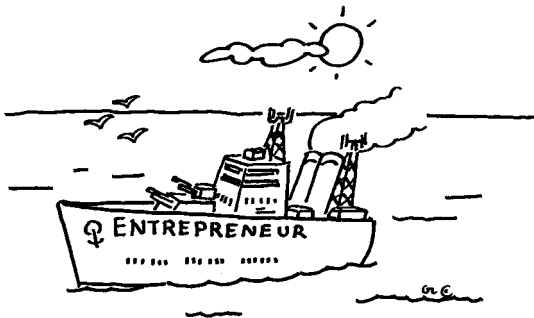




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Entrepreneurial Skills for the Creative Industries Preparing the Undergraduate



'The Entrepreneurship'

Mind Set

In relation to UK Art and Design Colleges and other institutions of learning it is relatively a recent progression that some of the syllabus is set aside for what is often dustily labelled as 'Professional Development' or 'Professional Practice' modules, often poorly resourced and funded. Entrepreneurial style schemes and project are creeping into many institutions but they are few and far between.

This article is based upon my own wide experiences of the arts, creating programmes and entrepreneurial research. Many people have varying views about what is meant by 'Entrepreneurship' and 'Business'. I'm not going to ponder upon the various view points on these suffice to say there is a big difference between business people in general and the entrepreneur. (See www.alisonbranagan.com for discussion) My thoughts and own sketchy definitions of the divisions for the purposes of debate; topics are as follows.

Professional Development – a mixture of self - management and basics of practicing as a creative practitioner. How to manage putting on an exhibition, working through a commission, marketing, career planning and basic self-employment knowledge.

Business Start-Up – a mixture of business planning, developing marketing material, money management and financial planning, in depth study or analysis of creative product or service and market research.

Enterprise/Entrepreneurship – a mixture of practical enterprise skills, such as vision, networking, presentation, self-promotion, branding, negotiation skills, nature of risk, action plans, teamwork, understanding innovation and technology, and how to generate profits from either creative work or more commercially applied ideas.

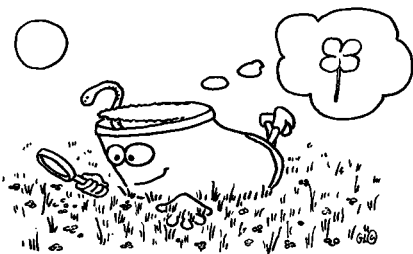
Big Business – a mixture of understanding regulations, legal issues, contracts, pitching for investment, PR, selling, using software/e-business, management, accounting, manufacture, retail, premises and employing people.

Never mind talent - Professional Development is not enough to prepare graduates for the realities of a world dominated by market forces and popular culture

Creative individuals are also complex, and many may make a success in turning concepts into a consumable product or commodity (mind of the retailer), however there are a vast number who are more ethically, and culturally orientated in their ethos, 'a not for profit' outlook' (mind of the poet).

Either way it is possible to cultivate an enterprising outlook through preparing students for career, cultural or business roles within the creative industries. By integrated properly funded enterprise modules within the under-graduate studies from day one of a degree programme.

Traditional methods of teaching business tend not to work with art students, due to the innovative nature of the type of work the students are creating, and the milieu of the creative industries sector. Entrepreneurial style training is key, and the importance of keeping up with technology. Business is a vocational subject, though creative, not just theoretical. Students need to be prepared with the specifics so they can cope with the highs and lows, plus the rough and tumble of business life.



'The Discovery Myth'

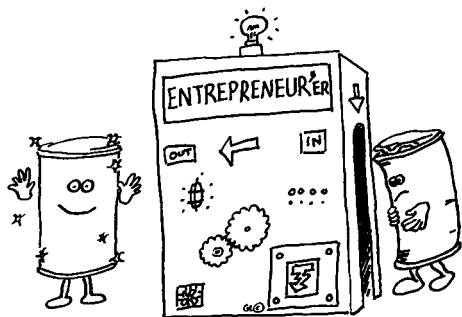
To early for enterprise skill cultivation?

I believe the key areas within any undergraduate programme should be a well balanced mix of: the basics of self-employment, self-management, active challenges/action planning, market/business research, debunking the myths of discovery, relevance of money or costs, legal issues such as 'rights grabs' developing networks, negotiating, selling and self-promotion skills.

It is often too early for undergraduate students to develop advanced soft or entrepreneurial skills as their practice or products and outlook are in the early stage of development. They also have been sheltered from the pressures of the commercial world and therefore have little ability to make informed decisions about taking their practice forward economically. (Does this have to be so if activities are integrated?) Taking the work of visual art graduates for example, they often have no idea about the market value of their work, how to enter into the sales process, negotiate a contract or sale. Never mind the handmade business card with dubious hotmail address inscribed, they offer out to potential customers. There frequently is a lack of connectivity between the student and the applied skill of realising themselves as a business.

How do we manage to cultivate enterprise skills? Expertise of facilitators is an important factor; setting up a venture is difficult enough when supplying artefacts, which the populace demand, never mind the obscure, transient, innovative, experimental or futuristic. This is usually what the graduate is offering and is the result of years of study.

The academic and supporting staff within art and design faculties often do not have the luxury of funded research time to develop learning materials or knowledge they can bring back into the studio or tutorial. So more pressure for business information is placed upon small number of guest lecturers to cover, often late in the day. This is not the way.



'Entrepreneur' er Machine'

How do we teach enterprise to creative students?

There needs to be a comprehensive culture shift within universities, to resource and develop not just modules but a programme of activities and events throughout the whole academic experience for the student. Preparation for leaving education is more important than ever due to the high numbers of graduates studying creative degrees.

Many students are leaving with over £10,000 or more in student loans, and it is only right that they should have developed an enterprising mind set which will aid them in generating profits or a decent level of income from this investment of time spent in higher education.

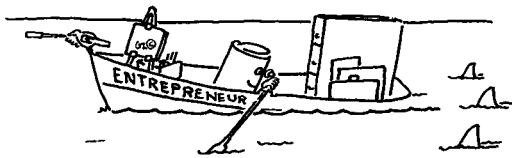
Solutions

There are many solutions to teaching enterprise to creative students; all of them require a greater input of resources though there is no need to reinvent the wheel.

Some of the key entrepreneurial activities teaching should focus upon students at an undergraduate level are, in general but not sector specific:

- Developing an entrepreneurial outlook and accept that they need to acquire skills in order to generate money or fund a cultural enterprise.

- Encouraging students to develop networks and networking skills amongst their creative and business contemporaries.
- Being able to work with others, as a member of a team and being able to lead when necessary.
- Practical skills such as negotiating a contract, also how to make a sale and present their work or product.
- Self-publicity and marketing a business.
- Keeping up to date with the pace of technology and innovation and learn about the process of manufacture.
- Encouraged to research and be set real life challenges.
- Left with the clear notion that they should be flexible to change and acting on opportunities.
- Basic business introduction to self-employment, tax and marketing.
- Introduction to intellectual property, how to read contracts and other legal issues.
- Gain an understanding of how business works, for example using terms and conditions within their trading activities.



'Starting out'

Summary

The methods of instruction should be a combination of lectures, some use of case studies, guest speakers who are running their own creative businesses, debate, practical workshops, student centred discovery and real life challenges; a combination of teaching and vocational training.