International Entrepreneurship Educator's Programme

Entrepreneurial Learning - Pedagogical Note Series

19. Use of Shadowing

1. What is 'Use of Shadowing'?
Shadowing as the term implies is following and tracing the activity and footsteps of a person over a period of time from days to weeks. In the entrepreneurial context it means undertaking this in a certain way with a certain set of objectives rather than just 'learning the job' – a context within which it is commonly used. The major objective in the context of entrepreneurial learning is to is to gain insight into entrepreneurial ways of doing things.

2. How is the exercise constructed?
To be most effective it is best constructed around the shadower being given a discrete set of tasks focusing upon a carefully chosen aspect of 'ways of doing things'. If the shadowing is with the entrepreneur then it should be developed in such a way to be directly of value to the person shadowed in terms of feedback. This will also help with he process of gaining access and permission from the entrepreneur.

Example
Shadowing of the entrepreneur for one week by a student.
An arrangement is made for the student to be with the entrepreneur all the time he/she is at work. And the student may also ask to have a morning debrief with the entrepreneur as to any business-related activity carried out 'after hours'. The focus of the exercise of value to the entrepreneur is two-fold:
- to analyse the use of time over the period
- to analyse the forms of communication used
The results will be fed back to the entrepreneur.

To meet the objectives the student measures the time of the entrepreneur in different locations inside and external to the workplace. The time may also be measured in terms of time allocated to different activities/problems/issues. Example time spent in briefing staff, time spent with clients, time on administration, time with suppliers etc.
Communication analysis exercises can be extremely useful. In this case the student begins with a categorisation list in terms of a series of headings in an exercise book. Categories will include:
- Form of communication (oral direct, telephone, internet, written)
- Location of communication (office, workplace elsewhere, external)
- Area of business – main focus of communication – marketing, supply, finance, operations, human resource/personnel etc,
- Proactive – reactive/planned-unplanned
Analysis can be fed back to the entrepreneur enabling him/her to address an issue that is almost always of importance namely time pressure and management.

The above example underlines the importance of focus in shadowing and of ensuring utility to the entrepreneur.

3.   **Relevance to Entrepreneurial Learning**
The focus is upon the real community of practice and the creation of empathy.
There is also a strong emphasis upon the use of knowledge to the entrepreneur.

3. Outcomes
Participants will gain substantial understanding of entrepreneurial ways of
communicating and doing things. They will also gain insight into what will
interest entrepreneurs and what they will 'buy into', a key issue in designing
services to entrepreneurs.