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Balancing Profit and Purpose: Navigating Global Entrepreneurship Education



In October, the Global Entrepreneurship Network (GEN), in collaboration with Youth Business International (YBI), launched a Global Youth Entrepreneurship Policy Framework to address the unique needs and potential of young entrepreneurs worldwide. This framework highlights global trends and patterns in youth entrepreneurship, offering policy recommendations aimed at harnessing the power of entrepreneurship education to address pressing social and economic challenges. Among the most notable trends are the rise of green and social entrepreneurship and the increasing recognition of entrepreneurship as a solution to youth unemployment. As more young people seek meaningful work experiences, entrepreneurship is emerging as a powerful pathway to create opportunities and bridge employment gaps.

The Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE) has been at the forefront of addressing these challenges globally through programs implemented across 31 countries. NFTE's experience aligns with broader research findings that highlight a tension within entrepreneurship education: balancing the focus on income generation with the development of value-driven skills, innovative thinking, and an entrepreneurial mindset.¹ While many global partners are committed to helping young people build durable skills and cultivate an entrepreneurial

NFTE Global Reach



it is equally essential—especially for disadvantaged youth—that they learn how to build profitable, sustainable businesses. NFTE's programs are designed to meet both needs, empowering young people with practical skills and the mindset required for success, striking an effective balance between profit-oriented entrepreneurship and value-based innovation. These programs are also adaptable to various environmental contexts, recognizing that a one-size-fits-all approach is not effective. This flexibility allows NFTE to address the specific needs and opportunities unique to each community it serves.

¹ Neck, Heidi M., and Andrew C. Corbett. "The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Entrepreneurship." *Entrepreneurship Education and Pedagogy*, vol. 1, no. 1, Jan. 2018, pp. 8–41

About NFTE

The Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE) is a global education nonprofit that empowers partners to integrate entrepreneurial education across curricula and equips youth in under-resourced communities with the skills, connections, credentials, and real-world experiences needed to lead change and own their futures. Since 1987, NFTE has reached more than a million learners worldwide.

To meet the evolving aspirations of young people, NFTE champions an integrated approach that equips them with the skills to generate profit while fostering purpose. This approach also emphasizes the development of durable skills, such as creativity, comfort with risk, and the ability to recognize opportunities. As the demand for impactful, purpose-driven work continues to grow, expanding access to comprehensive entrepreneurship education programs like NFTE's is vital. Developing a cohesive plan to scale these programs will ensure that more young people have the opportunity to pursue meaningful careers that align with their values, aspirations, and community needs.

How NFTE and Global Partners are Shaping Future Innovators

The tension in entrepreneurship education between profit-driven business practices and value-driven innovation mirrors a broader debate about the role of business in society. Traditional programs prioritize financial management and profitability, equipping students with the tools to build sustainable, revenue-generating enterprises.² However, a growing movement advocates for an approach that emphasizes value creation, innovation, and social impact, encouraging students to address global challenges like climate change and inequality.³ Increasingly, educational programs are blending these perspectives, integrating social entrepreneurship, ethics, and sustainability into curricula to foster both financial success and positive social change.

NFTE leads the global movement for equitable access to entrepreneurship education. Our work is continually expanding around the world as we partner with mission-aligned organizations to ignite the entrepreneurial mindset through unique learning experiences that empower students to take ownership of their futures. We support our partner network by providing access to curriculum, training, support, and competitions such as the World Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge (WYEC) and the World Series of Innovation (WSI). Currently, we collaborate with 36 partners across 31 countries, offering three distinct partnership levels: mindset partners, who utilize NFTE's Entrepreneurial Mindset Index (EMI); innovation partners, who collaborate with NFTE to host Innovation Days; and pathways partners, who implement NFTE's comprehensive programs and participate in competitions.



From left to right: Misaki Nakamura from Japan, Raneem Al Suwaidani from the United States, Tadeo Noguera and Sebastian Rodriguez from Argentina, and Sindhuja Venkataraman from India pose together at the World Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge in New York City in November 2023.

At the pathways partner level, students engage deeply by taking NFTE courses, developing business plans, and pitching their businesses in competition with other NFTE students. This November, 20 young entrepreneurs from various countries will present their businesses to potential investors during the third annual World Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge. Through years of thoughtful and intentional global partnerships, NFTE has gained valuable insights into shifting trends in entrepreneurship education, as highlighted in the Global Youth Entrepreneurship Policy Framework. Each program partner brings NFTE's programs to life for different purposes and in diverse ways, all aimed at supporting student success and readiness for the modern workforce. See some of NFTE's partners below:

2 Neck, Heidi M., and Andrew C. Corbett. "The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Entrepreneurship." *Entrepreneurship Education and Pedagogy*, vol. 1, no. 1, Jan. 2018, pp. 8–41

3 Lackéus, Martin. "Comparing the Impact of Three Different Experiential Approaches to Entrepreneurship in Education." *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, vol. 26, no. 5, 31 May 2020, pp. 937–971

Foróige in Ireland: Implementation at Scale

The partnership between NFTE and Foróige, Ireland's leading youth organization, began in 2009 with the launch of a pilot program designed to integrate NFTE's entrepreneurship education curriculum into the Irish context. Initially, this initiative aimed to serve around 700 young people in disadvantaged communities in Donegal and Dublin. Over the years, the program has grown substantially and now reaches approximately 7,000 young people through 170 NFTE sites spread across 24 counties in Ireland. This growth reflects Foróige's mission to equip young people, especially those from underserved areas, with the skills necessary for personal and professional success. The adaptability of NFTE's programs has played a significant role in the partnership's success, allowing each site to tailor the curriculum to meet local needs, making the model both effective and scalable.

Through this collaboration, participants are empowered to develop creativity, resilience, confidence, and the practical skills needed to launch entrepreneurship ventures. Caroline Cooke, Manager of Foróige Youth Entrepreneurship, Employability Programmes, highlighted that "Foróige's approach to entrepreneurship education has always been grounded in the belief that every young person has a unique set of skills, talents, and interests that can be channeled into entrepreneurship opportunities." While Foróige has long championed entrepreneurship since its inception 70 years ago, it was in the mid-2000s that the organization sought global programs like NFTE to bolster its offerings.

The partnership aims to foster an entrepreneurial mindset by teaching young people to identify opportunities, innovate, and build businesses, while also guiding them to develop viable, short-term profitable business ventures. Many students have launched ventures based on community problems they observed firsthand. A notable example is the 2024 winners of the Foróige NFTE Youth Entrepreneur of the Year Awards, Annamai Condon and Clodagh Desmond from Loreto Secondary School in Clonmel, Co. Tipperary. Competing against over 7,000 young entrepreneurs from across Ireland through a series of local, county, regional, and semi-final rounds, these students pitched their innovative product, Stick It, a sports stick bag holder. Stick It—an affordable device that attaches to gear bags, schoolbags, or bicycles—was developed after the girls experienced difficulties transporting athletic sticks for hockey and hurling on their bikes. This solution addressed a widespread problem among their peers, making transportation safer and hands-free.

Foróige has also developed a strong research and measurement practice that includes evaluating the impact of NFTE and other entrepreneurship programs. The organization has observed that entrepreneurship education leads to increased self-esteem and engagement, stronger relationships with teachers and peers, and the cultivation of an entrepreneurial mindset. "Every young person has a hobby, interest, or passion, and entrepreneurship education gives young people the opportunity to come up with different ideas and turn them into businesses, innovative ideas, and social enterprises," Caroline Cooke explained.

Sarah Haslam, Director of Training, Programmes, and Research at Foróige, emphasized that while learning how to create a profitable business model is an important outcome, the broader goal is for young people to experience value creation. "It's important that they recognize that they have the creativity, skills, and confidence to be an entrepreneur, and it's those learnings that they take to any pathway they choose," said Sarah Haslam. This comprehensive approach ensures that young people are equipped not just for entrepreneurship, but for a future where they can leverage these skills in any field.



Annamai Condon and Clodagh Desmond from Loreto Secondary School in Clonmel, Co. Tipperary will pitch their business Stick It at the World Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge in November 2024.

Halogen in Singapore: Robust Impact Measurement

Halogen in Singapore and NFTE began their partnership over a decade ago, recognizing their shared mission to foster entrepreneurial mindsets and equip underserved youth with essential career readiness skills. Each year, this collaboration delivers NFTE programs that are tailored to Singapore's local educational and vocational context. Through these programs, students engage in comprehensive entrepreneurship learning experiences aligned with the nation's educational objectives. "Halogen's focus is on supporting students from underserved backgrounds who are interested in entrepreneurship while also developing broader skill sets," said Ivy Tse, Chief Executive Officer of Halogen. Since 2014, nearly 5,000 students in Singapore have participated in NFTE's programs and about 4,000 community facilitators and volunteers have gotten involved.

At the heart of the NFTE-Halogen partnership is a commitment to nurturing an entrepreneurial mindset and achieving meaningful educational outcomes. The program is integrated across various schools, enrolling entire classes of 15- to 16-year-old students and ensuring inclusivity across diverse educational streams—academic, technical, and specialized tracks. Halogen has identified three main models for implementing NFTE programs in schools. One model involves integrating NFTE as part of an existing school-wide elective focused on entrepreneurship, thereby enhancing student participation and support. Another model uses NFTE as a targeted intervention for students at risk of dropping out, helping to re-engage them and improve retention. All schools incorporate NFTE to advance 21st-century competencies, such as self-directed learning and design thinking, leveraging the program's structure without the need to create new content.

A key aspect of this partnership is robust impact measurement. Halogen uses NFTE's Entrepreneurial Mindset Index (EMI) to assess traits, attitudes, behaviors, and skills that help students recognize opportunities, learn from challenges, and succeed across various settings. Additional evaluation tools include the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, the KIDSCREEN Quality of Life Index, and the ACT! Framework (Achieve, Connect, Thrive), which tracks changes in self-esteem, mindset, and soft skill development. These comprehensive metrics provide valuable insights into program effectiveness, with EMI results consistently showing 2-4% annual improvements in entrepreneurial thinking. Self-esteem measures have also demonstrated growth among participating students, further validating NFTE's approach to fostering personal and skill development.

Educators and schools are drawn to NFTE programs due to their proven impact. While visible outcomes like student participation in pushcart competitions highlight tangible achievements, the most significant results are seen in the development of soft skills such as communication, creativity, and resilience. "For schools and teachers, NFTE offers a reliable framework that aligns with broader educational goals, supporting youth in their personal and academic development," shares Tse.

Hear from Halogen's winning entrepreneurs:



Goh Qian Yi Ashley

2023 Singapore Winner

Serangoon Garden Secondary School

"I used to constantly doubt myself, thinking I would not achieve my goals, or that people would laugh at what I shared. The NFTE programme pushed me to step out of my comfort zone, helping me to discover my strengths and gain the confidence to share my thoughts. I've learned to persevere through hard times, even when I felt like giving up. I am deeply grateful to my facilitators for supporting me through this journey!"



Cheng Kei Win

2021 Singapore Winner

Yuhua Secondary School

"The NFTE program helped me to build my confidence in public speaking and to be more experienced in presentations. To me, confidence is like an armour. I learned to look at things with an optimistic mindset, which helped me grow stronger in character. Along my journey, I feel blessed to have so many professionals guiding me and advising me. The NFTE programme has helped mould me into a stronger person."

Recommendations for Scaling Entrepreneurship Education Across a Global Context

With the growth of the global youth population, entrepreneurship education is more vital than ever. For disadvantaged youth, in particular, it serves as a transformative tool, equipping them with essential skills to thrive in the future workforce and launch ventures that benefit their communities. Through strong partnerships across the globe, NFTE has identified key policy best practices that can scale youth entrepreneurship and provide meaningful support to young people. Implementing these policy recommendations will build a comprehensive system that not only teaches entrepreneurship skills but also ensures disadvantaged youth receive the guidance and resources they need to apply them effectively in real-world situations.

Increase Exposure to Entrepreneurship Education and Foster an Entrepreneurial Mindset

To effectively support young people, it is essential to increase exposure to entrepreneurship education while prioritizing the development of an entrepreneurial mindset. Early exposure through dedicated modules in school curricula can plant the seeds of creativity, resilience, and critical thinking. By integrating project-based learning and real-world business challenges into standard educational practices, students can see entrepreneurship not just as a theoretical concept, but as a viable path for their future. Partnerships between schools, local businesses, and startups can further enhance this experience by offering mentorship, guest lectures, and hands-on projects that deepen students' understanding.

In addition to in-school support, providing robust out-of-school opportunities is key to ensuring all students have access to quality educational experiences. Funding summer and after-school entrepreneurship programs would offer more students the chance to develop these essential skills in an engaging, flexible environment. Incorporating student voice in both planning and feedback processes is crucial to increasing access to entrepreneurship education, as it ensures programs are responsive to student needs.⁴ Highlighting student stories and advocating for resources such as compensation for their work and opportunities rooted in their community can amplify the importance of these programs. Collaborative partnerships between educators, employers, and students will be vital for developing sustainable programs that continue to grow and make a lasting impact.



Students participate in a NFTE Innovation Day in Mexico in November 2023.

Build Cohesive Policies for Sustainable Entrepreneurship Education

The creation of more cohesive policies is essential for sustaining and scaling youth entrepreneurship programs. A unified national strategy should integrate entrepreneurship education within the broader scope of educational and workforce development plans, ensuring that these initiatives are interconnected rather than existing as fragmented efforts. This strategic integration will not only enrich the educational landscape but also strengthen the nation's economic growth by nurturing a generation of job creators and innovators.

⁴ The Aspen Institute (2023). The Future is Young Learning Series: PARTNERING, MOBILIZING, CONNECTING: GOYN's Approach to Youth Engagement. https://govn.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Learning-Brief-2_Final.pdf (accessed on 11/06/24)

To maximize impact, cross-agency collaboration among departments of education, labor, and economic development is crucial. Such collaboration can foster a shared vision and pool resources, aligning goals to support a comprehensive framework that empowers young people through entrepreneurship.

Simplifying the process for schools and organizations to access and implement entrepreneurship programs must be a priority to reduce bureaucratic barriers. This can be achieved through streamlined application procedures, centralized support systems, and clear guidelines that encourage participation without administrative strain. Policy incentives, such as targeted grants, tax benefits, and national recognition programs for schools and educators, can further drive adoption and innovation within these educational frameworks. By rewarding schools for their commitment to entrepreneurship education, these incentives create a culture of investment and continuous improvement. A cohesive policy approach helps bridge regional disparities, offering equitable opportunities to all young people regardless of location, and promotes consistency in program delivery. Such initiatives not only foster entrepreneurship skills but also build the confidence, adaptability, and resilience needed to thrive in a dynamic workforce.

Ensure Access to Resources and Networks for Teachers, Students, and Alumni

Ensuring access to resources and networks for teachers, students, and alumni is a fundamental component of supporting entrepreneurship education. For educators, professional development opportunities are essential to equip them with the skills needed to deliver high-quality instruction and effectively mentor students. Teachers benefit from training programs that highlight best practices in entrepreneurship pedagogy and introduce innovative approaches that can be adapted to various learning environments. Establishing comprehensive digital resource hubs can further support educators by providing access to a wealth of teaching materials, including lesson plans, case studies, and interactive tools that cater to diverse student needs. These resources not only bolster teaching quality but also enhance educators' ability to inspire and guide the next generation of entrepreneurs.



Students participate in a NFTE Innovation Day in India in November 2023.

For students and alumni, the importance of structured support networks cannot be overstated. Such networks help sustain the momentum of entrepreneurship education beyond the classroom, offering avenues for continued mentorship, collaboration, and growth. Access to these networks ensures that young entrepreneurs can benefit from the guidance of experienced mentors, gain exposure to business competitions, and explore funding opportunities that can propel their ventures forward. Moreover, fostering collaborative ecosystems that involve schools, nonprofits, and the private sector strengthens these support structures. Through strategic partnerships, students can tap into expertise and practical insights that enrich their entrepreneurship journeys, facilitating a smoother transition from ideation to real-world implementation. By creating a robust network of resources and relationships, we can empower students and alumni to not only develop their entrepreneurship skills but also apply them meaningfully in their future endeavors.

Conclusion

In an era where young people face a complex and evolving job market, balancing the pursuit of profit with meaningful, purpose-driven work is essential. Entrepreneurship education plays a pivotal role in bridging this gap, empowering students to navigate both personal and professional landscapes with resilience and creativity. NFTE’s global initiatives, spanning partnerships in 31 countries, demonstrate how comprehensive programs can prepare youth to think like entrepreneurs and build sustainable ventures that align with their values. By focusing on both business acumen and social impact, NFTE helps students develop the durable skills and innovative mindset needed to thrive in today’s economy.

Expanding access to these programs requires a collective effort that includes policy support, resources for educators, and collaboration across sectors. Effective partnerships, such as those between NFTE and organizations like Foróige in Ireland and the Halogen Foundation in Singapore, highlight the importance of localized, adaptable approaches. NFTE’s programs can be tailored to fit the environmental context of the partners they work with, allowing them to address their specific needs. These partnerships not only provide youth with the tools to succeed but also create opportunities for them to contribute to their communities meaningfully. As more young people seek careers that balance profit and purpose, scaling entrepreneurship education will be vital for fostering a generation of leaders who can drive both economic growth and social change.

About NFTE’s Global Partners Featured in this Brief:

Foróige



Foróige is the leading youth organisation in Ireland and has been working with young people since 1952. Our purpose is to enable young people to involve themselves consciously and actively in their development and in the development of society. We work with over 50,000 young people aged 10-18 each year through volunteer-led Clubs and staff-led Youth Projects. Foróige currently operates in 26 counties in Ireland, with more than 600 Foróige Clubs, 150 Youth Projects, the Big Brother Big Sister mentoring programme, the Foróige Youth Entrepreneurship programme, our Youth Citizenship and Youth Leadership programmes.

Halogen

Our goal is to help youth develop positive belief systems and values so that they can take action in their circles of influence. As an end-to-end development hub, we provide young people from all walks of life equal accessibility to programmes and initiatives that can help them build these foundational skills. Today, Halogen has grown from two founder-volunteers to an established organisation with an ecosystem of support, and has an outstanding track record of over 210,000 youth impacted over the last two decades. We hope to continue working towards greater social mobility and more opportunities for youth in our nation and beyond in the years to come.



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