

## Educate!: Transforming education in Africa to give youth the skills to end poverty

Kampala, UgandaUganda



Angelica Towne



Year Founded:

2005

**Organization type:**

nonprofit/ngo/citizen sector

Project Stage:

Scaling

**Budget:**

\$1 million - \$5 million

Website:

<http://www.experienceeducate.org>

**Twitter:**

<https://twitter.com/EducateOrg>

**Facebook:**

<https://www.facebook.com/Educate-56919169894/>

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### Project Summary

#### Elevator Pitch

**Concise Summary: Help us pitch this solution! Provide an explanation within 3-4 short sentences.**

Educate! believes that youth across Africa have the power to solve poverty for themselves and their communities. Our skills-based education model provides the 21st century/business skills to make this a reality. We aim to end poverty across Africa by transforming secondary education.

**WHAT IF - Inspiration: Write one sentence that describes a way that your project dares to ask, "WHAT IF?"**

What if youth in Africa graduated secondary school with the skills to solve poverty for themselves and their communities?

#### About Project

**Problem: What problem is this project trying to address?**

6-7 billion youth will go through secondary school in Africa between now and 2100. In Uganda, a country with the world's youngest population (50% under age 15), the highest youth poverty rate (94%) and a 62% youth unemployment rate, it is evident that the education system delivers a broken promise: schooling does not lead to a better life. For the countries that depend on today's youth to solve poverty, this broken promise is tragic.

**Solution: What is the proposed solution? Please be specific!**

Educate! transforms secondary education in Africa, a sector whose potential is currently untapped, to give youth skills to end poverty. Our model is cost-effective, replicable, and designed to lead to better life outcomes for youth: improved livelihoods, business and job creation, community participation, and business/employability skills. Our model includes mentorship, experience starting a business, and leadership and entrepreneurship training, all of which are monitored for impact. A report from Solutions for Youth Employment identified that entrepreneurship interventions like Educate!'s have the highest return on productive work for youth. Educate! is perfectly poised to become the leading scalable solution to address this need.

#### Awards

Winner of the 2015 WISE Awards, the pre-eminent awards for Innovative Projects in Global Education, recognized by Clinton Global Initiative, Forbes 30 under 30, the Brookings Institute, backing from Echoing Green and Ashoka Changemaker's.

Impact: How does it Work

**Example: Walk us through a specific example(s) of how this solution makes a difference; include its primary activities.**

Hanifah grew up in Kampala, the capital of Uganda where where 62% of youth are unemployed and 90% of working youth are in the informal sector. When she became an Educate! Scholar, she launched a business sewing uniforms for local schools, enabling her to pay her school fees. With Educate!, Hanifah learned how to manage finances and create a business development plan to grow her business in a sustainable way. When her peers were fighting off poverty and struggling to find employment, Hanifah was self-sufficient, managing her own business, and creating employment opportunities for her community. Hanifah says she is extremely inspired by Educate! and will transfer her passion for entrepreneurship and leadership skills to many Ugandan youth.

**Impact: What is the impact of the work to date? Also describe the projected future impact for the coming years.**

Educate! directly reaches almost 90,000 secondary students annually in 15 districts across Uganda and an additional 25,000 students per year through the national upper secondary school entrepreneurship curriculum. Results from our Randomized Controlled Trial show that students who completed our program earned more than twice as much as their peers: an increase of \$173, or 105%. The effect on girls was even larger: a \$200 and 120% annual increase over girls in the control group! We expect to expand to over 80 new schools in the high needs, post-conflict Northern region of Uganda, increasing our impact to nearly 350 schools and almost 125,000 students. Educate! is proud to have advised Uganda and Rwanda's entrepreneurship curricula and is forming partnerships with Kenya and Cameroon.

**Spread Strategies: Moving forward, what are the main strategies for scaling impact?**

Our vision is to reach 1 million youth annually across 10 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa by 2024. We've encountered huge demand for our model and engaged governments in many countries, exceeding our own expectations. At full potential, Educate! will be the highest impact advisor for skills-based education reform in Africa. We aim to be ready for full-scale expansion in Uganda by 2017, targeting 1000 schools at full scale. We aim to launch in our second country, Rwanda, next year, and to use our experience there as an R&D lab for learning how to best create impact through education reform.

Sustainability

**Financial Sustainability Plan: What is this solution's plan to ensure financial sustainability?**

Educate!'s long-term goal is inherently sustainable: we aim to incorporate our model into national education systems across Africa. We also drive sustainability through cost-effectiveness. Our cost is now \$125 per student, and we target \$63 at scale. Already at current costs, our ROI is 5.5.x in only 4 years! Finally, we have instituted a cost-sharing strategy that is rare among Ugandan NGOs: we ask schools to contribute an annual fee of \$200.

**Marketplace: Who else is addressing the problem outlined here? How does the proposed project differ from these approaches?**

Educate!'s solution differs from existing alternatives, such as Junior Achievement and Teach a Man to Fish, in three core ways: 1) Our solution is cost-effective, replicable, and designed for scale; 2) Our solution measurably impacts our Scholars' life outcomes. We set ourselves apart with our investment in monitoring and evaluation, including a randomized control trial. 3) Our solution is sustainable, targeting systems-level adoption in the long term and incorporating cost-sharing in the short and medium term. Our focus on sustainability is unique among organizations that operate in schools.

Team

**Founding Story**

Educate! was founded in 2002 as a scholarship program for Congolese refugees in Uganda, but the founders realized that even if every child in Uganda could attend secondary school, the mismatch between education and life after school would still prohibit students from escaping poverty. In 2008 as co-founder, I worked with partner organizations to design a skills-based education model that would empower secondary school youth to become leaders, entrepreneurs, and changemakers in their communities. That model – the Educate! Experience – was launched in 2009 and Educate! went on to win many awards, including the 2015 WISE Award for projects that address global educational challenges.

**Team**

Educate! is composed of 74 full-time staff and around 100 Mentor-Fellows. All are 100% focused on this project as the organization's core work. Key team members include: Executive Director Boris Bulayev, a co-founder who has run Educate! for 10 years and grew the organization from the ground up; Global Director of Programs Angelica Towne, also a co-founder who developed Educate!'s model and built operations on the ground from scratch; Country Director Sarah Kayondo, who has 15 years of management experience, most recently at Technoserve Uganda; Director of Policy and Partnerships Maggie Sheahan, who successfully managed our recent scale-up and government partnerships; and Program Director Hawah Nabbuye, an Acumen Fund East Africa Fellow who has worked for Educate! for 5+ years. Our team has already demonstrated the ability to successfully address challenges that arise as Educate! scales, growing more than 4x in 2014 alone. For example, as we scale, we face corresponding pressure on recruitment and retention of high performing field staff. To address this challenge, the team has built a pipeline strategy into our entire organization: most Mentors are graduates of our program and feed into a direct, long-term pipeline to senior leadership. In 2015, we continued to put this strategy into action by promoting our Deputy Country and Programs Directors, two of our Program Officers to newly-created Regional Officer positions, and several volunteer Mentors to full-time Youth Leaders. To support our current growth we are focused on hiring to expand our global team. We are in the final stages of hiring a Regional Operations and Finance Director to head up the logistics of the expansion. Our next step is to hire a Global Recruiting Team Lead to support our growing team needs to support Educate! as we scale our impact!

Background

**Please confirm how you heard about the Unilever Awards:**

Ashoka

**Please confirm your role in the initiative (eg Founder/co-Founder) and your organisational title:**

Co-Founder and Global Director of Programs

**Which of the 8 UN Global Goals (Sustainable Development Goals) pre-selected for this competition does your solution relate most closely to? [select all that apply]**

No Poverty, Decent Work and Economic Growth.

Leadership and the Unilever Awards

**Please provide examples of any previous entrepreneurial initiatives you have pioneered.**

I have build Educate! from the ground up, harnessing my motivation to use my education and opportunities to improve the lives of other youth around the world. Prior to working with Educate!, my passion turned into transformative action as I began to pilot youth programs in Jamaica and Ethiopia. I witnessed first-hand the substandard, factory-style schools in these communities and felt that the promise of education was being broken by low quality standards and a focus on examinations. I started Educate! with my cofounders based on the shared values of scale, sustainability, and the power of young people to change the world. I also adapted Educate!'s curriculum for use in the Uganda national curriculum and designed a new practical standardized examination, reaching 25,000 young people annually.

**Beyond your existing team, who else are you working with to achieve your objectives, eg partners, advisors, mentors?**

Educate!'s government partnerships are a core part of the government integration component of our model. The most important of those partnership are with the Uganda Ministry of Education (with which we have recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding) and Uganda's National Curriculum Development Center, which we worked with to incorporate our curriculum into the national entrepreneurship curriculum. As we expand, Educate! seeks to build additional high-level partnerships with other ministries and international entities that provide technical assistance to governments. We have just signed an MOU with the Rwanda Education Board, which we expect to kickstart our efforts to work and create impact in Rwanda. We also partner with STIR Education on design and implementation of the teacher-training component of our model.

I am currently participating in the Mulago Rainer Arnhold and the Global Good Fund Fellowship, where I gain access to other high-impact, sustainable organizations who are also working towards accelerating lasting social change and tackling the basic needs of the poor. My induction into a global network of high-potential changemakers gives Educate! access to incomparable learning opportunities, especially around issues of responsible, effective scaling, where the learnings from which are folded into our design.

**Source URL:** <https://www.changemakers.com/globalgoals2015/entries/educate>