

Challenges of Preparing Students for International Entrepreneurship in the era of Artificial Intelligence

Tiit Elenurm

Estonian Business School, Tallinn, Estonia

tiit.elenurm@ebs.ee

Abstract: International entrepreneurship competencies in the era of rapidly developing artificial intelligence focus more than earlier on stepping out of one's comfort zone, asking the right questions, assessing the reliability of information sources, and developing cross-cultural teamwork readiness. The purpose of this research is to prepare students for collaborative learning situations where generative artificial intelligence tools have become widely available. The main research question is: What are the challenges in different types of entrepreneurial team-based action learning projects in the context of artificial intelligence? Learning concepts based on collaborative learning and improving the international networking readiness of students are presented. Practical implications of time zone differences, trust building and conflict management in international teams are analysed based on the experience of X-Culture projects. We compare the opportunities and challenges of applying generative artificial intelligence such as ChatGPT-4, Microsoft Co-pilot and Google Gemini Advanced when developing learners' own international business ideas to learning from international teamwork to assist foreign start-ups in entering new markets. Gaps in skills to apply human collaboration for critically assessing artificial intelligence summary answers and identifying possible hallucinations when comparing new potential foreign markets were revealed. Artificial intelligence applications can be used to form global student teams based on the similarity of entrepreneurial self-development visions of team members. Still, experimenting with prompts in these applications can also enhance readiness to compare the pros and cons of different international entrepreneurship concepts and intelligent questioning skills for coaching and consulting. Students can chat with AI in a role-playing manner that helps them understand how to manage cultural differences in international entrepreneurship teams. Online action learning driven by tasks of start-ups is an essential tool in the entrepreneurial learning approach that prepares students to understand the value and limitations of generative artificial intelligence tools for international entrepreneurship. This paper contributes to understanding the challenges in action learning of students for international entrepreneurship and ways to overcome these challenges in the era when generative artificial intelligence tools are changing learning and international entrepreneurship practices.

Keywords: International entrepreneurship, Collaborative learning, Networking, Online teamwork, Artificial intelligence

1. Introduction

Innovative entrepreneurial teams that involve members and partners from different countries are essential for developing international entrepreneurship. Educators at business schools should support learners by applying culturally inclusive educational technologies (Akinrinola et al, 2020). Thompson (2017) explained how digital tools make learning processes more interactive and enable international collaboration. Collaborative learning should prepare students for entrepreneurial team formation and combine online and face-to-face learning to develop a mindset, skills, and practice for starting a new venture. Still, such learning can support life skills even if learners do not start a new business during their studies (Neck and Corbett, 2018). Artificial intelligence (AI) applications such as ChatGPT-4, Microsoft Co-pilot, and Google Gemini initiate new opportunities and challenges in digital collaborative learning. These applications can facilitate learning by asking smart questions and reflecting on the responses in an interactive learning process (Rospigliosi, 2023).

Developing students' critical and reflective thinking skills is essential for preparing future entrepreneurs to make better decisions by using AI tools for informed reasoning (Bell & Bell, 2023). A pedagogical challenge is to distinguish the original work of students and artificially generated work (Gao et al, 2022), but a broader challenge is to assist students in understanding the role of individual entrepreneurs and international entrepreneurial teams in future situations where AI applications will be widely used for business idea generation, international marketing and communication.

Integrating entrepreneurship education with international business learning in international teams can be a tool for learning through student enterprises or assisting entrepreneurship practitioners in screening and entering new foreign markets. Both types of learning by doing create readiness for more innovative and internationally scalable start-up activities after university studies. However, collaborative action learning often requires the readiness of students to leave their comfort zone to experience interaction with new partners in new situations.

Teams in the digital workplace need to combine human communication and collaboration with new AI-enabled technologies (Lane et al, 2024). Students must be prepared to contribute to international entrepreneurial teams with diverse compositions and involve members from different countries and cultures. Our objective is to

identify the learning opportunities and challenges of entrepreneurial team-based digital action learning projects in the context of artificial intelligence.

2. Literature Review

Already some years ago, the entrepreneurial education discourse identified different departure points for entrepreneurship education (O'Connor, 2013). Applying learning by doing through practical venture creation and business idea implementation is a suitable framework if the student enterprise team is ready to jump-start such a process and their sector-specific resource base can be created during studies. Learning for future entrepreneurship by exploring development opportunities and crucial decisions of successful entrepreneurs in various countries, studying different types of entrepreneurship, including social entrepreneurship, and new business opportunities in emerging industries and the green agenda for regenerative futures (Camrass, 2020) is, however also operational for students to broaden their interdisciplinary knowledge base and to create their international network before launching a real start-up initiative.

In collaborative learning, students participate in small-group activities in which they share their knowledge and expertise. During the 1970s and 1980s, cooperative learning dominated as the general term for group-based learning in the research literature. However, since the beginning of the 1990s, collaborative learning has become a more popular term (Strijbos and Martens, 2001). Johnson et al (2007) explained how learning in groups is influenced by social interdependence. Dania and Griffin (2021) use the term “collaborative learning communities” when studying social media and collaboration solutions in the classroom. Collaborative learning can be implemented in a face-to-face classroom environment, but social media can also give input to collaborative learning. Social media has become influential in the daily lives of many students, and adoption of it for self-development may motivate entrepreneurial intentions (Do et al, 2020). Networking is a core entrepreneurial capability in attaining necessary resources, knowledge, and information (Morris et al, 2013). Elenurm (2012) explained how co-creative, individually innovative and imitative entrepreneurial orientations influence the networking needs of students. Innovative start-up businesses apply network learning to achieve their space in international markets (Caseiro and Coelho, 2019). In the era of AI, global networks that students develop in social media can be used to find inside information about emerging trends in foreign markets that generative artificial intelligence applications are not able to present. Although trained on massive, curated datasets, generative AI answers to prompts do not reflect recent developments in the marketplace after their training has finished, and new entrepreneurship trends are not documented in their online dataset used for training. AI collaboration with humans is the key to addressing new challenges and opportunities created by generative AI (Budhwar et al, 2023). The convenience of using ChatGPT and other AI applications could result in overreliance by its users, making them trust the answers provided by ChatGPT without critical thinking. Compared with traditional search engines that provide multiple information sources for users to make personal judgments and selections, AI generates summary answers for each prompt. Although utilising ChatGPT has the advantage of increasing efficiency by saving time and effort, users could get into the habit of adopting the answers without rationalisation or verification (Fui-Hoon Nah et al, 2023). Generative AI can generate seemingly correct responses that include misinformation as an outcome of hallucination. Susarla et al (2023) regard hallucination, including references to non-existent literature sources, as a serious challenge in the use of generative AI for scholarly activities.

Collaborative learning focuses on knowledge co-creation (Vuopala et al, 2019). In the AI era, knowledge co-creation assumes an understanding of what type of information humans representing different kinds of knowledge can add to prompt answers given by AI. The open innovation approach assumes collaboration and engagement with a wider variety of participants (Chesbrough, 2017). Forming an effectively performing founding team is among the most complicated tasks in building a new venture. The founding members of a start-up often represent different backgrounds and experiences and have varying expectations about their roles, leadership sequence and remuneration structure (Shepherd et al, 2021). Shah et al. (2019) stressed that in addition to complementary competencies of team members, common skills such as critical thinking, joint problem solving, sharing essential values, and mutual trust are necessary for effective entrepreneurial team functioning. Effectuation assumes that entrepreneurs use available resources, knowledge, and network connections as the starting point of their business initiative to develop and implement their business vision in adaptive ways and continuously modify their prediction and control space for future success (Sarasvathy, 2023). Building on the effectual approach for start-up team formation (Sarasvathy and Botha, 2022), ChatGPT's use for founding team creation as a pedagogical intervention is demonstrated by Hammada (2024). After choosing the business idea of their team, students were asked to prompt ChatGPT for advice on the ideal founding team composition, the characteristics of the founding team or key members and suggested split of equity among

them. Students were advised to use different combinations of keywords and sentence structures until ChatGPT provided them with a satisfactory enough answer. Such use of AI could lead to rethinking the original business idea as the result of competencies suggested by AI for pursuing this business initiative.

Open innovation assumes the networking efforts of innovators to find early users and product development ideas outside their organisation. Rapidly internationalising small and medium-sized enterprises from emerging economies should also use a wide range of internal and external network sources (Puthusserry et al, 2020) during their post-entry business development stages. Collaborative learning can focus on a team's own entrepreneurial start-up development or engage learners in projects where student teams solve problems faced by entrepreneurs already operating in practice. Contributing to solving practitioners' problems enhances critical thinking (DeSimone and Buzza, 2013). AI-human collaboration challenges and solutions depend on the role of creativity, information search, critical thinking and teamwork in different directions and stages of entrepreneurial learning. There is a research gap in the field of specifying challenges of using AI in collaborative entrepreneurship learning and understanding opportunities to apply IT tools for developing international entrepreneurship skills.

3. Methodology of Pilot Research for Identifying Artificial Intelligence Opportunities and Challenges

Educational action research examines and reflects the potential and challenges of educational practices centred on learning projects in different formats and with various internal and external partners (Mandrup and Jensen, 2017). Collaborative inquiry for knowledge generation is methodologically well-positioned for studying academic and practice-based development and change initiatives based on new learning tools (Shani et al, 2023). The methodological departure point of our approach to identifying opportunities and challenges of AI applications in collaborative knowledge co-creation is a comparison of learning processes, where students start ideation for their entrepreneurship development journeys in student enterprise teams or contribute as a team to finding international business development opportunities for entrepreneurship practitioners. We discuss AI use in two types of collaborative learning projects where the author has been involved: X-Culture global teams, where Estonian Business School students have participated and the author's short course for students at Université Catholique de Lille on Doing business in the Baltic countries. The literature overview serves as the basis for formulating the following questions to compare these collaborative learning practices.

- How can AI applications support creating diverse and well-performing teams for project work?
- To what extent can AI applications enhance creativity and open innovation for entrepreneurship?
- What are the challenges of AI-human team collaboration in these projects?

4. AI Opportunities in X-Culture Global Projects

The global X-Culture <https://x-culture.org> consortium has been able to involve business students from more than 150 universities in 40 countries. X-Culture organisers allocate students to virtual project teams following the principle of geographical and cultural diversity of each team. Students have to build their team consensus on the international business opportunity challenge they choose to solve together by working online for a period of two and half months. Students must pass the pre-test to demonstrate their knowledge of online communication, knowledge-sharing tools, and X-Culture rules. Creativity in X-Culture is needed for identifying new international business opportunities that match the needs of enterprises they have chosen for their online project work and also for aligning knowledge-sharing styles of students from different cultures and for finding the best online collaboration tools, including social media applications, in situations where team members never meet each other in a physical space. There is no direct face-to-face contact with the client enterprise during project work. In fact, even more than a hundred teams may choose to prepare a report for the same enterprise. X-Culture team reports are graded by lecturers representing all universities where team members study. X-Culture coordinators divide students into virtual teams to represent as many countries as possible in each 5-6 student team to enhance cross-cultural learning. If students could specify their future entrepreneurship visions before forming teams, AI could be used to consider the similarity of future entrepreneurial self-development vision in the team formation process. That would make X-Culture teams more similar to start-up teams that usually involve team members pursuing similar business development visions. Research on X-Culture teams has demonstrated that teams which have more task conflicts during their first weeks of teamwork when they have to conduct industry analysis and choose concepts for assessing the international competitiveness of the project enterprise and tools for comparing foreign markets present at the end of their project better reports than teams, where team members do not recognise and address such conflicts (Elenurm and Fabritius, 2023). Using different

AI application prompts, such as “What are concepts and tools for comparing potential export markets?” gives student team members a broader mental space to specify additional prompts for comparing the pros and cons of each tool for a specific export product and service. Training by experimenting with specific prompts is a way to learn from task conflicts constructively and, at the same time, develop broader intelligent question-asking skills that are relevant for chatting with AI but also for consultancy and coaching.

Post-project self-reflection of X-Culture team members has indicated that some students are stressed when communicating with team members representing different work cultures and time zones. Extensive use of WhatsApp and other online messaging tools creates pressure to respond rapidly to inquiries from students living in a different time zone. To prepare students for the challenges of global online teamwork, we have asked them to write a review of relevant research papers that address these challenges and ways to be successful in online teamwork. AI applications add to such preparation a role-play dimension, asking students to describe the role of some potentially problematic team member from their point of view and making, for instance, a prompt “ChatGPT, imagine you are representative of a high-context culture. How can I collaborate with you on an online team project as a person from a low-context culture?” If needed, this conversation could be continued by asking, “Imagine that you, as a person from a high-context culture, do not follow the agreed deadline. How can you explain it?” to focus on specific challenges. When all team member in the online teamwork process compare their prompts to AI about possible cross-cultural teamwork challenges and answers they received from AI, they will improve their ability to understand potential differences of team members from other cultures. That is a way to avoid dysfunctional relationship conflicts.

X-Culture final reports demonstrate that although universities have usually set guidelines for compiling reference lists in written works, many students do not understand the importance of using in-text references in the era of AI. In some universities, AI use is officially now allowed. However, team members still use it to generate their sections of reports without giving reference to the application they use to compile their text. Without in-text references, a reader has difficulty checking if some fact statement is based on a reliable information source or if AI hallucinated it. Using AI tools allows students to save time in compiling a report, but teams should be guided to check the existence of the original sources of the summary text generated by AI. Training critical thinking to assess the reliability of information sources is essential when applying AI in online global teams. We have challenged some teams’ generic final report texts by making ourselves a prompt to AI to compare export markets of a product chosen by a team. When presenting the AI answer to this team, we asked them to explain how their team report has used insider observations by their team members about new market trends that generative AI cannot access. Such discussion aims to lead students to understand their advantages as humans in international entrepreneurship compared to present generative AI applications and to be prepared for AI-human information exchange in future entrepreneurship initiatives.

5. AI Opportunities in a Short Region-Focused International Business Course

Doing business in Baltic countries in Lille (France) was a short 3-day course that involved only student teams of one French university. The final assignment of this course was preparing and presenting pitches about new French export products to a Baltic country chosen by each student team and proposing how their student team can find a start-up from a Baltic country to exercise entrepreneurship by assisting this start-up to develop their business in France. When developing their entrepreneurial ideas for promoting French export products, students relied heavily on well-known French food and beauty brands already available in Baltic countries. Students were encouraged to use prompts in AI chats such as “Which are competitors of French Camembert cheese in Estonia?”. Both ChatGPT-4 and Gemini Advanced highlighted potential competing cheese types. Still, Gemini Advanced stated: “...hard to give precise brand names of competitors without knowing your specific location within Estonia.” MS Co-pilot gave links to the Estonian Dairy Association webpage on cheese and some other web links for further market research. However, sharing information with students about webpages and online shops of the main Estonian retailers appeared to lead them more rapidly to identify competing brands and pricing info that AI applications did not reflect.

When searching for information about start-ups as potential cooperation partners from Baltic countries, start-up databases of these countries were introduced to students. Start-up Estonia database <https://ecosystem.startupestonia.ee/intro> states that its extensive information is gathered in cooperation with the digital deal room Dealroom.co, and AI is applied to gather data from public sources such as social media, domain & trade registers, job boards, analytics about web & mobile app usage, news articles in 30+ languages and investor portfolios. Students needed some instruction and training to navigate this database. In the context of identifying entrepreneurial cooperation opportunities, students mainly focused on start-ups that can offer French clients

online B2B software for logistic and recycling operations or online services for hotel and property management. The short format of the *Doing Business in the Baltic Countries* course demonstrated that general generative AI applications are helpful in structuring the key issues for assessing opportunities and competitiveness factors in foreign markets. However, AI, in its present general format, could only serve as a gateway for further analysis of time-sensitive data about foreign markets, such as retail prices of products. Specialised AI applications appeared to be more useful in finding cooperation partners for entrepreneurship. However, instead of writing a chat prompt, combining relevant search criteria was essential to dig out relevant information from such databases.

6. Discussion of Pilot Research Results

As an attempt to compare our two pilot research examples with broader suggestions of researchers and entrepreneurship developers, we applied three generative AI tools. The prompt based on the title of this paper was used: "How to prepare students for international entrepreneurship in the era of artificial intelligence? Answer should be a maximum 100 words". Gemini Advanced AI (2024, March 31) answered: "Here's how to prepare students for international entrepreneurship in the AI era (within the word limit):

- *AI Fluency*: Teach AI concepts, tools (coding and no-code), and how to leverage AI for market analysis, product development, and scaling a business.
- *Global Mindset*: Foster cultural understanding, international market knowledge, and adaptability to diverse business landscapes.
- *Critical Thinking*: Emphasise evaluating AI outputs, understanding its limitations, and making ethical decisions about its use.
- *Problem-Solving*: Focus on identifying real-world problems and using both AI and traditional methods to design innovative solutions with global appeal.
- *Collaboration*: Encourage collaboration with individuals from diverse backgrounds and expertise, including AI developers."

MS Co-pilot (2024, March 31) answer to the same question reflected as essential directions: soft skills and integrating AI with human skills, fostering collaboration between technology and human expertise. ChatGPT-4 (2023, March 31) gave a less structured answer. It, however, added to Gemini and Co-pilot answers interdisciplinary learning, understanding cultural differences and global market trends. Its answer text also stressed practical experience through projects, collaboration with AI-driven companies and fostering innovative mindsets and ethical considerations in AI deployment.

7. Conclusions for Further Action Research on AI Applications in Entrepreneurial Learning

At this research stage, we only have the first pilot experience of testing and discussing AI applications in learning processes that contribute to developing further action research agenda. AI applications open several new opportunities in the context of international entrepreneurship. AI prompt results can help young entrepreneurs in structuring their search for further information. AI can play a digital role as a potential new customer, competitor, or devil's advocate to identify the risks of a new entrepreneurship initiative. AI can be used to reflect and compare essential competencies, roles, and ways to overcome collaboration challenges in cross-cultural and digital teams. At the same time, students should be aware of generative AI hallucination features and be directed to checking and critically analysing the reliability of reports and research papers that have served as input for AI-generated answers to their prompts. A practical implication is the need to train database navigation and referencing skills. Entrepreneurship students should understand situations more profoundly, where AI answers should be compared with relevant research papers or updated media reflecting recent international business trends. Prompt writing for human-AI interaction is an essential skill to be trained. This skill can also be applied to interviewing entrepreneurship professionals and potential clients. New international entrepreneurship initiatives require time-critical specific data to choose countries for export. Such updated data is often missing in the text corpus used for training AI. Young entrepreneurs should understand both the present limitations of generative AI and its future potential to build up their careers in the AI era.

The limitation of the present paper is that it compares only two AI application use cases related to international entrepreneurship and business learning without a representative sample. However, the conclusions of this pilot AI application experience confirm Gemini's answer and Co-pilot's suggestions about soft skills and ChatGPT-4 focus on understanding cultural differences and global market trends through practical experience. Our use cases contribute to explaining examples of AI-driven opportunities and challenges for more extensive action research in future.

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