

# A quest from deep within: the construction of entrepreneurial identity and progression of entrepreneurial passion

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – *This paper aims to examine how the construction of entrepreneurial identity in a cross-disciplinary postgraduate entrepreneurship education program influence students' entrepreneurial passion progression as they enact different role identities and concurrently deal with competing microidentities.*

**Design/methodology/approach** – *Using the interpretative phenomenological analysis approach, an in-depth study of postgraduate students' accounts of their lived experiences is conducted.*

**Findings** – *Construction of entrepreneurial identity influences students' entrepreneurial passion progression through a process of "identity ecdysis" that occurs deep within students' microfoundations as they make sense of the entrepreneurial identity role while simultaneously accommodating their anticipated entrepreneurial life journey. During the transition stage, they begin to let go of their present personal identities and recast new ones based on the revised personal entrepreneurship action agenda. The motivation to change results from the underlying future moral obligation, via a quest to uphold entrepreneurial virtues toward their significant immediate social circles as the aspiring professionals with newly equipped entrepreneurship proficiency. Entrepreneurial passion deepens as they come to grips with their new personal identities as well as new roles and responsibilities.*

**Research limitations/implications** – *While this study establishes a foundation for understanding how entrepreneurial passion progresses and is encouraged within an educational framework, it has the potential to be tested on actual entrepreneurs in the macro identity workspace.*

**Practical implications** – *Entrepreneurship education programs' learning experience structure should be designed based on the sources of entrepreneurial passion and is flexible enough to allow for in-depth exploration and self-introspection that supports the enactment of entrepreneurial characteristics that can benefit postgraduate students in their next career move by focusing on the internalization of entrepreneurial virtues, which enables the organic, autonomous construction of entrepreneurial identity. This approach may enable people's entrepreneurial passions to evolve organically yet profoundly.*

**Social implications** – *The provision of entrepreneurial knowledge should be consistent with the goal of enabling students to organize and develop their own identities in pursuit of their next career trajectory.*

**Originality/value** – *The study highlights a phenomenon that happens deep inside people's microfoundations, demonstrating the intensive interplay that exists between dialogic and identity workspaces at one of the established entrepreneurial universities.*

**Keywords** *Phenomenology, Entrepreneurship education, Entrepreneurialism, Entrepreneurial passion, Identity workspace*

**Paper type** *Research paper*

## Introduction

Although entrepreneurs are known to wear different hats (i.e. different role identities), which influence the way they think and act during the early pursuit of new ventures (Mathias and Williams, 2017), little is known about how the process of wearing different hats during the early pursuit of entrepreneurship activity through a formal academic-based

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entrepreneurship learning process may influence the cognition, and subsequently, the behaviors of aspirants or want-to-be entrepreneurs among postgraduate students enrolled in a cross-disciplinary postgraduate entrepreneurship education program (CPEEP) as a unique single postgraduate degree program that integrates entrepreneurship into other disciplines (Welsh, 2021). Exclusively, CPEEP (i.e. MSc Applied Biopharmaceutical Biotechnology and Entrepreneurship, MSc Sustainable Energy and Entrepreneurship, MSc Electrical and Electronic Engineering and Entrepreneurship, MBA with Entrepreneurship) provides a situated entrepreneurship learning platform with a variety of experiential learning activities that mirror the practical entrepreneurship aspects (Hägg and Gabrielsson, 2019). Furthermore, CPEEP is designed to actively interact with the diverse academic backgrounds and microidentities of postgraduate students (Duening, 2017; Holcomb *et al.*, 2009). During the learning engagement, besides getting advanced knowledge on their core discipline subjects (i.e. science, engineering, etc.), they are also exposed to business schools-led entrepreneurship knowledge such as creative problem-solving, finance and accounting, marketing for entrepreneurs, project management and innovation management.

While identity is a significant component in entrepreneurship education (Celuch *et al.*, 2017; Donnellon *et al.*, 2014), its impact on entrepreneurial behavior is still vague. However, when paired with passion, identity has been demonstrated to influence favorable entrepreneurial behavior (Murnieks *et al.*, 2020) because they are mutually reinforcing and synergistic (Yitshaki and Kropp, 2016). Given that active learning environments enable people to construct, revise and reconstruct their narrative identities over time in an “identity workspace” (Harmeling, 2011; Petriglieri and Petriglieri, 2010), there are yet immediate concerns about how such circumstances can affect the progression of passion for a specific activity, such as entrepreneurship. Before enrolling in CPEEP, students are assumed to have an initial passion for entrepreneurship and are eager to explore the entrepreneurship journey further. At that juncture, they decided to experience the entrepreneurship lifeworld through the academic door. Less is known though about how their entrepreneurial passion (EP) is going to progress as they attempt to make sense of the specific entrepreneurship learning experience, necessitating a detailed examination of the in-situ process. Several theoretical concerns are outlined below.

First, since being and becoming are fundamental to forming one's identity (Yazan, 2018), a range of circumstances may affect students' identification and internalization of their identity, which impact their EP progression. CPEEP places students in an unfamiliar setting, challenging them to alter personal identities with entrepreneurial learning activities. This unique scenario gives students new social contexts to reconfigure and reinvent their identities; thus, they may be pushed to accept or reject new social role expectations (Wry and York, 2017).

Second, although it is indicated that individuals may adjust their narrative identities inside the identity workspace of entrepreneurship education (Harmeling, 2011), we also noted that as they make sense of their new learning setting, one microidentity, entrepreneurial identity (EI), would become more prominent and dominant (Donnellon *et al.*, 2014) which affects the way an individual's identity work may function. Given that EI construction is based on the individual's past personal and vocational experiences (Duening, 2017), the outcome of the process might differ significantly between individuals. Because EI has numerous overlapping aspects of growth at the individual and cultural levels, according to Yitshaki and Kropp (2016), it is crucial to understand how students combine past personal and professional experiences and fit them into the EI construction process.

Finally, while entrepreneurs have long been known to be passionate about entrepreneurship, which causes them to be full of energy, drive and spirit (Bird, 1989), there is little evidence that demonstrates a nuanced account of how aspirant entrepreneurs would demonstrate their passion for entrepreneurship as they are placed at the center of an

innovative climate (Kang *et al.*, 2016), a unique situation that allows them to become creative and think outside-the-box ideas. This subsequently translates into a better understanding of what would be the underpinning events that allow them to become passionate about entrepreneurship and, therefore, capable to make effectual decision-making (Stroe *et al.*, 2018). For instance, spending more time thinking about new innovative ideas (Schenkel *et al.*, 2019); self-regulating and becoming grittier about the entrepreneurship journey that they ought to commit (Mueller *et al.*, 2017); and further strengthening their entrepreneurial intention (Karimi and Valizadeh, 2020).

Taking these considerations, one step further, we hypothesize that when postgraduate students immerse themselves in the CPEEP, their identities will shift drastically, especially when EI emerges as the dominant identity. As a consequence, the EP may advance, regress or remain stagnant. Consequently, we seek to investigate how the construction of EI in a CPEEP influences the EP progression of students as they simultaneously enact different role identities and cope with competing microidentities. Therefore, using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), we explore the lived experience of postgraduate students at one of the Russell Group universities in the East Midlands, UK. Then, we present a grounded theory that describes the relationship between identity changes and EP progression. After that, we discuss the findings and recommend learning strategies for future undertakings before ending the paper with a conclusion.

## Literature review

### *Entrepreneurial passion experience*

The psychological notion of “passion” for a particular activity is depicted as a meaningful engagement experience with an activity that is congruent to the person’s identity (Vallerand, 2008, 2015; Vallerand *et al.*, 2003) as it fuels motivation, well-being and enthusiastic task engagement by providing a balanced and purposeful life perspective (Duckworth *et al.*, 2007; Vallerand, 2008, 2015; Vallerand *et al.*, 2010). Passion is concerned with an intense sensation that links individuals to the domain-specific subjects (Amabile and Fisher, 2009; Moeller *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, the passion for entrepreneurship is a generic sensation experienced in everything, but it is instead centered on a specific activity termed entrepreneurship. Cardon *et al.* (2012) believe that EP is an emotional phenomenon that individuals may experience when acting in or thinking about particular activities that provide favorable sentiments which correspond to the entrepreneurial roles.

Recently, EP has been characterized as a strong predisposition toward entrepreneurial activities that individuals like, which they feel significant and commit time and energy (Murnieks *et al.*, 2020). Thus, EP is seen as a deciding factor in whether an opportunity is taken (Brännback *et al.*, 2006). Hence, the same logic might be used for students enrolling in a CPEEP. Entrepreneurship content exposure during undergraduate years, family upbringing or recognition of entrepreneurial opportunities within professional background may result in such decisions.

EP experience is also susceptible to the social context because it concerns activities associated with meaningful and central roles to the self-identity (identity centrality) that take place directly within the situated social context (Cardon *et al.*, 2012). While practicing the entrepreneurial roles, emotional feedback is received and evaluated and whether to pursue the entrepreneurship endeavor (Gielnik *et al.*, 2015). Although EP is known to be very capable of influencing positive entrepreneurial experience (Jennings, 2012; Murnieks *et al.*, 2020, 2014), EP can also reversely be experienced through the undesirable evaluation of emotional feedback. Gielnik *et al.* (2015) found that the outcomes and subsequent appraisal processes of the entrepreneurial effort outcomes can lead to EP being experienced either positively or negatively.

By using a phenomenological approach, [Cardon et al. \(2017\)](#) conducted an inductive qualitative study of eight entrepreneurs. They discover that there are six major sources of EP, namely, passion for growth, passion for people, passion for the products or service, passion for inventing, passion for competition and passion for a social cause.

[Lee and Herrmann \(2021\)](#) recent systematic study of EP identified four EP theoretical frameworks: the passion for work, the dualistic model of passion, EP and perceived passion. The theoretical threshold for distinguishing these frameworks is based on the notion that the choice between frameworks should be influenced by research objectives and distinct conceptualizations of passion. Furthermore, they describe which research possibilities might be pursued depending on each framework. First, there is an opportunity to study work passion in the context of entrepreneurship in the passion for work framework; second, in the dualistic model of passion, there is a need to understand the distinct antecedents and outcomes of harmonious and obsessive passion; and third, in the EP framework, there is a concern that the framework is overly applied to entrepreneurs of small firms when it would be more beneficial to use the concept in various contexts. As a general recommendation, they conclude that: first, there is a need to conduct comprehensive and nuanced studies on the relationship, focusing on diverse types of passion; second, distinct mechanisms on how passion affects performance and other outcomes; third, carefully match theoretical arguments and measurements based on the passion framework; fourth, conduct empirical research in EP in various cultural contexts; and fifth, theoretical justifications.

### *The nature of identity*

Identity theory is a scholarly field of study that investigates how people form and internalize their own identities ([Kuhn and Nelson, 2002](#)). It is founded on three central principles of symbolic interactionism: people act toward things, including one another, based on the meanings they assign to them; these meanings are derived through social interaction with others; and these meanings are managed and transformed through an interpretative process that people use to make sense of and handle the objects that comprise their social worlds ([Snow, 2001](#), p. 367). Consequently, it is expected that identity theory focuses on basic questions like “who am I?” and “what am I to do?” ([Pratt, 2012](#)).

Identification and internalization are crucial processes in identity theory. Individuals may belong to a social group, such as a profession, but they may not adopt its values ([Hogg and Turner, 1987](#)). This is because, while social identification responds to the question “who are you?” in a particular social context, internalization responds to the question “what should I do?” in a similar environment, but with the inclusion of specific individuals or groups. According to [Duening \(2017\)](#), a person's moral views are the most influential factor in determining their behavior toward certain persons or groups. Individuals identify and commit to a set of virtues, which influences their conduct toward people who share those traits and those who do not. Consequently, internalization necessitates significant and ongoing identity development to emphasize the social category inside one's self-concept. Identity work is essential in the efforts of “exploring and understanding people” to “understand who they are, what they do and what they should do,” from entrepreneurial purpose through the formation and development of new businesses to the process of entrepreneurial exit ([Leitch and Harrison, 2016](#), p. 117).

### *Identity work*

Identity work is defined as actively engaging with contextual variables related to the identity construction process ([Alvesson et al., 2008](#)), which includes efforts to reconstruct and present one's identity in ways that may increase self-efficacy ([Kreiner et al., 2006](#); [Pratt et al., 2006](#)) in managing current discrepancies and future goals. Identity work is defined by

Alvesson *et al.* (2008, p. 15) as “the verbal and mental processes through which people strive to design self-narratives that generate a cohesive, differentiated, and favorably valued identity.” People’s identities change as they work on them. That is, it has an impact on both attitudes and behaviors. As Carroll and Levy (2008) observed, the newly developed leader’s identity work prefers to tackle strategic leadership issues and interact with individuals associated with leadership roles and activities over operational management concerns or individuals associated with the middle management positions. Despite the fact that identity work is regarded as a continuous activity, research indicates that its intensity fluctuates over time. Ibarra (1999) posits that identity work is more intense at times of transition, skepticism and self-doubt. Meanwhile, Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003) suggest that identity work is felt more strongly by aspiring professionals as compared to established professionals. As a result, identification work for students, apprentices and early career professionals are more stringent than that for seasoned professionals.

Grimes (2018) argue that when specific occupational demands or social conditions violate or threaten individuals’ identities in the context of their work, it will trigger a process of identity work, allowing individuals to come to terms with those violations, often through small adjustments to how they make sense of their identities in relation to the infringing social conditions.

### *Identity transition process*

Each significant life change is followed by a psychological and emotional transformation, which is reflected by an identity transition. Bridges (2009) proposes three sequential stages of identity transitions:

1. ending – when people experience fear, denial, frustration, confusion and uncertainty; neutral (transition);
2. losing – when people remain attached to the old situation while attempting to adapt to the new identity, resulting in anxiety; and a new beginning; and
3. letting go – when people embrace the change initiative and begin developing the necessary skills to work successfully.

The identity transition seems to occur when an individual’s current identity is challenged by a new occurrence, forcing them to explore a new identity capable of dealing with the new event and, as a result, engage in activities to actualize the newly desired identity.

Lundqvist *et al.* (2015) use the dialogic of current identity and entrepreneurial role expectation to explain how identity transitions occur during the development of a new firm in the entrepreneurship literature. According to this dialogic, EI may be developed by continual engagement (through venture integration and beyond) that integrates interaction with new value creation and role expectations in an immediate team context. The preceding dialogic alters the identity of individuals.

### **Microidentities**

Even though there is a substantial body of literature on identity in behavior that covers a wide range of topics such as personal and social role identity, organizational identity and others, this study will focus solely on personal identity – as superordinate identity – and three relevant microidentities of professional identity, postgraduate students’ identity and EI.

### *Personal identity*

According to Brewer (1991), personal identity is the self-image of personal value that individuals see as essential to their self-concept. This self-image is produced in a person’s

mind by examining his or her own unique background and experiences rather than by referring to other groups (social identity) or accepting a certain stance (role identity). One's identity develops through time and reflects the degree to which a category is important to the individual's self-concept. Personal identity, as a superordinate identity, is made up of a constellation of hierarchically ordered microidentities, with higher-ranking identities being more prominent and vital to one's self-identification than lower-ranking identities (Stryker and Burke, 2000). As a result, the more centrality of identification there is, the more important that particular identity is to the individuals (Callero, 1985; Rosenberg, 1986) and the larger the perceived significance of the activity. Therefore, individuals are more prone to value activities associated with confirming fundamental identities than activities linked with less central identities.

### *Professional identity*

Professional identity, according to Tickle (2000), is "generally accepted images in society about what a professional (with a certain vocation) should know and do, as well as what a professional value in their professional work and life based on their practice experiences and personal histories." Professional identity is intricately linked to occupational identity, which is developed by an individual's work experiences and career objectives (Adamson *et al.*, 1998) and symbolizes the individual's professional trajectory. Professional identity, according to Illeris (2004), is a component of a person's complete identity that is influenced by their work experience and how they identify as a "working individual." The career they chose (professional identity) and their sense of "who they are" (personal self-identification), all impact how individuals perceive their work, their place in life and their motivations to participate in those areas (Watson, 2001).

### *Postgraduate students' identity*

According to Hawkins (2005), students' identities are contested within the setting of educational institutions. According to Hinchliffe and Jolly (2011), despite the similar learning environment, a considerable difference in the identities of undergraduate and postgraduate students is discovered. The former is largely produced by subject discipline and a variety of undergraduate students' experiences, while the latter is fashioned by social and economic forces that are beyond their control owing to their integration with the public domain. Additionally, it is believed that postgraduate students transfer their professional experience into their new learning environment. As they undergo the learning experience, they must adopt a student identity that is centered on the desire to learn and acquire new knowledge while also incorporating existing knowledge to negotiate their identity and grow as individuals.

### *Entrepreneurial identity*

EI is recognized as a dynamic identity that is subjectively formed and continually reconstructed (Lindgren and Packendorff, 2009) based on the entrepreneur's perception of who and what they are. A successful entrepreneur, like any other professional, has unique characteristics such as an organizer, facilitator and communicator (Mitchell, 1997; Shepherd and Haynie, 2009). Entrepreneurs have various microidentities that represent both proactive and reactive processes (Pratt and Foreman, 2000; Shepherd and Haynie, 2009).

Earlier research focused on how entrepreneurs' cognitive ability adapts to their identity in the context of entrepreneurial engagement (see: Hoang and Gimeno, 2010; Murnieks *et al.*, 2014), but more recent research has focused on how entrepreneurs' EI is adapted to personal identity during the entrepreneurship process.

[Mathias and Williams \(2017\)](#) posit that role identity has a significant situated influence on entrepreneurs' cognition, which may significantly affect the pattern of growth and pursuit of new ventures through their attention to risks (i.e. minimal, mitigate and minimize), the scope of opportunities (i.e. narrow, moderate and broad), and finally, opportunity focus (i.e. entrepreneurial focus, marketing focus and long-term focus).

EI is also connected with a moral commitment to the community ([Duening, 2017](#)). Entrepreneurs' professional community actions are guided by their past commitment to the entrepreneur's moral community that they wished to join. He contends that the process of EI construction includes an acculturation and assimilation process that allows for the internalization of entrepreneurial virtues such as creating value for others, deferring to market judgments of value, respecting private property and contractual obligations and resilience in the face of failure. Individuals' EI will be generated on their own because of their commitment to serving entrepreneurial ideals. His model explains how EI is developed by considering aspects from the past (for example, previous experience, natural skill and temperament), the present (known information, personal knowledge and unique knowledge) and the future (deliberating practice, entrepreneurial virtues of creating value, respecting market, honoring contract and being resilient).

Finally, [Newbery et al. \(2018\)](#) use a quasi-experimental study method to illustrate how entrepreneurial microidentity is established among business students via the usage of business simulation games. They found that one's initial entrepreneurial experience either increases or decreases one's EI. They also observed that having an entrepreneurial role model raises students' EI salience by giving a realistic standard against which to compare their present EI. Students who put a greater value on EI are more likely to demonstrate positive observed entrepreneurial behaviors and intend to integrate EI into their future personal identities.

### **Situated, embodied entrepreneurial learning setting of entrepreneurship education program**

While studies on entrepreneurial learning acknowledge the role of identity in the learning process ([Harrison and Leitch, 2005](#); [Morris et al., 2012](#)), studies on entrepreneurship education begin to investigate the effect of identity on the outcomes of entrepreneurial education studies, particularly action-based pedagogical approaches in the classroom ([Donnellon et al., 2014](#); [Pittaway and Edwards, 2012](#)).

[Donnellon et al. \(2014\)](#) investigate EI construction in an entrepreneurship education program using several theories of identity, job role transitions and entrepreneurial learning. They discovered that the strategic positioning followed using visual and vocal symbols, narrative, socialization and collectivity, had a significant impact on students' EI. Their discovery supports researchers' arguments on the significance of universities and business schools as fertile identity workspaces ([Petriglieri and Petriglieri, 2010](#)). According to [Harmeling \(2011\)](#), entrepreneurship education looks to be a potential identity workspace within the framework of business schools, with:

[...] unique ability to connect the individuals, with his or her particular interests, knowledge, experience, and social networks with the marketplace in which he or she seeks to gain acceptance, implement plans, perform commercial transactions, interact with stakeholders and develop a project, business or organization ([Harmeling, 2011](#), p. 746).

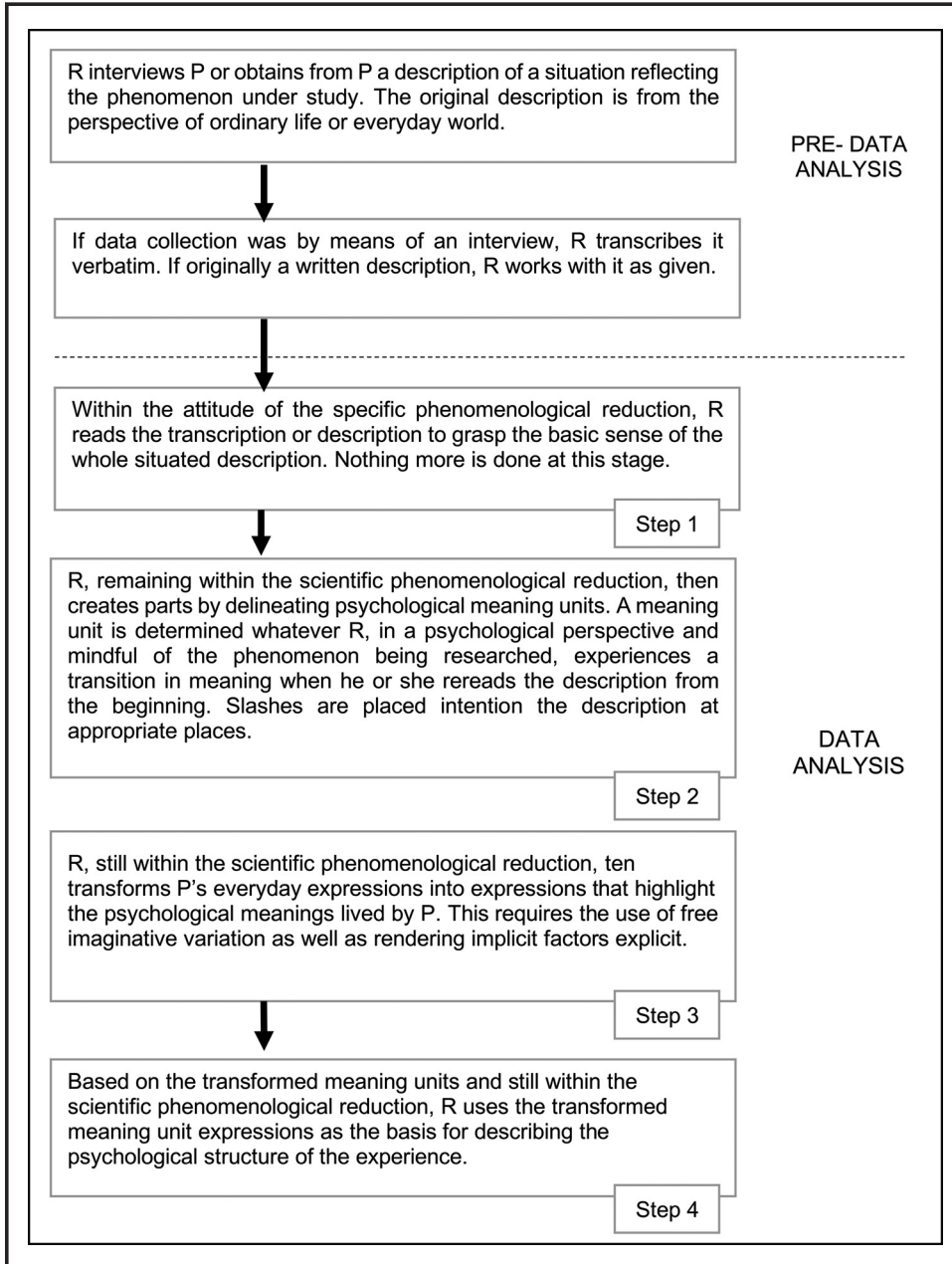
## **Methodology**

### ***Qualitative approach***

This research seeks to explore the phenomenon of EP through the students' lifeworld experience while they are immersed in entrepreneurship learning, which encompasses the

interplay of their identities and environment. Thus, focusing on pedagogy's core direction, especially the notion of "being and becoming" (Van Manen, 2016), is favored. Therefore, the IPA technique (Smith *et al.*, 2009) was used to capture the participants' environment and characterize "what it is like" (Larkin *et al.*, 2006) in terms of meaning and processes rather than events and their causes (Larkin and Thompson, 2012). The core of IPA is the idea that humans are "self-interpreting beings" (Taylor, 1985), actively interpreting events, things and others in their lives. More crucially, IPA acknowledges that such access is always contingent on what participants say and how researchers interpret it. So, profound knowledge of the phenomena may emerge conceptually (Figure 1 depicts steps taken in

**Figure 1** Steps in the phenomenological research approach





the phenomenological research approach and [Table 1](#) provides a summary of the research design).

### *Sampling and data collection*

CPEEP students were chosen because they could provide a viewpoint rather than a demographic and prioritize depth over breadth. The convenience purposive sampling approach was used to choose two cohorts, allowing for a comprehensive assessment of psychological heterogeneity within the group, and hence, the analysis of the pattern of convergence and divergence. Following ethical clearance, all CPEEP students were issued a request for participation, and the participation was voluntary.

The semistructured interview format (refer to Interview schedule):

1. Experience in CPEEP:

- What and how do you feel during CPEEP?
- Could you describe for me a recent experience you have had in CPEEP?
- Can you tell a bit more about how the activity influences you?
- What are some of the things that make you enjoy being in this CPEEP?

2. Identity:

- How do you get from the person you were to the person you want to be?
- Could you describe your role in the experience?
- How do you feel about the changes?
- How your professional background influence you while doing an entrepreneurship-related activity?
- How do you feel about the encounter between your professional background and the entrepreneurial activity that you engaged with?

3. Entrepreneurial passion:

- What does the entrepreneurship activity feel like?
- What does participate in the activity in CPEEP mean for you as a student? And as a someone with a profession in the future?
- How do you feel after doing this program?
- What is it like to be doing this course as compared to the course that may be more like a continuation with your degree/background?
- How do you view entrepreneurship now as compared to last time?

**Table 1** Summary of research design

<i>Research design elements</i>	<i>Selected element for this study</i>
Purpose of the study:	Exploratory
Type of investigation:	Correlational
Extent of researcher interference in the study:	Minimal interference by researcher
Study settings:	Noncontrived
Unit of analysis:	Individuals
Time horizon:	Cross-sectional

- Do you feel that it was something else that make you passionate about entrepreneurship?

4. Sense-making of lifeworld:

- How do you make sense of the journey you are making? The shift from what you are now to become an entrepreneur (the person you imagine to be)
- How is the shift of identity taking place?
- Without knowing/learning entrepreneurship from the program, do you think that you can become an entrepreneur?
- In what way, do you think the experience you have had in CPEEP change your view about entrepreneurship?
- How do you see yourself in the future?
- How do you think other people see you?

Is chosen to allow for real-time dialogue between the researcher and the participants, with initial questions being modified in response to the participants' responses to follow-up on interesting, meaningful and even unexpected issues that arise during the interview (Smith and Osborn, 2015). Prior to conducting the interviews, the researcher spent two consecutive academic years observing and collecting field notes to get acquainted with the CPEEP environment. Additionally, the researcher spent quite some time reviewing program syllabi and learning goals, as well as attending 20 weeks of lecture sessions and conversing informally. These field notes were utilized as a technique of triangulation to ensure the data was coherent and consistent. Consequently, nine people were interviewed for between 50 and 90 min (Refer to Table 2). Although the sample size is tiny, the IPA believes that there is no right or wrong answer to the sample size question, since the problem is one of quality,

**Table 2** Summary of participants background

<i>Respondent</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Academic program</i>	<i>Previous academic background</i>	<i>Previous employment/ responsibility</i>	<i>Country of origin</i>
Rosealia	Female	MSc Applied Biopharmaceutical Biotechnology and Entrepreneurship	BSc in Biotechnology and Genomic	Junior Scientist	Mexico
Monica	Female	MSc Sustainable Energy and Entrepreneurship	B. of Architecture	Junior Architect	Colombia
Sariyanti	Female	MSc Sustainable Energy and Entrepreneurship	B. of Architecture	Junior Architect	Indonesia
Akintunde	Male	MSc Electrical and Electronic Engineering and Entrepreneurship	B. Eng. Electrical	Telecommunication Engineer	Nigeria
Juliet	Female	MSc Applied Biopharmaceutical Biotechnology and Entrepreneurship	BSc in Bioscience	Junior Scientist	Nigeria
Diana	Female	MSc Applied Biopharmaceutical Biotechnology and Entrepreneurship	BSc Biomedical Science	Assistant Manager in Family Business	UK
Patrick	Male	MBA with Entrepreneurship	BBA (Hons), MA Applied Linguistics	Charity Organization Director and Finance	South Africa
Fiona	Female	MSc Sustainable Energy and Entrepreneurship	BEng Civil Engineer, Masters in Rock Mechanic and Masters in Mechanical Engineering	Professional Oil and Gas Engineer	Brazil

not quantity, given the complexity of the individuals' experiences (Smith *et al.*, 2009). Interview schedule

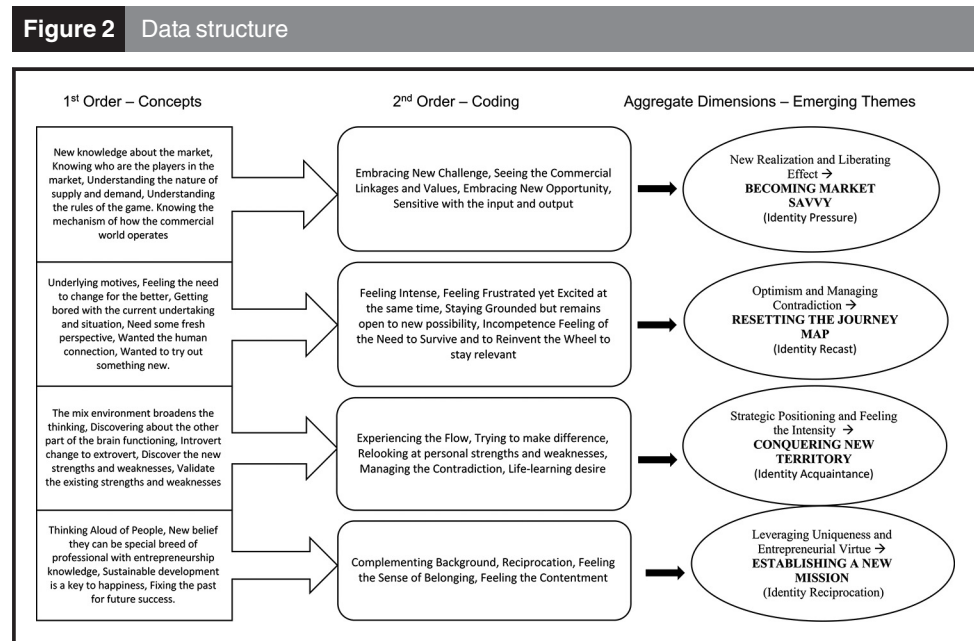
### Data analysis procedure

In IPA, a verbatim record of the data is described, expanded, revised and innovated (Smith *et al.*, 2009). The researcher must reread the transcript word by word to grasp the core of what is being said. Exploratory noting is used to discover a phenomenon's significance. While the researcher must stay inside the psychological reduction (i.e. be unbiased), they must be aware of the specific "meaning" of what is being stated. Using free imagination, the participant will eventually modify these meanings to connect to them. The data structure is provided in Figure 2, and the summary of analysis and thematic coding is provided in Table 3.

### Findings

The nascent entrepreneurial dialogic theory, the entrepreneurial virtues and professional identity development theory, the identity work theory and the student identity transition theory are all being used strategically as explanatory frameworks to help better comprehend the themes revealed by the data analysis. They were used in such a way that we can see how students made measures to construct their EI as they enact different role identities and concurrently deal with competing microidentities, and how this impacted their EP in due process.

As a result, four major themes emerged, centered on the newly discovered constellations of joy, delight, excitement and contentment that epitomize EP progression and are echoed by the transitional stage of self-introspection and identity transitions of becoming market-savvy (identity pressure), resetting the journey map (identity recast), conquering the uncharted territory (identity acquaintance) and establishing a new mission (identity reciprocation). Each subject is entwined and crucial to participants' search for identification in service of their natural tendency and moral commitment to entrepreneurial virtues. These issues are discussed in further detail below, along with excerpts.



**Table 3** Summary of analysis and thematic coding

Item	Participants/ Postgraduate Students	Significant words/ sentences used by participants to describe their account of experience in the CPEEP	Interpretation of specific meaning in the context of the experience of "What is like" to be inside the identity workspace of CPEEP	The progression of entrepreneurial passion and the manifestation of entrepreneurial behavior	First-order theme	Second-order theme	Emergent Theme
1	Roselia	[1] to think in a way that I'm not used to [2] into understanding how the real world actually works ... It's like you see the connection everywhere I go [3] when I get upset, then there is because there is a market gap	[1] An unusual feeling that never encountered before [2] The welcoming feeling of fresh information just coming through provide a positive reality check [3] A feeling about incompetency to deal with the present situation – the word "gap" may represent the inadequacy and the problems that come with it [1] A surprising feeling about how extensive is entrepreneurship world is then they initially thought – the realization of the space makes her feel that she is merely in the ecosystem [2] A new resolution of broadening the viewpoint – from a single perspective to broader perspective – carry out more responsibilities and hope Feeling that incompetency to deal with the presented information – A need for action to make up for the inadequacy by trying to get as much information about entrepreneurship to be ready with any information	The first effort to incorporate the entrepreneurial aspect into everyday activity by comparing particular life situations to entrepreneurship language demonstrates the understanding about the link between gap (issue) and opportunity becomes pretty clear The reality serves as a place for individuals to compare themselves to the market The consequence of entrepreneurial experience is that it allows individuals to open up, embrace, and appreciate the many aspects on which entrepreneurship concentrates	New knowledge about the market, getting to know who are the players in the market, understanding the nature of supply and demand and understanding the rules of the game. Knowing the mechanism of how the commercial world operates	Embracing new challenges, seeing the commercial linkages and values, embracing new opportunity and sensitive with the input and output	Becoming market- savvy
	Sariyanti	[1] entrepreneurship is broader, the variables are really wide [2] when I come into a business problem previously, I come to think from my point of view, but now ... I can see many perspectives ... the market point of view, R & D point of view, manager point of view					
	Akintunde	Sometimes I just could stay on the internet, searching for stuff I don't know what I am searching for					

(continued)

**Table 3**

Item	Participants/ Postgraduate Students	Significant words/ sentences used by participants to describe their account of experience in the CPEEP	Interpretation of specific meaning in the context of the experience of "What is like" to be inside the identity workspace of CPEEP	The progression of entrepreneurial passion and the manifestation of entrepreneurial behavior	First-order theme	Second-order theme	Emergent Theme
2	Juliet	<i>It is just abstract... I want something that is people-based</i>	The word "abstract" denotes an idea that about being trapped inside some space that did not offer much values and see the solution through new connection with human	The indication is clear that something has to alter, which would be a completely different experience	Underlying motives, feeling the need to change for the better, getting bored with the current undertaking and situation, need some fresh perspective, wanted the human connection, wanted to try out something new	Liberating mind, feeling intense, feeling frustrated yet excited at the same time, staying grounded but remains open to new possibility, feeling of the need to survive and to reinvent the wheel to stay relevant	Resetting the journey map
	Diana	<i>Being in the lab, experimenting, that was it. It's like a bridge... yeah, it is easier for me instead of jumping in the pool without anything</i>	A lab is being compared as the confined space of doing only experimenting something, nothing else – it is about a solitary work, working alone to get the result – that was it representing she had enough of the lab environment; she wanted something different	An indication that the participants already had their share of their previous experiences and were eager to try something new			
	Fiona	<i>I'm coming here with an open mind</i>	The feeling of assurance – the word bridge represents safety first, must be a safe way to cross to the other side	Before committing to entrepreneurship journey, it is necessary to quantify the risk first and to establish a shared starting point for the entrepreneurial journey			
			The feeling of liberating mind – do not want to be tied up with past experience. The word "open mind" represents the feeling of freedom to explore, liberating the mind	Entrepreneurship necessitates a new start, which necessitates individuals to be more receptive to alter themselves to be ready with entrepreneurship journey			

(continued)

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Item	Participants/ Postgraduate Students	Significant words/ sentences used by participants to describe their account of experience in the CPEEP	Interpretation of specific meaning in the context of the experience of "What is like" to be inside the identity workspace of CPEEP	The progression of entrepreneurial passion and the manifestation of entrepreneurial behavior	First-order theme	Second-order theme	Emergent Theme
Patrick	So, I want to explore... I came here, with no idea	The feeling of wanted to start afresh – do not want to put expectation because it might curtail the initial quest that has been set up. So, it gives better chance to absorb all the elements	Entrepreneurship is an exploration journey which provides an opportunity for individuals to examine their inner selves as well as the people around them				
3	Rosealia So, I think about the scientist, we used to enjoy when I was just a scientist that you don't have to speak to anyone so that I can do my research... but now I understand that it is essential to connect with people, ask the question, see what they think and then can feedback as well I feel like I have more voice. It develops my voice more	The feeling of reconnect to their domain and bringing back to new identity	The urgent need to interact with entrepreneurs to obtain greater insight and foresight about how things should be done		The mix environment broadens the thinking, discovering about the other part of the brain functioning, introvert change to extrovert, discover the new strengths and weaknesses, validate the existing strengths and weaknesses	Experiencing the flow, trying to make difference, relooking at personal strengths and weaknesses, managing the contradiction, life-learning desire	Conquering new territory
Diana	The empowering feeling that the ability becoming more powerful with entrepreneurial identity	The participants' growing ability as a result of entrepreneurship					
Patrick	..has equipped me to see a better way to do this	The optimistic feeling about the growing of entrepreneurial mindset	In terms of capacity to cope with opportunities, there has been a significant improvement				
Monica	I am going to think outside the box here, but you must think of a combination, so when you start thinking that way, you see all the possibilities all the different perspectives	The bold feeling to try something new – effort to become more creative in future activity	The act of thinking beyond the box indicates that participants are becoming more comfortable with their newly acquired entrepreneurial skills and knowledge				

(continued)

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Item	Participants/ Postgraduate Students	Significant words/ sentences used by participants to describe their account of experience in the CPEEP	Interpretation of specific meaning in the context of the experience of "What is like" to be inside the identity workspace of CPEEP	The progression of entrepreneurial passion and the manifestation of entrepreneurial behavior	First-order theme	Second-order theme	Emergent Theme
4	Monica	<i>I feel like I have strong commitment be able to make a change and that change it does not mean your personal benefit going to be put aside . . . you can make the change, you can improve your own life, and you can improve the lives of others . . . that really motivate me to look further into entrepreneurship as a way of solving and improving the way of life of yourself and the others</i>	Entrepreneurship will cater all stakeholders need – every entrepreneurship action will benefit both the doer and the receiver – it is a pleasant feeling of doing something that you will know you will be rewarded either instantly or later	Being well-versed on the role of entrepreneurship in generating both economic and social benefits. There is an increasing belief that bringing entrepreneurial knowledge and abilities back to their native country would help them greatly	Thinking aloud of people, new belief they can be special breed of professional with entrepreneurship knowledge, sustainable development is a key to happiness, fixing the past for future success	Complementing background, reciprocation, feeling the sense of belonging, feeling the contentment	Establishing a new mission
	Sariyanti	<i>What I want to do now is making some benefit to people, I mean we are existed to help each other, so by knowing, I can make some difference, by creating a business a sustainable business. I can improve my employees' life, and other people live as well . . . it will make me satisfied with my life</i>	Relates the entrepreneurship journey with purpose of life in which we would define the level of satisfaction that we wanted to pursue – whether tangible or intangible	People are an integral aspect of the entrepreneurial ecosystem that cannot be separated from its settings. Entrepreneurship must be able to direct activities in a way that benefits all parties involved			
	Rosealia	<i>I thought that it could be helpful to try to merge or to build the link between the business side and the bioscience side</i>	Returning to the original group that they come from and share the benefits of entrepreneurship to improve the group further	It is the ideal opportunity to reconnect with their professional network and develop things from there utilizing the entrepreneurship framework			

(continued)

**Table 3**

Item	Participants/ Postgraduate Students	Significant words/ sentences used by participants to describe their account of experience in the CPEEP	Interpretation of specific meaning in the context of the experience of "What is like "to be inside the identity workspace of CPEEP	The progression of entrepreneurial passion and the manifestation of entrepreneurial behavior	First-order theme	Second-order theme	Emergent Theme
Diana	<i>I never had perfect skin, and skin affects confidence quite a lot. I like to help other people</i>	Positively influence others – although there is no such thing as a perfect world, efforts must be done to distribute the positive effects of entrepreneurship It's vital to grasp this to return to their area of expertise so that they can enjoy it as well It takes passion to appreciate what you're doing while simultaneously helping others. Improve yourself and those around you so that the rewards of entrepreneurship may be shared by everyone	The inner feeling that by combining entrepreneurial knowledge and abilities with current strengths, they will be able to make a greater contribution to others around them				
Patrick	<i>Do the passion, and you'll enjoy the other things . . . So, your passion is for people, you are helping people</i>	Improves both activities and brings more advantages to individuals by tying the general passion and the specialized interest and strength together					



### *Theme 1 – becoming market-savvy (identity pressure)*

The first theme incorporates participants' desire to obtain a new perspective, a feeling of what the world of business has to offer them personally, through unpacking particular facts and ideas on the marketplace structure. They have gleaned a wealth of recent market information from the participants' accounts. As a result, participants are now capable of interpreting market information with increased understanding, including hidden market structures, the motivations behind corporate plans and the identities of industry actors. People get more acute when they become aware of a mismatch between their present identity and the new understanding. They are thirsty for further knowledge, which has evolved into their new behavior on its own. EP is experienced by participants when they sense the exhilaration of this new understanding and the possibility to apply it to their daily life beyond their current identity.

Rosealia revealed that CPEEP forces her to think differently because she is required to demonstrate her understanding of how real business ventures operate, which can be emotionally draining and lead to an obsession with finding solace through reading and comprehending market information:

This programme has allowed me to think in a way that I'm not used to [...] into understanding how the real world actually works [...] It's like you see the connection everywhere I go [...] Now I'm keeping the notebook, so maybe I think if it is not today there will come a point in my life that I may need the idea [...] I try to dedicate a few minutes a day [...] Not only do I write the idea, but I also write in which way I will do it [...] But for me every time I get upset about something, then I think [...] so when I get upset, then there is because there is a market gap.

Sariyanti began to see that there was a larger scene out there, and she was only a micro-sized participant. That new realization compels her not to see the marketplace only through the lens of her junior architect but to consider the perspectives of many stakeholders to get a deeper understanding of the marketplace:

Before this, I just know some sort of technical thing in the area that I know [...] entrepreneurship is broader, the variables are really wide [...] so we should consider all of them and we should have knowledge about them [...] when I come into a business problem previously, I come to think from my point of view, but now [...] I can see many perspectives [...] the market point of view, R & D point of view, and manager point of view.

Additionally, students become aware of new behaviors that they have recently developed during CPEEP. Akintunde realizes he can spend some more time analyzing market data he barely understands, but with a renewed feeling of purpose, he develops a new fixation with the markets:

I just have strict engineering so...but my thinking and my ideology has changed [...] if I'm being asked to run the company on my own or come out with something [...] I know what approaches to take, know what chances I have, what I need to do to improve my chances and what not [...] because now as I found that entrepreneurship is somehow interesting and me wanting to know more [...] Sometimes I just could stay on the internet, just searching for stuff I don't know what I am searching for [...] checking maybe the market data, just checking business news or checking stuff just to know.

### *Theme 2 – resetting the journey map (identity recast)*

Students' perspectives suggest that they are experiencing a new developing sense of optimism inside them, as well as an impulse to confront their established norms, which has resulted in their current deficiency, namely, their inability to cope with supplied marketplace knowledge more effectively. To address this, they believe they should modify their current status quo by implementing either a modest or major adjustment that will better prepare them for their anticipated entrepreneurial adventure. As a result, the EP experience is elicited when people experience the exhilaration of achieving a different sensation than

when they accomplish the opposite. For example, Juliet and Diana acknowledged in a “scientific world” that they were losing their “human connection,” that they felt alienated, and that they wanted to reestablish contact with the human world. They want social contact, more human interaction and the capacity to display their interpersonal abilities freely:

Because with biochemistry, it was really lab-based [...] I’ve done my first dissertation in the lab, and I wasn’t [...] I enjoyed it for a small time. However, I wasn’t sure I wanted to do this for the rest of my life. To be in the lab. Some people do [...] and I didn’t think I wanted to do that [...] I think I have other skills that I can use outside the lab [...] However, I also have people’s skills. I think I am quite analytical in other areas, not just scientifically. [...] I think my experience for being in the lab [...] wasn’t that inspired [...] doing cell culturing and you know I enjoyed year one and year two, but in the third year we were looking so much in details at protein [...] for me, it is just abstract [...] you know, I want something that is people-based.

Because of science [...] I thought being in the lab, doing an experiment, that was it. Business like [...] I say handling money; it is a different side. But maybe it is not money [...] the mindset is different as well.

While the students were desiring for something, which is the opposite of how they now feel, they are also fearful of doing anything new. As a result, they started reviewing the present resources available to them and how they may be incorporated with the goal of altering their status quo. They opt to go with what they are comfortable with. Diana used the term “bridge” to refer to both “connection” and “safety” while discussing her approach to business:

I like familiarity, to begin with [...] It’s good because I still have the science that I’m familiar with [...] it’s like a bridge [...] yeah it is easier for me instead of jumping in the pool without anything.

Students, on the other hand, rebel against their existing selves. They believed that the significant transformation was unavoidable since their old profession conflicted with their inherent personalities. They sensed, deep down, that their prior work no longer exuded energy (meaningfulness). To affect that shift, they go deeper by determining their broad passions (Patrick is passionate about people, while Fiona is passionate about the environment) and using that response to motivate them to be passionate about business to an end. They are enabling themselves to “open-up” as they immerse themselves in the entrepreneurial environment:

But for some reason, I don’t know why [...] I thought I’m doing something wrong and started doing some research about how I changed what I was doing [...] and ended up finding that renewable energy would be a good move to my life, to the things that I believe [...] I am a very environmentally friendly person [...] I used to work in the petroleum industry, but I never believed in petroleum as the energy source [...] I always believed in renewable resources, but the point is that 10 years ago, no one was talking about that [...] I mean that now I just do something that I always knew would come up [...] I’m coming here with an open mind [...] it’s like I know I can have a few plans but I know that it’s not going to fulfil that’s why I came here without any plan.

I came to this because I need something new. [...] The trigger point is for me was [...] my role when I was the central director for charity was to reinvent the area [...] and to basically make a profit so that it could operate properly [...] bringing in the new strategy and after five years, I run out of challenge [...] of how to make better, what to do. So, there was a choice [...] is to find another project, and do that or doing an MBA [...] then I will learn something that actually if I stay in my job or go back to my job, I could do it in a different way and even better [...] So, I finished the last job, quit, now I’m joining the MBA with entrepreneurship [...] and I think if you don’t have a life-changing event, you never going to have exploration, you never going to have growth [...] you not able to see something different [...] and when I came here, I realized that my planning is in the way of my development. So, I want to explore [...] I came here, with no idea [...] what I want to do outside of this course.

### *Theme 3 – conquering new territory (identity acquaintance)*

According to participants' narratives, CPEEP initiates a period of intense self-introspection to learn about and better understand their opposing selves. They begin to discover the new elements in them, accept what this newness could potentially bring and demonstrate their newness by directly practicing it and gaining rapid feedback on their performance. Participants believed that the diversified feature of CPEEP, which demands them to continually handle opposing relationships efficiently, contributed to their discovery of newness.

Roselia mentioned how CPEEP helps her uncover the other side of her thinking capacity, which, in turn, strengthens her newly acquired thinking abilities. She credits this novelty to her interactions with classmates who come from a variety of professional backgrounds. In certain circumstances, she is compelled to exert herself during group work. The immediate team atmosphere leads her to loosen up and try something new, such as turning into an extrovert from an introvert or from a less confident to a more confident individual:

I feel that I am gaining more skills. I feel a part of my brain that wasn't working before, I'm thinking in a different way [...] You're only into one school or department and you would of course act like the people in the same department, but because I mixed with the people from another background, everyone will be so different [...] it's helped me to understand that there are other ways of doing things and there are other ways of exploring and there are also important ways of communicating, being respectful [...] I was actually a bit shy, and I didn't connect a lot on the network. So, here at the very first, I was learning how to speak to people and how to introduce myself [...] I feel good about it. I feel like when I see people, I don't panic and I can speak about whatever and then you also link, there is always. People always have good knowledge and good networks [...] So, I think about the scientist, we used to enjoy when I was just a scientist that you don't have to speak to anyone, so I can do my own research [...] but now I understand that it is important to connect with people, ask the question, see what they think and then can feedback as well.

Additionally, the CPEEP experience gives individuals an opportunity to assess their existing strengths and weaknesses in a more direct way, providing them with immediate emotional input and behavioral reactions. This is the experience that Diana, Patrick and Monica had:

I also feel like I get more flexible, with the way of thinking, the way of doing a thing as well. So, I like meeting people [...] because there is more opinion, I feel like I have more voice. It develops my voice more [...] I always feel like my mind is always open to other ideas and other thoughts, and it is just built on top of my knowledge [...] evolved in a different way [...] I think it made me more confident, then what I felt before. If it made me confident in general in life. I can live on my own. I can support myself [...] I'm independent and act with the feeling of confidence and courage.

[...] and very quickly I realized that I am not a finance person [...] and that was good because I never knew that. I've worked with finance before, you know [...] in the charity, on the money side that I think I could do. I thought maybe I am an accountant, but I'm not. So that is what I've discovered [...] It has equipped me to see that there is a better way I can do this.

[...] you are a follower. After you are taking entrepreneurship ... you are the leader [...] it really pushes you to think outside the box, you are not just going to say, I am going to think outside the box here, but you must think of a combination, so when you start thinking that way, you see all the possibilities all the different perspectives.

### *Theme 4 – establishing a new mission (identity reciprocation)*

Participants' narratives revealed that the emotional feedback they had received while practicing newly acquired skills and abilities in their immediate team environment had helped them realize that they can also leverage their core competency and leverage entrepreneurship as a proxy to accomplish personal goals. EP is felt when an individual feels excited about how entrepreneurship complements their primary expertise, as well as content to be actively engaged in generating mutual benefit to themselves and the

marketplace's stakeholders. It completed the learning cycle by demonstrating their capacity to bridge the gap between how powerless they felt with their first identity and how, with their new identity, new meaningfulness began to emerge. At this stage, they have discovered what this newly internalized identity offers them, particularly in fulfilling their moral commitment to serve their entrepreneurial virtues. To continue with the whole expected entrepreneurship journey; they need to actualize this new identity to accommodate their newly developed entrepreneurial behavior without forgoing their professional capability, which brings wholesome goodness to society.

According to participants, the CPEEP participation teaches them that they are not merely regular professionals. For instance, Monica believed that with further entrepreneurial understanding, she might become a change agent. She reasoned that she might return to her country and make a good difference there via the positive force of the business. The urge to have a beneficial influence on society stems from the concept of sustainable development, which she believes can be advanced if she can use her core skill to promote sustainable design practices. Individuals are distinct but endowed with unique abilities. Thus, it is about instilling a positive change in the lives of others via the specialties she has, which provide her with a sense of fulfillment:

So, for me, I was working, my first job was an employee with one architect, and he always told me what to do, after that, when you think more like as [...] more entrepreneurial [...] you are thinking, how can I use my skills... as an architect as, how can I use this for me, making a change, at the higher level that I don't have to follow just everybody else doing, so I enhance the opportunities, and enhance my capacity as an entrepreneur [...] you gain the ability to make a change either for yourself or for the others, and I think in my case, the social driver is very important because I am very committed [...] because Colombia, we have so many problems, I feel like I have strong commitment be able to make a change and that change it does not mean your personal benefit going to be put aside [...] you can make the change, you can improve your own life, and you can improve the lives of others [...] that really motivate me to look further into entrepreneurship as a way of solving and improving the way of life of yourself and the others.

Sariyanti would be content with her existence if she could unequivocally state why she exists in this world. She reasoned that those improvements and advantages are inextricably linked to long-term socioeconomic growth:

When I was younger, I was thinking about by being an entrepreneur we can be a rich man, but, what I am thinking now that is not just about the money [...] but it is also good to improve many people live, I can improve people living in my own way [...] what I want to do now is making some benefit to people, I mean we are existed to help each other, so by having the knowledge, I can make some difference, by making a business a sustainable business, I can improve my employees' life, and other people live as well [...] it will make me satisfied with my life.

Meanwhile, Roselia, Monica and Patrick felt satisfied if they could return to their previous fields and contribute to the organization's beneficial developments:

"I see a lot of scientists struggling with funding all the time, and I'm thinking that is not because of lack of funding, but rather I see that they are not able to explain the importance and the application of the technology. So, for me as a scientist, I thought that it could be helpful to try to merge or to build the link between the business side and the bioscience side [...] and there is a way that this can change and that's learning from that experience, and try to be an entrepreneur [...] As an entrepreneur, I will be dealing with some skills and approaches to try to or work on the limitations that you have. So, thinking in the way of doing this and that, not so expensive but the successful way at the same time."

I really liked skincare, I am extremely interested in dermatology, [...] my plan is to understand dermatology, understand how skin can work [...] I never had perfect skin, and skin affects confidence quite a lot. I like to help other people [...] as I want in the future to start my own business in making skincare formulations. However, I need to get the experience to see how it works first.

My passion is people. So, anything that involves people, working with people who don't have an opportunity in life, a good example is refugees [...] so my passion is how to get the person from zero, to have the opportunity, I'm happy to use this sector, to help the people [...] I'm not motivated about me, it is not about money, success, you don't work in charity for money, so I then realized it is passion and that's the driver. Do the passion, and you'll enjoy the other things [...] So, your passion is for people, you are helping people, and then you are looking at the theory, you look at the business model. Do you think, well OK maybe I could fit into this? Maybe I can just apply this thing to my next project.

## Discussions

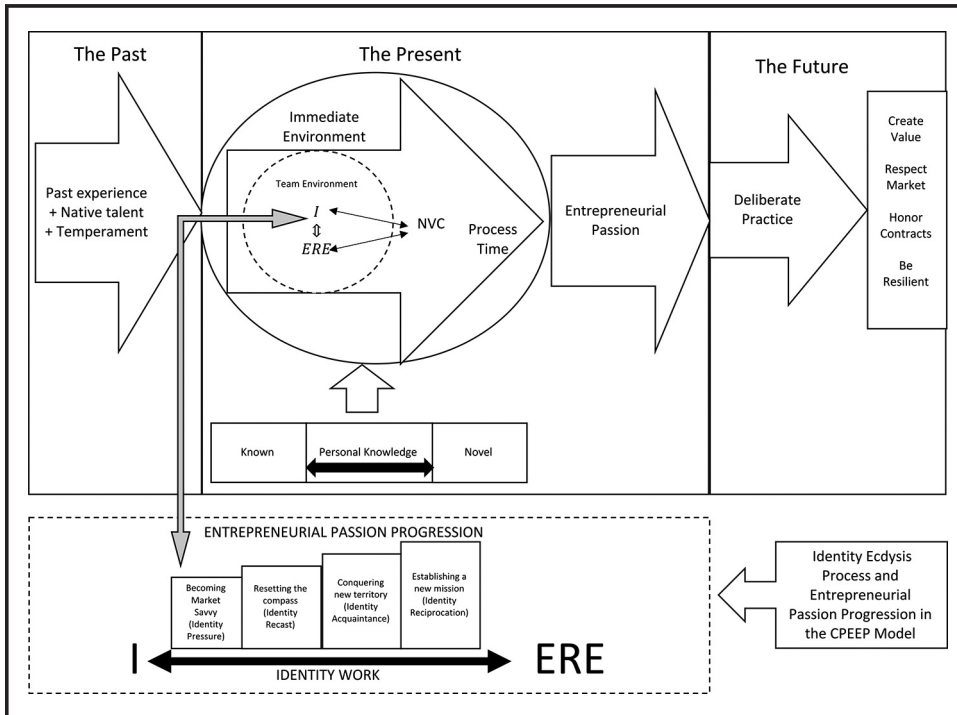
This part begins by reviewing the research question of how the construction of EI in a CPEEP influences the progression of students' EP as they simultaneously enact different role identities and deal with competing microidentities. We find that the construction of EI influences the progression of EP through a process that we refer to as "the identity ecdysis" that is akin to identity work, a missing process that takes place along the continuum of [Lundqvist et al. \(2015\)](#)'s nascent entrepreneurial dialogic theory [entrepreneurial identity role expectations (EIRE)], which defines the latent transition process of students' identity in the CPEEP (refer to [Figure 2](#)). This identity ecdysis occurs as the students reorganize their competing microidentities while seeking to fulfill their quest of moral commitment toward the entrepreneurial virtues ([Duening, 2017](#)). Throughout the process, students used their personal identity as a superordinate identity and began to reconcile all competing microidentities by connecting their future identities as professional entrepreneurs. By doing so, individuals position themselves to intentionally use all the ever-expanding information they acquire in service of their entrepreneurial values. The identity ecdysis process serves as a new paradigm for illuminating the hidden dynamics inside the entrepreneurship dialogic, allowing students to successfully manage their conflicting microidentities. This new theory elucidates how students make sense of the external stimuli encountered during the CPEEP by defining the legitimate quest for:

- who they are during and after CPEEP; and
- what they should do to better serve the entrepreneurial role expectation at that point in time, considering the past, present and future.

Based on the findings, we propose The Theory of Identity Ecdysis Process and Entrepreneurial Passion Progression in the CPEEP ([Figure 3](#)), a theoretical model that depicts the EP progression phenomenon and the underlying process of changing identities in response to experiences and career visions, all of which took place within the confines of a situated, embodied entrepreneurship learning context. This model is made up of four stages that represent the students' identity shifts: (I) identity pressure, (II) identity recast, (III) identity acquaintance and (IV) identity reciprocation, each of which complements the EP progression stage and is resonated by the self-introspection feeling of: (I) becoming market savvy, (II) resetting the journey map, (III) conquering the uncharted territory and (IV) establishing a new mission. These themes are consistent with the entrepreneurial pull factors of autonomy, authority, challenge, self-realization and engagement in the full process ([Kolvereid, 1996](#); [Zainuddin and Ismail, 2011](#)) and identity transformation models ([Bridges, 2009](#)). Furthermore, it is also discovered that the sources of EP ([Cardon et al., 2017](#)) appear to be allied to identity shifts, namely, passion for growth and passion for competition (Stage I), passion for inventing and passion for people (Stage II), passion for growth and passion for competition (Stage III) and passion for people, passion for products or services and passion for social causes (Stage IV).

The initial progression of EP happens when participants begin to question their present personal identity's limitations in comprehending the market adequately. They experience immediate pressure as they realize they are a relatively small part of the marketplace

**Figure 3** Identity ecdysis and entrepreneurial passion progression in the CPEEP model



ecosystem and must accomplish required entrepreneurial activities using their newly learned entrepreneurial expertise to assert their importance. The sense of incompleteness led to an increase in EP intensity, which helps participants become more open to the prospect of change (Landri, 2007). This theme is congruent with the notion of harmonious passion, which encourages more self-acceptance and less rumination on past experiences (Forest et al., 2012).

In the next stage, EP progresses when individuals recognize the adverse feeling of incompleteness as a signal to change to continue their entrepreneurial journey. By resetting the journey map, it forces participants to challenge their status quo, which helps them to be more receptive to new experiences and consequently seek a new identity that better fits them. This stage illustrates how participants' behavior changes when they let go of their current identity by rearranging and prioritizing competing microidentities in accordance with their importance and salience. By recasting a new personal identity based on the updated entrepreneurial agenda, reconciliation is established. EP progresses when individuals are captivated by the idea of doing something unexpected and novel, which forces them to leave their comfort zone. This theme is consistent with a description of passion as a distinct motivating factor that can affect people's ability to deal with contradictory elements in their daily activities (Gomart and Hennion, 1998), with passion acting as a "conditioning agent" that connects multiple actors in a social network in which this asymmetric relationship emerges, persists and reproduces (Landri, 2007). They affect change in the "control" environment, exhibiting the feature of calculated risk-taking (Palich and Bagby, 1995) and sound reasoning that defines entrepreneurial action (Sarasvathy, 2008).

Then EP progresses further as the participants get bolder by tackling new, unknown problems that enable them to experiment with their newly acquired entrepreneurial skills and knowledge. By forcing themselves to explore the uncharted territory, they discovered that there are distinct skill sets and knowledge that were previously unknown. The excitement of finding something new and being let to implement it immediately not only makes them more

effective but also more optimistic about the whole entrepreneurial journey that they are now experiencing as it provides them with a balanced and meaningful life perspective (Duckworth *et al.*, 2007; Pradhan *et al.*, 2017).

The final progression of EP occurs when the participants make sense of their existing core competencies, which are founded on the meritocracy of their professional backgrounds and compel them to go above and beyond to create great results for themselves and their immediate significant social circle. At this stage, they see that entrepreneurship may serve as a foundation for action. It demonstrates the balance they seek between personal competence and social approval. The accounts of the participants reveal their delight at having their personal competence supplemented by entrepreneurial knowledge, as well as their contentment with being able to use their personal competence to benefit others, bring social and economic good to the marketplace and reciprocate within their social circle. Consequently, EP has progressed into a well-balanced experience of identity shifts. While EP is often perceived as a solitary passion, this research discovers EP as a broad motivational construct that leads to life pleasure and promotes well-being as they embraced the perspective that entrepreneurship fulfills their overall life goal (Forest *et al.*, 2012; Philippe *et al.*, 2009).

The identity ecdysis is proven to influence the EP progression, therefore influencing students' identities, internalizing new values and pushing them to act entrepreneurially while maintaining their meritocracy through professional identity. By establishing a new individualized identity that encompasses all the microidentities inherent in the entrepreneurship education framework, they can use entrepreneurship as a proxy for achieving their overarching personal identity quest, which is derived from the moral commitment and natural inclination to practice entrepreneurial virtues.

### Future learning management implications

Based on the findings, we propose that future learning activities take several steps to strengthen the current CPEEP and to assist in the effective internalization and identification of students' identities that support the students' identity ecdysis.

To begin, the need of accepting the powerful nature of personal identification as an anchoring identity that may reorganize and harmonize conflicting microidentities must be properly underlined. Identity education principles proposed by Schachter and Rich (2011) may be used, enabling educators' deliberate active involvement with students' identity-related processes or contents in fostering preferred qualities between the self and the world. It is proposed that students should be given greater freedom to explore their numerous microidentities to identify which ones complement their EI during their entrepreneurial journey. As such, students must be more open by adjusting their level of openness while dealing with personal adjustments they must make. As a result, they will be able to recast their personal identity by combining their professional and entrepreneurial identities into a single signature identity to achieve their objectives.

Second, learning activities should be focused on EP sources (Cardon *et al.*, 2017) so that students may align their academic motivation with their professional objectives. The learning activities can be designed to manipulate the sources of EP by exposing students to various situations requiring them to solve business problems involving the pursuit of entrepreneurial virtues in addressing concerns about:

- growth (economic, social and personal);
- people (socioeconomic);
- products or services (marketplace gaps, problem-solving and value proposition);
- inventing (creativity and innovation); and
- competition (broad) (environmental, economic inequality and social injustice).

Finally, it is discovered that the activities involving handling contradictory elements seem to be an ideal platform for students to reveal the hidden quality or newness element, which causes a significant emotional feedback loop that enables them to realize the potent combination of both professional and entrepreneurial identities. As a result of the activity of handling the contradictory elements, it is assumed that the violation or threat of the identities of the students will trigger an additional level of identity work, allowing them to come to terms with the violations by making sense of their identities in connection to the infringing social conditions.

Therefore, looking at all these ideas, the apprenticeship approach may do this in the classroom. Entrepreneurial educators may build a teaching and learning style that incorporates students actively creating and commenting on values every day. An apprenticeship allows side guidance to emerge organically, but by purposefully participating in value-creation activities and displaying entrepreneurial characteristics, students' EP may be consistently and favorably changed.

## Conclusions

This paper demonstrated how the construction of EI in a CPEEP influence students' EP progression as they enact different role identities and concurrently deal with competing microidentities. Our findings add to the identity work literature ([Alvesson et al., 2008](#); [Leitch and Harrison, 2016](#)) by demonstrating that identity work facilitates students' internal negotiation of competing microidentities, allowing for self-introspection and identity transitions that effectively demonstrated "what it is like to be an entrepreneur" and "what I should do to become an entrepreneur." Identity work enables students' selves to develop and change by impacting their predisposition and willingness to participate entrepreneurially (through strategic positioning projection), resembling the EP's deepening intensity level.

Despite their importance, EP and identity have not been addressed in entrepreneurial learning. This research combines lifeworld analysis (IPA), emergent perspective theory (EIRE), entrepreneurial virtues and professional entrepreneur identity development theory and students' identity transition theory. This article contributes to the literature by elucidating the underlying mechanism of the latent behavioral integration process between passion and identity ([Vallerand, 2008, 2015](#); [Vallerand et al., 2003](#)) and by providing empirical support for CPEEP as an EI workspace ([Hytti and Heinonen, 2013](#); [Rigg and O'Dwyer, 2012](#)).

The previous study suggests that passion is personalized and domain-specific, but it may also be affected by the social environment, notably the individual's identity ([Cardon et al., 2009](#); [Murnieks et al., 2014](#); [Vallerand, 2008, 2015](#)). This study shows how participants deal with a competing microidentity by developing a new customized identity capable of harmonizing the entrepreneurship learning process and anticipated entrepreneurial journey. This research addresses how individuals can best use their identities to advance entrepreneurial ideals in the most social and economic manner possible. Using entrepreneurship as a personal action framework, people may channel their passion into focused entrepreneurial activity.

The findings suggest identifying emotional processes in entrepreneurship education. Learners are experts in their own experiences; thus, we must evaluate their heuristics for personal and societal impact. This study includes conceptual and qualitative concepts and practices (lecturers, educators and university administrators), but the findings might benefit from more quantitative or mixed analysis and experimental settings (i.e. neuro-entrepreneurship studies, etc.) Future research may examine how negative emotional feedback influences entrepreneurial desire. Does EP help individuals overcome negative emotions? Research needed.

In conclusion, EP is a profound experience that influences people's entrepreneurial behaviors throughout the entrepreneurship learning process, which begins deep inside and is supported by identity work. We demonstrate how EP is progressed in postgraduate entrepreneurial programs. We found that participants' EP progress was due to their moral commitment and propensity for entrepreneurial virtue.



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