

Entrepreneurship as a Mindset: Three lessons we can learn from young founders



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Three lessons we can learn from young founders

To many, entrepreneurship is the pursuit of building businesses. At LSE Generate, however, we see it as something much bigger than that. It's a way of thinking, a way of solving problems, and—most importantly—a way of empowering young people to feel confident and excited as they begin to take control of their futures.



Since we launched the LSE Generate Schools Programme in partnership with OakNorth in 2021, we've worked with over 10000 young people from over 100 schools around the world. Created by LSE Generate (the London School of Economics' entrepreneurship hub), and empowered by OakNorth (the bank for entrepreneurs, by entrepreneurs), whose founders met while studying at the LSE, the programme empowers students to develop the skills, entrepreneurial mindset and confidence to thrive in fast-changing future.

This summer, the LSE Generate Schools team are welcoming our first cohort of 16-18-year-olds to our Innovation Bootcamps, immersing them in the world of social enterprise. We're giving them the tools, the experience, the mentors, the space and the wider community to explore what matters to them and turn their ideas into something real. And this isn't just about business plans and pitches – although they'll have plenty of opportunities to perfect both: it's about learning how to navigate uncertainty, build confidence, and take action in a world that can often feel increasingly unpredictable.

Lesson 1: What Makes a Great Entrepreneur?

One of the biggest lessons that we've learnt from working with young people around the globe is that there's no single blueprint for a successful entrepreneur. It's easy to assume that entrepreneurial success is about charisma, a unique idea, or fearless risk-taking. Time and again, though, our students prove that the truly magic combination is adaptability, creativity, curiosity, and resilience.

Take, for example, this year's cohort from the Harris Federation, one of over 100 schools members of our Programme. Over 80 Harris students took part in innovation and entrepreneurship bootcamps, mentored by and learning from LSE alumni founders, tackling some of society's biggest challenges and pitching their ideas for a social enterprise to a panel of judges. The team that won the Best Idea prize (and an internship at LSE Generate) – SeaMasters—designed biodegradable fishing nets to prevent ghost-fishing, a phenomenon that poses a major threat to marine life. Other teams pitched equally compelling ideas ranging from an app addressing medical data bias in female patients to a community organisation tackling knife crime.

These aren't abstract ideas—they are real, pressing problems, some of which young people are encountering every day. And what struck us most was that, rather than feeling overwhelmed and giving up, these students met them with determination, creativity, and an energetic desire to act.

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Lesson 2: Community is Everything

Entrepreneurship can sometimes feel like a solo pursuit, but we know that no one builds anything alone, and that there is no limit to what we can achieve if it doesn't matter who takes credit. That's why our programme is built around mentorship, collaboration, and peer support.

In the last year, our students have worked closely with LSE alumni founders, learning from those who were in their position only a handful of years earlier. The impact was striking: 93% of students say they improved their teamwork, collaboration, and problem-solving skills, while 97% say the programme inspired them to think more positively about their future.



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As one student puts it, ‘I really enjoyed participating in LSE Generate, and having the course focused on social enterprise really motivated me and my group to create something that could actually impact people’s lives.’

What’s been especially exciting is seeing how these connections extend beyond the programme itself. Some students are keen to return next year as mentors for the next cohort—proof that the strongest entrepreneurial ecosystems are built on giving back and lifting others up.

Lesson 3: Why Entrepreneurship Education Matters



For many young people, the future feels uncertain. Climate change, economic instability, and rapid technological shifts mean that the most obvious paths available to previous generations no longer feel quite so straightforward for Gen Z and Gen Alpha. But at LSE Generate we choose to see this as an opportunity. As Head of LSE Generate LJ Silverman recently said in her closing comments to a group of GDST students who had just completed their programme with us, ‘when we encounter problems, we focus 10% of our energy on the problem itself, but 90% on the solution.’

Excellent entrepreneurial education shouldn’t exist purely to prepare students to launch businesses – but to equip them with the skills to navigate whatever comes next. Whether they go on to launch a start-up, work in mission-driven and social impact, or apply their skills in completely different sectors, the ability to think critically, take initiative, and turn ideas into action will remain with them.

One teacher who worked with us summed it up brilliantly: “The students understand that gaining entrepreneurial skills can help them in all walks of life—it’s a mindset rather than a mission.”

And if there’s one thing that surprises (and delights) us every year without fail, it’s how bold, socially conscious, and fearless young entrepreneurs are. Youth should not preclude someone from having a brilliant idea, and the agency to enact it: give young people the right environment, and they can thrive.

They don’t wait for permission. They don’t assume problems are too big to solve. And they aren’t bound by the limitations that adults often impose on themselves—the belief that older generations have become accustomed to that ‘this is just the way things are.’

This is why we do what we do. Because every time we run these bootcamps, we meet students who remind us that the future isn’t something to be feared—it’s something to be shaped. And they are more than ready to take on the challenge.