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# Understanding creative enterprise creation, functionality and sustainability from the lenses of Ghanaian creative entrepreneurs

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## ABSTRACT

This paper explored the dynamics of the Ghanaian creative industry to understand creative entrepreneurs' lived experiences in the process of turning their creativities into business ventures and the challenges they encounter in bids to sustain ventures. Guided by the business canvas model and a qualitative approach, data was collected from 40 creative entrepreneurs. Using both descriptive and thematic analysis, coupled with sense-making, it was established that creative entrepreneurship, as business practice was constrained by several phenomena, including the lack of governmental and investor support, high cost of creative productions, a dearth of practical teaching of creative skills and research in educational institutions, unfavourable regulatory policies for creative works, and a lack of appreciation for the Ghanaian culture. It is concluded that the constraints associated with the business dynamics of creative entrepreneurship could be used as innovative spaces for the derivation of plausible practices to enhance creative enterprise performance, in terms of future creative policy development and creation of viable business opportunities.

## IMPACT STATEMENT

This paper investigated the lived experiences of creative entrepreneurs in relation to how they turn their creativities into business enterprises, and the challenges that confronts them in managing and turning such enterprises into sustainable ventures. Based on interviews with creative entrepreneurs in Ghana, it was found that after forming their creative businesses, they found it too difficult to manage and sustain such enterprises. The reasons identified included the high cost of running their businesses, unfavourable regulatory policies for creative works, and the non-appreciation of their products, influenced by the Ghanaian culture. Additionally, they do not receive financial and/or technical support from the government or investors which could have helped them manage their business effectively to become sustainable. It is concluded that the identified difficulties experienced by the creative entrepreneurs could be used as innovative spaces to develop effective practices to enhance creative enterprise formation and management towards sustainable performance.

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## Introduction

The definition of entrepreneurship is quite varied due to the lack of consensus in the extant literature about how to specifically conceptualize. Though Shane and Venkataraman (2000, p. 218) definition of the concept as 'how, by whom and with what effects opportunities to create future goods and services are discovered, evaluated and exploited' was quite dominant, more recent definitions have emerged. Elia et al. (2020, p. 3) defined entrepreneurship as a 'process of identifying potential business opportunities and exploiting them through the recombination of existing resources or the creation of new ones to develop and commercialize new products and services'. Ratten (2023, p. 80) also defined the concept as

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'the identification of business-related opportunities through a process of using existing, new or a recombination of resources in an innovative and creative way'. Diaz Tautiva et al. (2023) have outlined the various perspectives on the apparent divergences in entrepreneurship activity across countries that have driven researchers and policy makers to investigate the reasons behind these variations (Hechavarría et al., 2023; Ruiz et al., 2023; Thornton et al., 2011). According to Diaz Tautiva et al. (2023), some scholars (e.g. Audretsch et al., 2021; Thornton et al., 2011) have argued that comprehending the sources of this empirical puzzle requires a joint examination of the contextual environment in which the new venture operates, and the type of value that entrepreneurs aim to create (Hechavarría, 2016), which can be either for profit-economic purpose, non-profit societal and environmental impact purpose, or a hybrid of these purposes (Diaz Tautiva et al., 2023). Thus, the conception that entrepreneurship is not only an engine of economic growth, but also serve as an instrument of social transformation is well established (Klein & Hadjimichael, 2003; Kreft & Sobel, 2005; Sackey et al., 2013). This conception, according to Sackey et al. (2013), served as the stimulant for entrepreneurship development to be given top priority in the policy-making agenda of several developing countries, including Ghana. Thus, in Ghana, as it was noted by Sackey et al. (2013), several policies were initiated differently by various governments in the past fifty decades to enhance entrepreneurial development. Yet, it was evident that none of such policies resulted in the creation of the requisite support to entrepreneurs (Sackey et al., 2013). The rationale behind such support failure is explored in this paper relative to the entrepreneur in the creative industry.

This paper is structured as follows. The conception of creativity and creative entrepreneurship development is firstly discussed. This followed by a critic of institutionalization of Creativeness as Entrepreneurial Activity in Ghana towards the identification of prevailing constraints that provided the basis for the research gap. The requisite literature is then reviewed to provide the basis for the development of the research framework. The research methodology is then outlined and then followed by the qualitative data analysis and discussion of the findings. The paper is then rounded off with the conclusion.

### ***Creativity and creative entrepreneurship development***

According to Bujor and Avasilcai (2016, p. 22), 'the brief definitions of creativity are subjectively interpreted, both by those who conceive them and by those who read them. Most of us know that something is created when we see it, hear it or experience that something, even if we cannot say to those around us why'. In this vein, the American Psychological Association (APA) define creativity as the ability to produce or develop original work, theories, techniques, or thoughts. By this definition, the APA situate a creative individual as typically displaying originality, imagination, and expressiveness through his/her engagement in creative thinking, which is the mental processes that leads to a new invention or solution to a problem. In Ghana, the creative arts has been a key part of the sociocultural dynamics of the people for centuries. In this respect, it was considered as an embodiment of culture that must be freely shared and/or consumed by internal members of societies and also be freely shared with others external to the society. This observation conforms to the broad interpretation of creativity, which underlined Florida's (2002) descriptions of the emerging 'creative class' in society, as a cohort of professional, scientific, and artistic workers whose presence generates economic, social, and cultural dynamism, especially in urban areas (Florida, 2002). More specifically, Florida (2002) situated the creative class to include scientists, engineers, architects, designers, educationists, artists, musicians, and entertainers whose economic function is to create innovative ideas, innovative technology and/or new creative content. In Florida's (2002) approach, the creative class also included a broader group of creative professionals in business, finance, and law, such as artists, engineers, musicians, computer scientists, writers, and entrepreneurs, who shared a common creative ethos that values creativity, individuality, differences, and merits (Florida, 2002). By implication, such creative professionals exhibit individuality, meritocracy, diversity, and openness through creativity which results in the addition of economic value (Florida, 2002). In this respect, Florida (2002) argued that creativity is not intelligence, but rather an activity that involves the ability to synthesize by sifting through data, perceptions and materials to produce something new and useful. Though Florida's (2002) notion of creativity contributed to advancing the public discourse on the creative economy, its range of occupational categories, including the definition of creative classes, were too broad (Creative Economy Report, 2010). In this vein, the notion of 'creative entrepreneurs', derived from the concept of

'cultural entrepreneurship', which deals with strategy formation, organizational design, and leadership in a cultural context, has gained ground as a characterization of successful and talented, entrepreneurial persons who have the ability to transform ideas into creative products and/or services for society (Creative Economy Report, 2010). Thus, entrepreneurship is a new way of thinking. It imbibes a new attitude that entails the scan for opportunities within the environment of a cultural organization, by regarding as the starting point, the organization's cultural mission (Creative Economy Report, 2010). This shift towards the conception of 'creative entrepreneurship' contributed to the acceptance of the 'rise of creativity' as a prime factor of economic growth (Creative Economy Report, 2010). It also resulted in the notion of the 'creative age' (Florida, 2012) which extended the conventional theory that only technology and tolerance contribute to creativity, with the argument that creative talent also drives growth, and is needed to attract human capital (Florida, 2012). In this stead, the creative arts, as sociocultural embodiments, are manifested in variety of forms, that is, physical, visual and verbal, and includes dancing, theatre performance, music, as well as the design and creation of crafts, artifacts and garments.

### ***Institutionalization of creativeness as entrepreneurial activity in Ghana***

As a business enterprise, the creative arts in Ghana entail a vast variety of performance activities that includes music, literature, and theatre, as well as design and manufacturing activities, such as painting, sculpture, smock and kente weaving, xylophone and calabash making, wood-carving and bead making. In this regard, successive governments have envisioned the country's wealth generation through its creative art, and took necessary steps to institutionalize the industry. These resulted in the creation of government entities, such as a government Ministry responsible for the Creative Arts, as well as complementary institutions, such as the Ghana Museums and Monument Board, the National Commission on Culture, and the National Theatre of Ghana to help create conducive environment for sustainable growth and development of the creative sector. The institutions are also to work to preserve, promote and popularize cultural activities in the country through enhanced relations among external organizations and institutions. Additionally, in a bid to consolidate the industrial attribution of the creative arts and its viability as a business in Ghana, several educational platforms were set up both at the secondary and tertiary levels in the educational establishment to enable new generation of students get formal knowledge in the creative arts, but not the requisite business principles and practices needed from them to become successful entrepreneurs. Despite this, the development of a vibrant creative arts industry has been recognized by governments in Ghana as key to enhancing private sector competitiveness and productivity, and affirmed this with the creation of regulatory bodies. These included the creation of the Copyright Act to serve as the legal framework protecting the use of an individual's work once the idea has been physically expressed, and also the establishment of the Copyright office and the Registrar General's to protect intellectual property of creative artists. So, there were manifestation of various government-developed institutional innovations in the creative arts domain to augment entrepreneurship development endeavours, though none of such innovations resulted in the creation of the requisite institutional structures and policies to support entrepreneurship development (Sackey et al., 2013). Even though, the creative and cultural institutions were viewed as potential sources for employment generation, wealth creation and skill development, in Ghana's poverty reduction strategies, the absence of a business model that incorporates entrepreneurs voice to guide entrepreneurship still is a constraints and thus represent a research gap. The prevalence of such research gap aligns with the argument by Block et al. (2017) that though innovative entrepreneurship is considered an important pillar for economic development and has sparked a lively discussion in academia and practice alike, such debate is oftentimes deemed as not sufficiently grounded on solid empirical evidence. In the Ghanaian context, the lack of such empirical evidence has resulted in the continuance of potential creative entrepreneurs lacking the requisite skills and practices for successful creative enterprise creation, as a small business. Thus, considering the trajectory of the evolving developments and current dynamics of the creative economy in Ghana, we viewed it imperative to find answers to the following questions; (i) how do creative entrepreneurs perceive the effectiveness of support structures to enhance enterprise creation in the industry?, (ii) how do creative entrepreneurs perceive the dynamics of creative production in the creative industry?, and (iii) how do creative entrepreneurs view institutional arrangements for creative business and management skills enhancement to aid business practices.

In this paper, therefore, we explored the prevailing dynamics of creative entrepreneurship in Ghana to find the constraints associated with its orientation as a business industry from the lenses of the creative entrepreneurs. More specifically we examined the barriers to and facilitators of entrepreneurship in this sector by seeking answers to the questions above to develop a good understanding of creative entrepreneurs perspectives which could contribute to the modelling of good business policies and practices for the creative industry.

## Literature review

Over the years, there is an appreciation in the use of the term 'institution' in the social sciences, which observation was highlighted by Hodgson (2006) to have reflected in the use of the institution concept in several other discipline. But, as Hodgson (2006) noted, 'endless disputes over the definitions of key terms, such as institution and organization have led some writers to give up matters of definition and to propose getting down somehow to practical matters instead' (p. 1). Hodgson (2006) viewed institutions as the kinds of structures that matter most in the social realm due to their significance in shaping social life. Thus, 'the increasing acknowledgement of the role of institutions in social life involves the recognition that much of human interaction and activity is structured in terms of overt or implicit rules' (Hodgson, 2006, p. 2).

Some authors have used the rational approach to situate institutions as social relationships and regulatory norms that leads to organisational structures (Parsons, 1990), and as nested systems and frameworks for action (Holm, 1995), which emphasize the creation of shared knowledge and belief systems. New institutionalists (e.g. DiMaggio, 1988; Jepperson, 1991) saw institutions as 'socially constructed, routine-reproduced, program or rule systems. Though, one central element of new institutionalism is a trend toward conformity, it challenges the traditional perspective that institutions adapt their structures and practices to a changing environment (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Yet, despite their adherence to this perspective, Abrutyn and Turner (2011) concluded that no conflict exists between the old and new institutionalism, but rather a shift towards viewing organisations as institutions. There are also newer work that objected to the conception of institutions as organisations, and seeks to build on old and new institutional theories (Jepperson, 1991; Kraatz & Zajac, 1996; such as, DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) to develop more complete explanations of institutional dynamics. In furtherance of this, Abrutyn (2016) argues that institutions organise and connect organisations and that institutions or institutional spheres are the 'macro-level structural and cultural milieus in which lower-order phenomena (e.g. fields, organisations, encounters) are organised and connected' (p. 209). It is argued by Rageth et al. (2021) that despite the importance of social institutions, scholars find it difficult to identify and assess their robustness empirically. Thus, building on institutionalism theories, Rageth et al. (2021) developed a theoretical framework of institutional robustness, where robustness describes ideal, long-lasting, or otherwise strong institutions (Rageth et al., 2021). This show that extant literature abounds with studies from diverse disciplines that discuss the role of external environment in supporting the emergence of entrepreneurship (Sackey et al., 2013). It is also well documented in the literature the argument by authors (see Bruton & Ahlstrom, 2003; Scott, 2013) that institutions in entrepreneurs' environment jointly constrained and enable their functionalities. Several authors (such as, Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986; Gnyawali & Fogel, 1994; Aldrich, 2005; Hwang & Powel, 2005; Sackey et al., 2013) have also argued that the institutional environment constrains and limits entrepreneurial opportunities, and by implication hampers the rate and extent at which new firms are created. In this stead, Foster (1986) found institutional factors impacting entrepreneurial development to include entrepreneurs' having access to capital in the external environment, and being provided with market incentives. Additionally, insufficient institutional development is posited to create difficulties to new venture growth (Baumol et al., 2007), while an institutional environment that is more developed, but highly regulated and restrictive can obstruct the creation of a firm (Soto, 2003). According to Bruton et al. (2010), direct actions of government in constructing and keeping an environment and social norms that are supportive of entrepreneurship development is an environmental factor that affect entrepreneurial efforts. According to Baumol et al. (2007), the level of entrepreneurial development in a society is directly related to the society's regulations and policies that govern the allocation of rewards. Bruton et al. (2010) noted that governments can ensure the efficient functioning of markets by removing conditions that create entry barriers, market imperfection and unnecessarily stifling regulations.



## ***Creative entrepreneurship***

Creative entrepreneurship is the practice of setting up a business in one of the creative industries (Howkins, 2002). In Europe, they are referred to as cultural industries (Hesmondhalgh, 2002). In America, they are branded as the creative economy (Howkins, 2002) while Latin America and Caribbean countries brand them as Orange Economy (Buitrago Restrepo & Duque Marquez, 2013). Several factors constraint creative entrepreneurs worldwide, especially those found in Africa, competing with other global giants. In other words, everything that serves as a limitation to a business from making profit is considered a constraint by every entrepreneur. Lack of regulatory regimes for creative works is a huge constraint (Ross et al., 2005), consequentially creative products may be exposed to high risk of copying and affected creatives deprived of expected fruits of their labour and would not have any incentive to produce such creative products in future. Beyond the constraints come opportunities for creative entrepreneurial growth and development. Most creative entrepreneurs have combined creative flair with entrepreneurial ability to build multimillion-dollar business empires. According to Howkins (2002), creative entrepreneurs instinctively think for themselves, instinctively network, and instinctively keep several balls in the air at once. By implication, they manifest not only innovative ideas about culture, but also current ideas and innovation about the world of work with the freedom to manage their own time and abilities, while compensating the unpredictable nature of their working environment, and the irregularity of their income (Howkins, 2002). Howkins (2002) further noted that entrepreneurs in the creative economy use creativity to unlock the wealth that lies within them. Essentially, this means creative entrepreneurs are investors in their own talents or the talent of others (Howkins, 2002).

## ***Institutionalization of creativeness***

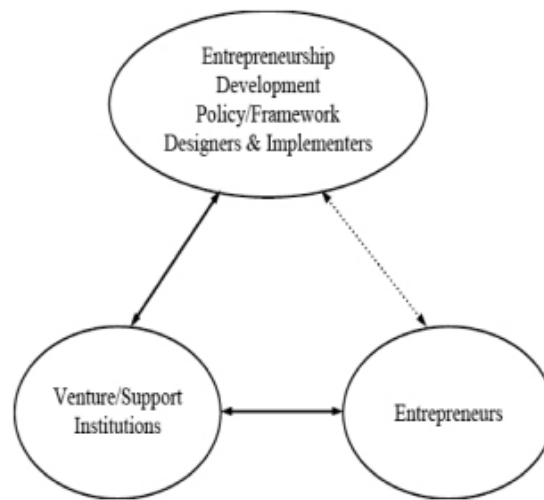
In recent years, a growing number of economic studies worldwide have showed the impressive contribution of creative enterprises to economic growth, jobs, and wealth creation. According to Cunningham et al. (2008), harnessing such creativeness can potentially lead to the cultivation of local talent and the creation of new wealth by generating creative capital through the development of new export markets. Also, as a cultural identity forger through the development process (Kon, 2016), the institutionalization of creativeness is increasingly becoming one of the relevant components of the modern post-industrial economies based on knowledge. Due to the belief of its potential to generate income and employment, the institutionalization of creativeness provides the basis for the creation of creative enterprises to enhance the growth of the creative economy, especially, in developing countries where rich cultural traditions and pools of creative talents abound. Institutions, in this context, are broadly defined as regulatory structures, governmental agencies, laws courts and professions (Scott, 1987), and also as clusters of moral beliefs that configure power (Veciana & Urbano, 2008). Institutions can be viewed as humanly devised constraints which provide the structure for political, economic and social interaction (North (1991), and consist of informal constraints manifested as values, norms, sanctions, taboos, customs, traditions, and codes of conduct and formal rules constrains manifested as constitutions, law economic rules, property rights and contract (North, 1991). Thus, as a distinction, institutions set the rules and define the way the game is played while organisations provide structures for human interaction that are political, economic and social-oriented (North (1991). In this research, the organizational/sociological view of institutions is employed with an acknowledgement of the existence of economic political stream and other assumptions inherent in the different institutional traditions (Bruton et al., 2010). Institutional theorization has been used to guide to examine issues in different fields that span from institutional economics and political science to organization studies (Bruton et al., 2010; DiMaggio & Powell, 1991).

Institutional theory has been used to understand how various groups and organizations better secure their positions and legitimacy by conforming to the rules and norms of the institutional environment (Meyer & Rowan, 1991; Scott, 2013), as well as to identify how different organizations and groups conform to the rules and norms of the institutional environment in which they operate in order to secure their positions and legitimacy (Bruton et al., 2010; Kondra & Hinings, 1998; Meyer & Rowan, 1991; Scott, 2013). Institutional theory provide a platform for identifying regulatory, social, and cultural influences that promote organizational survival and legitimacy (Bruton et al., 2010; Roy, 1997; Ruef, 2010; Ruef &

Scott, 1998), rather than focusing solely on efficiency-seeking behaviour (Roy, 1997). Thus, institutions could be described as a model of organizational and individual behaviour with institutional rules providing guidelines for new entrepreneurial organizations which guide behaviour by defining what is appropriate or expected in various social and commercial situations (Bruton et al., 2010). Therefore, an institution represents a cognitive model of individual behaviour that is based on subjectively constructed rules and meanings that limit appropriate beliefs and actions (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Scott, 2013). In this regard, an institution may operate at the individual level in terms of culture and language (Carroll, 1965; Scott, 2013), as well as other behaviours that individuals take for granted, without much thinking (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Meyer & Rowan, 1991). This cognitive perspective of the institution has gained importance in entrepreneurship research in terms of how societies accept entrepreneurs, inculcate values, and even create a cultural environment whereby entrepreneurship is accepted and encouraged (Bosma et al., 2008; Harrison, 2008; Li, 2008; Sackey et al., 2013; Thornton et al., 2011).

Scott (2013) opined that the institutional perspective of entrepreneurial research directs attention to the variant rules, norms, and beliefs that influence organizations across countries and cultures. Thus, using DiMaggio and Powell (1991) and Scott's (2013) perspectives of institutions manifesting the cognitive model of individual behaviour entailing subjectively constructed rules and meanings that limit appropriate beliefs and actions, as a point of departure, we deemed it important to understand entrepreneurship research and practice fully by finding out which entrepreneurial activities, beliefs, and attitudes are taken for granted by entrepreneurs and which ones are not (Sackey et al., 2013), and the enabling or constraining impact it has on the institutionalization of the entrepreneurship environment (Bruton & Ahlstrom, 2003). Though institutions are important for the growth of the firm, factors, such as culture, legal environment and economic incentives (Baumol et al., 2007), and cognitive issues, such as individual expertise, perceptions expectations and behavioural manifestations (Sackey et al., 2013) can all affect the firm and, by implication, entrepreneurial success. Based on their analysis of the initiatives, structures and frameworks designed by the various governments of Ghana to promote entrepreneurship development, Sackey et al. (2013) found that all the initiatives followed similar institutional pattern. Going by North's (1990) argument that institutions guide behaviour by the rules of the game, monitoring, and enforcement, Sackey et al. (2013) posited that the inability of a structure/institution model on this pattern to produce the desired effect/impact to promote entrepreneurship is indicative of model ineffectiveness, caused by is a missing link between the entrepreneur and the policy structure. According to Sackey et al. (2013), there is disconnection between the developers of entrepreneurial institutions and structures, and the entrepreneurs who are the direct end-users. Thus, there is no clearly defined framework which shows how entrepreneurs are readily supported towards private enterprising enhancement in Ghana (Sackey et al. (2013). In this regard, and based on the notion that partnership is a strategic association or affiliation between two or more persons, partnerships that thrive are often dependent on trust, equality, mutual understanding and obligations (Sackey et al., 2013). In this respect as posited by Sackey et al. (2013), both policy and structural remedies towards enhancing entrepreneurship development in Ghana could be derived by bridging the gap that exist between entrepreneurship development policies/frameworks designers/implementers and the entrepreneurs (humans), as highlighted in Figure 1 below.

Arguing from the perspectives of Scott (1995), Sackey et al. (2013) posited that regulative structures of institutions are expected to be made up of laws, regulations, rules, and government policies that could help promote certain types of entrepreneurial behaviour. In this respect, the framework in Figure 1 above could be used to help the formulation of institutional rules for entrepreneurship development that reflects the reality and the frames through which entrepreneurs make meaning of the entrepreneurship development moderating system (Sackey et al., 2013). This, according to Sackey et al. (2013), could result in the creation of functional structures that accommodates the expectation of all key players, especially the individual entrepreneurs towards small business growth and national development, which will help the sanctioning of the regulative characteristics of future-oriented entrepreneurship development policies and frameworks (Sackey et al., 2013). In this vein, bridging of the gap between creative entrepreneurs and the entrepreneurship development processes (highlighted by the broken arrows in Figure 1) could be attained through empirical research that enables the acquisition of insightful personal views and knowledge from creative entrepreneurs relative to their individual expertise, perceptions,



**Figure 1.** Human-oriented framework for effective entrepreneurship development (Sackey et al., 2013).

expectations and behavioural manifestations. Thus, the interactive loop (Figure 1 above) is used to guide this research on consensual engagement among stakeholders in the creative entrepreneurship design and development processes (Sackey et al., 2013) towards understanding the cognitive characteristics of creative institutions and how individual creative entrepreneurs share their inherent structures and social knowledge.

## Methodology

Based on the notion of consensual engagement that cognitive element of institutions is reflected by the cognitive structures and social knowledge that are shared by individuals in the same institutional environment (Sackey et al., 2013; Scott, 1995), the research adopted a qualitative approach. In the perspectives of Yin (2017), qualitative designs provide rich description of the social scene, deep explanation of the research context, deeper insights, deeper interpretation of the unique, typical experiences and circumstances of the subjects while still retaining a holistic and real-world perspectives. The real-life nature of the current research, and its strive for deep artistic and creative understandings, justifies adoption of the qualitative approach.

## Data collection

Informed by Flyvbjerg's (2006) information-oriented selection strategy for maximizing the utilization of adequate artistic and creative information, and guided by the snowball approach (Patton, 2005; Sanda, 2010), individuals considered to have wealth of creative and artistic information were identified as interviewees. Thus, qualitative data were collected from interviews conducted with forty (40) creative entrepreneurs in Ghana (see Table 1 below).

The interviewees were pre-informed about the research purpose, and their informed consent to take part or not, was sought. The interviewees are of diverse gender and have been creative entrepreneurs for periods that ranged from one (1) to fifty (50) years. The data collection period was from May 9 to November 29, 2020. The interviews were tape recorded (with prior consent from respondents). The average duration of the interviews is one hour.

## Data analysis

Drawing on concepts from entrepreneurship research, the interview data were firstly transcribed, and the transcripts segregated thematically to correspond with the three research questions underlined in the introduction section. In this regard, the data are analysed from the perspectives of the following themes:



**Table 1.** Distribution of interviewees and their creative activities.

Creative Activity	No of Interviewees
Film/Music/Performing	5
Pottery/Sculpture/Wood Carving	7
Leather work	2
Fashion Designers (textile sewing & weaving)	21
Art/Painting	5

(i) creative entrepreneurs perspectives of the effectiveness of support structures to enhance enterprise creation in the industry, (ii), creative entrepreneurs perspectives of creative production dynamics in the creative art industry, and (iii) creative entrepreneurs perspectives of institutional arrangements for creative business and management skills enhancement to aid business practices. The qualitative data for each theme was then analysed descriptively using Miles and Huberman (1994) flow model components consisting of data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/sensemaking. Hypothetical names were also designated to quoted interviewees scripts to ensure anonymity (Sieber, 1993). Thus, an interpretive description qualitative approach (Brazier et al., 2008; Sanda, 2010; Thorne et al., 1997) was used to analyse the scripts generated from the interviews. Using this approach, the lived-experiences of the interviewees were described and interpreted, but without reconfiguring it into a more highly interpretive form (Sanda, 2010), such as the theoretical framework that is created in a grounded theory approach. Rather, the findings, as argued by Brazier et al. (2008), were made to stay closer to the interviewees' words and described their experiences, so as to capture the meanings such words attribute to the interviewees' experiences as creative entrepreneurs.

The recorded interviews were transcribed and scripted (Kvale, 1996). The validity of the scripts generated for all the interviewees was established after crossing-checking with each interviewee. Interpretive description analysis was conducted to understand the functionality of enterprise creation and management by the creative entrepreneurs. This was because in the dialogue (i.e. interview conversation), the subjects (interviewees) did not only answer the questions prepared by the researcher (interviewer), but they (interviewees) were also given the space to formulate their own conceptions of their lived world (Kvale, 1996; Sanda, 2010). The expectation here was that the sensitivity of the interview approach and its closeness to the interviewees' 'lived world' would lead to the evolution of knowledge that could be used to understand the relative outcome of the enterprise creation and management.

## Results

The demographic distribution of the interviewees showed that out of the forty (40) creative entrepreneurs, 34 were males and 6 females. Regarding experiences as creative entrepreneurs, 35 of the interviewees had been practicing for more than 9 years while the remaining 5 had experiences of up to 5 years. Thirty-six interviews had formal education that ranged from basic level to tertiary level. Only four interviewees had no formal education.

In the sections that follow, the scripts generated from the thematized interview conversations about the interviewees' lived-world, which were informed by the research questions, are analysed using sense-making to understand creative entrepreneurs' interpretive meaning of the functionality of creative enterprise creation, management and sustainability.

### *Analysis of creative entrepreneurs perspectives of the effectiveness of support structures to enhance enterprise creation*

In this analysis, sense was made of how creative entrepreneurs perceive the effectiveness of support structures to enhance enterprise creation in the industry. Analysis of the interviewees expositions manifested a widespread perceptions among most creative entrepreneurs of being left alone with no help or nursing from the government. The notion of not receiving government support was strongly voiced by the interviewees, most of whom conceived their creative works as questioning basic societal problems and seek solutions for the benefit of mankind. For them, creativeness, in the form of film, music,

weaving, pottery and sculpture are used to predict the future of society. Some view their artistic and creative ideas as providing them with abilities to become visionary entrepreneurs. Others viewed themselves as visionary entrepreneurs because they create jobs, and understand the market dynamics of the artwork. As such, they see themselves as entrepreneurs just because they are creative entities who propose value, build brands for their own art works, and above all, are sincere in their artistic practice, which perspectives are highlighted in the interviewees' voices (IV) below.

IV<sub>45</sub>: As creative entrepreneurs, we have visions in which we have a wonderful way of seeing more of the creative world and the world as a whole. ... our vision expands our connections to the world, and add artistic and creative dimensions to how everything is connected towards solving societal problems (A 45-year-old male performing art instructor).

IV<sub>40</sub>: Within the creative entrepreneurship, 'performing arts and the music industry have a long tradition and strong export history, but the industry is struggling due to lack of adequate intellectual property protection structures. In the next five to ten years if nothing happens, am not sure any of us would sustain because it is a business. So, you cannot keep putting money inside and you are not getting any returns (A 40-year-old male music producer).

IV<sub>40</sub>: Kente is our heritage so in the future maybe we will continue to weave Kente and maybe after our death. But one of the problems is that as my brother already said something about some of the people who design prints. So, when you see some prints, you can say this is Kente but meanwhile is not Kente. So, we need the help of the government to ban those people who are stealing our designs to print (A 40-year-old male Kente weaver).

IV<sub>35</sub>: The major problem we are facing right now is that, I can speak nationwide that there is no even one single government owned cinema house to serve as a place where filmmakers in the country could display their movies and make some income out of it. Let us not even talk about Tamale. Last time we heard empty promises the government said they were going to convert the national cultural Centre into a cinema so it could support our business (A 35-year-old film producer).

Even though there was the mention of limited support received from government entities such as the Centre for National culture, and the National Board for Small Scale Enterprises, the level of adequacy to enhance sustainability of the creative enterprises was deemed as very minimal. The Centre for National Culture was identified as a government-based institution through which creative entrepreneurs can draw all assistance from the government. Though the National Board for Small Scale Enterprises, as a government agency, was established to support small scale industries, most of the interviewees perceive the agency as prioritizing its support in favour of small enterprises involved in textiles production, and not the entirety of the creative industry. There was the perception that even for the creative entrepreneurs who are engaged in textile production, and sought support from the NBSSI, they find it difficult to meet a set minimum qualification standards on an enterprise's capital base, and as such could not benefit from such support. Even for those creative enterprise who are deemed to meet the set minimum qualification standards on an enterprise's capital base, additional qualification indices are requested which goes further to constraint the creative enterprise's ability to benefit from the NBSSI's support, which perspectives are highlighted in the interviewees' voices below.

IV<sub>39</sub>: If you meet the capital base required by the NBSSI, they will look at your production rate, direction of production, and everything, just to ascertain whether they should financially, support your business (A 39-year-old batik tie and die designer).

IV<sub>37</sub>: I must tell you that designing and printing, as a creative business, will continue to be a big-time business for everybody if it is well supported by the government. Other businesses need our services to promote their businesses through branding and billboards design. If we are properly supported to stand on our feet, these are business opportunities that our creative businesses should be capable of exploiting and be profitable (A 35-year-old female graphic designer).

IV<sub>37</sub>: For me, the future of creative businesses should be structured to look positive, because almost everything is advancing. Technology is expanding, so the world of creativeness is also given that lifeline. If you want to print a banner those days, you have to do manual drawing of the letters and then cut them, and it can take you a whole day to produce one banner. Today, you can produce close to 100 of such banners in one day by using digital technology, and will even be able to do 3D printing, if your creative business is provided with adequate financial support. (A 40-year-old male graphic designer).

Based on the insight provided by the interviewees voices above, it could be inferred that the creative entrepreneurs broadly associated the constraint they encounter in their abilities to enhance the sustainability of their creative enterprises to the lack of favourable policies for the creative industries, lack of protection in the creative works, as well as lack of rules and regulations to monitor the quality of art works, and the enforcement of patent right/copyright. This inference indicates that the future-aspirations of the creative entrepreneurs, in terms of their cognitive schemes of envisioning better and more expansive creative businesses creation and sustainability on the one hand, and the potentiality of future creative projects for entrepreneurship growth is stumped by the lack of governmental support.

### ***Analysis of creative entrepreneurs perspectives of creative production in the creative industry***

In this analysis, sense was made of how creative entrepreneurs perceive the dynamics of creative production in the creative industry. Analysis of the interviewees expositions revealed that most creative entrepreneurs conceive the dynamics of creative production as key inhibitor to the sustainability of enterprise performances in the creative industry. There was the notion that the industry has over the years been grappling with unstable procurement of materials, due to the absence of a policy to regulate both the importation and marketing of raw material. This was deemed by the interviewees to have created a market situation whereby importers of the requisite materials used in the creative industry have their own means of either inflating the prices of such materials or causing intentional shortages of such materials as mechanism for price increases. The consequences of these are highlighted in the interviewees' voices below.

IV<sub>39</sub>: The market situation is free-for-all, and those who bring and sell the materials we require always determine the behaviour of the market. What happens is that no matter how much fund you intend to inject into your business, you will end up not getting very good returns because the procurement element is not too stable (*A 39-year-old male batik tie and die designer*).

IV<sub>35</sub>: It is difficult to get the right equipment to buy in the market. If you want a good camera to buy, you probably have to start thinking of going to city centre, where prices are so high. So is not just about our inability to acquire it, but the availability of equipment is the main challenge (*A 35-year-old film producer*).

IV<sub>37</sub>: In fact, this particular machine you are seeing, is a work-brand roller. If you are talking about a digital light format printing, this is the machine that every designer will acquire, and I can tell you that this machine goes for close to \$20,000. So, the issue of financing is a challenge (*A 37-year-old male graphic designer*).

There was also the notion that because most creative entrepreneurs are not too conversant with quality and what to use at a particular time, they end up patronizing cheap materials which they use in the value chain to come out with low quality products that are below standards, and not competitive in the creative market. There was also the shared notion that in some situation, some creative enterprises have to rely on imported raw materials sold at have high prices in manufacturing their local artifacts, and as such incur increases in their production cost. The rationale behind such enterprises reliance on costly materials for their production activities was because of feedback they mostly receive from customers who always tell them that they want high quality products. Yet still, such customers do not show their willingness to pay the corresponding prices for such products. There was also the issue of high cost of utilities caused by the constant interruption of power supply and the usage of fuel-powered generators, which increases the cost of production. The consequences of these are highlighted in the interviewees' voices below.

IV<sub>39</sub>: Because most creative entrepreneurs use cheap materials in producing their creative products, they end up selling them very cheaply, and as such create marketing problems for those whose products entail the requisite quality, but comparatively, could not sell their products at cheap prices due to their usage of quality materials that are costly (*A 39-year-old female batik tie and die designer*).

IV<sub>46</sub>: Most of the raw materials we use in producing our local artifacts are imported, and very expensive, which situation increases our cost of production. Even with this, customers do not want to pay high, but appropriate prices for such products (*A 46-year-old Kentey weaver*).

IV<sub>41</sub>: Now, we are trying to get access to the government, and also to do business with the foreign tourists. So, there will be more business opportunities in the future (*A 41-year-old male kente weaver*).

Based on the insight provided by the interviewees voices above, it could be inferred that the creative entrepreneurs broadly associated the constraint they encounter in their creative productions, both downstream and upstream, to the lack of appreciation of the value of creative products offered by creative entrepreneurs. The consequence of such constraint was deemed to contribute in their inability to enhance the sustainability of their creative enterprises since creative entrepreneurs are influenced to leave the creative industry and seek different professions in other industries.

### ***Analysis of creative entrepreneurs perspectives of institutional arrangements for creative business and management skills enhancement to aid business practices***

In this analysis, sense was made of how creative entrepreneurs view institutional arrangements for creative business and management skills enhancement to aid business practices. Analysis of the interviewees' expositions revealed that most creative entrepreneurs viewed the issue of institutional arrangements for creative business and management skills enhancement to aid business practices as playing a key role on the creative enterprise creation, profitability and sustainability. There was the notion that the industry has over the years been grappling with the challenges of setting up programmes for the formal provision and acquisition of the requisite business and management skills by creative entrepreneurs to enable them not only to establish enterprises with the requisite structures to function as profitable business, but also their abilities to manage such enterprise efficiently and effectively towards sustainability. This was considered by the interviewees to have created an operational scenario whereby creative entrepreneurs have the requisite technical competence, relative to their creativeness, to succeed, but lack the business and management knowledge to excite their professionalism as small firm owners and properly situate their capacity to be really successful. There was also the shared notion among the interviewees that in tertiary institutions where creative art programmes are offered, you will find just a sizeable number of students enrolled. This is due to the entrenched notion such programmes, as creative art professions, are not structured to be entrepreneur-oriented, and as such will make it difficult for students to create a business out of their technical qualifications alone after graduation. The consequences of these are highlighted in the interviewees' voices below.

IV<sub>41</sub>: Actually, we have to develop, not only our weaving skills, but also our business and management skills to high standards, so that we can operate as enterprises. (A 41-year-old male kente weaver).

IV<sub>37</sub>: To become a graphic designer, it is either you go through the formal education training or through apprenticeship. I went through the formal education. So, from Junior High School, I went to secondary school and did visual art, then from there to the university to do photo visuals and graphic designs. Though these have provided me with the requisite technical, I still need the additive business and management skills to enable me successfully manage my business (A 37-year-old male graphic designer).

The observations above are indicative of the notion that entrepreneurs in the creative industry desire business and management competences, which skills training and development will help enhance their entrepreneur prowess and enterprise performances, as highlighted in the interviewees' voices below.

IV<sub>44</sub>: I began life with tailoring. I also learnt how to make batik tie and dye along the way. I got business and management skills which enabled me to operate my business successfully as an enterprise. This resulted in me being used as a resource person by the Rural Enterprise Foundation to train other creative entrepreneurs on such skills. This has made me gain a lot of happiness as an enterprise owner (A 44-year-old, female batik, tie and dye maker).

IV<sub>50</sub>: The smocks we are weaving, enable us to take care of our families. I build my house from smocks weaving, and it has also helped me partake in skills workshops which has helped me with knowledge of how to manage my smocks business, get more customers, and save money. (A 50-year-old male smocks weaver).

IV<sub>44</sub>: Creative entrepreneurs should be given business and management knowledge that will enable them to run their businesses properly. With this, we can make a living as creative enterprise owners, because we will be able to produce efficiently and effectively sell to customers at very accommodating prices in a sustainable way (A 44-year-old, female batik, tie and dye maker).

Based on the insight provided by the interviewees' voices above, it could be inferred that the creative entrepreneurs broadly associated the difficulties in their abilities to create and manage creative

enterprises profitably and sustainably to the constraints on institutional arrangements for the acquisition of creative business and management skills to enhance creative enterprise creation, efficient and effective operation, profitability and sustainability.

## Discussion

This research explored the dynamics of Ghanaian creative industry to understand creative entrepreneurs' lived experiences in turning their creativities into business. Our findings provided insights to advance the extant literature. This is because, grounded empirical evidence (Block et al., 2017) situates that creative entrepreneurship is an important pillar for economic development in Ghana and which could be used to enhance the provision of the requisite skills of potential creative entrepreneurs and the design of practices for successful creative enterprise creation and operation as a small business. Regarding how creative entrepreneurs perceive the effectiveness of support structures to enhance enterprise creation in the industry, the research reveals different findings such as government and investor support constraints, high cost of creative production, constraints on practical teaching and learning of creative skills, lack of favourable policy regimes to regulate both artistic creative activities and unappreciation of Ghanaian culture by Ghanaians themselves. The government and investor support related constraints dominated responses to our artistic and creative entrepreneurial constraint questions in the course of the fieldwork. In this regard, our research findings show a lack of government and investors support (i.e. venture capital, working capital, revolving funds, machines and equipment and impact investors) to enhance artistic and creative entrepreneurship activities. In specific terms, the artistic and creative constraints from the results, centred on a lack of public support funding schemes, inefficient private sector funding regimes, no self-help initiatives, no funding from third sector and a low-key public-private partnerships. This finding is indicative of a model ineffectiveness, as espoused by Sackey et al. (2013). It is obvious that such ineffectiveness is caused by a missing link between the creative entrepreneurs and the policy structure to enable the production of the desired effect/impact to promote entrepreneurship. The findings also affirms Sackey et al's. (2013) postulation that no functional connection exist between the developers of entrepreneurial institutions and structures, and the creative entrepreneurs who are the direct end-users. This shows that there is no clearly defined framework to how situate how creative entrepreneurs are readily supported towards private enterprising enhancement in Ghana. Our findings agrees with that of Harvie (2004) and Ritchie and Brindley (2000), who identified challenges of creative entrepreneurs as a lack of access to finance and start-up capitals. This issue of government and investor support constraints suggest creative entrepreneur's inability to buy assets and resources needed for expansion, growth and development. Such constraint could be related to the lack of regulatory regimes for creative works (Ross et al., 2005), which consequently expose creative products to high risk of copying, thus depriving creative entrepreneurs the expected fruits of their labour. In this vein, and arguing from the perspective of Howkins (2002), it could be established from the findings that the capabilities of the creative entrepreneurs to instinctively think for themselves, instinctively network, and instinctively keep several balls in the air at once is also constrained. By implication, their manifestations of innovative ideas about culture, current ideas and innovation about their world of work, with the freedom to manage their own time and abilities, while compensating the unpredictable nature of their working environment, and the irregularity of their income (Howkins, 2002) is also constrained. This may also imply a jeopardy in terms of creatives' inability to meet their day-to-day operational cost, such as rent, rates, salaries and income tax obligations. The implications being that future existence and viability of Ghanaian creative scenes may be threatened, leading to degradation of creativity and innovation, which may further imply missed opportunities, loss of income and market vulnerability among the creatives.

In relation to how creative entrepreneurs perceive the dynamics of creative production in the creative art industry, it was established that the high cost of utilities and interrupted power supply, the use of obsolete machines and technologies as well as high cost of art delivery' defined the expensive nature of creative production activities in Ghana. These constraints on high artistic production cost corroborate the findings of Muhammad et al. (2009), who intimated cost hikes in art production as factors negatively impacting on creative entrepreneurs in Africa, competing with other global creative giants. The use of obsolete technologies suggests artistic production inefficiencies and ineffectiveness as compared to

newer technologies. Similarly, high cost of artistic and creative production may imply the creatives inability to create, produce, acquire, transport and distribute their creative wares at competitive rates. In contrast, the creative entrepreneurs in the course of the research, lamented how creative consumers demand quality art products, yet unwilling to pay the corresponding prices, and this may imply a reduction in art consumption. Also, the high cost of creative productions further means profit margins may be lower among the creatives, and further makes it unattractive for the creatives to produce locally. This challenge in producing locally implies no artistic and creative jobs will be created.

With respect to how creative entrepreneurs view institutional arrangements for creative business and management skills enhancement to aid business practices, a constraint was found to be engrained in practical creative capacity building, paving the way for theory-based teaching and learning of art. This suggests a compromise of efficiency, effectiveness and practical-base art teaching and learning. By implication, art students after graduation, may not be able to fit well in the art market. The theory-based teaching and learning of art further implies that students will lose their imagination and creativity as traits that fuel their artistic future. This finding is in sharp contrast to the notion that entrepreneurs in the creative economy use creativity to unlock the wealth that lies within them, meaning that creative entrepreneurs are investors in their own talents or the talent of others (Howkins, 2002). In furtherance of this, Abor and Quartey (2010) lamented weak regulatory regimes relative to protection of intellectual property in Ghana, just as our current research, revealed same. Unprotected creations of the mind such as inventions, literary and artistic works, designs, and symbols used in creative commerce constitute constraints in the development of creative entrepreneurship. In our estimation, failures to respect intellectual property rights can have deep consequences for creative entrepreneurs and businesses, including reputational and financial damages in Ghana. In an earlier work on property rights and economic growth, Leblang (1996) showed that countries that protect property rights grow faster than those that do not. Similarly, Le and McLennan (2011) showed that the effects of intellectual property rights violations on economic growth are significantly robust. This means, countries with increasing rates of property rights violations tend to have lower growth rates. This implies that when means of production, including intellectual property rights are disrupted and ignored, the creatives become less productive, which in turn leads to lower economic growth. In other words, governments, as intimated by Bruton et al. (2010), can ensure the efficient functioning of markets for the creative entrepreneurs, by removing conditions that create entry barriers, market imperfection and unnecessarily stifling regulations. Also, aligning to the suggestion by Bruton et al. (2010), governments can offset the constraints encountered by creative entrepreneurs by constructing and keeping an entrepreneurial environment and social norms that are supportive of creative entrepreneurship development. This suggests that countries with strong governance structures to enact creative protection policies may show increasing growth and development in their creative industry.

Beyond the constraints to successful artistic and creative entrepreneurship, this research, highlighted a regime for change, witnessing life-changing opportunities and future visions relative to creative entrepreneurship development in Ghana. Arguing from the perspectives of Cunningham et al. (2008), we view the attainment of such vision as necessitating the need to harness creative opportunities that brings with it the potential of new wealth creation, cultivation of local talent and the generation of creative capital. We also view it as requiring the development of new export markets, significant multiplier effects throughout the broader economy, the utilization of information communication technologies and enhanced competitiveness in an increasingly global economy. Life-changing opportunities to the creative entrepreneurs imply, creating new and sustainable jobs in the sector, overcoming poverty and general life improvement.

## Conclusion

This paper gave an account of the lived experiences of creative entrepreneurs in order to examine key constraints to their practice as well as opportunities and their future visions for improving the industry in Ghana. Key constraints include government and investor support shortage, high cost of creative productions, less practical teaching of creative skills, unfavourable creative regulatory regimes and in appreciation of Ghanaian culture. Employment and career building opportunities, sustainable income streams, popularity and fame gaining, tourism and travel potentials, artistic collaborations and synergies, exhibitions and contract performance were identified as life changing creative entrepreneurial opportunities being harnessed by the Ghanaian creatives. These creative entrepreneurs, being aware of the existing



professional and career constraints as well as life changing opportunities, then resort to self-managing their environments to optimize their creative processes via a regime of future visions to proffer solutions. It is therefore, concluded that creative and artistic constraints, namely financial support, expensive creative productions, abstract teaching of creative skills, lack of creative regulations and a lack of appreciations for Ghanaian culture constitute a bane to development of successful creative entrepreneurship.

The research has both practical and theoretical implications. The findings add to theoretical knowledge by outlining key indices in the creative value chain equation that require further academic consideration and further exploration towards developing sustainable and relevant business models in the artistic and creative community of practice. It also add to practice by providing insights that could enable policymakers to understand and appreciate the need for them to provide public support funding as node of empowerment to creative entrepreneurs to locally produce basic raw materials which could help enhance the productiveness of the creative industries. The learnings from this research will also help Government to introduce effective art-based policies and provide it with a robust implementation framework that protects intellectual property rights towards promoting artistic and creative economic growth. Additionally, it provides governments with an appreciation of the need to engage in equipping institutions with modern learning equipment, provision of qualified teaching staff, focus on competence-based training, extension of industrial attachments period for students, inviting industrial personnel for in service training, motivation, organizing periodic workshops to enable trainers to be abreast with technology and latest styles of teaching, the need for design innovation, and recognition are highly recommended.

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