International Entrepreneurship Educator's Programme

Entrepreneurial Learning - Pedagogical Note Series

6. Using External Speakers/Presenters

1. **What is an External Speaker/Presenter/Evaluator?**
   External speakers/presenters are used in enterprise/entrepreneurship programmes for a number of purposes:
   - to provide role models of entrepreneurs –'what's it really like'
   - to provide a 'real life case' of how to confront/deal with a particular problem or issue
   - to more formally teach a 'how to' part of entrepreneurial management
   - to act as a sounding board/evaluator for a piece of work or proposal
   - to present what their institution/organisation does (or a certain aspect of its work).
   - to give a view on a general issue of relevance to a programme

2. **How is the engagement constructed?**
   Often the answer to this question is 'very badly'. The common reasons for this are:
   - lack of clarity of the role to be played (as set out above)
   - inadequate briefing of 'external'
   - inadequate briefing of the students/audience
   - inadequate management of the learning experience
   - a resultant deterioration of the session into 'war stories'
   - an inability to relate the session to concepts or generalisation about good or bad practice
   - in-appropriate frames of reference agreed/used for evaluation/mentoring

   The construction of the external interface is therefore extremely important. Careful establishment of the goals of the external/internal interface is key, in particular of learning goals. If, for example, a 'new young entrepreneur' is invited as a 'speaker' there is a range of possible objectives all of which it is desirable to spell out upfront. These include; demonstrating clearly the motivations and drivers to self-employment; establishing how one finds and evaluates an idea; demonstrating how one copes with changes in the life-world associated with being an entrepreneur; among many others. One enterprising way of structuring outcomes in this way is not to overly brief the invitee but to set up an interview panel or panels of programme participants (each dealing with one issue). Their task is to draw out the relevant experiences of the participants.

   Another method of improving the management of external contributions is to precede the presentation/ interview with an analysis of an issue leading to the development of a frame of reference against which the programme participants can evaluate the external contribution. For example, where an external is being invited to demonstrate how they approach a particular problem/issue

(evaluating a business plan) the class are thoroughly briefed as to the process which presents them with a frame for evaluating/questioning the contribution of the external).

Where externals are being used as evaluators – for example of a project or proposal – initial briefing and agreement of frames of reference and process are important. Where externals are used as teachers then initial training is important or should be supported by staff in a joint approach.

3. **Relevance to Entrepreneurial Learning**
   The aim is to engage with the 'real world' in order to provide feelings of 'what it is like' to do things and experience things in practice. It is therefore a simulation of tacit learning but to be successful it must leave the participants with an 'emotional' understanding of the learning input and a heuristic framework against which they can judge future events.

4. **Outcomes**
   Participants have a real 'feel' for the practice of the real world. They have a bridge between concept and practice and they understand the drift between concept and practice. They understand the better the way in which entrepreneurial decisions are made.