Learning from role models in early-stage entrepreneurship: A qualitative processual analysis

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Abstract

Role models have received substantial attention in the field of entrepreneurship. While much of researchers' interest has been on the influence of role models on the decision to engage entrepreneurial activity, less is known about how and what is learned from them after one has become an entrepreneur. Through a qualitative, grounded-theory approach, this study explores the process and content dimensions of entrepreneurial learning from role models throughout the start-up process. Drawing on thirteen in-depth semi-structured interviews, the study shows how the attributes of role models and the related learning outcomes change throughout the start-up. Findings portray a learning process consisting of three major episodes in which nascent entrepreneurs identify, compare and empathize with different attributes of role models thereby accessing a variety of learning outcomes.