



EDUCATE!

RIDING THE REFORM
WAVE TO SCALE UP YOUTH
ENTREPRENEURSHIP
IN UGANDA

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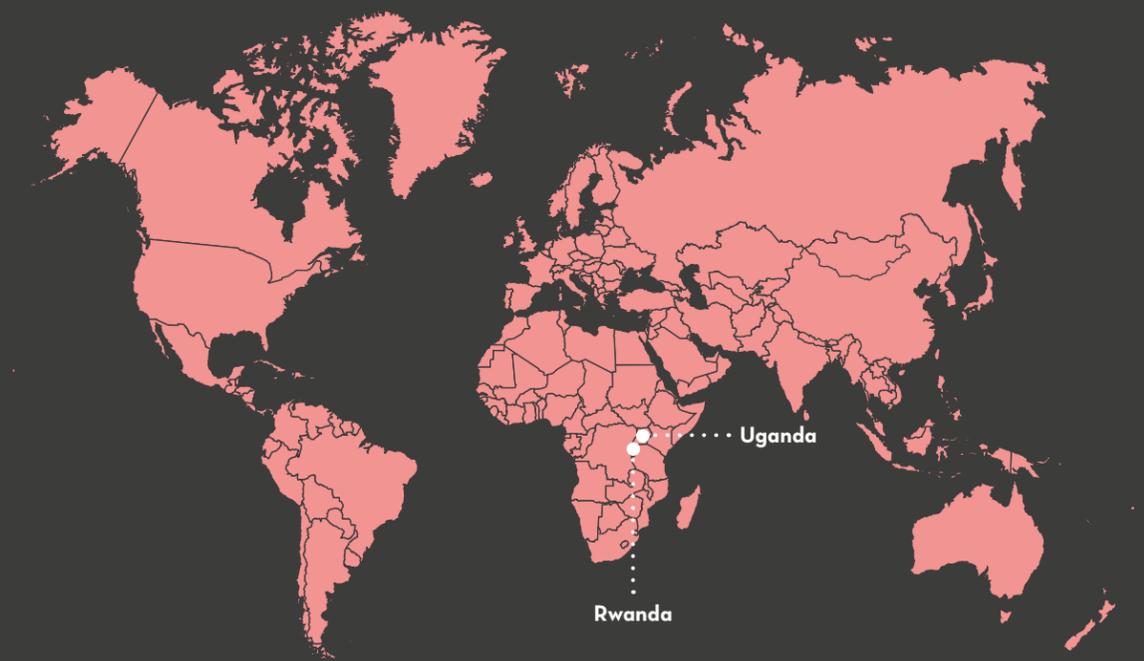
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Educate! at a glance

EDUCATION LEVEL:

Secondary



LOCATION:

Rwanda and Uganda

FOCUS OF INTERVENTION:

Leadership and entrepreneurship training for secondary school students and teacher training

INTERVENTION OVERVIEW:

The Educate! Experience (2009–present), implemented by Educate!—a U.S.-based nonprofit—is an experience-based education program that addresses the mismatch between education and employment opportunities in Uganda. The program focuses on three areas: student skills development, teacher training, and advising on national policy. Educate! Scholars, a select group of secondary school students, are provided with skills training in leadership, entrepreneurship, and workforce readiness, along with mentorship to start real businesses at school. The Educate! Experience program is delivered by young entrepreneurs, called Mentors. As part of their work in schools, Mentors are also engaged in a business accelerator program, where they receive advanced business support and capital for their enterprises. The teacher training intervention offered by Educate! provides teachers with practical training in student-centered teaching methods to help develop students' skills in critical thinking, problem solving, confidence building, and resource mobilization. A final component of Educate! activities includes advocating to high-level stakeholders for skills-based education methods to be integrated into Uganda's national education system, as well as in the education systems of other Sub-Saharan African countries.

TYPE OF LEARNING MEASURED:

20 performance indicators, including entrepreneurial activity, employment rate, average income, savings behavior, and soft skills such as creativity and self-efficacy

COST:

Total annual budget: \$2.3 million in revenue, and \$1.6 million in expenses in 2015. Average direct cost per school is \$4,000 (estimated to drop to \$2,500 at full scale). Cost per Educate! Scholar is \$100 (estimated to drop to \$63). Revenue comes from institutional foundations (40 percent), family foundations (40 percent), and individuals (20 percent).

SIZE:

Direct reach—More than 100,000 students per year (including 15,000 Scholars), in 380 government-run, private, and religious secondary schools in 24 districts of Uganda (more than 12 percent of the country's secondary schools). *Indirect reach*—In Uganda, 50,000 students annually, through the work of Educate! with the National Curriculum Development Center to improve the national entrepreneurship curriculum.

IMPACT:

For students—94 percent of first graduates have a business, job, or attend a university; there is a 64 percent increase in the number of students who have a business at the end of the program, compared with a control, and a 123 percent increase in students with a community project. The average income across all program graduates increased by 105 percent compared with a control. *National impact*—Educate! staff members have worked as technical advisers on curricular reform in Uganda and Rwanda. In both countries, these collaborations have resulted in the countries' education systems adopting components of the Educate! program and curriculum into their national education systems.

Background

The mismatch between what is taught in school and what skills are demanded by the labor market is far too common in many countries around the world. Perhaps no country faces this challenge more acutely than Uganda, which has the world's youngest population coupled with a youth unemployment rate as high as 62 percent (AAU, DRT, and UNNGOF 2012). The majority of jobs available are in the informal sector, placing youth in low-paid and highly vulnerable circumstances and still without suitable skills needed to improve their economic lives (Walther 2011). Exacerbating their positions of disadvantage, youth seeking to start their own enterprises are often denied access to credit or loans, which prevents them from creating opportunities for themselves—even if they have managed to acquire the necessary entrepreneurial skills (AAU, DRT, and UNNGOF 2012).

Underlying this reality is a skills gap fueled by a memorization-based education system that inadequately prepares youth for the challenges they will face upon graduating. Although the Ugandan government integrated entrepreneurship as an official subject of secondary schools in 2002, its curriculum has lacked a practical, hands-on dimension whereby students can gain

experience as entrepreneurs, create clear linkages with the private sector and thus circumvent barriers to entering it, and acquire valuable business skills through real-world experience (Educate! 2014a).

Responding to this reality in entrepreneurship education and development, in 2009 Eric Glustrom, Boris Bulayev, and Angelica Towne co-founded the Educate! Experience, a voluntary in-school program lasting 18 months during the final two years of secondary school to better support students in their transition from school to work. By teaching students the “21st-century business/employability skills” needed to start their own businesses (including grit, teamwork, social responsibility, business planning, project management, bookkeeping, and market research), the vision of Educate! was to transform Uganda's youth into successful entrepreneurs, employees, leaders, and social activists who could simultaneously tackle the country's youth unemployment problem while contributing to its economic development. At the heart of this was the goal to transform education in Uganda through experience-based learning and intensive mentoring, and to replicate this model across Africa.

The Educate! Experience

Educate! could not have emerged at a more opportune time in Uganda, whose Ministry of Education was on the cusp of reforming its curriculum in entrepreneurial education—something that it had not done

since 1962. Taking advantage of this policy moment, the co-founders of Educate! spent the years 2009-12 refining its model and generating evidence of its impact on graduates in order to demonstrate, first,

to early champions and, next, to the larger Ministry of Education that it had a response to the country's problems with secondary entrepreneurship education. Having identified where the skills gap between school and the labor market originated in Uganda, Educate! focused its interventions on shifting the dominant method of teaching (from rote memorization to experiential) and the content of entrepreneurship education (from highly theoretical to skills-based). It did so through two primary program areas: the Educate! Experience, for secondary school students and recent graduates; and Experience Associations for teachers, which are described in more detail below.

The Educate! Experience provides leadership and entrepreneurship training and mentorship to Ugandan youth at multiple levels. The core program of Educate! focuses on secondary school students, called Scholars. Educate! Scholars, the first level of youth involved in Educate!, are selected during their penultimate year of secondary school through a competitive application process that prioritizes gender balance, need, and interest in the program. Scholars gain experience starting an enterprise, such as liquid soap making or paper recycling, in a team setting through Student Business Clubs, which also include other students recruited by the Educate! Scholars. The Scholars are taught to develop business plans, manage businesses, and leverage available resources to solve local problems through these enterprises. After gaining experience with an enterprise in a group setting, the Scholars are encouraged to start personal enterprises (“back-home businesses”). They receive mentorship through the challenges they face starting these enterprises or community initiatives, as well as in their personal lives. During the

program, the Scholars also provide peer mentorship for lower-secondary-school students, the second level of youth reached through Educate! programming.

This program is delivered by trained Mentors, the third level of youth whom Educate! reaches. Each Mentor works with 120 Scholars across three schools (i.e., there are 40 Scholars per school) during the course of one and half years. They are trained in how to use student-centered methods and how to create positive learning experiences for students, and to teach Scholars a range of relevant topics, including financial literacy (with an emphasis on responsible borrowing and the risks presented by “debt cycles”), savings methods, positive leadership, and solving community problems. Over the years, Educate! has experimented with who serve as the best Mentors for the program. After realizing the value of Mentors who had personally started a business, Educate! began targeting young entrepreneurs, ranging from 19 to 25 years in age, to fill this role. As the program grew, Educate! moved away from a model that required full-time commitment from Mentors, allowing Mentors more time to work on their personal enterprises. In return for their work in schools, Educate! Mentors receive a 2-year fellowship, during which they participate in the Youth Business Experience, an Educate! program through which they receive advanced business support in the form of training and mentorship to help them accelerate their own businesses. The Mentors also receive capital injections as part of this fellowship, in addition to support when applying for business grants and loans. This model has enabled Educate! to attract Mentors with relevant experience, and has also allowed the program to scale up quickly.

Because much of the long-term success of the Educate! Experience rested on teachers, the Educate! leaders began to design a teacher intervention with the aim to have teachers deliver its model of skills-based education directly (Maggie Sheahan Appleton, interview by Jenny Perlman Robinson, December 11, 2015). The Educate! leaders believed that teachers must also be equipped to lead and design experience-based education programs for their schools in order for real system-level transformation to occur in Uganda and beyond. In turn, Educate! began to ask teachers to deliver the program's lesson plans in 2012, and it developed a practical teacher training component, called Experience Associations, to build teacher capacity and help them move away from a "cramming culture." Through Experience Associations, two teachers and one administrator from each partner school convened two to three times each term, creating communities of practice where they could learn from each other how to use interactive teaching methods and project-based learning, to facilitate group mentorship sessions, to make micro-innovations, to guide students through the practical experience of starting an enterprise, and to build support structures in their schools.

The original aim of Educate! was for Experience Associations to build a network of local champions for Educate! within each school and to offer pedagogical support for teachers delivering the Educate! Experience as an after school program. However, Educate! shifted away from using teachers in this way due to the added workload for teachers. Moreover, internal evaluations revealed that Mentors who were graduates of the program and young entrepreneurs were more

effective in delivering the lessons, and in modeling experience-based teaching methods for teachers to integrate into their classrooms. Nonetheless, Experience Associations remain a part of the Educate! programming model, specifically as a space in which to train teachers in the Ugandan government's new social entrepreneurial curriculum (discussed further below).

As Educate! refined its programming and delivery models, the organization eventually became laser-focused on five defining components: (1) working in formal secondary schools to leverage existing structures and systems; (2) a focus on leadership, workforce readiness, and entrepreneurial education; (3) a hands-on, experience-based approach; (4) a mentoring component; and (5) an open source curriculum. The final component is in reference to the desire of the organization's leadership to encourage greater adoption of its model by allowing "copylefters" to take and adapt its program to other countries. The Educate! leaders saw this as a strategic way to gain international allies who could help build support on the ground as the Educate! Experience expanded across borders.

With respect to working with partner schools in Uganda, Educate! began experimenting with charging schools a small fee for its program. After the first year, the leadership team of Educate! realized that full-cost recovery would be difficult. As one headmaster from a private school in Kampala (Uganda's capital) explained, there was a tipping point, where school leaders would decide that the fee was too high and seek out less-effective but cheaper options. Educate! pivoted on this idea and recently made a discounted fee more widely available to lower-income

schools. Nevertheless, its staff members still see value in the fee structure. It holds Educate! accountable to the schools, and ensures that the Educate! team takes seriously the idea of providing a program that schools see as valuable. If schools fail to pay the annual fee, the Educate! field team follows up to learn and understand why. In this regard, the fee is one of many indicators that Educate! uses to monitor the quality and relevance of its program across the hundreds of schools where it operates.

Finally, Educate! recognized early on that in order to achieve its desired impact, it also had to focus on systemic change, not just direct implementation. For example, after working with teachers for

more than five years, Educate! realized that teacher behavior change must be supported by national education reform. For Educate! the importance of creating an enabling environment for effective program implementation has meant collaborating with ministries of education and external allies like the International Labor Organization (ILO) to advocate for changes to the national curriculum, examinations, and teacher training. As with its philosophy about "copylefting," Educate! views its advocacy strategy as a way to ensure future that generations of students who do not have the opportunity to participate directly in its programming will still be able to leave school with the requisite skills needed to improve their lives.

Impact and evidence of success

As of 2016, Educate! operates across 24 districts of Uganda, reaching more than 100,000 students per year through its direct interventions in 350 public, private, and religious secondary schools (about 12 percent of secondary schools). Included in this reach are the 40 Educate! Scholars selected from each school to participate directly in Educate! training programs, the additional non-Educate! students who are recruited by the Scholars to join the Student Business Clubs, and the students reached through teachers who participated in Experience Associations. In addition to the 100,000 students affected in this way, an additional 25,000 students each year benefit from the Educate! method of skills-based education as a result of the program's advocacy work at the national level. Specifically, in 2012—after a close consultation with Educate!—

the Ministry of Education in Uganda rolled out a national upper-secondary, skills-based entrepreneurship curriculum that incorporated the Educate! evidence- and skills-based education methods. This allowed more students to be affected who did not have access to the program's direct implementation of its model. The program also successfully advised having the national exam in entrepreneurship changed to evaluate what students do in their Business Clubs and students' experience assessing markets, a shift that has greatly increased incentives for students to start businesses while in school. The impact of Educate! on the Ugandan educational ecosystem did not stop there. According to the Educate! leadership, since the 2012 educational reforms, Uganda has seen more experience-based learning emerging

in classrooms around the country, as well as a shift toward a more skills-based curriculum, with entrepreneurial education as one of eight core skills. As of 2013, 45 percent of Uganda’s secondary schools had incorporated Business Clubs (Kwesiga 2013).

In 2016, Educate! replicated its advocacy work in education systems change in Rwanda. After being invited by the Government of Rwanda in 2015 to serve as a technical adviser during the reform of the country’s upper-secondary-school curriculum, Rwanda’s Ministry of Education incorporated components of the Educate! model (specifically, the Skills Lab and Student Business Clubs) into the national entrepreneurship curriculum.¹ As in Uganda, Educate! will support Rwanda’s Ministry of Education in rolling out the new curriculum. With the potential to reach all secondary students across the country, Educate! projects that its reach will expand by 215,000 youth annually. A randomized, controlled trial—conducted in partnership with J-PAL, Innovations for Poverty Action, and a team of independent researchers—is planned to measure the impact of two years of teacher training to deliver the Educate! skills-based education program on youth livelihoods.²

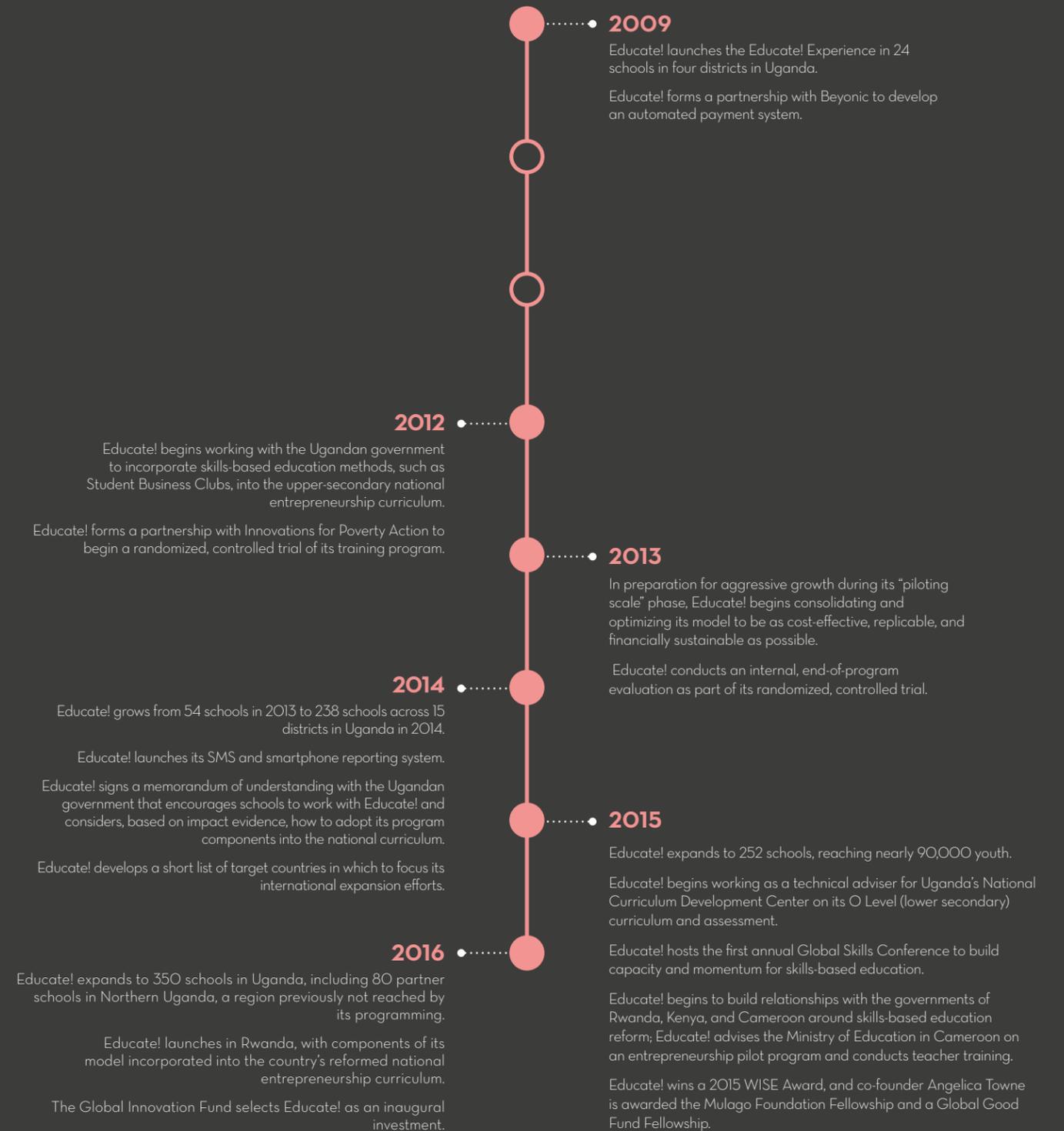
Outside Uganda, and now also Rwanda, the Educate! open source curricular materials have been “copylefted” by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in Africa, Asia, Australia, the Caribbean, Central America, Europe, the Middle East, North America, and South America (Educate! 2013).

With respect to its impact on learning, Educate! currently tracks 20 performance indicators for four target

outcomes on a weekly and trimesterly basis. Data are collected using SMS messaging, a smartphone system, and a soft skills assessment tool developed internally by the organization’s monitoring and evaluation team. The results have been substantial. Internal evaluations found that 94 percent of graduates from the first two classes run a business, hold a job, or attend a university, and that the more than 44 percent of graduates who have a business employ at least one other person. Results from a randomized, controlled trial designed in partnership with Innovations for Poverty Action found that Educate! students scored 3 and 4 percent higher on creativity and self-efficacy, respectively, scored 20 percent higher on savings behavior, were 64 percent more likely to own their own businesses, and were 123 percent more likely to have led a community project than the control group (Educate! 2014a). Overall, Educate! students earned double the income of their peers (\$338 per year, compared to \$165 per year for the control group), which, at current costs of \$100 per student, amounts to a return on investment of nearly 5.5 times in 4 years.³

The impact of Educate! on girls has been even more profound, with a 120 percent increase in income among the program’s female Scholars (\$200 more per year than their peers), a 152 percent increase in business ownership, and a doubling of leading a community project, compared with a control group (Educate! 2014b, 2015). And the program’s female students also scored 7 percent higher and 5 percent higher than control females on creativity and self-efficacy, respectively (Educate! 2014a).

Timeline of key events



Key drivers behind scaling impact

How did Educate! achieve such exceptional growth across Uganda, expanding as much as four times in one year, and making such a significant on its youth participants? The Educate! leadership believes that in order to successfully scale up, it is critical to get the “nitty-gritty” operational questions right (i.e., How will we manage cash flow between the office and the field? How will we communicate to a team spread across an entire country?) (Bulayev, Towne, and Appleton 2016). This case study reveals that key strategic decisions by Educate! were also factors in its success.

First, Educate! had good timing, tapping into both a growing demand

by youth for more relevant, skills-based entrepreneurship education and the government’s recognition that it was high time to reform its entrepreneurship curriculum. In addition, the program was able to surpass its competitors due to its deliberate scaling-up strategy. This included designing for scaling up from the outset, holding replicability and cost-efficiency as the measuring stick of progress in its direct implementation, and taking advantage of urgent policy opportunities within the national education system to catalyze systems-level change. Also part of its scaling-up strategy was pacing the scaling-up process, investing in tracking and analyzing impact, and leveraging technology for back office improvements.

Designing for scaling up from the outset

From the beginning, Educate! piloted with impact at scaling up in mind. Having been inspired early on by a visit to India to learn from the experiences of other large NGOs—including Pratham, Make a Difference, and Kaivalya Education Foundation—the Educate! leaders identified a scaling-up plan that would allow them to pace the scaling-up process in periods of aggressive growth without sacrificing quality. This plan involved breaking down the country into geographic clusters of 150 to 200 partner schools, with each cluster run as a self-contained unit by its own management and operational system. In the first year of “piloting scale” (2014), Educate! operated two units at nearly full capacity with the

triple aim of quality-testing its model at full scale (within Uganda), driving costs down, and reaching 120,000 youth by the end of 2016. Designing the Educate! Experience at scale in this way also enabled the Educate! leadership to identify and solve challenges with its model early on. Through a process of rigorous evaluation and improvement, Educate! could thus “work out the kinks up-front” and then focus on replicating the model, unit by unit (Bulayev, Towne, and Appleton 2016). The goal was to reach at least 1,000 schools across the country at full scale (or about 25 percent of secondary schools in Uganda), and to follow this approach country by country to reach 1 million youth annually across Sub-Saharan Africa by 2024.

Educate! was also open to scaling up its impact indirectly by allowing other organizations to “copyleft” its curriculum and adapt it to other contexts. Making its curriculum open source from the beginning meant that it could focus on developing content and programming for its targeted recipients (secondary school youth, first in Uganda, and then also in other African

countries) and leave other organizations to serve other populations of youth in need (i.e., out-of-school youth). This enabled Educate! to concentrate its efforts and resources on improving the quality of its program design and implementation, and not to overreach by expanding to other populations that may need a different set of interventions or approaches.

Planning for economies of scale

Designing for scaling up at the start also requires controlling costs from the start. For example, the cost of the Educate! direct implementation model is, on average, \$4,000 per school (projected to decrease to \$2,500 at full scale), and the cost per Educate! Scholar is about \$100 (projected to drop to \$63 at full scale). Although Educate! began to follow a cost-recovery model, whereby it charged schools a sliding fee to participate in its programs, the organization soon discovered that this was not an effective model to grow revenue, because it was often more expensive and time-consuming to try to secure payments from schools than what the fees actually helped to recover. Instead, though Educate! still collects a modest fee to support accountability, the program has ensured its financial sustainability by experimenting with a range of cost-optimizing approaches—including a growing marketplace for national youth workforce readiness education reform support; scaling up directly through the government (where the one-time cost of a technical advisory is estimated at \$300 per school); redesigning the Mentor role as a stipend fellowship rather than a full-time, salaried position; and planning well-calculated economies of scale.

The last approach has been particularly important, given that planning for economies of scale means considering at the beginning what any new addition or innovation to the program might cost when provided to 500 schools versus 1,000 schools, or to 500,000 students versus 1 million students. If the addition is too expensive at full scale, then Educate! does not introduce the addition. Indeed, leveraging economies of scale has been central in planning for the scaling up of Educate! because it promises to reduce costs per school or per student as Educate! grows. For example, one of its biggest expenses is currently printing. To run the Educate! Experience, the organization prints more than 20,000 student materials (i.e., passbooks and business portfolios) per year. Educate! could not move to digitize its materials due to uneven access to technology in schools. But printing in house was too costly. However, once Educate! reaches its full scale, the costs of printing will be lower, especially if the work is outsourced to offsite printers. To illustrate, Educate! may pay 3 cents (100 Ugandan shillings) per page to print 2,000 booklets, but only 2 cents (60 Ugandan shillings) per page if it prints 10,000

booklets. In this way, reaching an economy of scale is the only viable way to make the cost per student decrease

Riding the reform wave

As mentioned above, the Educate! long-term vision of reaching 10 million children has been supported by its two-pronged approach to scaling up its model: at the school level by working with students and building the capacity of teachers, and at the policy level by advocating for more 21st-century, skills-based education. Although both have been key to affecting systemic change, the organization's ability to strategically seize key opportunities to promote large-scale change has had a particularly strong impact.

In 2012 in Uganda, for instance, Educate! was invited to contribute to the national entrepreneurship curriculum and assessment framework. However, this was not an overnight process. Taking advantage of an opportunity in government reform entailed building evidence of impact, establishing a proof of concept, and reducing program costs over the course of several years, in addition to nurturing key high-level relationships within the Ugandan government and international institutions. One key player in the process was the ILO, which was supporting upper-secondary reforms in Uganda at the time. Noticing the immediate results Educate! had on its graduates, the ILO invited the Educate! leaders to join conversations with the Ugandan National Curriculum Development Center (NCDC) on the curricular reform process. Because the Educate! program

(personal communication, Maggie Sheahan Appleton and Jenny Perlman Robinson, November 25, 2014).

was tailored to the Ugandan youth population, created a visible impact, and included methods that addressed issues of rote-based memorization, Educate! was poised to advise the government on its national curriculum. Through this process, Educate! recommended the inclusion of Student Business Clubs as a required component of entrepreneurship education. Its staff members also worked with the NCDC to draft the Social Entrepreneurship curricula that would be implemented at the national level. Finally, Educate! advised the NCDC on methods that assessed students' experience. As a result, students are now examined on their work in the Business Clubs.

With at least 10 other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa going through some type of skills-based secondary education reform process, Educate! plans to replicate its strategy by leveraging reform efforts that align with its model in at least three other countries within the next few years. What is important to this strategy is how Educate! fits into the country's vision for secondary education, as building a parallel structure would be a waste of energy and resources. Already, Educate! has begun to advance this work in system-level change. Beginning in 2015, Educate! served as a technical adviser to the Government of Rwanda during its curriculum reforms of secondary education. With the stated goal of developing a competency-

based curriculum, the Rwandan Ministry of Education benefited from assistance from Educate! in shaping its national entrepreneurship curriculum, adapting

and integrating components of the Educate! model in the process. In 2016, Educate! will help to support the ministry in its rollout and implementation.⁴

Prioritizing monitoring, evaluation, and learning

Monitoring and evaluation have been high priority areas for Educate!—especially for generating the evidence of impact needed to win over early champions of its program and later for working with government partners. Currently, 10 percent of the Educate! budget is dedicated to monitoring and evaluation. This includes tracking 20 different indicators on weekly and trimesterly intervals, and conducting baselines at the beginning of the school year followed by surveys at the end of the school year, and two years after students conclude the program. Educate! also conducted, with the baseline designed and implemented by Innovations for Poverty Action, a randomized controlled trial in 48 schools between 2012 and 2013 in order to more systematically evaluate the impact of its education and training programs on students' livelihood improvement, community participation, and 21st-century skills (Educate! 2014a). In 2016, work is under way with J-PAL and IPA on another randomized controlled trial in Rwanda to further test and refine its model.

To reduce the costs involved in collecting frequent monitoring data and to improve the turnaround time between data collection, analysis, and learning, Educate! developed and launched in 2014 an SMS and smartphone data collection and reporting system for rapid program monitoring. This was particularly

important as Educate! grew across great distances into remote parts of Uganda, and the costs of collecting data at such frequent intervals would have been highly prohibitive, not to mention inefficient in terms of both time and resources. Using text messaging and smartphone surveys, field staff could easily provide information from any of Educate! program schools to a central, web-based dashboard that updated information about the program's impact in real time, allowing program leaders to cost-effectively and efficiently monitor performance and impact at scale while managing quality control. In 2016, Educate! made components of its dashboard publicly available on its website, allowing stakeholders and others interested in the organization to explore the program's data and to track its progress and impact.⁵

Educate! also built its own tool to rapidly measure and evaluate progress made in developing students' "21st-century and business/employability skills," like leadership, creativity, grit, self-efficacy, and savings behavior, to name a few—skills that youth had reported as being important to their success after leaving school. Inspired by Pratham's ASER, the Educate! Secondary Skills Assessment Tool (SSAT) was developed in response to the need to demonstrate the Educate! Experience's impact not just on students' entrepreneurial activity or income but also on their soft skills and hard skills

development. Such a tool did not exist for the Sub-Saharan African context, which made it difficult to track progress over time. The SSAT is continuously refined, based on adjustments made to the program. It has also played an important role for the organization as it has adapted its model for scaling up, indicating to leaders whether the organization was on track in terms of progress and impact, enabling it to respond quickly when and where needed, and helping to maintain quality control (personal communication, Maggie Sheahan Appleton and Jenny Perlman Robinson, February 24, 2016). In line with its “copylefting” philosophy, the SSAT is open source for other organizations to use.

Finally, Educate! integrated into its operations regular time for learning through Build-Measure-Learn Loops, a feedback mechanism used by many start-up enterprises around the world to test new ideas or program innovations. As a testament to its commitment to improve its program design and implementation and to analyze impact

Leveraging technology

As is evident in the section above, technology has been one of the biggest drivers behind the scaling up of Educate!—in particular, by building its back office support. As mentioned above, leveraging technological innovations like an SMS and smartphone data collection system enabled Educate! to better manage and monitor its programs in real time, leading to shorter response times between the implementation of an intervention and critical feedback into the program.

every trimester, Educate! built a new or different programmatic or operational component into its model—and ran projections of its costs at scale—measured its impact, and then learned from the results. Combined with the organization’s measuring sticks of replicability and cost-efficiency, this iterative learning process encouraged it to be honest about the trade-offs involved with going to full scale, leading it to make rapid course corrections and/or incremental cost- and efficiency-saving adjustments to the model based on the results of each loop. For example, Educate! modified its curriculum so that it could be delivered in 15 months rather than 18 months, it began to use existing infrastructure at partner schools, and it leveraged the role of teachers to support students in the annual business plan competition. Build-Measure-Learn Loops helped to cut out time typically wasted between implementation, learning, and program improvement, and enabled Educate! to better tailor its model to the demands of students and the labor market (Educate 2014b).

Another technological innovation that has proven to be instrumental in the ability of Educate! to scale up was its move to automate its payment system. In particular, mobile money helped Educate! reduce its transportation expenses and the cost of operating in cash, major organizational expenses that Educate! could not initially get around. For example, in order to recruit new partner schools, field staff needed to travel hours by bus from their work sites to the main office in Kampala in order to

receive their salary payments or to pick up the money needed to continue project expansion efforts. Educate! Mentors had to travel the same distances in order to pick up their stipends. Not only was this a huge inconvenience every two weeks, but it was also very costly. Educate! not only paid for the bus fares of its field staff and Mentors, but also for meals, accommodation, and per diem, while program staff were in Kampala. This was not a scalable model, especially because the organization planned for rapid growth. As Educate! began to scale

Hiring the right people

Much of the success of Educate! has been attributed to getting the right people involved in its organization. Its staff is largely made up of young people who are themselves highly entrepreneurial, highly committed, flexible, and able to adapt to a fast-changing and dynamic environment, energetic, creative, and can relate easily to customers. Educate! has also established a very clear pipeline for talent: star Educate! graduates become Mentors, and star Mentors become youth leaders and program officers. The challenge, however, will be to maintain the program’s robust culture as it scales up and expands to new countries. This is especially important

up, Beyonic, a mobile money platform, approached the organization to begin using its new product. Educate! was able to recommend additional features that would make the platform more user-friendly, and Beyonic’s service resulted in enormous cost and time savings for Educate!—by 33 percent and 20 percent, respectively.⁶ And from the time saved using the mobile money platform instead of traveling to the capital, recruiters were able to double the number of schools they reached during a recruiting period, and Mentors were able to hold more classes.⁷

as the organization continues to grow and requires its staff to be both nimble visionaries and resourceful administrators. Although the leaders of Educate! have recognized the importance of getting the culture of the organization just right from the start, hiring at the rate of two new employees per month, plus all its Mentors in the field every two years, has meant that the organization is getting less face-to-face time. Technology can be leveraged to help facilitate the internal operations of a larger Educate! But its greatest challenge lies on the road ahead: whether it can grow enough leaders to handle the complexities of international growth.

Lessons learned

- Rather than beginning with a gold-plated model that was prohibitively expensive to scale, Educate! *considered financial sustainability and scale from the outset*. This focus enabled Educate! to optimize the replicability and cost-effectiveness of its program design and implementation model, as well as to pace its scaling-up process in incremental bursts of experimentation, learning, and adjustment.
- Also, its attention to *leveraging economies of scale* enabled Educate! to think strategically about what costs would decrease with the growth of the program.
- Educate! followed a two-pronged approach to scaling up impact by focusing on both *direct implementation* and *system-level change*. The former enabled the organization to develop the entrepreneurial skills and experiences of individual students—and to experiment with and demonstrate the impact of its model—as well as to develop the capacity of schools to deliver experiential, skills-based education. The latter facilitated deeper transformational change in teaching methods and curricular content within the national education system.
- The decision by Educate! to open source its curricular materials enabled it to *build a network of allies* among “copylefters,” who may be a key in the organization’s future plans for expansion to other countries in Africa. This move also allowed the organization to focus on its niche—secondary schools and youth—and not to fall under pressure to expand to out-of-school youth, overreaching beyond its organization’s capacity and mission.
- The success of Educate! in Uganda was due in part to its *“riding the reform wave”* and in part by its *nurturing of key high-level relationships* within the government and with international institutions like the ILO. The latter made possible the invitation to Educate! to join conversations with government on the secondary education reform process, which resulted in the institutionalization of Student Business Clubs and Social Entrepreneurship into the national system.
- *Investing in tracking and analyzing impact* were key during the initial years of development and refinement by Educate!—especially for demonstrating impact and winning over local champions early on. Prioritizing monitoring and evaluation within the

organization’s budget also provided an incentive to innovate and develop a soft skills assessment, as well as cost-effective monitoring tools to collect data more efficiently. Now the organization is able to collect real-time data on 20 different performance indicators consistently and regularly, providing the Educate! leaders with timely information on the implementation and impact of their programs.

- The ability of Educate! to *integrate technology* into its back office operations enabled the organization to leverage existing innovations, like mobile money platforms, and to develop new ones, like its SMS data collection system, in ways that drove costs down while simultaneously enhancing program delivery, management, and monitoring. At times, this also meant *forming partnerships with other organizations*, like Beyonic, where it lacked the resources or experience to develop technology.
- Although Educate! has established a clear pipeline for talent within its own organizational structure, it faces a *human resources and management challenge* as it expands across Uganda and internationally. It must continue to hire the right talent, balancing an entrepreneurial spirit with the management skills required.

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Endnotes

1. See <http://www.experienceeducate.org/all-blog/2016/3/31/educate-launches-in-rwanda>.
2. See <http://www.globalinnovation.fund/investments/educate>.
3. See <http://www.experienceeducate.org/different/>.
4. See <http://www.experienceeducate.org/blog/2016/3/31/educate-launches-in-rwanda>.
5. See <http://www.experienceeducate.org/dashboard/>.
6. See <http://beyonic.com/2014/01/24/educate-changing-lives-transforming-education-now-with-mobile-payments/>.
7. In addition, by offering to train other NGOs in using Beyonic's mobile money system, Educate! was able to negotiate a reduction in the cost of Beyonic's commission from 3.5 to 1.5 percent, saving the organization even more money.

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