Entrepreneurial Learning as Experiential and Social Learning Process: 
A Case of Female Entrepreneurs in Creative Industry

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Abstract:
The last decade has witnessed the emergence of entrepreneurial learning as an area of scholarly interest and academic inquiry. There has been significant development in terms of research and the understanding there by generated regrinding the nature and process of entrepreneurial learning. However, an important question in this regard remains that of how female entrepreneurs learn. The current study aims to offer an understanding into the entrepreneurial learning of female entrepreneur in creative industry. Qualitative case-study aided the exploration of experiences of female entrepreneur. The paper identifies entrepreneurial learning is a dynamic process that occur by interaction of personal and social experience of female entrepreneur during her entrepreneurial journey not independent of the unique context of creative industry. The learning procedures for creative entrepreneurs is characterised by personal experiences coupled with high level of collaborations and sharing.

Key words: Entrepreneurial learning, Female entrepreneurs, Creative industries.
INTRODUCTION:

The past decade has witnessed a wider acceptance of the value (Carter, 2000) and the economic contribution the entrepreneurial potential that they hold (Carter, Anderson et al. 2003). According to GEM 2004 report female entrepreneurs are 6.7% of UK population and contribute annually £50-70billion to the gross value added by businesses (DTI, 2005). Consequently, discourses and acceptance regarding female entrepreneurship seem to increase both in scholarly community and among policy makers because of its significant economic contribution (Carter, 2000). Numerous researches, both theoretical and empirical, with variety of methodological perspectives, have offered understanding into the subject matter by observing the possible relationships/impact of gender and entrepreneurship.

As part of a wider study examining female entrepreneurship, this paper attempts to explore entrepreneurial learning of female entrepreneurs, by building upon research which looks at female entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial learning within the context of creative industries and to develop a conceptual framework of the significant themes in their learning experiences. Taking a gender perspective, this paper aims to explore the possible role gender plays in entrepreneurial learning in this economically crucial and growing sector.

For the purpose of this research entrepreneurship is defines as a process of venture creation and management via acting on identified or created opportunities which involves enacting, decision making (Shane and Venkataram, 2000)

The paper is divided in two sections. The first part presents a brief overview of the relevant literature in order to provide a context to the research and its findings. To meet this objective, this paper draws upon a range of published sources, including research publications in the field of entrepreneurship and creative/cultural industries including studies from within UK and international journals. Thus the first section comprises of four sections:

- A brief overview of the existing conception of entrepreneurial learning
- A review of existing research exploring learning of female entrepreneurs
- A brief review of extant literature on nature of creative industries
- Entrepreneurial learning in creative industries

The second section of this paper will explain the choice of methodology and the preliminary findings on the analysis of the qualitative data set which was collected for the doctoral research project by the researcher.

WHAT IS ENTREPRENEURIAL LEARNING:

Entrepreneurial learning has emerged as an area of scholarly interest and academic inquiry. The past has witnessed a significant development in terms of research and the understanding there by generated regrinding the nature and process of entrepreneurial learning. Yet it is believed that it is an area which is not well understood (Deakins, 2000). Rae (2006) explains learning as an integral part of entrepreneurial process in which human and social aspects hold as much importance as economic factors.

Entrepreneurship is an ongoing process (Rea and Creswell, 2000) entrepreneurship scholars has yet not confined this process into “start-end” boundaries. However, entrepreneur is considered as central to this process, whose entrepreneurial activities
enable the new organization to come into existence (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000; Gartner, 2001). Entrepreneurial activities change from time to time to correspond to the venture requirements (Shane, 2003) making the process dynamic and complex, hence, the exact behaviour that an entrepreneur may adopt to deal the changes is difficult to predict. However, estimating the course of entrepreneurial activities, based on the behaviour of an entrepreneur and his/her past experiences, may become possible to understand.

To keep the business progressing, an entrepreneur has to assume the role of innovator, manager, small business owner, division vice president (Gartner’s, 1988) at various stages of business and each role requires unique set of skills whose possession and application translate into a unique learning exercise. In this way, from opportunity recognition to actual creation of organization, the entrepreneur is involved in the variety of learning cycles which further adds to his/her experience.

Entrepreneurial learning widely is understood as how people acquire knowledge and enact new behaviours in the process of recognizing and acting on opportunities and of organizing and managing ventures (Maples & Webster, 1980; Rea & Carswell, 2000). Much of the learning that takes place within an entrepreneurial context is experiential in nature (e.g., Deakers & Freel, 1998; Minniti & Bygrave, 2001; Sarasvathy, 2001; Sullivan, 2000).

To understand these activities and offer understanding to it, many theorist have offered understanding from variety of angles. Cognitive theorists, which concentrates on the individual acquisition and comprehension of knowledge, has dominated the study of entrepreneurial learning (MiniTi & Bygrave, 2001 cited in Rae, 2006). The current research, however, aims to offer understating beyond cognitivism. The cognitivism, having more of an entitative stance, looking at learning as happening in vacuum and isolation from external factors and predominantly overlooks the role of personal experience. entrepreneurs personal experience is believed to have major influence on his/her learning which gave rise to yet another stream; that of experiential learning which attribute the learning during entrepreneurial process to entrepreneur career experience (Politis, 2005, Cope, 2005). However, the more recent turn within this stream of research is that of social learning which offer an understanding from a social and collaborative process of learning (Rae, 2001, 2004, 2006).

The current research builds upon the experiential and social stream of research. It offers an understanding of entrepreneurial learning as experiential and social learning process. the entrepreneur’s biographies and experiences plays crucial role in the venture creation and management which is coupled with the social interaction with significant people in their entrepreneurial lives and with the wider community. learning and knowledge takes place not only by active encounters by entrepreneur, thereby adding to his/her experience, but also by actively sharing their experience with the wider community.

WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS AND ENTREPRENEURIAL LEARNING

In the recent years, the scholarly interest in female entrepreneurship has increased, reflected in the fact the experiences of female entrepreneurs in entrepreneurship domain is studied from multiple dimensions. These scholarly endeavours to understand female entrepreneur, have amplified the knowledge on variety of topics, however,
characteristics of female owned business, differences between male- and female-owned business, leadership style, typologies are the dominant ones as a result. These researches, though form a vast body of literature on female entrepreneurship, however, female entrepreneurship as an area of research is still under researched (Carter & Marlow, 2007). Entrepreneurial learning is one such dimension.

A range of published sources are drawn upon within this study including published research studies from the field of entrepreneurship and from other fields as well to offer a brief overview of the existing state of art of researches on the subject matter. Only few studies so far could be found from filed of entrepreneurship regarding entrepreneurial learning with a gender specific stance. Researches undertaken on learning of female entrepreneur from other disciplines (e.g. sociology, management, education and psychology) has identified female entrepreneur as self directed learner (Wells, 1998) who learns from challenges & problem solving (Wells, 1998; Coyle, 2003) and frequently focus their learning on an in-the-moment information need (Fenwick & Hutton, 2000; Wells, 1998). However, these conceptualisations on learning of female entrepreneur view female entrepreneurs as an adult learner only hence overlooking the role of entrepreneurial context in such learning. From methodological stand point, the entitative studies focus more on information needs of female entrepreneur rather than the learning itself.

Essentially, studies from filed of entrepreneurship focuses entrepreneurial learning of female entrepreneur within entrepreneurial context and the impact on opportunity recognition. Moreover, this camp of research also takes into account the role of environment and the entrepreneurial context as influential factors within entrepreneurial learning (Ettle and Welter, 2010). Ettle and Welter’s (2010), by employing a gender specific framework, investigated the triggers and determinants on entrepreneurial learning of female entrepreneurs by taking into account micro, meso and macro level variables. Their finding suggest that the meso environment is more of an indirect influence; the macro and micro environments are strong influences on lives and decisions of women entrepreneurs, especially on their opportunity recognition. The business environment has both a direct and indirect influence.

Their finding provided essential grounds for the current study. However, the shortcoming is that their major emphasis is on environment (micro, meso and macro) and the research context is that of Eastern- and Western Germany, thereby offering limited transferability as the gender and entrepreneurial context can vary across geographical locations. Also, the industry context is not considered for its possible influence on learning which is an essential part in this study.

In addition to gender, this paper aims to understand entrepreneurial learning within creative industry more effectively. A brief overview of the context is provided in next section.

THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES AND THE CREATIVE ENTREPRENEURS

Past one and a half decade has witnessed a growing interest from academic circles and policy makers in the idea of the creative industries. This has resulted from the suggestion that the creative industries constitute a growing sector, which offers opportunities for new job creation, new business ventures, inward investment and
tourism (European Commission, 1998). Being one of the fastest growing sector (reffffff), the creative industries are accepted/acknowledged as an alternative for national and local economic development. This lead to the promotion of creative industries as a driver of economic change, higher on the educational agenda, securing economic and political support. Many Higher Education Institutions and universities are offering entrepreneurship degree and programmes to further promote enterprise development and entrepreneurial activity in this sector.

The creative industries emerged as a concept that aims to link sectors that are subject to intellectual property rights, or that are based on human creativity. It also emerged as a means to capture the convergence of technology and culture expressed in new media (Cunningham, 2005). The cultural and media industries have a growing social and economic significance within the United Kingdom (Leadbeater & Oakley: 1999). The Creative Industries Mapping Document, originating from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, estimates that they generated a revenue of £112.5 billion and employed 1.3 million people at the turn of the millennium, a figure which curiously excludes freelance and self-employed workers (DCMS, 1999; 2001) UK creative industries deservedly enjoy a global reputation for excellence, creativity and innovation. British design, advertising, music and interactive leisure software companies are considered to be world-class (DCMS 1999). This industry comprises of activities related to advertising, architecture, the art and antiques market, crafts, design, designer fashion, film and video, interactive leisure software, music, the performing arts, publishing, software and computer services, television and radio (DCMS 1999).

This sector comprises of people who starts and run divers kinds of enterprises, from sole owned self employment artists to globally significant business organisation (Bjórkegren, 1996 sites in Rae, 2004).

FIGURE I:
External Influences on Creative Industry
Source: vediochris.wordpress.com
Though, diversity prevails, however, large and growing share of employment in this sector is that of micro-business, self employed and freelancers (Leadbeater & Oakley, 1999). Moreover, the enterprises in this sector are largely multiplex. Entrepreneurs in this sector are often producer, designer, retailer all at same time, thus making it difficult to categorise on sectoral basis (Leadbeater & Oakley, 1999). Moreover, this industry hold a dynamic and volatile environment and is influenced by numerous factors such as changing market trends, increasing competition, frequently changing consumer demand, influence from other cultures and countries etc.

Moreover, as oppose to large scale industry (like manufacturing industry), creative industry relies largely, however not solely, on micro-business or SME’s. Unlike the manufacturing industry which is mostly large scale and is industrially well organised, creative industry mostly works around projects. Though some of the project might be quite large in its nature, however, creative entrepreneurs mostly work in informal way, outside the formal boundaries of factory.

The large scale manufacturing sector is predominantly led by the entrepreneurs. So the consumers are given a range of choice for goods from among which they can make their choice. On the other hand, creative industries are largely consumer-led and there is a propensity among entrepreneurs to largely offer those goods which are in demand by the customers. Thus goods are produced partly in conjunction with the consumers.

The most distinct feature of creative industry is that it is dispersed in various sectors. Thus creative entrepreneurs are exposed to high diversity and dynamic environment. This kind of complexity has a very crucial implication for entrepreneurship as this presents many opportunities for new venture creation and growth (Rae, 2004).

These featuring conditions of creative industries creates significant risk and volatility which cannot be overlooked in creative industry as in such situations the speed and effectiveness of learning are likely to be critical to the success of a venture (Rae, 2004). In such case, learning in creative industries can be unique from other (e.g. manufacturing) industries.

Entrepreneurs in the creative industries are recognised for rarely taking up any formal business training and support (Rafoo et al. 2000) for starting or managing venture. These entrepreneurs learn from high levels of collaboration and networking (Conwey et al., 2005) and thus more via connectedness and less through formal institutions. Business learning for entrepreneurs in this sector is situated within the social, cultural and economic contexts of the real world in which they operate (Rae, 2003). Moreover, Business knowledge that is used in business is actively derived and developed from the interactions of individuals within a purposeful domain of practice and hence is, in part, a product of the activity (Rafoo et al. 2000; Rae, 2003). Informal and intuitive theory in practice seemed to be developed by these entrepreneurs (Rafoo et al. 2000). “Entrepreneurial learning in the cultural industries appears at its most powerful when entrepreneurs are ‘doing’ and reflecting on ‘doing’ business within their sector contexts.” (Rafoo et al., 2000). However the learning processes involved in such businesses are not yet well understood (Rae, 2004).

Thus, entrepreneurial learning with in a complex environment with a gender specific stance presents an interesting scenario.
METHODOLOGY

Given the focus of this research on developing an understanding of entrepreneurial learning with gender and industry specific stance, the study takes an interpretive stance. Interpretive stance assumes that social world is interpreted, understood, experienced, produced and/or constituted with the underlying assumption and that the world is complex and multilayered and textured (Mason, 2002). Interpretive approach seeks to interpret events and phenomena in terms of how the people concerned perceive and understand their own experience (Patton, 2002). The reality in this case is understood to be subjective and it is function of interpretation (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

To meet the purpose of study, qualitative method as opposed to quantitative method was adopted. One of the defining characteristics of the qualitative method is that it is firmly located in the 'context of discovery' rather than the 'context of justification' (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Schwandt, 1994). Thus, qualitative methods are more inline with purpose of this research. As, in contrast to more quantitative approaches, qualitative research is inherently inductive rather than deductive (Deshpande, 1983) consequently, the research is based on inductive rather than deductive logic of enquiry.

Empirically, this paper draws on results of in-depth case studies of female entrepreneurs in Essex region. Case study approach was chosen to aid the exploration of entrepreneurial learning of female entrepreneurs as case studies are suitable for exploring those phenomenon where the behavioural events cannot be controlled and the focus is more on contemporary events (Yin, 2009). Yin (2003) described a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 13). Hartley (1994) explains, 'case studies are tailor-made for exploring new processes or behaviours or ones which are little understood'. Keeping in view the research purpose and research question, case study is considered to have particular relevance from entrepreneurial learning perspective and from female entrepreneurship perspective.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Type of business</th>
<th>Background</th>
<th>Transition into entrepreneurial career</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Henna</td>
<td>Consultant by design, global arts projects</td>
<td>Worked as singer, worked as project manager for large organisations, worked as trainer to dyslexic people</td>
<td>Childbirth, better life for family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Karon</td>
<td>Music Consultancy, Business trainer, Life coach, music retailer</td>
<td>Worked as banker, financial advisor</td>
<td>As a hobby with her husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Bevina</td>
<td>Training consultancy, e-learning and training consultancy</td>
<td>Employee as manager in various companies</td>
<td>Wish to be one’s own boss, first venture failure experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Ketherine</td>
<td>Image consultant, online cosmetic outlet, training and development for executives, teams and female entrepreneurs</td>
<td>Multiple employment experiences as librarian</td>
<td>Desire for change, Sudden interest developed into image consultancy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>First Name</th>
<th>Occupation and Details</th>
<th>Reason for Entrepreneurial Career Choice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Jenitt</td>
<td>Creative consultant, Card designer</td>
<td>Redundancy, desire to be one’s own boss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Andreana</td>
<td>Jewellery designer, Jewellery design trainer, Design business, garage business with partner</td>
<td>Personal preference for jewellery designing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Denneis</td>
<td>Cross cultural communication consultant, training, workshops and seminar with business executives</td>
<td>Left family business, interest in cross cultural communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Lynne</td>
<td>Event manager</td>
<td>Desire for change, ex-designing business sold off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>Clothing and jewellery retail, saddler retail, Training and teaching horse ridding</td>
<td>Age factors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For selecting respondents, the study relied on multiple sampling techniques which include purposive, criterion and snowball sampling (Patton, 1990). Purposive sampling was used to identify female entrepreneurs for participation in this study based on the characteristics and criteria relevant for the research. For the criterion sampling, the female entrepreneurs profile for this study will include was based on following points:

a) She independently or together with a partner started and established a venture, and is still in business or still running and managing her venture
b) She is a primary decision maker in her venture.
c) She has been running her business for more than three years

Open ended in-depth interview (Patton, 1990) was used as data gathering tool. Each interview conducted was started by inviting a story from the respondent and they were asked to share the story of their career. This was particularly useful to give and indepth view of the unique experiences that they hold. However, to make sure all the relevant question were covered, a topic guide was also utilised and was developed and modified after each interview in order to investigate the emerging themes. Thus, each interviewed revolved around (but was not confined to) the career story (before and after setting up a venture), factors that made them choose entrepreneurial career, how ideas were turned into a venture, what kind of resources of learning they prefer to employ, steps taken for filled the perceived gap in their learning, any critical situation they had confronted during their entrepreneurial journey. All the interviews were conducted face-to-face and were audio recorded. An explicit permission of the respondent was sought prior to actual interview day.

For the purpose of analysis, cross-case comparisons and grounded theory techniques were employed to search for the dominant patterns. Grounded theory techniques were adopted as they provide a more systematic way to inductive analysis. Cross case comparison provided a systematic approach to search the dominant patterns.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description of activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 1: Full transcription of interviews (Bauer &amp; Gaskell, 2000)</td>
<td>Transcription of in-depth interviews which were tape recorded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2: Familiarization (Ritchie &amp; Spencer, 1994) and initial interpretation of the transcripts (Patton, 1987 cited in Cope, 2001)</td>
<td>Immersion in the data: listening to tapes, reading transcripts (Ritchie &amp; Spencer, 1994) while writing comments in the margins indicating what can be done with different parts of the data ... several readings of the data are normally necessary' (Patton, 1987; p149 cited in Cope, 2001).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3: a) Grounded theory procedure of open, axial and selective coding (Strauss and Corbin 1994) b) Cross-case comparison of all cases at each step of open, axial and selective coding.</td>
<td>All the interviews, after preliminary analysis in familiarization stage, were analysed using the analytic procedures of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2000) of open, axial and selective coding. Cross case comparison was conducted at each step of open, axial and selective coding.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE II (Source: Author)**

**ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION:**

A conceptual framework for entrepreneurial learning of female entrepreneurs was developed by utilising grounded theory coupled with cross case comparison. Three main themes emerged from data through which entrepreneurial learning of female entrepreneurs could be understood. These are entrepreneur’s biography, social and experiential learning process, venture emergence.

**ENTREPRENEUR’S BIOGRAPHY:**

The first concept that emerged is that of entrepreneur’s biography. Every entrepreneur hold a unique biography characterised by educational experiences, early family life and multiple phases of employment. Each of the female entrepreneur in this study highlighted the significance of situations, relationships and people, and endows them with specific meanings based on her entrepreneurs personal interpretation. The educational experiences provided grounds for employment opportunities which inturn was given them chance of accumulating necessary skills that were then utilised for enactment on opportunities for venture creation. This theme is illustrated by the case of Ketherine, who is a founder of a company ABC (hypothetical name) and is an image consultant and trainer and have online cosmetic retailing.

**Educational experiences:**
Each of the stories represented that formal education experiences provided ground for their career to takeoff. These formal educational experiences, however, were not only before their first employment; rather, they were ongoing even during their employment time, thus there were multiplexity of educational experiences. These educational experiences were also helpful in making important decisions about their career choices which predominantly involve their own personal preferences for an available career option as well:

“When I finished school, I taken my A-levels, and I had, absolutely no idea about what I wanted to do for job, the only idea that I had was that I didn’t want to go to work coz I wasn’t, I didn’t want to start 9 to 5 at that age, so I thought I might as well go to a university, and do, a higher qualification, so, I went off to, I actually went to, what is not Thames Vally University, it was then Ealing college of higher education, and I did a humanities degree, where I studies English, history of arts, history, psychology, and a little bit music, and so I did that for three years, and then when I came to the end of that,.................. I still didn’t have any idea about what I wanted to do, and I started applying for jobs all over the place and wasn’t very successful, coz the one thing I knew I didn’t want to be was a teacher, and every kept trying to push me to be a teacher, and I knew I don’t want to be that”

Katherine

Multiple employment experiences:

Katherine first started her career as a librarian in a local library and had an on job sponsored training opportunity for two years. However, surprisingly, after she finished her qualification as librarian, her sponsors allowed her to apply anywhere for job as they did not has any pots to offer for a qualified librarian. This gave her a chance to get exploit a better employment opportunity and also proved to a ground for series of employment opportunities. Employment experiences not only provide opportunity for on job trainings but also multiple skills are gained including dealing with people, handling multiple responsibilities etc which latter on proved to be of high significance for their entrepreneurial venture.

Skills and knowledge gained from employment career

Katherine’s multiple employment experiences make her learn a great deal and various skills and know-how was gained via these experiences.

“........I went to the local college here I worked as the head of learning resources at Walthom forest college, for 11 years and in that job I was responsible for all library and information services and things like media resources everything from laptops to white board in the class rooms and those such things, because I have been working in further education, part of my responsibility in all the college I worked at was user education so its teaching students how to locate in formation, how to use it, how to interpret it, and then how to use to to produce assignment, so lots of research skills, information searching, that kind of stuff, I really enjoyed that kind of work”

Katherine

Thus, Kathy’s entrepreneurial learning arose from her formal education and multiple employment experiences.

EXPERIENTIAL AND SOCIAL PROCESS OF LEARNING
The second theme is that of experiential and social process of learning. Central to entrepreneurial learning are the personal experiences of entrepreneur, gained via encountering different situations, and the social experiences formed by the relationships and people over a period of time. Entrepreneurs do not operate in vacuum, rather they continually respond to their environment (Gartner, 1988). During their entrepreneurial journey, they have to manage relationships with people around them including friends, family, and business people. This theme is illustrated by Denneis’s case who is founder of a cross-cultural communication training consultancy.

**Critical events during entrepreneurial life:**

Denneis’s joined the family business father she was fed up of her job in Spain and decided to have a change. At the same time marriage bring about a big change in her life and her husband also joined the business after a while. The business soon was faced with recession and she decided to change the business. This however, was not an easy and straightforward decision to make; she faced a great deal of resistance from her family. Along her way, she realised several knowledge gaps which she perceived were necessary for the business which made her pursue a learning project.

............along the way back in 1990, the first recession hit and I thought to myself there has got to be a better way to run the business and what I realise that I knew how to do every job in the business but I didn’t know how to run the business, so I set out to learn”

**Denneis**

**Learning from personal experiences**

Learning essentially took place by personal experiences gained via variety of situation encountered. The experience from each episode and encounter went through a process of making meaning via reflecting upon them, drawing conclusion from them and applying the lesson learned actively into her business.

started to do that I got opportunity of working in Finland one week a month, for business consultancy, and so I was working in my own family business for three weeks a month and then one week in a months I was flying off to the Nordic countries to work with all sorts of business who wanted to internationalise and I just loved it, and that’s when I got to learn about different or cultural differences, and different approaches to doing business,

**Denneis**

**Social/shared learning**

Female entrepreneurs in Creative industry are predominantly social learners. They actively share their feelings, goals, visions and experience with perceived significant people around them. They not only learn from their experiences but also from other people’s experiences. In this way the essential knowledge is gained from the person who is perceived as knowledgeable and who is trusted.

but there was a time when I wanted to change the business, and nobody would listen to me, because, everybody was older then I am , my husband is 15 years older than I am, everybody had been in the business much much longer then I had, and they didn’t
wanted to change and I just thought, I did **wet turn**, so I went to see this man and I said
to him, terry, if u tell me I am wrong, I will believe you coz everybody else is telling me
I can’t do what I want to do and I am so frustrated but I honestly believe, that we have
got to change and I have got this vision, and he said have you got a vision, yes I got a
vision, I got a vision I know how this wants to be and I know what it should look like
and, I, I can feel it smell it touch it and I know what this business should be like but
everybody is telling me we can’t do that, and he looked at me, and he said Debbie, if
you don’t do what you say you are describing to me, if you don’t do that you won’t be in
business in two years time, so ahhh right, and then he said I can’t give you any money,
for your business but there are two thing I CAN do for you. I can give u access to
anybody in my business from whom you want to learn ,and I can give u access to people
to look over your plans and and so you can talk over what you thing you want to do,

*Denneis*

Denneis shared her vision and goals with one of the person who she trusted
who then
introduced her to all the relevant people in his business. This not only helped her to
discuss her own ideas with those people but she gained the required knowledge from
those people. Thus her significant relationship facilitated learning for her which also
broadened her network of relationship

*the first person I went to see was the human resource director because I wanted to learn
how to do proper reward and recognition systems, I wanted to understand how u did
bonuses and things like , and then I went to meet the logistics director because this guy
was incharge of getting product all over the UK between 7 o’clock in the evening and 5
o’clock in the morning, and when I began to talk to these people, I realised what
running was all about, and I learned how much I didn’t know coz until then I didn’t
know what I didn’t know, but that summer you know talking about the accounts and the
bank manager with the business adviser and then talking to the managing director a
really huge company and he is saying to me you can meet anybody you want to I my
organisation you can have access to them and they are the top level people, and there is
just little me with my little business, but just the insights i’ve got, allowed me to see
what I didn’t know, and then I just setup to learn as much as I could as fast as I could,

*Denneis*

**VENTURE EMERGENCE**

The third theme is that of venture emergence. The venture, once created, does not
operate in vacuum. Creative industry is characterised by dynamic and complex
environment. As the female entrepreneurs go along their entrepreneurial journey, they
engage in variety of activities. The centre of their focus is their own venture and they
make every effort of make it better. For that matter, they adopt various roles in their
ventures. Female entrepreneurs constantly thrive to make improvements in her business.
Thus the skills accumulated via experiential and social process of learning are actively
applied to develop and grow her venture more and more. This theme is illustrated via
Lynne’s case

**Business start-up**

The startup phase of the business is more related to the publicity and marketing of the
business and product. The process of setting up own business, building reputation,
getting referrals from served people, popularising business, marketing and
advertisement of business (via print media or word-of-mouth) are some activities that
entrepreneurs are involved in. At this stage, the family and friends played crucial role to help the business popularise.

When Glenneys decided to leave her post office manager job, she was not sure what to do. Her friends were aware of her qualification as a designer so they suggested why not to setup as interior designer.

so i said to friends of the time what shall i do, and few of them said, well, if you set up as an interior designer we would use you,

(Lynne)

Managing and growing the business

Once started, the creative entrepreneurs always aspire to grow their ventures. They utilise all their skills to grow their business which often results in having multiple sides of one venture, each one offer a different product or service. In case of Glenneys, she started as designer, managing few cafes in due course and ended up as event manager.

because as long as i managing it, or at the top doing the strategy, that’s fine, so this have enabled this business to grow, so i started at the gym and it has a little cafe, and it was ok, it wasn’t a great success because people didn’t see as that and didn’t matter what we did, it really never made a profit, cover the cost just, and then I find out there was cafe coming free in Maldon, and I bought that for while and that was good and this, then this one, we are at the moment in Chelmsford, and this used to be a sandwich bar, we bought this, then there was cafe, we bought that so we had the retail side of catering and at the same time, we built up the outside catering, and then about two years ago, I suddenly realised that actually, I don’t like retail, I don’t like, I don’t like it, at any level, I don’t like it, and I therefore sold off, we closed the sandwich shop here in Chelmsford, and we sold everything else, and now all we do is outside catering, event management and that suits me fine, and I like doing that, its where my strengths are because what I am doing is project managing, and that’s what I like doing,

Lynne

However, business is constantly evaluated by self-developed criterion largely based on personal preferences and choice of female entrepreneurs which results in expansion or contraction or modification of the venture. In this way, the venture evolve with the passage of time.

Managing relationships

The essential part of entrepreneurial journey is that of managing and developing relationship with customer, employees and with other business people.

I found somebody we have done work for before, .......knocked on the from door and said you are the women who do catering could you do an event for me,

Lynne
I have got at the moment 26 people who work for me on adhoc basis, I have no full timers, I have one chef who works for me most of his time, but does occasionally do all the work, I have a cook chef who works occasionally for me, and I have loads of people who work for me as waitresses and waitresses, and the wait work is really, that some waiters and waitresses work, will only work on weekends, some will only work in evening, some will work during the day but not on weekends, so its fine, so if for example, we have funeral which tends to be during the day during the week, there are certain people I wouldn’t ask, because I know they are not available, if we got a wedding in the, on Saturday, there are certain people I wouldn’t ask because I know they don’t do Saturdays, so, and that seems to work,

Lynne

I pay above the all, I always pay more than the market price, and I always treat them fairly

Lynne

The creative industry enterprises have to interact effectively with a diverse range of customers and suppliers. Thus relationship management becomes integral to the entrepreneurial process.

ROLE OF GENDER:

Based on the number of examples of gender related issues described by the women in their narratives and the details of their encounters that they provided and the meaning attached to them, it would seem that gender in this case had, by hook or by crook, an embedded role rather than major influential. In some cases, it appears to have obstructing or negative role, while in some cases it was rather a neutral or positive role. The gendered roles were actively constructed and reconstructed throughout their entrepreneurial lives. Sometimes, they have to put struggle and learn how to gain legitimacy as a women entrepreneur, while in other times, she has to keep on switching between her role as entrepreneur and as a women (wife, mother etc). Thus learning during entrepreneurial career is to learning to gain legitimacy, and learning to manage negotiated gender roles. This theme will be illustrated by Karon’s and Denneis cases.

Gaining Legitimacy:

Female entrepreneurs, not surprisingly, have to strive to become socially accepted as an entrepreneur. Karon experienced gender discrimination in her start-up phase by being told that women do not come to the business. This made her furious and she utilised her knowledge and experience and made her way into the existing market successfully. Thus, female entrepreneurs have to learn

but what I found was that nobody would help me in this country I got told (a) you are a women your place is in the home how dare you come into the music market well that to someone like me is bad news because that make me very angry

...... , I got told in this country before don’t even go down that road but having been encouraged there of course when I came back I continue work

(Karon)
Changing Roles and Focal Commitment over Time:

In their entrepreneurial lives, there are certain 'phases' when the entrepreneur is more focused on personal and family issues, as opposed to periods when the growth of the business dominated their thoughts and objectives (Cope, 2001). Particularly in case of female entrepreneurs, they have to switch between their role as an entrepreneur and as a woman (wife, mother etc). Thus they particularly have to learn to keep a balance between the roles they have to assume during this entrepreneurial journey.

Denneis, during her entrepreneurial expedition, had to keep a balance between her priorities for business and family which made her to learn being not only success full as entrepreneur but also as a woman.

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\text{...in the 1990’s I really had to redefine my vision of success, because, or my definition of success because that business wasn’t going like that and it wasn’t really to do with my lack of effort it was to do with that one of us had to put business first and I was putting the family first and my definition of success was to still remain married at the end of the business because if it happened it was the business that got him away of my marriage, and to have normal, healthy, psychologically sound children who felt confident enough to go out in the world and do whatever it was that they wanted to do, and, I have managed that, or we have managed that so yes, quiet often its if I am asked to speak to women in business I have a talk which is the the five entrepreneurial steps of learning, of doing business and what each of these were, the first one was catch-up learning then maintenance learning, shock learning and other things like that, but it all starts with redefining, explaining why I had to redefine success and that yes, I believe that I am a successful person, other people might not judge my business as being a huge success coz I cant sell it for £10 million or whatever, but I am not divorced my kids are happy, I have brought up three step children and my grandparents live with me and I am still talking to my mother...}
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(Denneis, underlined for emphasis)

ROLE OF CREATIVE INDUSTRY CONTEXT:

The context of creative industry acts as a trigger for entrepreneur to learn and to pursue a learning project. The creative industry is known for its dynamic environment characterise by rapidly changing consumer demand, technologies, fashions, market trends and also influence of outside cultures, referring towards different geographical regions. Inorder to make the business successful, creative female entrepreneurs take “on board” all the demands their customers make and ensure that their customer is happy with their product/service. They adopt a strategy of “No ‘NO’ to client/customer”. Particularly, they have to face the challenge of handling the demands that arise having influence from outside cultures.

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\text{...we are getting very Americanized now...}
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(Lynne)
Occasionally, it happens they there is a knowledge gap to meet this challenge, which rams creative entrepreneurs to actively learn to meet this challenge. This creative encounter for learning is mostly met by utilising external knowledge and expertise from their social network. They would prefer to ask someone who knows what they do not know and thus they fill up their perceived knowledge gaps by learning from others, and applying it to their business, hence creating a new phase of learning.

**CONCLUSION:**
The paper identifies entrepreneurial learning is a dynamic process that occurs by interaction of personal and social experience of female entrepreneur during her entrepreneurial journey and is highly situated. The learning procedures for female entrepreneurs is characterised by personal experiences coupled with high level of collaborations and sharing situated within the context of use. Within such complex environment, one of the crucial factor was that of individual biography and background. Each female entrepreneur brought a unique experience and knowledge to the entrepreneurial context which comprised of unique history of education along with employment experience. The individual’s biography influences the choice of business and product to be offered. The learning process in entrepreneurial context is essentially experiential and social processes not independent of influence of gender and creative industry context. Thus, within the context of creative industry, entrepreneurial learning can be seen as experiential and social learning process.
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