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[Social Entrepreneurs @ Work: Florian Kapitza \(Aiducation International\)](#)

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"Every society can only be as intelligent, effective and successful as the people it's made of. [] It is not an indulgence to cultivate great talent, it is an indulgence, a criminal indulgence not to do so." (Dr. Alfred Herrhausen, former Chairman of Deutsche Bank)

Interviewee: Dr. Florian Kapitza

Focus Region: Africa & Asia

Category: Education support

Education is the most important lever for the development of people and people are the most important lever for the development of any society. But the problem is that 400 million people worldwide don't have access to secondary education. Their chances to realize their potential and contribute to the economic, political and social development of their countries are consequently extremely limited.

Aiducation International is a for-impact organization, dedicated to giving people access to education. Founded in 2007 by parts of Kenya's civil society, the organization awards merit-based high school scholarships to bright and needy students in developing countries (current focus is on Kenya). Thereby, donors (AiduMakers) donate in a highly impact-efficient way: They help individuals (AiduFellows) to realize their chances in life, while at the same time pushing the human capital in developing countries closer to their factual potential. The 1-1 principle ensures very high transparency of the investment as the AiduMaker receives regular performance reports during the 4 years of the scholarship. The AiduMaker can participate in selecting the student and each scholarship is named after the AiduMaker (e.g. "Frank-Smith-Scholarship"). Until today, Aiducation has been awarded numerous prizes and is run by volunteers (called Aiducators) with chapters in Germany, Kenya, Switzerland, and UK.

Currently Aiducation International awards 150 scholarships per year on merit to high achieving children in Kenya who are identified as potential future leaders. It offers mentorship, networking and job placement opportunities to these young adults.



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The Entrepreneurs' Ship is a non-profit organization to promote entrepreneurship as a viable career path.

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As the co-founder of Aiducation International, Dr. Florian Kapitza said, *"I'm part of Aiducation International because I want to help students realize their potential and I love achieving this together with very inspiring people from all over the world!"*

How did you come up with the idea? When and how did Aiducation International get started?

It all started with Jeremiah Kiponda Kambi (Kenya) who had received a scholarship to become a physician. It was then that he understood the importance of complementary funding programs in order to support deserving students in their education and career development, an investment from which the entire community would benefit. At that time (1998/99), I lived in Ivory Coast and was amazed by the diversity of young talents. However, I also understood that they would hardly realize their potential, as many of them did not even have access to basic education – a prerequisite for the development of a person. When we (Kristin and myself) met Jeremiah and heard about the idea to give opportunities to high-potential students with financial need, it immediately appealed to us. Together with several friends, the three of us founded Aiducation International with one part of the team in Kenya to identify deserving applicants and one part of the team in Switzerland to raise funds to finance scholarships and push the idea forward. It was only later that we realized the similar patterns across many if not all developing countries: A large variety of high-potentials but no opportunities to unleash their talent through education and other career possibilities.

How has your project evolved over time and where are you standing today?

Over the past years we have grown from a small idea without any supporters to an organization, which awards 150 scholarships per year to high achieving children in Kenya who were identified as potential future leaders.

This is a remarkable success and I am sure you are very happy about your positioning. Could you tell us about the biggest impacts of your project to the sustainable social development in the African society?

In Kenya, we pay the school fees for our "AiduFellows" (scholars). This has an enormous impact. It gives hope to the AiduFellows and their families, it reduces the number of students out of school who often face brutal alternatives to going to school: working as day laborers, sitting at home, and in some cases even being married off long before their 18th birthday. We have had several such situations already, in one extreme case one of our scholarships led to the cancelling of an arranged marriage of our of our students. So, the impact is often very tangible. And above all our scholarships give our students the chance to excel in school: 2/3 of our AiduFellows belong to the top 30% of their classes in secondary schools, with a good reputation and traditionally academically strong class mates. One of our AiduFellows is for example David Charo Katana who recently graduated from secondary school as the best out of several thousands students in his county.

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Apart from that immediate impact our scholarships will also have a long-term impact, as all AiduFellow are part of a network of high potentials that will move their country forward in an economic, political, and social way.

As an entrepreneur, what are you doing in order to remain on top of things and reinvent what you're doing to ensure your strong position?

I exchange ideas with other entrepreneurs and read relevant literature.

How do you evaluate the competition between NGOs in the charitable educational field in Africa? Which are your major competitors and what are you doing better / different?

I think there is healthy, positive competition just like in any other field of the economy. It propels the different organizations forward.

What is Aiducation doing differently than many others?

There are four things, which characterize us and distinguish us from others. First, it is the use of donations. The 1-1 principle ensures very high transparency of the investment as the AiduMaker receives regular performance reports during the 4 years of the scholarship. The AiduMaker is part of an informal selection committee and decides from a pre-selected pool of AiduSeekers who he/ she wants to support and each scholarship is named after the AiduMaker (e.g. "Frank-Smith-Scholarship"). Regular reports inform AiduMakers on personal progress and impact. Second, we

believe that education is the most effective way of realizing potential. Therefore, Aiducation's activities fully focus on providing access to education and we are proud to say that 90% of all scholarship funds are invested directly into education. Third, we believe in meritocracy. Consequently, each AiduFellow has to go through a rigorous selection process in which financial neediness and brightness are carefully assessed. Therefore, our AiduFellows are high-potentials capable of contributing significantly to the social, economic and political development of their country. Fourth, Aiducation supports AiduFellows financially (Aid to Education Program) and non-financially (Education to Aid Program) by making them become part of an exclusive network of high potentials. The Education to Aid Program, consisting of elements like mentorship academies, group mentoring, career rotations, workshops, project work, seminars, internships, training, startup experiences and others, allow the students to meet and learn from high profile speakers and from other each other. The whole program empowers AiduFellows to live active lives and to use their potential and capabilities for the economic, political, and social development of their country.

Do you collaborate with other educational charities to have a stronger impact? Which and why?

We collaborate loosely with SOS Children's Villages in Kenya and Shining Hope for Communities. Both organizations help us recruit suitable candidates.

Many people admit that improving governance mechanisms and transparency in Africa could reduce opportunities for corruption. What are your experiences with corruption and how does that affect what you're trying to do?

Luckily we have never had active contact to corruption. It is an important problem in Kenya and mainly affects dealing with public authorities. Since our funds go directly to Kenya and then directly to the schools, we are hardly affected by it.

Are there any other barriers that constrain social entrepreneurs like yourself and governments from working more effectively together? How might they be overcome?

We have never applied for any government grants. At one time we approached the Swiss Development Aid organization, the DEZA and asked if they are interested in working together. Their answer was that they prefer working directly together with government agencies, rather than foundations, companies, or for-impact organizations like Aiducation.

Many non-African NGOs have to listen to criticism that they make a living on the poverty and necessity of the people they work with and that their activities are non-transparent and non-sustainable. How do you ensure that Aiducation International does not fall into the range of these NGOs and what do you do in order to transfer knowledge and resources to the local level for a more sustainable development?

We do so based on four principles.

- *Sustainability*: Is there something more sustainable than empowering the young generation with education to push their own country forward?
- *Transparency*: our concept guarantees a very high level of transparency. The AiduMaker selects the student and a

very large portion of his/ her money is invested into that specific student. Moreover our yearly report provides a very high degree of transparency on what we do. Last but not least, any donor is highly welcome to attend our Mentorship Academies in Kenya and directly talk to "his/ her" AiduFellow.

- *Living on poverty*: To say organizations like Aiducation are living on poverty is like saying that hospitals and doctors are living on cancer and diseases. We are not living on poverty but trying to get rid of it with an innovative and promising approach that has been widely neglected in the past.
- *Knowledge transfer*: In our Mentorship Academies, invited guest speakers – mainly from Kenya but also some from abroad – pass on their knowledge and experience to the high potentials. Apart from that, we also work closely together with our Kenyan chapter and mentor and coach them in our every day dealings.

What advice would you give to social entrepreneurs in Kenya or other African countries as well as non-African entrepreneurs who want to get started there?

Just do it.

What are your goals for Aiducation International?

We want to activate as much human potential as possible. Next year, we plan to add the Philippines as another Talent Raising Site to our organization and we are looking for more corporate partners, foundations and private people to support our mission.



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