

International Entrepreneurship Educators Programme

Entrepreneurial Learning - Pedagogical Note Series

45. Simulating the Entrepreneurial 'Life world'

1. What is Simulating the Entrepreneurial Life World?

Most of the emphasis in New Venture Programmes is upon the business aspects of the start up process. There is usually a strong focus upon preparing the business plan. Traditionally, there has been little concern with preparing individuals for their transition into a 'life-world' of becoming an independent entrepreneur. Many aspects of their world will change – a situation for which they are often ill prepared. If, for example, one moves from employment to self-employment then key changes may include:

- Greater freedom/independence to choose ways of doing things
- Greater individual responsibility for shaping ones own world
- Greater personal ownership of events
- Personal financial assets at risk and risk in disbursement
- Other personal assets may be at risk (eg house)
- Ego being more at risk as business idea exposed
- Personal responsibility for all outcomes
- Having to cope with more uncertainty on a day to day basis
- Greater personal vulnerability to changes in the environment and how to cope
- Greater pressure to take initiative/make things happen in work and home life
- Need to flexibly undertake a wide range of tasks
- Rewards directly linked to effort
- Need to manage a interdependency with a range of people with 'know who' and trust the key
- A situation where work, social and family life are more integrated
- changes in friendship patterns
- Greater links between personal effort and social status
- More learning by doing and responsibility for learning
- Need to cope with loneliness
- Need to work flexible and (often) long hours

It is a challenge to the educator to prepare programme participants for this.

2. How can an exercise constructed?

Several methods might be used initially to create awareness as follows

i) By asking participants to interview a recent new entrepreneur about 'what has changed' and how they have coped. Then to discuss the different issues that have arisen from the interviews in groups with the focus upon identifying what seem to be the most important aspects of being able to cope and 'how do we get that experience'. This can be followed by asking participants, if they are themselves in the process of moving into a new venture, what they expect will change and how they think they will cope for it – perhaps writing a 'self reflection' note.

Alternatively participants can be asked to interview each other in this context.

ii) By asking new entrepreneurs into the class for 'interview' about their world changes and how they have coped. This is perhaps best done in small groups to

create a more intimate personal atmosphere.

iii) By use of an initial 'critical incident' approach as below:

The incident is prepared before the session by the facilitator as follows.

Aim: to stimulate group discussion of the life world of the entrepreneur.

Key Question for Focus

What changes in ones 'way of life' when one moves from employment to self employment

Kate is a young single woman of 25 years of age. She graduated from University two years ago with a 2.1 degree in design – focused upon ceramics. She had always had a considerable talent for art and design demonstrated from an early age. She had worked herself up the educational ladder in creative design by successful progress through further education, to a Polytechnic and then to University.

Upon graduating she took a post at a school teaching ceramics but soon decided that this life was not for her. She wanted more independence. With the help of a small legacy from her grandmother she set up her own studio, complete with kiln and embarked on a career in self employment.

What changed in her life-world as a result of this move?

The facilitator can draw from the group a list of changes which can be used for discussion of the nature of uncertainties and complexities facing the entrepreneur and the skills and attributes that might be needed to deal with them. The group can be asked to speculate to what degree her previous work and life experience might have helped her to cope. For example if she comes from a background of family business she may well be familiar with many of the aspects of the life world noted above. This can lead on to a discussion of why it is that one is more disposed to set up a business if one comes from an SME family. It might also be useful to explore what aspects of the life world of being a teacher prepares one for entrepreneurship and which do not.