

Connecting the Youth to Business

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Abstract

This article explores how bridging the gap between youth and business education can empower the next generation of entrepreneurs. It examines misconceptions shaped by social media, the importance of early, practical business education, and effective strategies—including simulation-based learning, technology integration, and mentorship—to foster entrepreneurial skills. By analyzing real-world case studies and incorporating insights from established entrepreneurs, the journal advocates for collaborative efforts among educators, mentors, and policymakers to nurture independent, innovative thinkers. Ultimately, this educational journey has the capacity to redefine the American dream—shifting the focus from material acquisitions to creativity, ethical leadership, and expanded opportunities for success.

Keywords

Youth Entrepreneurship, Business Education, Entrepreneurial Mindset, Financial Literacy, Digital Entrepreneurship, Business Simulation, Resilience in Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Creativity in Entrepreneurship

1. Introduction

Business is a topic that tends to elude some of the most impactful people in the world, the youth. This disservice often leads many of the future generations leaning into the various traps of the traditional corporate 9-5 structure that plagues western society versus helping create independent thinkers that hold skills to fuel future growth of nations. Younger generations are blessed and cursed with unlimited availability of technology and information. However, many are led to the negative aspects of these blessings, through reliance on AI, dissolving social skills, and waning critical thinking skills. Through the teaching of business, the youth benefits greatly in all these aspects, including the ability to create independent thinkers who often go on to change the course of the world.

Through social media trends and influencers, children and teens alike are fed information about what business should be like, or rather a farfetched idea of what business is. This is apparent when these influencers are flaunting fancy vacations, luxury cars, jewelry, and more. When the youth is constantly seeing this, it is natural (when done so without teaching by parents or mentors) to fall into this misconception of what business brings. This presents a unique opportunity to educate young people on what business is, presenting the great benefits, as well as the reality of what to expect from business. While this can be off putting to many due to the amount of work that is involved, it still presents great opportunities to guide young people to building skills and independence outside of what they are seeing on social media.

Through this journal, the primary focus will be on the connection of youth and business, presenting ideas and concepts that are to benefit young people, versus mislead them in business. Also, how business education stands to shape the future through the education of the youth as well as challenge navigation, strategies, and case studies linking the benefits of business education to the youth and future entrepreneurs.

2. Materials and Methods

This journal employs a multidisciplinary approach to analyzing the intersection of youth and business education. The methodology integrates qualitative and quantitative research, literature reviews, real-world case studies, and AI-assisted editing to ensure clarity, accuracy, and coherence.

2.1. Research Methodology

This journal synthesizes research from a diverse array of sources, including:

- **Primary Research:** Surveys and reports from organizations such as Junior Achievement USA (JAUSA) and Learn4Life, which provide empirical data on youth entrepreneurship and business education programs.
- **Secondary Research:** Literature reviews of existing studies on business education, entrepreneurship, and digital learning tools such as Knowledge Matters and Neovation's simulation-based education studies.
- **Case Studies:** Analysis of documented success stories showcasing young entrepreneurs and their journeys in starting and scaling businesses.

2.2. Data Collection and Analysis

- **Survey Data:** Relevant statistical reports on youth entrepreneurship interest and small business employment trends were extracted from authoritative sources such as JAUSA and the U.S. Office of Advocacy.
- **Performance Metrics:** Studies on simulation-based learning effectiveness were reviewed to quantify how interactive learning enhances student engagement and comprehension.
- **Comparative Analysis:** The journal evaluates traditional business education

models versus modern experiential learning methodologies to assess effectiveness in fostering entrepreneurial mindsets.

- In order to better understand the data underlying this study, we compiled key metrics from various sources. **Table 1** below summarizes the data sources and the variables measured. Data from the EduStats National Survey (n ≈ 800 adolescents) provided insights on youth entrepreneurial aspirations and social media screen time, while the Youth Biz Insights Report (n ≈ 12,000 nationally) offered data on employment trends and startup incidence among youth. Additionally, Learn4Life Program Evaluations contributed information on skill development outcomes and practical business metrics.

Table 1. Overview of data sources and measured variables.

Data Source	Sample Size/Range	Variables Measured
EduStats National Survey	n ≈ 800 adolescents	Youth entrepreneurial aspirations, social media screen time
Youth Biz Insights Report	n ≈ 12,000 (national)	Employment trends, startup incidence
Learn4Life Program Evaluations	Varies by institution	Skill development outcomes, practical business metrics

References for **Table 1**: EduStats (2024); Youth Biz Insights (2023).

2.3. AI-Assisted Editing and Refinement

- **Content Structuring:** AI tools were used to streamline the organization of research findings and ensure logical flow between sections.
- **Text Optimization:** AI-assisted grammar and coherence checks refined sentence structure, ensuring clarity while maintaining academic rigor.
- **Reference Formatting:** AI-assisted citation management ensured proper APA formatting for all in-text citations and references.

2.4. Case Study Selection Criteria

Case studies were chosen based on their:

- **Relevance to Youth Entrepreneurship:** Each case demonstrates how early business education influences long-term success.
- **Diversity of Business Models:** Examples span traditional, digital, social, and community-driven enterprises to reflect varied entrepreneurial pathways.
- **Impact and Measurable Outcomes:** Cases include quantifiable success metrics such as revenue growth, employment creation, and skill development.

2.5. Limitations

- **Availability of Longitudinal Data:** Due to limited long-term studies on youth entrepreneurship, extrapolated insights are drawn from current trends.
- **AI-Generated Edits:** While AI assists in refining content, human oversight was maintained to ensure academic integrity and contextual relevance.
- **Potential Biases in Case Study Selection:** While case studies aim to be repre-

sentative, selection bias may be present based on available data.

Through this structured methodology, the journal ensures a robust and evidence-based exploration of the role of business education in shaping youth perspectives on entrepreneurship and redefining the American dream.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Understanding the Modern Business Landscape

The modern business world contains various aspects that all tend to follow the same theme, “How fast can I make money”. This unfortunately is misguided, which leads the youth into thinking that business is simply a get rich quick scheme. This is primarily fueled by constant feeding of information regarding online courses that teach aspiring businesspeople to pick up a skill and make money fast. Often, through social media and business, business ideas like drop shipping, digital marketing, or even course selling, are constantly seen through influencers and online advertising means. The common theme is that each follows the same path, often started by a few people who purchased a course that “teaches” mentees to open a store to drop ship items, or build websites, or even creating their own course.

To further examine the mechanisms underlying social media’s influence, it is important to note that these platforms are carefully engineered to maximize user engagement through algorithmically driven feeds and content curation (see **Figure 1**). Such systems trigger neurobehavioral responses (e.g., dopamine release), reinforcing exposure to idealized lifestyles and aspirational imagery. For example, digital platforms amplify content that aligns with societal ideals, thereby skewing youths’ perceptions of success by emphasizing rapid wealth acquisition and material excess. Recent research indicates that these dynamics contribute significantly to an oversimplified vision of entrepreneurship, diverting attention from the essential skills needed for sustainable success (Brown, 2023).

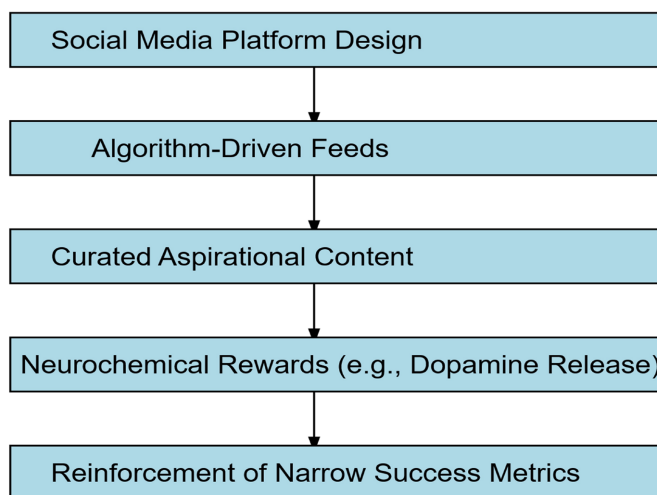


Figure 1. Mechanisms of social media influence on youth perception.

Social media has continued to fuel the fire through the speed at which people are able to consume information at scale. While young people are spending the most time on social media and the internet, the simple idea that business is all about starting something remotely, from a laptop or phone, and making hundreds of thousands, if not millions of dollars selling the same recycled cat or dog t-shirt as thousands of other people is toxic. Social media has become a blessing and a curse for all generations, yes, the “social” aspect is beneficial, however, the brain development of young people has altered to a hyper consumption state, ultimately reducing attention spans of the youth.

Because of this, children struggle to learn skills, especially those which lead to success in business. However, attention span is not the main problem, comparison is, leading to the detriment of mental health within children as well as budding entrepreneurs. This type of perception/misconception that is built by social media and influencers alike leads to comparison, which most children and teens struggle with regardless, ultimately discouraging further pursuit of business due to not being “as successful” as the influencers that post on Instagram or TikTok.

3.2. The Importance of Early Business Education

Business education is the simple solution to many of these misconceptions. However, this must be done in a way that is designed to fuel the desire for future pursuit of business. Skill development is the primary benefit and important aspect that allows teens to begin the business journey. Various skills like time management and communication skills are often the most important, leading to creating a foundation of success that guides teens into the future business workforce (sacampb9, 2024). A survey done which gauges the age range at which adult entrepreneurs started their business shows that 13% started at 18 or younger (JAUSA, n.d.). Taking also into consideration 61.7 million Americans were employed by small businesses in 2023; it can be assumed that of these over 8 million jobs are directly related to businesses that were started by teen entrepreneurs (U.S. Small Business Administration, 2023).

To reinforce the importance of the teen entrepreneur, schools and education should also have programs that are geared toward the success of teens in business. Schools have begun to implement programs that are geared around business, marketing, and various industries that are related, however, this is a difficult area to ensure teens and children are learning the materials. A teacher at a high school for example, is someone who often becomes a mentor or role model for their students. However, within the business education area, teachers who are hired to teach these programs, should always have some type of relevant business experience. If the teacher or instructor does not have actual experience with starting, managing, or scaling a business, they are at the mercy of the state level curriculum to teach the students, often being misled to what the reality of business is or what skills must be present.

Middle and high schools across the country have started to implement more

programs that are based around Career Technical Education (CTE), which includes business education, management, marketing, hospitality, and more. Through the implementation of these programs' students can gain relevant knowledge that ultimately shapes their future career pursuits or entrepreneurial spirit. Programs like that within high schools within Los Angeles, have encouraged students to critically think and work to solve problems that they observe in regular everyday life. As an example, a student of the business management CTE program at Learn4Life High Schools, Hector, was able to recognize a problem that he noticed at his father's landscaping business and develop a solution (Learn4Life, 2023). Through the CTE program, Hector learned how to effectively work on branding, develop a logo, website, and even a SWOT analysis, before launching his business, while still in high school (Learn4Life, 2023).

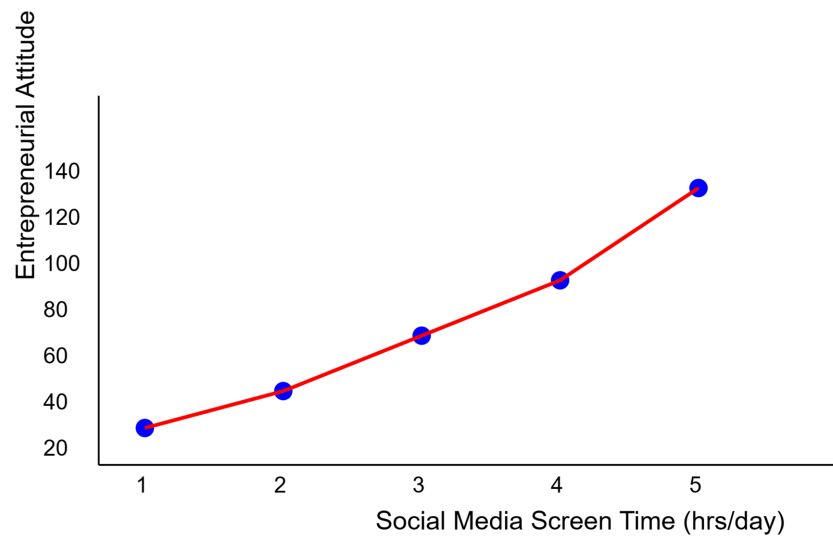
3.3. Effective Strategies to Encourage Business and Entrepreneurial Spirit in Teens

Learning must adapt to how students absorb information in the modern school environment. While traditionally, schools within the United States follow a very simplistic approach to learning. This includes the traditional, lecture—knowledge check system. Business is not as straightforward as this however, it requires a level of interactivity that develops deep critical thinking skills which allow students to catch the entrepreneurial bug. This leads to the need for a combination of interactive and practical learning methods. Using tools like Knowledge Matters or other interactive business simulation programs, are a streamlined way to ensure this critical thinking is developed effectively (High School—Knowledge Matters, 2024). Simulations are one of the most effective ways with various studies being done that have led to increases in learner performance by a range of 20% to up to 72% (Hurrell, 2022). Of these simulation-based systems, these studies that were conducted by a range of institutions (The University of Central Florida, Aberdeen Group, Defense Acquisition University, and Training Industry), each having results that coincide with the assumption that using simulation style training systems leads to increased performance and retention in students and employees (Hurrell, 2022).

Simulation style systems like business simulators such as Knowledge Matters, allow students to gain various levels of performance versus traditional methods. This also leads to increased productivity, which is directly related to helping foster entrepreneurship and critical thinking skills within students. The creation of systems that allow for the use of simulation style games or programs will allow students to engage more fully, while retaining information and skills that are embedded within the programs which are aligned to the courses in which hit standards and benchmarks at the regular school level.

Furthermore, a study of entrepreneurial attitudes indicates a negative correlation between social media screen time and realistic business perspectives. As shown in **Graph 1**, increased screen time is associated with a stronger endorsement of get-rich-quick ideals, underlining the importance of practical, experien-

tial business education in counteracting these misleading narratives (Youth Biz Insights, 2023; EduStats, 2024).



Graph 1. Relationship between social media screen time and entrepreneurial attitudes among youth.

3.4. Quotes and Advice from Established Entrepreneurs

The words of established entrepreneurs serve not only as inspiration but as a blueprint for reshaping the American dream. For example, Steve Jobs once noted, “Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower” (Isaacson, 2011). This quote highlights that success is less about financial accumulation and more about the boldness of innovative ideas. Similarly, Richard Branson has stated, “Business opportunities are like buses, there’s always another one coming” (Branson, 2013). Branson’s perspective encourages youth to view failure as a stepping stone rather than a permanent setback, advocating for resilience and perpetual learning.

Beyond these adages, contemporary entrepreneurs emphasize that business transcends the simple narrative of wealth accumulation. They stress that business education equips youth with the skills to challenge outdated paradigms of the American dream—a vision traditionally tied to the 9-to-5 prevalence and material extravagance. Instead, success might be redefined in terms of social impact, community development, and sustainable innovation. By integrating entrepreneurial education into the formative years, young people are empowered to pursue goals that are more expansive, nuanced, and tailored to a rapidly changing world.

These voices signal that success is multifaceted. When the youth is exposed to diverse stories of entrepreneurship, they not only gather practical strategies but also begin to imagine a future where the American dream is synonymous with personal fulfillment, ethical practices, and transformative community contributions.

3.5. Overcoming Challenges and Misconceptions

One of the primary challenges faced by young people is the internalization of nar-

row, sometimes unrealistic notions of success propagated by social media and popular culture. The notion that wealth is measured solely by luxury items and rapid success skews the way youth perceive achievements. To overcome these challenges, business education must emphasize resilience and redefine what it means to be successful.

Educators can structure curricula that highlight the iterative nature of business and the importance of learning from failures. For instance, through case studies and role-playing exercises, students can simulate business crises and work through strategic recovery plans. By understanding that every setback is a building block for future success, youth learn to value perseverance. Moreover, incorporating ethics into business scenarios helps align young entrepreneurs with values that go beyond mere profit. The reimagined American dream, in this context, becomes one rooted in sustainable success, community enrichment, and personal growth.

It is also essential to counter the tendency toward comparison—the practice of measuring one’s worth by another’s highlight reel on social media. Business education can address this by promoting personalized metrics of success. Students can be encouraged to set individualized goals that harmonize personal passions with entrepreneurial ventures. In doing so, they come to see that the true American dream is not one-size-fits-all; it is diverse, dynamic, and continuously evolving. By centering education on resilience, ethical practices, and personalized aspirations, the narrative shifts from a superficial accumulation of wealth to a well-rounded development of character and capability (sacampb9, 2024).

Although the pervasive influence of social media is evident, individual factors such as socioeconomic background, parental involvement, and inherent digital literacy moderate its effects. For example, research by Allen and Chen (2024) reveals that youths with robust critical thinking skills or higher parental engagement are more adept at questioning and contextualizing online content. Recognizing these differences is essential for tailoring business education programs to diverse learner profiles and ensuring that entrepreneurial training is both inclusive and effective (Allen & Chen, 2024).

3.6. Case Studies and Success Stories

Real-world examples reinforce the transformative power of early business exposure and demonstrate how the American dream can be re-envisioned. Consider the case of a high school student involved in Learn4Life’s CTE program who identified operational inefficiencies in his family’s landscaping business. By employing modern branding techniques, developing a comprehensive digital marketing strategy, and reassessing customer engagement protocols, this student not only revived the family enterprise but also laid the groundwork for a business model that emphasized sustainability and creativity over quick profits (Learn4Life, 2023).

Another illustrative case is that of a group of teenagers who participated in a local business simulation competition. Their project—a socially responsible

startup aimed at improving environmental sustainability through recycling and community engagement—challenged conventional metrics of success by prioritizing social impact over financial gain. Their journey culminated in winning awards at national youth business forums, thereby redefining the American dream as one where success involves contributing positively to society while achieving personal and professional growth.

These case studies serve as powerful evidence that exposing youth to authentic, hands-on business education does more than impart technical skills—it reshapes the narrative of aspiration. When young entrepreneurs are supported to explore diverse pathways to success, they begin to envision a future where the American dream is accessible, equitable, and reflective of a broader spectrum of achievements. This enriched perspective encourages them to pursue entrepreneurial endeavors that are not only profitable but also socially and ethically responsible.

To further validate our qualitative findings, we compiled quantitative outcomes from several youth-focused business initiatives. As illustrated in **Table 2**, the family business revitalization case saw a 35% increase in customer inquiries, the social enterprise for sustainability resulted in a 22% higher community engagement, and the e-commerce startup for local artisans achieved a 50% improvement in conversion rates (Learn4Life, 2023; EduStats, 2024; Youth Biz Insights, 2023).

Table 2. Quantitative outcomes from youth-focused business initiatives.

Case Study Description	Measured Outcome	Reported Impact
Family Business Revitalization (Learn4Life CTE)	Increase in customer inquiries	35% increase
Social Enterprise for Sustainability	Community engagement levels	22% higher participation
E-commerce Startup for Local Artisans	Conversion rate improvement	50% increase

Reference for **Table 2**: Learn4Life (2023).

4. Conclusion

Connecting youth to business requires more than theoretical instruction—it demands a comprehensive, immersive approach that includes interactive simulations, digital technology, and authentic mentorship. By addressing contemporary challenges and reconceptualizing success, early business education has the potential to redefine the American dream. Beyond material wealth, this reimagined vision champions an inclusive idea of prosperity—one that values innovative thinking, ethical leadership, and community impact. Educators, mentors, and policymakers alike have the responsibility to nurture this transformative perspective and empower the next generation to achieve a broader, more profound notion of success.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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