

EP02 - Education: Transforming Lives, Transforming Africa

0:00:06

(Veda Sunassee CEO | African Leadership University (ALU))

When the learner himself is driving their learning, it inevitably, in the moment, provides them with a deeper intrinsic motivation because they are made to feel that this is yours.

0:00:18

(Gabiella Harry Student | African Leadership College of Higher Education (ALCHE))

Without first addressing the issue of contextualized education and re-education, no real change can be made on the African continent. Scholars need a safe environment in which to explore their ideas, to really be critical, to really think about what they need to support those ideas, how they grow, how they develop, or even reimagine those ideas.

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(James Mwangi CEO | Equity Group Holdings Limited)

If I were to have my way, we would adopt co-education, where you're in class in the morning, and in the afternoon, you are in industry, practicing.

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(Dr. Peter Materu Chief Program Officer | Mastercard Foundation)

We have to do everything we can. The young people in Africa are able to seize and access opportunities in Africa and globally.

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(James Mwangi CEO | Equity Group Holdings Limited)

I don't think there's any choice.

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(VO)

Across Africa, young people are learning with purpose, shaping their futures and their communities. This is not work done alone. It takes families, educators, communities and partners working together. Through programs like the MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program, access is widening, ensuring more young people can learn, lead and contribute.

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(Dr. Peter Materu Chief Program Officer | Mastercard Foundation)

The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program is really very, very aligned to the vision of the Foundation. We believe strongly that everyone, everyone, irrespective of his or her beginnings, should have the opportunity to learn and prosper.

And MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program aims to take young people from very, very disadvantaged backgrounds, the ones that would never step out, when you go out on the street and say, I have a scholarship, looking for those, and then giving them an opportunity to get a quality education, but also wrap around leadership development and give back, a service mindset, so that once they complete their studies, they go back to their communities and start that journey of transformation, but also not only their communities, their countries, and over time break the poverty cycle.

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(VO)

That vision is visible in the spaces where young people live and learn together at the University of Toronto, the MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program, has brought new voices and new leadership into the heart of campus life.

0:02:56

Suying Hugh

Program Manager | Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program
Centre for International Experience, University of Toronto

The story of the collaboration between the University of Toronto with higher education institutions in Africa is really one that I can tell through what work we've done with the Scholars Program.

Through the Scholars Program, we have the chance to work with wonderful faculty across our various departments and disciplines at the University of Toronto. And these faculty, their work and their research span the continent. And it's through this interaction that we have been able to engage many institutions across the continent.

Presently, the University of Toronto serves as the secretariat of the Africa Health Collaborative, bringing together a group of eight universities in Africa and the University of Toronto to advance issues related to health in Africa.

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(VO)

These collaborations lay the foundation for young people to lead with purpose and impact. From this foundation, new models of higher education have emerged, focused on values and the skills Africa needs most.

0:03:56

(Veda Sunassee CEO | African Leadership University (ALU))

We believe that traditional higher education only meets some of the purpose that it is meant to pursue. which is why the African Leadership University, we felt that we needed to add some more to what traditional higher ed usually offers.

And for us, it was important to ground number one, our students in a purpose and a mission driven education. And the way we structure the mission declaration of our students is by giving them a scaffolding and introducing them to what we call the seven grand challenges and the seven great opportunities for the continent of Africa.

The second thing that we do that traditional higher education doesn't always handle, it's giving them real life skills. Very often traditional higher education sees its purpose as to be exclusively for the pursuit of intellectual exploration.

But for us, it is also important that higher ed takes on the responsibility to teach values, to teach ethics, to teach what does it take to transform a society, a system that is in desperate need of change and transformation.

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(VO)

This is a strong call for the responsibilities of higher education. Calls echoed by students themselves, urging education that speaks to Africa's realities.

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(Gabiella Harry Student | African Leadership College of Higher Education (ALCHE))

I found out about ALCHE through a friend who actually used to be a student here. He had great things to say about the institution, and it seemed like the kind of innovative environment that I wanted to be in.

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(VO)

At the African Leadership College of Higher Education, ALCHE, which is the Mauritius campus of African Leadership many students are supported through partnerships within the MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program, which operates across ALU's campuses.

0:06:00

Goitseone Maikano

Student Life Associate | ALCHE

In 2020, I learned about the MasterCard Foundation Scholarship, which I applied for and got accepted to study social sciences here. Being accepted for the MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program meant a lot to me. It reaffirmed the potential that I have and the potential that my mission has in shaping the futures of other African generations to come after me.

What education meant for me at the time was that it was an opportunity to learn about how to solve for problems of the African continent, but also to learn how to work and coexist with other young like -minded people from the continent.

0:06:23

(Gabiella Harry Student | African Leadership College of Higher Education (ALCHE))

ALCHE has given me access to a range of opportunities and The faculty and staff here are extremely supportive and extremely invested in the individual success of students. My worldview has actually changed a bit.

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VO

Individual transformation is matched by an educational model designed to equip every student for real challenges, moving beyond theory into practice.

0:07:10

**Stephen Naicken
Director of Academic Programmes | ALCHE**

We're preparing students not just to learn, but to solve real challenges that the continent at large faces. Our students are being empowered through our educational model, not just to learn the theory, but also to be able to engage in the practical elements as well.

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(VO)

Equipping students with skills to serve their communities is just the beginning. True transformation means seeing leadership as universal and opening doors so every young person has the chance to grow.

0:07:42

(Veda Sunassee CEO | African Leadership University (ALU))

We do believe that every person has potential, including leadership potential, right? And if that holds true, then we need to lower the barrier to entry. We want to make sure that we are not sort of already pre -selecting people who have a predisposition already to being leaders, to being entrepreneurs, to taking initiatives, that there are others as well who are able to come through.

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(VO)

That belief becomes real in the hands of students, where leadership is learned by doing.

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Goitseone Maikano

Student Life Associate | ALCHE

I started believing that leadership was possible for me almost as soon as I started my studies at ALC. Within the first three months of my studies here, I received an internship opportunity.

Internships have always been an integral part of our learning, and I've maintained internships throughout my study at ALC, and I learned through that what leadership looks like and how I can practice it.

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(VO)

And this individual growth evolves into something larger, a community of alumni whose connections carry the impact well beyond graduation.

0:08:47

Jesutomisin Ipinmoye

Student Success Systems Designer | ALCHE

In the act of exposing students to the ideas and principles behind what they might be, the greater idea of what they are learning is a very foundational way of them increasing their ability to repeat these skills and grow on these skills.

So this is how we think we are transcending the barrier of just learning and giving them even more ammunition to change communities they're going to enter.

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(VO)

Building movements of young leaders also demands that equity in education goes deeper than access alone. It must include the full support needed for every learner to thrive.

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(James Mwangi CEO | Equity Group Holdings Limited)

Empowerment through scholarship is not enough. to payment or is not equal to payment office. It ought to be an integrated program that centers on the child. The MasterCard Foundation program focuses on an integrated approach.

Access education, access health, access mentoring, access social psycho support, get support of uniform, transport, and mentoring within a school setup, and a guardian teacher, and a guardian staff member of equity. So it's a comprehensive package.

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(VO)

As that vision evolved, a partnership within the MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program extended access earlier in the journey, supporting secondary school learners through the Wings

to Fly program, and opening pathways to leadership for students from more vulnerable backgrounds.

0:10:28

(James Mwangi CEO | Equity Group Holdings Limited)

Our focus on education started in 1998. We said we would develop official leaders of Africa. We called the program equity leadership program. And it was to picking the most gifted children and transitioning them, equipping them as they go to university to choose that right careers, to evolve them, to trigger the instincts of leadership while young. But we had observed that all our Equity Leadership Program scholars came from middle income. And that was the puzzle we were trying to solve.

And as we were dialoguing with Reeta just during that occasion, we realized that children from very humble backgrounds were not able to complete paying primary school. So they were not eligible to enter into our program.

So they were dropping out or being dropped out. excluded from our program. We realized we have this problem. And on the other hand, MasterCard Foundation wants to avail opportunities to the most needy in society.

And we said maybe we could create and give them wings so that they can fly from free paying primary education, transition to secondary, and then become beneficiaries of equity leadership program when they finish secondary. And that changed the metrics.

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VO

Across Africa and beyond, partnerships link local schools to global campuses, enabling young people to thrive and institutions to grow with them.

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Suying Hugh

Program Manager | Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program
Centre for International Experience, University of Toronto

The collaboration with the MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program really has had a transformative influence on the campus. The diversity of thought and experience that the scholars bring have shaped the classrooms and residences in which they study and they live and they participate. They have placed themselves in leadership roles in student government, in their colleges, in their departments. All of this, after over 10 years of partnership, has really made its mark.

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(VO)

Over time, what begins as opportunity grows into purpose. MasterCard Foundation scholars learning to carry leadership in their own journeys.

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Goitseone Maikano

Student Life Associate | ALCHE

Being a scholar includes a lot of leadership. It includes a lot of ownership and it includes a strong commitment to excellence. And so at every point in my journey, I had to reimagine what growth looked like and how I could take full advantage of all of the opportunities made available to me.

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(VO)

Beyond individual growth, leadership also depends on the systems of knowledge that surround it. How data is gathered, shared and owned across Africa.

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Jesutomisin Ipinmoye

Student Success Systems Designer | ALCHE

I also think there is a lot of support we need in terms of data. A lot of Africa's data is scattered in different places and we need a lot of help in being able to bring all this information about Africa's past, all this information about what people are doing in different spaces and centralise them.

Working hand in hand with people who can develop localised AI support systems, I'm talking data centres and local computes, for us to be able to own both our compute power and the data in which we feed the compute.

0:14:02

(VO)

These collaborations extend beyond classrooms, carried forward through knowledge and mentorship.

0:14:09

Suying Hugh

Program Manager | Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program
Centre for International Experience, University of Toronto

Rich collaboration, knowledge, development, and the opportunity to work with some beautiful young people from across the African continent and to help them shape their future. These are some of the fruits of the collaboration with the MasterCard Foundation.

0:14:25

Goitseone Maikano
Student Life Associate | ALCHE

Mentorship played a big role in how I now lead. In my new leadership position, I try to constantly avail myself to my students and to the people in my community for them to know that they can come to me at any time and I will try to help them always to the best of my abilities.

0:14:43

Dr. Peter Materu
Chief Program Officer | Mastercard Foundation

The leader that we are trying to develop as part of the vision of the MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program is a young person with that service mindset, with the give back mindset, with the focus on transforming lives, starting with his own or her own, but also that of his or her family, that of his or her community, and that of the country, and maybe globally. It's simply not a leader who is only about me.

But it's about me and the other. It's about leading self and leading others. It's about improving the lives of my life and the lives of others, my community and other communities.

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VO

Building that kind of leader means higher education must go beyond academics, embedding entrepreneurship and values at its core.

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(Veda Sunassee CEO | African Leadership University (ALU))

So if we want that as an outcome, then we cannot just, like traditional higher education often does, prepare people to become job seekers. We need them to become job creators as well, which is why embedded in that foundation, that common core, that foundational year that all of them have to go through is deeply rooted in entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial values.

So, our students go through multiple incubator processes to come up with ideas, to test their ideas. They're introduced to investors. We create simulations. We make them appreciate how the world of entrepreneurship works, such that by the time they graduate, many of them would go on into entrepreneurship.

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(VO)

The test of education is whether it reaches beyond the classroom connecting learning to opportunity and the transformations ahead.

0:16:33

(James Mwangi CEO | Equity Group Holdings Limited)

Access to education is not an end to itself. It's a means to access to opportunities, economic opportunities in the marketplace. Thinking about the future of work should inform education. The environment is very dynamic. Technology is changing.

0:16:55

(James Mwangi CEO | Equity Group Holdings Limited)

Economies are changing. Demographics are changing. And essentially, technology, as an enabler, is redefining how we do things. So if education itself is not equipping scholars, they then graduate from schools ill-equipped.

0:17:14

(Gabriella Harry Student | African Leadership College of Higher Education (ALCHE))

I think education in Africa can be tailored to solve problems and to create global impact by adding nuance and complexity and actually acknowledging the specific African context and African situation. I think for a long time, curriculums across the continent have been crafted with the West in mind and to serve the West.

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(VO)

The demand for African-centred learning is answered with student-centred models, where growth goes beyond the classroom.

0:17:55

Suying Hugh

Program Manager | Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program
Centre for International Experience, University of Toronto

We really focus here on a student-centred approach, a student-focused model. We want to meet students where they are and looking at the holistic development of the student. We want students to be the driving force in constructing really their story, their story of learning and their academic and personal journey here at the University of Toronto. The two can't be separate.

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(VO)

Away from the classrooms, scholars carry their learning into projects that respond to the realities and hopes of Africa.

0:18:25

(Gabriella Harry Student | African Leadership College of Higher Education (ALCHE))

So right now, apart from my academics, I'm exploring projects in the arts and culture space and as well as the educational space for social impact. I see various knowledge gaps in several industries across the continent and I think we need.

One of the major problems facing Africa is access to knowledge and specifically access to contextualized knowledge. So I'm researching this problem currently with the hopes of finding a solution. And ALCHE has given me the platform to access experts, and their opinions have been really critical in researching this project.

I hope to create a solution that addresses this problem, whether that is an expert database or a knowledge database or something in between. I just want to create something that makes knowledge about African culture, conservation, healthcare, whatever industry, more accessible and actionable.

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(VO)

The drive to create solutions individually is reflected in the data, showing how graduates emerge as problem solvers.

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(Veda Sunassee CEO | African Leadership University (ALU))

When we look at the data, right, About 38%, 39 % of our alumni, once they graduate from African national university, they go on into entrepreneurship. About 27 % go on into full -time entrepreneurship.

As you can see, our model is one that goes just beyond pursuit of education and intellectual pursuit and intellectual curiosity. It is also one that endows them with very important skills to make them problem solvers, entrepreneurs, job creators for the continent and for the world?

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(James Mwangi CEO | Equity Group Holdings Limited)

I think the last six years, the program has scaled out to between 9 ,000 scholarships a year to 13 ,000. Last year, But one, we had the highest number of scholars, 45 ,000 scholars in secondary school at the same time. between Form 1 and Form 4.

We are now graduating these 9 ,000, 11 ,000 scholars and preparing them for university opportunities. And looking at these kids graduating at the age of 18, in the next four, five years, we'll be releasing that 45 ,000. from universities.

0:21:12

(James Mwangi CEO | Equity Group Holdings Limited)

And that is what we are then preparing. What will they do? Can we introduce entrepreneurship to them? Can we provide financial literacy? We're very lucky because of the reputation this program has had. I've seen, for instance, Huawei has given us 10 ,000 scholarships for coding, free for those kids, so that we start preparing them with the technology.

0:21:39

(James Mwangi CEO | Equity Group Holdings Limited)

Well, somebody else has given AI 20,000 scholarships, and so we are now preparing them for the marketplace. We have now achieved scale, and I expect us to have a significant impact at scale, and hopefully start changing society.

0:22:01

(VO)

Scale is one measure of impact, but the deeper story is seen in the lives transformed. How students themselves change and how they change the world around them.

0:22:12

Dr. Peter Materu
Chief Program Officer | Mastercard Foundation

Yeah, you know, when I see those who have gone through the program, and I travel around the continent, I just came from Ethiopia, I met some of those who came from the program from Gondar University, which is focusing on young people with disability, most of them are vision impaired, but also mobility impaired and so on.

Travel around, see interns, we have a number of them in each of our offices, and you see a different human being. And when you think about these young people, when you see them when they come in, and their lack of confidence, discomfort being in this environment with different kinds of people, and then you see them at the end of their studies, you know that something is happening, something has changed. And furthermore, those who have been out there for a while, they are doing things.

0:23:12

Suying Hugh
Program Manager | Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program
Centre for International Experience, University of Toronto

They can have the best of both worlds, of all worlds, and they can really develop a global perspective. The world we live in, it's changing so quickly you need to be innovative, you need to be entrepreneurial, and you really need to have that opportunity to share.

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So whether we are at institutions in Nairobi or we are at institutions in Accra or in Kigali, that we can work across borders and that the future of education in Africa continues to be global, it continues to be responsive to the needs.

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(James Mwangi CEO | Equity Group Holdings Limited)

There are many lessons of design and execution that governments, foundations, philanthropists, private sector could pick from this programme to better access to education for outcomes or for better outcomes in changing lives, building capacity and opening pathways for young people.

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(VO)

Reaching more students raises the next challenge. How can education stay true to Africa's needs?

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Goitseone Maikano
Student Life Associate | ALCHE

I think curriculums that are more tailored to the African context and to African needs are what will allow Africa and Africans to realize our potential.

0:24:37

(VO)

The call for education rooted in Africa's context points to something deeper, learning as a journey each person must shape for themselves.

0:24:48

Suying Hugh
Program Manager | Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program
Centre for International Experience, University of Toronto

Education is not something cast in stone. Education is something that you are going to construct and that you are going to create. And that really is the best way that you're going to get the best out of. an education, is really understanding yourself and being true to yourself.

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(VO)

But education is also a responsibility of institutions, universities charged with shaping creators as well as seekers.

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(Veda Sunassee CEO | African Leadership University (ALU))

I think universities on the continent need to realize that if they don't prepare the smartest people on this continent, the talent of this continent, to tackle some of the continent's biggest, most important pressing needs, that if they are not training young people to become job creators as much as they are job seekers, that if they are not preparing young people to identify and solve some of the major structural systemic problems that we have, that if they are not preparing people to leverage and tap into the multitude of opportunities that exist on the continent for job creation, then we are not doing our job.

0:26:01

(VO)

Preparing the next generation also means embracing innovation and technology, which is now very central to how learning must evolve.

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(James Mwangi CEO | Equity Group Holdings Limited)

We need to think how to get out of our challenges. We need to be critical not to do things the way we have done them in the past. We need innovative, creative minds. We have to introduce technology early in our education program. So we should not be interacting with technology after we have finished school, because we need to learn it.

0:26:33

(James Mwangi CEO | Equity Group Holdings Limited)

It's not something you adopt. It's something you learn, adopt, and then develop the instinct of using to frame our models to the problem you have in the marketplace.

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(VO)

The push to embed technology early takes on new urgency as artificial intelligence begins to respond work across the world.

0:26:57

Stephen Naicken

Director of Academic Programmes | ALCHE

We are in a moment of change across the world with artificial intelligence. It is rapidly changing the world around us. The world of work is very different. We cannot assume that globalisation, the principles of globalisation will continue and that work will naturally migrate to this continent.

So we need to be prepared for a very different world and a very different future. And with that, I believe partnership with government and in particular with technology companies will be incredibly important so that we are preparing our students for the reality of the world that exists once they leave after their degrees.

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(VO)

For young people to thrive in that future, opportunities must be within reach, both across Africa and worldwide.

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(Dr. Peter Materu Chief Program Officer | Mastercard Foundation)

We have to do everything we can so that the young people in Africa are able to seize and access opportunities in Africa and globally. For the MasterCard Foundation, it is our focus. We set 2030 as a milestone, but really, we're here for the long term.

