

International Entrepreneurship Educator's Programme

Entrepreneurial Learning - Pedagogical Note Series

4. Use of Ice Breakers

1. What is an Ice breaker?

It is an informal exercise designed to create interaction between participants, warm them up (as the name implies) and learn about each other. It can also aim to enable participants to harvest from each other the experience that already exists in a group of issues to be addressed in a learning programme. It is most often used at the beginning of a programme to replace the process of participants introducing each other more formally (which can be a long and boring exercise).

2. How is the exercise constructed?

Any game or exercise involving mobility and informal interaction could be classified as an ice-breaker. Examples include Speed Networking (see separate Note), participants interviewing each other and then either acting their counterpart in a participant introduction process or introducing their counterpart preferably in an innovative and amusing manner.

The exercise used in the IETP programme involves each participant being given a set of papers with boxes to fill in on the basis of exchanges with other participants. The boxes are designed to cover key areas of experience relevant to the learning programme - in the case of the IETP, the experience of participants in teaching to certain key outcomes in the NCGE Template.

The exercise can be constructed to fit any programme. For example in a student entrepreneurship programmes it can be used to harvest evidence of participant entrepreneurial behaviour (identified and taken an opportunity, been committed to see something through, failed in something but tried again, solved a problem creatively, planned and carried out an event under pressure, sold an idea to someone, etc). Most people have some experience of these things.

The exercise is commonly undertaken under pressure. The exchange of experience allowed between any two participants is deliberately limited to force participants to move around.

3. Relevance to Entrepreneurial Learning

The exercise is designed to: facilitate networking, the harvesting of information and its codification under pressure. It can also create confidence by a process of realisation of existing experience and informal benchmarking against other participants in a programme. It also creates a competitive but not really threatening atmosphere.

4. Outcomes

Participants informally endorsed via practice some of the key components of a programme. They also realise that it is relevant to them personally, and that they and others have relevant experience to input into the programme.