

# Educate *for* Life

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### 1.0 beginnings

Educate for Life is a new concept in charity and third world development. Set up and run by two friends at university, Ash Patel and Ed Forrest met at University College London in 2003 and although they did not know it yet both shared a common dream of building a school in India. It was not until nearly two years later in May 2005 that they discovered their common interest. At this point they swore to raise £5000 by the end of the next academic year with which to build a school in India, hire a teacher and open it to children.

Through their ideas of how a school should work and their determination to leave a positive impact on the world, Educate for Life was conceived. A dogma created to seed provision of education to impoverished people in developing countries the world over. Educate for Life are an encouragement of independent thought and living, a freedom of life provided through empowerment by education, from the most basic level right to the very top, in academia, art, politics, environment and all aspects of life that are important.

Education is necessary to understand circumstances and formulate a successful way solve problems, evolve in thought and progress in life. Schools provide this and an important stable environment for children to rely on when other aspects of their lives are prone to fluctuation or disruption. The problem faced by so many is too few schools to support the number of children, or an inaccessibility to schooling due to financial, physical or political restraints upon the child. Educate for Life are taking schools to where there are none, giving it to those who cannot afford it, encouraging those that feel they cannot do it and in short, making sure that as many children as possible get an education for life.

Our schools will teach children with great assiduity about art, culture and politics. They will teach them of the state of the world and what they can do about it. Starting in their communities, these children grow and prosper to shape their own future. Any child associated with Educate for Life either currently or before has the full benefit of all our time, energy and experience to get the boost that they need to excel in life.

Although we are based in the West, Educate for Life does not believe in teaching Western ways to communities that are not ready or don't want them. In fact we think it inappropriate to prescribe foreign culture on other people when opportunity should be given to find their own way in life. Our schools will be owned and managed by members of the local community that believe in the concept of Educate for Life as we do, but encouraged to teach in a way that underlines the importance of their local community in the hope that the children will go on to be outstanding members within it, helping to raise it away from the grips of poverty. It is power in the hands of responsible locals that will change the desperation that so many people in developing countries face, not power in the hands of the West, or in the hands of the corrupt.

## 2.0 vision

Educate for life is more than just a person, or a group of people; it is a vision and a dream that is brought to life, lives and breathes through all people that work or are involved with us.

Our philosophy is one of organic growth and development of humanity and the human conscience. We wish to build schools because the children of today are the leaders of tomorrow. Through education impoverished people can learn to live more prosperous and harmonious lives, not just in this generation but in generations to come. Educate for Life aims to bring communities out of poverty, but without sabotaging the futures of other people, or our world. It hopes that the people benefiting from our work develop a culture of giving, so that the idea may spread and self-propagate. Educate for Life is the world's only open source charity, everything that we do in creating schools is documented and freely available to those that wish to take education to anywhere, everywhere, in the world.

By doing this Educate for Life aim to create a global network of schools working together in the world in all developing and developed areas. A network that unites people so they can work in concord to bring about a change in all their lives, a change for the better. It is by working together that a real revolution can be achieved, and it is by knowing one another that boundaries are broken and acceptance instigated.

It is key in the development of a community to understand where it currently is and why changing it may be beneficial. And who knows better about an area than someone who grew up there. It is the children of Educate for Life that will be tomorrow's leaders and the ones that will be instrumental in taking their communities out of poverty. By allowing them a balanced view of the world and their community and all the skills necessary they can achieve this themselves, without need for external intervention.

In addition to the responsibility to our children, Educate for Life takes on an ecological responsibility in acknowledging that it is a consumer of resources and products. Although this is unavoidable Educate for Life will endeavour to take as environmentally friendly an approach as possible, where able using renewable energy sources for its schools, adopting sustainable practice and remaining neutrality in its net use of atmospheric carbon. Much of our buildings will be constructed of natural, renewable products, we have a target of 100% solar electricity, the most advanced energy conserving methods are employed in reducing fuel consumption in cooking and heating, and these are taught to local people so that the whole area can benefit.

Building schools is not our be all and end all; they are the cornerstones in our ideology of giving, of promoting understanding between people, of making change and making change last.

### **3.0 target**

By the end of 2006 our first school will be under construction in Uttar Pradesh, India, opening by spring 2007. It will be able to accept 60 students from the surrounding area, employ 5 teachers, one maintenance person, and a gardener. It will have capacity to accept up to two volunteers at a time who will be able to help with general upkeep and assist in the classrooms, as well as teaching specialist subjects. School One will be expanded during 2007 and each year after that to accept a further 40 students and 2 - 4 teachers per year so that by the end of 2010 the school will have 11 year groups each with 20 students ranging from 4 – 16, thus providing a full education. Concurrently we aim to open one extra school a year for the first two years then two schools a year after that for the next 5 years so that by 2010 there will be at least 860 children in seven Educate for Life schools.

### **4.0 core curriculum**

As with any school, ours follow a basic core curriculum in order to teach our children basic practical and theoretical skills. Fundamentally, it will be based around the government curriculum of the country in question. We will include English within our core curriculum, since it has become a necessity in the world to be able to communicate - an essential part of breaking down boundaries and promoting harmonious living.

In addition to the core curriculum that will give our children the basic foundations and qualifications to enable them to achieve their goals, our curriculum will have a special focus on the local area. With a syllabus tailored to the local community, its language, culture and needs we hope to give our children the tools required to understand the situation of their community and what steps can be taken to make a tangible change in the quality of life in their own people, in an environmentally friendly and ethical way.

Although our curriculum has a focus on the local issues of the school children, we would not be happy to stop there. The personal and local issues can only be set into perspective when there is an understanding of the wider world and the underlying themes of global politics, trade and such like that have contributed to the local situation that exists. With this in mind a wider education encompassing national and global subject matter will be included.

All-in-all Educate for Life aims to bring a holistic education to our children without trying to apply Western methods to non-western people. By building on our core curriculum we aim to give our children more than a basic level of education, equipping them with an understanding of local issues first and foremost and then wider agendas.

Educate for Life understands that education doesn't stop with school, but continues throughout one's life. People never stop learning. As a consequence it is not just children that need support but all people, old or young, rich or poor. It is for this reason that we make two commitments. The first is that the children who go through our schools not only have our full support while they're in school, but throughout their lives - we will always be there to facilitate their progression. Our second commitment is to the people of the local communities. The schools are not only for our students, but for all people in the surrounding area. We will run free workshops and community initiatives during vacations and concurrent with schooling, using the schools as the hubs in the community from which these activities take place.

## 5.0 education

In 1986 India made a National Policy on Education declaration, in which it was stated that 'primary schools with >100 pupils [should be] given a third teacher under decentralisation scheme'. This means that there are schools in India with class sizes over 50 students, and in reality it is often many more. This is not a good learning environment, it is hard for the teacher to control so many children and some teachers resort to corporal physical control of the students. As physical abuse is in stark contrast to the running of Educate for Life, this is totally unacceptable. As is the class size. This is just one of the many short-comings, and one that we will change by working there. In India there are also a large number of children that are not attending school be this for physical, financial or political reasons. We aim to reach these children so that they too have the opportunity of an excellent start to life. It is our aim to provide a learning environment that will allow the brightest children to reach their full potential. We aim to establish exchanges between our schools and schools in the UK, so each child has can learn about his fellow's culture, and between our own schools in different parts of the country and internationally.

Diversity of views in education is important, so we have a minimum level of three teachers. This gives the children a greater scope, access to teachers with higher subject specificity and better area knowledge. It also creates a better working atmosphere for the teachers so they can work more happily and more productively and to create a circle of senior members for the children to learn from and respect.

More teachers also means more pupils can be taught, allowing better social learning for the kids, a greater sense of pride in the school, and of course we are trying to reach as many children as possible.

Within current rural schools in India it is not uncommon for teachers to be the ones absent from school, so the greater teacher numbers means a greater sense of responsibility for the teachers and pride in their work, and the impact on the children is less if a teacher is absent for any reason. It means that the children will get school every day and will never need go home early. It also means that a self auditing system matures so that if one teacher act in a way not acceptable by Educate for Life then it is known early and can be resolved quickly. Having said that all our teachers have to go through a strict auditing first. Without knowing about Educate for Life and all that we aim to represent and do, then our communities are no different to any other. With this in mind, we are confident that we will never have a member that will be able to let us down.

## 6.0 specific objectives

In every Educate for Life community we aim to:

Provide full time education for the 4 – 16 year old age group.

Provide employment opportunities to the local community.

Empower local people.

Give equal opportunities for both genders, and actively work in encouraging girls to school.

Alleviate poverty on a local scale.

Create a national and international network of schools.

Create a stable environment for school attendees to rely on.

Promote environmentally friendly methods within the community.

## 7.0 building schools

The cost of a simple school is £1200, and just £400 a year to pay for one teacher and books for 20 children. It is of great importance to ensure that this money is being generated consistently to keep the school running once set up, this is done through a number of fundraising and sponsorship schemes.

Whilst the cash is being obtained, we research the school location. When deciding where to build a new site there are a number of key considerations that we take into account:

Drawing from personal experiences and socioeconomic maps we ascertain which countries have areas that are in need of extra schools. There are many countries in the world with an educatory deficit, so we decided the first school is to be in India based on personal knowledge and experience of areas within the country, and an awareness of the short-coming of its education system.

India is a large nation with 18 official languages, 58 taught in schools and newspapers in 87 different ones. Language is a good indicator of different societies, where different communication has had time to evolve, as has culture. Following a decision of which country to put a school in, then which area, thorough research is conducted into the ways and needs of the locality so the school can be tailored to the people which it serves.

A decision was made to build the school in Uttar Pradesh, a state in Northern India, bordering Nepal, Delhi, and another of other states. It plays home to the Taj Mahal and Sarnath (Varanasi), the pilgrimage site for all Hindus, as well as being the spiritual home of Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Mahavira, Ashoka, Harsha, Akbar and Mahatma Gandhi. It is larger in area than England, and home to over 160 million people. With so many people in such a small area in a developing country there are inevitable areas of neglect. Uttar Pradesh is one of the financially poorest states in India, and has female literacy levels of only 42.98%. The Education for All monitoring report, published by United Nation's education body UNESCO, found equal access to schooling for girls remains a distant prospect in 54 countries, one of them being India. A global report released in Delhi in 2003 stated that most developing countries are discriminating against girls, and a target set in 2000 of equal enrolment by 2005 has yet to be realised. With this in mind Uttar Pradesh is a good state to start building our schools due to a great necessity for them there.

Once an area has been chosen we contact the local government of the area, the education authority and existing educational and non-educational charities that work in the area. Between the three we can find out with a greater level of resolution which areas are most in need of another school, which might benefit most from another school, information about specific areas and their education targets, where other schools have already been planned and other information that will guide us to making the correct decision about where to put our school. Contacting existing charities is key as it prevents duplication of labour and we can draw on their contacts in the area which greatly decrease the time it takes from deciding where to build and actually putting those first foundations in.

## 8.0 involvement

Educate for Life aims to raise awareness of the plight of the people that we aim to help as much as we aim to help the people themselves. It is by knowing about a situation that people are more likely to act to change it. By getting people involved with Educate for Life we can personally touch people and inspire them to make steps to make a change. It also means that we can create a division of labour within the group so greater things can be achieved in a shorter time, helping more people and raising more awareness.

Our long term vision could never become a reality without taking things in a logical and thought-out way. We have created a set of short-term goals for people to get involved in, so that time commitment to the Educate for Life is more flexible, making it more available to volunteers, and by setting short-term goals there is a greater sense of achievement and with it a greater impetus to do more.

Our immediate aim is to raise £5000 by May 2006 to fund the building of our first school. Of course, we don't want to

stop there - that is just to get us on our way! The easiest way to help the charity is to donate money. Although we don't like asking for money, it is a necessary evil and without it we could not operate.

We also have an awareness raising organization pack that is sent out to people around the country and world upon request. It contains promotional materials to advertise the charity and instructions of who to talk to when planning an event, as well as information that will facilitate the awareness campaign. It is designed to not have to take a lot of work, be fun yet be efficiently helpful in increasing awareness of our charity and the plight of peoples around the world. Our awareness events are useful in two ways, it both raises the profile and spread of Educate for Life and reaches more people who previously would be unaware of many of the difficulties that people in developing countries face.

In addition we have fundraising packs available for distribution. It achieves everything the awareness raising organization pack does, but also raises the all important funds for the schools. We have two separate systems rather than just the fundraising pack as it underlines the fact that Educate for Life aims to be an awareness raiser as much it does a fundraiser.

We are also setting us a scheme for people that want to be involved with Educate for Life as much as they are able, and we encourage people to become a fully integrated and valued member of the team. This involves campaigning to MPs about Educate for Life, applying for corporate sponsorship, and assisting in the day to day running of the charity. Everyone is welcome, and we want everyone to be involved. We always listen to new thoughts and suggestions and act upon the good ones so Educate for Life is constantly adapting and evolving in its environment to remain as resourceful and innovative as when it started.

Once the first school is built then we will launch our overseas voluntary service. People from around the world will be encouraged to fly to where our schools are built and help in the classroom, with general maintenance and school expansion through manual labour and liaising with local governors and officials. We will also have a team of people who will go out into the surrounding area to tell people about Educate for Life and encourage their involvement. We will ask the locals for their thoughts and suggestions and make real efforts to take into account their wishes and run the school in a way that they can understand and are happy with.

## 9.0 sociology

The levels of literacy in India are at times atrocious. In rural areas of Rajasthan, female literacy rates are as low as 12%, with only 30% of both boys and girls completing education until they are 14. There are already systems in place for increasing these levels, such as the Lok Jumbish Project (The People's Movement) which concentrates of putting girls from illiterate families into school through an intensive six month program so they may successfully integrate into modern schooling. However more still needs to be done, only 30% of children in Rajasthan have access to education facilities within 10 km, and these are largely in urban areas with rural areas facing a large amount of neglect due to the dispersed nature of the settlements.

Like the girls of Rajasthan, there are children in India that have never, nor their parents, experienced schooling. Despite the official decree that castes no longer exist, there is still very clear evidence to suggest otherwise. If people are to move forward then they must work together. In Educate for Life schools caste, gender and ability are irrelevant, everyone gets an equal opportunity. It is important for us to understand the culture of a community and indeed we do embrace them, but only if it does not hold back the progression of the children and the community as a whole.

One of the most crucial aspects to a successful education, and indeed life, is stability. Without a stable platform it would be almost impossible to make any real and lasting progress. That is why it is our commitment to provide our children with a stable environment in which to learn, grow and flourish. No matter what else changes in and throughout their lives, Educate for Life will always be there and our doors will always be open. While in school the children can be assured of safety, a functional support network, love and affection, and a nutritious diet (as well as an education).

To provide protection for our children we have a Child Protection Policy. It has been written in view to creating a network which acts as an auditing system against any possible harm to the children, and also as an alert system so that if there should be any concerns they are raised quickly and can be dealt with immediately.