



Entrepreneurship Education and Social Justice: The Unexpected Connection

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Abstract. Social justice is a key goal of education in the United States. However, entrepreneurship – and therefore entrepreneurship education – typically are viewed as the antitheses of social justice. It is the purpose of this paper to show that not only are the goals of social justice and entrepreneurship education capable of simultaneous realization but also to argue that entrepreneurship education is a viable and even potent economic access strategy for enabling a social justice agenda. The paper is divided into three parts: 1) Social Justice as Fair Access to Economic Opportunity; 2) Benefits of Entrepreneurship/Entrepreneurship Education for Achieving Economic Access and Mobility; and 3) Listening to Youth: Entrepreneurship and Incorporating Entrepreneurship Education into School Curricula.

Keywords: entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship education, social justice, economic mobility, school reform

1. Introduction

A key goal of most primary and secondary schools throughout the United States (especially in low income neighborhoods) is the achievement and enhancement of social justice. In fact, the same objective can be found explicitly in the mission statements of major United States' Schools of Education. Mission goals such as *...Our work is guided by the principles of individual responsibility and social justice, an ethic of caring, and commitment to the community we serve ...* are typical rather than atypical.¹ On the other hand, quite often entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education at best are considered inconsistent with the goals of social justice – and at worst frequently viewed as the very antitheses of social justice. It is the purpose of this paper to show that not only are the goals of social justice and entrepreneurship education capable of simultaneous realization but also to argue that entrepreneurship education is a viable and even potent economic access strategy for enabling a social justice agenda. This paper is divided into three parts: Social Justice as Fair Access to Economic Opportunity; Benefits of

1. See UCLA Graduate School of Education and Information Studies 2007-2008 Annual Report.

Entrepreneurship/Entrepreneurship Education for Achieving Economic Access and Mobility; and Listening to Youth: Entrepreneurship and Incorporating Entrepreneurship Education into School Curricula.

2. Social Justice as Fair Access to Economic Opportunity²

Part of the reason why combining “social justice” and “entrepreneurship” appears at first glance to be an unusual or incompatible juxtaposition may be that the two concepts represent and originate from quite different, but in some ways parallel, intellectual traditions. Entrepreneurship has been studied predominately from an economics paradigm, a management perspective, and occasionally through an economics/sociological lens. Management scholars in the field of economics study the qualities of successful entrepreneurs as part of their purview, and economic sociologists focus on entrepreneurial activity as a social phenomenon and theoretical construct.³ Social justice, on the other hand, is principally the ken of political philosophers, although many equity-oriented political activists also find the term useful in explaining and discussing their goals and ideals.⁴ In addition, and most relevant to our purposes here, school reformers and educational researchers often name social justice as a value they believe should drive school reform efforts, educational research and, indeed, permeate the learning environments of school communities.⁵

The actual term *entrepreneur* is derived from the French verb *entreprendre*, which literally means “to take from between,” and suggests the role of bridging two entities: perhaps a buyer and a seller, or a person who needs something and a person who can meet that need.⁶ Typically, an entrepreneur is an individual who satisfies an unmet market demand in a particular area. The authors of this paper further describe entrepreneurship as the ability to recognize an opportunity that others have overlooked and the propensity to act on that opportunity where others may hesitate. In order to be able to do this, individuals must be encouraged to frame problems as “disguised opportunities.” It is a process we call “entrepreneurial thinking,” or having an “entrepreneurial mindset.”⁷ The thought

2. The authors would like to thank Andrew Thomas for his research contributions.

3. See Schumpeter (1934), Burt (1992), and Casson (2003).

4. Its origin in religious thinking, particularly Catholic theology, cannot be ignored. The term “social justice” can be attributed to the Jesuit Thomist writer Luigi Taparelli D’Azeglio (1793-1862), who was concerned with the social upheavals of the industrial revolution, and whose writings influenced Pope Leo XIII’s 1891 encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*. The concept of social justice also appears in the Jewish religious tradition as *tikkun olam*, which translates from Hebrew into English as “repairing the world.”

5. See McLaren and Fischman (1998), Cochran-Smith (1998, 1999), Nieto (1999), Fischman and McLaren (2000), Solorzano and Yosso (2001), Oakes and Lipton (2003), Ayers (2004).

6. For the non-economics reader, it is worth noting that entrepreneurship is considered one of the four key factors of production – along with land, labor, and capital.

processes and skills employed by such individuals are capabilities that can be generalized to all kinds of endeavors.

For example, the disguised opportunity recognized by a teen-age boy emanated from the ridicule he endured from his classmates because his father (a low income farmer) worked for an employer who produced and sold fertilizer. The 13-year-old came up with an idea about how to leverage his problem by turning it into a socially conscious business opportunity. He (along with a friend) took their savings and added some borrowed money to develop a complete menu of odor-free and organically aged manure fertilizers called (quite creatively) Manure Gourmet. These young co-founders offered a menu of products with humorous names such as Stud Crud, Cow Wow, Ewe Poo, and for those who wanted a sampler of all three – the Poop-ourri Gift Box. They called themselves the young entre-manures and eventually earned enough money to fund a substantial portion of their college education.

Many economists and policy-makers believe that entrepreneurship such as described above is the cornerstone of a vibrant economy. Also, many of these same economists view equity as their major goal in the efficiency/equity cost-benefit trade-off paradigm.

For the purposes of this article, the authors base their definition of social justice on principles of fairness in the spirit of John Rawls.⁸ People face oppressive conditions and disadvantages in a variety of places in our society, one of which still is the uneven playing field of markets. Oppressive conditions include unspoken norms and ideologies that deny privileges to classes of people and socioeconomically disadvantaged neighborhoods that restrict individuals' access to the resources they need to participate in and benefit from the economy. Not uncommonly, legal, ideological and geographic factors – often with historical roots – combine to exclude classes of people, even entire nations and subcontinents, from attaining economic well being. In these ways, “injustices” clearly can occur that ultimately impact “fair” socioeconomic access and distribution of economic benefits.⁹

The authors maintain that if socioeconomic access can be improved such that economic benefits are more widely distributed, injustices can be ameliorated to that extent. Here, we follow Rawls' second principle of justice as fairness, which states that everyone, independent of their origin, should have a *fair opportunity*

7. There are many books and articles that describe, discuss, and analyze entrepreneurial mindsets. For several examples, see Kent (1990), Ericksen (1997), Kourilsky (1999), and Kourilsky and Walstad (2000).

8. For a more thorough discussion, see Rawls and Kelly (2001).

9. Lack of access to the benefits is often accompanied by having to bear a disproportionate part of the burden of economic productivity. In other words, inequalities that might otherwise be justified under a fair system of cooperation in which everyone's situation improves are not just when the advantaged parties benefit from the cooperative scheme disproportionately more than do the disadvantaged; those who start out less advantaged get a “bad deal” in terms of the benefits they accrue and the burdens they bear. See Rawls (1999), pp. 15, 103.

to attain whatever socioeconomic position they desire.¹⁰ In making this argument, we will focus on those aspects of social justice that relate to “economic fairness” and the notion of “redistributive justice”. In other words, without fundamentally altering the organizational principles of our economy, we argue that it is within our power to address a variety of inequities in terms of access to economic opportunities (and therefore access to economic benefits.) For example, public policies can provide a social safety net in the form of payments to individuals or services offered at no cost to users. Government policies can ensure that laws encourage competition and prevent successful enterprises from creating monopoly conditions that distort competition and lead to market inefficiencies. Finally, educational policies can improve access to markets for those who have been historically excluded – for example by allocating curricular/instructional time (especially in low-income neighborhood schools) to conveying the knowledge and skills for “making a job” (as opposed to “taking a job”).

In focusing on economic fairness, we realize that many educators do not conceive of social justice in economic terms at all. Rather, in tacit reference to its early roots in moral philosophy and theology, some educators see social justice as a part of a comprehensive moral doctrine. That doctrine rests on the principle that individuals have “natural” or universal rights, and it is everyone’s ethical obligation to make individual decisions that are consistent with organizing our society in such a way that those rights are guaranteed. This paper readily acknowledges that broader scope of social justice as we seek to illuminate the more focused issue of achieving equity in economic access through entrepreneurship. Although we believe that social justice spans more than equitable socioeconomic access, without a healthy, productive economy with “more fairly” distributed benefits, social justice cannot advance. Our argument is simple: *the agenda of social justice is advanced by an education policy that teaches young people, many of whom are not likely for a variety of reasons to fulfill their potential through wage-earning employment, how to engage in entrepreneurial thinking and how to create their own jobs by establishing entrepreneurial ventures.*

One of the historic purposes of schooling has been to enable upward social mobility.¹¹ In fact, taxpayers subsidize the public schools in the United States in part with that idea in mind. Of course, schools also socialize children and prepare them to be citizens, and it goes without saying that schools impart knowledge and teach fundamental skills such as literacy, numeracy, critical thinking, and problem-solving. However, the successful imparting of knowledge and skills ultimately is intended to help transform children into productive adults who are capable of pursuing their dreams and prospering socially and economically. Yet public schools do not fulfill this “socioeconomic access” goal for at least two major reasons.

10. Rawls and Kelly (2001), p. 42.

11. Katz (1989), pp. 21-22.

First, schools are in the main oriented towards producing future wage-earners and not future “job makers.” Students enter schools with a consumption mindset already in place as early as kindergarten.¹² Unfortunately, students also are leaving school with a consumption mindset as schools are not providing their students with the tools they need to access the means of production in our economy. In fact, research shows that teen consumption has accelerated dramatically in recent years. It was estimated that teenagers in the United States spent 159 billion dollars in 2005, which represents an increase of nearly 50% over the prior five years. On one hand, this information may be viewed as positive for the U.S. Gross Domestic Product: young people have more money to spend, and their spending is an important driver of the economy. On the other hand, much of the money teenagers spend really represents their parents’ wealth and/or their own access to credit cards, which – encouraged by advertisers – young people tend to use for “non-essential” luxury goods. Spending money they did not earn, teens are learning how to consume, but not to invest or budget – and certainly not how to produce goods and services.¹³

The lack of emphasis in schools on business ownership and entrepreneurial thinking as well as the deferred discussion of other professional pursuits arguably tilts towards young people’s *consumption* state of mind rather than their *production* state of mind. In contrast, it should be remembered that in order to become an entrepreneur one has to focus on learning to achieve control of one’s means of production.

A second reason the public school system provides little help in fulfilling the “socioeconomic access” goal is that current economic trends make the task difficult. Young people going through the educational system today will emerge into an economy in which it appears the “cards are stacked against them” – an economy that offers fewer chances (than it has in the past) to prosper through taking jobs. Recent economic changes – linked to globalization, technology, and a mismanaged political system, among other factors – make entrepreneurship and small business initiatives increasingly important components of the U.S. economy. With small pockets of exceptions here and there, good middle-class jobs in manufacturing and farming represent a rapidly vanishing breed of employment opportunity in the U.S..¹⁴ Manufacturing jobs have steadily decreased over the last several decades as the trade imbalance with other countries has increased, and this trend is continuing at an accelerating rate. In rural areas, the family or small farm has all but vanished, and service sector jobs are often low wage. In cities, less advantaged youth lack access to the kinds of

12. See Kourilsky (1981) and Kourilsky and Walstad (2007).

13. Lemelson-MIT Innovation Index survey of American teenagers; see <http://web.mit.edu/invent/n-pressreleases/n-press-06index.html>

14. According to U.S. Census Bureau (2005), the total number of manufacturing establishments declined by 12,094 between 1997 and 2002. Jobs in this sector decreased by 3,400,845 between 1997 and 2004. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (2004), between 1997 and 2002 the number of farms in the U.S. fell by almost 87,000.

jobs their peers occupy in more affluent parts of the city. An additional alarming development in recent years is the increasing migration to external countries of well-paying high technology jobs that require advanced degrees.

Further exacerbating the “take-a-job” scenario during the last two decades, increases at the bottom of the wage scale have been disproportionately low relative both to the increases at the top of the wage scale and to the increases in return on investment. Average wage earners have been doing less well than corporate executives (even though all these groups are suffering in the current economic crisis.) Over time, capital investment and “very-high-end” labor have been very well rewarded on the average whereas “medium and low-end” labor have been less well rewarded, and this imbalance is likely to trend forward into the foreseeable future.

Thus, while young people from more advantaged backgrounds are more likely to have the option of going into a profession or joining the pool of very high end labor, for many of America’s public school students who live in inner cities or poorer rural areas, taking a high-end job is not a realistic option. For both groups – poor rural students and minority and less affluent urban students – *making* a job by initiating a venture is a potentially better strategy, and sometimes the only opportunity for breaking the poverty cycle. But without the knowledge and skills to pursue access to the means of production, most youth educated in the public school system are and will continue to be forced to compete on a tilted playing field outside of school that dramatically hinders their pursuit of social equity and their ability to achieve autonomous production and higher levels of income.¹⁵

Therefore, relative to their intended socioeconomic access function, public schools do not make the grade. On the other hand, an educational reform initiative introducing entrepreneurship instruction could help ensure that the transfer of public wealth by way of taxes to schools produces “social returns” – increased numbers of less advantaged young people having meaningfully enhanced socioeconomic access (with the concomitant enhanced access to society’s economic benefits.) In fact, entrepreneurship education has the capacity to do more than simply provide improved access to society’s resources; it has the potential to expand the overall base of society’s resources as students who acquire entrepreneurial skills, knowledge, and habits of mind go on to initiate ventures, innovate in their business practices, create jobs, enhance the Gross Domestic Product and give back to their communities. Thus, schools that add entrepreneurship preparation to their list of educative functions would in a sense be *investing* the fruits of the country’s productivity in turn to increase productivity. More equitable access for the disenfranchised and the underserved to the resources that lead to greater productivity would be a direct result of such a policy.

15. For a discussion of trends and concerns in the level and distribution of economic well-being in the U.S. economy, see Bernanke (2007).

Of course, any informed dialogue on the “real value” to youth of entrepreneurship is incomplete without: 1) further addressing the benefits of entrepreneurship both to the individual and to society at large; and 2) listening to the voices of youth themselves (especially minority youth) – that is, what are their expressed attitudes toward entrepreneurship and incorporating entrepreneurship education into school curricula.

3. Benefits of Entrepreneurship/Entrepreneurship Education for Achieving Economic Access and Mobility

Increased entrepreneurship and more entrepreneurial thinking among this nation’s young people would have a number of benefits. Some of the positive effects of entrepreneurship are personal, intrinsic or individual and they accrue to entrepreneurs economically, socially and psychologically. Other benefits are more properly categorized as concomitant societal benefits; they enhance a society’s general productivity level, improve income and wealth equity, and/or improve access to and ownership of resources.

Most people would recognize that the most direct benefactor of business operation and ownership is the business owner herself or himself. Even the entrepreneur who closes a company and moves on to something else arguably gains in experience from the process of having initiated and operated a business – itself a great educational experience. Among other qualities, it gives young entrepreneurs a chance to learn independence, financial skills and responsibility, salesmanship, business strategy, cooperation, leadership and the important skills addressed at the start of this paper of being able both to *recognize* and to *act* on opportunities – and to frame problems as disguised opportunities. It also helps them better understand how the real world works: e.g. how goods get from point “a” to point “b,” how a product is priced at the mall, and what people mean when they debate labor laws or taxes.

Typically, the successful business also leads to income and prosperity for its owner. Business owners, in general, have the ability to grow according to their own capabilities and the conditions of the markets. In contrast, wage earners are subject to the prevailing wage conditions, which are inherently limited. Of course, entrepreneurship does involve risk, and success is not assured; wage earners traditionally have exposed themselves to less risk than have individual business owners. (That traditional expectation is much more suspect in today’s economy as very large numbers of wage earners are suffering loss of employment in the wake of multiple major corporate and financial meltdowns.)

Not only do entrepreneurs in general benefit from owning their own businesses, but also the personal advantages of entrepreneurship are greater, relative to wage earning, for young people who live in communities where taking a job is either a poor option, or is not an option at all. Researchers and

policymakers have long believed that business ownership provides a potential route out of poverty for low-income populations who face discrimination in society and the workplace. A large number of government and philanthropic programs exist to encourage the creation of “micro-enterprises” in blighted areas or to provide assistance or set asides to minority-owned businesses.¹⁶ However until recently, the empirical evidence for the effectiveness of business ownership as a vector of positive social mobility was mixed. Researchers have noted, for example, that many self-employed ethnic minorities are economically marginalized and must operate in the less secure, unregulated world of the “underground economy.” On the other hand, studies have shown positive effects of self-employment in terms of earnings and average income. One of the most interesting of these studies is a longitudinal analysis of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Fairlie asked whether young people from low-income families who started their own businesses experienced higher earnings than similar people who were wage/salary workers. His results indicated that young male business owners from disadvantaged backgrounds earned more on average than their counterparts who worked for others. The difference between the two groups was large, significant, and comparable to the effect that the level of parent education exerts on income.¹⁷

In addition to the inherent personal benefits to the entrepreneur, increased entrepreneurship among young people confers benefits on society as well. Empowering young people to make their own jobs is good social policy because not only are these youth more likely to be upwardly mobile, but also they are more likely to be involved as change agents in their communities, to innovate, to create jobs, to pay higher taxes, and to be engaged politically and solve social problems. It may be that business owners of all ages also are more likely to vote than wage/salary earners. The U.S. Census has reported that people who feel more invested in society have the highest rate of voting participation.¹⁸

For obvious reasons, most firms created by young entrepreneurs are small in size. Interestingly, small firms tend to drive innovation in the economy by producing products that fundamentally change how we live. The airplane, the FM radio and the personal computer all are examples of products that were first developed by small firms. Often these products eventually are sold to giant corporations, which successfully market and distribute them. This symbiotic relationship between small, innovative businesses and giant firms has been termed “the David-Goliath” partnership and, according to economist William Baumol, is not accidental but rather an indispensable part of a thriving economy.¹⁹

16. For examples, see Severens and Kays (1999).

17. See Fairlie (2004, 2005).

18. See www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/p20-542.pdf and www.wipp.org

19. See Baumol (2005).

It is worthy of note that small businesses create the most new jobs in our economy. Although this observation is not without controversy and has been debated internationally in economics literature, the current research consensus suggests that small businesses are the primary drivers of job growth in the U.S. and probably elsewhere as well. Although small firms apparently experience more job volatility and loss than do large firms, thereby exerting a negative effect on employment, small firms also tend to create the most new jobs simply because they are new firms, which tend to exhibit rapid growth rates.²⁰

If the above-described advantages of increased entrepreneurial activity are to be realized, entrepreneurship needs to be accelerated. Educational reform that introduces instruction in entrepreneurial skills would be one important step toward accomplishing this goal. Solid entrepreneurship education not only would teach skills of opportunity recognition and business planning but also would introduce learners to the many resources that are available for anyone who wants to start a business, including websites, the Small Business Administration, chambers of commerce and youth-oriented business organizations. Many of these organizations help small businesses owned by young people organize their production, raise capital and find ways to reach customers. Entrepreneurship education also can help young people to recognize their own strengths and expertise grounded in their community and family experiences. All young people have their own “funds of knowledge” derived from what they know about the people around them and what those people need. Most young people who become entrepreneurs take advantage of their lack of financial commitments to launch low-cost ventures, often out of their parents’ homes and garages. The growth of online commerce, combined with the comfort that many young people have with computers and the Internet, has introduced new opportunities for enterprising young people with minimal access to financial capital.

Quality entrepreneurship education also would introduce students to the importance of maintaining good relationships with a network of people who can provide access to useful resources. Not only do many young people lack financial backing for their ventures, they often also lack social capital, which not only entails the emotional support of family members, teachers and community members, but also includes access to resources embedded in social relations. Understanding and pursuing the entrepreneurial process helps youth both to understand the importance of and to develop a circle of contacts that can provide useful information about business opportunities in the first place and also can provide access to other helpful people – partners, expert consultants and professionals, skilled employees, customers, and the like. Fortunately for aspiring young entrepreneurs, teen society (even more so today than in the past

20. See Karlsson, Friis and Paulsson (2006) who found substantial evidence from studies conducted all over the globe for the importance of small businesses in economic growth and job creation and Bruce, Deskins, Hill, and Rork (2007) for an analysis of the effect of small business on economic growth in states.

and partly due to advances in technology) offers many opportunities for socializing and making connections.²¹

4. Listening to Youth: Entrepreneurship and Incorporating Entrepreneurship Education into School Curricula

From the authors' perspective perhaps the strongest argument for achieving social justice through entrepreneurship (in the school curriculum) is generated by listening (literally) to the target audience – *youth*. In a survey validated by Kourilsky and Walstad and administered by the Gallup organization under controlled protocols to a national randomly selected sample of 1010 high school students, it was found among other results that *entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education are of particular value to minority youth*.²² The views of minority youth – African-Americans and Latinos – were distinguishable from white youth along several dimensions in the survey findings. For example, relative to whites (60%), both of the minority groups (77% of African-Americans and 75% of Latinos) expressed greater interest and intent with respect to working for themselves as opposed to working for another person. Additionally, African-Americans (75%) and Latinos (70%) – when asked directly if they wanted to start a business of their own – were more likely to respond in the affirmative than their white counterparts (63%). Compared to whites, they more often reported that they were “likely” or “very likely” (if shown how) to actually initiate their own ventures, and they were less concerned with risk as a reason not to start a business. In the same vein, although all youth were interested (at some time in their lives) in starting a non-profit or charitable organization, this desire was stronger among African-American youth (77%) and Latino youth (69%) than among white youth (61%).²³ Other areas of similarity between African-American and Latino youth included their interest in learning more about entrepreneurship and the importance of schools teaching more about entrepreneurship. For example, white youth (63%) expressed less interest (even though still quite high) in learning more

21. See Kent and Anderson (2003).

22. For a more complete and thorough description of methodology, including data collection, response rates, sampling errors, data analysis, and findings, see Kourilsky and Walstad (2007).

23. Youth's desire to start both for-profit and not-for-profit ventures causes cognitive dissonance. This dissonance is a manifestation of the proclivity of youth to combine an entrepreneurial spirit with a philanthropic or social responsibility mindset. The dissonance can be reduced in one of three ways. First, teenagers can choose to forgo permanently starting a not-for-profit venture to initiate a profit-making enterprise, or vice versa. Second, these young people could say to themselves that one or the other of these aspirations is of secondary importance and can wait until later. Third (taking a cue from the dissonance literature of Festinger (1957), et. al.), high school students can pursue another dissonance-reducing strategy: they can introduce a new cognition. In this case, the new cognition involves combining the intrinsic goals of youth's two aspirations and gaining access (hopefully through the school system) to knowledge about *social entrepreneurship* as a career alternative.

about entrepreneurship compared with African-American (82%) and Latino youth (71%). In terms of the importance attributed to schools teaching more about entrepreneurship (on a five-point Likert scale ranging from *very important* to *not important*), African-American and Latino youth significantly more often than white youth answered that it was very important to do so (67%, 56%, and 45% respectively.) Interestingly, the pattern of answers to the questions designed to gauge an entrepreneurial mindset also were similar for African-American and Latino youth.

On average, African Americans and Latinos in the United States come from families that earn less than white families. This demographic fact alone suggests that policies designed to redress income disparity are necessary and desirable on general economic growth and social justice grounds. Further contributing to the case for entrepreneurship education are the facts that African American and Latino high school students show an interest in entrepreneurship education and also express the belief that it is the role of the schools to provide this type of educational programming.

Of course not all youth are born with a desire to start a business nor is business ownership necessarily the best or even a good choice for everyone. However an entrepreneurial mindset – the ability to anticipate and recognize opportunities that others have overlooked and the skills, confidence, and courage to act on these opportunities whereas others may have hesitated – will benefit any individual no matter what line of work he or she pursues.

5. Conclusion

The authors have been investigating the attitudes of youth toward entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education since 1994, and longitudinal analyses indicate that their attitudes have remained relatively constant over time. To sum it up, “they think they don’t know” much about entrepreneurship, and their test scores on entrepreneurial knowledge suggest “they are right.” However “they want to know” as indicated by the high percentage of youth who want entrepreneurship to be taught in the schools. Also, “they want to do” as revealed by the astonishingly high percentage of youth who want to start a business of their own. And finally, “they want to give back” as illuminated by the equally high percentage of youth who want sometime in their lives to start a non-profit or charitable organization and believe that a business has an obligation to give something back to the community besides providing jobs and paying taxes.

It is not surprising that that these attitudes are held more strongly by minority youth – who in general are the most short-changed in terms of fairness parameters and therefore have the most to gain in terms of economic, social, and cultural capital by securing access to knowledge about entrepreneurial thinking and how to initiate a venture.

To reiterate, one of the great purposes of free public education in the United States is to provide, for all young people in the country, an “alternative inheritance.” Many teenagers from low-income families, students of color, immigrants, and residents of blighted inner city neighborhoods or economically marginalized rural communities have access to few meaningful opportunities that could offer them a path out of their relative socioeconomic “entrapment.” Although excelling in the school-based competition for grades and test scores can be a viable route into one of the professions for a small number of these youth, for many more the entrepreneurial process and small venture initiation are the best options for achieving the goals of social justice both for themselves and for their communities. Isn’t it time for schools and policy-makers to listen to the voices of youth and provide them with the type of social justice enabling education for which they have expressed a resounding call?

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