



## Exponential Education

### From Humble Beginnings

April 2014

Just 4 years ago, Exponential Education started in the backyard of my professor's house, Dr. Kate Adoo Adeku. After a lot of hands-on grassroots mobilization and talking to headmasters and teachers, we managed to get 20 students together as our first class. For 10 weeks, these 20 students gathered in Dr. Kate's backyard twice a week and eagerly awaited their peer sessions – led by 4 brilliant high school students from their community. Since then, our organization has grown in depth and scale.

Today, we welcome new staff who will lead Exponential Education and spearhead our new initiatives and programs. Our philosophy has always been to target the best talent: Young graduates from the best universities who crave challenges, thrive in unfamiliar environments and love to work on the grassroots level. We not only give them training and resources to equip them to lead Exponential programs, we prepare them to act as ambassadors of change, preparing them for their next step, be it at a larger NGO or a leading graduate school. This month, we will be welcoming a new Operational Director and Site Manager, along with 3 new volunteers. We will also be welcoming a team of graduate students from the University of Texas at Austin's LBJ School of Public Affairs. They will be leading our first impact evaluation this summer alongside two Ghanaian university students.

We will be launching a formal monitoring and evaluation system using rigorous methods to measure the impact of our programs at the junior high and high school levels of students. We will be collecting both quantitative and qualitative data to measure the impact of our tutoring, our curriculum, our materials, our stipends, our scholarships and see how these interventions change student motivations and future aspirations.

The future of Exponential Education is extremely bright. Within the next two years, we plan to expand our social venture Expo Tutoring Center to all major cities within Ghana. Each tutoring center will correspond and fund at least 4 Exponential Education programs in each area.

Hopefully, within 3 years, we will be able to expand into neighboring countries in conjunction with our Peace Corps partnership.

All of this wouldn't have been possible without your kind support and generosity. Your moral, technical and financial support has helped us grow this organization beyond our expectations. Your donations have made our organization thrive. We all thank you for your continued support, and look forward to updating you next month on our progress.

Sincerely,

Helen Gradstein and Amber Shevin



## Expo-Atchinakrom Students Speak Out

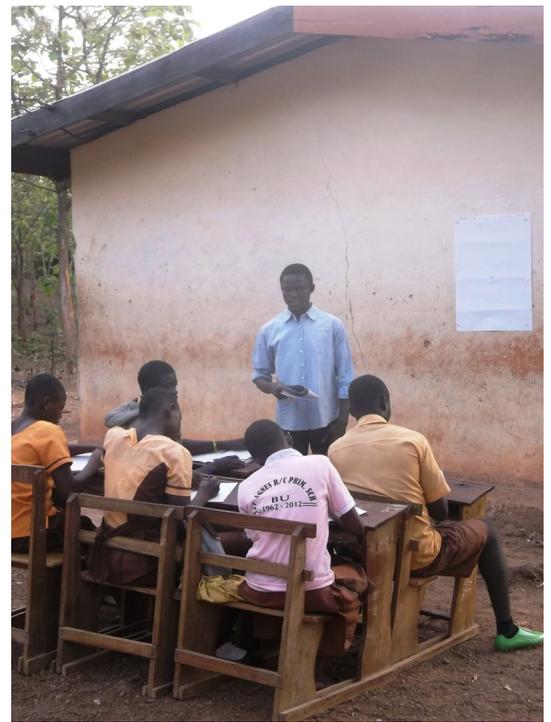
I asked each of my students to write a friendly letter explaining their opinion on the problems with Ghana's education system and what their solutions would be if they were a Ghanaian president.—Dara Denny, Expo Program Manager, Atchinakrom



**Dara Denny and her Atchinakrom Expo Students**

“My motive for writing you this letter is to tell you the problems facing Ghana's education. We lack of school chairs, lack of school test books, and inadequate teachers in the rural areas. If I were president I will give money to the carpenter so that they can build proper chairs for the people in the rural area and towns, so that the children will always come to school and also build libraries with books for the children to go there and to read when the teachers are not there and train and retrain teachers to teach the children.” Mavis Koomson, Atchinakrom JHS

“Some of the problems are financial problems, economic problems, and social problems. Ghanaian don't have enough money. We don't have money to build schools, we don't have money to build hospitals, police stations. But if I were president I will not use the money wrongly. I will use it to build schools and others which we have to need to make our life comfortable. So if I were the president I will make canteen free for the school so the children don't have money will go to the canteen to eat. If I were the president I will provide textbooks for the students to learn and build library to the school to go to search for some word they don't know.” Doris Aboagye, Atchinakrom JHS



**The Atchinakrom Expo Program in Action**

“For the past few years, many people have been expressing their views about the problems and solutions of the educational system in Ghana. As a concerned citizen, I would like to express my views about the challenges affecting the educational system in Ghana. After research, observation, experience and questionnaires from some educational experts, I identified the following problems that affect the educational system in Ghana:

They are changes of Government Inadequate teaching and learning materials, unqualified teaching personnel, examination malpractice, school under trees and lack of counseling to students.

Also, inadequate teaching and learning materials makes teaching and learning on the part of the teachers and students uncomfortable and difficult without teaching and learning materials such as textbooks, blackboards, chalk, registers, etc. Lack of these materials makes it difficult for some teachers to teach.

Furthermore, the major problem is the unqualified teaching personnel. There is a saying that “the blind cannot lead the blind or else they will all fall into a pit”. In Ghana, unqualified teachers lead their students into a pit due to their inexperience and lack of teaching skills. They teach for money, not considering the future of the innocent students’ lives in their hands.

Finally, lack of counseling to students really affects students in decision-making involving their academics. Most students find it difficult to put themselves up when they are down in emotional, social and academic challenges. Also, it becomes a problem for students to choose their course or profession when they encounter such problems in school.

Below are my solutions to the challenges affecting the educational system in Ghana:

The government of Ghana should encourage continuity of policies and programs of previous governmental administrations in respect to ongoing education policy.

To provide adequate teaching and learning materials to make teaching and learning easier on the part of teachers and student.

To employ quality teaching personnel in the education sector and also to provide workshop and symposia to teachers in order to upgrade their skills in teaching.

To provide security measures at examination centers to avoid examination malpractices among students. Also, to enlightened students about the dangers of examination malpractices.

To provide counselors to students to council students when they encounter social, economic and academic problems.”

- Anyomi Patrick, Atchinakrom SHS Tutor



**Patrick Anyomi, Expo SHS Tutor, Working With His JHS Group**

## Atchinakrom Contd...

“Education is said to be the only process through which a person acquires knowledge, skills and attitude that will help him or her to improve his or her life.

Ghana as a nation really has a number of problems with our education system.

In the first place, the problem of building facilities: this is the major problem in our education system now. A Ghanaian child may have the access to school but may not have access to a well-structured classroom building. Most of the schools in Ghana, about 60%, are formed of schools under trees and as a result school is closed when it is about to rain. Mostly, the deprived areas and even in some part of the cities are denied these accessibilities to school.

Therefore, Ghana also suffers from a lack or inadequate Information Communication Technology (I.C.T.) and equitable science resources center. Many schools do not have such facilities at all and even those who have it do not have the requisite materials to enhance effective learning. As a matter of fact, the inculcation of the I.C.T. as one of the core subjects was impressed by every Ghanaian citizen as it is well known that the world now has turned into a global village, all because of I.C.T. But the question now is that, do we have such facilities in our education system before and after the inculcation? Even now, candidates take examination on I.C.T., yet some of the candidates have not even seen a computer before, but they are ought to be tested at the end of their years in school.

I think in respect to the facilities, the government should put some measures in place to build well-structured classroom blocks for those schools to overcome the problem of schools under trees. This will provide better quality education and build a better nation.

Also, the government and the Ghana Education System (G.E.S.) should make a proper provision for all schools to have accessibility to computers in their respective schools in order to ensure progress on technology. Lastly, the West African Examination Council and the Ghana Education Service should unite as one body in order to work as a team and also come out with one syllabus.”— Boateng Obed, Atchinakrom SHS tutor



Obed, Expo SHS Tutor, Working With His JHS

“We all know that education is the key to success, but here in Ghana education has been optional, because in many places in Ghana people have not been going to school. Why?;

Inadequate qualified teachers. Schools, especially those in the rural areas, have very few teachers with vocational and technical skills and many of the teachers are unqualified teachers who are having no experience in teaching.

Lack of job opportunities. This has rendered the few who are able to go through the education system unemployed. This creates the erroneous impression that after all, education has no value.

Inadequate infrastructure and materials. Many schools lack proper accommodation or premises for any serious academic work. Also materials such as textbooks, science equipment, etc. are inadequate which is making teaching and learning difficult.

Overloaded curriculum. The syllabus for subject under the system is over loaded and in addition a students is required to offer many subjects within a short period especially at the junior high school and senior high school levels. This may lead to poor academic performance by the students.

Break down of marriage. This leads to single parenting, one parent looking after the child or children. The inability of one parent especially the mother to provide the basic needs including school fees may force the child to stop schooling.

Suggestions for these problems

Minister of Education should make sure that teachers who have been picked are qualified teachers, by employing some graduates to supervise all schools.

This will create jobs for the unemployed graduates.

Provision of adequate infrastructure and teaching and learning materials by the government.

The syllabus provided to the teachers should be reduced to the student level of education. Because if a whole term Antoa student are able to cover ten topics and nobody understands and Krobo student cover only two topics and everybody understands, Krobo student have achieved something more than the Antoa Students.

The government should employ graduates to help in advertising on education, giving out the importance of education and what education has brought them. This will touch the parents' hearts and they will be willing to take good care their child's education.”

—Charles Amponsah, Atchinakrom SHS Tutor



**Charles Amponsah, Expo  
SHS Tutor**

## Dara Agrees...

I don't think there is much other specific content I can add to the very intelligent responses given by my JHS students and tutors. I think their responses show similarities and differences that cast light on the issues of education in Ghana. There are some huge issues that pervade through all schools, in every region. There are also some more specific issues that might only be present in the Ashanti region. However, I have noticed that there are similarities outside of the education field that help explain the issue to me. For instance the education system seems to get worse in the areas further away from the cities and further away from the schools with important people's children. It seems to me that Ghana just doesn't have enough resources to set up a check and balance system to make sure that each school is doing their best. Or if they do have the resources, they are using them for something else.

I think the way to make lasting change is to improve the systems that support school. For instance, if the roads are made better then there will be much less effort needed for teachers, students, or government workers to visit schools. If school supplies were given to schools for free then they wouldn't need to cancel class due to a lack of chalk. If they set up a system to employ all of the unemployed university graduates, they would have a whole work force of educated people who could make a big change. I could go on with examples for a long time and they all refer to the same point. I believe that the policy makers in Ghana, those truly in power, don't have education very high on their priority list. Even worse, they don't seem to have anyone but their families high on that list. If we can start at primary school and start to raise children with the right attitudes, we can train the next generation to take over from the current corruption and start to use the abundant resources in Ghana to benefit everyone.— Dara Denny, Expo Program Manager, Atchinakrom

## Introducing Laura

Hi everyone! I'm so thrilled to be part of the Expo team and become part of the great work this organization is doing. I grew up in California, mainly in the Bay Area. I graduated from the University of California, Santa Cruz with a degree in Cultural Anthropology. I had been living in San Francisco for the past year working as the volunteer coordinator and community program manager for a small non-profit which ran a social networking site for social action, and helped global organizers to hold community gatherings in their local cities around the world.

My love for global collaborative and community-based work and interest in Africa, especially West Africa, brought me to Exponential Education! I couldn't be happier to be joining the team, and am very excited about the coming year as Operational Director. Thank you!!! Looking forward to starting work with everyone soon!

—Laura Ross-Perry, Incoming Director of Operations



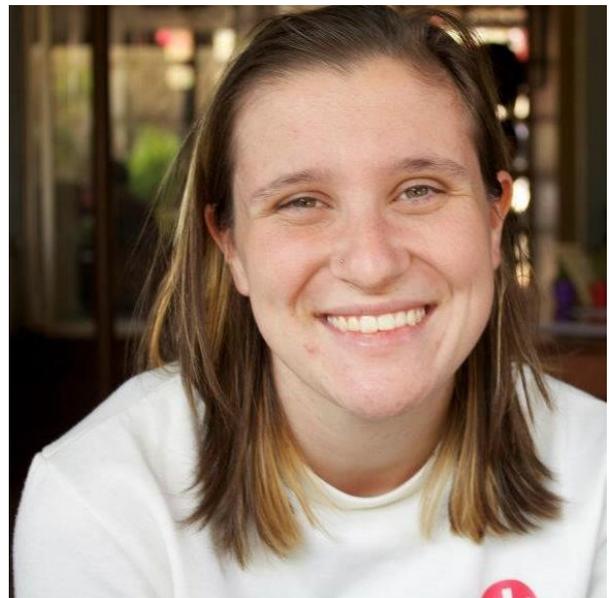
**Laura Ross-Perry**

## Introducing Clara

As early as 2009 I began to teach abroad and became passionate about international education. Having worked and traveled in southern and western Africa for some time, I feel I am able to easily share my skills in these areas, where I have already mastered the various cultural communication barriers. I don't just travel to see the world in all its beauty, I go for my students, my continually larger and more ethnically diverse family, and of course the delicious food.

I believe as a Sociology major, that sharing of other cultures is a great expansion for the mind both mentally and spiritually. It is a form of growth that due to my background can be easily shared. Exponential Education is a way for me to give my resources to others in a way I find culturally and morally appropriate. I am excited to be living and working in West Africa once again and look forward to many more adventures during my time here.

—Clara Burgess, Incoming Manager of Expo Tutor-



**Clara Burgess**

## Expo Scholars Highlight

Term 1 of the 2013-2014 school year, Expo gave out a few different scholarships for those tutors that worked the hardest amongst their colleagues. One of those tutors used the money from his scholarship to accomplish something he wasn't ready for on his own.

At the end of the Wonoo program, Anyomi Patrick was announced as the scholarship winner. Each and every week he truly showed effort above and beyond what he was asked to do. He would even call 'emergency' session with his program manager and ask what we could possibly do to address the unique needs of each of his students. Patrick seems like he was raised to be a teacher. Conveniently enough, he is applying to attend a big university in Ghana to study education.

After he was awarded his scholarship, we asked him how he was going to use the money. He told us that he needed to withdraw all of the money to pay for his application fee. After some more inquiry we found out that before he knew he won the scholarship he was planning on postponing his university application for another year due to his inability to pay for his applications. Expo quickly got him the forms and the personnel to escort him to his university and pay for his application fee. Everything was successful and now he is just waiting to hear if he is accepted.

Who knows what would have happened after another year of waiting for funds to go to university. Patrick is very motivated, but maybe without funding he would have changed his path and tried something else. Now we are sure that he has taken a strong step forward to fulfilling his goal of becoming a teacher to change the future of his country, one child at a time.— Matt Hottmer, Expo, Expo Senior Program Manager



Expo Scholar Patrick with Expo Senior Program Manager Matt Hottmer

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