

The Future of African Leadership and Education in the 21st Century

| Fred Swaniker

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Greatness comes from passion. Someone can be very talented at what they do, but if their heart isn't in it, it's obvious. I believe that to be great at what you do, **you need to be fully committed to it.** – Fred Swaniker

INTRODUCTION

What's up everybody? Welcome to this week's episode of Hidden Forces with me, Demetri Kofinas. Today, I speak with Fred Swaniker, a leader and innovator in the area of secondary education. He is the co-founder of three organizations that aim to catalyze a new generation of ethical, entrepreneurial leaders in Africa: the African Leadership Academy, the African Leadership Network, and the African Leadership University. A passionate entrepreneur, Fred also served as Founder and CEO of Terra Education, a global education company that today provides leadership training to about 4,000 people annually at 46 sites in 20 countries. Prior to his work in education, Swaniker co-founded the biotech company, Synexa Life Sciences, with operations in Cape Town, Berlin, London, and Dublin. Swaniker has been recognized as a Young Global Leader by the World Economic Forum and was listed by Forbes Magazine among the top ten young 'power men' in Africa. He has an MBA from Stanford University's Graduate School of Business, where he was named an Arjay Miller Scholar, a distinction awarded to the top 10% of each graduating class. He holds a BA in Economics with a minor in Mathematical Statistics from Macalester College. Fred, welcome to Hidden Forces.

ALU MISSION STATEMENT

The greatest equalizer in the world is education. – Fred Swaniker

At ALU, we resist the pressure to conduct tertiary education the way it has always been done. We challenge existing beliefs so that we only keep what works, and reimagine the rest. Our mission is to create a more prosperous and peaceful Africa by developing the next generation of ethical and entrepreneurial African leaders. We prepare students for a successful and meaningful life and career in the 21st century – with a shared vision for a better Africa.

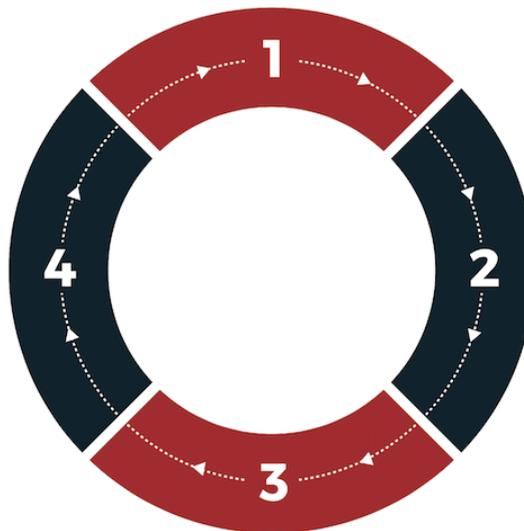
ALU LEARNING MODEL

DISCOVER

Realize what you don't know and what you need to learn

FACILITATED GROUP LEARNING

Apply & extend your learning to other contexts and wider problems



INDIVIDUAL

Learn at your own pace and in your own way

PEER LEARNING

Learn from others who have learned it and can explain it to you

ALU's unique learning model puts the student first. Students drive the bulk of their learning experience individually and with their peers through engaging and meaningful activities.

The University has developed a Learning Cycle that helps students learn new skills and master concepts. This 4-part Learning Cycle incorporates the need to **(1) discover gaps in your knowledge and skillset, (2) self-paced learning, (3) peer learning** (students teaching and learning from each other) and **(4) facilitated group learning**. Every stage of the Learning Cycle is incorporated into the classes you take in your Leadership Core.

Discover

Realize what you don't know and what you need to learn

Part of learning with a purpose is knowing what skills are needed to achieve your mission. Through a series of fun, engaging activities, each of your Leadership Core Courses gives you an opportunity to discover important gaps in your skillset that you work towards developing at ALU

Individual

Learn at your own pace and in your own way.

We recognize that not all students work the same way. In order for you to be most effective at mastering concepts, ALU has created a space where you take ownership of your learning. Using ALU's own academic platform ALUi, you will take courses and work on assigned projects at your own time and pace.

Peer Learning

Learn from others who have learned it and can explain it to you.

Learn by teaching. Work with your peers to exchange knowledge because the more you explain concepts to others, the better you understand them yourself. Peer Learning is an opportunity to learn from others who have a better grasp on concepts and can teach you.

Facilitated Group Learning

Apply and extend your learning to other contexts and wider problems.

Put your learning into perspective by thinking about the applicability of your skills and knowledge. With a faculty facilitator, you will engage in lively class discussions about how to make your classroom experience relevant in the real world- how proposed solutions can solve global problems or help you achieve your mission.



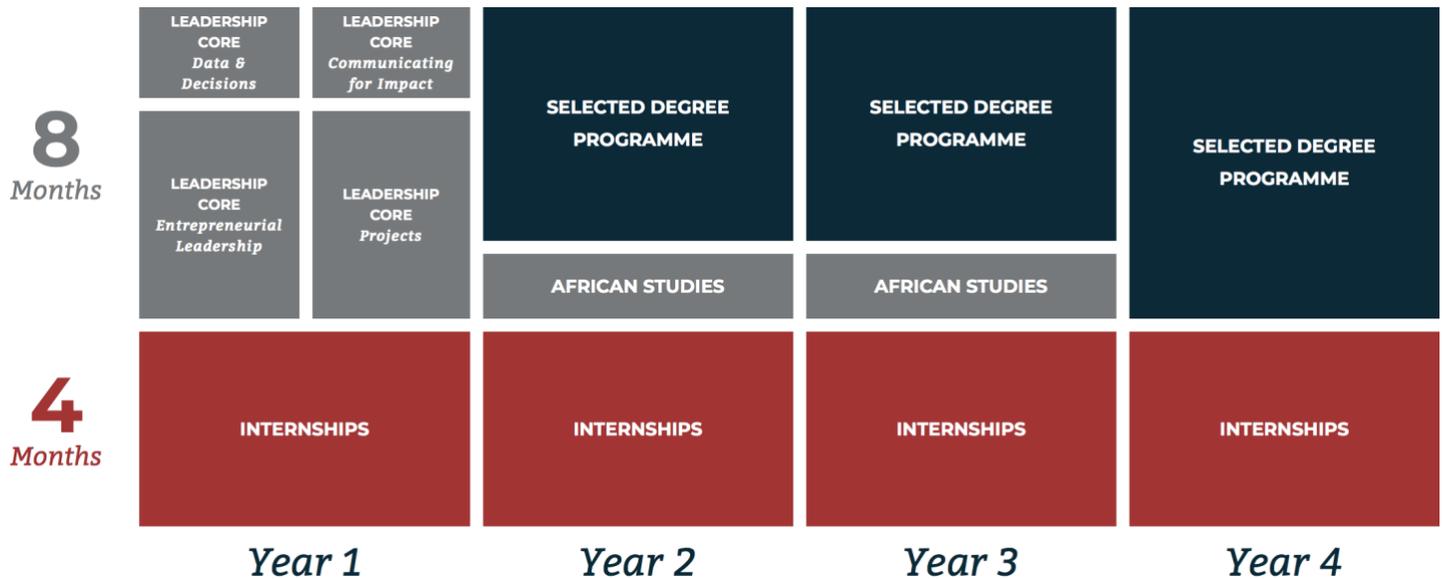
ALU UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM

The ALU Undergraduate Programme is designed with the student’s future in mind. Programmers believe in preparing students for the world of tomorrow filled with new ideas, big challenges and jobs that haven’t even been created yet. They have crafted a learning experience that allows students to continually apply the skills they learn, both in and out of the classroom and in everything they do.

Leadership Core

Year 1: Develop your skills

ALU’s Learning Model is governed by the **7 Meta Skills** identified as necessary skills for any graduate to be highly effective in the real world. Within these 7 Meta Skills are Core Skills that make up the tangible skillsets ALU applies on a daily basis from writing to quantitative reasoning, research and more. The Leadership Core is the platform targeted at helping students’ develop these skills. It is made up of four courses:



DATA & DECISIONS

Learn how to understand data and its implications in the real world

COMMUNICATING FOR IMPACT

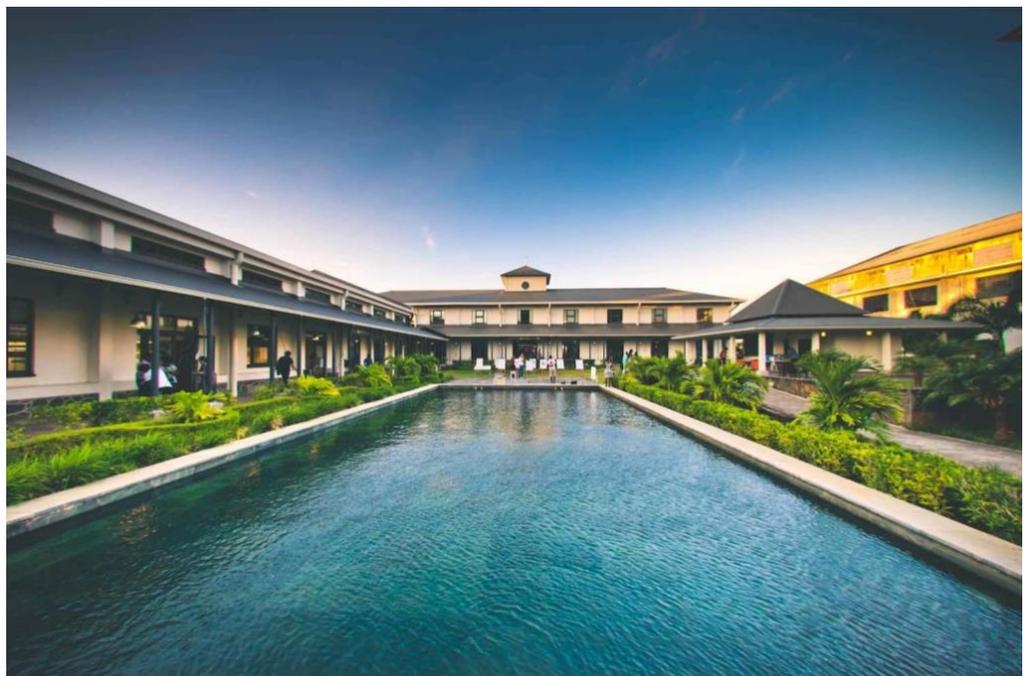
Develop the necessary skills to communicate in a professional setting

ENTREPRENEURIAL LEADERSHIP

Discover the soft skills needed to make a great leader

PROJECTS

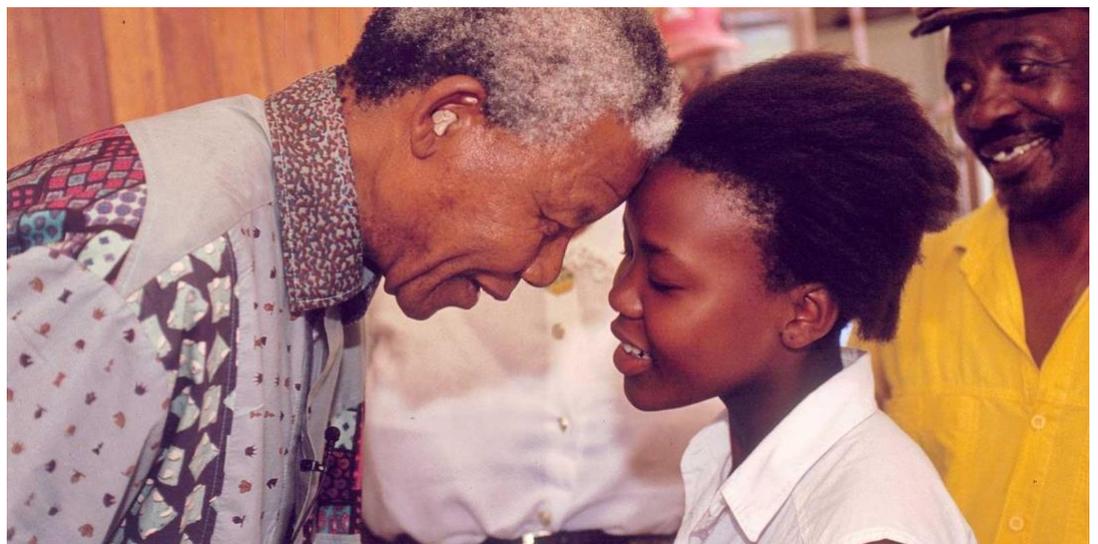
Engage in real life work similar to working in an actual organization



QUESTIONS

1. **The Man** – Who is Fred Swaniker? Where were you born? Where did you grow up?
2. **Growing Up** – Was your upbringing a typical one for an African boy? What about your early life? What do you think most contributed to making you the man you are today? Tell me about the role played by your mother? What was the impact of losing your father at such an early age?
3. **Leaving Africa** – When did you leave Africa? How did that opportunity come together? What did it feel like leaving behind friends and family for greater opportunity elsewhere? How did you reconcile those feelings and how did that experience impact you?
4. **Moonshot** – Why have you referred to what you are doing as a “moonshot in education?” What other, education and non-education projects would you compare it to?
5. **Approach** – I’ve heard you talk about your program being (1) student centered, (2) problem solving oriented, (3) costing “close to zero.” Can you elaborate? What is the problem that you are trying to solve with ALU, ALN, & ALA, and how do these three conditions help you get there?

“Everywhere I went I experienced the wonderful beauty of our continent and saw the resilience and the spirit of our people, and at that time, I realized that I wanted to dedicate the rest of my life to making this continent great” – Fred Swaniker
6. **Mother of Invention** – They say that “necessity is the mother of invention.” What have been the limiting factors that have shaped/forced the solutions you have chosen in your approach? Where else do we see this in Africa? (payments network, governance, etc.)?
7. **African Development Model** – What has the African development model been? How does it differ from what we’ve seen in Asia, which basically borrowed the industrial approach of the United States?
8. **Governance** – What is the future of governance in Africa? You are educating some of the continent’s future leaders. What is the political/governance curriculum and how do you think that what you are doing is going to change the way that politics expresses itself in human societies (starting with Africa)?
9. **Leadership** – You have made the point that institutions are very weak in Africa – weaker than on any other continent in the world. Can you give us an understanding of what this means? What are some examples of how the lack of legacy institutions and an absence of constitutional law have held African countries back in key moments during their development? Can you give us some examples of where good leadership has had the effect of accelerating positive change in a manner that would be impossible in any other country (particularly in the United States and Europe)? What leaders have most inspired you?
10. **Demographics** – Can you tell me



how important you think demographics are and how does that inform both your approach to education in Africa, as well as how successful you think your model can ultimately be? (Japan: 46.1, Germany: 45.9, EU: 42.9, America: 38.1, China: 37.4... AFRICA: 19.5)

11. **Learning Model** – Walk me through your learning model. First, tell me how the cooperative approach of students teaching each other works? Is it really working? How well is it working? Are there cultural dimensions to this that make it work better in an African culture than in a western or eastern one?
12. **Business Model** – How does your business model work? How do you fund your university and academy now, and how do you intend to fund it in the future? How will your “equity stake” approach be implemented? Have you deployed this anywhere?
13. **Global Missions** – How do students go about choosing their majors? I’ve heard you talk about “missions,” and focusing learning around one challenge or problem that a student wishes to solve. Can you tell me how this focus on a major problem and framing it as an opportunity for a degree, work?
14. **Radical** – What are some of the most radical ideas you have around education?
15. **Analogue vs. Digital** – You have said that learning happens best in social settings. Are you able to complement the real-world learning experience with digital tools? How are you doing this?
16. **Elementary** – Is there anything that is being done by you or some other organization in order to improve elementary and grade school education in Africa, similar to what we see with ALU and ALA?

