb.edu/accreditation/business/standards/>

major in Arts Entrepreneurship at several institutions there was significant opposition from various quarters. After several contentious discussions, my efforts succeeded and the proposal was approved as a major at both graduate and undergraduate levels. I found that primary opposition came from arts faculty who taught music, visual arts, photography; I received less opposition from graphic designers and digital media faculty. The performing arts faculty as a group was perhaps the most willing to embrace these efforts. It was remarkable that business faculty were also less enthusiastic and obstructionist at various levels. One specific criticism was, "Is there really a difference between teaching business skills and teaching entrepreneurship skills? Entrepreneurship is nothing more than a subset of strategic management mixed with some marketing content, opportunity recognition, and market expansion methods. Also, since business plans seem to be the final product graduate and undergraduate programs produce, is there a difference between graduate and undergraduate coursework?" (Rich, Roberts, et al., 2002). These kinds of questions were used to block arts entrepreneurship course approvals and their permanent addition to curriculum and programs. The best answer to address the questions about grad/undergrad levels is the following quote; "This is no different than in accounting – graduates and undergraduates are taught at different levels of rigor and intensity and depth," (personal conversations, 2000 - 2010).

In addition, it was always a struggle to get the business faculty not to dumb down the content for artists. Misguided and false perceptions were responsible for this mistake on their part. Musicians, dancers and visual artists are as capable of learning accounting as business students. Theater and arts administration programs seem to have made it past these criticisms. Though it is reasonable to expect some resistance, what surprised me were its sources. Primarily arts education faculty and administrators were more reluctant to accept and embrace a change in thinking and attitude. The one positive in all of this is that students do not care about these conflicts; they are demanding arts entrepreneurship education now. They realize that it is simply not enough to just learn to play an instrument, take wonderful pictures, sing, direct, and so on. Arts students simply accept the fact that they need to learn business skills and competencies.

Entrepreneurs vs. Administrators

Arts entrepreneurs differ from arts managers in their perspectives on the business of arts. There are key differences between these two groups. Administrators are usually concerned with maintaining resources rather than risking resources on innovative ideas that may or may not succeed. Entrepreneurs pursue new opportunities with a willingness to risk failure. Arts entrepreneurship programs designed by arts administrators run the risk, therefore, of being more focused on rationality, predictive management processes, and pedagogy. This difference is reflected in the struggles some faculty trying to integrate entrepreneurship and the arts face across the landscape of academia, as well as within professional organizations such as the Association of Arts Administration Educators (AAAE). It is not clear if some of this resistance is due to "turf and fiefdom battles," or simply administrator vs. entrepreneur attitudes. Regardless of this situation, educators must push on to infuse entrepreneurship within the arts curriculum.

Infusing Entrepreneurship in to the Arts Curriculum

Entrepreneurial knowledge and skills are still being developed and refined by business school programs. The field is very young and is just beginning to grow its body of knowledge. As of now, accrediting agencies such as Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business

do not recognize entrepreneurship as a body of knowledge². John Hughes, Chairman at Emeritus, and Michael Hennessy, President of the Coleman Foundation, both state that the best thing to happen to entrepreneurship is that it has escaped business school (personal conversation, 2008). This is based on their collective experience of distributing close to \$40,000,000 dollars in grants to support entrepreneurship education programs over several decades. It is against this backdrop that I have been engaged in the development and modification of arts entrepreneurship curriculum over the past several years.

Collective experiences from coordinating the Coleman Foundation Faculty Fellows Program, the experiences gained with self-employment in the arts, and (SEA) Conference³, an annual student artist conference, have instilled within me an understanding of how to best prepare artists for arts entrepreneurship careers.

First is the realization that teaching entrepreneurship to artists is a messy proposition. Students from other areas such as engineering, sciences, and health also seem to have perceptions about entrepreneurship similar to art majors. However, as evidenced by a recent article by Caitlin Dewey (2012), it is safe to say that educators have a moral obligation to provide the best education and training to help artists become successful arts entrepreneurs. Artists also seem to be stuck with the “selling out” and “commercial artist” syndrome. “Selling Out,” as faculty and students explained to me, is the act of pursuing commercial success without regard to the purity of the art form and compromising aesthetics for money (Iannone, 2011). “Commercial artist” are those who think of producing art in terms of an assembly line, akin to the manufacturing of paper cups with designs painted on them by a machine. Though this attitude is surely not as prevalent today as it was in the early 2000s, it is important to create a balance between purity of art and how well audiences accept and financially support them.

Arts educators are also sometimes known to perpetuate the myth of the starving artists. Individuals like Lisa Canning⁴ and Genevieve Thiers⁵, among others, demonstrate that artists could become entrepreneurs. Arts educators need to embrace the idea that artists can become arts entrepreneurs. I have concluded that it is not critical to develop definitions of whom or what an arts entrepreneur is. Students and parents of students who pay for their education do not care about definitions. Parents only care about how their sons and daughters will survive as artists. They are often satisfied when we explain the linkage of entrepreneurship to arts education.

Infusing Entrepreneurship Modules

Seeking to find the best solution, informed with qualitative data from the Coleman Fellows, faculty who have engaged in teaching entrepreneurship to artists, and by collective experiences over the years, I started using the term “infusing entrepreneurship” to describe my approach. “Infusing” is achieved by the modification of learning objectives in disciplinary courses supported by lesson plans that adopt entrepreneurship knowledge, skills, and abilities. Furthermore, the lesson plans translate the knowledge, skills and abilities into discipline specific language and semantics. Infusing entrepreneurship into arts curricula seems best accomplished by developing modules of information, knowledge, skills, and abilities. A review of papers

² See <http://www.aacsb.edu/accreditation/business/standards/>

³ www.selfemploymentinthearts.org

⁴ Lisa Canning – EntrepreneurtheArts.com

⁵ Opera singer & Founder Sittercity.com

presented at the International Association of Arts and Cultural Management, (AIMAC) between 1991 and 2009 reveal that arts research papers focused on marketing, management, and consumer behavior (Pérez-Cabañero & Cuadrado-García, 2011), which suggests that infusing these entrepreneurship topics is not such a far-fetched idea for the arts education community.

A module is a collection of thoughts, knowledge, and skills that can be delivered in two or three class sessions. Such modules are ideal to get students thinking about entrepreneurship as a process rather than an event. There are several key elements to module building that have been tested and re-tested since the 1980s by the author. This follows a cry for curriculum reform in engineering, mathematics, and chemistry (US Department of Education Report, 1983). Educators have been championing these approaches to obtain the same end result, to prepare students for successful career paths. Combining module learning with entrepreneurship education and training seems to be taking root. Although modules would be primarily based on direct experience from working with Fellows, there is plenty of room to expand the modules approach across the entire academic landscape.

Based on various conversations with Coleman Fellows and faculty over the years, it seems pedagogically there is a challenge because entrepreneurship knowledge, skills, and abilities seem best taught in an experiential setting. Successful entrepreneurs seem to agree that “doing” is the best teacher for entrepreneurship. In my experience, “doing” entrepreneurship can best be achieved with the modules approach. Students are taught basic entrepreneurial concepts and knowledge. They are then engaged in an exercise in which they perform several tasks and record data. One such task could be establishing an E-bay account and finding items to sell. The item, if sold, should be shipped, money collected, and net profit calculated. This is easily achieved with a modular approach. A module that captures this activity is easily adaptable into any arts entrepreneurship course. Thus, I have come to believe that the modules approach is the best option we have, as educators.

Sample Dance Entrepreneurship Module

Several educators who teach dance have infused entrepreneurship in their coursework. One required her students to create a portfolio. With most dance students seeking to become self-employed or freelance, they seek a “gig” or a job with a dance company nationally or internationally. The other path centers on the creation of dance studios or dance competitions. Based on several observations in this realm, a typical module for infusing entrepreneurship is:

- Session 1
 - Passion as skill – Benefits of entrepreneurship – Thinking like an entrepreneur –
 - Building your entrepreneurship portfolio
- Session 2
 - Your passion for dance -Your Genre – Aesthetics – Reaching your audience –
 - The business of Dance – Your action plan
- Session 3
 - Elevator Pitch – How will you create value – New Genres?
 - Innovation in Dance forms

There are several dance instructors who adopt aspects of this module. Some created lesson plans and compressed this content into one, or in some cases, part of a class session. The effectiveness of doing so is not clear at this time and needs further research.

Sample Visual Arts Entrepreneurship Module:

As a Batik artist, I engaged the challenge of infusing entrepreneurship in visual arts courses differently than other art forms. Mixing genres or converging genres with an entrepreneurial attitude should guide the infusion of entrepreneurship in visual arts. Opportunity recognition within visual communications is not just developing an audience and reaching them, but changing the way we communicate.

A typical entrepreneurship model for visual arts:

- Session 1
 - Visual Arts as a converging art form – Photography – Paintings – Sculptures – Water Colors – Functional Arts
 - Introduce opportunity recognition concepts – Market Innovation Techniques –
 - Developing a feasibility analysis
- Session 2
 - Develop an entrepreneurial action plan – define your aesthetic – Develop an understanding of the multiple genres that can be converged – develop a method to blend Performing and Visual arts Genres
- Session 3
 - Finalize a portfolio ready for galleries – juried shows and events – financial plan to assess viability and pricing model options

Learning Outcomes Modification as Best Practice

The following are sampled from syllabi posted to the Coleman Fellows website (www.colemanfellows.com). These learning objectives were added to arts course syllabi:

- Identify your passion and potential for success as a business owner
- Identify skills necessary to execute a new business idea
- Identify resources necessary to launch a new business
- Demonstrate how opportunities can become businesses
- Synthesize and demonstrate effective collaborative and communication skills
- Develop concepts and understanding of financial restraints to start a business
- Identify the role leadership plays in entrepreneurship in the arts
- Identify and synthesize a process for recognizing new business opportunities
- Explore and develop new market entry strategies
- Research and craft an elevator pitch and business plan for an arts related business enterprise.

There are several other examples of business and entrepreneurship related learning objectives that are now guiding dance, music, fashion, and graphic design faculty in infusing entrepreneurship and small business concepts in their course work. More examples can be found on the Coleman Fellows website listed above. This is a best practice because the results point to a palpable student enthusiasm in entrepreneurship. Based on personal knowledge, reports from Fellows, and talking to arts students, it is clear that students exposed to entrepreneurship content are starting businesses or becoming self-employed. It also seems that more arts students are starting businesses than business majors at several Coleman Fellows Program Schools. This approach seems to be working and deemed best practice.

Assessing the Impact of Arts Entrepreneurship Education

As these efforts were under way, one question concerned testing, “How do we know that this is working?” One of my tasks as Coleman Fellows Program Coordinator was to help design assessment tools. As entrepreneurship modules, learning objectives, and lesson plans were implemented, it became obvious these efforts required measuring. A pretest-posttest approach was chosen to address this need. The following is a summary of this effort.

Assessing modules and modified learning objectives to infuse entrepreneurship knowledge, skills, and competencies has yet to be defined. Although there are several examples and studies on how to assess modules in non-arts disciplines, there is no proven method to test entrepreneurship (personal conversation USASBE annual meeting 2011). An experiment with pre- and posttesting was attempted. Thus far, the results have been mixed due to the problem of testing bias.

To reduce bias we had to implement a new approach to the test design. We designed a test given to half the students in the class when the course began. We then taught the course as usual only to follow the conclusion of the course with a posttest administered to the other half of the class. This is not a silver bullet to cure all the issues of pre- and posttest method, but it seems to reduce the test bias. Moreover, when this approach was used, the results seem to point to a better understanding of the views students hold about entrepreneurship. However, the answer to the question whether arts entrepreneurship education is producing or helping more artists become arts entrepreneurs, or self-employed as artists is not clear from an empirical and scientific perspective. (www.Colemanfellows.com)

Conclusion and Future Research Topics

In conclusion, it appears safe to say that entrepreneurship in the arts is a developing field that proves a viable career option for artists. Over the years, students have demonstrated their acquired abilities to become self-employed as photographers, writers, actors, designers, musicians, and painters. Still, the educator’s job to effectively blend entrepreneurship and arts is far from complete. As future artists seek to debunk the myth of the starving artist, the process of artists becoming entrepreneurs is becoming clearer. In addition to the undeniable and demonstrable key advances in the field, it is also clear there are several serious questions about entrepreneurship in the arts.

1. What are the administrative and curricular barriers that prevent arts students from enrolling in entrepreneurship courses?
2. What are the pedagogical constructs that define arts entrepreneurship?
3. What differences exist between entrepreneurship in the arts and Arts Administration pedagogy?
4. What are the best module designs to infuse entrepreneurship in the arts? Who is teaching them and where are they being taught?
5. Assessing impact of entrepreneurship in the arts education as a two-pronged initiative, namely, pedagogy effectiveness and conversion ratio of arts students to arts entrepreneurs. Is arts entrepreneurship education producing arts businesses or self-employment in the arts?

There are probably several more avenues of inquiry available, but these questions are ones that interest several of the Coleman Fellows.

It is my belief that convergence of disciplines such as communications, graphic design, and game design, among others is trending, as are integrative skills and the blending of aesthetic

reasoning. Entrepreneurship in the arts goes beyond helping artists acquire business start-up skills and its pedagogy could include innovation through genre blending. For example, musicians can start blending genres that were thought of as impossible to blend, a bluegrass banjo player DJ who can rap. The future is looking bright and full of opportunity for artists, arts entrepreneurs and arts entrepreneurship educators.

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