ACCELERATING CHANGE FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION

Simplon
France
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www.simplon.co

SUPPLEMENTING INNOVATION

An intensive training in programming aimed primarily at unemployed people and underrepresented profiles in the digital sector (women, refugees, seniors). Its educational approach helps participants develop long-term professional and social skills.

SOLUTION

Simplon aims to fill the skills gap in the digital sector by training unemployed people to develop digital skills and reach their social inclusion. It seeks to build capacity among participants in vulnerable situations, enabling them to offer a range of professional services that are in increasing market demand: web development, coding, programming, app design or data management.

STRONG EVIDENCE

Outputs:
- 2,265 people trained in programming and other digital skills.

Outcomes:
- Six months after the training, 78% of participants have a positive exit (of whom, 84% gain employment and 16% engage in further training or internships).
- Participants find work in the following sectors: service activities (39%), information and communication (23%), scientific and technical specialised activities (12%), public administration and education (7%), and financial, insurance and real estate activities (5%) among others.

Source:
Simplon (2017) Alumni survey. To measure its social impact, Simplon sends questionnaires to each student at the beginning of the training and 3, 6, 12 and 24 months after completion.

RECOGNITIONS AND AWARDS

Ashoka fellowship (2015). Grand Prix de l'Innovation de la Ville de Paris, mention in Social Innovation (2014). Lauréat Entrepreneuriat du concours Samsung Launching People (2013).

Up Social Innovation and Scaling

HOW IT WORKS

Participants get involved full time in a six-month free training programme. Its educational approach includes methods such as learning by doing, learning by teaching, reverse mentoring and peer education with the aim to develop long-term professional and social skills among the group. It focuses on coding and programming, but it also develops soft skills such as curiosity, creativity, self-learning, leadership and self-esteem.

Teachers do not deliver an exhaustive academic curriculum with turn-key solutions: students have to meet concrete goals and face difficulties on their own, putting cooperation, solidarity and autonomy into practice.

PROVEN INTERREGIONAL ADAPTATION

Initially developed in France, Simplon has built an international network of social digital schools, operating via 35 active schools in Belgium, Lebanon, Spain and Senegal. As of July 2018, the organisation was working in next openings in Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Côte d'Ivoire, India, Jordan and Switzerland.

THE OPPORTUNITY FRAMEWORK

The training offered by Simplon is articulated in a personalised itinerary that smoothens the transition to the labour market. For this purpose, corporate partners take an active role all along the training -a new collaboration scheme with the social sector that generates win-win situations.

Throughout the course, participants receive personal guidance and follow-up and participate in a specific set of activities that is adapted to their professional integration needs, including practical workshops, networking events, regular meet-ups and "pitch your job" sessions.

With regards to the challenge of long-term unemployment, Simplon activates two levers of change. On the one hand, it bridges the skills gap in the labour market, strengthening the links between educational organisations and potential employers. On the other hand, it fosters proactiveness and responsibility, offering participants the chance to break the digital, gender and economical divides at once and develop an entrepreneurial mindset.

SCALABLE INCOME MODEL

The programme has four main revenue streams:
- Public bodies who pay recognised training organisations to deliver employment integration training programmes.
- Service provision: Simplon Corp organises training programmes, workshops and events for companies, and Simplon Prod is a web agency that creates websites and mobile applications.
- A franchising model in which local partners pay a lump-sum or an annual fee to have access to Simplon's pedagogical toolbox and network.
- Sponsorship through grants and philanthropy, which mainly finances R&D, and does not exceed 30% of total revenues. The Simplon Foundation is funded by private foundations, large donors and crowd-funding initiatives.

ADVANCED TRANSFERENCE MODEL

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Simplon carries out international replication in various modes: either through direct expansion, franchising or working through partnerships. In their training centres (mainly in France), teaching staff and the project manager are included in Simplon's team. All the other projects rely on local partners who launch their own training centres based on the original teaching method. Project holders (either local partners or franchisees) receive assistance from Simplon to develop their initiatives through the project management toolkit, the teaching toolkit, teacher training sessions, recommendations and counselling, and permanent follow-up.

KEY AGENTS AND ROLES

Simplon's model relies upon the following players and roles:

▪ A social organisation operating the programme through a contract with Simplon. Some characteristics are key to success: being a non-profit legal entity and having a skilled and motivated project team, strong connections with relevant local allies and the ability to raise funding.

▪ Social and educational players (foundations, associations, cooperatives, schools, universities) playing a major role within the candidate recruitment process and assisting students throughout their itineraries.

▪ Private sector (e.g. in the digital field, or in human resources) sharing their expertise on the market needs and bridging the labour market in order to help participants find long-term jobs after the training.

▪ Local, regional and state public administrations certifying the courses and helping make connections with the labour market. They may also help providing space for the school.

FIRST STEPS
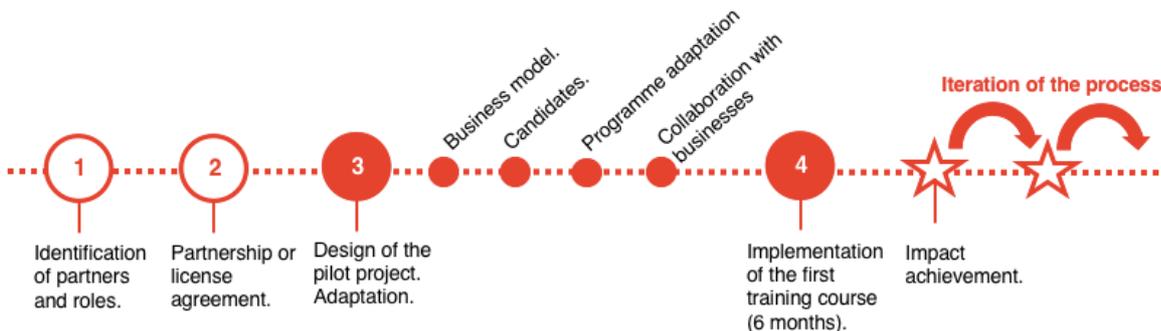
1. Identification of partners in all needed roles.
2. Establishing the partnership or license agreement with Simplon.
3. Design of a pilot project with assistance from Simplon, including:
   ▪ Adaptation of the business model.
   ▪ Identification and selection of candidates.
   ▪ Adaptation of the training intensity level and translation of materials.
   ▪ Collaboration with local business network for internships or job placement.
4. Implementation of the pilot project: the first training course (6 months).
5. Iteration of the process with other cohorts or target groups.

OTHER RELATED LINKS

Presentation video
https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=cxxdOBgfeSo
Ashoka profile
https://www.ashoka.org/en-US/fellow/frédéric-bardeau
Factoría F5, Simplon's partner in Spain
http://www.factoriaf5.org

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ACCELERATING CHANGE FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION - ACSI
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