



Setting the Scene: The Student-Process-Educator Nexus in Entrepreneurship Education

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1 INTRODUCTION

Teaching entrepreneurship to undergraduates and what takes place in the classroom can in many ways be compared to setting a scene in the theatre. Students are the leading actors surrounded by elements in supporting roles. While not a cultural art scene entrepreneurship education (EE) is yet a similar scene with actors assigned to different roles. The scene of EE can best be described as dialogic system with elements such as the institution, the community, the educational process and the entrepreneurship educator that evolves around each student (Jones & Matlay, 2011). While each student is the star of their own show the star cannot shine

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without the necessary support. Unclear directions from the entrepreneurship educator add to the probability that only very skilled stars will manage to obtain a personal success. However, EE is for all and as such the entrepreneurial classroom should offer possibilities for all. This is the setup for this chapter.

From a research perspective, EE research is rather diverse, however, the dominant focus concerning entrepreneurial pedagogy and teaching approaches has been on the outcome and less on ‘how’ to teach entrepreneurship and even lesser on how both students and educators should act in this perspective. This chapter zooms into the roles, relationship and interaction between the educator and student using the entrepreneurial classroom or learning space as a scene for student identity development. It proposes a framework that assists the entrepreneurship educator to direct the play on the entrepreneurial learning scene, that could act as an inspirational manual for the entrepreneurship educator who wishes to develop students’ entrepreneurial identity by focusing on how the entrepreneurial learning space is created. The chapter ends with some practical propositions of what the entrepreneurship educator could do to put the framework into play in an undergraduate setting.

2 UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

Often EE is linked to the purpose of creating a business plan and starting up a business which affects the teaching focus and learning approach. However, as the purpose of the chapter is to discuss and propose how the entrepreneurship educator can assist in students’ entrepreneurial identity development a wider focus on EE is needed. In this context, EE acts as the scene for becoming entrepreneurial hence a movement from the ‘starting up’ perspective towards the ‘stepping up’ perspective that embraces both the purpose of either being an entrepreneur or becoming entrepreneurial (Jones & Matlay, 2011). In the wider context of EE becoming entrepreneurial relates to each students’ personal development, being creative, taking initiative and building self-reliance among other things (Lackéus, 2015). As an entrepreneurship educator, it is important to consider one’s own understanding of the EE context, the definitions, and purposes. The approach to entrepreneurship stems from these clarifications and act as the thread that binds plan, content and execution

including the perception of learning objectives and assessment of the students together (Samwel Mwasalwiba, 2010).

In this chapter, EE is defined broadly as developing the mindset, skill set and practice necessary for starting new ventures, yet the outcomes of such education are far-reaching supporting the life skills necessary to live productive lives even if one does not start a business thus empowering each student through EE (Lackéus, 2015; Neck & Corbett, 2018). This definition of EE implies an entrepreneurial learning approach that reaches further than using conventional teaching methods only, while at the same time emphasises the potential of EE as a driver for students to undergo a personal transition as well.

To set the scene further, this chapter moves beyond the traditional view on the classroom denominating the entrepreneurial learning space. The reasoning is that the classroom is more than ‘only’ a physical room where the students and the educator meet. Alongside the traditional understanding of a room a mental room appears in which the educator has a large degree of influence. This mental room includes content, methods and approaches used in class when setting the scene of EE. The mental room represents the entrepreneurship educator’s interpretation of how to teach entrepreneurship, how the educator will allow and encourage student development (Sagar, 2015). The understanding of the entrepreneurial learning space challenges the conventional assumption that students only learn during their presence and meeting with their educator in the classroom. Learning can take place everywhere, for instance when the entrepreneurial learning approach includes applying a practical element to the course content that sends the students out of the classroom to test their ideas in practice. Moreover, students interact with fellow students outside the classroom which reinforces the assumption that entrepreneurial learning takes places both inside and outside of the classroom.

Presenting the Components of the Play

Something ‘magical’ can and should happen in the entrepreneurial learning space. As illustrated in Fig. 1, there is a deeply connected dialogical relationship between the entrepreneurship educator and each student through the educational process. This dialogic relationship influences how the educator teaches entrepreneurship and impact the development of what happens in the classroom. The entrepreneurship educators influence

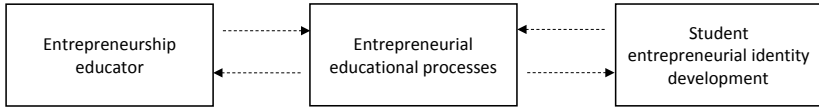


Fig. 1 Three central components on the entrepreneurship education scene (*Source* Own depiction)

students in their ‘becoming’ towards their entrepreneurial identity development where they acknowledge themselves being able to act in that role. Likewise, the students’ interaction and feedback influence the role of the entrepreneurship educator as well.

The three components in Fig. 1 represent the backbone of this chapter. At a first glance, the illustrated relationships seem simple; however, each element represents a complexity bound by dialogic relationships that together ‘form a system that cannot be divided if it is to be understood’ (Bryat & Julien, 2001, p. 169). The entrepreneurial educational processes are the stage where the story unfolds with each student as the lead actor and the entrepreneurship educator as the primary director of the play bound together through interactions in the entrepreneurial learning space.

Behind the scenes, the entrepreneurship educator is embedded in a system of own dialogic relationships with a range of stakeholders (Wraae & Walmsley, 2020). Hannon (2018) even views entrepreneurship educators in the role of entrepreneurial leaders within the organisation. The educator is (re)acting to how the educational frames of reference are decided by the institution in order to plan and execute teaching entrepreneurship. Further, they act as the link between the students and the outside world, for instance by creating contact to incubator environments and the private sector. In many ways, the entrepreneurship educator is the ‘buffer’ between the students and the elements that surrounds the students in their daily lives as students. How the educators take on the role of being and acting as an entrepreneurship educator is based on the view of their own role in relation to the dialogic relationships (Wraae & Walmsley, 2020) and their previous entrepreneurial experience as well as their experience as educators (Wraae et al., 2021).

The scene, the entrepreneurial educational processes, is the entrepreneurial learning space and the delivery of teaching. Its focus is not exclusively on the immediate creation of new businesses, rather it evolves

around developing certain personal qualities, entrepreneurial attitudes, and skills. It is the scene where students have their rehearsals through a wide variety of situations, aims, methods, and teaching approaches (Fayolle et al., 2006; Harmeling, 2011; Pittaway & Thorpe, 2012; Svensson et al., 2017).

On the centre stage, the entrepreneurial play unfolds with each student, that is expected to take on a leading role on their entrepreneurial identity development journey. Having the leading role really means to take an active role. The student cannot act as an extra on their own show. They must act in the role of (future) entrepreneurs. At the same time, students enter the entrepreneurial learning space with different backgrounds, life experiences (thus far), skills and competences. In other words, they represent a wide span of differences, that the entrepreneurship educator needs to be aware of in the student's journey towards a future career (Jones & Matlay, 2011).

Setting a Transformative Scene—The Educational Entrepreneurial Processes

Zooming in on the scene, the educational entrepreneurial processes, is where the entrepreneurship educator and the students meet and play out their role in students' entrepreneurial learning journey and identity formation. This is the stage for both the rehearsals and where the opening show takes place.

While it can be discussed whether the entrepreneurial learning approaches can be considered a process (Sagar, 2015) or a method (Neck & Greene, 2011)—this relates to the unpredictability of acting entrepreneurially—there is an agreement that teaching entrepreneurship should include students learning through a practical and experiential context where the gained knowledge, learned tools and theories are put into practice while giving the students the possibility to reflect on that practice and their own role (Sagar, 2015; Wraae et al., 2020).

Transformative learning relates to EE as it: 'refers to the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action' (Mezirow, 2000, pp. 7–8).

To implement transformative learning a series of teaching approaches are possible. Each represents different purposes in terms of content and role distribution. The ‘for’ and ‘through’ approaches are each linked to activity-based learning as a means to develop entrepreneurial students (Neck & Greene, 2011; Robinson & Blenker, 2014). The ‘demand’ and ‘competence’ models are related to the entrepreneurship educator’s view on education and the role of respectively student and educator (Bécharde & Grégoire, 2005; Nabi et al., 2016). As such, the entrepreneurship educator faces possibilities and choices when deciding what should take place in the entrepreneurial learning space. However, keeping the transformative learning approach in mind, the overall role of the educator is to assist students to become both aware and critical of their own assumptions and others’ assumptions as well in order to use their imagination to look at and redefine problems from a different perspective to facilitate transformative learning (Mezirow, 1997).

Mezirow’s (1997, 2000) transformative learning approach aligns with the principles of andragogy and heutagogy (Jones, 2015, 2019; Neck & Corbett, 2018). Each principle resonates around the interaction between the student and the educator either in the form of a mutual agreement between each student and the educator on the outcome (andragogy) or the activities the students initiate (heutagogy), thus self-determined learning and facilitating their own learning process (Jones, 2015). Each student is encouraged to take a personal responsibility to make meaning of the learned, however not in isolation but in cooperation with the educator, that facilitates a learning environment where this is possible (Garrison, 1997). Each student must claim ownership over their own learning and make sense of acting entrepreneurially and achieve a sense of belonging in the entrepreneurial learning space and to the actors in that space (Donnellon et al., 2014; Nielsen & Gartner, 2017).

Students having a real-world experience rather than simply reproducing theoretical concepts experience ‘learning by doing’ or ‘doing by learning’ producing problem-solving and solutions and having to use their knowledge to make a case for the important aspects of the given task. By doing so, the entrepreneurship educator is engaging the student’s senses, feelings and thinking (Jones & Matlay, 2011), hence: ‘Learning is best facilitated by a process that draws out the students’ beliefs and ideas about a topic so that they can be examined, tested, and integrated with new, more refined ideas’ (Kolb & Kolb, 2005, p. 194). Further,

learning takes place when students interact with the surrounding environment (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Therefore, real-world experience should be a part of the transformative learning approach as an important contributor to students' learning and their making sense, meaning and purpose of their experiences.

Entrepreneurship as the Scene for Student Identity Development

A part of being an undergraduate student includes undergoing an identity development journey that makes sense of 'who am I' and making sense of what each student is going to become (Nielsen & Gartner, 2017). Being a student includes building 'identity capital' that defines themselves internally and how others define them externally in different contexts (Varelas, 2012). The role transformation is an ongoing part of every student's life. In the educational context, the general student role conception is that a student is someone that prepare for class, show up and participate, have an attitude (being active or passive), hand in assignments and finally, pass their exam to get their grade.

However, upon entering the entrepreneurial learning space that role conception is challenged more than in the traditional sense when each student is expected to take on the role as an active student that is responsible for own learning while experiencing an entrepreneurial transformation through the offered learning processes. As such, students' entrepreneurial learning experience is strongly linked to their identity construction (Brush & Gale, 2015) however sensing multiple identities in the process, for instance as both students, entrepreneurs and predefined future worker identity (Nielsen & Gartner, 2017).

While identity transformation can be explained by a shift in roles, it can also be explained as a result of an individual socialisation process when the student creates meaning through the interaction with the educator and the other students (Donnellon et al., 2014). Further, the narrative or the dialogue assist in the identity formation. When the student experiences dialogues with him or herself and with others as a part of the entrepreneurial process, it creates experiences that contribute to the entrepreneurial identity construction (Donnellon et al., 2014).

The student can also adopt an entrepreneurial identity by claiming to be an entrepreneur while in the process of creating a new venture (Rigg &

O'Dwyer, 2012). Finally, symbols contribute to entrepreneurial development, for instance when the student presents a prototype or pitch an idea or dresses up to make an impact to an audience (Donnellon et al., 2014).

The student entrepreneurial identity construction, therefore, links to different theoretical identity perspectives. The students themselves must perceive their own entrepreneurial role (identity theory) as well as a shared construction of entrepreneurship in groups (social identity theory). Furthermore, students are formed in a social process by their educator, their student peers and what happens both inside and beyond the classroom and the educational facilities (Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Nielsen & Gartner, 2017). Finally, the students must consider themselves in a future job-related perspective and how they will act either as entrepreneurs or intrapreneurs for that matter (professional identity theory).

As the focus of the chapter is the entrepreneurship educator assists the students in their becoming—their entrepreneurial identity development—the role of the entrepreneurship educator is to give each student a sense of belonging through enabling students with meaning, motivation and decision-making competences (Donnellon et al., 2014; Hytti & Heinonen, 2013).

Reflection as a Supporting Role to Student Identity Development

For each student to make sense of the 'who am I' question, they must engage in a complex reflective process and find meaning through the entrepreneurial learning processes (Donnellon et al., 2014). As such, reflection serves to understand, recognise, and even acknowledge own identity development in EE. Reflection triggers insights about learning and about the entrepreneurial process including which skills that are needed to act through entrepreneurship. Students become empowered to understand their own identity and their identity formation. Further, they obtain an awareness of the transformation they are going through and the shift between different identities; that they leave something and move towards a new understanding of themselves. In short, they obtain self-insights into their own personal transformation (Wraae et al., 2020).

Self-reflective and self-assessment tools have proven useful to connect the learned to own learning and identity development. Moreover, such tools enhance critical thinking when the students assess themselves in the light of own skills and competences. Reflections in EE can have various goals and foci from doing self-observations of self, of experiences, of

relations to others to assessment of dreams and future career aspirations (Lindh, 2017; Pittaway & Thorpe, 2012). The latter is especially important for undergraduate students as they are in their early stage of career development.

For students to obtain self-insights and understanding of own self and future role towards an identity development, Wraae et al. (2020) suggest individual video clip as a concrete and effective tool that allows students the possibility to reflect on their themselves in an entrepreneurial perspective without any interruptions from anyone. Individual assignments ‘force’ each student to reflect on themselves. Alongside the tool, however, the educator must give room for reflection to happen and there must be something to reflect upon. Only then, are the students capable of reflecting on themselves in an entrepreneurial perspective and obtaining crucial personal insights and transformations about themselves in an entrepreneurial perspective (Wraae et al., 2020). The role of the entrepreneurship educator is therefore to encourage students to learn how to learn and assist the students to develop the right capabilities to be able to do so.

The Framework and the Nexus Between the Actors in EE

The dialogic relationship between educator and student relates to andragogy and heutagogy as the entrepreneurship educator must view each student as an individual and give each student an active role in their own learning process. On the other hand, student identity development can only happen in cooperation with each student. Based on the discussions so far this section proposes how the educator can contribute to students’ entrepreneurial identity development.

Figure 2 illustrates a suggested framework—a proposal for how to develop students’ entrepreneurial identities. It acts as an illustration of the dialogical relationship and the interdependence between the actors and shows that the role of the entrepreneurship educator is to create an entrepreneurial learning space along with each student. In turn, each student delivers active engagement and through that experience and entrepreneurial identity formation. Thus, the entrepreneurship educators are highly dependent on the students as they must be able to self-direct their own learning in the entrepreneurial learning space (Jones, 2015; Neck & Corbett, 2018).

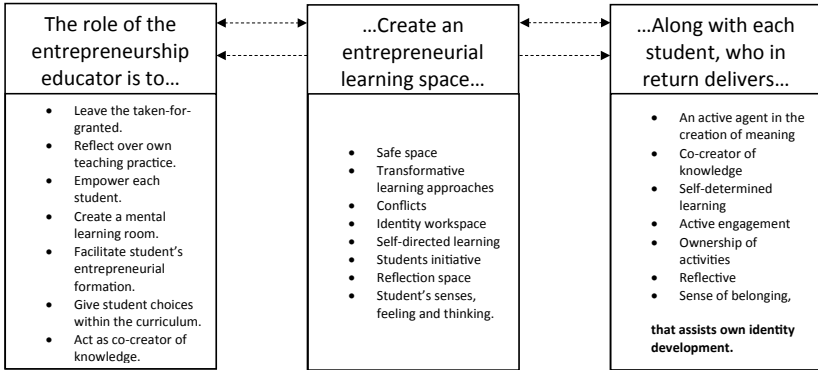


Fig. 2 The nexus between the entrepreneurship educator, learning space and the student (*Source* Own depiction)

Even while the expectations of the entrepreneurship educators can seem overpowering in terms of content relative to the goal of EE (Henry, 2020), they still need to be experts and understand the key concepts of both entrepreneurship and education and be able to incorporate ‘softer’ entrepreneurial topics, for instance teaching about the entrepreneurial mindset, work-life balance and talk to the students how to cope and learn from the failures that are unavoidable (Fayolle, 2013).

Entrepreneurship educators must be aware of their own role in the entrepreneurial learning space and how that role aligns with their teaching focus (Wraae et al., 2021). They need to recognise that role shifts are necessary if they want to empower the students and contribute to students’ identity formation (Wraae & Walmsley, 2020). As such, the educators must let go of the known world and the ‘taken-for-granted’ educator position, a term adopted from Fayolle (2013) to develop new practices. Along with each student, the entrepreneurship educator must move into unknown territory and even give the student a leading role on their entrepreneurial learning journey and accordingly fulfilling the learning goals and the frame for teaching set by the educational institution. In fact, the entrepreneurship educators act as supporters in the interaction with the students as they use students’ feedback and their experiences to support and improve students’ learning and through that take part in students’ identity development (Wraae & Walmsley, 2020).

The educators are even learners themselves when they use students' feedback and responses to reflect on their own teaching practices.

Summarising the chapter so far, to implement the framework the entrepreneurship educator must first acknowledge the existence of the entrepreneurial learning space that goes beyond the traditional understanding of a classroom.

Second, the students must be given the space and the opportunity to act entrepreneurially in practice which in turn means that the students must claim ownership and responsibility for their own learning. In that process each student must be viewed individually with their own individual direction to follow. Thus, empowering students and assisting them in their identity development. When that happens more than just learning takes place in this shared learning space, identity development starts to happen.

Third, the entrepreneurship educator must plan and execute teaching entrepreneurship accordingly and include practical elements, 'conflict' and room for reflection as a platform for identity development. As such, each student must be given the entrepreneurial knowledge and entrepreneurial tools to deal with the issues related to entrepreneurship (Gibb, 2002; Wraae & Walmsley, 2020). Through transformative learning, it is possible to appeal to student's senses, feeling and thinking (Jones & Matlay, 2011) and thereby creating a learning space with an included possibility to experience and develop their identity. While a part of learning approach involves conflict and tension, the learning space must be considered a safe space to build on mutual trust and where each student can take the initiative and action in relation to their own learning. If the students do not feel safe, they might act on the incorporated learning elements, but it might have a different outcome than the expected.

Fourth, both the entrepreneurship educator and the students must understand, acknowledge and accept new role distributions (re. andragogy and heutagogy) and leave their respective own traditional role perception and accept the idea about them being in a 'community of practice'. Sharing the responsibility as co-creators of knowledge in the entrepreneurial learning space establish all parts as both directors and learners as they all learn from each other and are acting and executing on a common learning and personal development journey (Jones, 2015, 2019; Kolb & Kolb, 2005).

While the educator must give room and surrender a piece of the responsibility, the students must take that responsibility and bring that

newfound responsibility into use as well. It can be done. The following quote describes how a student views the co-creational role and shared responsibility: ‘Normally we get told what to do – now we have to make our own decisions’ (Wraae, 2017, p. 147) which illustrates how the educational process aids forming the student (Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Nielsen & Gartner, 2017). When a student takes ownership of own and others’ learning, the students experience new insights into that role which leads to their own identity development (Nielsen & Gartner, 2017). However, the entrepreneurship educator plays a critical role in creating the entrepreneurial learning space which, depending on how this learning space is created, leads to varying levels of student engagement.

The framework presents the paradox in EE with on one hand arguing for how educators need to direct and by that set all actors free and create a more democratic entrepreneurial leaning space by relinquishing power and hand it over to the students while on the other hand doing it through a restrictive framework. The necessity lays in the EE context that is both complex (Neck & Greene, 2011) and heterogeneous (Jones & Matlay, 2011) and if the purpose of EE is to act as an arena for identity formation (Hytti & Heinonen, 2013) the entrepreneurship educator cannot do it alone. The entrepreneurship educator should accept that when you ask the students to go through an entrepreneurial process and ask them to act and think on their own as well as asking them to reflect on what happens it will be messy and chaotic. The vital role of the entrepreneurship educator is to create ‘a safe space, a quasi safe zone in the mind’ before the comma to replace ‘such a mental room’, that allows and encourages students’ development. Therefore, a framework—a script is necessary and even while the script encourages students to ‘improvise’ this must be orchestrated by the educator who is—after all—responsible for the process and the frames set by the institution and who navigates these relationships in a complex world of delivering EE. Even more so, because in the end the entrepreneurship educator must assess the outcome of the process and as such, a framework and some guidelines are in order.

3 PUTTING THE FRAMEWORK INTO PLAY

Based on the theoretical discussion and the analysis that led to the presented framework and own experiences as an entrepreneurship educator, this section will offer some practical suggestions on how to put

the framework into play and turn the classroom into an entrepreneurial learning space.

First of all, be aware of who is present in the learning space. As an educator you should know your students. In contrast to what is commonly believed, students sign up for an entrepreneurial course for a lot of different reasons. True, some are there to become entrepreneurs, but many enter the entrepreneurial learning space with another motivation entirely, ranging from that entrepreneurship is an important skill to learn, to choosing the course for convenient reasons only. No matter the reasons and motivations each student brings skills, capabilities and competencies into the classroom that can be put into use. They all bring active assets to the learning space. Therefore, know your students. Moreover, know yourself. Be aware of own role as an entrepreneurship educator and the change in roles throughout the course: “Teachers are conceived as ‘coaches’ and ‘developers’ – while students are seen as individuals who actively construct their knowledge through their interaction with their educator(s) and peers” (Bécharde & Grégoire, 2007, pp. 264–265).

Second, be in control to be able to give up control. The entrepreneurship educator must have an overview of the purpose, the goals and the outcome of asking the students to act accordingly in this learning space. Be transparent. Always convey all information possible so there will be no surprises during the course and also, to align expectations with the students. This includes an explanation of the learning approach and the (new) role distribution between the educator and the students, including highlighting the difference to what they are used to. The students must be encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning through an action-based approach with a goal of creating something of value for others, in reality work with an idea that has turned into an opportunity.

Third, let the students be co-creators of their own learning: ‘To some extent, the teacher engages the students in defining the learning objectives (what) and how, when, where and with whom this is to be learned. The discussion is focused on the creation of value for the student in the learning process’ (Sagar, 2015). The choices could for instance be to have students add one or two personal learning goals and/or add a personal curriculum to the official one that is of relevance the idea, they are working with and to whom they are as students. Both can be incorporated in the final assessment of the course. The goal is to provide the students with an opportunity to focus on something that has their personal interests at heart. Further, let the students have a voice and let them decide the

narrative. Some students find the business plan an easy tool while others prefer to call it an innovation plan (intrapreneurship) and others prefer to expand on the business model canvas. Let the students argue for their choice relative to the idea they are acting on (Wraae, 2017). This is about empowering students and facilitate their identity formation.

Then, create a safe space. In the shared learning space, the students need to know, that even while they act independently, they are not alone. Self-directed learning does not mean that students are given responsibility for their own learning alone (Garrison, 1997). Therefore, the entrepreneurial learning space should include room for supervision of the teams and room for students making decisions on their learning direction. This is a safe room for students to talk about their progress and their setbacks and how to proceed. Here the role of the educator is to coach and ask questions that leads students to deduct their next step. For the educator this is a balance as too much support from the educator is at risk of being counterproductive to the achievement of learning goals.

Finally, make room for reflection to contribute to personal identity formation for instance by using video-clips as previously described (Wraae, 2017; Wraae et al., 2020). Give each student the task to describe him or herself in an either entrepreneurial or intrapreneurial perspective in a 2–3-min video clip to for instance be handed in as a part of the final assessment. Alternatively, in the beginning and the end of the entrepreneurial course to discuss the transformation. It is important not to provide too many guidelines on how to solve the reflective practice itself and emphasise that the creation of the clip, including layout and editing is less important. The focus must be on how each student interpret the assignment and reflect on themselves in a free room where they are in decision on how to solve the given task.

Finally, remember that being an entrepreneurship educator is messy and chaotic at times. Still, the students will be more than ready for the opening show—they will have found a direction towards who they are and where that could take them.

4 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter was to present a framework for how the entrepreneurship educator can plan and execute EE in a transformative learning environment with the goal of assisting undergraduate students' entrepreneurial identity development. The actors in the entrepreneurial

learning space and the assumptions linked to them were introduced as being bound by dialogic relationship to be understood in its whole. The presented framework in Fig. 2 illustrates this relationship underlining that the educator cannot do it alone but must work together with the students and understand the possibilities of the entrepreneurial learning processes.

Applying the framework in practice contributes to assisting students to both gain entrepreneurial skills and a transformation towards an entrepreneurial ‘becoming’. Entrepreneurship educators can view each of the presented bullet points in Fig. 2 along with the practical suggestions at the planning and executing stages of an entrepreneurial course. If the entrepreneurship educator acts as proposed, then the likely outcome is that each student develops their entrepreneurial identity.

As the entrepreneurship educators act on behalf of the institution, this chapter can serve as an inspiration for the management level with the importance of offering entrepreneurial courses as well as understanding the importance of what is offered as a part of an entrepreneurial course in the undergraduate setting.

On a final note, while each student in EE is the star of the show, the role of the educator and the cooperation between the two in the entrepreneurial learning space is important for delivering educational outcomes.

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