

International Entrepreneurship Educator's Programme

Entrepreneurial Learning - Pedagogical Note Series

10. Use of Hot Seats

1. What is a Hot Seat?

This is a group exercise. Members of the group in turn are put in the 'Hot Seat' to respond to intensive questioning from other group members. Hot Seating is used by actors to help them identify with the character they are playing. It is used in entrepreneurship education to enable participants to get inside the culture and values of stakeholders with whom they might have to deal. But it can also be used for intensive questioning of an individual's own personal aims, objectives and plans including business plans. Other participant's act as interrogators.

2. How is the exercise constructed?

The hot seat itself is in the middle of a semi-circle of chairs. The person in the Seat can be himself/herself or represent a client or stakeholder. Dependent upon the role, questions fired rapidly may relate to personal issues; business/organisational problems or community activities.

Example Hot Seater Business/plan/idea

The individual is surrounded by those role playing different stakeholders that the plan might need to convince. The aim is to create recognition that the plan will be seen very differently by very different stakeholders. Interrogators may for example play the roles of bankers, venture capitalists, family, local government officials offering grants; a potential large customer who will be judging whether to include the client on a buying list or a major potential supplier who may be asked for credit.

Other participants can then be similarly hot seated. At the end of the hot seating there can be a review of what has been learned about the business plan as a relationship management instrument and how it might be best developed to meet different needs.

Example Hot Seater different stakeholders

Using the same focus of the business plan hot seater's in turn can be asked to play the roles of different stakeholders as above and are quizzed about what they are looking for and why?

Example Hot Seating on a problem

The technique can be used to role-play individuals from a case study with the aim of creating lively personalised discussion of major points for learning from the case. It can also be used to focus discussion on how to deal with a particular problem set out in a simple brief.

3. Relevance to Entrepreneurial Learning

This is an exercise in thinking and responding under pressure. It also is designed to stimulate understanding of relationship management and the value of thinking empathetically. It can be used to throw light on the 'organisational cultures of different stakeholders that make them see the same things in different ways.

4. Outcomes

Participants gain confidence in responding to questioning under pressure. They may importantly also learn that they need to 'act' differently with different stakeholders. They learn quickly to adapt to other's point of view.