



e-ISSN: 2319-8753 | p-ISSN: 2347-6710

IJIRSET

International Journal of Innovative Research in
SCIENCE | ENGINEERING | TECHNOLOGY



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF INNOVATIVE RESEARCH

IN SCIENCE | ENGINEERING | TECHNOLOGY

Volume 14, Special Issue 6, December 2025

ISSN INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

Impact Factor: 8.699



9940 572 462



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From Ideas to Influence: Guiding Students through Entrepreneurial Leadership

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ABSTRACT: In an era defined by rapid technological advancement, global interconnectivity, and evolving societal needs, the traditional paradigms of education and leadership are undergoing a radical transformation. Amidst these changes, the fusion of entrepreneurship and leadership—referred to as entrepreneurial leadership—has emerged as a powerful model for preparing students to navigate complexity, drive innovation, and create meaningful impact. This paper explores the concept of entrepreneurial leadership as both a mindset and a practice, and proposes a comprehensive framework for educators, institutions, and policymakers to guide students through the journey from ideation to influence. Entrepreneurial leadership blends the visionary, opportunity-seeking spirit of entrepreneurship with the strategic, people-oriented nature of leadership. This hybrid approach is especially relevant in today’s educational landscape, where students are no longer content with passive learning or conventional career paths. Instead, they seek to solve real-world problems, launch ventures, lead movements, and engage in purpose-driven initiatives. The challenge for educators, therefore, is not just to impart knowledge, but to cultivate the competencies, confidence, and character traits necessary for entrepreneurial leadership.

KEYWORDS: Entrepreneurship, leadership, Ideas to influence, mindset and skills

I. INTRODUCTION

In a rapidly evolving global landscape, students must be prepared not only to adapt but to lead. Entrepreneurial leadership—the fusion of innovation, initiative, and influence—offers a powerful framework for equipping young people to solve complex problems, create value, and drive social and economic change. This paper explores how students get through a transformative journey from ideas to influence, nurturing the mindset, skills, and character required for entrepreneurial leadership.

The proposed model consists of three developmental stages: Ignition, where students discover purpose and identify real-world challenges; Incubation, where they prototype ideas, build skills, and collaborate in dynamic learning environments; and Impact, where they scale solutions, mobilize others, and lead change beyond the classroom.

Drawing from global best practices in education, the paper emphasizes experiential learning, design thinking, mentorship, and cross-disciplinary collaboration. It also highlights the essential role of educators as facilitators of student agency and entrepreneurial behavior. Special attention is given to inclusion, resilience, and ethical leadership as core components of a future-ready entrepreneurial mindset.

A student-centered development model, which maps the journey from Ideas to Influence in three progressive stages: **Ignition, Incubation, and Impact.**

1. **Ignition** focuses on awareness and inspiration. At this stage, students are encouraged to explore their interests, identify pressing problems in their communities or industries, and cultivate curiosity. Through storytelling, exposure to role models, and interactive experiences such as hackathons, design thinking workshops, or entrepreneurial boot camps, students begin to see themselves as creators rather than consumers of value.
2. **Incubation** emphasizes skill-building and experimentation. Here, students translate ideas into prototypes—be it a product, service, campaign, or social enterprise. They engage in iterative processes that involve research, testing, feedback, and refinement. Critical support structures such as mentorship, interdisciplinary collaboration, maker spaces, seed funding, and access to real-world clients or problems are vital during this stage. Failure is reframed as learning, and resilience is nurtured through reflective practice.
3. **Impact** represents the culmination of the student’s leadership journey. The focus shifts from creation to influence—scaling the idea, mobilizing communities, and driving systemic change. Students assume leadership roles,

International Journal of Innovative Research in Science, Engineering and Technology**Two Day National Level Conference on “Entrepreneurial Leadership: Guiding Teams Towards Visionary Goals”****26th & 27th September 2025****Department of Management Studies, Potti Sriramulu Chalavadi Mallikarjuna Rao College of Technology (Autonomous), Vijayawada, India****[Volume 14, Special Issue 6, December 2025]**

communicate their vision, build networks, and seek sustainability for their initiatives. They may start ventures, launch social movements, influence policy, or lead within existing organizations. The ultimate goal is not just individual success, but collective transformation.

Entrepreneurial leadership is the integration of an entrepreneur's traits—like proactivity, vision, risk-taking, and opportunity recognition—with the skills of a traditional leader, such as fostering innovation, influencing teams, and directing collective effort toward common goals. This fusion enables organizations to leverage creativity, take calculated risks to seize opportunities, and drive significant value and competitive advantage through innovation.

II. KEY COMPONENTS

Innovation: Entrepreneurial leaders champion new ideas, products, and processes, creating new markets and solutions that enhance a firm's competitive edge.

Initiative (Proactivity & Risk-Taking): This involves proactively seeking opportunities and being willing to take calculated risks to capitalize on them.

Influence (Leadership Alignment): Leaders inspire and motivate their followers to engage in innovative activities, create commitment, and work toward shared objectives.

Visionary Leadership: The ability to identify and articulate a compelling vision of future opportunities.

Opportunity Seeking: Actively searching for new possibilities and creating unique, innovative solutions to business challenges.

Proactive Behavior: Taking initiative and acting to create new opportunities, rather than merely responding to them.

Risk Propensity: A willingness to embrace uncertainty and make decisions with potential risks for the benefit of organizational growth.

Influence and Motivation: Creating a supportive environment that empowers employees to innovate, self-reflect, and be self-correcting.

Benefits

Enhanced Innovation: Fosters an environment where new ideas are generated, supported, and implemented, leading to product and process improvements.

Competitive Advantage: Enables organizations to adapt to dynamic environments, stay ahead of trends, and achieve sustainable competitive advantage.

Organizational Value Creation: Drives the creation of new value for the organization by leveraging creative potential and seizing new opportunities.

Key Principles of Entrepreneurial Leadership for Students

Innovation and Creativity: Nurture students' ability to develop novel ideas and innovative solutions to challenges.

Risk-Taking and Experimentation: Create a safe space for students to experiment with new ideas and learn from failures, fostering resilience.

Proactiveness and Initiative: Encourage students to identify and pursue opportunities with determination, acting as self-starters rather than waiting for instructions.

Problem-Solving: Guide students to view problems as opportunities for creating economic and social value, developing a proactive mindset.

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Collaboration and Inclusivity: Foster an environment where students seek expert opinions, welcome feedback, and collaborate to improve ideas.

Strategies to Guide Students Create a Supportive Educational Environment:

Implement policies and a culture that supports experimentation, creativity, and continuous improvement.

Provide Real-World Exposure: Connect students with experienced entrepreneurs and innovators through mentorship and networking to inspire them.

Develop Leadership Skills: Help students learn to lead themselves before leading others by building their discipline, strategic thinking, and ability to make change permanent.

Foster a Proactive Mindset: Empower students to take initiative, develop their own passions, and pursue side projects or ventures.

Promote Action and Outcomes: Guide students to focus on taking action and achieving tangible outcomes, rather than just having ideas.

Cultivate a Long-Term Vision: Encourage students to look beyond the immediate future, consider the bigger picture, and anticipate future consequences.

The Dual Engine: Entrepreneurship and Leadership

A line between entrepreneurship and leadership. Entrepreneurship is described not simply as opportunity recognition, but as a mindset—one that thrives in ambiguity, takes calculated risks, and turns ideas into value. Leadership, on the other hand, is about alignment, influence, and collective purpose.

The idea that entrepreneurial leadership is the fusion of both is not new, but it's well-framed here. Where it becomes particularly insightful is in its recognition that many leaders struggle not just with external resistance—bureaucracy, fear of failure, societal norms—but with an internal reckoning between their “ideal” and “real” selves. That is a profound point. In high-performing environments, the greatest obstacle to innovation might not be structure—it might be identity.

III. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF AN ENTREPRENEUR

No.	Characteristics of entrepreneur	Explanation
1)	Vision	A successful entrepreneur leader has a well-defined vision. He knew exactly where he wanted to go and how to get there. They share their idea with the team and collaborate with them to make the vision a reality.
2)	Risk-taking	Becoming a successful entrepreneur requires taking risks. If you are not taking risks, you may need to reconsider becoming a business owner. However, taking risks does not mean blindly entering the business and expecting good results but taking risks in the entrepreneurial field requires careful planning and hard work.
3)	Achievement orientation	Successful entrepreneurs are achievement-oriented. They value achievements and intrinsic rewards equivalent to achieving difficult goals.
4)	Able to motivate	As an entrepreneur they have to able motivate his followers and make their business successful. To increase motivation, they can start by setting small goals. Small goals can help you achieve larger goals and push you to achieve higher goals. Understand the work done and celebrate your results, even small ones.

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5)	Creativity	One of the most essential traits of a good leader is creativity, which creates a successful and healthy workplace atmosphere. Creativity brings up possibilities for problem solving, goal achievement, and motivating teams to be innovative and seek out unusual alternatives.
6)	Flexibility	Leading a team to outstanding performance requires leaders adapting their natural leadership style to the individual and the environment.
7)	Persistence	If you want to succeed in today's competitive business environment, you must be persistent. You will become a lot more accomplished entrepreneur and will be able to establish a much more stable, successful firm if you are willing to give it your all to achieve your business goals.
8)	Patience	True leaders realise that patience allows them to assess the situation, recognize what is needed and wait while they develop the capacity to take appropriate and successful action.

To guide students from ideas to influence through entrepreneurial leadership, educators should foster innovation, promote risk-taking, and cultivate a culture of proactiveness. This involves creating supportive environments for change, encouraging creative solutions to problems, and inspiring a proactive mindset in students by connecting them with real-world innovators and providing opportunities to lead and take initiative.

Educational institutions can integrate entrepreneurial leadership by implementing entrepreneurship-centric curricula, fostering a dynamic entrepreneurship ecosystem, and partnering with external stakeholders to create a supportive network for student ventures. Key practices include promoting hands-on, real-world learning through project-based learning, mentorship, startup competitions, and internships, while nurturing an entrepreneurial mindset that emphasizes creativity, problem-solving, teamwork, and ethical decision-making in students.

Barriers such as rigid curricula, resource limitations, and social inequities are addressed through recommendations for institutional innovation, ecosystem support, and policy reform.

Ultimately, fostering entrepreneurial leadership in education prepares students not just for employment, but for impact. By guiding them from ideas to influence, we empower the next generation to lead with purpose, solve pressing global challenges, and shape a more sustainable, innovative, and equitable future.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

A set of actionable recommendations and policy guidelines aimed at integrating entrepreneurial leadership across all levels of education. These include:

- Embedding entrepreneurship and leadership as core competencies across disciplines
- Creating cross-functional innovation labs and student-led incubators
- Incentivizing educators to experiment with student-centered teaching models
- Building pathways for students from marginalized backgrounds to access mentorship and capital
- Establishing metrics that evaluate both entrepreneurial outcomes and leadership growth
- Encouraging global collaboration and digital platforms for knowledge sharing and co-creation

V. CONCLUSION

Entrepreneurial leadership represents a transformative approach to education—one that aligns with the demands of the 21st century while honouring the agency, creativity, and aspirations of young people. By guiding students from ideas to influence, we not only prepare them for the workforce, but empower them to become architects of a better future. Whether they go on to launch start ups, lead non-profits, shape public policy, or inspire cultural change, the principles of entrepreneurial leadership will serve as a lifelong compass. This paper calls upon educators, institutions, and

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policymakers to reimagine their roles—not as gatekeepers of knowledge, but as catalysts of possibility and stewards of the next generation of leaders.

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