



# Culture, Entrepreneurial Orientation, and Global Competitiveness

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*Based on Lumpkin and Dess's conceptualization of entrepreneurial orientation (EO), this paper presents a cultural model of entrepreneurship. We propose that a society's propensity to generate autonomous, risk-taking, innovative, competitively aggressive and proactive entrepreneurs and firms will depend on its cultural foundation. The role of economic, political/legal, and social factors as moderators of the relationship between culture and entrepreneurial orientation (EO) are also considered. Overall, it is proposed that only those countries with specific cultural tendencies will engender a strong EO, hence experiencing more entrepreneurship and global competitiveness. Specific country examples are discussed.*

**E**ntrepreneurship has long been considered a significant factor for socioeconomic growth and development because it provides millions of job opportunities, offers a variety of consumer goods and services, and generally increases national prosperity and competitiveness (Zahra, 1999). Moreover, given recent trends toward corporate downsizing, the privatization of economies, and global competition based on agility, creativity, and innovation, both popular enthusiasm and aca-

demical research are increasingly stressing the need to establish a global business climate whereby entrepreneurship assumes a prominent role (Birley & MacMillan, 1992, 1993; Covin & Slevin, 1991; Lado & Vozikis, 1996; Morris, 1998).

Although entrepreneurship as an area of intellectual and academic study has been around for over two hundred years (Morris, 1998), a well-developed paradigm to create coherence in entrepreneurship research is still lacking (Aldrich & Baker, 1997). Moreover, the interdisciplinary nature of entrepreneurship (Low & Macmillan, 1988) combined with the variable nature of entrepreneurship itself (Morris, 1998) further contributes to the existence of multiple

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perspectives. Although all perspectives have merit, none are comprehensive enough to fully explain the marked differences in entrepreneurial activity occurring in various societies around the globe. Thus, there is a need for a unified conceptualization of entrepreneurship that can be applied at the societal level.

In this paper, we propose a cultural model of entrepreneurship to fill this need. Specifically, we develop a framework for understanding the relationship between the unique characteristics of national culture and entrepreneurship, recognizing the strong role of a culture's entrepreneurial orientation (EO) (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996) as well as key environmental forces (e.g., economic, political/legal, and social). We suggest that these relationships will impact the degree of experienced entrepreneurship, and ultimately, the global competitiveness of nations.

#### **CURRENT ENTREPRENEURSHIP APPROACHES**

Although entrepreneurship is generally defined as the creation of new enterprises, the construct has been analyzed using a variety of approaches. Generally, the literature seems to offer three main approaches, namely individual, environmental, and firm.

##### **Individual Approach**

Many attribute entrepreneurship to the internal psychological traits of individual entrepreneurs whereby those with a propensity toward risk-taking (Begley & Boyd, 1987), high achievement (McClelland, 1976), or an internal

locus of control (Brockhaus & Horwitz, 1986) are thought to be leaders of innovation or catalysts who provide the "spark" for economic growth and development (Berger, 1991). Similarly, sociological characteristics such as being a first child, being an immigrant, and having early role models, have been associated with an entrepreneurial personality (Bird, 1989).

Others (e.g., Gartner, 1988) define entrepreneurship by the behaviors associated with performing entrepreneurial activities (i.e., what an entrepreneur does rather than on whom the entrepreneur is). Those who experiment with promising new technologies, seize opportunities, or in other ways demonstrate initiative or decision making competence are more likely to be successful entrepreneurs than those who do not display such behaviors.

##### **Environmental/Contextual Approach**

Those who assume a more macro view of entrepreneurship have challenged that entrepreneurial success depends on traits or behaviors of individual entrepreneurs. Although not completely discounting the role of the individual, under the environmental approach, entrepreneurship is viewed as a response to certain environmental conditions that can help or hinder entrepreneurship success by the nature of the climate they establish. Bloodgood, Sapienza, and Carsrud (1995) suggest that factors such as family and support systems, financial resources, local community, and government agencies can potentially affect entrepreneurial activity.

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