# UBUNTU ACADEMY / MANUAL

## VISION

The Ubuntu Academy pilot was founded with the intention to create and test a programme through which young, underprivileged people would achieve transformation and professional empowerment through arts, entrepreneurship and leadership education. The wider goals were to nurture a generation of changemakers who in turn inspire, lead and transform their communities.

During the planning phase, the following statements were formulated:

**Vision**: To create positive social change through the talents and dreams of youth.
**Mission**: To be a social enterprise and sustainable organisation
**Values**: Creativity, passion, Ubuntu.
**Blurb**: Celebrating diversity, unlocking potential.

The pilot was formed for three concrete objectives:

- Testing a methodology
- Growing a stakeholder network
- Getting students into further education, employment and/or to support their own projects.

## THEORY OF CHANGE

The theory of change posits that young people learn and grow better when one taps into their passion. Ubuntu Academy uses arts and creativity as tools to unleash these inner talents and potential. On top of that Ubuntu Academy creates a constructive space where youth are trained to think entrepreneurially, turning needs into opportunities. Leadership is practiced to install authenticity and self-initiative.
Experiential learning and collectivity are key tenets, so that Ubuntu Academy is a dynamic, open, consensus-driven vehicle for personal and professional development, sustainability and bottom-up empowerment. Ongoing, individual guidance, feedback and supervision contributes to everyone's unique development. Giving access to a stakeholder network automatically creates opportunities and a community of trust, so that education, employment and own ventures have an easier uptake.

**Passion & talent:** The belief that every person can reach their full potential when they are stimulated through their unique passions and talents.
**Creative education in entrepreneurship & leadership:** Using arts as tools for young people to grow skills and aspirations.
**Personal development:** Coaches and mentoring
**Stakeholder network:** Social, business and creative partners that create an ecosystem of individuals, organisations and businesses that students can tap into. Growing the community for the educational movement.

## PROGRAMME

**Recruitment.** Students were recruited from three communities: Mfuleni, Blikkiesdorp, and Mitchell's Plain. With the help of community partners auditions were held, and the Ubuntu Academy team acted as judges. Students were asked to fill in a registration form, including motivation and basic information. 55 students were selected based on their creative performances. The only requirements were for students to be between 16 and 27.

**Curriculum.** The pilot was launched in March 2013 without detailed curriculum or plan. There was a basic plan and a rough schedule but little information or support around learning outcomes. Initially the programme was designed to run on Friday afternoons and Saturday full days, around 10 hours per week. The rationale was that this would allow students who are still in school to attend. These times were least likely to conflict with other occupations, such as jobs or other programmes. These are also the times considered 'high risk', when young people are most likely to roam the streets and be exposed to gangsterism, drug and alcohol abuse, etc. The rough programme phases were divided into:

- Talent development
- Skills development
- Own master piece
- Peer review, master classes, networking

Once the programme was running, the content changed all the time. Several times the programme was interrupted due to funding gaps. We aimed to do at least Saturdays to have a minimum of consistency and contact. Leading up to special events additional and workshops rehearsals were organised during the week, sometimes just once or twice, at times up to 4-5 times over weeks.

Between these phases the team would spent trying to plan next projects. Generally, a ridiculously disproportionate amount of time and energy was spent on (1) trying to adjust to changing resources, (2) making a new plan and (3) communicating with team and students to see whether everyone was available to pull the projects off. The fact that the team was reliant on other jobs made this more complicated.

**Format: Workshops.** The main mode of teaching and working took place in workshops, either once-off or as a series of workshops and rehearsals, over a period of time. The core team capacity were around drama, life skills and production. External coaches were invited and briefed to use arts, entrepreneurship and leadership, and to make sessions as interactive, creative and fun as possible. The aim was to ensure that students would be open, attentive and enjoying it.

Some deeply transformative moments have taken place. There is a fundamental difference between sessions who were careful designed and charismatically facilitated, which introduced new theories or concepts, had controversial topics, and in which honest dialogues or even conflicts took place. We did see the negative impact of workshops that were thematically irrelevant or of low quality: Students got bored and lost motivation to come to other sessions.

**Format: Projects.** Workshops are great ways to invite role models, thought-leaders or other forms of inspirations. Projects on the other hand allow deeper, ongoing processes which can be co-creations and meaningful collaborations with other institutions and businesses. Both allow students to immerse themselves in new environments and organisations, and to connect with a wider range of people and professionals**.**

A large number of various projects was carried out within the pilot. Of course these may change, but it's important that there is a shared sense of what the group is working towards. Examples are the Tokoloshe theatre play, STUB, or the graduation camp. There is a vast difference in success and professionalism in how these projects were carried out, mostly due to the factors of time and resources. The better projects - in terms of learning outcomes, impact, but also reputation and partner interaction - were STUB and the campaign, which had dedicated preparation, planning and appropriate resources, both financial and human.

**Coaches / Facilitation.** Initially the Ubuntu Academy started out with a network of about 25 coaches: The idea was to have two per discipline in music, drama, dance, life skills, film, photography and design. Except for the core team that completed the pilot programme, most coaches and team members left as soon as it was clear that salaries couldn't be paid. The impact was felt particularly where students looked up to the coaches.

Later coaches were hired once off or for more defined projects and shorter periods. In the beginning there was little briefing on how to work with students. On the positive side this allowed coaches to do workshops according to their skills, experience and interests. On the downside it meant lacking alignment with other coach and team activities. Later on more specific briefs were given, and external coaches are increasingly selected based on shared values and future collaboration potential.

## PROGRAMME LEARNINGS

A recruitment process should consider following:

- Support from community partners that already have relationships with local youth, and who understand    the    local context. They can source venues, bring in volunteers and staff, and promote.
- Knowing who we want and what will be expected of them: Criteria, requirements and expectations of students must be communicated ahead of the auditions to attract the right target group, with appropriate demographics and motivation.
- Communicate rules, practicalities and consequences: transport, catering, communication, attendance, respect to manage expectations and minimise dropouts.
- Letters of motivations / essays: Students must formulate their motivation and demonstrate a certain level of literacy and critical thinking, and an ability to meet basic formats and deadlines.
- Hold auditions and interviews at the venue: students must prove to be independent and reliable to take public transport and be on time.
- Do two rounds of interviews: Get to know them personally and give opportunity to ask questions.

There should be a clear, upfront structure and public schedules about how and when the programme runs, and milestones towards which one can work. We advise to have a 6-12 month intensive programme, with 3-5 days a week. Significantly more contact hours are required to establish trust, to devise plans and to produce events, performances, exhibitions or else. Spending time as a full group, one-on-one, and in smaller teams is vital.

Workshops should have clear learning outcomes that fit into the overall objectives and more specific learning outcomes of the Ubuntu Academy. Having a basic routine on how to carry out workshops creates better discipline. Communicating the learning outcomes and framing or contextualising the relevance of the workshop content before each session ensures that students are more likely to take it seriously and internalise the learnings. An element of interaction, creation and physical activity is recommended, to cater for the often bubbling physical energy of the students.

The team was generally more productive when there was a clear project. The time spent in-between these phases were what wasted time and caused confusion and frustration. Balancing external, ad hoc opportunities with the predefined learning outcomes has been a challenge.

Adopting a project-based approach is one of the key learnings from the pilot and should form fundament of the next Ubuntu Academy. It allows to give students ownership. Each project is also a strategic networking and campaigning opportunity, where students increasingly take on roles and responsibilities as their skills and experience grows. Involving them in the concept, design and execution is where entrepreneurial and leadership learning takes place, and is a great learning mechanisms. These projects should grow into flagship events, that can lead to income generation and reputation of Ubuntu Academy. For instance, hosting annual youth arts festivals, participating in the dance and drama competitions, etc.

Careful planning and good facilitation. Projects should be aligned with overall learning outcomes of the full Ubuntu Academy programme / curriculum. But each project should break down further its own learnings outcomes, and clearly specify what models, frameworks they are built on, and what the input and outputs, as well as milestones are. Roles must be clearly allocated and accountability should be ensured.

Conceptualising projects with external partners. This is a great way to mobilise resources and learn from and with institutional and professional partners. It also allows to bring in new elements of learning. Having visiting artists or other professionals to take lead of a project is a great opportunity to structure main parts of the curriculum well in advance.

Coaches should be positive role models that students can identify with and relate to. Coaches should inject motivation, share personal experiences and be able to facilitate other opportunities, and lead by example. Above all they should be a friend and supervisor to the students. Strong facilitation and process leadership skills are vital for learning and achieving goals. Maintaining open, equal and caring relationships with students is important to keep trust and respect.

## CONTENT: ARTS / ENTREPRENEURSHIP / LEADERSHIP

Originally the plan was to train skills in arts, entrepreneurship and leadership in separate phases. However, during the pilot it was discovered that it works well to include these different approaches throughout projects and workshops.

Content should be creative and artistic. Execution entrepreneurial, and learning takes place on personal leadership. Social media, networking, relationship management, research and communications should be practiced throughout.

**Arts**. Working with the creative talents of the students is vital in the beginning. It is a playful way to get to know each other, build trust and have fun, and to establish a standard of values, discipline and respect together. It also allows the group to engage in a neutral, playful yet constructive way.

**Entrepreneurship**. Introduce skills around organisation, facilitation, business thinking, project management. The content of projects can be creative and artistic, (a performance, an installation, a video), but the planning and implementation should be owned by students, so that they instil entrepreneurial spirits. In that sense each project must be viable, achievable and implementable by the students. Ideally financial aspects are included: budgeting, accounting, invoicing, as well as marketing: how to brand, promote, campaign and advertise. As such, the goal is that each project is run like a business operation.

**Leadership**. Individual and as part of a collective, every project should appeal to a leadership element, so that students continue to be aware of themselves and the collective, and to experience situational leadership, as well as to identify different roles within oneself and as a group. "What do I want, what can we create together, when to follow and support, when to take initiative?"

## UNEXPECTED LEARNINGS

**Communication with students.** Communication has unfortunately not been very effective. Differences in access to infrastructure, such as cell phones, digital media, and other resources have made it very difficult to reach and liaise with students. We tried to communicate verbally on programme days, often leading to an overload of information to students. We had an sms system in place, which worked great, but since some students don't have their own cell phones, and/or often change numbers, even that was not reliable. Printouts worked to a certain extent. Mostly, certain team member spent days on the phone trying to track down each and every student to convey a message. This was time and cost intensive and often frustrating.

Using community partners as communication channel was sometimes effective, but not for regular communication. Their role is strongest as parent and family liaison, as contact point for students, and to inform the team on community specific issues, and during events, and for more high level decisions.

Ideally, a communication platform enables the team to automate messages, updates and news, whether it's an automated calendar, a FB group, or something along those lines. Students can then take ownership of keeping updated. The goal is to have a simple and reliable structure in place that everyone can access on their own. Include the students in understanding what works best for them, and create a system that everyone understands and can use.

The goal should be to train students in professional communication standards and across channels. That way students are viewed as ambassadors from the beginning, and they are empowered and become content creators. Working digitally and on social media amplifies the UA brand and reputation, and effectively makes use of the students as resource.

**Dealing with challenges at home.** All students face challenges in their home environment, some more than others. We succeeded in creating a space and time for students to share intimate issues, and for private conversations with coaches and team members. Over time students opened up more and more about problems in their lives, and some even asked for specific help. Peer support was also given through group dialogues. However, some students required bigger interventions for which the team members did not have the skills, time, resources or networks to adequately assist the students. In such cases we asked youth partners for input, or would try to source an appropriate support structure.

Having a trusted network of professionals that can readily be called on is important, such as psychologists, therapists, social workers or youth counsellors. This network should be sourced before start of the next programme and its existence should be known to students. Having a trained youth counsellor in-house would add a great level of expert personal development focus.

There should be sufficient time in the programme for one-on-one and group counselling, so that well-being and challenges are seen as an ongoing and preventative process. The most important aspect is to listen, to let the students know that they have someone to support and that they are safe. Another great source of support are the other students: Once trust has been established, the student body is an incredibly beautiful, powerful and innovative support system. This should be nurtured from the get go.

**Youth ownership / Rules.** We regularly asked students for their opinions and ideas to improve the programme and the organisation. While on the plus side this create better understanding, deeper involvement and caring, this also meant that students complained too readily, and that they had increasingly high expectations of the small team, and would often keep on challenging decisions. It sometimes ended in a 'students vs organisation' narrative, instead of a constructive group effort.

Student ownership did not go far enough during the pilot. Asking for student's opinions does not bring real leadership experience and ownership. Students should be stimulated and supported in being proactive, take responsibility and accountability. Therefore student ownership should be structurally designed as part of the organisation. Coaches must support, guide and supervise students, make boundaries clear, enforce consequences, but not necessarily take the lead. Finding the right balance between giving freedom and empowering, but drawing clear lines and boundaries is most crucial. Clearly identifying when and how to negotiate, and when decision are off-boundary are key to this.

- Draw clear boundaries so students know where their freedom and ownership begins and ends: *This is what we can decide on together, this one is non-negotiable.*
- Enforce discipline and consequences right from the beginning.
- Design rules and consequences with the students.
- Allow for feedback loops, times, spaces and roles whose mandate is to provide constructive feedback, or challenge norms, but in a contained way.

Rules were established to instil discipline and professionality, but the rules were created reactively, i.e. only after challenges were experienced. This made it harder to enforce rules. The most important ones are around:

- Late-coming
- Missing classes
- Communication
- Personal goods and safety
- Venue maintenance
- Respect towards fellow students and team

It is essential for the health of the organisation and the educational impact to involve youth in organisational matters. Students shouldn't only come in to participate in a programme, they should be part in designing and organising the programme. At a time when Ubuntu Academy was most transparent and shared what was happening in the background, it brought students and team closer together, and practiced real life problem solving. Naturally students would then take more ownership and adjust their expectations.

Real ownership is a key principle of the Ubuntu Academy and how leadership and entrepreneurship is stimulated. It should be kept in mind that many students have not yet experienced this before, and that it is very different from the mainstream schooling system.

**Wellbeing.** The Ubuntu Academy strives to create, healthy, passionate and skilled individuals. Learning about wellbeing on a physical, mental and spiritual level should be taking place throughout the curriculum. Workshops or projects on nutrition and environmental sustainability are seen as crucial themes. Practicing ways of well-being should be encouraged and packaged so that the new knowledge and behaviour can be shared with families and communities. That way students practice wellbeing and are already agents of change in their communities. The main focus for this area should be:

- Nutrition
- Environmental awareness and sustainability
- Physical health through sports and being active
- Mental health: meditation, concentration, self-awareness, self-trust, confidence

# ORGANISATION / GOVERNANCE

We believe in a governance structure built on transparency and accountability. The course of the pilot has taught us that feedback loops across students, teams and partners builds the kind of academy that can then create the impact that we set out to create.

**Team.** The makeup of the core team and its structure has changed several times during the pilot project. The instability and highly dynamic context lead to staff not receiving appropriate or consistent salaries, there was confusion around decision-making, roles and responsibilities. These challenges presented the team with valuable learning on what is actually needed to run UA. Initially a core team of 4 were supposed to run the organisation. The core team included founder, a programme coordinator and two managers. Over time this changed, and in the end a core team of three ran all operations, roughly splitting roles into (1) performing arts direction & life skills, (2) programme coordination, production & media, and (3) managing, communication & admin. Following are the roles and responsibilities that should be covered in a new team:

* Team leader/s: Facilitator / personal development coach / supervisor

       * Producer / project manager: Programme, events
       * Impact / M&E: research, analysis, evaluation
       * Business developer / Fundraiser
       * Administrator / Accountant

The key learning was that the team had way too many roles and responsibilities. It is not advisable for a manager to have to keep the overview, whilst also running around producing the programme and projects, to then facilitate sessions with students. The stress trickled down to students who felt rushed on programme days. At least 2 team members plus support staff should be present during programme days.

Salaries have to be secured and need be market related. Putting emotional stress on staff because they are not receiving salaries brings in negative energy and manipulates good decision-making. Paying adequate salaries is vital to attract and retain professional, competent staff.

The team should be made up of local South Africans, as well as internationals. South Africans are more likely to have an existing local network to tap into, and of course it's easier for students to relate to them due to language and cultures.

The different roles and responsibilities could be further defined and divided in the following manner to clarify the different aspects that needs to be covered within the programme, and making this division clear from the beginning:

- 1 main personal development coach / facilitator / supervisor
  - Full time
  - Main contact point for students, parents and community partners
  - Develops and tracks personal development plans with students
  - Stimulates, guides and inspires students to take ownership

- 1 project manager, producer, programme coordinator
  - Full time
  - Oversees production of projects and events, guides students to take ownership in the production or is supported by volunteers in production work
  - Oversees planning of Ubuntu Academy programme
  - Accounting
  - HR
  - Volunteer manager

- Impact researcher, fundraiser and social media officer
  - 3 days a week
  - Makes sure activities are documented and used for research and social media/website
  - Monitoring and evaluation research and analyzing the impact
  - Uses content for fundraising, social enterprise development and strategic planning

- Business developer / connector
  - Part time / full time
  - Networking and ceasing strategic partnerships
  - Marketing
  - Social enterprise development
  - Communication to network
  - Fundraising
  - Volunteer sourcer

- Administrator / receptionist / venue caretaker
  - Full time
  - Accounting

- Cleaner (maybe also cook)
  (although it would be good if students can really take ownership and also care for the venue and clean it properly)

Adding to these comes a wide range of freelancers contributing with their expertise within the different aspects of the programme, e.g. designers, filmmakers, photographers and artistic coaches.

**Board.** A board was created in the beginning. Two board members were very scarce and resigned within the first year. Two members remained active and supportive and gave high level input, mediated between team and offered networking.

The expectations and commitment of board members must be more clearly defined in the beginning, and board members should be selected based on expertise, network passion and commitment. The board should take on ownership of the programme and serve to ensure accountability from the beginning, to meet legal requirements and act as sounding and advisory board to the team.

Regular reviews and evaluations and reports should take place. Clear structures and agreements need to be in place. Most importantly, the board should have regular touchpoint with the students as as well, to authentically witness the programme and to engage with students.

Following areas were identified that should be covered by board members:

- Marketing
- Fundraising
- Finances
- Relevant networks and institutions
- Art, creativity
- Entrepreneurship, business
- Leadership
- Pedagogy: teaching, coaching

**Youth partners.** At the start of the programme each community had a youth partner: a leader from a community based organisation that supported UA with student communications. In Blikkiesdorp this organisation was Blikkies4Hope, in Mfuleni this was the Ubizo Theatre, and in Mitchell's Plain it was Sinko Sonke. The Mitchell's Plain partner withdrew, but the two others remained key collaborators and enablers.

Youth or community partners are extremely important since they have a deeper local understanding and existing networks and relationships. They thus further the reach and impact of the UA. They supported and complemented communication with students, about programme logistics, commitment and participation. And they were vital in liaising with parents, answering questions and giving a sense of credibility and legitimacy.

For students it is important to have a point of contact at their fingertips, in the communities. Because youth partners are active community leaders they are particularly able to inform the team about living situations, local opportunities and challenges. They are able to source local resources, specifically people and venues, and advised on safety issues during community activities.

UA supported the community leaders with money for airtime and internet when needed, and often donated clothing or other materials. Generally the working relationship was on a voluntary basis. Going forward more formal agreements could be made, to identify what each party contributes, and what benefits each gets. The youth partners have expressed to be more involved in the future, which is a positive sign and which we strongly advise for the future.

Community partners should be selected based on following aspects:

- Be clearly passionate about the upliftment of youth
- Is a reliable and trustworthy leader, and well respected within the community
- Runs or works with another established organisation
- Is already connected to youth and families
- Is able to communicate well, is flexible and easy to approach

**Stakeholders / Partners / Networks.** UA has done a good job at growing a strong family-like culture, a stakeholder network and a positive reputation. The student body and team that is still in regular contact, and who collaborate and work on projects together. Moreover, the mentorship programme has added a dimension of professional, industry specific contacts. Students have generally significantly expanded their professional and social relationships through UA.

The partner network has grown too. This took place mostly through social media, by connecting with likeminded organisations and people, and through audiences from events. A database exists that comprehensively lists local and international contacts in various fields. The FB page has over 1000 likes, and increasingly, we get international requests from people who want to collaborate with us, a great sign.

Open collaboration and strategic partnerships are very valuable and effective. They increase the learning opportunity for students, creating strong media are an effective and aesthetic way to convey our mission and purpose and impact.

While our media has been strong, our reach into the communities should be emphasised more. Growing a local network of partners, coaches, artists, community partners, mentors, ambassadors and supporters creates a stakeholder network that students can tap into, grow and later continue to work with. So far, little collaboration has taken place with public entities, such as departments for arts & culture or social development. While some business partnerships have taken place, more strategic and ongoing collaborations with private sector, specifically corporates, is recommended.

## OPERATIONS

**Venue.** For the majority of the programme we had our own venue in central Cape Town, in walking distance to the main station. It was a central and accessible place for students, staff, volunteers, coaches and partners. The venue had one floor with around 250 square meters and different rooms for music, dance, design film/photography, as well as an office and communal area. A small kitchen and bathrooms were available. The venue was colourful and spacious, and students enjoyed it, felt free to play around and make it their own.

Having an own venue is important to create that dedicated space where students come to learn and grow. At the same time it allowed to host events, do performances and invite partners and potential coaches to visit and meet students. Ideally, students should have access and their own lockers, so that they can use the venue at all times to work on their projects.

There are two main options with regards to venue space:

Option 1: Own venue
- Own space to create a safe environment and a sense of ownership
- Must be spacious enough to allow for lectures, performances, exhibitions, events, workshops
- Decorated in a welcoming, playful and enabling manner. With resources that students can use (instruments, dance & rehearsal space, computers with internet)
- Ideally allow for own locker or similar so that students can use their own space
- Needs a kitchen, bathroom and lockable and equipped office space for team
- Central Cape Town recommended, to expose other organisations and be in walking distance to the main station

Option 2: Share or source venue
- Shared space, with other educational actors

**Equipment.** Over the course of 2 years we collected many things, most of which were clothes, costumes and props for theatre, as well as black theatre curtains, a sound system, craft materials (paint, paper, etc), printer, scanner and phone, whiteboards, many chairs, couches and tables. The kitchen was kitted with fridges, cutlery, plates and cups, warm water kettle and urn. External hard drive is essential to store the large amount of footage. Laptops were provided, but during a break-in most were taken. Things that we did not have (enough of), were instruments, dance mirrors, dance floor, stage, computers, lockers, lights, cooking materials. It is obviously vital to have basic equipment in place before launching a new programme; holding a photography workshop when there is no camera does not make sense.

**Transport.** With the start of the programme UA used to hire buses to each community. This did not work well because students would often be late, as a result the entire community group would be late. Hiring busses was also very expensive.

UA then asked students to take public transport and reimbursed the costs. This worked better, but many students still arrived late, whether due to lacking discipline and/or unreliable public transport. Reimbursing the students with transport money was time intensive and included a cash transaction, during which the team literally handed money to students. This should be avoided in the future, as it creates a giving and taking culture. It also created situations where students were dishonest to receive more money. Both of these are against principles of trust, equality and independence UA is promoting.

Additional transport was generally organised for special events or outings. This worked pretty well as soon as certain meeting points and time constraints were introduced. While students still show up late, often delaying the programme, this is a safe way to get students home, specifically after nightfall

The following options should be considered and discussed before launching the programme:

Option 1: Students organize and pay for their own transport. Make sure all students can afford and provide for this.
Option 2: If possible, get students monthly bus/train tickets, instead of handing out cash. There should be no money transaction between students and coach to keep the relationship neutral of finances.

Option 3: Reimburse students through different payment systems, like a bank transfer.
Option 4: Own and get access to busses that collect students from the communities.
Option 5: If funding permits, hire transport service to pick up students in the communities.


**Catering / Lunch.** Lunch was always organised by the team. This was time intensive and required an extra role to shop, prepare and clean up. The kitchen facility did not allow for cooking so lunch was very basic: usually break with basic sandwich filling, served with fruit and juice. It was quite challenging to serve lunch that was not expensive, yet healthy and filling.

Option 1: Students organise and bring their own lunch, i.e. from home or by buying in the area.
Option 2: Students and team prepare food together. Requires kitchen facility.
Option 3: Someone else prepares food: Delivery service (for instance in partnership with a local business), or someone could prepare food in-house (the cleaner, a parent, or an outsourced partner).

As mentioned above, there should be at least one workshop, or really a project or experience around nutrition. Students have different eating habits, and many are unaware of the negative consequences of them. This is an opportunity to educate on environment, food security, and to instil ideas around urban agriculture, food shops, catering businesses, etc.