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# Readiness for New Ventures in South Africa Through Entrepreneurship Education: A Reflective Thematic Approach

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## **Keywords:**

Entrepreneurship education, Innovation in business, training in entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurial intentions

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## **Abstract**

*The purpose of this research is to investigate what factors affect students' readiness to start their own businesses once they graduate from college. Case study research was conducted with an emphasis on an undergraduate degree program at a South African university. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with 15 program participants and analyzed using a reflective theme analysis method. Our findings suggest that the experiential learning methodology employed at the university increases students' levels of self-efficacy in the realm of entrepreneurship, i.e., their belief in their own abilities to create and run successful firms. They look at the benefits of going into business for themselves with optimism. However, our findings suggest that certain students may lack the confidence to take initiative and try new things, making the social support system of teammates and teachers all the more important for helping them feel safe enough to try new things and succeed.*

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## **Introduction**

There is widespread consensus around the world that entrepreneurship is an essential component of national progress and economic expansion (Shambare, 2013). In response to this discovery, several countries, including South Africa, have studied entrepreneurship as a fundamental part of their higher education programmes (Lose & Khuzwayo, 2021). Numerous nations have settled on their own distinct approaches to the instruction of aspiring businesspeople (Cheteni & Umejesi, 2023). However, questions have been asked about the calibration of the education provided by higher education institutions [HEIs] with reference to business startups and management.

Although research has shown that entrepreneurship education is associated with the growth of entrepreneurial skills and motivation to engage in entrepreneurship, countries such as South Africa still record low early stage entrepreneurship intentions [TEA]. This is because entrepreneurship education is associated with the development of entrepreneurial skills (Franco, Haase & Lautenschlager, 2010; Bowmaker-Falconer & Herrington, 2020). As a direct consequence, the unemployment rate has remained very high, particularly among the younger generation (Jwara & Hoque, 2018). Because the TEA in South Africa is relatively low, there is a pressing need to analyze the efficacy of entrepreneurship education in developing entrepreneurial readiness among students graduating from higher education institutions (HEIs) in the country. It is vital to establish the necessity of improving entrepreneurial education to ensure that desired economic growth is accomplished, and this is essential to do so. This is especially important in rural communities such as those that characterize the Eastern Cape Province in South Africa, where most of the population lives in rural areas. Compared with urban provinces, these communities have significantly higher rates of poverty, unemployment, and social marginalization.

In general, entrepreneurial activity propels the economy toward greater productive capacity, positively contributes to economic growth, and generates new employment opportunities (Mukwarami, et al., 2020; Uyen & Zainal, 2020). The promotion of entrepreneurial endeavors is one of the top priorities of economic policy in every country (Mukhatar et al, 2021), since it plays a significant role in both the maintenance and

expansion of economic activity (Izadi & Mogaddham, 2019; Mukhatar et al, 2021). According to Masha (2020), the majority of young people with ideas for possible enterprises do not have the competence or ability to transform such ideas into profitable businesses.

There is currently no causal evidence examining the efficacy of Entrepreneurship Education (EE) for youth or "potential future entrepreneurs." The current empirical foundation of the field consists of observational studies (Brown et al., 2011; Von Graevenitz et al., 2010) and quasi-experimental studies (Brown et al., 2011). Furthermore, almost all these studies were conducted in the developed world. Meanwhile, Byabashaija and Katano's (2011) study in Uganda is the only notable study on entrepreneurship education in the sub-Saharan region. This study is one of the first to investigate the effects of EE on youth and young adults in a developing context, and it will shed light on the effect of entrepreneurship pedagogy at one university.

This study contributes to the literature in three ways. To begin, there is acknowledgement of the role that youth have historically played in the realm of entrepreneurship. Second, there is recognition of the importance of youth participation in businesses. Third, there is an emphasis on indigenous youth as the target demographic for placement of entrepreneurship in rural settings. One of the claims that will be made in this paper is that one of the benefits of entrepreneurship is that it has the potential to eradicate poverty. This claim has been made, although it is generally accepted that entrepreneurship is responsible for the creation of jobs and economic development (Bugwandin & Bayat, 2022).

Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the connection between receiving entrepreneurship education and being prepared to engage in actual business activities after graduation. The low TEA observed in South Africa continues to be a source of concern, especially in light of the necessity of expanding education on entrepreneurship to promote economic growth. This is a case study of a rural university offering entrepreneurship education as part of its South African curriculum.

### **Entrepreneurial readiness**

The concept of entrepreneurial readiness has been investigated using a wide variety of research approaches. Both entrepreneurial intentions (Malebana & Swanepoel, 2015) and the rate of entrepreneurial activities are closely related concepts that are considered synonymous with entrepreneurial readiness. Research has also taken into account total early stage entrepreneurial activity as a measure of the total number of people who engage in the early stages of the entrepreneurial process (Bowmaker-Falconer & Herrington, 2020). This presents a challenge when considering the assertion made by Siivonen, Peura, Hytti, Kasanen, and Komulainen (2019) that universities have become key economic drivers because of their role in the development of aspiring business owners and conducting research with economic value. According to Malebana (2016), exposure to entrepreneurial education has a positive relationship with entrepreneurial intention. It is customary practice to think of entrepreneurial intention behavior in terms of a person's desire to pursue entrepreneurship as a career path as well as the individual's possession of a powerfully positive attitude toward engaging in entrepreneurial behavior. According to Mars and Rhoades (2012), the concepts of entrepreneurial intention and readiness are effective if entrepreneurs tend to adopt an agency view in which they see themselves as critical agents of social change. This view is necessary for entrepreneurs to have for the concepts to be effective.

### **Entrepreneurship Education**

According to Gottlieb and Ross (1997), "entrepreneurship education" is simply education for improving the skills of innovation and creativity. Entrepreneurship education has also been defined as education that teaches about identifying business opportunities, allocating appropriate resources (such as finances, marketing, and human resources), and, most importantly, starting a new business (Kourilsky, 1995). According to Davidsson (2004), entrepreneurship education involves teaching participants how to explore numerous opportunities and make good decisions about which ones to pursue.

Many debates surround entrepreneurship education, specifically how education affects intention and its antecedents, such as attitudes toward behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavior (Kirkley, 2017). According to some studies, entrepreneurship is not inherent and teaching and training can help develop certain aspects of entrepreneurship (Neck & Greene, 2011; Yu Cheng et al., 2009). This hypothesis is supported by Frank et al. (2010), who argued that intentions are not magical, mysterious, genetic, or

intrinsic. They argue that entrepreneurship, like science, can be taught and developed in the same manner. Kuratko (2003) proposes new methods and paradigms for teaching entrepreneurship, thereby rejecting the notion that entrepreneurship is an inherent quality.

According to Jones and Iredale (2010), university-level entrepreneurship education programs are primarily aimed at raising awareness and encouraging students to pursue entrepreneurship as a career path. Enterprises and entrepreneurial behavior are thought to be fundamental skills that people acquire later in life (Lose, 2016).

This study utilizes Koch et al.'s (2021) conceptual framework of entrepreneurship education, as shown in figure 1. EE is generally understood to refer to the entrepreneurship-related education and upbringing of children and young people. EE manifests itself primarily in systematic, intentional teaching and learning in general education schools and vocational (business) schools in South Africa and other countries, although elements of educational and learning processes in family and extracurricular contexts can be classified under this term (Cleveland & Bartsch, 2019). Figure 1 illustrates how the design of the EE in question can have a significant impact on the learning objectives and outcomes, and how EE is integrated into the educational system (Koch et al., 2021). Educating entrepreneurship aims to disseminate theories and characteristics about the entrepreneur, typical fields of action, and the entrepreneurial role in the economy and society, while educating entrepreneurship aims to prepare for entrepreneurial activity in the sense of a direct start-up qualification (Koch, 2003; Lackeus, 2015). "Educating through entrepreneurship" is the third strategy, which involves guiding students through and outperforming entrepreneurial processes, often through business games or business plan competitions (Lackeus, 2015).

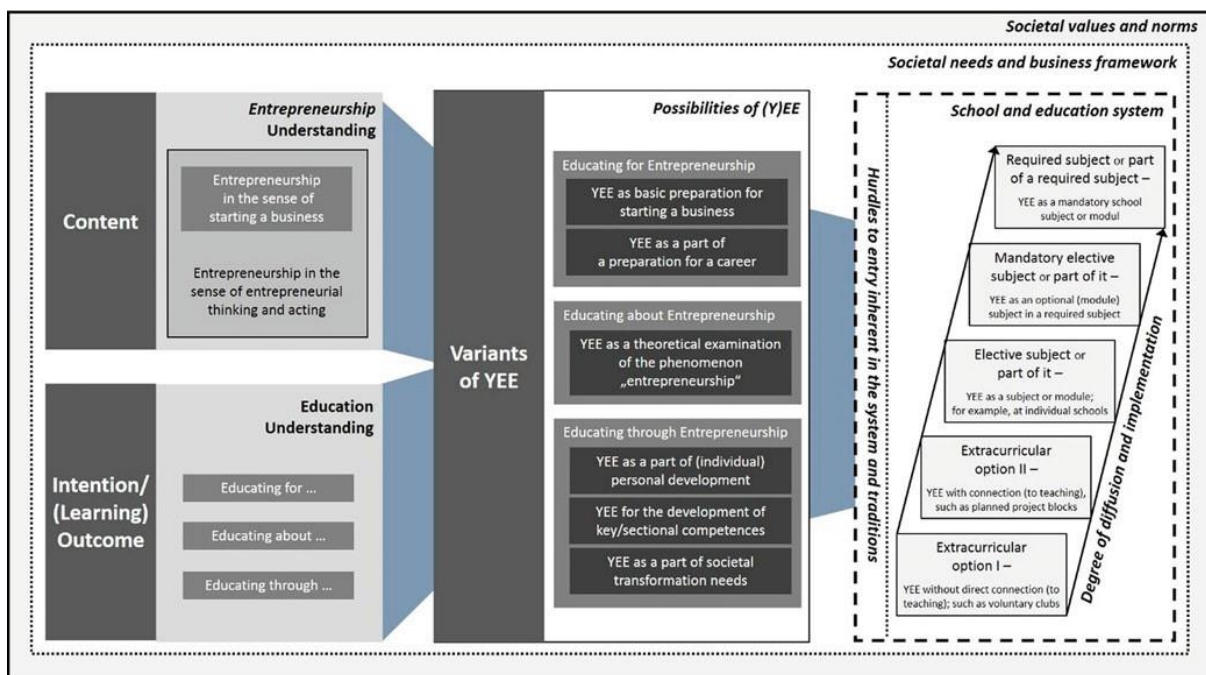


Figure 1: Variants of (youth) entrepreneurship education (Koch et al., 2021)

First, this type of education has close ties to the established goals of South African education. They are geared toward helping each student grow into a fully functional, self-actualized adult, and are grounded in a neo-humanist theory of education. Entrepreneurship, which places particular emphasis on the subject of education (Koch et al., 2021), can play a role in this context because it is concerned with imparting students with fundamental abilities related to substantial ways of thinking, acting, and problem-solving in accordance with formal educational theory. Common entrepreneurship education often provides students with information and training that is only marginally useful in the context of future business ventures. These skills and capacities are also important when addressing everyday challenges, such as those faced in areas of climate change, the environment, and resource depletion.

### Theoretical Framework

The theory of planned behavior (TPB, 1987) by Icek Ajzen has been the primary theoretical framework that has guided the evaluation of youth EEPs. Most EEP evaluations are theoretically underpinned by Ajzen's theory. The idea that entrepreneurial attitudes, such as perceived desirability and perceived behavioral control, precede intention is at the heart of this theory. According to the model's application to the field of entrepreneurship, perceived desirability is the degree to which a person finds the idea of starting a business, and perceived behavioral control is equivalent to one's perception of one's own entrepreneurial self-efficacy. Finally, entrepreneurial intention, defined as the desire to launch one's own business, is one of the best indicators of future entrepreneurial behavior. As a result, it can be said that TPB is an appropriate theoretical model to illustrate and anticipate entrepreneurial intentions for business ventures given the wide variety of learning outcomes it has produced.

Elmuti et al. (2012) made another intriguing suggestion regarding the connection between perceived behavioral control and intention and behavior. They contended that entrepreneurial self-efficacy and the process by which each person starts a business are directly related. Notably, the association between self-efficacy and intention may be blamed for growing entrepreneurship intentions (Wilson et al., 2007). Entrepreneurial self-efficacy is a belief in one's ability to successfully carry out the various roles and responsibilities involved in entrepreneurship is known as entrepreneurial self-efficacy (McGee et al., 2009). Entrepreneurial intentions are sparked by self-efficacy (Caiazza & Voipe, 2016; Elmuti et al., 2012). Ajzen's model is shown in Figure 1.

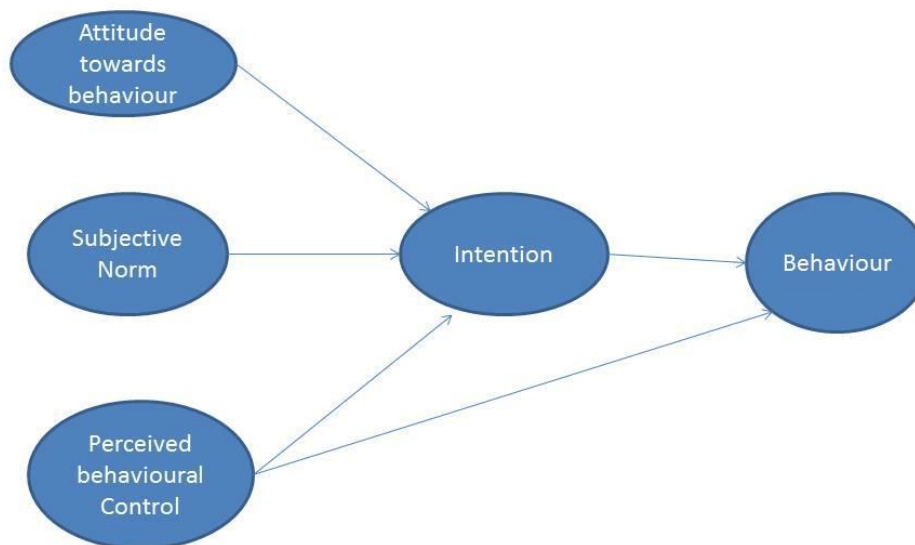


Figure 2: Theory of planned behaviour

### Methodology

The research philosophy known as "interpretivism," which maintains the ontological view that reality can be interpreted from the views and perspectives of social actors in certain circumstances, served as the foundation for the study. This philosophy holds the ontological view that reality can be interpreted from the perspectives of social actors in certain circumstances (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In other words, as people progress through life and come across a variety of phenomena that pique their interests, they develop their own unique interpretations of the world around them. Interviews are a common way to gather information about phenomena because they give participants the opportunity to discuss not only themselves but also their points of view on the phenomenon being discussed (Bordens & Abbott, 2018).

This research was conducted in the context of a South African university that offers entrepreneurship programs. A HEI in the Eastern Cape province was selected for sampling using both convenience and purposeful criteria. First, the university was representative in that it was located in a non-urban area and offered general entrepreneurship education. Among these were the institution's geographical isolation, its incorporation of entrepreneurial modules into the required coursework, and the relatively large number of



students enrolled in its entrepreneurship programs. This research project was conducted as a rich, detailed qualitative ethnographic field study to examine the entrepreneurial processes experienced by students in situ (Eberle & Maeder, 2016). Observation, video/audio recordings, interviews, and written and visual materials were used to collect data from 15 students who developed new ideas, the purpose of which was to help and assist other people with better options in various areas of society related to students' education. There were seven classes, with 371 students enrolled. Participants' biographical information is presented in Table 1.

*Table 1: Demographical information of participants*

Respondent	Gender	Age	Education level
1	Male	25	Undergraduate
2	Male	21	Undergraduate
3	Male	23	Undergraduate
4	Male	22	Undergraduate
5	Female	21	Undergraduate
6	Male	21	Undergraduate
7	Female	19	Undergraduate
8	Male	20	Undergraduate
9	Male	23	Undergraduate
10	Female	24	Undergraduate
11	Male	27	Undergraduate
12	Female	28	Undergraduate
13	Male	23	Undergraduate
14	Male	34	Undergraduate
15	Male	24	Undergraduate

This study obtained an ethical clearance certificate required by all institutions of higher learning. This was accomplished by satisfying the requirements of a research ethics committee at the institution where the researchers worked (Sefotho, 2022). Informed consent was obtained from each of the 15 entrepreneurs' students prior to the start of data collection, and we gave them the option to decide whether they wanted to continue taking part in the research (Okeke, et al., 2022). We protected all the participants by assuring them of their right to confidentiality and anonymity. This was accomplished by adhering to the principle of non-maleficence (Babbie, 2012).

### Data Analysis

The objective of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of EE on youth or young adults' readiness among enrolled and graduated students in a rural university setting. As a result, all interviews were openly and selectively coded by one researcher and discussed with other members of the research team to establish a reliable coding system in accordance with grounded theory principles. The codes were then classified and clustered to identify the higher-level attributes. A reflexive thematic analysis approach was used to analyze the data gathered. Analyzing patterns and themes in qualitative data is much simpler with the help of reflexive thematic analysis, a method that is both accessible and theoretically malleable (Braun & Clarke, 2021). In the reflexive TA approach, the researcher is seen as an active participant in the knowledge-creation process (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The researcher's interpretations of the meaning patterns across the dataset are represented by codes. As a reflection of the researcher's interpretive analysis of the data, reflexive thematic analysis is conducted at the nexus of (1) the dataset, (2) the theoretical assumptions of the analysis, and (3) the analytical skills and resources of the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Using the same approach, we were able to identify different association types that could be described by mapping five themes (cultural, resources, psychological, models, and systems).

**Findings And Discussion**

The analysis framework presented in Figure 3 provides a summary of the main themes and patterns across certain categories and subcategories, which are important for an adequate appreciation of the relationship between entrepreneurship education and readiness to engage in entrepreneurship after graduation.

Table 2 provides the theoretical direction for respondents' real and lived experiences. The codes provided were then considered to establish categories and themes based on observable data patterns. Five codes were extracted from participants' data.

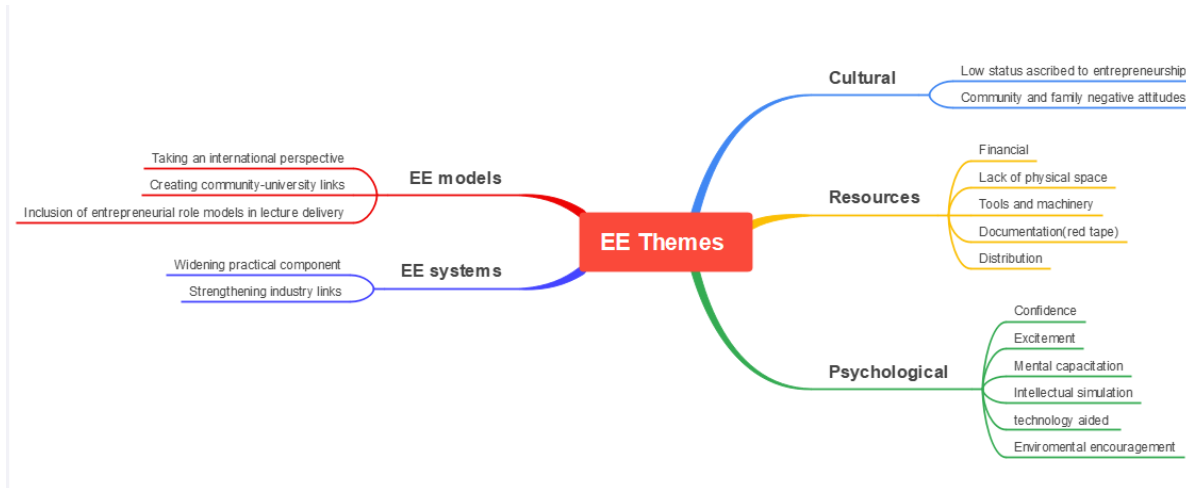


Figure 3: Themes generated.

It should be noted that the constant comparison technique originated in grounded theory and is often conducted together with other grounded theory strategies that include theoretical sensitivity. This technique involves the recognition of concepts and cases for a more detailed analysis, as they are likely to be central to deducing the emerging theory. As expounded by Kolb (2012), when employing the comparative analysis strategy, important codes are first deduced from a dataset using purposeful and systematic coding. To establish the relationship between entrepreneurship education and readiness to engage in entrepreneurship, a sampling of relevant phrases that reflected the views and opinions of the students was necessary.

Table 2: Initial coding of data extracts

To what extent has education in entrepreneurship made you ready to engage in entrepreneurship?	Codes
<p><i>"The entrepreneurship module has actually opened up a certain area in my mind. Now I admire the work of many entrepreneurs. I realised that entrepreneurship is an adventure, a way of life and a means of survival. But I think something needs to be done to adequately ensure readiness. Look getting psychological equipment is one thing. But let's consider the initial capital, the space and the networks. More need to be done"</i> [P5]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ -Sense of psychological readiness</li> <li>✓ Excitement for entrepreneurship</li> <li>✓ Materially not ready</li> </ul>
<p><i>"I feel that the entrepreneurship module has made opened my eyes to see how I can be financially independent through being a player in the economy, but I think this idea that you educate at a certain university then you go for incubation somewhere else and then you seek funding from banks and government is wrong. Why can't we create a model where you get a full package on one spot. I think that would make me more ready than I am now. To me readiness is enhanced if entrepreneurship education is heavily linked to practical activities of real businesses."</i> [P7]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Intellectual excitement</li> <li>✓ Practically not ready</li> <li>✓ Theoretically ready</li> <li>✓ Not ready with distributed route to entrepreneurship</li> </ul>

<p><i>"Entrepreneurship is not just about knowledge acquisition; it entails real engagement in opportunity generation and persevering through various challenges to convert an opportunity into actual profit generating activities. There are opportunities to be converted, business plans to be formed, value chains to be analysed, viability test to be conducted, funding to be secured, markets to be assessed and so on. Readiness can only be attained if there is practical work related to these aspects of entrepreneurship. I see that the main challenge relates to these things."</i> [P12]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Not ready – inadequate resources</li> <li>✓ Theoretical readiness</li> <li>✓ More practical support required</li> </ul>
<p><i>"While I can argue that I have been capacitated mentally to be an entrepreneur. In other words, I have mental readiness, something remains missing. My question is – Why is it that entrepreneurship is not taught by entrepreneurs. I think in order to be fully ready to engage in entrepreneurship, I need lectures from the entrepreneurs themselves. Universities should promote adequate linkages and networks to allow entrepreneurs to teach entrepreneurship in universities."</i> [P6]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Mental readiness</li> <li>✓ Doubt readiness. Believes in the use of role models</li> <li>✓ Not ready. Inadequate linkages</li> </ul>
<p><i>"Entrepreneurship education modules are wonderful and have done well to make me ready to engage in entrepreneurship, but I still face conflict from the society and community that I come from. Look, after graduating from the university, my family and other people in my community expect me to get employed somewhere and be a manager somewhere. Very few will appreciate me going to university and then coming back to struggle again, trying to establish and run a self-employment venture. I think entrepreneurship education should be done in conjunction with advocacy and community mobilisation to change views and attitudes in entrepreneurship."</i> [P8]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Intellectual excitement</li> <li>✓ Not ready – poor community and family acceptance of entrepreneurship as a career option</li> <li>✓ Resource limitations</li> <li>✓ Poor university-community links</li> </ul>
<p><i>"Personally, I am not ready to engage in entrepreneurship after graduation because I foresee big challenges in the real activities of entrepreneurship. I need funds, I need tools and equipment and I need space. The University does not offer those things, so how can I be ready?"</i> [P4]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Resource limitations (not ready)</li> <li>✓ Negative attitudes (not ready)</li> </ul>
<p><i>"I am ready to go my brother, I come from a background where there are existing entrepreneurs who are making money already. In fact, my parents run some entrepreneurial projects at home. I think I am now ready to take those projects to another level."</i> [P7]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ University – home education</li> <li>✓ Readiness through family entrepreneurship</li> </ul>
<p><i>"I cannot say that I am fully ready because after graduation, I still have to seek the services of an incubator to help me set up my venture. Something which the University has not done. So, readiness is elusive."</i> [P11]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Feeling unsure</li> <li>✓ Unsure about readiness</li> <li>✓ Distributed entrepreneurship education not the best approach</li> </ul>
<p><i>"I think there is need for an overhaul of the entire entrepreneurship education system in order to make individuals like me ready. Why can't the university have its own real entrepreneurship ventures which it uses to allow practical exposure of entrepreneurship. Learning by doing is more powerful than these simple lectures."</i> [P2]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Nor ready – model of entrepreneurship education is unconvincing</li> </ul>
<p><i>"Look, I hear that in China students are more entrepreneurial than us here in South Africa. Why can't our education be organised in such a way that we have international exchanges of entrepreneurial students and lecturers where we get to know how they are doing it in China or in the United States of America?"</i> [P1]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Not ready due to a localised approach</li> <li>✓ Adopt an international approach</li> </ul>
<p><i>"The Covid-19 pandemic have increased my readiness to be an entrepreneur. I saw people losing their employment as businesses closed. I then realized that having your own venture is critical. It gives you</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Environment-enhanced readiness</li> </ul>

<i>independence and financial or job security compared to being employed. In addition, businesses nowadays are more based on technology which makes entrepreneurship easier to start."</i> [P5]	✓ Technology-enhanced readiness
<i>I cannot become an entrepreneur straight from graduation. I think I need to go out and work somewhere first before I can become an entrepreneur. There is less hustle as a member of an organisation than as an entrepreneur."</i> [P14]	✓ Not ready ✓ Poor appreciation of the entrepreneurship career option
<i>"I think I still need to meet a real entrepreneur before I can describe myself as ready to start my own venture. University education on entrepreneurship is more theoretical yet entrepreneurship is practical."</i> [P15]	✓ Initially feeling uncertain ✓ Feeling abstracted ✓ Feeling comfortable with time
<i>"I am not sure about my readiness. I will see when I graduate and start initiatives to start a venture."</i> [P10]	✓ Unsure about readiness

A majority of the students agreed that the entrepreneurship module opened up their mindset and views about entrepreneurship. P5 and P7 affirmed that the module opened their mindsets and showed that they could be self-dependent. However, P7 stated that readiness can only be attained if EE is taught as a practical and funding package. He further lamented that the incubation of an entrepreneurship idea can be achieved in one university. The fact that both respondents used the word "mindset" is intriguing because it suggests that being an entrepreneur was once seen as unattainable or unrealistic. This is consistent with previous research (Palmer et al., 2021) showing that entrepreneurship education boosts self-efficacy by giving them practical skills and experience that prepares them to start their own businesses.

A similar view was held by P12, who stated, "Readiness can only be attained if there is practical work related to the aspects of entrepreneurship'." Thus, P6 noted that as much as they are mentally capacitated by the module, a key question is why entrepreneurs do not teach entrepreneurship. Such views are dominant in the module because students believe that the person who once travelled on a rough road is the most suitable to advise others on how to navigate it.

On the other hand, P8 feels that while the modules have equipped him with the necessary skills, the family expects him to work elsewhere. In his own words, "Only a few can appreciate me going to a university then coming back to struggle again." This view tells us that entrepreneurship is not seen by families or communities as something sustainable or something that can drive them out of poverty. This view is the norm, especially in rural areas from which participants come. There is a concern that parents will send their children to attain certificates and degrees so that they can work in the public sector. However, given that entrepreneurship is a risky business opportunity, it is understandable why families and communities feel the way they do.

Participant P4 put it bluntly: "I am not ready to engage in entrepreneurship after graduation because I foresee challenges." The student goes on to state that challenges such as funding, equipment, and office space are issues that need to be addressed. While these views are true, entrepreneurship involves navigating such terrain and creating it someday. Therefore, as pointed out by Cheteni and Umejesi (2022), entrepreneurs in rural areas of South Africa would not pursue a venture if the risks were considered high. The students interviewed were from similar communities in South Africa.

A student (P2) described the module as "a slap in the face because we had invested so much time into it, despite understanding the rationale behind the rejection," in an interview with the class. The interview probes provide more insight into how they make sense of the content. Despite the apparent truth of this reasoning, students have a harder time wrapping their heads around the dynamic forces that impact their process. As a result, various explanations were put forth by the students as to why things went wrong after graduation.

## Discussions

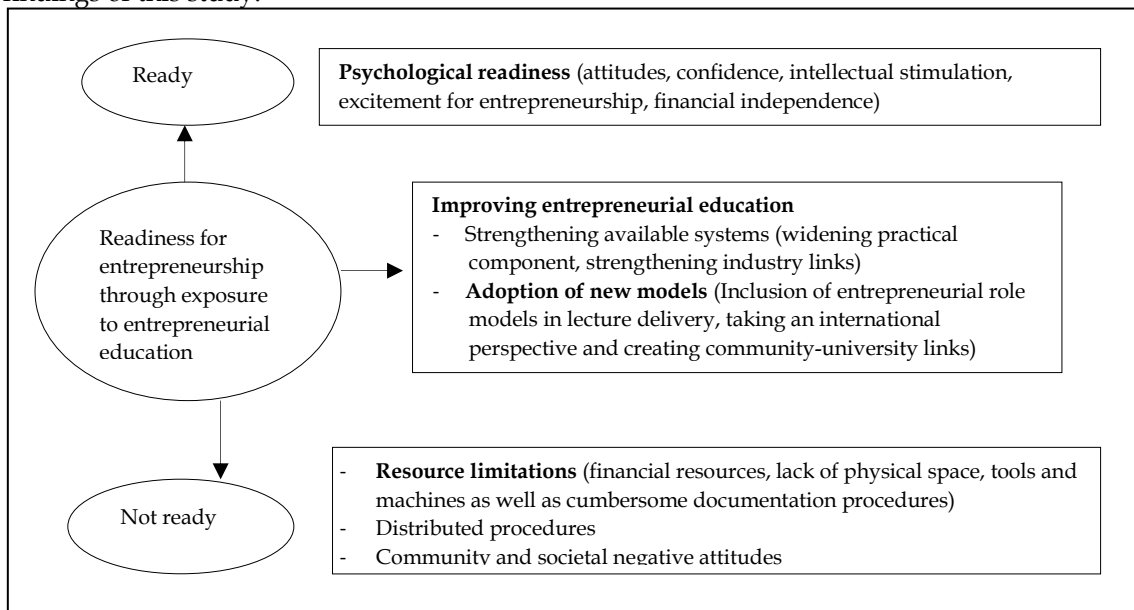
This study, as in Loss (2021), found that the practical component of entrepreneurial education is essential to realizing the desired outcomes from entrepreneurial education. Respondents felt that practical work should be strengthened within the entrepreneurship modules. This study found that readiness to engage in entrepreneurship among students is likely to be achieved under circumstances of strengthened



practical exposure. A dichotomy of views emerged from this study, with some students describing themselves as ready, while others felt unready, which relates to Shambare's (2013) findings that students often possess optimistic and pessimistic views of entrepreneurship education. This study further found that readiness to engage in entrepreneurship is affected by factors such as family history or background as well as the nature of the communities of origin. Shambare (2013) commented that exposure to entrepreneurship education does not guarantee that students will engage in entrepreneurship.

This study supported this position and found that a significant number of respondents preferred financial security associated with paid employment to earned finances. This study also found that it is essential to ensure that the learning environment in higher education is favorable and capable of stimulating entrepreneurial creativity. These observations are also shared by Roman and Maxim (2017), who noted that some higher education environments can stimulate the emergence of ially oriented graduates. This study found the need to ensure that entrepreneurship education is accepted and valued in the community to foster changes in students' attitudes. It has been observed that students feel that there is a need to strengthen community links and networks that promote a holistic approach to entrepreneurship.

These findings are consistent with those of Mars and Rhoades (2012), who suggested that a higher education system should foster an agentic perspective in which universities and students see themselves as important agents of social change. This is important, as it translates to ensuring that universities and students lead to notable matters of development. The students also shared views on what can be done to improve the entrepreneurial education system in South African HEIs. Respondents felt that the system should include community personnel and entrepreneurial role models who can inspire students in order for them to become more equipped to pursue entrepreneurial careers. Another important finding from the data collected is the need to create a centralized entrepreneurship system that combines all important role players, such as funders, business incubators, and government departments, so that students can receive a hybrid entrepreneurship system that makes them fully prepared as they graduate. Figure 4 summarizes the key findings of this study.



### Theoretical implications

Conceptualizing and empirically testing the antecedents of students' entrepreneurial readiness, this study provides insights that theoretically enhance the discourse on entrepreneurial readiness. Therefore, this study provides empirical evidence that emphasizes the significance of students' perceptions of the quality of entrepreneurial education and the competence of teaching staff in propelling students toward an entrepreneurial mindset. It has been empirically shown that student readiness for entrepreneurship increases when professors are enthusiastic about teaching the course, encourage students to engage in entrepreneurial-related activities, and model entrepreneurial behavior. The extant literature generally agrees that a competent lecturing team correlates with students who are ready to start their own businesses,

so this finding is not surprising (Ahmad et al., 2018; Bignotti & Le Roux, 2016). South African schools can improve students' access to business by bolstering their teachers' skills through activities such as career fairs and talks with local business owners.

College freshmen from low-income households who lack employment background knowledge would benefit greatly from this opportunity. The growth in university-based entrepreneurial endeavors has been the subject of increasing scholarly interest over the past three decades around the world (Ferreira et al., 2019). They go on to say that these "entrepreneurial universities" are actively seeking out opportunities to make a positive impact on the economy beyond their core competencies of teaching and research. This new research bolsters the idea that universities are becoming more comfortable with their role as stimulators of entrepreneurial drives and economic growth. Turpin and Garrett-Jones (2000) and Etzkowitz, Webster, Gebhardt, and Terra (2000) point out that universities that want to be entrepreneurial need to take entrepreneurial action and that universities' roles are growing in importance as society's knowledge production system evolves. Ferreira et al. (2018) elaborate on the significance of this duty by identifying two primary ways in which entrepreneurial universities boost academic entrepreneurial capability: the development of practically skilled human capital and the dissemination of academic research findings to businesses. The new understandings revealed by this investigation confirm and expand upon the aforementioned premises. First, the authors argue that innovative educational institutions can serve both the knowledge transfer needs of businesses and the creation of highly skilled human capital. To build upon this foundation, this study argues that academic entrepreneurial capability enhancement in universities' success depends on two main factors: the adequacy of their curriculum and course content and the competence of their lecturing team.

This research highlights the importance of having a competent lecturing team to effectively implement the desired entrepreneurial drive motivation and economic development, as well as the importance of ensuring a curriculum that drives the entrepreneurial uptake propensity of students. This research emphasizes the significance of ensuring that the curriculum is not only relevant but also adequate in its pursuit of the stated goal of increasing students' entrepreneurial mindset (Gelaidan & Abdullateef, 2017).

Finally, this research highlights the fact that in some cultural settings, ensuring adequate curriculum and course content and a competent lecturing team may not be sufficient to propel entrepreneurial ambitions. Interesting insights can be gleaned from analyzing the nationality distribution of responses to questions about entrepreneurial preparedness, the relevance and adequacy of the curriculum and course content, and the competency of the lecturing team. Even though they have high confidence in the curriculum, course content, and lecturing team's ability, African Black students have reported a very low level of entrepreneurial readiness.

### **Policy implications**

Several studies have highlighted the significance of entrepreneurship education, particularly due to the fact that there is a clear correlation between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurship readiness (Gelaidan & Abdullateef, 2017). This study has important policy implications, one of which is that administrators and policymakers in charge of higher education should seriously consider entrepreneurship among subjects taught at universities. As a result, our research provides support for expanding relationship-related coursework in higher education. Policymakers and academic practitioners should collaborate to create curricula and course content that incorporate the relevant theoretical ingredients to motivate the entrepreneurial drive and maximize its impact on economic development. Particular focus should be given to ensuring that the curriculum and course content are relevant and adequate to maximize the motivational impact of the entrepreneurial mindset. Fundamentally, we must embrace incentives that facilitate learning and help students gain a deeper understanding of how to apply entrepreneurial principles in real-world situations. Universities in South Africa also need to recruit and retain highly qualified faculty members to carry out the course of study. The findings of this research also show that cultural factors tend to affect individuals' propensity to take an entrepreneurial tack. This situation warrants the attention of policymakers.

### **Conclusion**

The motivation for this research was the need to evaluate how well HEIs prepare their students for entrepreneurial endeavors. According to the interviews conducted for this research, some students believe they are mentally prepared, but are hindered by a lack of opportunities to gain practical experience in entrepreneurship. To be more prepared to engage in entrepreneurship, respondents believed they needed strong industry links and exposure to practical tasks. It is suggested that HEIs implement the recommendations provided in this study, such as the need to expand the practical elements of entrepreneurial education and heavily involve the community to alter mindsets and elevate the standing of small business owners. It is essential for students to learn about the value of self-employment over traditional employment.

Areas of future research include studying the psychological and cultural factors that influence or affect entrepreneurship readiness among students and graduates, especially those residing in rural settings.

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