

International Entrepreneurship Educator's Programme

Entrepreneurial Learning - Pedagogical Note Series

20. Use of Role play

1. What is Use of Role Play?

The central aim is to put participants in the role of predetermined persons with whom they seek to gain empathy. The role player is challenged to match all the known characteristics and knowledge base of the chosen person. The player is confronted by one or more persons either playing other roles or by other participants questioning the chosen role-played character.

2. How is the exercise constructed?

It can be constructed in a wide variety of ways. Within a business context, for example

- exploring the way in which different organisations view a business proposal, individuals can role play venture capital personnel, angels, bankers, public authority grant givers or large firms offering financial support to small.
- playing the role of a large company buyer interviewing a small business seeking to get onto the company's central procurement list
- conducting a selling exercise with a potential buyer of a product or service
- conducting an interview for a job (see below)

Example of Role Play : Job Interview

During this exercise participants are given the opportunity to put into practice what they have up learned about the behaviour of an entrepreneurial person. The aim is to enhance the capacity of participants to internalise and apply concepts of the entrepreneurial person.

For the purpose of this exercise participants are organised in groups of three. One member of the group acts as the interviewer, one as the interviewee and one as an observer. Separate instructions are given to each person.

Two rounds are played – with separate instructions for each. Different individuals play different roles during the two rounds.

Round 1

Instruction for observer

You have to observe and read the behaviour of the interviewer and interviewee. After the interview you will report back on the entrepreneurial potential observed. Use the checklist of entrepreneurial behaviour and attitudes as the guideline for observation and reporting.

Instruction for interviewer

You are to interview a candidate for a position as Marketing Manager in your organisation which is a franchise organisation for quick print. You are the original entrepreneur behind the franchise concept with, at least in your view, a great deal of success behind you. In your own perception you are highly motivated towards success in the long term. You compete with your own standards of excellence and not so much with other people.

The person you are looking for should be somebody with a great deal of entrepreneurial ability harnessed into a striving also to get co-operation from franchisees and other staff.

Instructions for interviewee

You are to be interviewed for a position as Marketing Manager in a quick print franchise. You are not particularly interested in the position.

Your previous experience has been in the financial function. In applying for this position you are really taking a chance as the salary is a great deal higher than your present income. You are also interested in the perks and the possibility to travel extensively and use an expense account, something you have never had before.

Your qualifications are good but all on the accounting and finance field. You are basically looking for a position where you can quickly make a great deal of money.

Round 2

The group exchange roles with slightly different instructions

Instructions for Observers

You have to observe and read the behaviour of the interviewer and interviewee. After the interview you will report back on the behaviour observed in term of entrepreneurial characteristics.

Use the checklist of entrepreneurial behaviour and attitudes as the guideline for observation and reporting

Instruction for interviewer

You are to interview a candidate for a position as Marketing Manager in your organisation which is a franchise organisation for quick print. You are the original entrepreneur behind the franchise concept with, at least in your view, a great deal of success behind you. In your own perception you are highly motivated towards success in the long term. You compete with your own standards of excellence and not so much with other people.

The person you are looking for should be somebody with a great deal of entrepreneurial ability harnessed into a striving also to get co-operation from franchisees and other staff.

Instructions for Interviewees

You are to display as much entrepreneurial orientation and behaviour as possible during the interview. You are anxious to get the job because it is a logical step in your career and presents a great personal challenge.

You are a marketing specialist. The job you are applying for is with a franchise organisation in the field of quick print. The job is described as that of a 'marketing manager'. You are not sure what the job entails although it is clear that, as far as salary is concerned, the job means a step forward in your career.

In this exercise the role play allows practice at using a framework for assessment of entrepreneurial potential in a conventional job context. The juxtaposition of two different types of interviewee provides the basis for strengthening the analysis post-exercise.

3. Relevance to Entrepreneurial Learning

This is learning by doing involving the practice in use of concepts learned. Creativity and flair in acting out roles is encouraged, The whole exercise is dependent upon the use of empathy. The role played demands imagination as to the characters portrayed.

4. Outcomes

Participants will have a strong frame of reference for use in analysis of entrepreneurial behaviour. They will also have greater confidence and ability in articulating he views of others.