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Experiential Entrepreneurial Learning in Architecture

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Experiential Entrepreneurial Learning in Architecture

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Abstract

Architectural practice is changing and calls for an increased awareness of the entrepreneurial aspects of architectural practice are growing: Sustained design prominence requires that the designer be supported by a viable, well organised and managed firm. Despite the fact that the logic of this statement is widely accepted, entrepreneurship education and training, for a variety of possible and valid reasons, do not receive significant space and time in the curricula of many schools of architecture. However, this is not necessarily a disadvantage because it moves entrepreneurship learning for architects from architectural schools to architectural practices and architectural professional associations and thus from the realm of education to that of training. Many entrepreneurship education theorists will argue that this is exactly where education for entrepreneurship (as opposed to education about entrepreneurship) should take place: An enacted format is recommended by many entrepreneurial education theorists where entrepreneurs, within a supportive system, learn by doing, dealing with crises and making mistakes coupled to reflection resulting in what Jason Cope refers to as significant learning. This paper, based on a literature review, will review some publications and proposals regarding entrepreneurial education, experiential learning and mentoring, to highlight the advantages of experiential learning in entrepreneurial education as included in some models used or proposed for participative experience-based entrepreneurship training in order to emphasise the importance and roles experienced mentors can play within such a system and to point out that, in order for this to happen, someone will have to set up an organisation to train mentors and facilitate the mentoring process.

Keywords: Experiential learning; Mentoring; Entrepreneurial learning; Architectural learning

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Introduction

Since 1920, the American Institute of Architects (AIA) has been highlighting the importance of the business and administrative dimensions of architects' firms.[1] The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), since 1962, following a study titled 'The Architect and his Office' has also been emphasising the importance of the business managerial side of an architect's firm.[2]

Recent editions of practice manuals and other publications from these organisations have increased the emphasis placed on this aspect with the AIA now stating that "twenty-first century practice requires architects to adopt an entrepreneurial approach dependent on risk-tolerance, self-awareness, and comfort with unpredictability."[3] They point to the advantage of starting and building up a new firm by highlighting that "starting a firm gives architects opportunity to leverage talent and drive to create a work-life that is both personally satisfying and financially rewarding."[4] The RIBA now advises the use of strategic planning processes and business plans (including marketing plans) when starting a new firm.[5]

Thus, it is now accepted that, for firms to achieve the goals of their founders, be they financial rewards or lifestyle related, they must be conceptualised and planned properly and specific steps must be taken before starting a new firm.[6] These include:

- Define exactly why this step is being considered.
- Decide on the type of firm that is envisaged
- Set goals for the first couple of years.
- Establish what unique services and abilities the firm will be able to offer and if clients need these.
- Study enduring firms to determine what led to this achievement.
- Decide if partners will be needed.
- Establish how the founder(s) of the firm will survive until the firm becomes profitable.

This implies that entrepreneurship is a process, one that can be enhanced by appropriate education and training.[7] This paper will use a literature review of publications on entrepreneurial learning and the added benefits that

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[1] AIA (2008:vi)
[2] Ostine, Stanford, Hickson-Smith, Fairhead and Waddell (2010:32)
[3] Choi & Klein (2014:185)
[4] Choi & Klein (2014:185)
[5] Ostine (2013:98-107)
[6] Piven and Perkins (2003:7)
[7] Valerio, Parton & Robb (2014:20) holds that many of 'these mind-sets, types of knowledge and skills can be learnt' .Pretorius and Wlodarczyk (2007:509) citing the work of Ronstadt (1987), Van Clouse (1990), Ivancevich (1991), Fretschner and Weber (2013:410), Vanevenhoven (2013:467) and Sánchez (2013:447) agrees that there is considerable consensus that entrepreneurship can be taught.

experiential learning, mentorship and group support can play as part of such a learning process. The aim of the paper is to highlight the benefits that mentoring can bring to experiential learning processes for architects and to point out that this will require an organisation to provide training to mentors and to facilitate the process of matching mentors and mentees, possible support groups and the interaction between them.

Entrepreneurship Education and Training

Entrepreneurship Education and Training (EET) constitutes the interface of the academic fields of entrepreneurship and education.[8] According to Vaerio, Parton and Robb,[9] EET includes both formal academic education and formal or informal training interventions. They regard that EET comprises all the educational initiatives that have the overarching objective of developing entrepreneurial mind-sets and capabilities in individuals and to promote participation and performance in a variety of entrepreneurial and associated managerial roles and initiatives. To them, entrepreneurial capabilities deal with the entrepreneur's competencies, knowledge and technical skills. This includes general business knowledge and related skills required for starting and managing a business.[10] EET also has socio-economic outcomes:[11] Outcomes accepted by the Northern Ireland Centre for Entrepreneurship, include employability (being able to get a job), intrapreneurship (being an entrepreneurial employee) in addition to venture creation (being able to start a venture) as evidence of this broader focus. The relationship between these broader socio-economic and the narrow EET learning outcomes are illustrated in Figure 1 (overleaf).

According to Kozlinska,[12] EET has a socio-economic or real-life focus. EET is also different from (and should not be confused with) general business management education. Vaerio et al,[13] having reviewed a range of literature,[14] indicate that the main differences between EET and business management education are that the mind-sets and skills included in EET consist of socio-emotional skills including self-confidence, leadership, creativity, risk propensity, motivation, resilience and self-efficacy. In addition, general awareness of, and perceptions regarding, entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship are included. Obviously, general business knowledge combined with the skills and knowledge required to start and manage a business are also covered. In turn, general business management education, traditionally, focuses on preparing students for managerial roles within established businesses and

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[8] Béchard & Grégoire (2005:40)
[9] Vaerio, et al (2014:41)
[10] Valerio et al (2014:38)
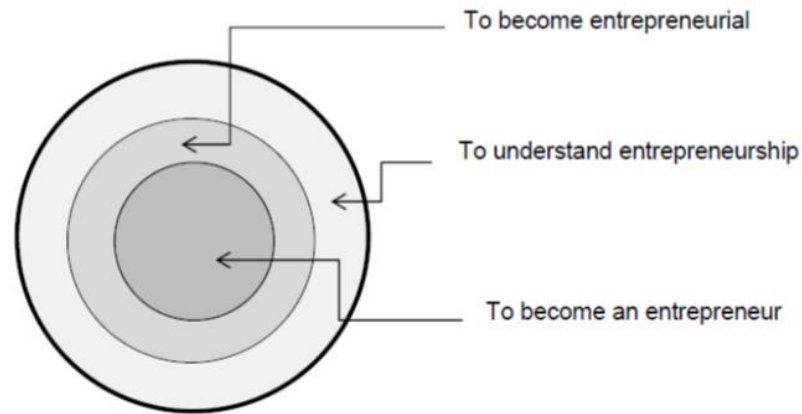[11] Kozlinska (2012:14)
[12] Kozlinska (2012:17)
[13] Vaerio et al (2014:22),
[14] Lüthje and Franke (2003), Rauch and Frese (2007), Teixeira and Forte (2009), Cloete and Ballard (2011)

hierarchies.

Figure 1. *Prioritised Aims of EET*[15]

Valerio et al[16] distinguish between Entrepreneurship Education (EE) and Entrepreneurship Training (ET). They believe that EE focuses on 'building knowledge and skills about or for the purpose of entrepreneurship' while ET 'focuses on building knowledge and skills explicitly in preparation for starting or operating an enterprise.' They also point-out that the two types of programmes are further distinguished from one another by differences in programme objectives and outcomes and by the type of learners at which they are aimed. This distinction is illustrated in Figure 2 (overleaf).

EET programmes can range from short training courses to full academic programmes.[17] Valerio et al furthermore believe that because entrepreneurship and the entrepreneurship programme concept include many and varying aspects, a combination of courses and activities should be combined into a portfolio or framework. Hence they propose that an EET framework should include components as diverse as classroom activities and support services such as mentoring, networking opportunities, guest speakers and inter-institutional collaborations.[18]

A phased approach or framework is also supported by authors such as Kozlinska[19] and Pruett [20] who are of the opinion that multistage education involving individual mentors is useful because it will discourage unrealistic projects and encourage participants to investigate alternative opportunities. Pruett furthermore found that providing ongoing support to new entrepreneurs stimulated entrepreneurial activity and increased their confidence levels.

Vanevenhoven,[21] like many authors, also supports a phased approach

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[15] Based on Kozlinska (2012:21)
[16] Valerio et al (2014:2)
[17] Valerio et al (2014:46)
[18] Valerio et al (2014:48)
[19] Kozlinska (2011:205)
[20] Pruett (2012:100)
[21] Vanevenhoven (2013:486)

including enacted, experiential activities where students work in the environment for which they are preparing. His opinion is based on the understanding that experiential learning will allow for individualised training which is advantageous because students learn at different rates, have differing levels of motivation, experience and resource networks.

Figure 2. *Classifying Entrepreneurship Education and Training programmes*[22]
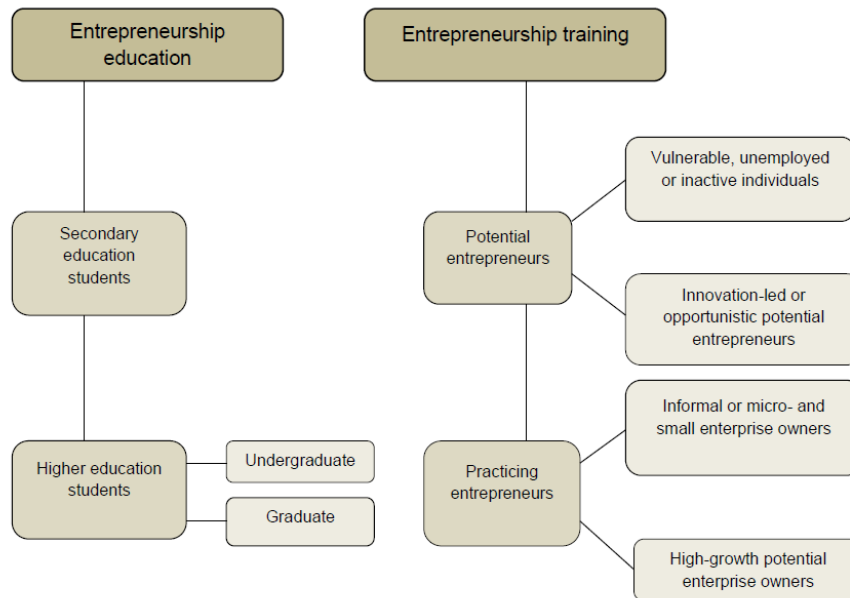
Mandel and Noyes[23] point out that entrepreneurship education offerings that include experiential learning are commonplace. However, they believe that such a strategy faces a range of challenges including finding suitable mentors which could restrict the use of this mode of delivery.

Antonites and Van Vuuren,[24] in turn, report on the effectiveness of an experiential or action learning approach used in a programme that focused on the development of creativity, innovation and opportunity recognition.

Markov and Kuzmanovic[25] report that a group of students who followed an EET programme asked to participate in projects and exercises that will require them to enact the theoretical knowledge, acquired during the programme, in the creation of business projects and for an increased use of entrepreneurial role-models.

Williams-Middleton and Donnelon[26] point to the fact that experience-based strategies often focus on developing skills and attitudes for entrepreneurship and skills in entrepreneurship by immersing students in the actual process. They believe that this makes tailoring to accommodate the

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[22] Valerio et al (2014:2)
[23] Mandel and Noyes (2016:164)
[24] Antonites and Van Vuuren (2004:1)
[25] Markov and Kuzmanovic (2011:456)
[26] Williams-Middleton and Donnelon (2014:194)

student's unique capabilities and attitudes possible. It furthermore exposes students to the ambiguity, uncertainty and evolving contextual demands that can occur in the entrepreneurial environment.

Pretorius and Wlodarczyk[27] caution that for experiential learning to be meaningful, it must be supported by an established theoretical base. They also point out that the style, role and practical experience of the facilitator is of great importance.[28]

The strongest and best developed argument for an experiential or enacted learning comes from Jason Cope. Cope proposes a process of experiential learning that consists of doing something and then reflecting or thinking about what took place.[29] He believes that entrepreneurs learn from 'learning events' and holds that learning is triggered by "significant, discontinuous events that occur during the entrepreneurial process."[30] Cope promotes a 'deeply rooted experience perspective'.[31] His perspective consists of a focus on the 'lived experience' and a personalised understanding of the sense that owner-managers have of their present situation and the risks to which they are exposed.[32] He believes that this is an essential prerequisite to understanding why entrepreneurs behave and learn in certain ways. Because of this belief, he places great emphasis on 'learning by doing' and 'learning through crises' which he believes should be internalised in order to become 'reflective learning.'[33] He elaborates and extends this list to incorporate 'learning about oneself.' 'learning about the business,' 'learning about the environment and environmental networks,' 'learning about small business management' and finally 'learning about the nature and management of relationships.'[34] An essential part of this process consists of 'real-life' experiential learning: Pittaway and Cope found that, while "significant dimensions of entrepreneurial learning can be simulated in an academic environment, there are important aspects that cannot be simulated, either for ethical reasons or because it would be impractical."[35]

Cope's Entrepreneurial Learning Framework (Figure 3) depicts the above as a process in which adaptation and the role of adaptive learning in the growth process are both starting points and key elements.

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[27] Pretorius and Wlodarczyk (2007:505)
[28] Pretorius and Wlodarczyk (2007:524)
[29] Pittaway and Thorpe (2012:8430
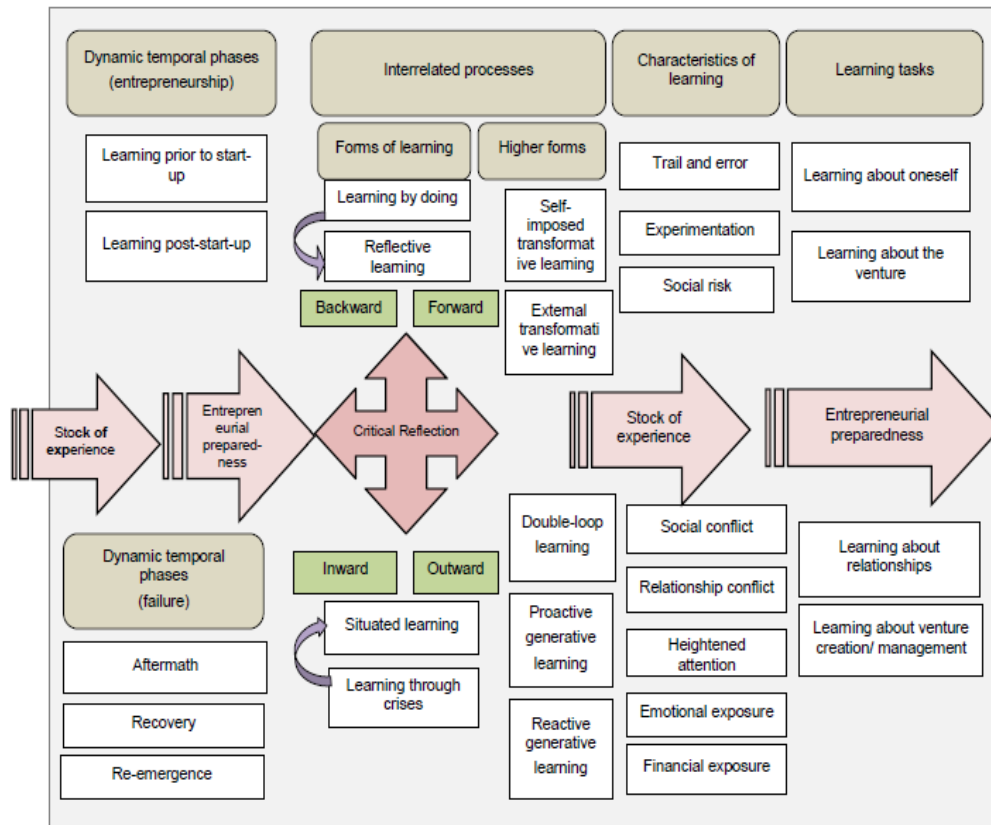[30] Cope (2003:429)
[31] Pittaway and Thorpe (2012:840)
[32] Cope (2005:379)
[33] Pittaway & Thorpe (2012:843)
[34] Cope (2005:380)
[35] Pittaway & Cope (2007:230)

Figure 3. *Cope's Entrepreneurial Learning Framework*[36]

This framework explains that learning is a process that takes different forms. The entrepreneur enters imbued with skills, experience and knowledge acquired before starting the venture. Due to experiential learning, learning and development continue throughout the process of starting and growing the venture. Learning thus takes place because of lessons learnt from the mistakes made and even through the failure of the business should the mistakes be serious enough. An entrepreneurial disposition would see the entrepreneur recovering and re-emerging. During the entire process, learning will take on various forms, most notably through experiential learning which, after critical reflection and assimilation, can constitute reflective learning. Depending on the impact which the process of critical reflection might have on the entrepreneur's understanding and development, learning through crises could become situated learning or even better, the learning that took place, might constitute 'double loop' or deep learning.[37]

From the foregoing it is apparent that, while a need exists for an element of formal entrepreneurial teaching and learning, effective EET must include an experiential learning component wherein students can learn by doing and then reflecting on what they have experienced.

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[36] Pittaway and Thorpe (2012:841)

[37] Pittaway & Thorpe (2012:843-851).

Experiential Learning

Experiential learning has been described as a "versatile pedagogical approach that can contribute to a number of positive outcomes, such as improved cognitive abilities for college and adult learners."[38] Kolb[39] defined experiential learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience." Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience". Kolb is regarded as the 'father' of experiential learning Theory (ELT).

Experiential learning theory is based on the work of a number of prominent and regarded twentieth century scholars and theorists. These scholars ascribed to experience a central position and role in the theories of human behaviour and development that they postulated. These theorists include John Dewey, Kurt Levin, Jean Piaget, William James, Carl Jung and others.[40]

According to Kolb and Kolb[41] learning from experience is a process that is pervasive hence present in human activity all the time, anywhere and at all levels of society.

Kolb[42] formulated the Experiential learning Cycle (Figure 1). This model is organised on two dimensions (axes) namely grasping and transforming experiences. The two axes establish a framework for four distinct learning styles based on the four-mode learning cycle comprising 'active experimentation' (doing), 'concrete experience' (feeling), 'reflective observation' (watching) and 'abstract conceptualisation' (thinking).[43]

According to the cycle, experiential learning is explained as a process of creating knowledge involving a creative tension between the four learning modes in response to contextual demands. The cycle portrays learning as an idealised learning cycle wherein the learner 'touches all bases' by experiencing, reflecting, thinking and acting. The cycle is recurring and is responsive to the learning situation based on concrete experiences that form the basis for observations and reflections.[44]. Kolb believes that while individuals have preferred modes of learning, they all use each mode to a certain extent.[45]

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[38] Bell (2006), Bobilya (2004) Dewey (1938) cited by Heinrich, Habron, Johnson & Goralnik (2015:375)
[39] Kolb (1984:41)
[40] Kolb and Kolb (2009;43)
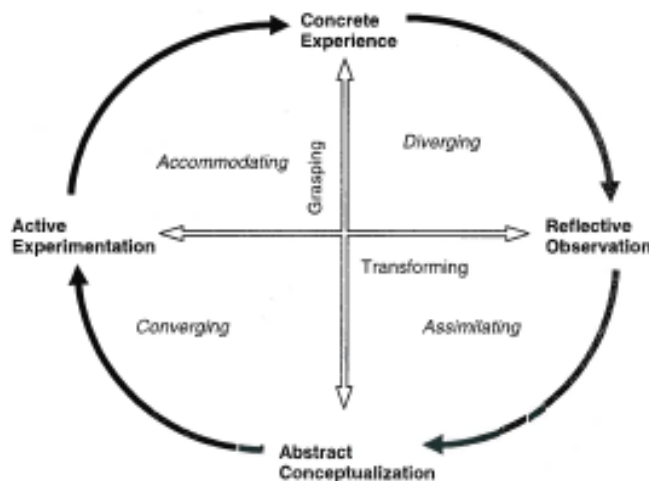[41] Kolb and Kolb (2009;43)
[42] Kolb (1984)
[43] Turesky & Gallagher (2011:6-7)
[44] Kolb and Kolb (2009:44)
[45] Turesky & Gallagher (2011:1-7)

Figure 4. *Experiential Learning Cycle*[46]

Kolb[47] combined the modes of learning to depict four types of learners (accommodators, divergers, assimilators and convergers). These typologies have proven very useful to coaches and mentors. While Kolb's 'learning styles' have received a degree of criticism,[48] an alternative has not yet been formulated while practicing coaches[49] report that Kolb's approach provides them with a workable and useful lens.

ELT also introduces the concept of deep learning. Deep learning describes learning that fully integrates the four modes of the learning cycle.[50] a concept central to the entrepreneurial education framework proposed by Cope[51] as described under experiential learning and entrepreneurship education and training.

Experiential learning has been used in management training and education since the 1960s.[52] Action and experiential learning can be viewed as a code that informs practice. It can play an important role in leadership development because it encourages challenge, critical reflection and a review of self and identity.[53]

Entrepreneurship education and training theorists regard experiential learning as a way of developing decision making and critical thinking skills.[54] It is believed that learning by doing encourages students to explore and test the limits and extent of their knowledge and beliefs while developing their ability to identify opportunities and original solutions to problems.[55]

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[46] Kolb (1984:44)

[47] Kolb (1984)

[48] Manolis, Burns, Assudani & Chinta (2012: 45)

[49] Turesky & Gallagher (2011:6-7)

[50] Kolb and Kolb (2009:49)

[51] Pittaway & Thorpe (2012:843-851)

[52] Kolb and Kolb (2009:57)

[53] Leitch, McMullan & Harrison (2009:243)

[54] Lefebvre & Redien-Collot (2013:371)

[55] Lefebvre & Redien-Collot (2013:371)

However, experiential learning, as part of formal education and training programmes, must be facilitated by a teacher[56] or mentor[57] who must guide the learning process; research has found that engaged mentors who encourage nascent entrepreneurs, assisting them to develop coherent and successful projects provide substantial benefit to their *protégés.*

Mentoring

Mentoring in entrepreneurial learning refers to a support relationship between a novice entrepreneur (the mentee or protégé) and an experienced entrepreneur (the mentor).[58] Mentoring has often been regarded as an important mode of knowledge sharing and acquisition.[59] Evidence suggests that support in the form of mentoring at the start-up of new enterprises is beneficial[60] because it can increase self-confidence and the ability to act as an entrepreneur[61] while developing managerial skills. Lee[62] believes that mentoring supports transformative experiential learning.

Mentoring is grounded in Bandura's Social learning theory.[63] This theory holds that individuals can learn by observing the actions and behaviours of role models. Mentoring is generally regarded as an intra-organisational relationship where a more experienced person acts as role model and confidant to another, less experienced person in a relationship based on trust, mutual respect and genuine interest in each other's lives.[64] The mentoring relationship is seen as a mutually beneficial one where mentees have someone who invests in their total growth as professionals while the mentors gain personal satisfaction stemming from their efforts to help another person.[65] Mentors are often described as advisors, coaches, teachers and advocates.[66] Schafer extends this list by adding sponsor and agent.[67] However, mentoring must be distinguished from coaching, tutoring or a support system by the fact that it is centred on a quest for meaning rather than acquiring techniques. According to Lefebvre and Redien-Callot, mentors can use a variety of communication strategies which can be grouped as persuasion, engagement, criticism and provocation.[68]

However, effective mentoring is a learned skill: Gotian believes that effective mentoring requires from the mentor to develop an exchange between

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[56] Kolb and Kolb (2008:57)
[57] Lefebvre & Redien-Callot (2013:387)
[58] St-Jean & Audet (2013:98)
[59] Fielden and Hunt (2011); Johnson (2002) and Merriam and Mohaad (2000) cited by Lefebvre & Redien-Collot (2013:371)
[60] Deakins et al (1998); Sullivan (2000) cited by Lefebvre & Redien-Collot (2013:371)
[61] Kent, dennis & Tanton (2003) cited by Lefebvre & Redien-Collot (2013:371)
[62] Lee (2007) cited by Lefebvre & Redien-Collot (2013:371)
[63] Lyons and Pastore (2016:3)
[64] Maclennan (1995) cited by Lyons and Pastore (2016:3)
[65] Jones (2009) and Pastore (2003) cited by Lyons and Pastore (2016:3)
[66] Gotian ([sa]:1)
[67] Schafer (2009) cited by Gotian ([sa]:2)
[68] Lefebvre & Redien-Callot (2013:370)

the two parties that they learn to work as a team, listen, trust and lean on each other for support and advice.[69] The mentor's role is not to simply provide answers or tell the mentee what he or she would have done, but instead to question the mentee in order to help him or her to develop a better understanding of the problems and then lead the mentee in developing possible solutions before applying these solutions:[70] the mentor must help the mentee find his own answers to his questions and then to see possible solutions.

The maieutic or non-directive approach which focuses on enabling individuals to find the knowledge which they possess is recommended in preference to the directive approach[71] (refer to Figure 2).

Figure 5. *Mentor Intervention Styles and Nature of the Relationship[72]*
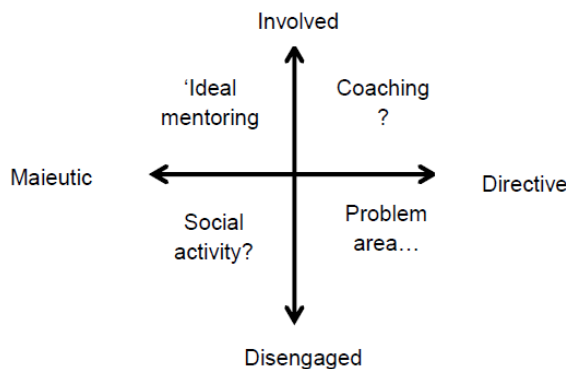

Figure 2 organises the range of mentor involvement styles along two axis. The first is 'directivity' and the other 'involvement'. The directivity axis has the Maieutic or non-directive style at the one extreme and the 'directive' style at the other. The involvement axis has 'involved' and 'disengaged' at either extreme. Research by St-Jean & Audet found that the maieutic and involved styles of mentoring are the most effective. However, the need for flexibility is flagged as a critically important aspect.[73]

Because of the skill required to act as an effective mentor, it will be necessary for organisations, which sponsor business mentoring, to train mentors in the use of the maieutic and involved styles of mentoring.[74]

Mentoring features in some more recent architectural publications: Foxell[75] suggests engaging as a mentor- someone who has been there before and who is willing and able to act as a guide to the entrepreneur-architect(s). DeBernard[76] suggests that architect's firms should introduce a mentoring

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[69] Gotian ([sa]:2)
[70] Foundation de l'entrepreneurship (2003) cited by St-Jean & Audet (2013:100)
[71] St-Jean & Audet (2013:109)
[72] St-Jean & Audet (2013:110)
[73] St-Jean & Audet (2013:111)
[74] St-Jean & Audet (2013:114)
[75] Foxell (2015:6)
[76] DeBernard (2014:491)

system in order to aid the development of professional skills and growth in staff members.

Conclusion

This paper reviewed some of the prominent literature regarding entrepreneurship education and training. It found that EET can be divided into two broad categories, namely: education about entrepreneurship and education (or training) for entrepreneurship. Education about entrepreneurship can be subdivided into education that encourages learners to become entrepreneurial and education about entrepreneurship. As far as education for entrepreneurship is concerned, many authors recommend that it should comprise or include experiential learning. The experiential learning process takes the form of a recurring cycle comprising experiencing, reflecting, thinking and acting. However, for learning to advance to the level of 'deep learning' the four modalities must be integrated fully. Cope believes that this will require that lessons be learnt from the mistakes made and even through the failure of the business should the mistakes be serious enough. Thus to get the full benefit, experiential learning should take place inside businesses because simulations will not be as effective. Furthermore it was shown that the learning process can be significantly enhanced through the use of appropriately trained and experienced mentors and a support group. However, this will require training, facilitating and management and hence an organisation that can organise, facilitate and manage the process. Could this be an opportunity that a group of architects with entrepreneurial mind-sets might explore?

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