

# Educating through a whole new print medium

 By [Shan Raddiffe](#)

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Despite a majority of South African students speaking a language other than English as a home language, English is still largely used as the language of instruction at school. In order to encourage young disadvantaged learners to read and gain a better grasp of the language more quickly, this group of UCT Upstarts developed an innovative solution, using cheap and readily available printing systems, to produce relevant stories and news.

## ■ ***Who are the brains behind Pop Print?***

Pop Print was founded by Alexander Knemeyer, Boitumelo Dikoko, Mvelo Hlophe and Nicholas Harrison. We're all studying towards degrees at UCT.

A bit about us:

Alexander is a second year mechatronics engineering student. He's 20 years old, and loves seeing how technology can be used to improve people's lives in truly significant ways.

Nicholas is a first year business science economics student who is passionate about the current entrepreneurial space South Africa is currently in.

Boitumelo is a fourth year Mechatronics engineering student. He has a couple of entrepreneurial ventures which he has worked on as he has a passion for transforming the country for the better, while pursuing a career as an academic.

Mvelo is a first year business science student. He's fully utilising his time at UCT, exploring both the academic and practical sides of becoming an entrepreneur and leader in South Africa.

## ■ ***Tell us about your start-up and the inspiration behind it?***

Primary and high school students in underfunded and under-resourced areas face a variety of challenges whilst passing through the education system. One of the largest issues is language - learning tough, important concepts in English during formative years is made far more difficult if the language itself is a barrier. The sooner children can reach high proficiency (in both home and English language) the better equipped they become to handle concepts in maths, physics, history, etc.

Another obstacle is access to *relevant* stories to read - reading simply isn't as fun when the protagonists are American Joe and European Jill; kids need stories taking place in South Africa, written for South Africans. Giving children tablets and wifi

to access resources would be wonderful but sustaining such an expensive venture is an immense task; it also makes children targets for crime. Many school libraries - if they are even available - are extremely understocked or full of third hand copies of Shakespeare.

Added to this, we find that many children, especially in disadvantaged schools, do not have access to fresh daily and current affairs of the world around them. They need a local source of relevant news.

The idea to create a solution to this problem came about through our tutoring experiences where we noticed the severe lack of resources as well as a lack of English proficiency (the medium for learning) among student being a downfall rather than their ability to grasp the concepts in various subjects.

**Our innovative solution:** Our solution is a supply of locally relevant short stories to facilitate language-learning and general mental development - resources to practice and consolidate what is learned at school.

These will be printed by POS receipt printers, initially by partnering with industry leading supermarkets, but with the end goal of being able to place a modified version of these printers in classrooms for complete ease of access to reading material for children. We will also supply non-language mental exercises such as Sudoku and crosswords - in this way we will greatly impact the general issue of a lack of resources that many schools endure. The solution aims to not build a wheel, but to equip a car with wheels - we will collaborate with organisations such as [bookdash.org](https://bookdash.org) to source needed resources and networks and minimize the time required to generate content.

Our aim is to get businesses involved, not only in revenue streams such as advertising, but to work with the businesses to build hype around reading. This hype will come in the form of competitions and opportunities for the end-user to make reading fun and widespread.

#### ▣ ***Where do you plan on taking it from here?***

Our next step is to secure partnerships with retailers - we'll print short stories and games using the existing till slip machines inside stores, and these will be given to parents to enjoy with their children. We're also working on our own printing unit, which we can place in disadvantaged schools.

#### ▣ ***What do you feel is the importance of innovation at an educational level?***

Education should be an enlightening experience for all, therefore innovation should be an integral part to ensure long-lasting enlightenment. With the rapid development of knowledge in various spheres, it is important to always rethink the classroom and those who interact with it. This is why initiatives like UCT Upstarts are very important in helping with the innovation process, mainly with young people as they are at the peak of their education careers.

#### ▣ ***How necessary are initiatives like the UCT Upstarts Idea Auction to the development of entrepreneurship in South Africa?***

These platforms provide students with the resources to help them realize that their ideas have the potential to make an impact in the South African environment and that there are so many people who are willing to help you out along the way. There are so many people with such great ideas, yet they don't have the resources or confidence to turn those ideas into a reality. Upstarts encourages you to take the steps that most fear and forces you to find a solution to an issue rather than just talk about it and never do anything about it.

#### ▣ ***What advice do you have for young entrepreneurs who are just starting out themselves?***

Yes, you are young, but age shouldn't constitute your success as an entrepreneur. Your imagination as a young person is still untouched and original, therefore take advantage of that. The other advantage you have as a young person is the fact that you have less responsibilities (ie. family), so take advantage of that and take calculated risks. Finally, it is okay to fail but make sure that you fail fast and forward, so go out there and prototype your ideas.

## ABOUT SHAN RADCLIFFE

Shan Radcliffe is the editor of Bizcommunity HR, Education and Legal.

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