DEVELOPING SELF-EFFICACY AND ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENT FOR TECHNOLOGY ENTREPRENEURSHIP: THE INFLUENCE OF ROLE MODELS (INTERACTIVE PAPER)

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Principal Topic

This study builds upon existing work on self-efficacy, including Bandura (1986, 1997) and role modelling, Gibson (2003). Issues concerning the influence of role models (RM) on observational learners (OL) are identified.

Method

Data from a study of more than 2,500 engineering students in six UK and US universities were analysed using SPSS version 11.5 for Windows. Item scales were prepared and factor analysis performed to identify measures for two role model effects, model presence and model exposure. Previously validated measures were used for entrepreneurial self-efficacy and intent.

Results and Implications

RMs are relativistic – they are of value only with respect to the state of an OL. Receptiveness to learning from an RM will depend upon the OL’s life/entrepreneurial stage and the situation/context of the RM. The effects can be positive or negative.

OLs will draw on more than one RM. OLs draw lessons from different RMs at different points through their lives. By taking contrasting and complementary lessons from multiple RMs, an OL stitches together a conceptual patchwork of learning.

There may be a holistic value deriving from an RM, but only parts may matter. OLs, whilst observing an RM draw specific lessons rather than absorbing the RM’s whole way of being.

OLs may be more or less active in how they seek RMs and scrutinise them. OLs will encounter (passively) some RMs in the natural course of their lives (e.g. familial) whilst others, perceived to be highly efficacious individuals outside the immediate circle, will be sourced proactively.

Similarity between RM and OL affects the impact of RM. This manifests in terms of shared identity (including beliefs, values, social groupings), and affective connection over key issues.

Social Distance, both horizontal and vertical, impacts on the relationship. Social distance will influence the likelihood that lessons are taken from RMs in very different groups.

These issues should be considered by entrepreneurship educators when selecting case material, mentors and entrepreneurs to be used in learning situations. Students should be encouraged to actively seek role models.

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