

The Effects of Improvisation Training in the Arts Entrepreneurship Curriculum

Monika Herzig
Indiana University

Stan Renard
University of Oklahoma

This paper was presented at the [2022 International Summit](#) of the Music & Entertainment Industry Educators Association
May 16-17, 2022

<https://doi.org/10.25101/22.15>

View the Summit presentation at:
<https://youtu.be/RLDZ4HGc5hQ>

Abstract

Entrepreneurship education is a relatively new addition to academia with the first courses being offered in 1953 at New York University, followed by an initial small business management course at Stanford in 1954. Recognizing the need to prepare artists for sustainable careers, there has been a significant increase in arts entrepreneurship offerings over the past decades with an estimated 168 institutions with 372 arts entrepreneurship courses in the U.S. alone (Essig and Guevara 2016). However, research on content and effectiveness of curricula is still in its infancy. Furthermore, Levie (1999, 4) observed a focus on teaching about entrepreneurship through formal lessons with little focus on practical exercises. It seems there is not even a clear definition of the term arts entrepreneurship and arts entrepreneur (Essig 2017). However, Collins, Smith, and Hannon (2006) identified a set of traits held by successful innovators and entrepreneurs. They all displayed vision, creativity, intuitive decision-making, creative problem-solving, risk-taking, and the ability to learn from their mistakes.

Furthermore, Keith Sawyer [2003a] attributes entrepreneurial success to a problem-finding approach rather than problem-solving techniques. He defines the problem-finding approach as the process of searching for interesting problems in an improvisatory manner rather than starting with a detailed plan and then working towards successful completion. Similarly, entrepreneurship curricula promote the concept of a growth mindset defined as the belief that personal characteristics, such as intellectual abilities, can be developed. This belief is opposite to a fixed mindset assuming that abilities are fixed and unchangeable (Dweck 1999;

Dweck and Leggett 1988; Yeager and Dweck 2012).

The jazz metaphor as a tool to develop improvisational capacities and an entrepreneurial mindset is a frequent topic in the entrepreneurship literature (Barrett 1998; Hatch 1999; Lewin 1998; Weick 1998; Diasio 2016; Eisenhardt 1997; Kamoche and Kunha 2001; Walzer and Salcher 2003; Zack 2000). Duxbury (2014) identifies improvisation in organizations as a coping alternative in situations of extreme change and turbulence. Improvisational skills may be drawn from art forms that regularly engage in such behavior, e.g., jazz and improvisational theater, and capacity for improvisation can be trained. Limb and Braun (2008) provide evidence that certain parts of the brain get activated through improvisational activity, a process that can improve through deliberate practice. All traits identified previously in successful innovators (Collins, Smith, and Hannon 2006) are integral to the process of improvisation (Herzig 2015) and thus may be trained effectively by regular and deliberate engagement in the process of improvisation. Consequently, we implemented frequent improvisation exercises in the Arts Entrepreneurship classrooms at Indiana University and The University of Texas in San Antonio and tested the impact on levels of creativity and growth mindset. The students completed pre- and post-test questionnaires indicating their perceived levels of creativity. Statistical analysis indicated that improvisation exercises help improve levels of growth mindset/creativity significantly. However, there is a difference in level of students—graduate students are more resistant towards alternative teaching methods or stepping out of their comfort zones. Since courses were taught online during the Spring 2021 semester, we speculated that Zoom teaching may inhibit the possible improvement options/effects of exercises. Based on the results, we plan to refine the exercises for the Arts Entrepreneurship classroom towards effective teaching of creativity and ideation.

Keywords: arts entrepreneurship, arts entrepreneurship pedagogy, entrepreneurship, improvisation



Monika Herzig is the author of *David Baker – A Legacy in Music* (Indiana University Press), *Experiencing Chick Corea: A Listener's Companion* (Rowman and Littlefield 2017), and co-editor of *Jazz and Gender* (Routledge 2022). She is also the chair of the research committee for the Jazz Education Network and editor of *JAZZ* (Jazz Education in Research and Practice, Indiana University Press). Currently she is Professor of Artistic Research in Jazz and Dean of Music Education at the Jam Lab Private Music University in Vienna, Austria while on leave from Indiana University.

As a jazz pianist Dr. Herzig has toured the world, opened for acts such as Power of Tower, Sting, Yes, and her music has won Downbeat Magazine Awards and is featured on NPR and JazzWeek. Her awards include a 1994 Downbeat Magazine Award for Best Original Song, a Jazz Journalist Association Hero 2015 award, as well as grants from the NEA, the Indiana Arts Commission, MEIEA, Jazz Tours, the U.S. Embassy, among others. Herzig is a CASIO Artist.



Stan Renard is Associate Dean and Associate Professor and Coordinator of the Arts Management and Entrepreneurship programs in the Weitzenhoffer Family College of Fine Arts at the University of Oklahoma. Dr. Renard is also the Director of the Arts Incubation Research Lab (AIR Lab), a National Endowment for the Arts Research Lab. The lab's research team studies the intersection of the arts, entrepreneurship, and innovation at its incubation stage with a research agenda that intends to understand the economic potential of artists as non-conventional entrepreneurs and the impact of the digital divide upon arts-based entrepreneurs. In addition, he is a touring and recording artist, and the founder and arranger of the Grammy-Nominated Bohemian Quartet and the Executive Director of the Monteux School & Music Festival in Hancock, Maine. Renard holds a Doctorate in Musical Arts (DMA) from the University of Connecticut as well as a Doctorate in International Business (DBA) from Southern New Hampshire University. Previously held collegiate appointments include the University of Texas at San Antonio, Colby College, the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, the University of Connecticut, Storrs, Providence College, Eastern Connecticut State University, Southern New Hampshire University, and the University of California at San Diego. Dr. Renard is a member of the Yamaha Master Educator Collective, Music Business & Entrepreneurship Group.



**MUSIC & ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY
EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION**

**PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
2022 INTERNATIONAL
SUMMIT**

**OF THE
MUSIC & ENTERTAINMENT
INDUSTRY EDUCATORS
ASSOCIATION**

– MAY 16 & 17, 2022 –

Music & Entertainment Industry Educators Association
1900 Belmont Boulevard
Nashville, TN 37212 U.S.A.

www.meiea.org

© Copyright 2022 Music & Entertainment Industry Educators Association
All rights reserved