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BENEFITS OF MENTORING FOR ENTREPRENEURS: THE EFFECT OF THE MENTORING STYLE (INTERACTIVE PAPER)

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Principal Topic

Since the entrepreneur often lacks time to take traditional training, an increasing number of them choose to be coached by a mentor. There are several positive return benefits to such a relationship, whether it be in terms of knowledge, competence and improved abilities, of a greater self-confidence or simply being able to get out of isolation (Cull, 2006; Gravells, 2006; St-Jean et Audet, Sous presse; Sullivan, 2000). However, we still don’t understand the process through which the entrepreneur undergoes a transformation by being in contact with his mentor. According to Gravells (2006), directivity and commitment are two variables that define the boundaries of mentoring depending on the orientation of concerns. This brings our research question: are there ways of doing or mentoring styles more efficient than others?

Method

We collected data through the business mentoring program of Fondation de l’entrepreneurship in the province of Québec. Mentees were contacted by email to participate in the study and 362 participants agreed to cooperate (response rate of 36.9%). The measures of the mentor’s maieutics (non-directivity) and commitment have been created drawing inspiration, on one hand, from discussions of mentors and mentees within the framework of focus groups with 51 mentees of M network, and on the other hand, according to the indications regarding these dimensions in the literature.

Results and Implications

All the return benefits of the relation (satisfaction of being an entrepreneur, satisfaction with mentor, and three components of entrepreneurial self-efficacy) are significantly and positively correlated to maieutic and commitment. As well, by splitting maieutic and commitment measures at the median and forming four groups with different styles, we have compared the results depending on the groups. It reflects that the style combining “maieutics-commitment” provides greater return benefits for the entrepreneur than the other styles. In light of these results, we can only recommend for organizations sponsoring business mentoring programs that they recruit and train their mentors in order for them to adopt a maieutic and committed style.

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