




# An application of Hofstede's cultural dimensions and golden circle in entrepreneurship education



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**Background:** Entrepreneurship education has become an important issue worldwide, originating mainly in the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK). Different methods have been used to teach entrepreneurship, often without considering local circumstances, which is particularly important in sub-Saharan Africa with its diverse cultures. Therefore, comparing the impact of cultural differences in teaching entrepreneurship education in Western Europe and sub-Saharan African countries is crucial to overcoming such challenges.

**Aim:** This article aims to compare the impact of cultural differences in teaching entrepreneurship education in Western Europe and sub-Saharan African countries with the aim of designing appropriate entrepreneurship education programmes and approaches to the specific cultural contexts.

**Setting:** The study compares the impact of cultural differences in Western Europe (US and UK) and sub-Saharan African countries.

**Methods:** A literature review descriptive study of the impact of cultural differences in teaching entrepreneurship education in Western Europe and sub-Saharan Africa was adopted. Secondary analysis using Hofstede's cultural dimensions' model was used for analysis.

**Results:** The main cultural differences are in the dimensions of individualism versus collectivism and power distance. Incorporating team-based learning and focusing on business ideas with a positive collective impact in sub-Saharan Africa can lead to more effective entrepreneurship education.

**Conclusion:** It is crucial to adapt entrepreneurship education approaches to the specific cultural contexts of regions. Using a framework with four guide questions for whom, why, what and how can support the development of programmes.

**Contribution:** Future education programmes can be designed based on a proposed golden circle.

**Keywords:** entrepreneurship; education; Hofstede's cultural dimensions; sub-Saharan Africa; golden circle; teaching methods.

## Introduction

Entrepreneurship education (EE) has spread around the world over the past two decades as one of the current systems to increase the quality and number of entrepreneurs, resulting in employment creation and economic empowerment in many countries. Unemployment has recently become a global challenge, particularly among the youth, as both developed and developing countries are directly or indirectly affected by unemployment. As a result, different countries have opted to incorporate EE into their educational curricula with the aim of providing individuals with entrepreneurial mindsets and abilities to support involvement and performance in different entrepreneurial activities. For instance, South Africa introduced the EE programme in its education curriculum in the early 1990s to provide a platform to increase the number of business start-ups that would generate employment opportunities for learners (North 2002). However, the good initiative encountered many problems, including the cultural background and differences of learners in the South African school system (Gouws 1997).

Generally, by encouraging students to take initiative, recognise and seize opportunities and encourage teamwork, EE gives students a sense of responsibility (European Commission 2021). Nonetheless, EE cannot effectively reach its goals without the initial contribution of lecturers,

who are a crucial part of the teaching of EE. Summarily, the objectives of EE are to increase student awareness of self-employment, provide the business skills required to launch a new venture and encourage participants to develop entrepreneurial qualities, such as being creative, as well as taking the initiative, risks and responsibility (European Commission 2014).

In order to achieve the EE objectives, effective methods for delivering EE are critical. One factor that might determine how EE is taught is the culture of a country. While there have been studies on the influence of culture on education, there is a paucity of research when it comes to the influence of cultural differences in the teaching of EE, particularly with a comparative approach between countries of the Global North (Western Europe [WE]) and Global South (sub-Saharan Africa [SSA]) groupings.

Against this backdrop, this article aims to compare the impact of cultural differences in teaching EE, at all levels, in WE and SSA countries through the application of Hofstede's cultural dimensions. The differences between SSA on the one hand and WE and the United States (US) on the other hand are analysed based on Hofstede's national cultural assessment scores. Specifically, this article addresses the following questions: What teaching methods and approaches are suitable for teaching EE in SSA countries? How can the teaching of EE be improved to achieve the EE objectives in SSA countries? To respond to these questions, the article explores Hofstede's cultural theory in assessing cultural differences in teaching EE and reviews the literature on EE and EE teaching methods and approaches before highlighting the national cultural difference results and providing recommendations.

## Literature review

### Theoretical background underpinning cultural differences

This article's theoretical footing is grounded on Hofstede's cultural theory, which has been chosen for its prominence in explaining how differences in culture, particularly at a national level, influence the different behaviour outcomes of different countries. The culture of a country is equally important for entrepreneurship, as well as for education and teaching methods. The term culture has been defined in many ways. For this article, we view culture 'as a set of values that are shared in a given social group and distinguish this group from others' (Beugelsdijk, Kostova & Roth 2017) or as Hofstede (1991) states, it is the 'collective programming of the mind distinguishing the members of one group or category of people from another'. Therefore, it is shared among a group of people.

Hofstede (1991) identifies four elements of culture: symbols, heroes, rituals and values. Symbols represent abstract ideas, such as a country's flag, which have a shared meaning within a culture. Heroes are individuals who embody values and are admired for their contributions, such as

famous leaders. Rituals are symbolic behaviours, such as religious ceremonies, which communicate shared values and create a sense of belonging within a culture. Values are shared beliefs about what is important and desirable in a culture, such as individualism or collectivism, and guide behaviour and decision-making. Together, these elements shape and define the culture of a society.

The work of Hofstede ([1980] 2001) is the most cited on national culture, and while it has been criticised, it is still considered valid and has been used as the theoretical framework for this study. Hofstede first defined culture according to four dimensions and later extended it by two more, as follows:

- **Power distance:** The extent to which power is unequally distributed in a society is indicated by this dimension, and how it is perceived by those with less power.
- **Individualism versus collectivism:** This dimension highlights the degree of emphasis placed on individual achievements and independence compared to group harmony and interdependence in society.
- **Masculinity versus femininity:** Compares the extent to which a society values attributes stereotypically connected with masculinity versus femininity.
- **Uncertainty avoidance:** This dimension indicates to what degree a person tolerates or avoids ambiguity, uncertainty and unpredictability in situations, often resulting in strict laws, rules and rituals.
- **Long-term versus short-term orientation:** Highlights how much a society appraises future-oriented, goal-oriented and perseverant behaviours and traditions versus present-oriented, and adaptable behaviours and trends.
- **Indulgence versus restraint:** Measures to what degree members of a society are ready to indulge in pleasure and gratification versus controlling such impulses. Societies that score high on indulgence are more likely to accept and enjoy leisure time, while societies that score high on restraint are more likely to regulate behaviour through strict social norms and rules.

As mentioned, the model of a national culture has been criticised for its oversimplification because of its original four-dimensional (it later on became six-dimensional, as presented earlier in the text) conceptualisation of culture, limitations in the sample size that focuses on a single multinational corporation, failure to account for cultural changes over time and a lack of attention to cultural diversity within countries (Kirkman, Lowe & Gibson 2006; Sivakumar & Nakata 2001). Fischer and Schwartz (2011) claim that there are bigger differences within countries than between countries. However, a study by Minkov and Hofstede (2012) found little evidence for these claims. By comparing 299 regions in 28 countries across the world, they found that culture is country-specific and differs more between countries than within regions of the same country. Therefore, despite the criticism, the model of Hofstede is still a credible model to use for cultural analysis.

## Context

According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (2022), countries in SSA have a high rate of entrepreneurial activity. Necessity entrepreneurship, meaning that a person starts a business because of a lack of employment options, is prevalent in this region, while only a few people start their businesses because they see an opportunity in the market. The drawback with necessity entrepreneurs is that they usually start and stay small and do not have growth opportunities or employ people. Therefore, the promotion of entrepreneurship and the recognition of opportunities become crucial. Another key concept is the difference between informal and formal entrepreneurship, with the difference being that formal entrepreneurs follow the official processes for registration and incorporation by the government, while informal entrepreneurs start their businesses without any formal protection (Autio & Fu 2015; Thai & Turkina 2014). It is important as many countries have a high share of informal entrepreneurship (Thai & Turkina 2014) and it harms a country in the long run. This raises the question of whether EE and training can play their part in formalising more businesses.

## Teaching methods in entrepreneurship education

The ultimate goals of EE have largely been those of encouraging new start-ups, skills and knowledge acquisition, development of positive attitudes towards change and developing a better appreciation and support for all aspects of entrepreneurship (Chhabra et al. 2021; Dehghanpour Farashah 2013; Galvão, Ferreira & Marques 2018; Galvão, Marques & Ferreira 2020; Zhang et al. 2021). While these goals have largely remained the same over time, there have been repeated calls to modify and enhance the current teaching methods for a better shot at the attainment of the EE goals.

Various scholars have differently categorised the prominent methods that have been used in advancing the EE agenda. Perhaps the most prevalent method includes formal education where traditional classroom-based learning takes place in schools (Olokundun et al. 2018). Other methods include the incubators and accelerators programme, boot camps and workshops, mentorship and coaching, self-education and networking events (Dakung et al. 2019; Miroshnikova 2020). While the formal education method remains the number one EE method employed by secondary and tertiary institutions, where most EE takes place in Africa, Olokundun et al. (2018) contend that such traditional methods of teaching entrepreneurship are more theoretical and dormant as they do not allow for active participation and fall short in motivating considerations for an entrepreneurship career. Table 1 shows an overview of possible teaching methods.

In light of Rodrigues, Bu and Min's (2000) observations, it is important to note that, because of the heterogeneity or homogeneity of preferred pedagogical approaches and

**TABLE 1:** Teaching-learning methods in entrepreneurship education.

Teaching-learning methods	Elements
Direct teaching-learning methods	Inviting guest entrepreneurs - Mentoring - Official speech-seminars - Video watching and recording - Training in extracurricular activities - Training in specialised lessons - Small businesses mentoring - Entrepreneurship tutoring
Interactive teaching-learning methods	Process-oriented learning - Learning from mistakes - Interviewing entrepreneurs - Bilateral learning - Group discussion - Networking - Discussion - Problem-oriented learning - Active learning
Practical operational teaching-learning methods	Role-playing - Training workshops - Site visiting - Class practice - Research projects - Internship - Business planning - Starting business - Studying nature - Investment projects - Practical experience

Source: Esmi, K., Marzoughi, R. & Torkzadeh, J., 2015, 'Teaching learning methods of an entrepreneurship curriculum', *Journal of Advances in Medical Education and Professionalism* 3(4), 172-177

cultural orientations among different groups of people, formalised EE approaches may not be universally applicable. In a similar light, Zhang et al. (2021) argue that different cultures lead to different learning styles, leading to different pedagogical preferences. Where some learners prefer learning through exploration and discovery, some thrive when learning coordinators furnish them with learning points (Galvão et al. 2020). As such, because of the influences of culture, some learners prefer greater responsibility and control in their learning process while others do not.

## The influence of culture on education and teaching methods

It is undeniable that culture has an impact on education and teaching methods at all educational levels. Ahanchian and McCormick (2009) showed that the effectiveness of virtual training through teamwork differs between participants from individualist and collectivist countries. A difference between nations with high power distance, high collectivism and high avoidance of uncertainty is that they are more likely to prefer teacher-centred methods, while the opposite cultural inclination prefers hands-on learning (Rodrigues et al. 2000). In addition, Manikutty, Anuradha and Hansen (2007) also mention different learning styles that are influenced by culture and to which teaching styles can adapt. Therefore, national culture has an influence on teaching methods and education in general.

Following this argument, EE has to take into consideration the cultural context. Oo et al. (2018) show that EE is particularly successful within cultural contexts that exhibit a propensity for accepting uncertainty, placing emphasis on individualism, and having a cultural heritage that values traits traditionally associated with masculinity. Shirokova, Tsukanova and Morris (2018) confirmed that in individualistic and low uncertainty avoidance, the effects of EE are higher. The study also added the power distance dimension, concluding that cultures with lower power distance have higher attendance in programmes and higher start-up activity. Keeping in mind the fact that entrepreneurship is usually an individualistic achievement, these results come as no surprise.

Observing that national culture does have a significant impact on education in general and EE specifically, pursuant

to the objectives of this article, the differences in national cultures in SSA and how they can change EE to be a better fit are reviewed.

## Research methods and design

The research method for this article is a literature review descriptive method, as it represents a broad approach to scientific research that encompasses the research aim, objectives, as well as methods, procedures, criteria of quality and standards for reporting. The literature review process was conducted in two steps. Firstly, the authors determined the topic of interest (EE and Hofstede's cultural dimensions) and the aim of the study and decided on what literature should be included. The literature includes indexed peer-reviewed publications, including EE in titles, abstracts and keywords. The literature was searched using some electronic dataset searches, such as the Scopus, Web of Science and Science Direct databases, which aim to ensure the scientific accuracy of publications. The search generated a total of approximately 182, 76 and 158 related publications found in Scopus, Web of Science and ScienceDirect, respectively. Publications that were found during the search that did not include the search terms in titles, keywords or abstracts, or were not accessible online, and were non-peer-reviewed were excluded. This yielded a total of 416 publications establishing the database that was used to address the objective of the study.

Secondly, the authors were each allocated 138 articles to assess, resulting in an evaluation of the literature to determine relevant hints. The hints include Hofstede's cultural dimensions of individualism versus collectivism, power distance, power and entrepreneurial teaching methods. Discrepancies in this assessment were resolved through discussion until agreement was reached by the authors. Secondary analysis was used to compare the cultural dimensions, according to Hofstede, of the available countries of the SSA with those of the US and UK. The impact of power distance and individualism on teaching entrepreneurship was also reviewed, as research has shown that individualism and power distance have a positive effect on entrepreneurial activity (Bugaje et al. 2023). In light of the aim of the current study, secondary analysis was found to be relevant because it can make critical contributions to knowledge as well as to afford guidelines for future entrepreneurial research (Pederson et al. 2020). Lastly, a framework for EE in SSA based on Simon Sinek's golden circle was developed. Educational programmes can be designed by focusing on the why, how and what.

## Ethical considerations

Although there are no human participants in this study, ethical issues that were undertaken encompass the researcher's honesty, quality, legality and integrity. Researchers followed ethical principles by observing research procedures and refraining from distorting the results or any other behaviour that may appear misleading to readers.

Only publicly available secondary data were used for this study. Ethical clearance to conduct this study was obtained from the National University of Lesotho Institutional Review Board (IRB) Ref. No. ID 94 2020 and NUL/STA/2024/02.

## Results

For the results section, we firstly looked at differences in EE between WE and SSA. Secondly, the cultural differences based on Hofstede's dimensions were analysed. Lastly, the focus was on how power distance and individualism impact teaching and entrepreneurship. The two dimensions have been chosen because of them having the biggest differences between the two regions (Hofstede Insights 2023).

### Differences entrepreneurship education in Europe and sub-Saharan Africa

Approaches to teaching EE vary significantly across different countries, regions and cultural contexts (Suska 2019). With regard to the focus of this study, there are also notable differences between the teaching of EE in WE and SSA. In terms of cultural values and educational systems, Fayolle and Gailly (2015) submit that EE in WE, which is established, integrates entrepreneurship curricula in all levels of education (from as early as primary all the way to tertiary) with a weighted focus on real-life projects, business simulations and experiential learning that encourages independent thinking and creativity among their learners. This echoes the individualism often identified with WE culture (Gibb 2002). In contrast, the SSA EE is still evolving and is mostly influenced by the pronounced collectivism in their societies (Jesselyn & Mitchell 2006). Their EE accordingly focuses on group activities that are risk averse, have community support and interests at the core, and the development of activities that bring shared benefit to the community (Masha et al. 2022).

Further differences can be noted on pedagogical practices and approaches. Entrepreneurship education in WE places emphasis on incubator and accelerator programmes that seek industry and real-work-world partnerships, with hands-on and experiential learning at the core (Akhmetshin et al. 2019). For instance, WE has programmes such as the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs, which, among others, fosters skills exchange across countries that enhance cultural understanding and entrepreneurial skills (Seeber 2021). Entrepreneurship education in SSA, often driven by community-inspired learning approaches, places an emphasis on providing solutions to challenges bedeviling the community and the need for sustainable social entrepreneurship development (Iwu et al. 2021; Jardim, Bártolo & Pinho 2021). The Tony Elumelu Foundation Entrepreneurship Initiative, for example, which provides funding, mentorship and support opportunities for young men and women in Africa, champions the need for giving back to the community (Emeh et al. 2020; Gikabu 2020).

There are also differences in challenges faced and opportunities in the pursuit of EE in WE and SSA. On the

one hand, WE, a generally risk-averse people coupled with stable economies and disparities in EE approaches across different countries are noted as the key challenges (Kyrö 2018). The key opportunities are presented in the form of an enabling infrastructure with robust support structures that lay a strong foundation for innovation and advancement of EE techniques (Welsh, Tullar & Nemat 2016). On the other hand, the prevalence of informal economies, surging levels of unemployment, limited resources such as trained educators and inadequate infrastructure, are characteristic of the main challenges being faced in EE in SSA (Iwu 2022; Mbeteh & Pellegrini 2018). Regardless, opportunities are also present. The growing youth population and the continued government fixation and focus on entrepreneurship as a tool for economic development and diversification are a positive move for EE in SSA (Du Toit & Gaotlhobogwe 2018; Naudé 2017).

### Cultural dimensions of sub-Saharan Africa United States and United Kingdom

The cultural dimensions, according to Hofstede, of the available countries of SSA with the US and UK are compared. Table 2 indicates the SSA, UK and US countries' scores according to the Hofstede model as shown in the literature review. The scores from 1 to 100 in the model represent the extent to which a particular cultural dimension is pronounced in a country or society. A high score (close to 100) indicates that the cultural dimension in question is strong in that country. A low score (close to 1) indicates that the dimension is less pronounced or that the opposite of the dimension is more strongly anchored in the culture.

Considering the data, some differences stand out. Sub-Saharan Africa has a higher power distance than the UK and the US.

Power is typically concentrated in a political framework that upholds authority, which is distributed according to experience and age (Nyambegera, Kamoche & Siebers 2016). Also, there is a big difference in individualism, where the

UK and US are very high, while SSA countries are very collectivist. Inversely, UK and US cultures emphasise the importance of individual identity, human rights and needs rather than those of the group (Chayakonvikom, Fuangvut & Cannell 2016) and learning is considered to be a one-time process to be acquired at a young age. Research has shown that collectivist and individualist cultures may be reflected in the teaching methods of teachers, trainers and/or lecturers (Yilmaz, Altinkurt & Ozciftci 2016). In the UK and the US, for example, teachers expect students to actively participate in the process of acquiring knowledge through conversations and inquiry, whereas in SSA, the role of the teacher is to impart knowledge in a clear, structured and straightforward manner (Staub & Stern 2002; Voss et al. 2013).

The masculinity dimension shows that both sub-Saharan African countries and Western countries tend to be competitive societies, but with certain differences. While the scores in SSA vary between 40 and 63, the UK and US have comparably slightly higher values (66 and 62, respectively), which indicates that success and achievement are highly valued in these societies.

In terms of uncertainty avoidance, countries in SSA have moderate scores, suggesting that these societies have a certain tolerance for uncertainty but still value structure and rules. In comparison, the UK and US have lower scores (35 and 46), showing a slightly higher acceptance of uncertainty and ambiguity, that is these societies are more open to new ideas and unpredictable situations.

There is a difference in long-term orientation; however, there are large differences in SSA and some missing data. Sub-Saharan African countries tend to have lower scores, indicating a stronger orientation towards traditions and short-term results. The UK and US have moderate scores (51 and 26), with the UK showing a slightly stronger long-term orientation, meaning that these societies are more future-oriented but at the same time value traditional values.

**TABLE 2:** Country scores for the six cultural dimensions: sub-Saharan Africa countries, UK and US.

Countries	Power distance	Individualism	Masculinity	Uncertainty avoidance	Long term orientation	Indulgence
Angola	83	18	20	63	15	83
Burkina Faso	70	15	50	55	27	18
Ethiopia	70	20	65	55	-	46
Ghana	70	15	40	65	4	72
Kenya	70	25	60	50	-	-
Malawi	70	30	40	50	-	-
Mozambique	85	15	38	44	11	80
Namibia	65	30	40	45	35	-
Nigeria	80	30	60	55	13	84
Senegal	70	25	45	55	25	-
Sierra Leone	70	20	40	50	-	-
South Africa	49	65	63	49	34	63
Tanzania	70	25	40	50	34	38
Zambia	60	35	40	50	30	42
UK	35	89	66	35	51	69
US	40	91	62	46	26	68

Source: Hofstede Insights, 2023, *Country comparison tool*, viewed 22 September 2023, from <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison-tool>

In the dimension of indulgence, the scores vary widely across SSA. Some countries, such as Nigeria, have very high scores, indicating that these societies value the free enjoyment of life and leisure. In contrast, the UK and the US also show high scores (69 and 68), which suggest that these societies also value enjoyment and free development, but within a cultural context slightly different to that of SSA.

The differences indicate that culture may influence teachers' teaching methods and education. In the following section, there is a focus on power distance and individualism as the two strongest differences.

## Power distance and individualism impact on teaching and entrepreneurship

### Power distance

In the educational setting, power distance may reflect the level of dependence learners exhibit in the learning environment, including the measure of the extent to which inequity is recognised within the educational fraternity (Cortina, Arel & Smith-Darden 2017). Evidence from the literature has shown that in low power distance (UK and US) countries, students are at liberty to argue, discuss, comment and question lectures. This indicates an education process that is not teacher-centred but rather student-centred. This view is supported by Alqarni (2022), who argues that if learners feel that they are at liberty to discuss and provide their views, they are more likely to develop independent thinking. Learners with independent thinking are likely to be confident and highly adaptable. Therefore, it will be easy for teachers to impart entrepreneurial knowledge to low power distance countries as they are characterised by independent thinking, which allows them to challenge conventional wisdom, identify new opportunities and develop unique solutions to complex problems.

Nonetheless, in high power distance countries (SSA), usually, there is a clear differentiation between teachers and learners, the emphasis is on formal authority and privileges and orders are executed by learners and not discussed. Lecturers are supposed to provide a conducive environment that allows students to make decisions, take risks and act on their own without micro-management. From an educational point of view, schools and universities should concentrate on using active learning and process-oriented teaching when it comes to developing students' entrepreneurial skills, regardless of whether they are from high or low power distance countries (Oyelola 2013).

Power distance can influence entrepreneurship in several ways. Firstly, in cultures with high power distance, individuals tend to be less willing to take risks, which leads to lower entrepreneurial intentions (Antoncic et al. 2018). Secondly, in entrepreneurship teams, high power distance can lead to mistrust and high turnover among co-founders, especially if the power distance between leadership and team members is mismatched (Zhu 2013). Thirdly, social ventures are less common in cultures with high power distance, as

such cultures are less likely to challenge existing power structures (Puumalainen et al. 2015). Finally, high power distance also limits the ability of entrepreneurs to discover entrepreneurial opportunities through networks (Shu, Ren & Zheng 2018). Power distance also has an impact on EE. In cultures with high power distance, for instance, the study in Taiwan, this leads to a preference for traditional teaching methods, which are less likely to foster creativity and innovation, which are crucial for EE (Lu 2021). In educational institutions in India, high power distance leads to low critical thinking and weaker entrepreneurial commitment (Tiwari & Anjum 2014). To increase the effectiveness of EE, teaching methods that reduce power distance and encourage open interaction should be used. In high power distance environments, educational approaches need to be adapted to reach a higher engagement of students in entrepreneurial activities.

### Individualism/collectivism

Within the educational context, individualism seems to support tailored learning experiences that accommodate various strengths, paces and interests, while collectivism accommodates cooperative learning strategies and communal problem-solving, fostering a sense of unity and shared achievement. The purpose of education in individualist cultures is to 'learn how to learn', which goes on through the whole life of a member of an individualistic society, while in a collectivist culture, it is to 'acquire the customs and norms of that society in order to function better as an in-group member' (Hofstede 2003; Giota 2007). With regard to teaching strategies, collectivism emphasises peer learning, empathy, effective communication and collaborative solving. A positive relationship between individualistic societies and entrepreneurial orientation has been shown by various studies (McGrath & O'Toole 2014; Mueller & Thomas 2000). This is also supported by Mueller and Thomas (2000), who found evidence of countries with high individualism being more supportive of entrepreneurship than collectivist countries. However, Franke, Hofstede & Bond (1991 in McGrath & O'Toole 2014) argue that individualism may sometimes be a burden 'given the importance of group cohesion in generating collective economic effectiveness'. Therefore, the best way to teach entrepreneurship in schools, regardless of whether students are in individualist or collectivist countries, is to balance the individualist and collectivist orientation because, for successful entrepreneurship, there is always a need for individual creativity as well as the spirit of a team of work. Furthermore, most people are a mix of the two characteristics, and a person from an individualistic country might also have traits of collectivism and *vice versa* (Triandis 2001).

## Discussion

### The golden circle approach of entrepreneurship education

Entrepreneurship is about achieving personal goals and mostly individualistic achievements. The question arises:

How do we do this in collectivist cultures with a high power distance, and what does it mean for EE in SSA? As such, this article develops a framework for EE in SSA based on Simon Sinek's golden circle, originally developed for businesses to find their purpose. Sinek (2011) argues that 'people don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it' – *why* is the reason for being, *how* is how we implement the reason for being, and *what* are the actual actions in day-to-day business. Authors believe this can be adapted as a framework for EE, as it will encourage practitioners to be holistic in their approach and also look at the *why* – which is the reason for actually doing training. For a training offer or programme, the following three questions need to be determined:

*Why?* Every educational institution has to find its purpose. The *why* should then determine the *how* and the *what*.

*How?* This entails the whole process of delivering education focusing on teaching methods. There is also a need to consider the processes around the delivery by spelling out the target group and the recruitment of the target group.

*What is it?* Most EE organisations probably know what they are doing. However, the results of EE efforts are ambiguous (Gielnik et al. 2015; Longva, Strand & Pasquine 2020; Oosterbeek, Van Praag & Ijsselstein 2010). This questions whether organisations know whether *what* they are doing is appropriate for the context within which they operate. The *what* in an educational offering would, therefore, be the actual training that is delivered in the field.

Based on these three factors-cum-questions, this article presents the golden circle that organisations teaching EE should consider when designing programmes. The circle is designed with a strong focus on culture. The question, *for whom*, is considered, as also added by Fayolle (2013), as an integral part of every EE measurement.

### **For whom, why, how and what of entrepreneurship education**

*For whom?* To start, educational institutions have to define who the audience of the training is, as the other factors have to be adjusted based on this. Audiences can vary from the formal education sector with primary, secondary or tertiary education to informal education through non-governmental organisations or companies. The audiences can differ from their background in terms of upbringing, education and knowledge and their motivation (Fayolle 2013). It is apparent that an education aimed at secondary school students without a business idea must be different than one teaching out-of-school youth with already started informal businesses.

*Why?* For institutions offering entrepreneurship training, the ultimate purpose is to increase the number of start-ups and support economic development. As shown, EE works better in individualistic cultures with low power distance and low uncertainty avoidance (Oo et al. 2018; Shirokova et al. 2018). With the cultures in SSA countries being collectivistic and having a higher power distance, the reason has to be changed.

Instead of solely increasing the number of start-ups and economic development, the training should focus on the benefits for the community and the family and how the expertise can be used for the benefit of society. The goal does not necessarily have to be only the creation of new companies. It is also a useful outcome if, as a result of an EE, students realise that starting a business is not for them (Block et al. 2023). The skills learnt can also be used by employees.

*How?* In an African culture with high collectivism and power distance, EE's teaching methods should be culturally nuanced to better meet the needs of students within this context (Price & Ronnie 2021). It is important to consider the cultural dimensions of collectivism and power distance, as they can significantly influence the effectiveness of EE (Damaraju, Barney & Dess 2020).

In collectivist societies, team-based learning can be very useful in EE. Successful businesses are often a team effort, and addressing the possible issues of working in a team and developing the teams during the EE can increase the number of start-ups (Zimmer & Bajwa 2023). Also, in high power distance societies, students are more used to having all the knowledge spoon-fed and delivered. There has to be a compromise between still delivering knowledge directly and also developing concepts in teams.

The role of educators is crucial in designing and delivering entrepreneurship courses within this cultural context (Price & Ronnie 2021). Educators should have experience with entrepreneurship and industry, as their background can influence the quality and relevance of the teaching materials (Price & Ronnie 2021). It is important for educators to understand the cultural nuances of collectivism and power distance and incorporate them into their teaching methods. For example, they can foster student collaboration and teamwork to promote collective learning and problem-solving.

EE is done with digital formats (Peoples & Kotwal 2023), which raises the question of how well this can be implemented in SSA, considering the lower internet penetration compared to other parts of the world and the higher power distance, which means that the educator should lead the courses. Especially with younger generations, these delivery modes should be part of the learning experience.

*What?* Eventually, the *what* has to be adjusted to the *whom* and *why*, as different target groups and goals require different skills and competencies (Block et al. 2023). Some goals will be the same; for example, every business needs a market analysis or a financial plan. However, these need to be adjusted to the local context. From a cultural perspective, long-term thinking has to be included. Successful businesses are in a long game and with short-term planning, they will be more likely to fail. Also, different models of companies might be worth a look. For example, the concept of cooperatives can be considered, which are owned by the people and have democratic structures, something that could fit collectivist cultures.

Accordingly, this study makes the following practice and policy recommendations. Entrepreneurship education concepts need to be adjusted for the regions in which they are implemented. Something that works in South Africa might not work in Mozambique and *vice versa*. Cultures and traditions are different; however, too often, on the ground, one training programme, the one by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), for example, is used the same in different countries. While it is a good starting point, it needs reflection to adapt to local circumstances. Furthermore, educational institutions need not assume that all learners have individualistic and creative thinking capabilities. It is something students must be led to. If a student has been taught all his life to follow rules and a strict curriculum with examinations, creative thinking is less likely to have been formed. With creativity and the recognition of opportunities as one of the key factors for entrepreneurship, there is a need for the inclusion of exercises that train these competencies. This study also recommends that a focus be placed on team-based learning with the aim of having a greater goal for society. Firstly, learning together with peers can be more effective in collectivist cultures. Secondly, business ideas with a positive impact on the collective will work better in SSA.

### Limitations and strengths

This article is not without limitations. It is based on desk research and the literature review. The available data were not collected to address the current research problem, which may negatively affect the results of this study (Cheng & Phillips 2014). Regardless, further studies can take this article as a starting point for empirical research. Also, the recommendations can be tested in the field to verify how a more collectivist approach might support entrepreneurial intention and outcome, as well as how the hierarchical structures in students' heads can be broken with exercises focusing on creativity.

### Conclusion

This study set out to compare the impact of cultural differences in teaching EE in WE and SSA countries by applying Hofstede's cultural dimension theory. This article reveals that most entrepreneurial concepts come from European societies or the US and have, therefore, individualistic and low hierarchical structures as their basis. However, as shown, cultures in SSA are different and, in addition, differ strongly between countries. Accordingly, this article pushes for a rethink of EE for it to be localised for better results. This study makes various contributions. Theoretically, the article contributes to the debate around the influences of cultural differences in teaching EE and the need for more localised approaches to EE. The study also presents a framework, *the golden circle approach of entrepreneurship education*, which may be adopted for use and guidance by both EE policy and practice organisations. This framework and the recommendations are envisaged to inspire reimagined approaches in pursuing EE excellence.

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### Authors' contributions

R.M.T., D.M. and M.C. contributed equally to this work.

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### 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 are the product of professional research. It does not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated institution, funder, agency or that of the publisher. The authors are responsible for this article's results, findings and content.

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