



# Entrepreneurial learning outcomes in the transition from hybrid to full-time entrepreneurship

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**Dates:**

Received: 04 July 2022  
Accepted: 11 Aug. 2022  
Published: 18 Oct. 2022

**How to cite this article:**

Rugpath, N., & Mamabolo, A. (2022). Entrepreneurial learning outcomes in the transition from hybrid to full-time entrepreneurship. *South African Journal of Business Management*, 53(1), a3359. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajbm.v53i1.3359>

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**Purpose:** Hybrid entrepreneurship is a career transition path and a learning ground for entrepreneurs moving towards full-time entrepreneurship. Although previous studies have highlighted the benefits of a learning process, the learning during the hybrid phase is mainly underexplored. This study aimed to explore the learning outcomes during the transition from hybrid to full-time entrepreneurship in a South African context.

**Design/methodology/approach:** This narrative qualitative study collected data from a purposive sample of 15 South African entrepreneurs who transitioned from hybrid to full-time entrepreneurship.

**Findings/results:** There are three primary learning outcomes during the transition process. Firstly, the meaning-making outcomes in the early transition stage rely on spiritual guidance in the decision-making process and refining the entrepreneurs' purpose. Secondly, the applied entrepreneurial learning outcomes in the mid-transition stage focus on the entrepreneurial competencies and operating as a jack of all trades to manage the business. Lastly, the constructive entrepreneurial leadership outcomes in the late transition stage are about the entrepreneurs leading themselves, others and the organisation. The findings show that the entrepreneurs' narratives of the learning outcomes align with the transition stages.

**Practical implications:** This study contributes to the entrepreneurial practice by developing a framework on learning outcomes during the transition process. Entrepreneurs in the transition process should build some of the identified competencies.

**Originality/value:** The study addresses an overlooked research area on learning experienced during the transition from hybrid to full-time entrepreneurship. It also suggests propositions that contribute to the growing body of research on hybrid entrepreneurship.

**Keywords:** entrepreneurial learning; learning outcomes; experiential learning; hybrid entrepreneurship; full-time entrepreneurship; narrative.

## Introduction

It is difficult to overstate the critical role that entrepreneurs play in society (Musara et al., 2020). Despite the significant role of entrepreneurship in any economy, unfavourable conditions (e.g. lack of support for entrepreneurs and limited skills development) contribute to the low levels of entrepreneurship in emerging countries (Swartz et al., 2019). As one of the exemplary emerging countries, South Africa crawls behind the average of an established business in Africa and globally (Bowmaker-Falconer & Herrington, 2020). One of the ways to improve the established entrepreneurial activity is through the entrepreneurs' transition from hybrid to full-time entrepreneurship.

Hybrid entrepreneurship has received research attention against the gig economy's backdrop and the growth of platform technologies (Raffiee & Feng, 2014). The gig economy is defined 'as ex ante specified, paid tasks carried out by independent contractors mediated by online platforms' (Koutsimpogiorgos et al., 2020, p. 540). Even though the work performed is digitally mediated via technology and platforms, it could still be purely online (e.g. Clickworker) or offline (e.g. Uber driver) (Kost et al., 2020). The flexibility of gig work significantly contributes to the emergence of hybrid entrepreneurship.

In this study, hybrid entrepreneurship refers to individuals who start their businesses while still having a primary job (Folta et al., 2010). Hybrid entrepreneurship is often a

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point of entry to full-time entrepreneurship and a distinct process that enables learning through the development of entrepreneurial competencies (Petrova, 2012; Pollack et al., 2019; Raffiee & Feng, 2014). Moreover, hybrid entrepreneurship appeals to individuals who wish to test their entrepreneurial ability towards full-time entrepreneurship (Folta et al., 2010; Wennberg et al., 2007). However, some hybrid entrepreneurs can choose to continue the state of hybridity without transitioning into full-time entrepreneurship (Raffiee & Feng, 2014; Solesvik, 2017; Thorgren et al., 2016). Despite the growing interest, Demir et al. (2022) argued that hybrid entrepreneurship is in its infancy, still requiring exploration of individual factors that drive this type of entrepreneurial activity.

One of the under-researched areas is the interlink between learning and transitioning into full-time entrepreneurship (Ferreira, 2020). Beyond the entrepreneurs' willingness to transition from hybrid to full-time entrepreneurship (Petrova, 2011; Raffiee & Feng, 2014; Thorgren et al., 2016), the actual transition is also influenced by the learning that occurs during the hybrid phase (Ferreira, 2020; Folta et al., 2010). Learning is interpreted as the practical acquisition of competencies, including skills and knowledge (Ferreira, 2020; Kolb, 2015), needed for successful business venturing. Although scholars have researched this nascent concept of hybrid entrepreneurship (Block & Landgraf, 2016; Demir et al., 2022; Petrova, 2011), the learning outcomes encountered during the transition from hybrid to full-time entrepreneurship are not yet well understood (Ferreira, 2020; Kurczewska et al., 2020).

The body of research that is receiving attention focuses broadly on skills that entrepreneurs learn in the hybrid entrepreneurship phase but not during the transition to full-time entrepreneurship (e.g. Raffiee & Feng, 2014). In addition, studies on transition explore the factors influencing the transition without the inclusion of learning (Block & Landgraf, 2016). One of the few studies on learning in hybrid entrepreneurship conceptually evaluates the factors (e.g. fear of failure and entrepreneurial competency development) that influence the transition through experiential learning (Ferreira, 2020). This study expands the conversation beyond the factors that influence the transition by focusing on the learning outcomes in the transition from hybrid to full-time entrepreneurship. Experiential learning, which emphasises practical and reflective experiences, is used in this study to explain entrepreneurs' learning outcomes during the transition. Experiential learning is the type of learning that occurs during hybrid entrepreneurship, allowing the entrepreneurs to learn from the multidimensional corporate and entrepreneurial environment continuously and repetitively at the same time (Byrne & Toutain, 2012).

This study intends to answer the following question: what are the learning outcomes in the transition from hybrid to full-time entrepreneurship? The main aim is to explore what entrepreneurs learn during their transition to full-time entrepreneurship. The research question was answered

through a narrative qualitative study on a sample of 15 entrepreneurs based in the Gauteng province of South Africa who have transitioned into full-time entrepreneurship. The transitioned entrepreneurs were suitable to share their lived experiences of learning. In addition, the selected sample aligned with the theoretical argumentation of the study. South Africa, as the study's context, is characterised by a low level of entrepreneurship activity compared to other African countries, which makes this research on the transition to full-time entrepreneurship important.

This study's main contribution to the scant hybrid entrepreneurship literature is to highlight learning as a potential mechanism that explains the link between hybrid and full-time entrepreneurship. Given that a significant percentage of entrepreneurs comprise hybrid entrepreneurs (Viljamaa et al., 2017) and taking cognisance of the increasing trend of hybrid entrepreneurship (Raffiee & Feng, 2014), it is important to understand the learning outcomes during the transition process. Furthermore, from a practical perspective, entrepreneurship is an essential vehicle through which unemployment can be reduced and inclusive growth can be achieved (Singer et al., 2018).

The remainder of this article is organised as follows. The literature review presents background to the South African context, theoretical underpinning, hybrid entrepreneurship, transition and learning outcomes during the transition. Then, the research design and methods used to answer the research question are discussed, followed by the study's findings reviewed against the existing literature. The last section provides concluding remarks and policy implications and highlights the study's limitations as a pathway for future research.

## Literature review

The literature review has three focal points of discussion. Firstly, the study defines the three primary constructs: hybrid entrepreneurship, transition from hybrid to full-time entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial learning outcomes. Secondly, the study presents a theoretical framework that underpins the study. Lastly, literature reflections discuss the study's constructs in the context of experiential learning theory.

### Hybrid entrepreneurship

In this study, hybrid entrepreneurship is a process whereby individuals 'engage in self-employment activity while simultaneously holding a primary job' (Folta et al., 2010, p. 254). Hybrid entrepreneurship is different from traditional entrepreneurship, which focuses on individuals exploiting business opportunities on a full-time basis (Ferreira, 2020). The term also differs from part-time entrepreneurship, which focuses on 'individuals who work at a regular wage job some of the time and work at their own businesses the rest of the time' (Demir et al., 2022, p. 44). Folta et al. (2010) posited three reasons as to why individuals enter hybrid entrepreneurship.

The first is a means to additional income, where individuals supplement their income by entering self-employment. The second is a path to nonmonetary benefits, which introduces the flexibility for individuals to explore their hobbies or personal interests. The third is a path to transition, a bridge of preparation for individuals who wish to move to full-time entrepreneurship. This study focuses on the third path suggested by Folta et al. (2010).

### The transition from hybrid to full-time entrepreneurship

As there is no established definition of the transition from hybrid to full-time entrepreneurship (Block & Landgraf, 2016; Ferreira, 2020; Thorgren et al., 2016), this study defines it as a process where entrepreneurs, influenced by a specific motive, decide to leave their formal employment to engage in entrepreneurial activities on a full-time basis. After deciding to be in hybrid entrepreneurship, the entrepreneur's next decision is whether to transition into full-time entrepreneurship or maintain hybridity (Thorgren et al., 2016), depending on the entrepreneurial motivation (Block & Landgraf, 2016). Some may transition depending on several factors, such as the desire for independence (Block & Landgraf, 2016; Folta et al., 2010, p. 265), while others may decide to operate as hybrid entrepreneurs, enjoying job security and additional income from the entrepreneurial activities (Raffiee & Feng, 2014; Solesvik, 2017; Thorgren et al., 2016). While transition from hybrid to full-time entrepreneurship is perceived as a difficult decision because of income uncertainty (Block & Landgraf, 2016), it is also viewed as an incredible learning process (Ferreira, 2020).

### Entrepreneurial learning outcomes

The entrepreneurial learning outcomes can be defined as the knowledge, skills and abilities needed by an entrepreneur to identify and utilise opportunities and sustain their business (Boyatzis, 1982). Becker (1964) simplified the learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and abilities, combined as entrepreneurial competencies) as a result of investments in previous experiences and education. While some researchers note that entrepreneurial competencies are innate, others suggest that they can be developed (Rezaei-Zadeh et al., 2014). Such entrepreneurial competence development may be enabled by entrepreneurs' practical experiences, as they interact with their entrepreneurial environment and exploit opportunities. Hence, hybrid entrepreneurship is argued as an important context for entrepreneurial learning outcomes.

### Experiential learning theory

The experiential learning theory underpins research on entrepreneurial learning (Ferreira, 2020) and is used as a guiding theory in this study. Experiential learning has been described as gaining knowledge through experience (Kolb, 2015) and cognition, where an individual's knowledge is altered during the experience or by doing (Bélanger, 2011).

The strength and richness of experiential learning lie in the concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation within a particular context (Kolb, 2015; Merriam et al., 2007). Hence, the main argument is that learning cannot take place without experience (Kolb, 2015) and practical actions based on an individual's preceding experience (Bélanger, 2011). Literature maintains that this form of experience-based learning is crucial during hybrid entrepreneurship (Ferreira, 2020).

While there are several helpful learning theories (e.g. humanistic, cognitivist and constructivist learning), the experiential learning theory was most applicable for this study (Bélanger, 2011; Ferreira, 2020; Kolb, 2015). Humanistic learning suggests that behaviour is learnt from the context or environment, while cognitivist learning theory concerns interpretation and information organisation. Constructivist learning is about individuals constructing their learning, thus making meaning of their experiences. The critique of these theories is that they either focus on repetitive behaviours (humanistic), cognitive processes (cognitivist) or the construction of meaning through their experiences (constructivist) (Bélanger, 2011; Ferreira, 2020).

Therefore, experiential theory compensates for the weaknesses of the other theories by combining the knowledge formed after going through an experience, practice and an individual's reflection process or meaning-making (Bélanger, 2011; Kolb, 2015). The experiential learning context and related outcomes will help articulate what entrepreneurs learn over the transition process. The next sections explain the application of experiential learning theory to explain hybrid entrepreneurship, transition and the learning outcomes in the transition process.

### Experiential learning and hybrid entrepreneurship

Hybrid entrepreneurship provides individuals with a substantial learning opportunity (Petrova, 2011) and a safer, less risky option to become full-time entrepreneurs. Moreover, it is an attractive option because of the learning process that entrepreneurs inculcate with being hybrid entrepreneurs (Folta et al., 2010). Pollack et al. (2019) indicated that hybrid entrepreneurship provides individuals with the time to learn everything they have to acquire about running their intended enterprise and its operations. At the same time, hybrid entrepreneurship helps individuals improve their confidence and beliefs and enhance their skills and abilities to pursue a new venture.

From a theoretical perspective, hybrid entrepreneurship contributes significantly to entrepreneurial competence development through experiential learning within the work environment and entrepreneurial business (Byrne & Toutain, 2012; Ferreira, 2020). While existing research on entrepreneurship centres on previous learning experiences (Politis, 2005), this study argues that hybrid entrepreneurship

elucidates the multidimensional nature and richness of entrepreneurs' current learning context. The hybrid entrepreneurship context could enhance one's entrepreneurial competence (knowledge, skills and abilities) through current repetitive or continuous behavioural interactions, cognitive development and practical experiences (Ferreira, 2020; Raffiee & Feng, 2014). As experiential learning and hybrid entrepreneurship involve 'learning by doing', it will emphasise the currency and continuity of practical learning in transitioning (Ferreira, 2020). In summary, the multidimensional nature of the work-and-entrepreneurship environment embodies experiential learning.

### **Experiential learning and hybrid to full-time entrepreneurship transition**

Researchers (e.g. Morris et al., 2013; Petrova, 2011) have agreed that learning plays a vital role in the hybrid transition process. Learning in the transition process also allows individuals to assess whether they have the necessary tenacity and ability to proceed into their chosen field or whether to change direction. Should the entrepreneurs' assessment show that there are still gaps, they may abandon the decision to transition. Ferreira (2020) conceptually argued that hybrid entrepreneurs who overcome the fear of failure have a reduced perception of risk, have entrepreneurial competencies and have increased self-efficacy will be able to transition to full-time entrepreneurship. While Ferreira (2020) focused on learning accumulated during the hybrid phase, this study explores the entrepreneurs' experiences during the transition, supported by empirical evidence. The next section presents the learning outcomes during the transition process.

### **Experiential learning and entrepreneurial learning outcomes during transition**

As experiential learning theory's strength is learning through behaviours, meanings, interpretation of processes and practical experiences (Bélanger, 2011; Ferreira, 2020; Kolb, 2015), this study focuses on the meaning-making and practical outcomes as the important entrepreneurial learning outcomes during the transition. The meaning-making outcomes explain how entrepreneurs make sense of the entrepreneurial journey (Namatovu et al., 2018; Varney, 2009). The limited research shows that self-actualisation and independence are some of the meaningful outcomes and motivating factors that influence entrepreneurs' transition into full-time entrepreneurship (Block & Landgraf, 2016). Self-actualisation is about entrepreneurs challenging themselves and pursuing a particular vision (Block & Landgraf, 2016). Consequently, this study argues that during the transition process, entrepreneurs learn the meaning-making outcomes crucial for business venturing.

Another outcome of experiential learning is the practical ability to execute activities or tasks (Kolb, 2015). Simply, experiential learning during the transition leads to entrepreneurial competencies, including skills and knowledge acquired through experience to identify and exploit opportunities

and sustain the business (Boyatzis, 1982; Ferreira, 2020). When individuals commence with the first steps of their hybrid entrepreneurship journey, they tend to be unaware of their entrepreneurial capabilities and abilities (Petrova, 2011). It is equally likely that they have low confidence in their entrepreneurial competency (Viljamaa & Varamaki, 2014), which leads to many new entrepreneurs establishing their entrepreneurial competency in a low-risk work environment (Folta et al., 2010). Petrova (2011) suggested that hybrid entrepreneurs with prominent levels of entrepreneurial competency will successfully transition to full-time entrepreneurship.

The applied experiential learning outcomes also include the diverse skills required to start and run an entrepreneurial business. These skills include technical, business management, entrepreneurial and personality skills (Kerrin et al., 2017). These diverse rather than specialised skills are required for successful entrepreneurial activities (Lazear, 2004; Syme & Mueller, 2022). As entrepreneurs have resource shortages in the early stages, the diverse skill set may compensate for the challenges of sourcing human capital. However, when entrepreneurs have employees, they need to display entrepreneurial leadership, which helps explore and exploit entrepreneurial opportunities while leading their teams (Harrison et al., 2018; Renko et al., 2015). What makes entrepreneurial leadership distinct is focusing on entrepreneurial goals and encouraging employees to achieve those goals (Renko et al., 2015). It is essential to discover how entrepreneurs learn entrepreneurial leadership skills during the transition process.

### **The conceptual model**

Although entrepreneurial learning is fragmented and incongruent (Nogueira, 2019), learning has been emphasised as an essential process in hybrid entrepreneurship (Folta et al., 2010). Whether a hybrid entrepreneur transitions to a full-time entrepreneur or remains a hybrid entrepreneur, it is argued that learning takes place during this period. Very few empirical studies have been conducted on hybrid entrepreneurship (Petrova, 2011; Raffiee & Feng, 2014); thus, there is a limited understanding regarding learning during the transition from hybrid entrepreneurship to full-time entrepreneurship (Ferreira, 2020). This study explores what hybrid entrepreneurs learn during their transitional phase.

While this study explores the transition from hybrid to full-time entrepreneurship, it is essential to note that the transition can be cyclical, where entrepreneurship moves from full time to hybrid (Ferreira, 2020). Figure 1 shows the study's constructs and how they are interrelated. The model shows that experiential learning influences the transition and the outcomes learnt during the transition process. Lastly, the transition from hybrid to full-time entrepreneurship, represented by a dotted and crooked line, is not a perfectly linear process.

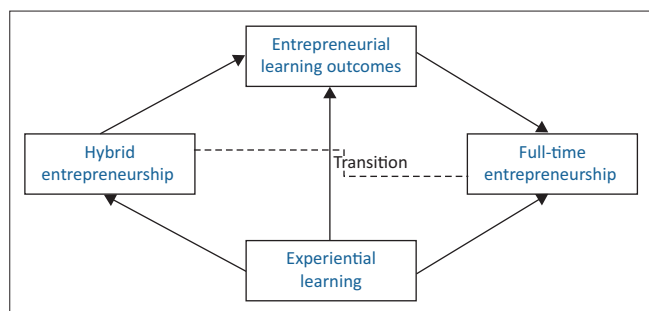


FIGURE 1: Conceptual model.

## Research design and methodology

### Study's research context

South Africa is an emerging economy where weak regulations impede entrepreneurial activity throughout the various stages. One of the stages can be explained by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor's total early stage entrepreneurial activity that focuses on individuals participating in new business ventures, representing nascent entrepreneurship and new business ownership. Bowmaker-Falconer and Herrington (2020) indicated that the summation of both categories reveals no increase at 10.8%. The number of established businesses in South Africa was staggeringly low at 3.5% in 2019, a slight increase of 1.3% from 2017. Established businesses have been operating for a minimum of 42 months (Bowmaker-Falconer & Herrington, 2020). South Africa crawls behind the average of an established business in Africa and globally. While the new business rate is at 3.5%, the number of businesses closing is at 4.9%, meaning more businesses are closing than new businesses are being set up (Bowmaker-Falconer & Herrington, 2020).

De Clercq et al. (2010) postulated that the country's customs, rules and values impact entrepreneurship. Murimbika and Urban (2020) agreed that the institutional profile of a country impacts new ventures and performance. They also posited that entrepreneurship is influenced by society and community choices. However, Urban and Hwindingwi (2016) argued that the more significant the government's involvement in the process is, the less favourable entrepreneurship becomes. These findings show that there is a need for interventions to support the new business owners and established businesses. Therefore, understanding entrepreneurs' learning experiences when they transition from hybrid to full-time entrepreneurship could provide insights into the appropriate support and training interventions. Full-time entrepreneurs will contribute to the established business rate.

### Research design

This study adopted the interpretivism philosophy (Saunders & Lewis, 2018), which revealed how full-time entrepreneurs interpreted and constructed learning from hybrid to full-time entrepreneurship. Moreover, a qualitative narrative approach was utilised to explore the entrepreneurs' learning outcomes

because of the notion that learning during the transition process is mainly unexplored (Ferreira, 2020). According to Given (2008), narrative research is a way of understanding people's experiences and allows for a close inquiry into their experiences. It allows people to describe their experiences that involve a sequence of events and actions (Maitlis, 2012). During the interviews, the participants could speak through their stories and experiences. The researchers were able to code data to form emerging themes revealing deep and insightful findings from the participants' rich accounts of the transition journey.

### Data collection

Aligned with the research question, the population in this study encompassed hybrid entrepreneurs who transitioned to full-time entrepreneurship. The target population focused on booming entrepreneurs who had been running their businesses full time for no more than 5 years. The purposive sampling method was used to select the entrepreneurs based on their tenure and transition from hybrid to full-time entrepreneurs. The 15 participants were selected from diverse backgrounds, including retail, digital marketing, consultancy services and human resources (see Table 1). We focused on entrepreneurs who founded their businesses as they have an authentic experience of the transition and would be able to narrate their transition journey.

All companies originate in South Africa, with three companies having an international footprint in other African countries, North America and the Middle East. The international companies expanded after they had transitioned into full-time entrepreneurship. The companies are based in Gauteng province, operating mainly in Johannesburg, a city known for its entrepreneurial and corporate activities. The entrepreneurs had an average of 7 years as hybrid and 3 years as full-time entrepreneurs. Although the size of their companies was wide ranging (refer to Table 1), all founders and majority partners played an active role in leading their entrepreneurial organisations and daily business management. Most entrepreneurs transitioned in the last 2–5 years and could thus recall their learning process and outcomes using remarkable events as signposts or anchors to their stories. For example, one of the participants mentioned that they had set a date to transition on October 25 and had a clear plan of the actions they needed to take. Others reflected on personal and work crises that made them realise it was time to transition. Such critical events were signposts that validated the data and minimised the participants' memory bias (Huber & Power, 1985).

The researchers also increased the reliability of retrospective data through the content of the questions (Müggenburg, 2021), such as creating a semi-structured interview guide to explore the experiences of the selected participants. The interview guide included questions formulated according to the literature. Specifically, the researchers used the conceptual study of Ferreira (2020) to make the connections between experiential learning, hybrid entrepreneurship and transition.

**TABLE 1:** List of participants.

Participant	Industry	Position in the business	Employees post-transition	Experience as a hybrid entrepreneur (years)	Experience as a full-time entrepreneur (years)	Interview date	Duration of the interview and transcript length	Footprint
P1	Recruitment	Founder	10	5	3	28/07/2021	40 min, 10 pages	South Africa
P2	Hydrology consulting	Founding owner and partner	2	5	2	29/07/2021	40 min, 10 pages	South Africa
P3	Retail	Founder and owner	92	6	4	29/07/2021	38 min, 10 pages	South Africa
P4	Electrical services	Founder and owner	14	15	2	3/08/2021	40.34 min, 10 pages	South Africa
P5	Laundromat	Founder and owner	10	5	2	3/08/2021	20.20 min, 6 pages	South Africa
P6	Telecommunications	Founder and majority partner	11	8	5	4/08/2021	43.35 min, 12 pages	Africa and the Middle East
P7	Medical	Founder and majority partner	26	3.5	2	5/08/2021	25.45 min, 8 pages	South Africa
P8	Medical – biotechnology	Founder and owner	15	5	2	6/08/2021	20 min, 7 pages	South Africa
P9	Retail and food services	Founder and majority partner	5	12	2	11/08/2021	50.52 min, 13 pages	South Africa
P10	Beauty	Founder and owner	5	3.5	3	12/08/2021	34.52 min, 10 pages	South Africa
P11	Information technology consulting	Founder and majority partner	45	11	5	12/08/2021	34.33 min, 12 pages	South Africa and North America
P12	Information technology consulting	Founder and owner	7	5	3	12/08/2021	43.52 min, 15 pages	South Africa
P13	Digital marketing	Founder and owner	5	5	2	12/08/2021	27.06 min, 9 pages	South Africa
P14	Management consultant	Founder and owner	42	19	5	16/08/2021	50.24 min, 11 pages	South Africa
P15	Medical – biotechnology	Founder and owner	1000+	8	5	17/08/2021	46.58 min, 11 pages	Southern and Middle Eastern Africa

Moreover, the study of Block and Landgraf (2016) was utilised to derive the research questions to focus beyond the motives for transition. As semi-structured interview questions were adopted, the order of the questions could be changed or more time could be allocated to learning questions than others (Given, 2008). Table 2 shows the interview questions and suitable literature review.

The research used a narrative interview strategy to probe the learning experiences and the role of learning during the transition from hybrid to full-time entrepreneur. A pilot test was conducted before the main data collection took place to test the efficacy of the interview guide, which required minor amendments. The two pilot interviews revealed that the interview guide had too many generic questions not aligned with the transition. Consequently, the interview guide was modified to focus more on learning and transition.

Before the pilot and main interviews could begin, all participants signed a voluntary informed consent form to participate and had a right to withdraw from the study without penalty. The participants gave their permission to record the interviews. Each online semi-structured interview for the main study ranged between 30 and 50 min, resulting in a total of 554 min or 9 h. The limited interview time was because of data collection during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, when most entrepreneurs were actively engaged in managing the sustainability of their businesses. To maximise the participants' time, the interview guide was specific to ensure that the interview contents were covered. For participants with limited time of less than 30 min, attention was paid to learning during the transition and member checking (described in the next section) was conducted throughout the interviews. The quality of the interviews was deemed suitable and helped answer the study's research question.

**TABLE 2:** Interview questions.

Interview theme	Literature to support the interview questions	Interview questions
Understanding the transition context	Block and Landgraf (2016); Demir et al. (2022); Ferreira (2020); Kolb (2015); Petrova (2012); Solesvik (2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Describe your journey into hybrid entrepreneurship.</li> <li>Describe your experience in the transition to full-time entrepreneurship.</li> <li>Describe the factors that were the catalyst in the transition process.</li> </ul>
Unpacking the learning experience during the transition process	Ferreira (2020); Nogueira (2019); Wang and Chugh (2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explain the triggers that preceded the learning process.</li> <li>What did you learn during the transition process?</li> <li>Describe the actions that you took during the learning process.</li> <li>What impact did the learning have on your business today?</li> </ul>

All interviews were transcribed using an auto-transcriber. Once the transcriptions were complete, one of the researchers reviewed each transcript to verify the accuracy of the content. After the quality check, the average length of the transcripts was 10 pages, and the total for all the interviews was 154 pages (see Table 1).

## Data analysis

Before data analysis could begin, all transcripts were loaded onto computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) that helped organise the data. This study used thematic narrative analysis, the most common narrative analysis that focuses on the content, namely 'what is said rather than the way it is said' (Maitlis, 2012, p. 494). Thematic narrative analysis is suitable for this study because the intention was to analyse the narratives across the participants and obtain aggregate themes (Ganzin et al., 2020). The analysis process started by reading

the transcripts. The second step focused on understanding the entrepreneurs' narratives and looking for patterns in the stories.

A surprising pattern that emerged from the analysis was a narrative on the transition's sequence of events. It was clear that some entrepreneurs planned the exact date or year of transition, while for others, it was intuition or crisis based. As shown in Figure 2, the entrepreneurs reflected on the initial stages of transition to the later stage of transition. This pattern of explaining the transition process, enabled by narrative design, was not in the study's conceptualisation. The existing studies on transition did not articulate the various stages (Block & Landgraf, 2016; Ferreira, 2020). Like Hardy and Maguire (2010), the chronology of the transition was considered during the analysis stage. Drawing insights from Table 1, hybrid entrepreneurship had an average of 7 years and full-time entrepreneurship had approximately 3 years. The estimated transition time reported by the participants was 1–2 years.

Once we identified the broad narratives from the interviews, we compared the themes across the participants (Ganzin et al., 2020), leading to Table 3. The first theme was meaning-making outcomes in the early stages of entrepreneurial activities. The second theme was applied entrepreneurial outcomes in the mid-transition stage, and the last theme was the constructive entrepreneurial learning outcomes in the later stages of transition.

Multiple strategies were followed to achieve research quality. Firstly, to avoid participant bias, the participants were not sent an interview guide before their interview. Secondly, during the interviews, member checking by playing back the narratives to the participants was an effective way to secure the credibility of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The participants were asked if they understood the questions as an additional layer of member checking. Thirdly, using the CAQDAS helped to keep a detailed trail of the data analysis activities, thus increasing the trustworthiness of the findings (Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012). Fourthly, data analysis ensured trustworthiness by going back and forth between the empirical findings and theory to establish robust aggregate themes (Cho & Trent, 2006; Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012).

Fifthly, secondary data were used to triangulate the information obtained from the participants. The study used three data types to validate the findings: company website information and public documents, online profiles obtained from professional networking platforms and media interviews. The information obtained from the professional networking platforms showed the entrepreneurs' career profiles, skill endorsements and recommendations by their customers and colleagues. The primary interview data were compared against the secondary data and all cases were aligned. There was one case with modest alignment, but the entrepreneur was approached to provide additional evidence. Table 4 shows

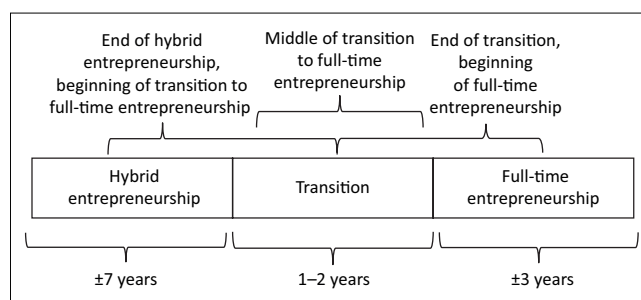


FIGURE 2: The transitioned business timeline.

TABLE 3: Learning outcomes in the transition from hybrid to the full-time entrepreneurship.

First order-codes	Second-order codes	Aggregate themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personal belief, trust and faith in God almighty and/or spiritual beliefs to help deal with business challenges</li> <li>God almighty and/or spiritual beliefs are involved in the decision-making process for guidance</li> <li>Establishing self-identity after the corporate experience</li> <li>Making a difference/impact in the communities</li> <li>The business should focus on profitability and growth</li> </ul>	Spirituality is a transition resource  Redefining the purpose	Meaning-making outcomes in the early transition stage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing an agile and entrepreneurial mindset</li> <li>Building entrepreneurial networks within the family and industry</li> <li>Entrepreneurial self-efficacy and tenacity to continue</li> <li>Doing everything alone without any help</li> <li>Setting the operational processes of the business</li> <li>Managing the critical functional areas of the business</li> </ul>	Entrepreneurial competencies  Operating as a jack of all trades	Applied entrepreneurial outcomes in the mid-transition stage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leading others through empathy and delegation</li> <li>Leading and setting the organisational culture</li> <li>Striving for continuous learning, personal growth and motivation</li> </ul>	Leading others  Self-leadership	Constructive learning outcomes in the late transition stage

the data triangulation sources. Lastly, the researchers shared the findings with peers to improve their credibility.

## Findings

The study's findings have three aggregate themes representing the learning outcomes during the transition process: meaning-making outcomes, applied entrepreneurial outcomes and constructive entrepreneurial leadership outcomes.

### Meaning-making learning outcomes in the early transition stage

When the entrepreneurs reflected on their transition journey, they mentioned that the early transition stage was filled with uncertainty. As a result, they had to seek spiritual guidance in making key decisions and trusting that God almighty would help during and beyond the transition. They also learnt that they had to redefine their purpose and impact. These two outcomes are about the meaning-making of the transition journey.

TABLE 4: Data triangulation.

Data triangulation	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P11	P12	P13	P14	P15
<b>Description of career and entrepreneurial experience based on online profiles</b>															
Resignation from formal employment	Yes	Yes	Yes	Limited profile	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Start of full-time entrepreneurship	Yes	Yes	Yes	Limited profile	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Alignment of online experience with primary interviews	Highly aligned	Highly aligned	Highly aligned	Highly aligned	Highly aligned	Highly aligned	Highly aligned	Highly aligned	Highly aligned	Highly aligned	Highly aligned	Highly aligned	Highly aligned	Highly aligned	Highly aligned
<b>Evidence of formality</b>															
Website information and public data	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Evidence of skills using online endorsements and recommendations</b>															
Online entrepreneurial, social and technical skill endorsements	Industry and business skills	Industry, inter personal and specialist skills	Evidence of serial entrepreneurial activities	Yes, business creation	Industry, technology and interpersonal skills	Industry, technology and interpersonal skills	Industry and business skills	Industry and business skills	Industry and business skills	Industry and business skills	Industry and business skills	Industry, technology and interpersonal skills	Industry, knowledge and interpersonal skills	Industry, technology and interpersonal skills	Industry, technology and interpersonal skills
Other generic qualitative online recommendations	Innovative, need for achievement, goal-orientated	Problem-solving skills, goal-ambitious	Limited information	Limited information	Motivated and goal-orientated	Exceptional entrepreneurial ability	Innovative healthcare solutions	Innovative and entrepreneurial solutions	Problem-solving skills	Risk-taking, new markets, product development	Technical expertise	Limited information	Social impact	Innovative business model	Serial entrepreneurial activities
Leadership skill endorsements	Yes, diverse business activities and teams	Pleasant to work with, enjoy helping others	Yes, leading a retail outlet	Yes, Evidence of a team, with various role players	Strong leadership skills	Visionary	Strong leadership skills	Leadership team player	People-orientated/ Moderate	Moderate	Leading highly skilled teams	Small teams	Community engagement	Strong leadership skills	Dynamic and positive leader
Evidence of leading a team	Yes	Moderate	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Moderate	Moderate	Yes	Yes	Moderate	Yes	Yes
Alignment of online skill endorsements and recommendations against primary interviews	High	High	High	Modestly high	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High



### Spirituality as a transition resource

Spirituality is an emerging learning outcome theme influencing how entrepreneurs make transition decisions. The entrepreneurs mentioned that they relied on their spirituality in decision-making and learnt to incorporate spirituality in their business activities. Some participants were Christian, while others were Muslim, making their religious faith and practices, such as prayer, influence their journey from hybrid entrepreneurs to full-time entrepreneurs. These participants emphasised that they rely on the wisdom and guidance from God almighty in the transition decision-making process. The participants' spiritual faith and the integration of their faith journey also helped them overcome their challenges in the transition process. A deep measure of faith was emphasised by P4:

'I put my faith in my God. I trust him. We pray about it. He is the CEO. We let the Holy Spirit guide us and lead us into this.'  
(Participant 4, Founder and owner, Electrical services)

Some participants who did not mention their spiritual beliefs spoke about redefining their purpose and impact.

### Redefining the purpose

In the early stages of the transition, the participants had to redefine their and their businesses' purpose. Most participants spoke of their social value creation in giving back to the communities by coaching and mentoring. The entrepreneurs believed they were working towards the more significant social cause of reducing unemployment in South Africa. Their sense of purpose was motivated by their awareness of the need for job creation to build a prosperous new era for the country. One of the participants said, '[w]hen you become an entrepreneur, you want to equip other people for free; you do not charge anyone, you want to share your knowledge or experience with others' (Participant 15, Founder and owner, Biotechnology).

Part of redefining the purpose was to think about the economic activities of the business. Participants shared that they learnt that the profitability of the business is core. If the business is not profitable, it will not be able to contribute to employment and wealth creation. This, coupled with participants' deep sense of societal concerns, reinforced maximising the businesses' economic value for themselves, their staff members and their country. Moreover, all participants expressed societal obligation and patriotism towards South Africa, a sense of purpose and a profound sentiment to share their learnings.

Lastly, the entrepreneurs learnt to strengthen their identity and reintroduce themselves to the industry partners as business owners. Even though some participants had pre-existing relationships while still employed, they had to build and re-establish the relationships and prove themselves as credible entrepreneurs to some suppliers or service providers during the transition. This contradicted their expectations that relationship building would not be a challenge:

'How do I get these guys to trust me again, to believe in me again? I had to learn that, and that is a skill because you do not just open a shop and then expect these guys to send you truckloads of goods or think they will automatically trust you that everything is going to be okay.' (Participant 4, Founder and owner, Electrical services)

### Applied entrepreneurial learning outcomes in the mid-transition stage

When entrepreneurs began to focus entirely on the business in the middle of the transition, they integrated the business functions to ensure all processes were in place. They learnt to apply the skills, competencies and previous experiences practically. The entrepreneurs had to establish specific and required entrepreneurial competencies of the agile mindset, building networks and entrepreneurial self-efficacy. As there were no employees yet, another learning outcome was operating as a jack of all trades, where the entrepreneur was responsible for the running of the business.

### Entrepreneurial competencies

The findings demonstrate that entrepreneurs learnt certain qualities to successfully transition and integrate business functions, such as entrepreneurial mindset, building entrepreneurial associations and entrepreneurial self-efficacy. The findings revealed the importance of having an entrepreneurial mindset. The participants agreed that their transition success could be attributed to their thinking, positive mindset, identifying opportunities within diverse challenges and being solution-orientated instead of problem-focused. Notably, most participants stated that some core competencies had to be learnt before the transition could take place, while some competencies were learnt after they had already transitioned. Furthermore, their entrepreneurial mindset enabled them to be agile, flexible, tolerate risk and embrace transition uncertainty. In uncertain conditions, entrepreneurs found solutions using a trial-and-error approach:

'It is more being agile, having a viable product or service. Let us see if it works. If it does not work, let us iterate. Let us try something else, so it is more about trial and error.' (Participant 13, Founder and owner, Digital marketing)

In the transition stage, participants learnt how to run a business effectively mainly from their social capital, that is, family, friends, colleagues and mentors. Building a network of entrepreneurs helped them share their experiences and challenges, thus increasing their exposure to different types of entrepreneurs in diverse industries, while creating a platform for global and local exposure and vicarious learning. One participant described the tactics he employed to surround himself with the right people as follows:

'Some people have said that being an entrepreneur is a lonely journey. I made sure that it was not lonely; I associated with people already there. The secret is that you have to associate yourself with powerful individuals that you can call upon at any time.' (Participant 2, Founding partner and owner, Management consulting)

Most of the interviewed participants had close family and friends who were entrepreneurs and supported them during the transition. In some cases, the experiences of support from family and friends varied, primarily referred to by P3, P5, P6, P8 and P9. The participants shared their disappointment with friends and family who had let them down. Additionally, the disappointment was experienced with mentors. Some participants unanimously cited their mentors as being authoritative and inflexible, while other mentors had equipped the participants with the right tools and exposed them to their entrepreneurial networks.

Lastly, building entrepreneurial self-efficacy was one of the essential competencies that participants learnt. Entrepreneurs had to let go of fear and rely on their self-esteem, self-confidence, perseverance and resilience. Resilience and grit were emerging themes, as all participants demonstrated refusing to give up or be cast down by their challenges. However, it is worth noting that resilience was believed to be a learnt character trait. Participants also had an overdeveloped ego because of their corporate success and failures in their entrepreneurial ventures had caused them to embrace humility. All entrepreneurs interviewed reinforced their current posture of humility, which allowed them to be teachable and adopt a learning attitude. The sense that learning is a lifelong process was underlined during one of the interviews:

'Look, for me, number one is, do not be arrogant. I have learnt that I know nothing. My advice to young entrepreneurs is to be teachable and do not be arrogant.' (Participant 4, Founder and owner, Electrical services)

All participants in this study were open to experiencing new ideas, concepts and beliefs. They described their belief in themselves, citing this as a reason for transitioning into full-time entrepreneurship. While self-doubt is frequent, participants noted the severe cost of self-doubt and how they had no choice but to overcome it.

### Functioning as a jack of all trades

The interviewed entrepreneurs explained that they were operating as specialists supported by their colleagues when they were full-time employed. In the transition process, they did not have employees and had to do everything in their businesses or be jacks of all trades. The entrepreneurs had to establish business functions that were not there when they started. The business functions that entrepreneurs had to learn included critical business management, marketing, HR management, supply chain, stakeholder management and technical and financial skills mandatory to run a business. The newly established functions in their businesses required entrepreneurs to continue operating as jacks of all trades: 'I have learnt much more about running a business, HR, legal, and accounting. I hated accounting, but now I kind of love it' (Participant 6, Founder and majority partner, Telecommunications).

Entrepreneurs unanimously emphasised the significance of developing their systems and processes of how things should

run. These ranged from procurement processes and product development to HR management. Most of them emphasised that they were used to the systems that are readily designed in corporate organisations. However, it was a challenge to develop the systems within their businesses.

### Constructive leadership learning outcomes in the late-transition stage

The last theme focuses on the learning outcome of constructive entrepreneurial leadership demonstrated by leading self and others. This learning outcome was essential towards the end of the transition when the entrepreneurs had employees. The late-transition stage also marked the beginning of full-time entrepreneurship.

#### Leading self

Leading self was an important learning outcome that emerged during the analysis, as managing one's mental health and motivation levels impacted the leaders' performance and successful transition. It is worth differentiating between entrepreneurs who learnt to manage themselves and their time well versus those who lacked enthusiasm and self-motivation. Some entrepreneurs experienced a business failure caused by their lack of motivation and grit, thus strengthening learning from failure. During such a process, entrepreneurs described the entrepreneurial environment as ruthless and unforgiving for inexperienced individuals, seeing themselves more as victims than blaming themselves for not taking the necessary steps to avoid or reduce external impacts. A participant emphasised the importance of learning how to manage mental well-being and motivation levels:

'It is important to keep yourself motivated and your team motivated. If your motivation is out, it is not just your motivation. It is also your team's motivation that goes out; your partners also feel demotivated; somehow, they pick up on the energy from you.' (Participant 9, Founder and majority partner, Retail and Food services)

#### Leading others

The data show that in the later stages of transition and beginning the full entrepreneurship, entrepreneurs had to display practical leadership skills. Regarding leading others, it is worth differentiating between participants with previous leadership experience and those without leadership experience. Participants with leadership experience described their deliberate changes in their leadership style as caused by the context of the entrepreneurial organisation and employee type. Participants who did not have prior leadership experience had to learn to lead through their new daily experience and vicarious learning. In leading others, several participants spoke of their learning experience in trust and delegation, stating that they could not do everything independently. Participants also mentioned qualities, such as delegation, letting go and allowing employees to do what they were hired to do.

Another key learning outcome that emerged from the findings is the entrepreneurial leadership skills required to

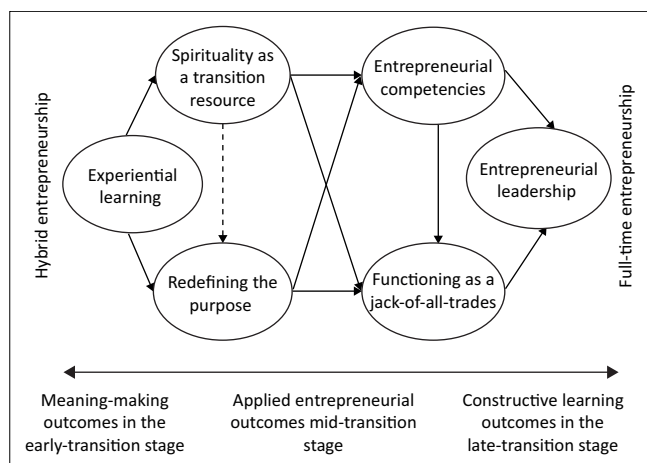
lead a business venture and involve employees in identifying business opportunities. In leading their entrepreneurial organisations, almost all entrepreneurs had to learn how to anticipate changes in the market. For instance, entrepreneurs spoke of constantly evaluating their organisations' strengths and weaknesses, understanding the threats in the market and learning how to mitigate threats to sustain a competitive advantage. The level of anticipation to stay ahead was highlighted by one of the participants:

'The environment constantly changes, so you cannot always be complacent or in one place. You always have to anticipate change. I think that's the biggest lesson I learnt and kept on learning, and so you always have to be solving problems for the future to avoid problems.' (Participant 10, Founder and owner, Beauty)

Lastly, several participants acknowledged the importance of cultivating a healthy culture and a conducive environment to enhance their employees' productivity. Interestingly, the participants noted the need to adapt their leadership skills – some learnt to be more empathetic, while others intentionally checked in on their staff members.

## Discussion

This article aimed to explore the learning outcomes of entrepreneurs transitioning from hybrid to full-time entrepreneurs. Inspired by the entrepreneurs' narratives, Figure 3 shows the learning outcomes and how they are interrelated. Aligned with the study's theoretical framework, entrepreneurial learning is the foundation of the learning outcomes in the transition process. The diagram further shows the learning outcomes as the transition process unfolded according to the different stages. The first learning outcome is meaning-making, which relies on spiritual guidance in decision-making and refining the entrepreneurs' purpose. The second is applied entrepreneurial learning outcomes that focus on the entrepreneurial competencies and operating as a jack of all trades. Lastly, the constructive learning outcomes are about



**FIGURE 3:** Learning outcomes during the transition from hybrid to full-time entrepreneurship.

the entrepreneurs leading themselves, others and the organisation. The diagram shows that spirituality and redefined purpose influence the subsequent entrepreneurial actions and decisions in the transition process. Moreover, reliance on spirituality as a transition resource helps entrepreneurs redefine their purpose. The following section discusses the learning outcomes in detail.

## Meaning-making learning outcomes

The study's first contribution is articulating meaning-making outcomes that help entrepreneurs make sense of the uncertainty in the early stages of transition. Meaning-making constitutes spirituality as a transition resource and redefining the purpose. Surprisingly, the study found that entrepreneurs identified spirituality as an essential resource during the transition process. This study builds on the research of Namatovu et al. (2018), who discovered that entrepreneurs' sense-making and purpose were influenced by spirituality. Entrepreneurs learnt to lean on the power of prayer to carry them through the challenges they faced and overcame. Importantly, having faith in God almighty or spiritual beliefs gave entrepreneurs the confidence to continue learning and functioning during the transition period. Some scholars suggest that spirituality, faith and prayer strengthen entrepreneurial commitment and increase productivity, flexibility and creativity (Agbim et al., 2013).

Some of the entrepreneurs relied on God almighty and/or spiritual beliefs during the decision-making process. Existing research shows that entrepreneurs, especially in developing countries, rely on spiritual guidance when identifying and exploiting entrepreneurial opportunities (Kojana & Mamabolo, 2020). Scholars suggest that spirituality contributes significantly to business success and is considered a driving force (Raco et al., 2019), while some entrepreneurs were spiritual people (Nandram & Borden, 2010). Kauanui et al. (2010) argued that spiritually inclined entrepreneurs to experience greater joy and passion for their ventures.

Additionally, Varney (2009) asserted that meaning-making is about entering a purposeful field that enables one to be impacted and impact others. Entrepreneurs who participated in the study learnt to redefine their purpose by focusing on pursuing social and economic purposes. Spiritual participants mentioned that their spirituality influenced their purpose (Namatovu et al., 2018). Most participants claimed that increasing their income was not the primary motivation for moving into full-time entrepreneurship. Instead, these entrepreneurs developed a sense of purpose, motivating them to share their learnings with others and contribute to their communities. Their businesses enjoyed higher profits through meaningful work, such as mentorship with employees and community members.

Lastly, the participants had to rebrand themselves and embrace a new identity as full-time entrepreneurs. Solesvik (2017) contended that entrepreneurs opt for hybrid

entrepreneurship to minimise the liability of newness and gain customers. While it is expected that entrepreneurs will have built some relationships with suppliers and customers, this study showed that entrepreneurs rebrand and introduce themselves as business owners. Some entrepreneurs explained that it was challenging to rebrand themselves and be trusted by the customers who had worked with them during their corporate days. Therefore, re-establishing entrepreneurial identity when embarking on transition is an important learning outcome. Based on the above discussion, this study proposes the following:

Proposition 1: The meaning-making outcomes are learnt in the early transition stage from hybrid to full-time entrepreneurship.

Proposition 1a: Spirituality is a meaning-making outcome learnt in the early transition stage from hybrid to full-time entrepreneurship.

Proposition 1b: Redefining purpose is a meaning-making outcome learnt in the early transition stage from hybrid to full-time entrepreneurship.

### Applied entrepreneurial learning outcomes

The second contribution this study makes is the notion of applied entrepreneurial outcomes when entrepreneurs are deep into the transition process. At this stage, the interviewed entrepreneurs were still without employees, so their role was to integrate the different business functions and practically apply the skills they had learnt through experience. As argued earlier, the outcome of experiential learning is the ability to practically apply all that has been learnt through experience (Kolb, 2015). The first learning outcome of entrepreneurial competencies includes having an agile mindset, self-efficacy and building networks. In this study, hybrid entrepreneurs developed a flexible and open mindset; they took calculated risks and solved problems, thus accelerating their learning ability. This finding complemented the research by Wang (2008), which stated that an entrepreneurial orientation coupled with a learning orientation fosters entrepreneurship and business performance.

The study found that entrepreneurial self-efficacy is one of the essential competencies that entrepreneurs learn. The data showed that, initially, hybrid entrepreneurs displayed low levels of confidence, which complemented the findings of other researchers (e.g. Folta et al., 2010; Raffiee & Feng, 2014), who highlighted that individuals lacking entrepreneurial experience and with a low core self-evaluation enter hybrid entrepreneurship. This finding contradicted that of Kurczewska et al. (2020), who asserted that individuals with a high level of self-efficacy enter hybrid entrepreneurship. This study showed that the entrepreneurs' confidence and resilience improved through learning from their own mistakes or failure, experiential learning and trial and error. This finding complemented the research conducted by Ferreira (2020), who affirmed that experiential learning is fundamental to an entrepreneurial level of self-efficacy.

Collaborations within the participants' entrepreneurial networks were advantageous and necessary to build the required entrepreneurial competencies. Associating with like-minded individuals and entrepreneurial organisations enabled the hybrid entrepreneurs to learn how to overcome obstacles and barriers presented in the transition to becoming full-time entrepreneurs. Participants who received support from family, friends, role models and mentors felt that their support network gave them the emotional and mental support needed to transition into full-time entrepreneurship (BarNir et al., 2011; Chen & He, 2011). Earlier research conducted by Dunn and Holtz-Eakin (2000) confirmed that parental role models increase the next generation's propensity and motivation to become entrepreneurs. Contrastingly, Block and Landgraf (2016) reported that the motivation to follow an entrepreneur role model does not directly affect the behaviour of a hybrid entrepreneur to transition to full-time entrepreneurship. However, in this study, building strategic partnerships and sourcing right-fit mentorships increased the level of learning and positively influenced the behaviour regarding the transition to full-time entrepreneurship.

The second applied entrepreneurial outcome is that entrepreneurs learn to be jacks of all trades during the transition phases. In their corporate jobs, they functioned as specialists, but this changes when they transition. The finding is consistent with the argument that the complex process of assembling factors of production requires entrepreneurs to be competent in many diverse skills (Lazear, 2004; Syme & Mueller, 2022). Similar to existing literature, being jacks of all trades enabled the entrepreneurs to learn diverse skills, including business management, marketing, product development, financial management, HR management, resourcing, opportunity exploitation and strategic skills (Morris et al., 2013; Reis et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the entrepreneurs had to learn new digital skills – namely, website building, social media management and, importantly, the development of their branding and equity on the social platform. This was consistent with the findings of Toniolo et al. (2020), who found that the rise in emerging and digital technology demanded a new set of entrepreneurial competencies. Although some scholars argue that being a jack of all trades is an innate ability (Silva, 2007), this study argues that, to some extent, operating as a jack of all trades is influenced by entrepreneurs' background, current, continuous and intentional skill acquisition as they transition (Syme & Mueller, 2022). This discussion leads to the development of the following proposition:

Proposition 2: Applied entrepreneurial outcomes are learnt in the mid-transition stage from hybrid to full-time entrepreneurship.

Proposition 2a: Applied entrepreneurial competencies are learnt in the mid-transition stage from hybrid to full-time entrepreneurship.

Proposition 2b: Applied jack-of-all-trade skills are learnt in the mid-transition stage from hybrid to full-time entrepreneurship.

### Constructive entrepreneurial leadership learning outcomes

This study's last contribution is the finding that entrepreneurs learn to be constructive entrepreneurial leaders in the late transition stage, leading themselves and others. In the late transition stage, some businesses started employing employees and entrepreneurs led teams. Based on the present study's results, it can be said that constructive entrepreneurial leadership is built by meaning-making and applied entrepreneurial learning outcomes. As Varney (2009) argued, leadership is about creating meaning in the context in which the game is played. Such meaning empowers entrepreneurs as individuals and derives the purpose for their teams. The participants echoed the importance of having the ability to set a vision and mission while establishing an organisational culture, building a high-performing team and applying self-management in building a business model that captures value (Freeman, 2014).

The entrepreneurs emphasised the importance of leading from the inside out. This notion of self-leadership focused on the entrepreneurs' motivation to achieve goals and improve organisational performance. Self-leadership literature explains that such choices in specifying higher-level objectives that govern self-influence contribute to the achievement of outcomes, including motivation, positive work attitudes, task performance, creativity and innovation (Knotts et al., 2022). The findings also show that entrepreneurs who demonstrate self-leadership are able to lead their teams.

In the later stages, the entrepreneurs were no longer operating as jacks of all trades. Leading at an organisational level required the entrepreneurs to create an entrepreneurial culture in their enterprises, which encouraged and was conducive to enhancing the employees' productivity (Secundo et al., 2017) and achieving organisational goals (Wang & Chugh, 2014). Entrepreneurs were expected to anticipate, identify and exploit opportunities within their environment (Harrison et al., 2018) and carefully manage risk when leading others. In leading others, empathy and care, motivation, team-building skills and people management skills were critical skills that hybrid entrepreneurs had to develop.

In some cases, entrepreneurs had to adapt to the needs of their organisations and the level of their employees. This finding was consistent with Chen (2007) and Harrison et al. (2018), who argued that empathy, ethical behaviour and caring for the employees' growth are core to entrepreneurial leadership. Nevertheless, most entrepreneurs reported adapting their leadership styles to encourage, motivate and promote productivity in their entrepreneurial organisations. While prior leadership experience was an intervening condition, we argue that leadership styles tend to be

adapted as the context, environment and circumstances change. Based on this discussion, the last proposition is as follows:

Proposition 3: Constructive entrepreneurial leadership outcomes are learnt in the late transition stage and beginning of full-time entrepreneurship.

Proposition 3a: Self-leadership outcomes are learnt in the late transition stage and beginning of full-time entrepreneurship.

Proposition 3b: Leading others is learnt in the late transition stage and beginning of full-time entrepreneurship.

## Conclusion

This study explored what hybrid entrepreneurs learn during the transition towards full-time entrepreneurship using the experiential learning theory. The findings show the key learning outcomes in transitioning from hybrid to full-time entrepreneurship. The dimensions of learning outcomes included meaning-making (spirituality as a resource and redefining the purpose), applied entrepreneurial (entrepreneurial competencies and operating as a jack of all trades) and constructive entrepreneurial leadership (leading self and others). These learnings have created a deep sense of purpose and patriotism among the entrepreneurs and promoted value creation. The findings from this study should enable hybrid entrepreneurs considering transitioning to full-time entrepreneurship to use this framework to understand the entrepreneurial competencies required to become successful full-time entrepreneurs.

The study yields implications for hybrid entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial practitioners, revealing the resources required during the transition process. As the learning period for hybrid entrepreneurs is cited as critical, the government should encourage entrepreneurial education to be offered on a broader basis to improve the rate of hybrid entrepreneurs transitioning to full-time entrepreneurship, thereby creating economic value and growth. Entrepreneurs can learn the competencies that are aligned with their stage of transition and skills gap. Additionally, the study has important implications for organisations and policymakers in South Africa, as the country has a struggling economy and needs entrepreneurial growth. Policymakers in South Africa should introduce entrepreneurial support for transitioning entrepreneurs through comprehensive entrepreneurial support and education programmes. Lastly, the identified entrepreneurial learning outcomes could help training institutions to develop tailor-made programmes for transitioning entrepreneurs.

This article is not without limitations and paves the way for future research. The sample of the study was limited to 15 successful full-time entrepreneurs. As the findings do not provide a broader view of entrepreneurs' learning experiences, the results cannot be generalised to a wider audience. Future research should include larger sample sizes. The study found that entrepreneurs become leaders in the later transition stage. Therefore, future research should

investigate entrepreneurs' experiences of transitioning from an owner-manager to a leader.

Spirituality influences the development of leadership skills. Consequently, future research should focus on spirituality's effect on the transition process and its impact as the entrepreneurial process unfolds. Future research should consider a longitudinal approach to determine the learning process and effects over time and any corresponding changes to the hybrid entrepreneur. Such studies could also explore the triggers and the distinct stages or phases of the transition process. Lastly, the empirical model can be developed further and tested in quantitative studies.

## Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank India Goncalves for editing the manuscript.

## Competing interests

The authors have declared that no competing interest exists.

## Authors' contributions

This research is based on the first author's (N.R.) master's research project. She contributed to the conceptualisation, data collection, analysis and writing of the original research draft. A.M. supervised the research, contributed to the conceptualisation of the study, re-analysed the data and revised the original manuscript to make it more focused.

## Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance to conduct the study was obtained from the Gordon Institute of Business Science on 19 July 2021.

## Funding information

This study was sponsored by MBA.

## Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

## Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the authors.

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