



Conceptualising arts entrepreneurship education: bridging the arts and entrepreneurship within higher education settings

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Abstract

Despite the rise of entrepreneurship education within higher education, entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education remain overlooked in the arts discipline. Existing research in arts entrepreneurship education is scarce. The current study aims to investigate stakeholder perspectives towards conceptualisations of arts entrepreneurship education within higher education, including that of first and final year undergraduate students, educators and industry professionals in the arts discipline. A questionnaire was administered for preliminary insights towards how arts students understand entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education. Individual interviews were then conducted for in-depth investigation in how arts students, educators and professionals conceptualise and define arts entrepreneurship education. The findings revealed arts students' perceptions of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education. Moreover, diverse stakeholder viewpoints shed light upon understandings of arts entrepreneurship education, roles of relevant stakeholders and the relationship between entrepreneurship education and arts. This study highlights the value of arts entrepreneurship education, contributing to discussion on addressing gaps between arts and entrepreneurship education, and between higher education and the industry.

Keywords Higher education · Arts education · Entrepreneurship education · Student perspectives · Teacher perspectives · Industry perspectives

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Introduction

Entrepreneurship education is increasingly embraced within higher education curricula over recent decades. However, entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education remain in confusion and controversy within the arts discipline. Existing literature on arts entrepreneurship education is scarce, and further investigation is needed to understand the phenomenon. This study investigates perspectives towards arts entrepreneurship education within higher education, offering a dialogue between students, educators and professionals in the arts discipline. The findings shed light onto how arts entrepreneurship education is conceptualised and what it means to different stakeholders, contributing to understandings of arts entrepreneurship education and the value of embedding entrepreneurship education within the arts discipline.

Literature review

With growing interest in entrepreneurship education, countries across the world have been introducing entrepreneurship education in higher education settings (Fayolle & Klandt, 2006). However, understandings of entrepreneurship education continue to vary. Tiberius and Weyland (2022) wrote that while there has been vast discussion on the research field of entrepreneurship education, the field was broad, complex and increasingly difficult to oversee. In addition, universities have been embedding entrepreneurship education into discipline programmes such as in business (e.g. Kwong et al., 2022), engineering (e.g. Kaltenecker et al., 2015; Wong & Chan, 2022) and arts (e.g. Thom, 2017; Toscher, 2019). This added to the complexity of entrepreneurship education, where in different disciplines or contexts, entrepreneurship education may be understood and practiced differently.

While arts entrepreneurship education is a “comparatively emerging discipline of cultural and creative industries in higher education systems” (Abisuga & Muchie, 2021, p. 370), there are challenges towards whether arts students’ needs are adequately addressed by entrepreneurship education offered at higher education institutions. Conceptualisations on arts entrepreneurship education are lacking. Toscher (2019) proposed a conceptual framework for entrepreneurial learning activities in arts entrepreneurship education but acknowledged a lack of consensus on the definition of entrepreneurship. Thom (2017) claimed that “literature findings are only able to assume a poor state of arts entrepreneurship education” (p. 271), noting the confusion and controversy over what arts entrepreneurship is and what should be involved in arts entrepreneurship education. The lack of common understanding was highlighted as a major reason for poor embeddedness of entrepreneurship education within the arts discipline. Moreover, Hong et al. (2012) wrote on how entrepreneurship education was minimal in undergraduate arts curriculum. It is thus important to gain further understanding of arts entrepreneurship education as a phenomenon, to investigate its conceptualisation and value.

There are differences in how arts entrepreneurship education programmes are organised across the world (Rapisarda & Loots, 2021). With existing literature in

arts entrepreneurship education relatively scarce and a majority of such literature situated in a Western context (e.g. Beckman, 2007; Brown, 2005; Rapisarda & Loots, 2021), there is a gap in the literature on arts entrepreneurship education from an Eastern context. Moreover, arts entrepreneurship is different from business entrepreneurship or other entrepreneurs, as Bridgstock (2013) pointed out individuals in the field of arts have distinct motivations and aims towards entrepreneurship, as well as a distinct nature of entrepreneurial opportunities, contexts and processes. It is therefore crucial to investigate arts entrepreneurship education within higher education with the inclusion of direct stakeholders, such as students and educators, as well as professionals in the field who are knowledgeable in arts entrepreneurship or relevant opportunities.

This study aims to investigate perspectives of stakeholders in the arts discipline towards entrepreneurship education, focusing on how entrepreneurship education is conceptualised from the arts perspective. This includes understandings and definitions regarding entrepreneurship education, the meaning of entrepreneurship education in relation to arts education and how stakeholders are involved in arts entrepreneurship education.

Methodology

Participants

Target participants for the questionnaire phase in this study were undergraduate first and final year students from the Faculty of Arts in a public university in Hong Kong in the academic year 2021–2022. Bulk emails were sent to all first and final years, and 57 completely-filled questionnaires were collected, including 37 first years and 20 final years. The first year arts students were aged 17–21 years, with an average age of 18.19 years, and included 12 males, 24 females and 1 preferred not to disclose their gender. The final year students were aged 20–22 years, with an average age of 21.5 years, with 5 males, 14 females and 1 preferred not to disclose their gender. Only 1 first year and 1 final year arts student reported experiencing entrepreneurship education at the university, but neither experienced arts entrepreneurship education through the undergraduate curriculum.

Following the questionnaire phase, student participants were invited for follow-up interviews. Four first years and 3 final years agreed to participate in the qualitative phase of this study. In addition, with the criteria that educator participants must have at least 2 years of experience in teaching and learning within the university and must be teaching in the Faculty of Arts in the academic year 2021–2022, 3 educators with experience in entrepreneurship education or arts entrepreneurship in the Faculty of Arts were recruited for interviews. Furthermore, 3 professionals in the field of arts who had experience of education within the public university in Hong Kong or at least 2-year experience in arts entrepreneurship or employing arts graduates from the university, were recruited as participants in this study. Demographics of the 13 interview participants are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Participant demographics

Pseudonym	Gender	Details
Student 1	Female	First year, aged 18 years, no entrepreneurship education experience
Student 2	Female	First year, aged 17 years, no entrepreneurship education experience
Student 3	Female	First year, aged 19 years, no entrepreneurship education experience
Student 4	Male	First year, aged 18 years, no entrepreneurship education experience
Student 5	Female	First year, aged 22 years, no entrepreneurship education experience
Student 6	Female	First year, aged 22 years, no entrepreneurship education experience
Student 7	Female	First year, aged 22 years, no entrepreneurship education experience
Educator 1	Male	Experienced in entrepreneurship education in the Faculty of Arts
Educator 2	Female	Knowledgeable in entrepreneurship in the field of arts and in entrepreneurship education in the Faculty of Arts
Educator 3	Female	Experienced in entrepreneurship in the field of arts and knowledgeable in entrepreneurship education in the Faculty of Arts
Professional 1	Female	Professional in an arts organisation
Entrepreneur 1	Female	Arts entrepreneur
Entrepreneur 2	Male	Arts entrepreneur

Procedures

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Human Research Ethics Committee in a research-intensive university in Hong Kong. For the quantitative phase of this study, an online questionnaire was distributed to first and final year arts students over bulk email to investigate student perspectives towards entrepreneurship education. Students were informed that participation was voluntary, and consent was obtained from all participants before data collection.

Following the collection of questionnaires, individual semi-structured interviews were conducted as it allowed for flexibility of exploration for in-depth responses (Ruslin et al., 2022). This phase explored understandings of the entrepreneurship education within the arts discipline, particularly in what it meant, how it was defined, and what roles do stakeholders play within arts entrepreneurship education, respectively. Participation was voluntary, and consent was obtained from all participants in the interviews before data were collected.

Instruments

In the first phase of this study, the questionnaire instrument was adopted from Mani's (2015) study on entrepreneurship education, which targeted non-business discipline higher education students and included seven questions investigating student perceptions towards entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurship in general. Mani (2015) reported the questionnaire was with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.801, greater than 0.7 the acceptable value. For this study, the questionnaire was piloted by 34 students to ensure clarity and appropriateness of items, and items were revised after further discussion with an expert in teaching and learning within higher education at

the university. In the second phase, interviews focused on investigating participant perspectives towards the concept of arts entrepreneurship education, and questions were designed in consideration of results from the questionnaires collected. Interview questions were piloted by two experts in teaching and learning within higher education to ensure questions were comprehensible, appropriate and structured.

Data analysis

Quantitative data from the questionnaire responses was analysed with descriptive analysis. Nassaji (2015) described descriptive analysis as data analysis that involved naturalistic data without intervention or manipulation, “using frequencies, percentages, averages, or other statistical analyses to determine relationships” (p. 129). In adopting descriptive analysis in this study, it enabled quantitative data to be analysed without any interference by the researchers.

Qualitative data analysis was primarily performed with inductive content analysis. Elo and Kyngäs (2008) described the inductive approach as recommended for when there was not enough former knowledge or fragmented knowledge of a phenomenon, thus with the relative scarcity of the current literature in arts entrepreneurship education, this approach was considered appropriate. The researchers conducted open coding individually, then created categories from the codes and abstraction on the categories. Then, the researchers came together to finalise categories and abstractions.

Findings

Quantitative findings on student perspectives towards entrepreneurship education

Students from the arts discipline indicated their plans to start their own business in the future. As in Table 2, 21 first years and 8 final years indicated having never planned to start their own business, which accounted to approximately 50% of the total of 57 participants in this quantitative study. 21.62% of first years had planned

Table 2 Do you plan to start your own business in future?

Options	No. of first year responses	No. of final year responses	Total no. of responses
Never	21 (56.76%)	8 (40%)	29 (50.88%)
Immediately after graduation	0 (0%)	1 (5%)	1 (1.75%)
1–5 years after graduation	8 (21.62%)	1 (5%)	9 (15.79%)
5–10 years after graduation	3 (8.11%)	5 (25%)	8 (14.04%)
After 10 years	5 (13.51%)	5 (25%)	10 (17.54%)
Total	37 (100%)	20 (100%)	57 (100%)

Table 3 To what extent do you agree that entrepreneurship should be taught in universities?

Options	No. of first year responses	No. of final year responses	Total no. of responses
Strongly agree	6 (16.22%)	3 (15%)	9 (15.79%)
Agree	16 (43.24%)	10 (50%)	26 (45.61%)
Neutral	11 (29.73%)	6 (30%)	17 (29.82%)
Disagree	3 (8.11%)	1 (5%)	4 (7.02%)
Strongly disagree	1 (2.70%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.75%)
Total	37 (100%)	20 (100%)	57 (100%)

Table 4 To what extent do you agree that entrepreneurship education is useful for students even if they never plan to start their own business?

Options	No. of first year responses	No. of final year responses	Total no. of responses
Strongly agree	5 (13.51%)	5 (25%)	10 (17.54%)
Agree	17 (45.95%)	9 (45%)	26 (45.61%)
Neutral	13 (35.14%)	4 (20%)	17 (29.82%)
Disagree	0 (0%)	2 (10%)	2 (3.51%)
Strongly disagree	2 (5.41%)	0 (0%)	2 (3.51%)
Total	37 (100%)	20 (100%)	57 (100%)

to start their own business 1–5 years after graduation, whereas 5% of final years planned to do so.

Asked about their perceptions towards entrepreneurship education within higher education settings (Table 3), 35 out of 57 participants agreed that entrepreneurship should be taught in universities. In particular, 6 first years and 3 final years indicated strongly agreeing.

Arts students indicated to what extent they agreed that entrepreneurship education is useful, even if they never plan to start their own business (see Table 4). There were only 4 participants indicating disagreement, in which 2 first years responded with “strongly disagree” and 2 final years responded with “disagree”. Out of the total of 57 arts students, 36 agreed with the statement.

Table 5 showed responses towards whether students agree that entrepreneurs are born, and entrepreneurship cannot be taught in the classroom. 30 arts students disagreed, which was approximately 52.64% of the participants. Fourteen students indicated agreement, including 9 first years and 5 final years.

Participants were asked to choose 1 out of 11 options on which factors stopped students from taking entrepreneurship education as a career option immediately after university (Table 6). Considering all responses, the main deterring factors stopping arts students from taking entrepreneurship as a career option was too much risk and lack of funds, in which both recorded 14 responses each. None of the participants indicated “parents don’t want”, “family responsibilities” and “already started one” as main deterring factors. The most important factor stopping first year students was

Table 5 To what extent do you agree that entrepreneurs are born, and entrepreneurship can't be taught in classroom?

Options	No. of first year responses	No. of final year responses	Total no. of responses
Strongly agree	3 (8.11%)	1 (5%)	4 (7.02%)
Agree	6 (16.22%)	4 (20%)	10 (17.54%)
Neutral	9 (24.32%)	4 (20%)	13 (22.81%)
Disagree	14 (37.84%)	8 (40%)	22 (38.60%)
Strongly disagree	5 (13.51%)	3 (15%)	8 (14.04%)
Total	37 (100%)	20 (100%)	57 (100%)

too much risk (11 responses), followed by lack of experience (9 responses). For final years, the most important factor stopping them from taking entrepreneurship as a career option was lack of funds (9 responses), followed by too much risk and not interested (3 responses, respectively).

Students were asked to choose 1 option out of 9 factors that motivated them to become an entrepreneur (Table 7). Considering all responses, being one's own boss was the most motivating factor (16 responses), followed by chasing their dreams and independent decision making (8 responses, respectively). For first years, the most motivating factor was "being your own boss" (11 responses), then "chasing your dreams" and "independent decision making" (6 responses, respectively). As for final years, the most motivating factor was "being your own boss" (5 responses), followed by "high returns" and "to do things differently" (3 responses, respectively).

Participants were asked regarding the importance of eight competencies to becoming a successful entrepreneur on a 5-point Likert scale ("Highly important = 5" to "Not required at all = 1"), in Table 8. According to the responses from first years, decision-making skills had the most responses indicating it was important (35 responses), after which was communication (33 responses). For final years, ability to prepare business plan had the most responses indicating it was important, with 19 responses and the highest mean of 4.65 among all competencies. Sales technique recorded the lowest mean among the competencies, with a mean of 3.78 and 3.90 respectively from first and final year responses. Among all responses from 37 participants, only 2 responses indicated competencies as not important, which included 1 final year response indicating creativity was not important, and 1 final year response indicating negotiation skills was not important.

Qualitative findings on stakeholder perspectives towards entrepreneurship education

Defining entrepreneurship education from the arts perspective

Education on starting up and running a business In the interviews, participants discussed their understandings on the meaning of entrepreneurship education. Among first year arts students, Students 1, 3 and 4 had understood entrepreneurship education

Table 6 What stops you to take entrepreneurship as your career option immediately after university?

Options	No. of first year responses	No. of final year responses	Total no. of responses
Too much risk	11 (29.73%)	3 (15%)	14 (24.6%)
Lack of experience	9 (24.32%)	1 (5%)	10 (17.5%)
Parents don't want	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
High-paying job offers	0 (0%)	1 (5%)	1 (1.8%)
Lack of funds	5 (13.51%)	9 (45%)	14 (24.6%)
Lack of knowledge	5 (13.51%)	1 (5%)	6 (10.5%)
Family responsibilities	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Other objectives in life	1 (2.70%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.8%)
Not interested	5 (13.51%)	3 (15%)	8 (14.0%)
Already started one	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Other: Too much risk, lack of experience, lack of funds, lack of knowledge and other objectives in life	1 (2.70%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.8%)
Other: Too much risk, lack of funds, lack of experience and lack of knowledge	0 (0%)	1 (5%)	1 (1.8%)
Other: Government scholarship obligation	0 (0%)	1 (5%)	1 (1.8%)
Total	37 (100%)	20 (100%)	57 (100%)

Table 7 What motivates you to become an entrepreneur?

Options	No. of first year responses	No. of final year responses	Total no. of responses
Chasing your dreams	6 (16.22%)	2 (10%)	8 (14.04%)
Being your own boss	11 (29.73%)	5 (25%)	16 (28.07%)
Independent decision making	6 (16.22%)	2 (10%)	8 (14.04%)
High returns	4 (10.81%)	3 (15%)	7 (12.28%)
Your own confidence and knowledge	3 (8.11%)	0 (0%)	3 (5.26%)
To do things differently	3 (8.11%)	3 (15%)	6 (10.53%)
Family support	0 (0%)	1 (5%)	1 (1.75%)
To do something for society	3 (8.11%)	2 (10%)	5 (8.77%)
Other: Being your own boss, high returns, doing something for society	1 (2.70%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.75%)
Other: Being your own boss, independent decision making, to do things differently	0 (0%)	1 (5%)	1 (1.75%)
Other: no response	0 (0%)	1 (5%)	1 (1.75%)
Total	37 (100%)	20 (100%)	57 (100%)

as education which taught students to create and operate a business. This understanding was shared by final year participants where Student 5 mentioned entrepreneurship education was about learning to set up a business then marketing and advertising it, and Student 7 related entrepreneurship education as learning about starting up and “make it convincing for the investors to invest”. Educators 2 and 3, along with Professional 1 and Entrepreneurs 1 and 2, also defined entrepreneurship education as education related to create, organise and manage a company or business. Entrepreneurship education would prepare students for entrepreneurship “in terms of knowing what to do” (Entrepreneur 1). From such responses, entrepreneurship education was conceptualised as education relevant to starting and operating a business.

Education to develop entrepreneurial individuals Some participants understood entrepreneurship education as education for students to develop entrepreneurial qualities or competencies. To Student 2 who was a first year, entrepreneurship education would allow students to develop “a kind of leadership or quality that helps people to create a business or become a starter of certain kind of business or things that involve business”. Educator 1 pointed out entrepreneurship education was education on “defining a need or an underserved group, and then finding a new solution for it—this could be a product, a service or business, or a more innovative way of doing things”, stressing that a broader definition on entrepreneurship education, instead of only starting up a business, was important. From such findings, entrepreneurship education was conceptualised as education to develop an individual entrepreneurially. However, none of the final year students and professional participants understood entrepreneurship education in relation to entrepreneurial development of an individual.

Table 8 Which of the following competencies are important to becoming a successful entrepreneur?

Competencies	Highly important		Important		Neutral		Not important		Not required at all		Mean		S.D.		
	First year	Final year	First year	Final year	First year	Final year	First year	Final year	First year	Final year	First year	Final year	First year	Final year	
Creativity	10	9	23	10	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	4.16	4.35	0.60	0.75
Risk-taking capacity	18	11	15	9	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	4.38	4.55	0.68	0.51
Ability to prepare business plan	13	14	19	5	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	4.22	4.65	0.67	0.59
Sales technique	6	3	17	12	14	5	0	0	0	0	0	3.78	3.90	0.71	0.64
Knowledge of finance	11	6	17	9	9	5	0	0	0	0	0	4.05	4.05	0.74	0.76
Communication skills	22	10	11	9	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	4.49	4.45	0.69	0.60
Decision making skills	26	12	9	7	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	4.65	4.55	0.59	0.60

Table 8 (continued)

Competencies	Highly important		Important		Neutral		Not important		Not required at all		Mean		S.D.		
	First year	Final year	First year	Final year	First year	Final year	First year	Final year	First year	Final year	First year	Final year	First year	Final year	
Negotiation skills	17	11	15	7	5	1	0	1	0	0	0	4.32	4.40	0.71	0.82

Relating the arts discipline to entrepreneurship education

Most participants perceived entrepreneurship education to be relevant in the arts discipline. First year students, Student 1 and 3 believed that entrepreneurship education was relevant to arts education, with Student 1 expressing that entrepreneurship education would provide insights to arts students that they may explore entrepreneurship as a possible career or ability, and Student 4 similarly stating arts education can be a foundation for entrepreneurship, which indicated a relationship between arts and entrepreneurship education. For Students 5 and 6, as final years they saw that some aspects of the arts discipline, such as ethics, value and the emphasis on analysis and critical thinking skills, were relevant to entrepreneurship and the entrepreneurial spirit. All educators perceived arts education and entrepreneurship education as interrelated. Educator 1 pointed out that “Arts students should be very open to the very idea of creating value”, which made entrepreneurship intertwine with the arts discipline. Educators 2 and 3 suggested that individuals in arts-related careers will need to manage their work or career, which in a sense was entrepreneurial, thus relating the arts discipline to entrepreneurship education, and similarly, Professional 1 claimed that with a “rise of small dependant businesses being set up that involves the selling of art and handicrafts”, entrepreneurship education was “beneficial and applicable to the running of most organisations, arts included”. Findings revealed perceptions from stakeholders to indicate that entrepreneurship education was interrelated with the arts discipline.

Distinctions of arts education and entrepreneurship education

Some participants described arts education as quite distinct from entrepreneurship education. Students 2 and 4, as first years, did not see evident interrelationships between the arts discipline and entrepreneurship education, though both believed that in the arts curriculum, skills or knowledge relevant to entrepreneurship may be embedded but not clearly highlighted as entrepreneurial. Student 7 described there was “definitely not a strong relationship” between the arts discipline and entrepreneurship education and remarked that some self-employed individuals in the arts discipline “don’t consider themselves entrepreneurs” even though they have their own business. While none of the educators saw arts education and entrepreneurship education as distinct, Entrepreneurs 1 and 2 saw arts and entrepreneurship as separate entities. Entrepreneur 2 stated “in arts education, I didn’t think about business”. “For art, you can be creative, like doing anything you want in a way, because it’s your own art. But for entrepreneurship or business there’s a method, things you keep learning as you grow the business”, said Entrepreneur 1. In these responses, arts education was seen as largely distinct from entrepreneurship education, although all participants who perceived so did acknowledge that entrepreneurship was possible and relevant to arts.

Roles of students

Students were perceived to take a proactive role in arts entrepreneurship education. According to first and final year participants, arts students should make the choice to participate in entrepreneurship education opportunities, and within entrepreneurship education, students should be allowed a certain degree of autonomy to come up with ideas and products. Student 6 perceived a criteria for students in entrepreneurship education, “the requirement is like, if you’re motivated, you have the passion to own a business”. Similarly, all educator participants suggested students should initiate themselves into arts entrepreneurship education, that students should be active (Educator 1), take courses on their own accord (Educator 2), and be proactive in seeking out opportunities and promoting their work (Educator 3). Moreover, the idea of the active student was echoed by all arts professionals, who believed that students should be initiating themselves into entrepreneurship education opportunities. The responses underlined a need for students to be self-motivated, take initiative and take active roles in arts entrepreneurship education.

Roles of educators

To advise, organise, promote and support Participants believed educators should take a step back in arts entrepreneurship education, in comparison to students in active roles. First year students all suggested educators to mainly take an advisory role, along with suggestions for educators to introduce students to entrepreneurship (Student 1) and to promote entrepreneurship education (Student 2). Final year participants perceived educators in advisory roles, while particularly highlighting promoter roles. Students 5 and 6 regarded educators as responsible for promoting and increasing entrepreneurship education opportunities. “[Educators] can use more promotion, because currently I don’t know any entrepreneurship course or education in our faculty”, said Student 7. Educators in advisor roles was echoed by arts professionals, who perceived educators to organise opportunities and support student work or projects (Professional 1), act as advisors and supporters to students in entrepreneurial journeys (Entrepreneur 1), and design learning for students and even find mentors (Entrepreneur 2). Such findings demonstrate the role of educators in arts entrepreneurship education were mainly advisory roles, along with organising opportunities and supporting students.

To coordinate and collaborate Educator participants viewed educators in slightly more significant roles to coordinate with students in entrepreneurship education. Educator 1 remarked “it’s really important that we have to shift a little bit our mindset as professors and look for different kinds of student products”, and claimed that educators should be “supervising, coordinating [...] to open up the space for students to do different kinds of work”. Educator 3 perceived educators could be collaborators or working to compromise with students. According to Educator 2, it was important for educators in arts entrepreneurship education to train or connect students according to what students would like to do or achieve, especially pointing out that few arts educators had professional training in arts entrepreneurship.

Such perspectives highlighted more roles for educators in arts entrepreneurship education, that they were to collaborate and work with students.

Roles of professionals

Some participants discussed the involvement of professionals in arts entrepreneurship education. As a first year, Student 4 suggested that professionals should act as guides to students, to “educate by providing feedback or even suggestions and recommendations to students”. It was highlighted that professionals were better choices to lead students in arts entrepreneurship as they were more experienced in the subject (Student 4). While Educator 3 pointed out that there was a need for different perspectives in arts entrepreneurship education, Educator 1 posed an important question: “if you’ve never built a company, how could you possibly teach this to others?” This highlighted a belief that educators in entrepreneurship education should be experienced, and professionals from the industry as educators would offer real world experience and feedback to students. Educator 2 remarked that including professionals from the industry or investors to evaluate or assess student work in arts entrepreneurship education was valuable. Participants in this study who were professionals in the field of arts particularly advocated for involving professionals from the industry as educators in entrepreneurship education, that Professional 1 suggested professionals could be mentors to interested students, while Entrepreneurs 1 and 2 believed that professionals were happy to work with universities and university students, such as offering personal experiences or even internship opportunities. “It’s a great chance to give back to society and to help young people to find something they’re passionate about”, Entrepreneur 1 claimed. Whether offering real world experience, advice, feedback or assessing student work, the value of professionals as educator-like roles in arts entrepreneurship education was evident. Responses also suggested the inclusion of professionals in arts entrepreneurship education as feasible and beneficial, calling for universities to collaborate with professionals from the industry.

Arts entrepreneurship education within higher education

In discussing arts entrepreneurship education within higher education, a first year and a final year student believed that arts entrepreneurship education should be compulsory, reasoning that “it will give more opportunity to inspire more art students” (Student 1) and “we [students] will have more exposure to what would we want to do in the world and we’re not just stuck with one thing” (Student 5). However, a majority of participants suggested that arts entrepreneurship education should target voluntary students who were interested, for example:

“Because not everyone would like to bear the risks of entrepreneurship—maybe some people are more reserved and think that entrepreneurship is

risky, they won't want to take such risks, so the compulsory course to them is not that useful" (Student 3).

"Most of us [university students] have a clearer concept of what our life is going to be in higher education" (Student 7).

"I'd rather create a voluntary experience, I'd rather create an opportunity for students to want to come together and do this rather than forcing them" (Educator 1).

"It should be an optional course for students who want to turn their art into a business to take it, because otherwise it's a waste of resources as well" (Entrepreneur 1).

Nevertheless, all participants, regardless of stakeholder group, agreed on the feasibility and effectiveness of arts entrepreneurship education within higher education.

Discussion

The findings in this study offered a dialogue on arts entrepreneurship education within higher education. Results showed understandings of entrepreneurship education from students, educators and professionals in the arts discipline, also a comparison of similarities and differences in the perspectives of the different stakeholder groups. While some distinctions were identified, perspectives of stakeholder groups were largely similar in this study, revealing that understandings of arts entrepreneurship education among stakeholders in the context of this study were corresponding. The findings provided valuable insight into arts entrepreneurship education, in particular how arts entrepreneurship education was conceptualised, what it meant to stakeholders, and how entrepreneurship education was understood in relationship to the arts discipline. This study highlighted the importance of arts entrepreneurship education, and how stakeholders, including students, educators and professionals from the field of arts, should co-construct the concept and design of arts entrepreneurship education programmes, courses or opportunities.

According to White (2013), arts entrepreneurship education was not recognised as essential in arts programmes. In this study, a majority of participants agreed that entrepreneurship should be taught in universities, and that entrepreneurship education was relevant to the arts discipline. Conceptualisations of entrepreneurship education from qualitative findings included understanding such education in terms of starting and operating a business, along with developing entrepreneurial individuals. This was supported by quantitative findings where a majority of student participants indicated that entrepreneurship education can be taught, it should be useful even for students who did not plan to start a business, and a list of eight competencies was indicated as important for becoming a successful entrepreneur. Such results acknowledged the feasibility and importance of arts entrepreneurship education within higher education, with further implications of entrepreneurship education understood as a mixture of starting and operating businesses and developing entrepreneurial competencies and qualities. In contrast to Thom (2017), which suggested that "teaching focus on arts entrepreneurship education should be more

on intangible aspects of entrepreneurship rather than on new venture creation and business planning” (p. 733), perspectives from stakeholders in this study imply the importance of venture creation and operation along with the intangible entrepreneurial aspects, particularly regarding developing relevant competencies.

Perspectives from participants in this study underline the importance of entrepreneurial development and career-related abilities, with implications that only focusing on either would not be enough in arts entrepreneurship education. According to Lindemann and Tepper (2012), there is a large gap between the skills arts students acquire from higher education and skills important for careers. This study revealed in questionnaire responses that almost 50% of student participants planned to start a business, and a main motivation for arts students to become an entrepreneur was being their own boss. There is a need to address such need for arts students to become entrepreneurs and support students in overcoming deterrents, such as facing risks and lacking funds. Effectiveness of arts entrepreneurship education is “explicated by the extent to which arts entrepreneurship educational programmes address and meet students’ needs in terms of their professional, as well as academic, development” (Welsh et al., 2014, p. 21). While conceptualising arts entrepreneurship education, results in this study revealed motivating and deterring factors towards entrepreneurship and identified particular needs of students which should be addressed. In addition, the gap between arts education and entrepreneurship education should be bridged, in reference to interview responses where some participants perceived arts and self-employment as related, but arts education and entrepreneurship as distinct. As Chang and Wyszomirski (2015) described, arts entrepreneurship is a complex and dynamic phenomenon with many variables. Apart from connecting arts education and entrepreneurship, the concept of arts entrepreneurship should be further explored, such as to what extent a self-employed individual in the field of arts can consider themselves as entrepreneurs, or whether there is a distinction between self-employed arts professionals and arts entrepreneurship.

Results revealed the roles of stakeholders within arts entrepreneurship education. As participants all agreed that students should be proactive within arts entrepreneurship education to initiate participation in relevant opportunities and be active in learning, this corresponded to a call for “a more personalised, student-centred approach” to arts entrepreneurship education (Toscher et al., 2020, p. 197). While focusing on the student, roles of other stakeholders, as in educators and professionals from the industry, must not be undermined. Findings in this study revealed educators to be organising learning opportunities, supporting and advising students, as well as acting as collaborators with students. However, a challenge was acknowledged in that arts educators are rarely experienced in arts entrepreneurship. According to Bridgstock (2013), it is important to affirm existing effective teaching practices and reinforce the importance of disciplinary content in arts entrepreneurship education, particularly with professional development and support for teaching staff. For effective teaching and learning, training and support must be offered to educators. There is a need for more effort, recognition and support for arts entrepreneurship education (Beckman, 2011), and universities should raise awareness on encouraging, promoting, developing and supporting entrepreneurship education particularly in the arts discipline.

A particular finding in this study was an emphasis on the inclusion of professionals in arts entrepreneurship education. As professionals are more experienced in career-related aspects within the field of arts, they can serve important roles in arts entrepreneurship education alongside educators. Findings in this study showed professionals could be involved in learning opportunities to share personal experiences, advise students, assess or evaluate student work, in which the suggestion of including of such professionalism responded to the acknowledgement of arts educators' lack of experience in the entrepreneurship or industry aspect. Hanson's (2021) study reported on the effectiveness of mentoring in arts entrepreneurship education, and while participants did not specifically suggest the inclusion of professionals as mentors, the roles perceived to be undertaken by professionals in arts entrepreneurship education were similar to mentorship. On the other hand, Chan and Chen (2022) noted a lack of shared discourse between higher education and the industry. In this study, perspectives of students, educators and professionals had largely corresponded, but encompassing professionals from the industry into arts entrepreneurship education would further enhance teaching and learning and ensure alignment of higher education and industry expectations and needs. More importantly, students, educators and professionals should all contribute in arts entrepreneurship education, to ensure understandings are consistent and that education is effective.

Limitations

This study was conducted on a voluntary basis and within the restrictions of the pandemic, which both quantitative and qualitative parts of this study were conducted online. With bulk emails sent to targeted student participants and questionnaire responses anonymised, as well as the scarcity of experienced arts educators and professionals relevant to the context in this study, this study was unable to further recruit respondents. While the findings offered important insight to arts entrepreneurship education from an Asian context, further studies may investigate perspectives from more participants, more higher education institutions and other geographical locations.

Conclusion

This study revealed understandings of arts entrepreneurship education in a dialogue between first and final year students, educators and professionals in the arts discipline, within an Asian context. Results shed light on conceptualisations of entrepreneurship education, including perceived definitions, relevant perspectives, understandings of the meaning of entrepreneurship education in relation to arts education, and roles of respective stakeholders in arts entrepreneurship education. A number of implications were brought forth. First, arts entrepreneurship education should be conceptualised as education regarding starting and operating a business, as well as entrepreneurial development of an individual. Developing competencies relevant to entrepreneurship was important, and this study identified eight competencies

important to a successful entrepreneur, which could be embedded into arts entrepreneurship education curriculum. Second, there is a need to address the gap between arts education and entrepreneurship education. The concept of arts entrepreneurship education should be reconsidered, and investigation on self-employment and entrepreneurship within the arts discipline is encouraged. Third, arts entrepreneurship education should be student-centred, but the roles of educators and professionals are not to be undermined. Higher education institutions should increase encouragement and awareness towards arts entrepreneurship education. Promotion and support towards this field is needed, and the importance of entrepreneurship education within the arts discipline should not be overlooked. Furthermore, cooperation between higher education institutions and the industry is needed. It is also essential to invite professionals to contribute to arts entrepreneurship education with their expertise and experience in the field and address the gap for the possible lack of experience among arts educators in entrepreneurship. Last but not least, perspectives of different stakeholders within arts entrepreneurship education must be considered in educational practices and research, to bridge the gap between needs and understandings between students, educators and professionals from the industry. With the complexity and diversity of arts entrepreneurship education, future studies should seek to construct a holistic overview of arts entrepreneurship and arts entrepreneurship education, both in conceptualisation and operationalisation.

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Declarations

Conflict of interest On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

Ethical approval The methodology and instruments for this study were approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Hong Kong (reference No.: EA210144). The researcher confirms that the research was performed in accordance with relevant guidelines/regulations applicable when human participants are involved (e.g. Declaration of Helsinki or similar).

Informed consent Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to participation in the study.

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