The Case for an African Centered Education System in Africa: A Case Study on African Leadership Academy, South Africa

By

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Abstract

This thesis makes a case for education reform in Africa. It argues for an education system that is African centered and poised to develop Africans who can serve as the agents and leaders of Africa’s transformation.

Through a case study of the leadership institution - African Leadership Academy (ALA) whose goal is to develop the next generation of African leaders that will transform Africa, this thesis illustrates the potential of an African centered education system in bringing about development in the continent. Also, the dreams, aspirations, and views of an important but often neglected group in deliberations about how to develop Africa – the average African (especially African youth) are presented. In so doing, the thesis provides a framework upon which an African centered education system in Africa can be developed from.
Acknowledgements

African scholars stand on the shoulders of giants and super heroes/sheroes such as Kwame Nkurumah, Julius Nyerere, Patrice Lumumba, Nelson Mandela, Yaa Asantewaa, Queen Amina and millions of children who spent their lives fighting or being humiliated for the sake of the continent. These heroes/sheroes have laid a solid foundation for Africa’s transformation to take place. They have made it possible for Africans like me to stick out our heads in dignity and to show up on the battleground for Africa’s transformation with the courage to aim for the ideal and the patience to persevere till the dream is realized. They have armed me with a sense of purpose because that which they were fighting for is still not completely achieved. Through their activism and scholarship, they have given me words and a conceptual framework to articulate my desires and arguments. To these people, I acknowledge, pay homage, and offer this thesis back to them.

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as I use the knowledge they have provided thus far to deliver on a brighter future for the upcoming generation.

On a personal note, this thesis is one step in a long journey towards transforming the continent through education. One of my dreams is to see every African child receive **free quality and cognitively restoring education**. Through my activism and the social capital that I will accumulate throughout the journey, I hope to facilitate the process of ensuring that such education becomes adopted as policy and is put into practice.

As I reflect on my motivation and the destination with this lifelong dream of contributing to the rebirth of my motherland, it is hard to imagine how I would have started the journey, gained inspiration or completed this thesis without the spiritual super heroes I have in Heaven. Even when I was in solitude, I have always felt unexplainable joy and a divine sense of purpose. I always felt like my mother’s Ibo name suggests – *Chi-nonyerem* (God dwells within me, God hangs out with me). Good God, I am grateful and humbled. I ask that you continue to use me as an instrument to do your will on earth.

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To my Unveiling Africa family comprising of executive team members, trustee members and volunteers from around the world, my sustained passion in this field is because of all of you. By believing in me and remaining committed to Unveiling Africa even in my absence, you gave me the license to develop myself and nurture my passion through this Masters. Thank you for your support.

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**Foreword**

I come into this thesis burdened with memories of my pathway to graduate school and how my interest in education reform for Africa’s development originated. I was 16 at the time and recently moved to Grand Prairie, Alberta to begin my University Degree. I was surprised by how little Canadians knew about Africa, and taken aback when people I met viewed my traditional clothing as a costume.

When I arrived at the University of Alberta to complete my Bachelor’s degree, it seemed that every student group was organizing a fundraiser to help Africa. In my classes, I was inundated with anecdotes about how the West set Africa up for failure and how Westerners have a moral imperative to help. I wondered: which Africa is everyone trying to save? What is wrong with Africa? When I lived in Nigeria, I never thought that we had a problem. I began to research, and discovered how little I knew about the history and socio-economic situation in my country and continent. It pained and angered me to realize that I had lived in the midst of social injustice and inequities — child traders, mob justice, gender violence and corruption amongst others but never questioned them. I could not understand how our education system was not geared towards ensuring that the so-called ‘leaders of tomorrow’ (young Nigerians) know about these issues so we will know what constitutes a better tomorrow. I did not understand how these issues became so natural in society that it never came up throughout my teenage years as a problem that must be tackled or talked about. When I went back home for holidays and started asking questions like: Why are the roads so bad? Why aren’t we taught to take ownership for the society so that we may become passionate about societal issues in our high school years? Why weren’t we taught about our history in high school? Why is access to basic needs
such as electricity, water, good education that is readily available in the West to second-
class citizens (International students) like me not available to Nigerian citizens in their
home country? Why is it that I felt like Nigerians were not valued by their government
and in comparison to my Canadian experience, animals in Canada were treated better?
Why are Nigerians abroad more valued than Nigerians in Nigeria? The responses I
received were not satisfactory. For the most part, everyone had the usual Nigerian
resignation: “this is how it is”. I was confused and did not understand how these bizarre
social realities had become so normal that no one questioned them. On the other hand, I
was flabbergasted and angry. I felt cheated by the Nigerian education system and my
upbringing. On behalf of my continent and country, I felt extremely insulted to learn
about my country and continent in a foreign country. I was convinced that if I had known
more about these issues as a high school student, was made to see that I play a pivotal
role in changing my country and was equipped with the mindset to do so, I would have
made strategic decisions in my academic pursuits so that it directly benefits my country.
My anger set me off on a rage for change. I had to do something. It was quite clear to me
that fixing Nigeria and Africa should be the primary responsibility of its citizens. We
have to take responsibility for our responsibility!
Armed with this perspective, I found it even more perplexing that Canadians believed
that they could really “help and save” Africa through the pennies and loonies they raised
from Bake Sales to buy goats and build villages in Africa. I did not quite understand how
people actually believed that Africa was going to develop without Africans being in the
drivers’ seat of their own development; without Africans taking leadership for their
problems and in most cases like mine, without Africans knowing that they had serious
problems to fix. I did not understand why people were not bothered about asking why Africans could not help themselves. It beats logic and I thought that perhaps I had not seen the full picture.

In the interim, I decided to focus on the future and began to research what this big picture could be. I started exploring how I could get young Africans like me to see their role and responsibility in bringing about change in the continent.

In 2006, I started a non-profit organization (Unveiling Africa) focused on achieving this purpose. I became passionately interested in influencing Nigeria’s education system so that high school students will not continue to graduate without a nuanced understanding of their society and what they can do to contribute to change. From an academic and extracurricular standpoint, understanding, theorizing and taking steps to put Africans especially the upcoming generation (youth) in the drivers’ seat of the continent’s future became my life’s mission.

Consequently, in my academic career as a Masters student, I have focused on understanding how the formal and informal education system in Africa starting from Nigeria can be radically reformed for the purpose of an African led and driven development. Beyond a structural education reform focused on infrastructure development and increasing access to education, my education reform interest also includes curriculum content reform amongst other things. In other words, I am interested in aligning classroom content in African classrooms to an African social change agenda that foregrounds the African person as the principal instigator and facilitator of transformative development in the continent.
In this vein, one of the core purposes of my thesis is to make a case for an African Education system that is informed by and rooted in an African centered and African driven development plan. The end goal of the education system is Africa’s transformation through the citizens. To illustrate this point, I conducted a case study on an innovative African centered and driven leadership institution – African Leadership Academy, South Africa. African Leadership Academy (ALA) equips African youth under the age of 19 or at the pre-university stage with the skillsets, passion and mindset they require to contribute to Africa’s transformation during their formative years and throughout their lifetime. For the study, I interviewed ten students and nine teachers/administrators about the vision of the academy, the academy’s program, the role of Africans in Africa’s development and their experience as members of the institution.

The relevance of this research is in numerous folds.

For far too long Africa has been a charity and problem case for the world especially in the area of quality education for Africans, African leadership and poverty. Through this research, a concrete educational alternative that is driven by Africans and for the purpose of Africa’s transformation is presented for further development and policy adoption.

Also, the voice of an important but often neglected group (African youth) is foregrounded. Scholars, activists and development practitioners are able to incorporate the view of young Africans in an overarching theory of change for Africa. Importantly, this research will contribute to the development of a theory of African development through education and youth engagement.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Personal reflection: learning more about African centered development

The non-profit organization - Unveiling Africa (UVA) that I founded in 2006 seeks to engage Africans on their role in development and provide a platform for African teenagers to lead social change projects within their communities. After two active years (2010 – 2012) in Nigeria where I worked with more than 2000 teenagers in various leadership and mentoring programs such as nation building conferences, magazine publications, teen led community service projects across the country, I still felt like we were far from understanding what it will take to bring a critical mass of Africans to the fore of their development in a way that was transformative and natural. I had a lot of questions about what exactly it will entail to enable an African led and driven development to emerge. However, a few things were clear. Bringing Africans to the fore of their development would require more than a point in time activity such as a leadership development event. It will be an ongoing engagement that brings about a lifestyle and a change in perspective and mindset. This mindset had to be fuelled by an embodied knowledge that centers Africa’s transformation. This embodied knowledge will influence how Africans see the world in relation to the continent and how they equip themselves for the continent’s transformation.

In search of what this knowledge/perspective is and my curiosity about what it could look like in an educational context, I decided to pursue this Masters degree at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. In no time, I quickly learnt that things were a little more complex than they appeared. The holes I observed in my
educational experience had a complicated history and politics that was rooted in the colonial past of my country, which was not adequately problematized or talked about in the country. At best, it was talked about briefly, like something that happened in the past. Social reality was presented as natural and unchangeable. Thus, the fact that people like me received an education hollow of relevant day-to-day Nigerian life issues and conscientization but learnt about the British monarchy and Shakespeare was not entirely accidental. It was in line with a ‘neutral’ and ‘natural’ looking but British setup social system that presented individual economic prosperity as obtainable in the West (getting good western education, getting a job, buying a car, buying a house, getting married (for the women become a Mrs. and having children) as the ultimate purpose of life. But after my undergraduate degree in Edmonton, Alberta I had gone through that cycle of getting a Western degree, getting a Western job, buying a car and living a fairly good life for my age but I was still deeply dissatisfied. I still felt unskilled and incapable of contributing at an optimal way to my country and continent. Despite what I thought was my ‘Western enough English’ (also known as “Phone-tics” in Nigeria), I was always rudely reminded that I did not perfectly fit into the Canadian society through questions like: “How come you speak good English”? “I did not know Nigerians speak good English!” “Where are you from?” “Are there, like elephants in your house?” “Are you on a scholarship?” “Are you on government support?” One fellow in the condescending sympathy he felt obligated to have for people like me, offered to contribute $20 to my school fees! He went on to tell me that instead of permitting his family to come visit me in Nigeria, I will have to come meet them in South Africa.
Given these experiences, I had no choice but to claim my difference. But in return, I found that I had nothing different to offer. The difference in skin color between my White Canadian friends and me should have meant nuanced knowledge about my real culture, tradition and values. To my shame, I found that I did not have any different knowledge or embody a different culture. I came to realize that I did not know anything about my real history and English had no correlation with my real history. I found that I knew more about Western countries than African countries. I could not tell people about my story growing up because there were simply no stories to tell. I spent most of my teenage life in boarding school or locked up inside the house. I could not tell people about my tradition because I had grown up practicing the same tradition (Christmas, Easter and Valentine’s Day amongst others) as them. In all of these, I felt empty! I knew that something had been robbed from me and without finding it; I will really not be able to lend my voice to this African led development.

My journey of self-discovery and increased awareness about our ‘neutral’ looking societal structures that Africans appear to be trapped in began in May 2012. The Democratic Approach to Pedagogy class taught by Prof. John Portelli that I took helped me to problematize the neutrality and naturalness of contemporary society. It helped me to understand the logic of my ignorance and Africa’s predicament. The Anti-Racism and Anti-Colonial and Indigenous Knowledge classes (taught by Prof. George Dei and Prof. Njoki Wane) that I took provided me with a conceptual framework to unearth suppressed memories, theorize, express and problematize my experiences from Nigeria. In high school, I had learnt Colonialism as a simple impersonal fact but through these classes, it started to become a personal truth (Adichie, 2012) that I found influenced me without my
permission. Without me knowing it, it had been the frame of my life’s picture. In line with Wane’s (2006) observation, I realized that I had become a product of Western commodification. I was a footnote in someone else’s script for the world (Asante, 2007).

In search for the truth for the benefit of Africa

Upon this awakening, I had more questions than answers for myself and the world: How can I be at the center of my continent’s development if I do not even know who I am and how I and people like me have come to exist in this world in relation to others? How can I be a major contributor to my continent’s development if I do not even know about my continent or if I am just learning to love my continent? How can Africans as a collective lead their continent if we do not know our true history? The history that we learn about was at best from the beginning of slavery and at worst, from the end of colonialism, which positions us as people without agency and in need of Western civilization and modernization. How can Africans as a collective contribute to their development and enrich the world if we do not know our culture? How can Africans advance their societies in a truly unique and sustainable way if we are unable to revitalize our minds through the knowledge, failings, and success of our ancestors? How can we really cater to the increasing needs of our people if we do not put a social and economic value on our knowledge, culture and traditions?

Even though these questions are rhetorical, they do however reflect the contradictions in the African education system when one thinks of it as a potential vehicle for transformative and sustainable development. If my educational experience is similar to the majority of Africans who attended high school in Africa, then I can testify that our education system fails us woefully and makes us incapable of contributing to our
continent’s development in a germane and at an optimal level. When it comes to what matters – awareness of self, knowledge of history and identity in the world, ability/freedom to advance and share one’s culture, and being able to contribute to the advancement of humanity throughout one’s life, the system and its emanating experiences, humiliate, cognitively abuses, strips Africans of their human dignity, and disempowers Africans both on a personal and at a communal level. How can several generations be denied essential truths about their heritage or inherit a lie about who they really are and how they have come to relate with the world? With this type of education received, isn’t it deceitful and illogical to advocate and expect this generation to contribute to their continent’s development in a transformative way? Who benefits from the kind of ‘development’ that emanates from the contemporary African societal context and the education system? From my experience, the education system involuntarily turns Africans into imposters and caricatures of neither their true selves nor the Westerners who they have grown up trying to imitate and aspiring to be like.

Despite this grim, there is hope because the future of the Future is always in the present. That is, we can design the future. More and more Africans like myself are coming to the realization that the prevalent theory of change or lack of one and the dominant development framework that directs our societies marginalizes Africans and privileges a minority at the expense of our culture, values, history amongst other things. We can now read in between the lines. More of us are able to deconstruct our reality and envision an alternative reality driven by a development framework that depends on our collective will to create change, our intelligence, collaboration, culture, history, values and strengths to succeed. We also see the power of education; it can be tailored to support a development
plan geared towards this alternative reality. We also see our greatest assets; our youthful population - over 63% of Africans is under the age of 25 (UNESCO, 2012) and African youth are yearning to be meaningfully engaged for positive change. Literally, we the youth are the future and our collective future as Africans is ours to design.

It is in this possibility of creating a brighter future through an African centered development, a transformed education system and the engagement of young people that my research situates itself. For far too long, Africa has been at the mercy of the world’s condescending sympathy thus non-Africans diagnose the continent’s problems and prescribe solutions. It is time for Africans to get into the driver’s seat of their development and tell the world what the continent needs and how to engage with us.
The case for a reformed education system in Africa

There is a consensus; Western led and driven effort to achieve development in Africa has not been effective. In the past five decades, more than $1 trillion dollars has been spent on aid in Africa (Easterly, 2006). Yet, at least $1.4 billion people live on less than $1.25/day and basic needs such as access to quality education, water, security and social security remains a luxury for a critical mass. Over 40% of the world’s population that lacks access to drinking water lives in Sub-Saharan Africa (World Health Organization, 2012). Disturbingly, at 29 million children, Sub-Saharan Africa has the largest population of school age children who are not in school (UNESCO, 2012). The UNESCO 2012 Education For All report reveals that 50% of the 15-19 year old youth in 23 Sub-Saharan African countries lack foundational skills in education.

Even though the economies of Sub-Saharan African countries are rapidly expanding (2012 average of 4.8% compared to -0.2% for EU-27 area countries), commentators describe this growth as a “jobless growth” (Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2013). The unemployment rate amongst the continent’s majority is staggering: 60% of Africa’s unemployed are between the ages of 15-24 (African Economic Outlook, 2013). Region wise, unemployment rate in North Africa is at 23.7% and Sub Saharan Africa has the highest rate of poverty amongst working youth (40.1% at $1.25/day) (International Labour Organization, 2013).

Just like other parts of the world, corruption is rampant in African countries. In the 2013 Transparency International Report, 90% of the Sub-Saharan African countries public sector ranked high on the corruption perception index. In Africa’s most populous country - Nigeria, It is estimated that $400 billion has been stolen by Nigerian leaders between
Beyond corruption, there are African paradoxes and mysteries. Even though 63% of the world’s uncultivated arable land is in Africa and Agriculture accounts for 25% of Africa’s GDP, only 2% of the Africa’s youth study agriculture (Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2013). According to the Mo Ibrahim 2013 report, Sub-Saharan Africa has the lowest share of engineering graduates in the world. Yet, being a resource rich continent, Africa will need skilled engineers to drive the continent. As recent as March 2014, the editorial of a respected Nigerian Newspaper (Vanguard, 2014) reported the official removal of History from Nigeria’s national curriculum. The reason proffered by the Nigerian government is interesting. Apparently, Nigerian students’ lack interest in History and there is a paucity of History teachers. Prior to this time, not every Nigerian secondary school student was required to take History; only students in the Arts stream at the senior secondary school level have the option of taking History.

Given Africa’s rapidly increasing population - by 2050, it is estimated that half of Africa’s population will be under 24, (Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2013) and the crucial role the continent plays and will continue to play on the global stage; the urgent need to stir Africa towards a sustainable and transformative path cannot be overstated. Fittingly, numerous scholars and institutions have lent their voice to this quest. Afegbua and Adejuwon (2012) point to the leadership selection process in Africa as an impediment to development. Owoye and Bissessar (2012) posit that Africa’s bad governance and corruption problems are symptoms of leadership and institutional failure. African Leadership Academy (ALA) and Mo Ibrahim Foundation would concur. Corruption of all sorts including what is referred to as the “Quiet Corruption” (World Bank, 2010) includes
the host of issues many contend stalls Africa’s development.

Numerous scholars including but not limited to (Muei & Martin, 2009; Nkomo, 2011; Imoka, 2010) posit that these obvious and prevalent issues are manifestations of a more fundamental problem. Imoka (2010) argues that if leadership is a problem in Africa then “followership” and the nature of the current society are also problems. Followership in this context refers to the general citizen base. It includes how citizens engage with their political leaders for an economically and culturally responsive democracy, why they engage with their leaders, and how they contribute to or shape societal norms. The nature of society includes prevailing societal ideologies and the values and norms it rewards. Also, socio-economic-political-cultural factors that determines who participates in civic action for a more responsive democracy, the terms on which they do so and the rewards/losses for doing so. For example, participation in disruptive and sustained civic action is a luxury Africans who live on less than $2/day cannot afford. This group of people especially those with families are preoccupied with the challenge of day-to-day survival. Thus, speaking, thinking or doing something for social change has become a pastime for the elite who have the passion, time and skills to commit. Even when the elite participate, their interests are usually not in line with that of the critical mass.

The fundamental problem Africa may be faced with, Imoka argues, is that the prevailing societal ideologies and socio-economic conditions for the African majority amongst other things hinders the collective capacity of citizens to drive Africa’s transformation. Consequently, the root of prevailing societal ideologies, the quality and nature of citizenship and the vehicle (education) that nurtures it needs to be investigated and revamped.
Nkomo (2011) and Muei & Martin (2009) make clear that Africa’s current predicament is deeply rooted in its colonial past and remnant structures. Transforming current day society will require a trip back to the drawing board. A critical extension of these arguments is what Ake (1996) contends in his acclaimed book - *Democracy and Development in Africa*. According to Ake, “The problem is not so much that development has failed in Africa as that it was never really on the agenda in the first place” (Ake, 2006, p.1). Real development, he contends, will be driven by a critical mass of Africans in pursuit of a culturally relevant social democracy (Olaopa, 2012). Such democracy will be rooted in and will foreground the political, social and economic livelihood of the people. Consequently, Ake suggests that sustainable development will be achieved if and when Africans drive their own development. A key principle of this theory is that Africans must be the agents, means and ends of their own development.

This thesis is in accord with Ake (2006) and argues for the engagement of Africans and the creation of an education system that equips them to be the agents, means and ends of their development. Interestingly, education in the continent has been noted to be antithesis to Africans driving their own development (Obanya, 2011; Oluniyi, 2013; Abdi, 2012). Abdi (2008) has suggested that educational systems in Africa are undemocratic and perpetuate oppressive colonial structures. Current educational structures are the same inherited from colonial times and as such are Eurocentric. Olaniyi (2011) reports that student enrolment in critical classes such as citizenship education is devoid of learning. According to him, students learn how to spell irrelevant things like systems of government such as the monarchy, states and capital. My personal schooling experience in Nigeria also supports this. I did not learn about my history in a nuanced and
Nigerian and Ibo (my ethnic group) centered way. Important historic events in my country such as the Biafra War were relegated from the curriculum but we were required to read Shakespeare and Macbeth. To say the least, these European texts are irrelevant to my culture and history. Neither do they enhance my understanding of my history and culture. However, European texts such as these have a place in the Nigerian curriculum – secondary texts and in certain cases, as an elective. To thrive in the contemporary global society, a class on world history, literature and politics is necessary for the African child. Teaching Shakespeare, Macbeth and similar authors within such context and from an African centered perspective will be beneficial to the African child.

In *A New Paradigm of The African State*, Muiu & Martin (2009) makes similar observation about the colonial nature of Africa’s education system and calls for its transformation:

> Africans must transform their educational systems… Western education in Africa alienates Africans from their culture and environment… Civic education will be crucial in creating an African state. It presents Africans as people without any positive tradition, culture, and history – people who were always “backwards”, weak and dependent until Western colonialist and Christian missionaries came to save them … (Muiu & Martin, 2009, p.198).

Indeed, Africans must transform their education systems. Contrary to what many Africans have been taught to believe, the interdependence of Africans, the robustness and richness of the African culture, history, economics and values predates the advent of colonialism. Through the Eurocentric education system in Africa, Africans have inherited a lie about themselves or at best a silence about their true culture, tradition and history. In effect, this has led to the embodiment of a self-deprecating sense of self and lack amongst Africans. In this context, everything better and good is perceived to be associated with the West and beyond the immediate reach of Africans. This critical problem impedes
communal confidence and nurtures a lack of belief in the African potential amongst Africans. Overturning this problem is another academic and activism goal that I have. By writing this thesis and putting a spotlight on the African potential and African centered narratives through African Leadership Academy, I am hoping to strengthen the clarion call for an African centered education system in Africa. This education system will enable the reclamation, reinvigoration and reconnection of marginalized African culture, knowledge and history into a large conversation about Africa’s development.

Also, Abdi (2012) rightfully argues that education is an important vehicle for social development and as a result, Africa’s sustainable development is closely tied to the society’s transformation.

Given that 68% of the continent’s population is under the age of 30 (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2011), African Youth is Africa’s greatest asset in securing a brighter future for the continent. Thus, the mobilization, meaningful engagement and proper education of Africa’s youth are imperative for Africa’s socio-economic development. In this light, as I have stated earlier, the broad purpose of my thesis is to make a case for and reaffirm the urgency and relevance of a transformed education system in Africa. As Osabu-Kle (2000) contends, Africa’s development and democracy is tied to the minds of its citizens and a new education system.

Realization of compatible cultural democracy has to begin from the sphere of the mind to rid the African first of mental slavery. It requires a new education system capable of psychological and ideological transformation of the artificial African created by Europeans—the mentally enslaved African—into the liberated and proud African with an African-centered mind, someone totally committed to his or her country in thought and deed—the new African (Osabu-Kle, 2000, p. 275).

Such education system will enable and equip Africans to become the agents, means and ends of their own development and a truly transformed continent. Intuitively, the
education system will be centered on Africans. It will be aligned and responsive to the needs of Africans. It will awaken Africans to themselves, to their world and equip them to solve the social issues around them and shape what their world becomes. Necessarily, this education will be culturally, politically, and socially relevant and enable Africans navigate their social realities for the purpose of revitalizing society.

Such an educational system encourages students to be innovators and educators rather than passive consumers of information. It can integrate African oral tradition, art and history with science and technology to prepare Africans to deal with their environment and their economic and social conditions (Muiu & Martin, 2009, p.198).

As opposed to being Eurocentric and foregrounding European systems, values, norms and personalities, it will uphold and teach Africans their culture, history, values and heroines/heroes.

To make a case for this, I conducted research on a unique Pan-African leadership education institution -African Leadership Academy (ALA) aimed at developing the next generation of African leaders. I chose this institution as the focus of my research because of the potential I see in it to develop and unite Africans who can serve as agents of a transformed continent. ALA’s curriculum focuses on African studies (including African history starting from ancient civilization and as written by Africans), leadership and entrepreneurship. Philosophically, ALA believes that Africans are responsible for transforming their continent and that African youth especially the teenagers are the torchbearers of the continent’s bright future. As a result, ALA’s flagship program, which is the focus of this study, caters to African youth between the ages of 15 – 19 years.

Contextualizing this research are the following:

1. A review of Ake’s vision of social democracy in Africa,
2. A literature review on one of Ake’s principles of African development theory,

3. A review of the Afrocentric literature and,

4. My conceptualization of what it will entail for African youth to serve as the agents, means and ends of development in Africa within an education context.

Metaphorically, my research attempts to put ALA’s program in conversation with Ake’s vision and principle of African development that calls for Africans to lead Africa’s development.

Accordingly, my research question is: *To what extent does African Leadership Academy exhibit attributes of Ake’s vision of a social democracy as expressed in his principle of African development: “people as agents, means and ends of development”*?

To answer this question, I spent seven days in African Leadership Academy interviewing 19 students and faculty members about the academy’s vision, program, practices and impact of the program. Ake’s theoretical framework will guide the thesis.
Claude Ake’s theory of African development

In his book – *Democracy and Development*, Ake debunks the distracting and deceptive narrative that suggests Africa has begun an emancipatory and transformational journey towards ‘development’. As he notes, “[t]he problem is not so much that development has failed in Africa as that it was never really on the agenda in the first place” (p.1). In preparing and putting a development agenda for Africa, Ake cogently argues for the destruction of inherited colonial political structures present in modern day Africa. These structures were in place to institutionalize, legitimize and normalize the servitude of Africans for the long-term benefit and domination of the western colonizers and their empire. The African democracy, he argues, will be:

- Markedly different from a Liberal Democracy;
- In all probability it will emphasize concrete economic and social rights rather than abstract political rights;
- It will insist on the democratization of economic opportunities, the social betterment of the people, and a strong social welfare and will have to draw on African traditions to adapt democracy to the cultural and historical experience of ordinary people (p.141-142).

The achievement and success of this democracy will be entirely dependent on the African people. As he argues, “the impetus lies in the internal motivation for democratization in Africa…. it insists that the cause of development is better served by a more democratic approach that engages the energy and commitment of the people, who alone can make development sustainable” (p.139 – 140).

For Ake, development is politics and politics is democracy. Therefore creating the kind of politics that maintains an ongoing dialogue between the political and economic needs of the people is paramount. As he proclaims, “Africans are seeking democracy as a matter of survival; they believe that there are no alternatives to this quest that they have
nothing to lose and a great deal to gain” (p.140). Subverting Africa’s underdevelopment requires a democratic movement and as Ake notes, “a democratic revolution” (p.141).

In painting the vision for Ake’s African Social Democracy and the conceptual framework that could facilitate its birth, Ake lays out five key assumptions that must be taken into account.

1. Development is not economic growth.
2. Development is not a project but a process.
3. Development is the process by which people create and recreate themselves and their life circumstances to realize higher levels of civilization in accordance with their own choices and values.
4. Development is something that people must do for themselves. If people are the end of development, they are also necessarily its agent and its means.
5. Africa and the global environment are to be taken as they are and not as they ought to be.

Two key messages stand out from these core values. Development is not a quick fix that happens with an economic injection or through a top down mandate; development must occur from bottom up and driven by citizens. Neither is development measured exclusively by an increase in GDP. Real development occurs when societal structures are centered around everyday people such as the plantain seller on the streets of Accra and the milk seller in Senegal. In turn, the development and democracy path is responsive and reflective of the desires of these everyday people that make up the continent’s majority. The result of this type of everyday people centered development is that development is entirely dependent on the energy and collective will of the people. Societal ‘space’ is also
created for the average African who struggles for daily survival to contribute to the construction of a relevant democracy and social system.

In line with these assumptions, Ake put forward four values and principles that are central to achieving an African social democracy.

1. **A popular development strategy**: The primary principle of development strategy in Africa is that the people have to be the agents, the means, and the end of development.

2. **Self-reliance is about responsibility**: in the context of development, responsibility for producing a development project as well as providing the resources to carry it through. The embracing of self-reliance will be the real revolution of development in Africa. It must be practiced at all levels of regions: federal, state, local, communities and households.

3. **Empowerment and confidence**: Self-reliance requires such confidence. Lack of confidence is a serious problem; it may well be the greatest obstacle to the development of Africa.

4. **Self-realization rather than alienation**: What is happening now is an attempt to develop against the people. Development must take the people not as they ought to be but as they are and try to find how the people can move forward by their own efforts, in accordance with their own values.

The focus of this thesis is on the first value, which he refers to as a Popular Development Strategy. It requires the people (Africans) to be the agents, the means, and the end of development (p.142). Amongst the other values postulated by Ake, the
chosen focus is the most relevant to the core of my thesis that is attempting to make a case for an African driven development.

**Research significance**

The motivation to do this research lies in the possibilities that I see in creating a different future for Africa through the upcoming generation and education. Since the Jomtien conference in 1990, the clamor for quality education and access to education in Africa for the continent’s development has been ubiquitous. But what exactly constitutes ‘quality’ for Africa? What should quality education make Africans know, see, feel and do? Clearly, quality education in North America cannot be the same for Africans, yet it is often conceptualized and promoted as the same. What are the factors that will enable quality education in Africa? Who defines what quality education is for Africans? What type of education counts for Africans? How can the success indicators of our education system move beyond employment of any kind to equitable employment and citizens’ capacity to continuously revitalize their society? In the context of the defunct government institutions and the absence of robust systemic structures in many African states, what type of education and youth engagement needs to be employed to facilitate sustainable human development (not economic development)? These broad and important philosophical questions are some of the many questions that my research seeks to stir a conversation and action around. Beyond these questions, this research seeks to be theory in action. Through the data collected from ALA, a concrete education alternative from what is predominantly found in Africa is presented. Citizens, international community and national governments will have a clear sense of what an alternative education could look like for Africans in the 21st century.
The literature is sparse on African voices on African issues, African solutions for African problems and unique African programs for youth. This research will contribute to this body of knowledge while incorporating the voice of young Africans who constitute the continent’s critical mass. Put together, my research output could serve as baseline data for future researchers seeking to understand how Afrocentric education can be rolled out in Africa. It could also help inform advocacy and policy efforts for education reform in Africa.
**Thesis road map**

In the seven chapters that follow, I present an alternative theory of development for Africa, theorize what this might look like within an education setting and put a spotlight on a Pan-African leadership institution (African Leadership Academy) that has the goal of developing the next generation of African leaders.

Chapter 1 is the introductory chapter where I discussed the motivation behind this research, provided a rationale for the study and discussed the research significance.

In chapter 2, I present and expand the work of the late African Political Economist – Claude Ake who argued for an African development that is driven by Africans and grounds itself in the socio-economic and political needs of local Africans. Specifically, he argues that Africans must serve as the agents, means and ends of their development.

Drawing on the work of other scholars that expand Ake’s work and cite him, I shed more light on what it might mean for Africans to serve as the agents, means and ends of their development. I also looked at the Afrocentric literature, which argues for an African centered and driven development and provides details on how such development can be enabled.

In chapter 3, a brief overview of my research case study – African Leadership Academy is presented. I provide details about the vision, mission and programming of the institution. In addition, I develop a conceptual framework by synthesizing the theoretical framework and the presented information about ALA in the chapter. Using the theoretical lens of the thesis, I tried to answer the question: *What do I expect to see in a school aimed at developing Africans who will transform Africa?* Here, ALA is the schooling context.
Chapter 4 focuses on the research methods, research sampling type, data collection and analysis and the research participants. For research methods, I used a qualitative case study approach and interviewed 19 ALA students, teachers and administrators.

Chapter 5 and 6 are the findings chapters. In chapter 4, I present a detailed overview of ALA including their principles, beliefs, programs and curriculum.

Chapter 6 showcases the emerging themes from ALA. These themes represent attributes or/and values of ALA that align with the theoretical framework of this thesis. Specifically, there are nine themes. They include: The Promotion of an African Led development, Teaching of Servant leadership, The Proclamation for a Culturally Relevant African Development, Promoting Pan-Africanism and Pan-African Collaboration, The Practice of an African Centered Teaching and Learning, Youth Centered Curriculum and Mindset Development in ALA, ALA students as agents of Change and Classrooms without Borders.

Chapter 7 is the discussion chapter and answers the question of this thesis: To What extent does ALA align with Ake’s Theory of African Development? ALA aligns with Ake’s theory of development to a fair extent. Namely, through its Africa centered way of teaching, its practice of African led development; its focus on developing an African centered mindset amongst the students; its teaching and promotion of servant leadership, its promotion of Pan-Africanism; the students preference for a social democracy/entrepreneurship and the students’ Africa centered worldview. There are a number of ways that ALA misaligns with Ake’s theory of development. They include: the seeming heavy American influence and presence in the school; absence of indigenous
knowledge and decolonization education in curricula; absence of a theory of change and ideology.

Chapter 8 is the concluding chapter that reemphasizes the point of this thesis – the overhaul of Africa’s education system and a replacement with an Afrocentric education system, meaningful engagement of African youth for social change and the adoption of an African centered and African dependent development framework for Africa. By drawing on the insights from ALA and the theoretical framework, I reiterate the significance of the thesis, present questions for further research and reflections about the future of Africa and ALA. The Appendix includes informational letters, interview questions, and consent letters.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is in twofold:

1. To shed light on Ake’s vision of social democracy in Africa,
2. To explain and expand Ake’s principle of development: Africans as the agents, means and ends of their development,

To achieve this, I provide a detailed overview of Ake’s theory of African development and a literature review on Ake’s principle of African development. Unfortunately, Ake died early on in his career and his scholarship provides brief details on what it means for Africans to serve as the agents, means and ends of their development. As a result, I also reviewed scholars who attempted to expand his work or/cite him. These scholars include Jeremiah Arowosegbe, Said Adejumobi, Tukumbi Lumumba-Kasonga, Victor Adetula, Guy Martin and Mueni wa Muiu. Put together or analyzed separately, these scholars do not provide adequate insight into Ake’s principle of development. However, they provide strong theoretical pillars (Anti-Colonialism, Decolonization of the African mind, Indigenous knowledge production, African culture and values centred democracy, Pan Africanism and African driven development) that are beneficial for further research and theorizing of Claude Ake’s principle. These pillars represent the themes that emerged from the reviewed scholars. They also provide a strong theoretical lens that is valuable in understanding and articulating an African centered agenda. The second section of this chapter features the Afrocentric literature. The Afrocentric literature was useful in further developing Ake’s principle of development as it pays particular attention to the African individual as an agent of an African driven development. For Africans to be the agents of
their development, the literature argues for the embodiment of certain perspective and knowledge, grounding and awareness of agency amongst other things.

**Africans as the agents, means and end of their development**

Claude Ake did not live long enough to flesh out the numerous invaluable ideas in his book. In 1996, he died in a plane crash in Nigeria. One of the central pieces in his social democracy vision for Africa is that the people have to be the agents, means and end of their development. However, his book provides brief and broad details on what he meant by this and provides little insight on how it can be instigated in society.

Agents of development, explains Ake, “are those with the responsibility of deciding what development is, what values it is to maximize and the methods of realizing it…. They must also have the prerogative of making public policy” (p.128). As the means through which development happens, the people “decide on how to proceed with social transformation” (p.128). They are involved in the entire process and use their resources to see it through. As the ends of development, people are the primary beneficiaries and their “well-being is the supreme law of development” (p.129).

Albeit rich and insightful in narrative, there are still numerous unanswered questions which Ake’s disrupted life prevented him from answering. Within the context of already ‘under-developed’, undemocratic African societies with oppressed citizens, how exactly will this emancipative and participatory process be ignited in society? What will be the first point of action? What will it look like in society when people are playing these roles he proclaims? What kinds of settings enable and equip people to play these roles? Is it only adults that can play these roles? How do we prepare children to play these roles? What are the indicators of one’s capacity to play these roles in the future? What kind of
educational setting and content will enable this? These questions and more are central to extending Ake’s vision to praxis.

The numerous scholars who have referenced Ake or/and written about his life, legacy and contributions to Africa’s development through academia have also not shed light on this core principle of development. Arowosegbe (2008) notes the critical relevance of Ake’s scholarship in that he (Ake) made a case for a “uniquely African social science” for Africa’s development. As Arowosegbe points out:

Ake exposed the history and legacies of the foreign presence on the character of African scholarship through the articulation of protest scholarship, critical reflections and an affirmation of the need for epistemic rupture and curricula transformation. He was principally concerned with developing a form of scholarship, which takes its local intellectual, political and existential contexts seriously while also seeking to be globally reputable (p. 24).

Ake’s commitment and conviction about the need for African knowledge production was evident in numerous contexts. For example, in the CODESIRA (2004) document cited by Arowosegbe (2008), Ake called “for a re-thinking of state, economy, culture and society in ways that depart radically from conventional wisdom” while reaffirming the need to harness “African knowledge for the advancement of peace, stability and unity in the continent” (p.25).

Adejumobi (2000) corroborates Ake’s call for a conceptualization of development in Africa that foregrounds the socio-economic rights of citizens and sees democracy as a prerequisite for development. Ake offers Lumumba – Kasonga (2002) a critical lens to question and unravel the assumptions upon which Africa’s “development” is carried out on. He analyzes the role of the African state as a leading agent of development and argues that it is a fallacy to think that development has started in Africa. As he states, “the African state, in its current form, is not an agent of positive social change because
this state was created essentially to advance the interests of metropolitan capitalism” (p.8). Referring to Ake, he affirms that the political conditions in Africa do not enable development and to transform the continent, the state must be re-conceptualized. Through “social, popular and democratic movements”, Africans must gain social and critical consciousness about their history and the role they play in redirecting society. Africans need to exercise their agency, capture, appropriate, reimagine and rename the state according to Africa’s objective conditions. Through a social or popular revolution of radical change to the economic structures within a Pan-African perspective should be considered. The African state should be analyzed and created from an origin that foreground and incorporates African traditions, culture, ethos, and theories of management and governance. Civic and political rights, economic and social rights of the people are the fundamental tenets this new African state has to be built on.

In the article *Measuring democracy and ‘good governance’ (sic) in Africa: A critique of assumptions and methods*, Adetula (n.d) expands on Ake’s writings and critiques the Liberal Democracy system by showing its limitations and how as a result is a misfit for Africa’s development. “This type of democracy is not in the least emancipatory especially in African conditions because it offers the people rights they cannot exercise, voting that never amounts to choosing” (1996 cited by Adetula, n.d). Even though, Liberal Democracy evolved within a Western culture and environment it is promoted as a universal commodity. Adetula explains that traditional African societies had robust democracies where communitarianism, social inclusiveness, consensus and representation were central to governance. Accountable governance was at the pillar of traditional African societies. Referencing Ake, Adetula points out that African leaders
were held accountable for their actions and in addition expected to explain natural events such as famines, epidemics, floods and droughts. As a result, many “unaccountable” leaders were forced into voluntary exile or asked “to go and die” (p.12). The Liberal Democracy system introduced into Africa failed because it was indifferent to these cultural nuances and traditions. African traditions were put at the periphery and propagated as backwards and unfit to support a democracy. In summation, Adetula calls for an African inspired and centered democracy. In African Political Thought, Martin (2012) expands on Ake’s scholarship and refers to Ake’s paradigm to African development as “Africanism” that intersects and interweaves a culturally rooted and relevant African democracy and development. He argues that the solution to Africa’s problems lies within Africans themselves. In a radical way, Muiu and Martin (2009) call for a reconfiguration of the continent and a merger based on historical, political and economic values/interests. In a radical way, Muiu and Martin (2009) call for the deconstruction and destruction of African borders for a politically and integrated Africa. They introduce a new paradigm for analyzing and developing the new African state – Fundi wa Afrika (Builder or Tailor of Africa in Ki-Swahilli). Through this paradigm, they argue for Africa’s analysis from a multidisciplinary and long term historical perspective. Conceptualizing Africa’s path to sustainable development from a multidisciplinary lens includes an analysis that incorporates history, political science, geopolitics, economics, sociology, and literature. A long-term historical perspective studies the continent from the sixth century BCE (Kush/Nubia and Egypt) as opposed to the 1800’s or 1850 as is often done. Such analysis they argue enables scholars highlight the contribution of Africa to world civilization, as well as its potential for economic
Fundi Afrika as an analytical paradigm for Africa’s development has the following core elements:

1. Epistemological disruption on contemporary Africa: An exhaustive and radical critique of existing paradigms of African states.

2. Reclaiming, Relinking and Reviving: Relinking and reviving indigenous African traditions, culture, languages, social structures, political systems and institutions in a way that adapts to current political, economic and social conditions in Africa.

3. Drawing ideas and building on the work of African political thinkers such as Ibn Khaldun, Amilcar Cabral, Frantz Fanon, Kwame Nkrumah, Cheikh Anta Diop, Daniel Osabu-Kle, and Claude Ake.

4. Africans first, African centered and African Unity: Putting Africa and Africans first, emphasizing the fundamental cultural unity of Africa, and promoting the political and economic unity of Africans in Africa and in the diaspora.

Fundi wa Afrika calls for a logical pathway towards transforming the continent. Starting from an often-neglected component: knowledge. This involves understanding the logic of Africa’s underdevelopment from a pre-colonial analytical lens, acquiring the associated knowledge and seeking to disrupt status quo for social change. Beyond this knowledge mobilization phase, Fundi wa Afrika anchors the African struggle in the scholarship of African political thinkers, who put together make a case for Africa’s self determination and fundamental need for mobilization.

Quite clearly, Ake’s scholarship and the scholars who have expanded his work challenge
conventional thinking that suggests Africa is currently ‘developing’. From different perspectives, they demystify and unpack the notion that the installment of Liberal Democracy in Africa is synonymous to or will trigger development in the continent. They show the contradictions in the African development narrative by illustrating how the current political structures are the same structures inherited from the colonizers who operated against the interest of Africans. As Muiu (2005) argued, “if the Japanese state reflects Japanese values, the American state reflects American values, the French state reflects French values, why should the African state be any different”? (p.6).

These scholars cited above have argued that Liberal Democracy is a deceptive tool used to distract Africans from the urgent task of nation building while enabling western control of the continent’s resources. In effect they undermine western Liberal democracy within the African context and thereby necessitate homegrown democracies and political structures based on the socio-economic needs of the citizens and centers African culture, ways of governance and systems. In this sense, Ake’s scholarship stresses the need and role of Africans in claiming their continent and embarking on the process of transforming it. Of critical importance to efforts aimed at contributing to Africa’s development, Ake as well as the scholars who cite and expand his work provide a transformative conceptual framework to imagine, analyze and theorize alternative ways for Africa. The conceptual framework is exhaustive and broad enough for different stakeholders to choose an area of interest to focus on. All the scholars situate their work within other scholars who put together creates a formidable intellectual alliance for Africa’s development.

Understandably, the hydra-headed nature of Africa’s underdevelopment makes it difficult to find coordination and unification in the associated scholarship. As seen in the review
above, the scholars present numerous insightful theoretical narratives from disparate locations, which without an intentional effort to connect with each other or bring to practice will remain theories. Ake’s principle of development – agents, means and ends of development is a case in point. All the reviewed articles put together or assessed differently are still not able to provide answers to fundamental questions that can extend their ideas or Ake’s into practice. The paucity of informed practice is arguably Africa’s greatest need.

Also, the sole focus on the state as the agent of change and not the citizens is interesting. Even though all the scholars problematize the colonial nature of the state yet their implied theory of change suggests that the state is at the center of sustainable development in Africa. They do not provide a theory of action on how the African state can become decolonized. They are mute on the role citizens have played in maintaining and enabling the current state of affairs. In analyzing these scholars, there is a tendency to overlook the fact that African leaders who oppress citizens through the state are from the citizenry and in effect, reflect the citizenry. To that end, critical questions about the citizens and the citizenship base needs to be asked. What kind of knowledge and intellectual foundation comprises the agency of Africans? Is this knowledge and grounding aligned to an agenda aimed at creating a decolonized state for sustainable development in Africa? Why have Africans been unable to exercise their agency to the extent that sustainable development has been spurred in the continent? What are Africans learning or not learning in schools and society that has prevented them from spurring a decolonized state? Why have elected African leaders not been able to transform the African state? Why have they been unable to act in the best interest of their citizens?
The answers to these questions are varied, not straightforward, neither is the nature of the raised issues simple. The point of this discursive is to illustrate the relationship (often a complex one) between the individual citizen, citizenry and state and to suggest that this relationship should be taken into account when analyzing and proffering solutions for Africa’s development path. Nevertheless, several important pillars are foregrounded in Ake’s scholarship which will be instructive in creating a framework that seeks to engage African youth who are the focus of this thesis as the agents, means and ends of development. These pillars include Anti-colonialism for development, Decolonization of the African Mind, Indigenous knowledge production, African culture and values centered democracy, Pan-Africanism and African Driven Development.

**Extending Ake’s theory through Afrocentric, Indigenous Knowledge & African Philosophies**

In depth and in breadth, the Afrocentricity literature sheds light on the questions raised above while enabling a more nuanced conceptualization of an African centered and African led development. More importantly, it takes a closer look at the role Africans as indigenes must play in Africa’s development and the necessary knowledge, mindset and disposition they must embody to bring about their continents’ development. It also provides an academic framework and methodology to analyze and synthesize knowledge for the purpose of Africa’s liberation. In effect, the literature gives a practical spin to Ake’s thesis.

**A. An overview: Afrocentricity, Indigenous Knowledge & African Philosophies**

As a way of life and conceptual framework, Afrocentricity dates back to pre-colonial
Africa where Africans naturally engaged with the world from a perspective that sought to uphold African culture and promoted the best interest of Africans. As a theory of African development, Afrocentricity roots itself in the rich and nuanced history/traditions of Africa from pre-colonial era. In effect, it provides an African centered perspective to analyze and problematize Africa's colonial history, Africa’s colonial interaction with the colonizers and the legacy of that interaction. It contends that even though colonial rule has officially ended, colonization of Africans continues. As Mazama (2003) argues:

As Mazama (2003) argues:

The reason for this is that colonization was not simply an enterprise of economic exploitation and political control, as it was commonly held, but also an on-going enterprise of conceptual distortion and invasion, leading to widespread confusion and ultimately, mental incarceration (Mazama, 2003, p.3).

This mental invasion and subjugation involved intentionally conceptualizing Africans as “savages” or “cannibals” (Abdi, 2012) and stripping them of their culture, values, modes of thinking, language and traditions in exchange for Eurocentric values, Eurocentric mode of thinking and language. It involved “rewriting history to denying existence, devaluing knowledge and debasing African cultural beliefs and practices” (Wane, 2006).

During the physical presence of the Europeans in Africa, they exploited Africans politically, economically and physically. In the “post-colonial” rule, Europeans continue to exploit Africans through the colonial political and economic structures (Mueni, 2009; Abdi, 2012) they left behind and the colonial mindset Africans continue to embody (Fanon, 1965). It is in this light that Mazama argues,

The mental/conceptual aspect of colonization has never stopped. It has simply taken on new names in the nineteenth century to modernization, development, democracy, globalization and free market nowadays… our main problem is
usually our unconscious adoption of the western worldview and their attendant conceptual framework (Mazama, 2003, p.4).

This mental subjugation and the associated African cultural cleanse they argue has “decentered” Africans from their true cultural core that could have led to an organic social development. Instead, Africans are now at the margins of their social development (Dei, 1999) and dependent on Europe’s experience and existence. Africans exist not on “their own terms but on borrowed, European ones” (Asante, 1998 cited in Mazama, 1993, p.5). As Wane (2006) notes, most Africans have become a “commodity of Western ideology”. Africans are spectators in a show that defines them from without (Asante, 1998 cited in Mazama, 1993). Consequently, Afrocentricity contends that Africa’s liberation is dependent on the ability of Africans to “systematically displace European ways of thinking, being, feeling, etc and consciously replacing them with ways that are germane to the African cultural experience” (Mazama, 1993, p.5). This corroborates the arguments of Ake and the scholars in previous sections.

Resuscitating African cultural experiences, centering indigenous knowledge, understanding colonization for the purpose of decolonization (Wane, 2006) and implicating them into Africa’s development is what Dei (2000;1999) argues for in explaining what an African centered development is:

It is development that reflects the lived realities and the goals and aspirations of the grassroots of African communities. It is a form of “development” rooted in indigenous peoples’ sense of moral and spiritual values, and the connections between the social and natural worlds. It is a critical perspective on development that argues that local communities should own and control the solutions to their own problems. But real and effective community control is possible only if the development agenda seeks to center indigenous knowledge systems in search for solutions to human problems (Dei, 2000, p.143-144).

According to Dei (2000), “Indigenous knowledge systems are traditional norms, social
values and mental constructs that guide, organize and regulate African ways of living in and making sense of the world” (p.72). Since colonization as Wane (2006) notes involved “re-writing history to denying existence, devaluing knowledge and debasing cultural beliefs and practices” of Africans, decolonization will require a reinstatement of the above. Consequently, the embodiment by Africans and permeation of indigenous knowledge in contemporary African societies is the antidote of colonial knowledge and philosophies, which have shaped and continue to influence Africa. The positive valuation and embodiment or pursuit of indigenous knowledge amongst Africans is quintessential to the “resurrection, reconstruction and revitalization of African culture” (Modupe, 1993, p.59).

At a communal level, Afrocentricity calls for a communal consciousness about Africa’s colonial history as told by Africans and a spiritual dialogue of some sort between the African community and the individual African towards the psychic and cultural liberation for Africa’s development. Within the context of Ake’s principle of development that calls for Africans to act as agents of their own development, Afrocentricity provides useful insight. On a personal level, Afrocentricity is about “agency” and action (Asante, 2007) by culturally “conscious” “centered” and “located” Africans for the purpose of Africa’s development. Afrocentricity argues that Africans must view themselves as agents, actors, creators and participants in their continent’s development. As Asante (2007), the forerunner of Afrocentricity declares, “there is no Afrocentricity without an emphasis on African agency in the context of African history” (p.16). For Africans to be agents of their own development, they must embody a quality of thought and perspective that always seeks for the best interest of Africans that seeks to connect themselves to the
classical African times, that seeks to revitalize and mobilize the African culture and engages the world from that centered location. Afrocentric agency also enables the African person to see himself or herself as “an agent of history and not an object of European creation” (Asante, 2007, p.16). The Afrocentric agency moves beyond wearing African clothes or participating in African traditions. At its core is consciousness about the African people’s struggle, African culture, Africa’s history as told by Africans and an understanding of how the enslavement of Africans serves as the pillar of contemporary global society. It is about taking action (engagement with the world and Africans) from that consciousness. Fuelling this consciousness are three key elements Asante (1988) argues for:

1. **Grounding** in knowledge and experience centered in the history and culture of the African people.

2. **Orientation** towards Africa, which is exhibited in a sustained intellectual interest in Africa and corresponding psychological African identity formation.

3. **African Perspective**, which is a “self-conscious way of seeing and shaping the world” (p.63) in a way that reflects Africa’s best interest and the quality and amount of grounding and orientation the African possesses.

Within an educational context, Afrocentric education seeks to do precisely what the overarching theory postulates – African led and African centered development. Centering and implicating critical components like indigenous knowledge systems that Ake as well as the scholars who cite him have argued for, decolonized knowledge systems (Abdi, 2012), African philosophies and experiences. Afrocentric education challenges prevalent Eurocentric education systems by providing an identity for often-marginalized Africans
in the education system. Lived experiences, local economic and social needs, African values and traditions are at the core of teaching and used as a pathway to learning various subjects and making space for oneself in the world.

Through such education, Africans learn about their roots, love their continent and take ownership for the continent. They are equipped with what Abdi (2012) describes as a “decolonized agency” (p.12) that enables them disrupt unassuming but racist bodies of knowledge that shape day-to-day interaction. In this way, Afrocentric education equips Africans with a mindset that gravitates towards their psychic and cultural liberation, which Afrocentricism argues is central to Africa’s development. In the classroom, Afrocentric education provides a platform for students to learn about the world from an African worldview and become subjects rather than objects in their education (Dei, 1994). It will also teach in a holistic way and draw from the social, cultural, economic, political, spiritual and cosmological aspects of African life (Dei, 2000; p.73). It will foster Afrocentric values such as group solidarity, collective work, responsibility and mutuality (Dei, 1994; p.20).

Situating Ake’s scholarship within the Afrocentric theoretical framework and literature portrays a more holistic, richer and dynamic picture of what a transformed Africa could look like and how to bring it about. It enables the visualization of a challenging but realistic theory of action for Africa’s development. It also carves out the role Africans must play in the continent’s development, the knowledge they must embody and the disposition they will need to project. Within the context of education, Ake and the Afrocentric literature provide relevant theoretical constructs, pedagogical pillars and potent culturally relevant educational content to engage Africans with.
Within the larger context of transformative development in Africa, they take on different but crucial perspectives. Ake approaches Africa’s development from a political and economic standpoint while the Afrocentric literature takes on a broader theoretical framework with focus on the intellectual constitution of the African person. Put together, they provide appropriate emphasis on critical components of the African society (socio-economics, politics and psychological) that influence the ability of Africans to drive their own development.

**Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, I have laid out Ake’s vision of social democracy in Africa, conducted a literature review on his principle of development that is of relevance to my thesis – (Africans serving as the agents, means and ends of their development) and also expanded this principle by drawing from the Afrocentric literature.

Ake’s scholarship provides brief details on what it means for Africans to serve as the agents, means and ends of their development. The writings by scholars who cite and attempt to expand his work do not provide additional insight into this key principle. For the most part, their scholarship focuses on the role of the state and not citizens in Africa’s development. Nevertheless, numerous theoretical pillars that were instructive for further research on this principle emerged. They include Anti-colonialism for development, Decolonization of the African Mind, Indigenous knowledge production, African Culture and Values Centered Democracy, Pan-Africanism and African Driven Development. The Afrocentric literature which I draw on to expand Ake’s principle of development foregrounds these theoretical pillars in its theorization of the disposition and knowledge Africans need to embody to facilitate transformative development in the continent. I
presented Afrocentric education as the type of education that will enable the development of Africans who can serve as the agents of transformative development in Africa.
Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework

As stated in the introductory chapter, one of the goals of this thesis and my scholarship/activism is to contribute to the development of a theory of African development that foregrounds education and the African child. Creating a relevant conceptual framework to facilitate this mission is a work in progress that goes beyond the scope of this thesis and a Masters degree. Consequently, in this chapter, I have focused on developing a conceptual framework that will guide my research in African Leadership Academy. In doing this, I present a brief overview of the African Leadership Academy (ALA) and drawing from the theoretical framework in chapter two, I theorize what I expect to see in ALA given the school’s vision of developing the next generation of Pan-African leaders. At the PhD level, which I commence in September 2014, I hope to further develop these ideas.

Brief Overview of African Leadership Academy (ALA)

Founded in 2008 by Ghanaian Fred Swaniker and American Chris Bradford, African Leadership Academy (ALA) in Johannesburg, South Africa is one of a kind institution in Africa. The academy’s goal is to develop the next generation of ethical and entrepreneurial leaders. Specifically, ALA’s goal is to develop 6000 African leaders in the next 50 years. In the words of the Academy, ALA seeks to transform Africa (enable lasting peace and prosperity in Africa) by identifying, developing, and connecting the next generation of African leaders (African Leadership Academy Website).

Through the Two Year Pre-University Program, ALA works with 15 – 19 year old leaders from across Africa in a curriculum rooted in African Studies, Entrepreneurial
Leadership and Cambridge Studies. The young Africans who end up at ALA are usually change makers who have demonstrated leadership potential, a passion for Africa, an entrepreneurial spirit, and a track record of community service. In that light, ALA is a platform for them to practice entrepreneurial leadership, expand and deepen their perspective on African issues, take ownership and responsibility for bringing about a different future for Africa and gain entry into a network of passionate and committed Africans like themselves. As they describe on their website:

Our leadership development formula is relatively simple: we believe that by identifying young leaders with immense potential, enabling them to practice leadership, and connecting them with transformative opportunities, we can develop and empower the next Nelson Mandela, the next Wangari Maathai, and Africa’s Jonas Salk and Steve Jobs.

ALA takes on a long-term, critical and transformative approach to addressing Africa’s underdevelopment. The focus is on securing a prosperous and vibrant future for Africa by developing African leaders with the capacity to facilitate and enable its realization. As the academy contends,

Africa’s greatest need is ethical and entrepreneurial leadership. Too often, we invest in addressing the symptoms of bad leadership in Africa: we give blankets, food, and medicine to those impacted by war, poverty and famine. But these efforts will never stop unless we develop leaders who prevent wars from occurring in the first place, entrepreneurs who create jobs, and scientists who sustainably increase food production and access to healthcare.

ALA’s Two Year Pre-University Program’s curriculum has three core pillars: African Studies, Entrepreneurial Leadership and Cambridge O’ Levels. The African studies course takes on an interdisciplinary approach by studying Africa through historical, economic, geographic, and political lenses. The goal is to help students “develop an understanding of Africa's past and present, a connection to the broader African community, and a sense of ownership for the continent's future” (ALA’s Website). In
their first year, students are equipped with a multidisciplinary perspective in African studies, which serves as a foundation for their Contemporary African Studies case study project in year two. In year two, students work in groups to tackle case studies on subjects ranging from health care provision to poverty eradication to the environment. Student learning is assessed through student research papers, presentations and inter-group debates.

The entrepreneurial component of the program seeks to enable ALA students develop “the mindset, approach, and skills necessary to be entrepreneurial leaders on the African continent” (ALA’s Website). In year one, students receive leadership coaching on topics such as mental models, speech and presentation, values-based leadership, and emotional intelligence. They also participate in activities such as Experiential Design Challenges, Case Learning Program, Guest Speaker Series and Executive Seminars, Design and Innovation challenge (BuildLab) amongst others. In year two, the students take on a capstone project under the Student Enterprise Program where they have to lead a group of five to seven people and implement an idea that has a direct impact on ALA or a neighboring community.

To keep the students globally competitive for their University education after ALA, the students are required to sit for the Cambridge exams, take two years of Math, English and three additional subjects from the Sciences, the Humanities, Economics, and French. According to Fred Swaniker in his CNN African Voices interview, ALA is more than a school, it is a lifelong network of Africans from different parts of the continent who share a collective purpose: “To Transform Africa” (CNN African Voices, 2011). ALA’s reach and impact beyond the Academy is rapidly growing. ALA graduates are
gaining admission into world-renowned universities such as Harvard, Yale, Brown, Cornell, Duke, New York University, MIT, Stanford, Oxford, London School of Economics, Ashesi University, Ghana and University of Cape Town.

As of November 2013, ALA graduates have collectively earned over $35M in scholarship awards. ALA’s young leaders have launched 38 non-profit and for-profit enterprises. In 2011, The World Economic Forum recognized five ALA students for the organizations they launched in their home countries. Two teams of ALA graduates won the $10,000 Kathryn Davis Prize for their peace projects in Kenya.

**Developing a Conceptual Framework**

The school (African Leadership Academy - ALA) my research focuses on is unique. ALA was born out of the conviction that the predominant efforts aimed at Africa's development addresses symptoms and not the root cause of Africa's problem. For them, at the root of contemporary Africa’s underdevelopment is the paucity of good leaders. That is, Africa lacks a critical mass of people with the mindset and skillset to bring about a different future. In developing this mindset amongst Africans, they have focused on African teenagers who they are grooming to love Africa in its entirety and to acquire skills to continue to support the continent. Looking at ALA’s programming approach, ALA appears to understand the need for the type of democracy and leadership Ake calls for, one that will be grounded in African culture, Pan-African cooperation, transformative and empowering education and the engagement of young people. ALA’s core pillars are commensurate. They include: Addressing the Underlying Problems, The Power of Youth, The Power of One, Pan-African Collaboration, and Entrepreneurship.
However, in light of the objective of bringing about transformative development on the continent within a colonial world where the minds of Africans are already colonized, questions and concerns abound. In process, practice and pedagogical philosophy, what will it mean and look like for ALA students to be the type of African leaders who will have decolonized agencies will and not pursue economic prosperity at the expense of their culture and the masses? What should constitute their African studies curriculum to enable them become anti-colonial African leaders who are agents, means and ends of development? What kind of class environment will support this? What will the schooling environment look like? What role will culture play in the school?

In developing a conceptual framework to guide my research method and analysis, I situate ALA data presented in the ALA overview section above within my theoretical framework and tease out observable practices for a schooling context like ALA. Using this lens, I have asked myself this question: What am I expecting to see in ALA?

**What am I expecting to see in ALA?**

Simply put, in ALA, I am hoping to see a school (teachers, students, administrators) who are passionate about and express the desire to create a new continent through the reclamation of marginalized African knowledge and culture, the questioning of African history as we know it, the questioning of the political and geographical construction of modern day Africa and the rewriting of that history through practice. In positioning and perspective, ALA students and teachers will be transformative intellectuals (Giroux, 1985) and rebels. They will show knowledge about the continent, love for the continent and responsibility for its transformation. Especially amongst the students, I will want to

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1 Detailed guiding questions are provided in the appendix.
see an awareness of the complex issues facing Africa. From a cultural reclamation and identity standpoint, I hope to see the use of African names for as many school activities and structures as possible. In terms of the learning environment, I am hoping to see an environment that enables young people to maximize their agency while being grounded in African culture; community spirit and building; and self-discovery. In practice, ALA’s curriculum might take on a Humanistic-aesthetic approach (Ornstein, 1987) that favors the “whole child” development and stresses higher-level cognition such as critical thinking, problem solving, self-reflectiveness, social enterprises, field trips, amongst other things (p.211). This curriculum approach will embody and reflect the Afrocentric pillars of social development that include group mentality, self-reliance, solidarity, communal bonding, and social responsibility (Dei, 2000). This orientation should be easily observable in the interaction with the students and teachers.

Emanating from such curriculum approach would be what Portelli and Vibert (2002) described as “a curriculum of life”, which is a “conception of a curriculum that breaks down the walls between the school and the world” (p.15). This curriculum, they argue, “is grounded in the immediate daily worlds of students as well as in the larger social and political contexts of their lives” (p.39). Education at ALA should enable students to connect school knowledge to issues in the larger social, cultural and political environment. In fact, most and if not all of the educational content should be about current social, cultural and political issues and their analysis of it.

To transform Africa, ALA students need to first of all transform their immediate environment by being actively engaged and involved in the academy. Consequently, I expect ALA students to be very involved in the running of the school from school
governance, ownership and startup of school businesses and clubs amongst others. For ALA students to be engaged for transformation (starting from school), teachers, communities, and the pedagogy need to be connected and engaged (McMahon & Portelli, 2004). Through such pedagogy, I also expect ALA teachers to have experienced transformation as a result of working at ALA and have a commitment to a process of self-actualization that promotes their wellbeing (hooks, 1994, p.15 cited in McMahan & Portelli, 2004). Because of the embodied and engaged nature of the pedagogy that I envision ALA has, I expect ALA to be a place where the students, faculty and staff continuously reflect on the nature of their citizenship to their countries and continent; redefine their commitments as necessary and continuously experience transformation in the nature and quality of their citizenship (Banks, 2008). Consequently, I expect ALA classrooms to be “outward looking classrooms” (Osler & Starkey, 2005) where everyone especially students move beyond discussing social issues to taking on political action as required. In numerous ways, I expect to see that ALA is a “part and creator of society” (MacMath, 2008, p.8). This could be in the form of student initiatives that have moved beyond ALA, political activities that students are involved in and dialogical interaction between community members and the school community on community issues.

Considering the colonial history of Africa, the social construction of Africa’s predicament by the West, and the fact that ALA is very western in operation (they follow the American school calendar, they are heavily funded by American institutions, all their students are groomed to write SAT and Cambridge and they even celebrate Halloween) I expect that ALA classroom discussions reflect the inherent contradictions, risks, tensions and constraints associated with this. Critical discussions about controversial issues (Hess
& Avery, 2008) such as colonization, Africa adopting one language, and the possibility of a Pan-African political and economic integration for the purpose of creating a “United States of Africa” include some of my expectations from ALA classrooms.
Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I provided an overview of the academy and developed a conceptual framework. African Leadership Academy believes that Africans have the responsibility to transform their continent and that an intentional effort must be made to develop the next generation. Drawing insight from the theoretical framework chapter and citizenship education scholars, the conceptual framework seeks to evaluate student disposition and knowledge, curriculum, classroom, student involvement in school, interaction between community and school.
Chapter 4: Research Methods

This chapter focuses on the research methods used in this thesis.

In light of my research question: To what extent does African Leadership Academy exhibit attributes of Ake’s vision of a social democracy as expressed in his principle of African development? I employed a qualitative research design, which allows for the exploration and detailed understanding of a central phenomenon (Creswell, n.d). In the case of my research, ALA and the two years program are the phenomena that need to be explored. Because of the particularity of the program (as of 2014, the only Pan-African leadership institution in Africa developing African teenagers), I employed a qualitative case study design, which necessitated semi-structured open-ended questions. This allowed me gather information from the participants that revealed the nature of the programs particularity (Merriam, 1988) and enabled an in-depth understanding of the program. Case study approach also lends the researcher an opportunity to gain a holistic view yet a nuanced and interconnected understanding of the phenomenon (Merriam, 1998). Understanding the constitutive elements of the ALA program was critical to describing how it manifests Ake’s principle and the case study approach afforded me that perspective. Because of the small school size and the specificity of the research question, purposeful sampling was used to recruit the teachers and administration staff that I spoke to. For the student participants, convenience sampling was used. In total, there were 19 research participants. I drew from critical research philosophies and the Afrocentric paradigm to gather data from the participants. Using these lenses, data was analyzed in four stages ranging from descriptive and values coding to categorizations based on the
core components of the ALA program (Teachers, Students, School Philosophy) and analysis based on theoretical framework.

Research Sampling
The key players in the ALA pre-university program are the teachers, students and administrators. In selecting my research participants, I used two sampling methods. Administrators and teachers were selected using purposeful sampling (Miles & Hubberman, 1994). Because of the distinct and unique constituents of the ALA’s academic program, purposeful sampling was appropriate to ensure that I speak to key administrators and teachers, who put together, provide a holistic and nuanced understanding of the program.

For the students, I used convenience sampling (Creswell, n.d). Eight out of the nine interviewed students self-selected themselves by responding to the call for participants notice circulated in ALA. I purposefully selected one of the student participants because of the critical views she informally expressed about the school.

Self-Identification in Research and Exploring the Insider/Outsider Positions
Position wise, I felt fluid and found myself mentally traveling from an outsider to insider position. Being identified as the ‘lady from the University of Toronto doing research on ALA’ categorized me as an outsider in the school community. During their weekly assembly, alongside other visitors to the school, they announced my presence on campus. Expectedly, some of the student participants expressed distance and unfamiliarity by asking questions relating to Canada, University of Toronto and the study as a whole. During the interviews with the teachers, I found myself starting off in the outsider
position and also being perceived as an outsider until they started questioning my research interests and intentions. For example, the first question most of the participants asked me is: “Why are you doing this?” After I respond, the interview dynamics often changed. Responses to my questions started to come from a space of communal consciousness about African issues, an expected understanding from lived experience in the continent and the challenges that has impeded our progress. In other cases, I found that the interview ‘unofficially’ began in response to my explanation for conducting this research. On several occasions, I had to interrupt the conversation to inform the participants that I will be turning on the recorder. The informal structure of most of the interviews and the nature of interaction enabled an insider position. I conducted some interviews over meals, outside on the grass and while walking around the school. Even after some interviews ended, discussions about other issues relating to Africa and shared interests in education continued. One of the participants referred and connected me to other people with similar interests in South Africa and Toronto. My affiliation with one of the founders (Fred Swaniker) of the school and introduction by him to other research participants also enabled an insider position.

In trying to obtain curriculum documents from the teachers I spoke with, teachers responded more than three weeks later. When I eventually received a response, I learnt that teachers wanted me to talk to the Dean of Studies directly as they were not sure of what information to share with me. Despite the insider position I felt I occupied based on my interaction with the teachers on site, subsequent hesitations suggested that I also occupied an outsider position.
Data gathering

To gather information from the participants, I conducted interviews with nine students and ten “staffulty” (ALA’s term for staff and faculty members). With the co-founder – Fred Swaniker who also serves as the CEO, I asked questions about his motivation for starting the academy, the academy’s view on Africa’s development, philosophy, ideology, and theory of change and how they were reflected in the academy’s programming. At the administration level, I interviewed the Vice-Principal of Academics (Denis Kojo\(^2\)), the Director of Strategic Relations (Andrew Saliwa) and the Director of Lifelong Engagement (Drina Andrews). Generally, I wanted to get a sense of how the organization’s philosophy comes alive in the programs, practices, systems and the success so far. The Vice-Principal (Denis Kojo) focuses on the academic life of the students at ALA. Dr. Andrew Saliwa who is the Vice-President and Director of Strategic Relation is in charge of connecting ALA to the world and forming strategic partnerships for ALA’s programs and fundraising. Amongst other things, Drina Andrews is in charge of ALA’s African Career Network that keeps the young people connected to the continent through internships and job placement.

In interviewing ALA students, I wanted to learn about their views on Africa’s development, their ALA experiences, ALA’s impact on them, the projects they are working on and their future prospects as a result of this experience. I interviewed nine students, all under the age of 21 and from seven African countries.

\(^2\) Except Fred Swaniker who provided permission to publish his name, pseudonyms are used for the teachers and other administrators.
I also interviewed five ALA teachers, two of who are involved in pastoral care and student wellness. Henry Ebube teaches Entrepreneurial Leadership which is a core ALA subject used to challenge student mindset and engage them on ALA values. Kalas Tekele is in the African Studies department and teaches the foundational course in African studies. African Studies is also a core subject area in ALA’s pre-university program. Through this subject, students learn about the continent from a multidisciplinary perspective and an African centered way. Ephraim Mgonja is the Mathematics teacher. He especially focuses on preparing the students for the Cambridge Math exams. Namdi Ndoga is ALA’s Director of Arts & Culture. He teaches an ALA elective – Creative Arts and is involved in ALA’s Pastoral care. He also leads ALA’s weekly community event – Assembly. ALA assemblies serve as platform to nurture the community spirit, to share news and stories about ALA community members and Africa, and to celebrate community members and diversity in the continent.

Randa Walters is the head of the French department and is in charge of ALA’s language program. She provides support for students who want to learn other African languages such as Zulu, Swahili, Afrikaans and Arabic. She is also a residence faculty and maintains close contact with the students by living with some female students to ensure general wellbeing (emotional, physical and mental).

With these teachers, I asked questions relating to the program goals, the goal of their personal engagement with the students, the curriculum, course content (where applicable), pedagogical approach, and conceptualization of student success.
To obtain contextual information, I reviewed ALA’s website (www.africanleadershipacademy.org), articles about ALA and watched publicly available online videos about ALA. I analyzed program documentations for the ALA’s assembly, Creative Arts, and Residence program. I was unable to obtain lesson plans and curriculum documents for the African Studies and Entrepreneurial leadership program.

Throughout my time in the school, I kept a journal where I recorded feelings, surprises, further questions and observations. I recorded the interviews using an Olympus Digital Voice recorder.

Research Participants

Who are ALA Students?

The ALA student participants are inspiring and passionate community problem solvers with compelling dream for the continent. With the exception of one student who was 21 at the time of the study, all the ALA student participants were either 18 or 19 years. What these students have in common is their contagious passion for Africa, track record of community mobilization for social action and ambitious dreams for the continent. For example, one of the students began his community service journey at the age of 6 years. At that age, he had already started thinking about saving wildlife in Madagascar and nurturing the environment. Another student participant was the first girl in her community to attend school. In turn, she began a literacy club to teach other young girls in her community. It is for reasons like these that all the student participants believe they were accepted into ALA. All of the students found out about ALA through an adult who

3 The founder of ALA, Fred Swaniker provided permission to publish his name. However, pseudonyms are used for the teachers and other administrators.
had seen their leadership potential in the past and encouraged them to apply. The desire to transform the continent through an identified interest or passion platform was another unifying attribute amongst the students. For example, one of the students is curious about how to use media and theater to create change and specifically promote the Arts in her country Zambia. In her words,

I’ve been thinking about how you can bring them together and how you can help the media and support the arts. Because in my country all you hear in the media is politics and how this one politician is insulting another politician and all that drama. But, you never hear about the good things that are happening within the arts and how the people in the arts community are advocating.

More on the students can be found in chapter 7.

**Summary of research participants**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role at ALA</th>
<th>Gender</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fred Swaniker</td>
<td>Founder/CEO</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<tr>
<td>Denis Kojo</td>
<td>Deputy Principal, Academics</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randa Walters</td>
<td>Head of French Department/Faculty member Residence Life</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Ebube</td>
<td>Entrepreneurial Leadership</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kalas Tekele</td>
<td>African Studies Teacher</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ephraim Mgonja</td>
<td>Mathematics Teacher</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew Saliwa</td>
<td>Director, Strategic</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
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<tr>
<td>Namdi Ndoga</td>
<td>Director of Arts and Culture</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drina Andrews</td>
<td>Director of Lifelong Engagement – Africa Careers Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>Withheld*</td>
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<td>Year 1 Student</td>
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**Data Collection**

My approach to soliciting knowledge in this research especially in the interviews and my pathway to understanding it was informed by my lived experience of seeing African stories being told by non-Africans or simply not being available, the Afrocentric paradigm and critical research philosophies. The Afrocentric paradigm argues for an African led and centered way of conceptualizing development (Asante, 2003). It calls for Africans to mobilize, write and tell their own stories. Critical research enables research praxis that leads to social change and transformation (Kincheloe, 2011). In this spirit, my

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4 Student names cannot be revealed.
intent was to use my ‘research authority’ to provide academic space for the Africans I met to tell the story of their Africa and what they are doing to construct it to suit local needs. In the same breadth that Dei (2011) advocated for studying Africans through what they know and do, I tried to understand the logic of the school and the activities of the participants who make it up. In practice, this looked like not having a rigid interview structure (some interviews were done sitting on the grass, over meals, walking) and by ensuring a interviewee centered interview by beginning conversations around individual experiences, motivations, aspirations and allowing conversations to continue even when they seemed to be off tangent. This also looked like me not feigning neutrality about my position or opinion about the school and African issues when asked (Kincholoe, McLaren and Steinberg, 2011). In those instances, I felt like I was also being “researched”. Some of the experiences (such as having a single story about Africa and not knowing about Africa’s history till they came to ALA) the participants shared resonated with me. I expressed affirmation in those instances and wasn’t shy to express emotions (such as being in awe, inspired and even shedding tears in a particular interview) as necessary.

The knowledge creation process in most of the interviews was a partnership (Freire, 1970) that originated from a sense of solidarity and alliance for transformative development in Africa. The conversations were interwoven with passion, laughter and a lot of personal narratives. There was co-teaching, mentoring by the older participants I spoke to and mentoring from me to the students I spoke with.

In seeking for more information such as the curriculum documents and synthesizing all the information I received, I was not trying to triangulate to prove correctness or wrongness. I wanted to gain multiple entries into the program and their experiences so
that I am enabled to convey representative information. I also wanted to emotionally connect with their experiences and aspirations so as to strengthen my passion, solidify my convictions and inform my education advocacy aspirations for Africa.

**Data Analysis**

My data analysis was done in four stages. Using descriptive and values coding (Saldana, 2012), I encoded my data to give a summarized but nuanced understanding of the data from a bird’s eye view. The second level analysis involved re-coding and re-summarizing the descriptions to form subcategories (Saldana, 2012). Subsequent to this, the topics were synthesized into broad categories that were relevant to the major component of ALA’s two-year program. The last level of analysis was to identify categories and connect them to themes that emanated from my literature review.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter illustrated the research methods – research type, research design, sampling type, data gathering and analysis system used in the study. The uniqueness of the school and specificity of the research question informed the chosen research methods. In line with the theoretical framework, critical research philosophies and Afrocentric paradigm was employed in data gathering and analysis phase. In total, there were 19 research participants (10 staff members and 9 students). Interview with staff members was to understand the ALA’s rationale, vision, programs and indicator of success. The purpose of the interviews with students was to learn about their ALA experience and the impact it has had on them and their future prospect as a result. Data was also gathered from ALA website and news releases about ALA.
Chapter 5: Research Findings

Consistent with the case study research approach used in the thesis, this chapter provides a detailed overview of the academy. The philosophy, vision, ideology, programs, academic life and notions of student success include reviewed topics.

I analyzed the collected data into three categories: Academic life, Residential life and Life beyond ALA. Academic life explores ALA’s academic programs, program model, conceptualization of student success, ALA classroom and teachers’ role. Residential life puts a spotlight on student life at ALA and the support services available to the students. Life beyond ALA captures ALA internship program, university placements and how connection is maintained with ALA students beyond their time in the academy. Serving as context is ALA’s belief, vision and principles.
ALA’s Principles, Beliefs, Programs and Curriculum aspects

Founded in 2008 by Ghanaian Fred Swaniker and American Chris Bradford, the goal of the academy is to develop the next generation of ethical and entrepreneurial African leaders with the capacity to transform the continent. In the words of the Academy, “ALA seeks to transform Africa (enable lasting peace and prosperity in Africa) by identifying, developing, and connecting the next generation of African leaders” (African Leadership Academy, Website). ALA is looking to develop the next generation of Nelson Mandelas’, Wangari Mathais’, Desmond Tutus’ who both individually and as a collective will transform the African continent and catapult it into a permanent path of progress. In another sense, ALA is a response to Africa’s most pressing problem – the paucity of citizens (leaders and followers) with the capacity to take on critical sectors in the African society and invigorate them in a coordinated fashion. As Swaniker explains:

I remember the days of the apartheid struggle. You will see all this violence going on TV and you will see Nelson Mandela in jail and he was being offered a chance to come out of jail and he refused until he achieved his objective: getting a free and fair society in South Africa. Desmond Tutu being out there… At the end of the day it was two people who brought a change to the country and I realized you know what, if Africa can create more people like these…. If Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu can change South Africa and bring down something like Apartheid, then we just need to create a few more great leaders. And just like we solved Apartheid, someone can do healthcare, these people can take care of education, agriculture, infrastructure… We can solve all our problems...That is really when I realized that you know instead of just hoping that these leaders emerge. I thought, is there a way that we can develop them in a proactive way and create a system for engineering the leaders that we need?

ALA’s aspiration to transform the continent is set to happen through the 100 African youth (15 -19 years) from across the continent that it admits every year into its academy. These teenagers are selected through a highly competitive process and must be academically excellent, have a track record of community service and a passion for
Africa. They are then immersed into a two years rigorous residential program rooted in African studies, Entrepreneurial leadership and Cambridge studies. Subsequent to the academy, the engagement continues through an alumni and career support network. They are provided ongoing support and opportunities to strengthen and nurture their commitment to Africa’s transformation and advancement.

ALA’s operational vision is to take on Africa’s toughest problems and through the academy’s leaders, solve them for Africa. As the founder notes, “the vision is really to solve the biggest problems facing Africa by using the whole generation of the most effective leaders we can find.” So therefore success for ALA is the transformation of Africa led and facilitated by the academy’s leaders.

If we look back 50 years, 100 years from now and we say, how has the continent changed? Who drove that change? It was the leaders from ALA. Right? So who made that agricultural break through that allowed us to feed 50 million people in Ethiopia? Who came up with that solution that allowed us to bring affordable healthcare to every person in Africa? Who solved Malaria for the continent? Who created the Walmart, the Googles and the Yahoos of Africa that brought employment to 250 million people? Right? It is the people who came out of the academy with their innovations and ideas, political leadership and the policies they have brought up. How many jobs did we create? How many millions of lives do we touch everyday through the innovation these young leaders come up with? How much wealth is created for people in Africa? How many Nobel Prize winners do we get out of this school? So that is success to us (Fred Swaniker, Founder of ALA).

Guiding ALA on this path to take on the continent’s greatest challenges are strong philosophical underpinnings that influence the academy’s design and programs. Common to all of them and the organization as a whole is the belief in the Power of One person to make or break the African continent. So therefore finding the “one or two” African people with the potential “to develop into a better and more advanced human being”
(Henry Ebube, Entrepreneurial Leadership Teacher) for Africa’s transformation is central to ALA’s mission. As Swaniker explains,

The model of going around Africa and picking exceptionally talented young people that have leadership potential is based on our philosophy that it doesn’t take a lot of people to change society. For example, the overthrow of Mubarak in Egypt, it took only a few people who started a campaign and it grew and grew. If you look at Zimbabwe, it has taken only Mugabe to hold the country back.

It is in this same line of thinking that ALA wants “to find a few amazing people and develop them intensely. We want to make a very, very personalized and deep investment in one or two of these people” (Fred Swaniker, ALA Founder).

ALA’s engagement with the young leaders is intended to be life long and is captured in three fold: two year program, university years and post university years. The two-year phase is a residential program in the academy. It can be divided into two main components – residential and academic life. The focus of this thesis is on the two-year program.

**Academic Life**

At the core of ALA’s academic life are African Studies and Entrepreneurial Leadership which is couched in the Cambridge O’ Levels studies that enables the students smoothly transition to university after ALA. Throughout the two years at ALA, students are required to take two years of African Studies (AS), Entrepreneurial Leadership (EL), Mathematics, English and three electives from Science, Humanities, Economics and French. Apart from AS and EL, the remaining subjects follow the Cambridge curriculum and students are required to write the examination to fulfill their ALA graduation requirement.
**African Studies**

If Entrepreneurial Leadership is the how to solve Africa’s problem component of ALA’s curriculum, African Studies (AS) is the “what to solve” component of it. At best, the AS course is geared towards helping the students “develop an understanding of Africa's past and present, a connection to the broader African community, and a sense of ownership for the continent's future” (ALA’s Website). According to Denis Kojo – Vice Principal Academics at ALA, the goal of AS is to “Instruct and Unite”. In ALA’s context, students from different countries are being united for current and future leadership of the continent.

The African studies course foregrounds an African account of the continent and takes on an interdisciplinary approach by studying Africa through historical, economic, geographic, and political lenses. The course is divided into two parts between the two years. Year one is the foundational stage that sets the students up for further specialization in year two. In year one, all the students in the cohort focus on answering broad questions about the continent. Questions include: What does it mean to be African? How can the African identity be defined at the individual level? Is there such a thing like Africaness that can apply to everyone? On a weekly basis, students read the news and current affairs from another African country that they normally will not learn about and discuss in class. The purpose of this is to enable students connect the dots and draw similarities between social issues/solutions in their countries and the ones they read about.

Beyond these questions, the students learn about African civilization ranging from the Great Zimbabwe, Ancient Egypt and the Aksumite civilization. The relevance of this
foundational focus explains the African studies teacher – Kalas, is to help the students challenge conventional conceptions of Africa being a basket case poor continent that has always needed help. As Kalas argues, teaching about Ancient African civilization helps the students learn that there has been greatness on the African continent before the history they have been taught which is often Eurocentric and focuses on Africa from slavery and as a continent that has always being in need. For this reason, she explains, students are made to see that another era of greatness is possible in the continent. Such knowledge also helps to build a sense of pride in the African identity, she purports.

Becoming critical, curious and analytical about the orientation of conventional African history/studies that focuses on slavery, colonization and Africa as an underdeveloped continent is also an area of importance. “There are so many great things that came out of this (ancient civilization), so why is it that these existed but we don’t learn about it as much?” (Kalas Tekele, African Studies Teacher).

Increasing knowledge about Africa, “dispelling single stories” about the continent and disseminating a body of knowledge about Africa as told by Africans is also integral to the foundational year.

   But also with the experience of slavery and colonization - we study it because there are some students who have not had that exposure to that history and it is also an opportunity to say: this might be what you have been told, here is another side to the story as told from the African perspective (Kalas Tekele, African Studies Teacher).

Students are guided to make an informed decision about issues especially about Africa by looking for the many other sides of the story.

   The other thing we really push in all the classes is "the danger of a single story”. Before you make an informed decision on anything, read around, see what many different people are saying about it before you say "I am going with this one story” and that is it! (Kalas Tekele, African Studies Teacher).
In line with this, AS also promotes the importance of knowing about the African continent, owning the continent and sharing her story.

There is something just disenfranchising about not being able to tell your own story. It is just something that has filtered into the development path of Africa and we are saying to the students: someone is identifying what your problems are and prescribing the solutions for you instead of you taking the stage and saying these are what the problems are. These are the ideas I have. How do you think you can help me solve these problems that I am identifying by myself? (Kalas Tekele, African Studies Teacher).

Pan-African collaboration being a key belief in ALA, students explore African history in a way that shows historical collaborations between countries for struggles such as Independence and the end to apartheid. This helps illustrate the historicity of African unity and collaboration for development that ALA is promoting as a pillar to Africa’s transformation. The latest addition to the first year component of the program is a creative project relating to Independence movements. Students will be given the opportunity to conduct their own research on the independence movement from any perspective that is of interest to them.

In the second year of the course, students specialize in one of the five modules, which are:

1. Africa in the Global Context
2. Politics and Governance
3. Gender in the African context
4. Development
5. Apartheid Segregation and Intolerance

At the end of the two years, students are required to carry out a contemporary African studies case study project.
AS program puts the spotlight on Africa and constructs the face of the continent that
needs to be transformed. Perhaps more importantly, the AS course seeks to ignite a sense
of responsibility for and an attachment to the continent, engender passion, quench any
sense of hopelessness and transfer ownership to the young leaders. The AS teacher
explains: “And the other thing is like you said – it is "your Africa"; own it! If you will not
do anything to fix the problem, who will? Who are you leaving it to? Do something about
it because no one else will!” (Kalas Tekele, African Studies Teacher).

**Entrepreneurial Leadership**

Entrepreneurial Leadership is an experiential learning course that draws on
entrepreneurship, leadership and ethics. Throughout the program, students move between
solving real life problems, to participating in simulations about social issues in Africa to
in class reflections about their experiences and to running an actual business. From a
different perspective, the entrepreneurial component of the program can be likened to a
toolbox the students are equipped with to solve social issues in the continent. The most
important item in this toolbox is a transformed mindset about themselves, about
problems, about leadership and the continent. The EL Teacher explains:

> If you are going to transform a continent, you have to be equipped with the
mindset and skillsets. It is kind of like us trying to activate important parts of their
brains. It is about seeing problems not as problems but as opportunities. It is about
trying to address root causes of problems and not symptoms. And all of those are
skills that you can develop, that can be taught, that can be learnt. It is about
helping the students develop their emotional intelligence to a higher level and it is
also about learning about living a life guided by values. (Henry Ebube,
Entrepreneurial Leadership Teacher).

In practice, changing student mindsets involves class activities that enable students to
challenge status quo and previously held conceptions about themselves and taken for
granted terms such as Leadership. For example, students are required to engage in
personal reflections on what it means to be a leader and answer the question: Am I a leader? They then participate in an experiential activity called “LILI PAD” that challenges their conceptualization of leadership. Henry Ebube, Entrepreneurial Leadership teacher explains:

The first thing they have to do when they get into the classroom is to write a reflection on: Am I a leader and who is a leader? At African Leadership Academy, those are the first two questions you have to answer for yourself: Am I a leader and who is a leader? And interestingly, most of the time, most of them will tell you: Yeah, I am a leader. Did you guys not select me because I am a leader? We need to get them to realize very soon that you are not a leader but you are here because you have the potential to develop into a better and more advanced human being. Now, that is what is going to make you a leader. Somebody who has got the potential to drive change, somebody who has got the potential to drive a group of people going towards a common goal, someone who has got the potential to be part of a group people towards a common goal. The potential is what brings you here and as they get more exposed, we challenge them to prove that they are leaders... One of the first things that we also do is an experiential activity called "Lili Pad". Essentially, we put half of the class here (in the quad) and put half of the class on the other side of the quad. And we put a whole bunch of paper plates on the quad and we say these paper plates are lilipads. Your task is to take the entire team from one side to the other. First of all they will struggle, they always struggle because guess what? There are 100 of them: 50 on this side and 50 on the other side. 50 people, who believe they are leaders, default for them means: I am supposed to lead. What happens when you have 50 leaders who are trying to lead the leaders? How do we do this? Which suddenly starts boggling their mind. Wait a minute, how do we do this? What does that mean? Can you put 50 leaders together? Is this something I am supposed to be doing in a lonely way? Is it that once I am a leader, everyone should be below me? Or can we all as equals still have somebody else lead us? So suddenly you start to pull the rug underneath them in the way they have thought of leadership, in the way they have thought about themselves. And suddenly they realize: I tend to scream a lot when I am sharing my ideas. oh wait a minute, I actually cannot listen to other people when they are sharing their ideas. Oh wait a minute, the same ideas that I have had for my entire life that made me a hero in my little community suddenly is not even valid anymore because there are 50 other people that are way better than me. You see, so it is kind of this fundamental shift in your thinking. Then they are like, Woh Woh, let me challenge everything that I have held true for most of my life and start rethinking. Ok, if that is not leadership, then what is leadership? Here are 50 so-called leaders that cant even cross the quad and they never manage to, by the way. So what does that say about leadership? What does it say about us? What it probably does say is that the way you have been thinking about leadership is wrong. Leadership is not about whose
voice is heard best or whose voice is loudest or who is got the best alternative. But it is probably about who manages to work with other people to get to a point. You see? That is where it begins. Then you go to a classroom and then you start challenging even more things.

Extending this conceptualization of leadership that requires “working with others to get to a point” and the attitude of digging deep, students are required to go into a nearby community to solve real life social problems such as poor school infrastructure and poor learning outcomes amongst other things. A project that was referenced is the Creche Project. Ten minutes away from the African Leadership Academy, many students in the Creche were studying in unhygienic conditions with poor infrastructure. ALA students spent about 8 – 10 weeks in the community. They were challenged to dig deep into the problem and move beyond identifying solutions that focus on conventional fundraising to buying pencils, books or infrastructure for the school. They were able to identify that the parents of the students in that school were illegal immigrants with minimal income or unpaid salaries and as a result were unable to pay sufficient fees that would have helped pay the teachers better and keep the school in a better condition. Following this thinking, students were able to see the problem in its entirety, ask more questions about the problem and society generally, seek understanding and generate multiple solutions to this problem. ALA’s Mindset transformation process follows their BUILD (Believe, Understand, Invent, Listen and Deliver) model. BUILD is a way of thinking about a problem that takes off with believing a problem can be solved, building relationships and connections with the identified community. It also involves critical research, analysis, iteration, invention and delivering relevant solutions.
Anchoring the BUILD model are ALA core values and other leadership values that the EL program reinforces. ALA’s core values with explanations from signage posted on the walls of the academy include:

1. **Integrity**: We are people of our world, with the courage to do what is right.

2. **Curiosity**: We challenge the status quo and take the initiative to pursue new ideas.

3. **Humility**: We are thankful for our opportunities and are aware of our limitations.

4. **Compassion**: We empathize with and care for those around us.

5. **Diversity**: We respect all people and believe that difference should be celebrated.

6. **Excellence**: We set high standards for our own achievement and celebrate the achievements of others.

In the EL program, responsibility and proactivity are the underlying dispositions aimed at. Responsibility is about owning a problem and being able to see responsibility as Response-Ability. That is, *what is your ability to respond to problems?* Therefore, the
goal of EL is to equip the students with greater ability to solve problems, specifically
problems relating to Africa’s transformation. EL is also about developing a mindset in the
students that equips them to see and think of problems in a different way. Henry, the EL
teacher describes this mindset and approach to solving problems as an “optimistic
resilient approach to thinking about problems”. Instead of seeing problems in a negative
light, problems can be embraced and seen as opportunities to create solutions. Awareness
of this mindset and the willingness to share it with others is also part of the EL teachings.

A mindset reflects how somebody talks about an issue, tackles the issue, and tries
to empower others to think in that same way. That is, someone who has a
different mindset and understands the power of that different mindset and tries to
empower others. It is also about paying it forward. (Henry Ebube, Entrepreneurial
Leadership Teacher).

Outside of the classroom, every ALA student is required to manage a campus business.
These businesses include: Tuc Shop, auditing firm, radio station and a farm amongst
other initiatives.

**Understanding of Student Success & Assessment**

That is why, when you walk around ALA, you see our values all over our walls. You see
when we give awards at the end of the term, it is not who did well in Math, who did well in
English but it is about who is embodying the values, who is living by example, who is
modelling leadership? (Henry Ebube, Entrepreneurial Leadership Teacher).

In the EL program, student learning is captured through changes in student disposition
and acquisition of soft skills such as self awareness, self confidence, self reliance, team
spirit, mindset orientation, comfort with failure, openness to learning, and willingness to
pay it forward. It is also about what the students end up doing for Africa throughout their
time in ALA and after the two-year program. EL measures change in mindset by looking
at how the students talks, thinks and tackles issues while empowering others to do the
same. “Mindset reflects how somebody talks about an issue, tackle the issue, and tries to empower others to think in that same way... That is someone who has a different mindset and understands the power of that different mindset and tries to empower others” (Henry Ebube, Entrepreneurial Leadership Teacher).

Quantitatively, the EL program measures success in two ways. The BUILD model provides a framework to assess the students. The process instead of the outcome of the project appears to be the focus of the assessment. The teachers seek to understand how well the students used the BUILD process and if the projects they created are viable. Teachers look for how the students unpacked the problem, if they addressed root cause and not symptoms, how they failed and what they did with their failure.

Grades are not assigned in the EL program. According to Henry (EL Teacher), “what does it even mean to get an A in leadership?” A 360-survey feedback mechanism is conducted pre and post EL to assess students in ALA core values. The 360- survey is 30 questions long and is completed by 5 – 6 people in the ALA community - the student, teacher, a friend in class, a team member in a student enterprise and another person in the dormitory. Total scores are analysed and ranked on a scale that ranges from:

1. Immediate focus area
2. Emerging Behaviour
3. Meets Expectation
4. Exceeds Expectation
5. Model for community

A communal assessment of this nature is important, Henry argues, because people’s perception of a leader matters.
Obviously, there is no leadership without followership, what is followership? Followership is essentially: Why will I follow you? Why will I follow Nelson Mandela? Because there are things about a guy like Nelson Mandela that I can believe in, I can trust his integrity, I can trust his empathy, his compassion for people. I can trust that if I give Mandela the right to make a decision or a choice for me, he is going to do it with my best interest at heart. So, perception matters when you talk about leadership.

Cambridge Studies:

Because the ALA program is a pre-university program, ALA simultaneously prepares the students for university entry. Consequently, ALA follows a Cambridge curriculum and students are required to take two years of Math, English and three additional subjects from the Sciences, the Humanities, Economics, and French. At the end of the program, students write the Cambridge exam. I spoke to Ephraim who teaches Mathematics in the Cambridge stream about the relevance of Math in the transformation of Africa. For him, one cannot successfully change the continent without being mathematically literate. To accommodate for the different skills and interest level, Math is taught from an intellectual and practical lens. For the students with a strong leaning in Math, they are encouraged to continue on to Further Math and participate in the Math Olympics. From a practical angle, Ephraim tries to teach by helping the students identify Mathematics in everyday life.

A challenge ALA faces is connecting the Cambridge curriculum to the Entrepreneurial leadership and African studies. Understandably, the Cambridge curriculum is Eurocentric and was not made with EL or AS in mind. Through the student led initiative platform (Original Ideas for Development), ALA students have begun the project of integrating the AS/EL studies together with Mathematics, Science and Humanities subjects. The result of this fusion, they hope, will be an African Baccalaureates program that will serve as a
replacement for the Cambridge exams African students who seek to go abroad must take. It will be an exam that is more relevant to the African context while being globally recognized.

**Creative Arts and Innovation**

ALA is also about helping the students activate their right brains and teaching the use of it. The Creative Arts program is a student led and student interest driven class. The class starts with an exploration of music to movement, visual arts and theater. For the final project, students are encouraged to carry out projects of interest such as singing, writing amongst other things. The coordinator of the program (Namdi Ndoga) who imagines himself as an enabler and connector finds focal points between student interests and extended learning opportunities. For example, guest speaker invitations and competitions are organized around these interests. The goal of the creative arts component is to enable students create and tell stories, empathize, play, find meaning, design, dream big, innovate and build connections amongst themselves and their teachers. Evaluation in the class is interpretive and based on student accounts of its impact. Students create a series of “somethings” and draw connections between the experiences they have in the class and their future aspirations. The program is open to all students in the academy.

**Classroom & Teacher’s role**

ALA teachers describe their role in the classroom as facilitators and enablers of learning.

Because leadership. I often say, you do not teach leadership, you learn leadership…. I think it is really about learning and not so much about teaching. It is not like Math; there is one way to solve an equation, there is one way to solve for X, and there is one answer that you get to. If I were doing that, then yes, I could say that I am teaching leadership. Leadership is not equal to X and X is not equal to leadership, so I cannot teach you how to solve for X. But I can teach you,
I can coach you, I can facilitate your learning in terms of the many ways you can try to gain an understanding of what X could potentially be. (Henry Ebube, Entrepreneurial Leadership Teacher).

In illustrating one of his classes, Ephraim Mgonja, ALA Math teacher states:

My first rule in class is to talk less. You know what happens? If you talk a lot in the classroom, the students will become disengaged. Obviously, there is a need to talk, but I try to limit it to a minimum level. When we talk about something, we look at a few examples. I don’t necessarily have to come up with the examples. I ask students to come up with the examples and then when I try to talk about it and somebody knows what I am about to talk about, I invite them to talk about it and explain. So even when given the examples, students will get involved.

Accounts from other teachers such as the Creative Arts and African studies teacher points to a student centred approach towards learning. Students are expected to take leadership and they appear to be doing so.

So if a student came towards me with an idea, like “I’d like to do a song, I’d like to write a piece.” Anything that was creative I would support it and I would find focal points. I would say: Let’s have an open mind. Let’s get a guest speaker in. Or let’s get a guest to do this. Or let’s have a competition. So there are focal points in the subject, but I wouldn’t direct it. I would say: wouldn’t it be great if we had this.. and then somebody would organize it.

Weekly discussion sessions in the African Studies class on Africa indicates that ALA classes are discussion and project based.

Our teaching method is very much the Socratic method, discussions, asking questions. Rather than me asking questions and tell you that these are the solutions, lets look at the problem. Let me ask you, as many problems as I can that will lead you to think outside the box in terms of the solution finding process. (Kalas Tekele, African Studies Teacher).

ALA student accounts triangulate ALA teachers’ description of their classes. All the students (nine of them) I spoke to shared how ALA classes are different from what they were used to. They described a classroom that is student centred and peer-mentored. This learning approach appears to be the norm even beyond the classroom. I had dinner with
the students on numerous occasions and discussions about the projects they were working on, politics and controversial issues predominated their conversations. 

The way in which we are taught is very different from how I was taught in my old school. In this school, it's more discussion based. People are allowed to explore and be critical thinkers in whatever subject and allowed to ask questions and debate amongst each other and with the teacher. Students are allowed to use their creativity and think of new ways to explore the subject. For example, in Biology, I was told to make a song or a play out of the topic or create something using PowerPoint. For example, in English, you could make a digital narrative expressing who you are. It is that type of thing in the different subjects, think outside the box, become more of a critical thinker, become more opinionated, discuss, accept other people's opinion instead of just your own opinions. (ALA Student)

ALA students are rewarded for taking charge of their learning and encouraged to challenge their teachers in the classroom. As Swaniker describes,

Very often if you go to a class, you see that the teacher is sitting and the student is teaching the class. We really want them to challenge the teachers. We encourage them and reward them. We tell them that they are doing a great job when they challenge the teachers. You know, this is very different from what you find in other schools. We really believe in the power of youth.
Residential Life

“You cannot be a good leader if you are not a well-rounded person”

(Randa Walters, Residence Faculty Member).

Residential life program caters to the mind and body of the students. The focus is on providing a support system for the students to keep up with their academic life on campus. The program covers a broad spectrum and includes advisory family and groups, spiritual, health and wellness, and athletics. In line with ALA’s vision to promote learning and collaboration amongst Africans, each student shares a room with someone from a different African country. ALA students are also grouped into an advisory family of six (3 boys, 3 girls from different countries) and a faculty parent. The family meets at least once a week to discuss issues and bond over lunch. Every ALA student is expected to participate in at least one sport and wellness activity. A room – Magenta room is dedicated to spiritual activities for all the existing faiths (7th Day Adventist, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Jew, Atheists and Agnostics) on campus. Arrangement is also made for the students to go for weekly services or other religious observance. Mentoring and counseling is a big part of the residential life program. There is a unit dedicated to counseling and stress management. They use a metrics to detect stress level in students in a proactive way. The mentoring component extends and consolidates the key lessons from the students’ academic life. Some of the dispositions that are nurtured include self-confidence, self-awareness, learning to love, learning to care for others, learning to ask for help as necessary, and learning to connect the dots from school to community.

Weekly, assemblies are conducted. These assemblies, according to the coordinator are the focal point of the community to reinforce and celebrate community spirit through news
sharing, performances, national Independence Day celebrations and general announcements.
Life beyond ALA

Upon joining ALA, students with financial needs are given a scholarship and required to sign a contract that requires them to come back to the continent after their education abroad.

Africa Career Network

Beyond the walls of the academy, ALA seeks to remain “connected to the leaders throughout their journey” (Drina Andrews, Director of Lifelong Engagement). A team of four is dedicated to ensuring ALA students remain connected to themselves, ALA and Africa. In the USA where most of the students go to for higher education (more than 80%), a team in the USA serves as a support network and helps connect the students to host families, organize reunions and provide career mentoring as required. Similarly, in other countries where ALA students are, ALA provides financial and resource support to ensure that chapter groups are set up and regular reunions are organized.

Through the Africa Careers Network - a job portal dedicated to ALA students and MasterCard Foundation scholars, ALA provides internship and post-graduation job placements for the students. ALA works with a select group of prospective employers with a Pan-African outlook/reach, relevant opportunities that are of interest to the students and are interested in working with ALA. Through this process, internship opportunities are identified and/or created and advertised on the career network. To pursue the opportunity, ALA students are provided support in resume writing, interview preparation, resource material on industry and general career mentoring. Between 2010 and 2013, one hundred and sixty five internships have been offered to ALA students.
across the continent and internationally. 90% of the opportunities were in Africa.

Currently, ALA has about 124 partners and some of the popular organizations include Google, GE, McKinsey & Co, KPMG, CocaCola, Mandela Institute for Development Studies and IBM.

Within the context of ALA’s vision to transform Africa, an important goal and strategy of ACN and ALA explains Drina Andrews - Director of Life Long Engagement, is to provide “a human capital injection back to Africa of high quality, high caliber ethical transformative leaders”. It is through these leaders that structural societal problems that facilitate poverty, joblessness and lack of growth amongst other things could be tackled. Additionally, she explains, a network of this nature enables a number of important factors that directly contribute to Africa’s transformation. They include:

1. Bringing African talent back to the continent.
2. Providing evidence that Africa is a continent of bountiful opportunities.
3. Shifting mindset and shaping perceptions about Africa and what constitutes opportunity: turning down a Wall Street offer to come back to work in Africa is an indication of that.
4. Creating opportunities for growth and employment within the continent – ALA graduates are given support to start their own ventures.
5. Creating opportunities across Africa between the students and likeminded individual.

Chapter Summary

ALA’s program can be understood from three distinct but interconnected standpoints: Academic, Residential and Life beyond ALA. Students are admitted for two years and
are required to live on campus. For those two years, students study African studies, Entrepreneurial leadership and sit for the Cambridge exams. ALA students are very involved in the governance of the school and run external projects. Each student is assigned to an advisory family of 4 – 6 and is paired with a roommate from an African country other than theirs. The ALA experience is more than the two-year program on campus. ALA maintains an alumnus network and help students with job placements.
Chapter 6: Research Findings

In this chapter, based on the data collected, I will identify themes from ALA that align with Ake’s theory of development and my subsequent expansion of it through the other reviewed scholars in my theoretical framework chapter. These identified themes are ALA attributes that are easily observed in the academy’s practice and gleaned from the views expressed by the research participants. The nine themes are presented below:

1. The promotion and practice of African led development
2. Teaching of servant leadership
3. The desire for a culturally relevant development in Africa
4. Social democracy and entrepreneurship
5. Nurturing and promoting Pan-Africanism
6. African centered teaching and learning
7. Youth centered and mindset development
8. ALA students as agents of change
9. ALA classrooms as classrooms without borders

Below, I provide an analysis of each of the themes with relevant quotes from the students, administrators and teachers.

Emerging Themes from ALA

A. The promotion and practice of African led development

ALA strongly believes in the need for an African led and driven development. This belief is best exemplified in the founder himself who with a debt of $200,000 gave up his job at Mckinsey & Company to start ALA. As he explains,
What could be more compelling than coming to change a continent? What could be more compelling than changing the future of a billion people? What could be more compelling than creating a machine to transform the continent?

Fuelling the founder’s conviction to start ALA is a worldview rooted in passion, a sense of ownership, responsibility and attachment to the continent. He explains the motivation for starting ALA below:

I hate it when I go around the world and see us being depicted like this hopeless continent. We need the rest of the world to come and save us. You need a visa to go to the USA or UK and they treat you like you are not even a human being. You land in these countries and the way you are treated in immigration and asked all these stupid questions. Why should we be treated this way because we are Africans? At the end of the day, part of it has been brought onto us but a lot of them are things we have done to ourselves. If we were a great nation, if we were strong, prosperous and powerful economically, no one will treat us that way…. I am tired of living and being a part of a people that is not respected. You know, I want to make sure we are respected, that we have power on the global stage. This is a great continent!

Making Africa a great continent that is respected is a task ALA believes cannot be left to chance and must be championed by Africans. At the crux of ALA’s mission is the intentional development of Africans for Africa’s leadership. The founder notes:

The reason why we are underachieving is because we did not have good leadership… Instead of just hoping that these leaders emerge, is there a way that we can develop them in a proactive way and create a system for engineering the leaders that we need?

In a different but related context Fred Swaniker explains how Africa has the ability to solve its own problems:

If Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu can change South Africa and bring down something like Apartheid, then we just need to create a few more great leaders. And just like we solved Apartheid, someone can do healthcare, these people can take care of education, agriculture, infrastructure… We can solve all our problems. This philosophy guides ALA’s program design, goals and mandate. For example, ALA admits 100 young Africans every year for the purpose of equipping them to transform
Africa. Transforming the continent starts from learning more about their identity as Africans, loving the continent, identifying opportunities for collaboration and being a part of a network of passionate people committed to changing the continent. One of the core subjects – African Studies helps ALA students in this respect. The course teaches about Africa from an interdisciplinary lens and relies on the experiences and diverse national backgrounds of the students for continuous student learning. According to this student, “ALA is mostly student run, the teachers are here to facilitate and make sure we do things right.” Another student describes the goal of the African studies class:

One of the aims of the African studies course is to help us understand Africa, like the “real Africa”. For example, if previously, I knew just about the witchcrafts from Nigeria, with the African studies class, I will be able to understand more - its political, social and economic part. It also enables us to understand why people may have those preconceptions. Also, because we live with Nigerians here in the academy, they help us understand what the actual Nigeria is about and not the one we knew before.

Creating clarity around what it means to be African and generating knowledge about Africa is central to ALA’s strategy of equipping young Africans to lead the continent’s development. In the first class of African studies, students have to answer the question: Who is an African? As this student explains:

The first thing you focus on is: Who is an African? People ask what you identify as African. Some people said: my hair, some people said my color and some people just say because I am born in Africa and then we learnt about Africans of the blood and Africans of the soil. So, Africans of the soil would be people that were born on the African soil in an African country and Africans of the blood would then be for example, people who have parents that are Africans of the soil and were born in America or some other continent apart from Africa.

B. Teaching Servant Leadership
Squaring in on leadership, which is at the crux of ALA’s mission, ALA teaches and promotes a different type of leadership from what is found in contemporary African leadership (Hierarchical leadership). As the Entrepreneurial leadership teacher explains, it is not about being an “Oga at the Top” (Nigerian nickname for hierarchical leaders), it is about leading from behind, service to the people and solving social issues.

What we do at ALA is make people understand that there are multiple paradigms of leadership, one of which is servant leadership. The greatest leadership we have seen has not been the Ogas’ at the top; it has been those who have led from behind. It is this idea from the bible of Jesus Christ being the shepherd -- who is a Shepherd? Can a Shepherd lead a herd of cattle if he was up front? What are you leading? Who are you leading? But this idea of leading from behind is what we have not seen enough of in Africa. After independence, it has always been about the Ogas' at the top. We put people up in big places that talk and say a lot of things but have never led others. What is going wrong in Nigeria and I will say many other African countries is a misunderstanding of leadership.

Servant leadership as the students and other teachers describe it is community centered, service-oriented and gains its credibility from its capacity to solve problems that the people face. This people centered form of leadership is consistent with Robert Greenleaf’s (1977) vision of servant leadership where he illustrates that servant leadership is about improving the lives of those served. The quote below explains:

> Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or, at least, not be further deprived? (Greenleaf, 1977, p.6).

In this type of leadership, leaders are servants (Greenleaf, 1977) and the motivation for their leadership is not self-interest but the societal need of their service (Luthans & Avolio, 2003 cited in Dierendonck, 2011).

Within the context of ALA, young people are community mobilizers, community energizers, facilitators of community change and where necessary, are pacesetters and
catalysts with groundbreaking ideas/initiatives for tough social problems. Their acquired knowledge from ALA as well as future education is for the primary purpose of solving a particular social problem and serving the community. They are community servants. Like Stone (2004), Russell & Patterson (2004) notes “Real servanthood is a leadership style that relies upon the influence of self-giving without self-glory” (p.357).

Contrary to conventional notions of leadership that suggest impactful and relevant societal leadership is only possible at an older age, ALA promotes and expects immediate leadership from the students regardless of their age. ALA students have spoken on behalf of the continent at global events such as the G8 summit. The Director of Strategic Relations explains that leadership is not about how young one is but about how good a person is with their ideas and conviction. As he illustrates, “we have a saying, as a young leader, if you’re good enough, you’re old enough.” For ALA, these opportunities help demystify leadership positions, give young people an understanding of how global society works, provide them experience in engaging people on behalf of Africa and develop awareness about how the world sees Africa.

The type of leadership ALA promotes is not only in entrepreneurship but also in politics, non-profit, government and private sector. Essentially, wherever there is a problem that needs to be solved. This is evident in the diverse fields ALA students conduct their internships in (Finance, Business, Information Technology, Healthcare and Education).

C. The Desire for a Culturally Relevant African Development

Upholding African culture, values and knowledge, promoting it and finding ways to foreground it in everyday life is constitutive of what ALA believes is required for Africans to lead their development. The musings of ALA’s Entrepreneurial Leadership teacher - Henry captures this:
How do we make Africa become a progressive continent while at the same time staying true to the traditions and cultures? How do you bring leadership to this continent while respecting the incredible role elders have played in the way we have governed Africa? How do you bring back the spirit of Ubuntu?

One student also questions: “How can Africans gain back their identity and their culture?

How can we own our identity and culture?”

Another student observes and questions how a culturally relevant African education system can be developed:

So usually we learn from the Cambridge or the French system or the IB (International Baccalaureate), but how do we change that? How do we have our own African system that can be spread around Africa? I can't use my grade 12 Zambian papers to get into college, but how can we stop that? How can we stop writing the SAT or having to write A levels to be able to go to a school like Oxford? How can I use my African papers to get into these types of schools? Or, how do we start to grow our own good universities, so that other people from outside are like, I want to go to the University of Rwanda because that university is so nice and it's prestigious as well.

D. Preference for Social Democracy and Entrepreneurial Leadership

The kind of Africa and democracy the ALA participants are seeking for is reminiscent of Ake’s social democracy and roots itself in the socio-economic and political needs of Africans. For example, in response to a question on his views on Ake’s vision of social democracy in Africa, Henry – EL teacher agrees with Ake and says: “Claude makes sense. What he is saying is that: it is Africans who are going to create the institutions that fit the African model.” Henry presented his home country Mauritius as an example of a mono crop African country that used a people centered development approach (investing in people’s education, transportation and healthcare) to leap frog itself from a poor colonial dependent country in 1968 to a now independent African country with a large middle class and 100% literacy rates. He explains,

How do you do that? From a kid living in 1990 in a little shack to today’s middle class if not upper middle class in Mauritius? How the hell do you do that in a
generation? How do you make 50% of your population, who are labourers to become part of the middle and upper middle class today? How the hell do you do that? Yeah, you can make arguments – It is a small country, blah blah blah -- but they started with zero, zero resources! But hear what was interesting, in the 90s when Mauritius gained independence and then suddenly realized that we are a mono-crop economy, we were like: we are dead! But we had good leadership; we had forward thinking leaders who said: You know what? It is about the people. Investing massively in those three basic things especially free healthcare, free transportation and free education is how you create a Social Democracy. You take the best of socialism and you infuse it with the best of democracy – you get an absolutely very vibrant democracy.

Further on he states,

[S]o expecting the West or anybody else to come fix our problems, again, it is naive at best. It is not going to happen. We are going to have to find African solutions to Africa's problems. Would it be similar to stuff that others have already found out? Yes! There are only so many ways that money works, there are only so many ways that economies work; the principles of economics are not that different but there are other things that can be done differently. This idea of always optimizing profit bothers me. You are taught always to optimize profit. Really? Is that really the only way to think about business?

The ALA students I spoke to also allude to a different type of development and democracy for Africa. Sustainable development for them is the intersection between creating profitable enterprises and social impact. This ALA student explains:

So the sole purpose is never only to make money, nor is it only to help the people. You can find an in between - sustainability. How do you sustain your enterprise but still help your society? This could also be the same thing in leading the country. How do I sustain my country, but still make it economically stable so that people are satisfied? I think that's why they say, for example, being fully communist is hard because the government cannot take all responsibility for every enterprise and expect to increase the country’s economy and give the people everything that they need. But the country can also not be fully capitalist and expect to satisfy the people fully. You know the disadvantage of that and the advantage of both sides but I believe that if you are in between where you are still trying to develop the country economically, but are also trying to help the society.

E. Promoting Pan-Africanism and Nurturing Pan-African collaboration
Pan-Africanism is a founding belief at ALA (Pan-African collaboration). This belief is not only an aspiration and strategy in the school; it is also a pedagogical approach that informs school practices. Entrepreneurial Leadership teacher, Henry explains:

There is a way to think about the future of Africa where we all have a common understanding of what Africa could become. Where we are all saying: there is a common African identity that we can build on. A definite example is: you are from Nigeria and of course you are very proud of being Nigerian and most of the time that you thought about fixing issues and you have thought: this is a Nigerian problem and this is how I am going to fix it for Nigeria. And then you come into ALA and you are surrounded by people from Namibia, Morocco, South Africa, Kenya, Tanzania, Senegal and you are like, wait a minute, there are some common grounds here and then suddenly instead of thinking of problems just for Nigeria or your community, you are thinking: How could we collaboratively and in a Pan-African way think about solutions to this problem? Because, guess what, that same problem I am facing in my community is also somewhere else in Africa. At the end, it ultimately highlights that we have way more in common as Africans than we have as differences. And by building common grounds and leveraging our diversity, we manage to create solutions of scale. Solutions that have the possibility of having a grander magnitude than what we were thinking initially. Simultaneously, by being in a group of people from all over Africa, our understanding of our common history is also enhanced. Then you start putting the mini pieces together and see that Africa existed way way way before the idea of Nigeria as a nation state existed. Africa existed before the idea of Ethiopia as a nation state existed. Nationalism is a new concept if you were to put it on a scale of human history. The idea of state is only maybe 200, 300 years old. But Africa as a continent, as a place, we have lived, the land of Africa, mother Africa that connected all of us, defies all sorts of boundaries and has always being there. Not that we are saying that nationalism does not have a place anymore. But we are saying, how do we find the balance? (Henry, Entrepreneurial Leadership Teacher)

Discerning this balance and tilling the soil for greater Pan-African collaboration is an ongoing pursuit at ALA. Every Friday ALA students share news and current affairs from a different African country. At the weekly assembly, the ALA community learns about news from all around Africa and celebrates the culture of different African countries. ALA students created an African anthem that is sung at these assemblies. Every ALA student shares a room with a student from a different African country. As a collective, the school community is divided into house families of 5 – 6 people from different African
countries. ALA students espouse the belief in Pan – African collaboration. This student explains: “The essence of what we do is really to get Pan – African collaboration and Pan-Africanism going. I mean if we're going to be the future African leaders then we need to start seeing opportunities for collaboration with different African countries”.

A critical component of this belief at ALA is helping young people see more similarities than differences between Africans and to build continental relationships that can be leveraged for Africa’s transformation. From a critical lens, it inculcates an anti-colonial lens in the young people which is enabling the students question the colonial divide of Africa into smaller countries and in effect, inspiring their pursuit for a united Africa. It is from this lens that ALA students must be arguing that an African leader is someone who puts Africa first before his/her country. According to them, an African leader is someone who understands local African problems in a nuanced way and has what it takes to bring about Kwame Nkrumah’s United States of Africa dream to life. ALA’s African Studies (AS) class is a focal point for nurturing this conceptual framework. As Denis Kojo notes, the purpose of the class is to “Instruct and Unite”. Kalas, AS teacher also explains the goal and rationale of the AS class:

I mean the aim is to help them see that these are problems that aren't necessarily unique to their communities or country. If these problems exist elsewhere, what is being done in other parts of the continent that could potentially be tried in their own communities? So it is a learning opportunity both in terms of just what is going on in and around Africa and what is being done successfully in other parts of Africa that can be done in their own countries and communities.

Quite more importantly, the class helps the young people see that Pan-African collaboration is not new in the continent. They explore African history in a way that shows historical collaborations between countries for struggles such as independence and
the end to apartheid. Kalas explains below:

If we at ALA are talking about Pan-African collaboration, we are not looking at it like something that is completely new and has never been done. We are saying, look at the experiences of all the independence movements, people from across borders that worked together because they had a mutual goal of independence.

This perspective helps illustrate the historicity of African unity and collaboration for development, which is often obscured in the conventional analytical framework used for Africa. ALA’s Pan – African collaboration belief is nurtured by providing an opportunity for the young leaders to learn more about the continent’s diversity and potential from each other. The student below explains:

I didn't know that Egypt or Nigeria or South Sudan or Kenya had so many things that I am interested in and didn't have the chance to study. So actually getting a clear understanding of the different cultures, countries that have different resources, and how, let's say, Nigeria can help Senegal or how Ethiopia can actually collaborate with I don't know, South Africa for instance was helpful. I didn't know that much about Africa and I think African Studies has really enabled me to have a clear understanding of what Africa has and what its potentials are.

F. Africa and people centered way of teaching and learning

Analyzing Africa from a perspective that centers Africans and Africa by always seeking for what is in the best interest of Africa was ever present in the conversations I had with ALA participants. This Africa centered positioning and way of engaging the students was expressed in so many ways. When the students spoke about their personal aspirations, it was always in line with an agenda for how they think they will transform Africa.

The Africa of my dreams really starts here in ALA. We are students from different countries; students who really want to do a lot for their countries, students who already started doing amazing things in their countries; building schools for refugees and all that. So I think it starts here. In a sense, you know sometimes as humans, we tend to have these big hairy audacious goals and say: "We want to change Africa” but I think changing Africa does not necessarily mean staying here and saying “I want to change this whole continent”. But students from different countries, when we go back to our own countries and actually do something in our countries for others; that is really something for Africa. Because you cannot be in different places all at once. I think for me, it will
be an Africa where we are able to make changes in our own respective countries. We communicate with others, ALA students communicate with students from other African schools and we get help from each other.

Success for the ALA teachers and administrators I spoke to is the extent to which ALA students transform the continent. This student notes:

So usually we learn Cambridge or the French system or the IB (International Baccalaureate), but how do we change that? How do we have our own African system that can be spread around Africa? I can't use my grade12 Zambian papers to get into college, but how can we stop that? How can we stop always having to write the SAT or having to write A-levels to be able to go to a school like Oxford? How can I use my African papers to help me get into these types of schools? Or, how do we start to grow our own good universities? So that other people from outside are like, I want to go to the University of Rwanda because that university is so nice and it's prestigious as well.

The students and teachers expressed a strong desire for Africa to engage with the world on Africa’s terms and for Africans to regain their own culture. The muse of this ALA student captures this: “How can Africans gain back their identity and their culture? How can we own our identity and their culture?”

A general position ALA students’ foreground is their responsibility to protect and own the continent. Many of them realize this position in themselves when they leave ALA campus and have to explain their Africa to foreigners or even community members whose understanding of other African countries has been fuelled by “single stories” and stereotypes.

But, it's really fascinating how much more you learn about the continent when you come to ALA. When I went for my summer program in Boston, like I had this sense, I really just wanted to protect the continent, like people would bad mouth it and I'd be like no, no, no, but this and this are happening and people will be like, in Ethiopia people are starving and I am like no, ABC, ABC, ABC (hypothetical contextualized response to the people she is talking to) and all of a sudden you feel very protective about the continent and it's something that I know, if I did not come here, I would definitely not have.
ALA’s African Studies course is taught from an interdisciplinary lens and pre-colonial times which helps show Africa as a strong continent with a rich and long history of catering for itself, intellectual wealth and a track record of African collaboration and interaction. The students are taught in a way that allows them to see their misconceptions about Africa and dispel “single stories”. Kalas, the African studies teacher questions: “There are so many great things that came out of this (ancient civilization), so why is that these existed but we don’t learn about them as much?” (Kalas Tekele, African Studies Teacher).

This form of teaching seems to have imbued a strong sense of agency, healthy cynicism about the role of the West in Africa, a passionate desire to re-appropriate Africa’s story and a critical conceptual framework to analyze and theorize Africa amongst the students. They manifest an African centered analytical framework and understanding of Africa’s history. This student notes:

So right now, even what we learn in African history for example is very European based: Europeans write it. But, how do we start exploring African history written by Africans? In African history taught by Africans, they would say Shaka Zulu was a great warrior. Whereas in European history, they say he became deranged and started killing everyone and he was mentally disturbed, while Zulus would say Shaka was awesome, like he was the man, he made us who we are.

When ALA students speak about Africa, they are literally electrified. Their theory of Africa’s underdevelopment, robust critique of the West and the hypocrisy of Western media align with Ake and the scholars in my conceptual framework. They all indicated ignorance of the continent before they arrived ALA. This subsequent understanding, love of and responsibility to Africa are credited to their African studies class.

When I came here, I did not know about a lot of African countries. I always thought Egypt was far away. I did not know Morocco was a country. When you come here and are with the students from other countries, you are learning from
them and hearing their perspective on issues. It kind of creates that passion for Africa; you are like, you know what? If this is what Africa is all about, I want to be that person to partake in it. I want to be that person to be a change maker, challenging all the status quo that we have about Africa and all the single stories about Africa... You cannot really change Africa if you do not know anything about it. So I think African studies really equips us to be those agents in a way that you know a lot more about your continent so that when you say "I wanna change Africa", you know where to actually begin and you will not be like: I know Egypt is somewhere in Europe.

Necessary to and a consequence of centering Africa in a school setting like this is continuous knowledge production about and for the continent. A number of ALA students proclaim the need for Africans to write about Africa and to tell their own stories. Doing this involves constructing and producing knowledge about who Africans are and want to be. In this excerpt, ALA student describes an engaging classroom experience where what it means to be African was constructed:

In your first class of African studies, the first thing you focus on is: Who is an African? That is the topic and people ask what you identify as African. Some people said, my hair, some people said my skin colour and some people just say because I am born in Africa. Then we learnt about Africans of the blood and Africans of the soil. So, Africans of the soil would be people who were born in Africa in an African country. Africans’ of the blood would be for example, people who have parents that were African of the soil and were born in America or some other continent apart from Africa and now they have African blood.

This African centered way of learning and living in ALA has led to a healthy and critical self-reflection about ALA student’s relationship to the continent and greater appreciation for African culture.

Most of us, when we came to ALA, we didn't really have strong attachments to our African roots per say. I'm 17, pop culture, you know, yo yo, hip hop and all that stuff is what we like. We've been watching Oprah growing up, you know, that kind of thing and in a sense just sort of toned down our Africaness. As we came to ALA, most of us started embracing our cultures more. I mean, I thought dressing in traditional outfit was really embarrassing, I was like, oh my gosh, I will never do that. And then I came to ALA, and it is the in thing. Everyone is doing it and I don't have one and I look so weird and so I was like oh my gosh, okay and then I
started appreciating traditional clothing from different countries, that sort of thing and you start appreciating Indomie (popular Nigerian noodles) you didn't know existed.

All the participants understand that the reason why they are at ALA is because of their role in transforming Africa; hence, the need to keep Africa at the center of their life is only logical. ALA students appear to be the gatekeepers of this mission. They point it out when they feel some practices and features of ALA such as celebrating Halloween and having a White Dean of Studies challenge the Africaness of the academy. As this student states:

The American influence is there, but it's not so pre-dominant as to make me feel a bit worried about whether this is truly an African school, but a lot of people do question, is it truly African? Our Dean is not quite African and we have a lot of American this, American that, we celebrated Halloween for crying out loud!

This positioning goes beyond the classroom; other school practices express this Africa centered approach. In one of the weekly assemblies I attended, Africa and the ALA community was at the core of the gathering Following their regular program for assemblies, they shared current news in Africa for the week (This Week in Africa), a student shared her personal story (My Story) and they had an African Diversity presentation where community members learnt words from an African language.

**G. Youth centered and Mindset Development**

ALA’s focus on youth and mindset development is based on the assumption that young African minds can still be formed and developed to align with an agenda to drive Africa in a particular direction. In describing the power of young people and how it can be enabled, ALA’s founder explains:

Young people can really change the world. If you think through a lot of the greatest change makers in history, it has been young people. Mandela was in his early 20's when he joined ANC; Steve Jobs was 21 when he started Apple. Bill
Gates was 19 when he started Microsoft; Richard Branson was 16 when he started business. Marc Zuerkerberg was 17. The problem in Africa is that all the young people who can change Africa have been stifled. Too often in Africa, we glorify culture and pretend there is nothing wrong with our culture. But there are some things that are bad about our culture. One thing that is bad about our culture is that we stifle youth. I remember growing up, my parents told me – don’t question what I say. You don’t talk at the dinning. You do not challenge your parents. You are to be seen and not heard. Same thing in our schools; you do not challenge your teachers... That really stifles creativity.

According to the Entrepreneurial Leadership (EL) teacher - Henry Ebube, the mindset ALA is trying to nurture in the students enables and nurtures an “optimistic resilient approach to thinking about a problem”. Put in a different way, it is a critical thinking mind that always gravitates towards problem solving in a creative and innovative way.

This disposition is one that is developed as a youth. On the question of why ALA’s focus is on 15 – 19 year olds’, below is a response from ALA’s EL teacher:

Why so young? Because we believe that this is the ideal age where a person is really starting to develop character. Where a person is really starting to develop a sustained understanding of his strengths and weaknesses. This is the time where a person is starting to define what he or she is going to become. We feel like a lot of these concepts, while you may hear them and learn them when you are going to business school, but too often, it is a little too late because you have already gotten too far ahead in your life and in your education that you have not really had a chance to mould your thinking. And that is why we feel like it is so important. It is so important also because - this is probably going to become Africa's biggest problem - that the youth that is emerging is going to become over 40% of the entire population in 10 -15 years. So if the youth themselves do not start thinking about how they are going to address these problems, we are going to face exactly what we have been facing in the last 50 years. Where it was a bunch of elite leaders who got educated somewhere and were supposed to make big decisions for everybody else and they failed. And they failed not one but two generations. Now, What are we doing? Are we saying that we have to wait for the older generation themselves to get their act together? Suddenly, I do not know, a deep awakening is going to happen and they will realize and say: oh guess what, we have been messing this up for the past 50 years, let’s try to do things differently. Or are we saying, lets grab the bull by the horns and say, hey, it is our problem. If we do not fix this right now, 5 to 15 years from now, we are going to be in the same mess that we have been in the last 50 years! (Henry, Entrepreneurial Leadership Teacher).
H. ALA students as Agents of Change

ALA students embody a refreshing and critical body of knowledge about Africa and their responsibility to the continent. All the students I spoke to passionately subscribe to Pan-African collaboration for development and the belief that Africans must be the champions of their own development regardless of socio-economic status. Consistent with this position, six out of the nine students identify colonialism and its enduring legacy as a major problem inhibiting Africans from advancing their own development. They also identify corruption, poverty and poor leadership as issues inhibiting Africa’s progress. These students suggest that colonization of Africa is ongoing and that colonization along side the structures inherited by “African freedom fighters” who some of these students argue were not equipped to become political leaders include some of Africa’s problems. These two factors they argue has mentally incapacitated Africans through the poverty inflicted on them or/and the warped sense of self and identity. As one of the students explain:

I think the people’s mindset became that way not only because of themselves, but also, unfortunately because of colonization. Most of the people in Morocco are speaking French and most of the things are quite French and the education system is French so they are still under the French system of colonization. They do not have their own culture and even their mindset. So the solution for their whole problem is going to France. For example, let us go to somewhere like Nigeria that was colonized by the British. So most people in Nigeria speak English now. So you really do not have your own language. I think you see the effect of Britain (colonization) on Nigeria and the people’s mindset when they say that they are going to study in the US or UK because these are better places.

Another student identifies the self-alienating trend amongst South Africans and the deprecation of the African identity: “You know, some South Africans don't think they're in Africa, even the president (Jacob Zuma), he is like we shouldn't think like Africans in Africa. We shouldn't have an African mentality, we should be progressive”.

On the topic of the African identity and its normalized absence or manipulated presence in the media or/and deprecation, students problematized this and observed the simplification of the African identity to “single stories”. As one student remembers,

I never had a Black doll with an Afro and I never watched cartoons where there was a black character. All the characters were White, blonde, blue eyed and the news was always about something happening in Congo, and there is terror here and Rwanda is not at peace and Ethiopia is starving and Nigeria is just Nigerian movies. I didn't really know about Ghana, I never heard anything about Ghana.

The role of Western media in nurturing single stories about Africa was purported by this particular student. Single stories also feed into the white savior mentality, which these ALA students abhor.

So, it's the way media portrays what Africa is because even when you type in “African” in Google and just look at the pictures, it’s going to be a black individual with thick curly hair in some bush place and people don't think of Africa as a developed place. How many movies have you seen that are based on Africa that showed you the developed side of Africa or the good side, or the development that is actually happening in certain countries? Usually, you see for example, the movie - Last King of Scotland, Uganda is in turmoil and this White man comes and he saves the day. The same thing with Blood Diamonds, it is just war, war, war, and this White man came and he saved the day. Any American movie I watch, I mean, of course there are those that you see where they live in the Bronx or the ghetto or whatever, but then they still show you the city and how New York looks like and Chicago and all of these places and you’re like wow, it’s so glamorous and so developed, but they would not show you as much of the suffering that is going on in America.

In response to the comment above, I asked this particular student why she thinks Africans are portrayed this way, what the root of such portrayal is and who benefits from it. Below is her response:

For me, you can trace it back to the time when we first started to get colonized and we had White settlers. So, during that period of time, there was this movie playing, apparently it was also in French called: Black Venus. In this movie, they were talking about how African women were these surprising creatures. They take them and throw them in a cage so that people can come and see them and be like,
"look at these curvy women with big butts, and they are so voluminous. I have never seen this before” and I think, during that time it was very entertaining for them to see such features that were never seen before. I feel like its still sort of entertaining to people to see African tradition. So when they see me and I'm not wearing my Loincloth and I'm not in traditional outfit and I'm just like in make-up and I am looking “modern”, It wouldn't be as entertaining as if they saw me in my Loincloth walking around with a spear because in their mind that is the real African.

All the students noted and problematized the absence of African studies education prior to coming to ALA. Where it existed, it was lacking in substance. Two of the students shared the embarrassing experience of realizing their ignorance of Africa in a Map Quiz they had to complete in ALA.

I am like, I know there is a Mozambique somewhere and you know, I think I put Kenya in an awkward place like where South Africa was supposed to go. It was really bad. I remember having a Malaysia there somehow. So my knowledge about Africa was almost at a zero level. I was embarrassed and at the same time, I was like Wow, so this is how I grew up? It is not about knowing a map; it is really about starting to immerse oneself in different cultures.

In addition to learning about Africa on the map and its history, the value of culture in development was also emphasized by one of the students. “[Culture] is an identity... If you loose your culture.. that means you will take up someone else’s culture which I do not think will help you…You will just be copying.”

In bringing about transformative change to Africa, all the ALA students I spoke to argue for a type of social change that begins from a “personal starting point” (a personal position that factors in socio-economic status, passion and interests) but also extends to the community. They see the need to make money but argue that it is not all about money; it is also about the community. Striking that balance will be to create social good.
Clearly, social entrepreneurship is the favored development approach amongst these
ALA students. This is evident in the following narrative:

So being a social enterprise, basically you are making a profit but thinking about
how you are impacting the environment and the people. Even for me right now, I
am the CEO of the student radio show, but then we keep thinking about how we
can use radio to make the community better (ALA Student).

This student argues that this approach and way of thinking can also be relevant in the task
of leading a country.

How do I sustain my country but still make it economically stable so that people
are satisfied? And I think that is why they say being fully communist is hard
because the government cannot take all the responsibility of every enterprise and
expect to increase the country’s economy and give the people everything that they
need. But the country cannot be fully capitalist and expect to satisfy the people
fully as well.

To acquire an in-depth understanding of ALA’s mission, I asked the students what it
means to be an African leader and how an African leader is different from a Western
leader. According to them, an African leader is someone who understands local problems
in a nuanced way, who puts Africa first before their own countries and has what it takes
to bring Kwame Nkrumah’s dream of a United States of Africa to life. Regardless of
geographical location, an African leader is passionate about Africa, always seeks for the
best interest of Africa, carries Africa in their heart, and doesn’t mind living in Africa. An
African leader does not focus on his country alone but on Africa as a whole. Being an
African leader is also about making personal sacrifices and engaging with people. This
student explains:

First of all, an African leader needs to understand the problems in his/her
community and not just the superficial understanding, like an in depth
understanding of the problems that are in society and then after that they would
have to be able to sacrifice a lot to solve the problem. But, then again they also
have to be willing to engage with the people.
Learning in ALA is not bound to the classrooms. From assemblies, to meal conversations and the play based activities such as the Do Something Creative (DOC) day they had while I was on campus, ALA students and teachers are always learning about themselves and Africa. According to the students, most of their class discussions always extend beyond the classroom. This ALA student explains an ALA classroom: “In ALA, the discussions go outside the classroom because it becomes an opinions based discussion and debate about things. After class, students continue to discuss, they get other people together and ask what they think”.

Student learning in ALA also appears to be based on student interests and passion. Students are encouraged to explore subjects and pursue projects from a point of relevance for them. For example, all the students I spoke to are involved in a social change project outside ALA. They are able to develop these projects and work collaboratively during their time in ALA. They maintain a dialogue between the school and community through the school projects (an example is the Creche project described earlier) they are involved in. Issues from the projects inform instruction content in classes like the Entrepreneurial leadership. Another way ALA interacts with the community is through ALA students who are asked to nominate people in their community that should come to ALA.

ALA students noted that their classes are discussion based and that they are encouraged to think critically and explore multiple ways of knowing in carrying out their assignments. This student notes:

[S]o people are allowed to explore and be critical thinkers in whatever subject and allowed to ask questions and debate amongst each other and with the teacher. Students are allowed to use their creativity and think of new ways to explore the
subject. For example, in biology I was told to make a song or a play out of the topic. Or in English, make a digital narrative expressing who you are.

Through ALA’s interfaith forum, students are also able to learn about each other’s religious belief. According to ALA’s website, students often join their classmates in fasting, vigils and celebrations. Some ALA students are agnostic and atheist. They are encouraged to practice freely.

Politically and culturally sensitive topics like sexual orientation are not out of bounds in the school. This student explains: “We have sexuality discussion groups where we get to meet every Thursday and discuss different things about sexuality and sexual orientation and people express their different opinions. It is very opinionated and discussion based as well. We do it with our teachers as well”.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I highlighted nine themes that I found relevant because of their alignment to my theoretical framework. From the overview, readers are able to see that ALA was born out of a belief in the potential of Africa and a vision to put the control and design of Africa’s future in the hands of Africans. ALA students are taught about the continent in a way that centers the continent and is critical of the conventional narrative about Africa. Servant leadership as opposed hierarchical leadership is what ALA teaches and nurtures in the students. In this type of leadership, the leaders are facilitators, community mobilizers and community centered. ALA teachers and students expressed a preference for a culturally relevant democracy in Africa. ALA also nurtures Pan-Africanism and the students yearn for Africa to engage with the world on Africa’s terms. Put together, these themes represent attributes of the academy that relate to my theoretical framework and help me answer the question of the thesis in the next chapter.
Chapter 7: Discussion

This chapter focuses on answering the main question of this thesis:

“How to what extent does ALA align with Ake’s theory of African development?”

Highlighting eight attributes, I argue that ALA aligns with Ake’s theory of development to a reasonable extent. However, ALA also misaligns with Ake’s theory of development. Fundamentally, Ake’s theory of development is against any form of Liberalism. ALA’s ideological leaning was not completely clear. Other observed misalignment and contradictions include the significant American influence and presence in the academy, the absence of indigenous knowledge and a decolonization component in the curricula and an absence of a theory of change.

Answering the thesis question: To what extent does ALA express Ake’s theory of development?

A core principle in Ake’s theory of development is that Africans must be the agents, means and ends of their development. In this, Ake meant that Africans are responsible for creating the agenda for Africa’s development plan and that the execution and success of the development plan is totally dependent on Africans. Ake states, “the impetus lies in the internal motivation in Africa… it insists that the cause of development is better served by a more democratic approach that engages the energy and commitment of the people, who alone can make development sustainable” (p.139 -140). This proclamation by Ake as well as the other scholars I cite in my theoretical framework that requires Africans to lead Africa’s development appears to be something ALA fully understands. At the heart of ALA’s mission is equipping African youth to serve as catalysts for and leaders of
Africa’s transformation. As Ake calls for, ALA does engage the energy and relies on the commitment of Africans for Africa’s development through its annual recruitment of 100 African teenagers who spend two years in the academy learning about their role in Africa’s development and equipping themselves to play their role. Accordingly, many ALA students (present and past) run impressive initiatives outside of school aimed at shaping Africa’s future and mobilizing community members for self-empowerment. For example, Priscillia Semphere, an ALA graduate is the co-founder of Pen Africa whose goal is to tell African stories through the lens of young Africans. Her publicly acclaimed book series - Ekari Book Series features an 8-year-old girl - Ekari who travels around the continent and shares her experience through the book. 18-year-old Kenyan, Leatita Mukungu started Africa Rabbit Center at the age of 14 when her mother could not afford to pay her school fees and as a result, was forced to discontinue secondary school (Daily Nation, 2014). To raise cash for school, Laetita started a rabbit farm after she identified that the demand for rabbits in Kenya was higher than the supply of it. To sustain the Rabbit farm when she is in school, she engaged 15 women who had difficulties paying school fees for their children. In collaboration with the women, they started Women’s Rabbit Association (Capitalfm.co.ke, 2013) and through the association, they work on the farm with Leatita. As a result, the women have been able to gain meaningful livelihood while sending their children to school. In 2012, Leatita’s efforts were recognized – she was one of the winners of the Anzisha prize for innovation in Africa. ALA’s Eddy Gicheru Oketch is the founder of a non-profit – Peace for Africa and Economic Development (PAD), which was created in response to the 2007 – 2008 election violence in Kenya. Through PAD, Eddy preempts the imminent danger in having
economically disempowered and disengaged young people who as a result are easily swayed towards violence. PAD economically empowers young Kenyans by helping them start their own business and train them to become Peace Ambassadors within their communities. After three years of kicking off the initiative, PAD had reached more than 250,000 young people in Kenya, Uganda and Mozambique (Padinst.org). In 2012, Eddy was awarded the 2012 Impact Award from the Kenyan Diaspora and was a panelist at the 2012 G8 Summit. ALA’s founder – Fred Swaniker, is the epitome of this attribute. He left his job at McKinsey and Company to start the academy in 2008.

Even though the community mobilization and social change efforts of ALA students and the founder cannot be evaluated from a futuristic or popular democracy lens, their leadership in solving immediate African issues and mobilizing Africans for Africa is in line with the African driven and centered development pillar of my theoretical framework.

At the school level, ALA manifests interesting attributes that align with Ake’s theory of development as well as that of the other scholars in my theoretical framework.

Pan-Africanism, a core pillar in the theoretical framework of this thesis is one of ALA’s founding beliefs. For the scholars in my theoretical framework, Africa’s bright future is in its unity and ability to recreate itself based on African values, traditions and indigenous knowledge. Achieving this will be the beginning of an anti-colonial journey for Africa where the arbitrary and Western centered borders that separates African countries are destroyed. Possibly, as a result, Africans will have an opportunity to create a collective future in an African centered way, independent of the West and based on African culture, history, traditions, priorities and needs. As Muiu and Martin (2009) explains: “the
African state must be reconstructed based on African culture, history, traditions, priorities and needs” (p.195). The European centered and arbitrary borders dividing Africa mar the possibility of instigating a grassroots movement towards a Pan-African future.

Compounded by the Eurocentric education Africans still receive, Africans have grown in prejudice against each other and ignorance about their cultural heritage and affinity. The possibility for sustained learning as an African collective about the African past and dreaming about the future has been prevented because of these divisions. The need to bring Africans together during their formative years to learn as an African collective and dream together is something ALA appears to understand and nurtures. The 100 students admitted every year are taught about African history in the way Muiu & Martin (2009) argues for – from an interdisciplinary lens and from pre-colonial times which helps show Africa’s contribution to the human civilization as well as a history of African collaboration. ALA’s teaching approach and educational content takes an African centered and a decolonized lens. Kalas ’s (African studies teacher) explanation about the importance of teaching African history from pre-colonial times and with an interdisciplinary lens tells it all: “So the significance of looking at ancient African civilization is to show that there has been greatness on the African continent before the history that we are taught which is often Eurocentric history”. She mirrors the sentiments of Muiu and Martin (2009): “by focusing on Africa from 1500 or the 1850s, African history and political institutions are fragmented so that the reader is left with the impression that Africans have always been dependent on Western countries. Most positive aspects of indigenous institutions are ignored” (p.5).
ALA students learn about Africa from ancient civilization and are made to see the colonial bias that dominates Africa’s narrative. They also learn about the history of Africa’s collaboration and greatness.

Beyond the African studies class, ALA as a school is very much African centered. As illustrated in the previous chapter, assemblies, dining conversation, academic content, advisory family and room assignment are conducted in a way that promotes and nurtures Pan-Africanism.

The invisible but powerful legacy of colonialism – the colonized African mind is what Mazama (2003), Wane (2006), Abdi (2012) and Mueni (2012) problematize and suggest must be tackled in addition to other efforts aimed at economic and political independence. As Mazama explains,

\[
\text{Colonization was not simply an enterprise of economic exploitation and political control, as it was commonly held, but also an ongoing enterprise of conceptual distortion and invasion, leading to widespread confusion and ultimately, mental incarceration (p.3).}
\]

She goes on to say, “our main problem is usually our unconscious adoption of the western worldview and their attendant conceptual framework” (p.4).

Although the reason ALA’s entrepreneurial leadership teacher provides for focusing on cultivating a different mindset amongst the students is not explicitly for decolonizing the African mind. However, he alludes to the need to promote critical thinking and a mindset that always seeks to solve the root cause of problems as opposed to its manifestations. Interestingly, ALA’s African studies course relies on the Entrepreneurial leadership course to expand the mind of the students and equip them with a worldview that enables them engage in critical discussions about Africa in class.
Although none of the scholars in my theoretical framework describe the kind of leadership Africa needs as Servant Leadership, however, the attributes of leadership they call for is clearly participative, people centered and leaders are expected to serve the people. For example, Muiu and Martin (2009) argues that “the priority of new leadership (in Africa) must be to emphasize and meet the needs of the people. “Democracy” in Africa must serve the interests, priorities, and needs of the majority. Any leadership that does not fulfill this role is illegitimate.” (p.199)

Ake also states “the cause of development is better served by a more democratic approach that engages the energy and the commitment of the people, who alone can make development sustainable.” (p.141). Ake’s conception of democracy in Africa is people driven and gains its credibility because of its ability to meet its peoples’ economic and social needs. The kind of leadership (Servant Leadership) ALA teaches and promotes amongst the students is consistent with Ake and Muiu and Martin (2009) conception of leadership for Africa. As this student explains:

But, I think one thing that I’ve learned is the true definition of leadership…. It (leadership) is so much more about doing something and helping people. Not because you want anything from them but simply because you care. In simple words, ALA has taught me to be a kinder person and that's very important in any community, we need kind people, we need considerate and compassionate leaders. Even if they are not in politics or have large crowds of people following them or like are on TV. But the people who change lives of others one person at a time.

By all indications, the kind of leadership Ake, Muiu and Martin promotes is the type of down to earth, followers centered leadership this ALA student speaks about. It is certainly not an “Oga at the top” (hierarchical) leadership that Henry (Entrepreneurial Leadership teacher) described in chapter 6.
All the interviewed ALA students expressed preference for an African society that values social entrepreneurship, African culture and a system of government that puts the people first. The the spirit of their aspirations for Africa is best expressed in quote by Ake:

Markedly different from a Liberal Democracy; in all probability it will emphasize concrete economic and social rights rather than abstract political rights; it will insist on the democratization of economic opportunities, the social betterment of the people, and a strong social welfare and will have to draw on African traditions to adapt democracy to the cultural and historical experience of ordinary people (p.141-142).

Just like Ake’s theory calls for a social democracy and a democracy that provides the basic needs for its people, ALA’s EL teacher specifically calls for a people centered social democracy in Africa. Drawing example from his country – Mauritius, he as well as the student participants favour Ake’s vision of an African democracy; one that gains its credibility from its capacity to reach Africa’s potential and leverage on the strengths of its people for continuous prosperity. The participant’s desire to see Africa’s culture revitalized, re-appropriated and centered in Africa’s education system reflects Ake’s vision of an African democracy that adapts itself to the culture and experiences of the people. It also speaks to one of Ake’s values of Africa-led development: self-realization rather than alienation. The founder’s assertion that Africans have the mandate and what it takes to develop the continent embodies Ake’s spirit of self – reliance and self-empowerment. It is also consistent with Ake’s theory of African development that he argues will rely on the motivation of the ordinary people.

Putting a spotlight on the nine ALA students I interviewed, strong manifestations of Afrocentric postulations come to light. As explained in the theoretical framework chapter, Afrocentricity argues for the development and embodiment of a decolonized
agency amongst Africans for Africa’s development. According to Asante (2007), Afrocentricity is about agency and action by culturally conscious, centered and located Africans for the continent’s development. Such positioning in Africans leads to Africans embodying a quality of thought and perspective that always seeks for the best interest of Africans. This perspective in Africans enables the unpacking and displacement of European narratives about Africa. It also seeks to center African culture and experiences and positions Africans to lead the continent towards a path of transformation. It also leads to Africans taking on a decolonized worldview, taking ownership and responsibility for the continent’s development and being knowledgeable about the continent’s history and culture. This Afrocentric disposition seemed to be dominant amongst the students. They theorize the continent’s experiences in ways that reflect an African centered grounding. For example, they problematize the Museumization of African cultures and people and the creation of single stories about Africa. From an anti-colonial lens, the students have an African centered understanding of the challenges facing the continent. They speak about the issues on the continent with a sense of history that predates independence from colonizers or slave trade but stems from ancient African civilizations. From this lens, ALA students’ analyze contemporary issues amongst Africans and Africa’s political/social structures are traced back to colonial legacy. They argue that colonialism is still present in Africa and interestingly, problematize and note a significant American influence/presence in their school. They question what it means to be African and how one can truly be African in a world where there are practical and big time rewards for being associated with Whiteness. Through their emotional proclamations about the role they play in Africa’s development, the students claim and assert their agency as well as
that of other Africans in fixing the continent. In this light, they also blame African leaders for failing their citizens. They point to corruption, poverty and problematize certain aspects of African culture and society that looks down on girls and courses like History.

ALA students have broad knowledge about the continent, which for the most part they gain by teaching each other in their African studies class and the numerous communal activities in ALA. They uphold the following positions:

1. Africans must drive their own development,
2. Africans must learn about themselves,
3. Africans must write about themselves,
4. Africans must arm themselves to dispel single stories within and outside the continent,
5. Africans must revive their culture, and importantly,
6. Africans must work together.

They are cynical of Western influence and Western “saving” of Africa. Recalling the story of Sarah Baartman shown in the movie - Black Venus, one student illustrates the humiliating long history of museumizing Africans and their culture for Western entertainment. No question or topic is out of bounds for these ALA students. In a dining sit-in and numerous informal conversations with my participants and other students, they passionately discussed and debated homosexuality in Africa, the theory of change for Africa, and the socio-economic development system for Africa - capitalism vs. socialism. In different ways, they each allude to the desire of reigniting Kwame Nkurumah’s dream of a United States of Africa. Questions hovered around how to revitalize African knowledge and put it in mainstream education such that Africans will not have to write
SAT and Cambridge exams anymore. In this spirit, a student mused about how she cannot use her Grade 12 Zambian certificate to gain admission to universities like Oxford. She wondered how Africa can grow her own universities such that people from all over the world will want to come to African universities like University of Rwanda because it is “just as prestigious”. ALA students do not just ask these questions, they get their hands dirty. A few of them on campus are conducting research to facilitate the creation of an African curriculum that will lead to the African Baccalaureate program and replace foreign exams such as Cambridge all across Africa. Another student runs an Ideas Festival in Senegal to connect young people with ideas to mentors. Another student is involved in a student run enterprise that helps a neighborhood crèche.

As can be inferred, these ALA students are critical, self-reliant, confident and empowered but are completely dependent on their community to be the best they can be. All these are attributes Ake argues are necessary for Africans to lead their development. They hold themselves to task through their student government and student run businesses where they mentor and keep each other accountable. These students realize that it will take more than a few people like them to change the continent so they argue for a type of social change in Africa that moves beyond individual success but individual success that gains its impetus because of its dialogue with and impact in community. Quite more importantly and laudably, they exhibit strong passion for the continent and speak about the continent with a sense of ownership. For them, if they do not fix Africa, who will? If they do not own Africa, who would?

Critiques & ALA’s Misalignment with Ake’s theory of development
Amongst other commendable things, ALA passes the Ken Osborne’s (2001) test where he argued that: “if education is understood and delivered properly, it contains the seeds of its own deconstruction” (p.45). ALA students (past and present) appear to be the harshest and most popular critiques and de-constructors of their ALA education. In response to my admiration for ALA and how ALA is preparing their students to change the world, this particular ALA student remarked: “It is not a perfect model”. This imperfect ALA model appeared in numerous ways throughout my interview with the students, personal interrogation, research and reflection on ALA documentations (web and print). A recurring concern or dilemma expressed by some of the students I interviewed is the American influence in the academy, the academy’s dependence on the West for funds, legitimacy and validation and the question of: Is ALA truly African?

As the student below describes, the Western influence in ALA is expressed in multiple ways:

On the flip side, there is a huge American influence. From the fact that our Dean is American and most of our teachers are American. Even the curriculum is British, which is quite different. We do SAT’s, we have a lot of affiliations with the American schools and students have what we call host families. So when you go to the US, there's a family that will host you in maybe during holidays because you don't have a family to go to. So that's where the American centric culture comes in.

Although my research did not investigate ALA’s funding model and the American influence on the school, a quick scan of the website for ALA partners/supporters, scholarship sources, a review of the schools ALA students attend and a synthesis of the participants feedback, suggests that a significant amount of ALA’s funding and support comes from abroad and large corporations. Eight out of the ten board members on ALA Foundation’s board are Westerners. Disturbingly, one of ALA’s global advisors – Carly
Fiorina served as the Chairman of America’s CIA’s external advisory board (CSIS, 2014; Carly Fiorina Enterprises website, 2014). A good number of the organizations ALA students complete their internship with are large American corporations like Google, IBM, GE, Microsoft, Coca Cola, Exxon Mobil Corporation amongst other. It is these types of American supporters and Western sourced/awarded funding and support that some ALA students are questioning. They wonder about its consequences and enabling elements. They wonder if ALA’s funding and seeming global support is a reward for the Academy’s proximity to Whiteness. The quote below explains itself:

"I think a lot of people have a problem with this thing that you know, it's like the white industrialist complex, you know. People from America coming and as far as Mr. Swaniker is not White, people could still be like, oh, but he works for Mr. Bradford. All our donors look at them and are pumping money into the academy to help African children. It is like you know, the standard story. I personally think ALA goes the extra mile to get African donors. Africans are just not willing to support this institution. You know, and that's not okay. I don't think they (ALA administrators) should block out these people who are willing to help and go no, we need Africans to make this really African.

Understandably, people reading this thesis may become worried about the seeming Western influence in ALA and its implication on the vision of the academy. Based on my interaction with the students, teachers and administrators in ALA, I was convinced beyond reasonable doubt that ALA students are being equipped to achieve the vision of the academy. Speaking from my personal experience as the Executive Director/Founder of an international non-profit that actively operates in Nigeria, it is generally more difficult for Africans to garner initial financial support for noble projects like these from fellow Africans and African governments. It is never an easy choice for Africans seeking to establish institutions like African Leadership Academy."
In a more intensified way and on a publicly published blog (www.abegoh.wordpress.com - African Leadership Academy Alumni Advocates for Immediate Structural and Pedagogical), ALA Alumni – Winnie Atieno Imbuchi reiterates the sentiments and concerns presented in the accounts above. In the media, she identifies and decries what she sees as Western meddling in ALA affairs, Western denigration of Africans and the academy and ALA’s complicity in it by not speaking up. She also notes the high number of White faculty members and questions the implications of that on the agency of Africans. She calls for a revision of ALA’s problem statement from a “lack of leadership” to a more complicated statement that reflects historical struggles, colonial legacy/structures and complex social realities. She argues that a focus on exclusively problematizing leadership is a reductionist analysis of the leadership situation in Africa and this enables and sustains colonial/racist rhetoric and relations.

On the issue of Cambridge, Winnie is lucid: In her words, “we propose the adoption of Independent, Revolutionary, Unapologetic and Bodacious: Afrocentric, Pan-Africanist and Inclusive curriculum [the African Baccalaureate], suited for this era of African Renaissance”. She ends that blog post with this statement: “We cannot construct our emancipation from the same epistemology that enslaved us. Neither can we be emancipated by the machinery of our colonization.”

Clearly, ALA students are critical, reflective, fearless and are conscious of the colonial construction of our global society. Indeed, it is refreshing and a sign of good intellectual formation to see young Africans critical of an institution that does provide unique learning and life changing opportunities for the few Africans that manage to get admitted.
This epistemological issue raised by Winnie is at the crux of the some of the gaps and misalignments I see between ALA and the scholars in my theoretical framework. Even though ALA teaches in an African centered way, adopts an upright lens in teaching African history and ALA students/teachers are extremely passionate about Africa’s transformation, the academy doesn’t appear to see the urgency or/and necessity in displacing Western conceptual frameworks and systems that firmly grip Africa and sets the context for its ongoing domination. The alternative to what I gathered in my short time at ALA will be a significant emphasis, promotion of and incorporation of anti-colonial and indigenous knowledge systems into the curriculum. Knowledge about African history and African civilization appeared to be perceived as an accessory of the present time or a “good to know” knowledge. Drawing from Wane’s (2006) observation that Africa’s colonization involved “rewriting history to denying existence, devaluing knowledge and debasing cultural beliefs and practices”, one sees that indigenous knowledge and systems is critical to know but it must be much more than an accessory of the present and should not be allowed to be relegated to past history. It is in fact Africa’s most potent ideological weapon of liberation and should constitute the flavor of and inform Africa’s transformation. It is also in this context that Afrocentricity contends that Africa’s liberation is dependent on the ability of Africans to “systematically displace European ways of thinking, being, feeling, etc and consciously replace them with ways germane to the African cultural experience” (Mazama, 1993, p.5).

Consequently, centering Africa in ALA should also mean centering indigenous knowledge and actively living up to the spirit of “Sankofa”. Teaching indigenous knowledge systems and actively encouraging ALA community members to reach
backwards to bring back all the great things about Africa and merge it with ‘modern’ times. This goes beyond wearing African clothes, singing African songs or having African names, it is more so about seeking to replace prevalent Western political and social structures both internally (within countries) and externally (intra-Africa) with functional and robust political elements of Africa’s indigenous systems in contemporary in Africa. As Muiu and Martin (2009) cogently argues: “No one can develop within a foreign culture. If Africans are to control their destiny, they must do so within their culture” (p.197). Quoting Ayitteh, they proclaim: “Africa’s salvation does not lie in blindly copying foreign systems but in returning to its own roots and heritage and building upon them”. And they go on to say, “Africans have to take another look at their history to borrow what worked in indigenous Africa and merge it with modern institutions. Indigenous institutional safeguards such as checks and balances on the power of leaders would benefit contemporary African states.” (p.196-197).

Reinvigorating culture, seeking to center Africa’s development and encouraging young people to dream about a new Africa from/through African indigenous knowledge and systems is so crucial and is what will make Africa’s transformation truly African. In the long run and at the end of the day, Africa’s global and competitive economic advantage will be realized through the social capital harnessed around the intangible African culture and knowledge that is created, shaped and controlled by the African majority and exported to the world. After all, the Canadians have successfully built an empire around a Maple Leaf, which is now renowned as the Canadian symbol. The world over and Canadians pumps money into Canada through the purchase of Maple Leaf cookies, Maple Syrup, and Toronto Maple Leafs Hockey team amongst other things. It will be a
shame and a great loss to the African majority if the discovery, use, control and commodification of African culture to be left to the West or Africa’s self-centered elites.

As a cosmetic label or for efficiency in conversations and seeking to appear ‘neutral’ and apolitical for international funding and support, squaring down Africa’s problem to bad leadership alone might pass. However, taking on this conceptualization as an operational worldview is problematic and indeed as Winnie notes is a reductionist and simplistic approach to analyzing Africa. One of the many problems with this analysis and its resulting conceptual framework is that it is a reactionary response to Africa’s predicament and not a comprehensive analysis of the issue. In many ways, it is an ahistorical analysis of Africa and does enable a Europe centered colonial conceptual framework in subsequent analysis of the continent. It does not reflect the complex and sometimes obvious but hard to remove legacy of colonialism. Critically, it takes on a transaction orientation as opposed to a transformative orientation in analyzing Africa. As such, the outcomes from such analytical lens risk not being anything ‘new’ or potent enough to question and destabilize Africa’s status quo if necessary. In this light and more importantly, it analyzes Africans on the terms of the West and not the terms of Africans. In this context, Western standards, values and ideals become the yardstick for progress, goodness and are considered natural and universal. Africans are assessed within the parameters and structures set by the West for Western benefit and ongoing exploitation. The scholars in my theoretical framework affirm this position and assert that leadership and a host of other issues, has caused and continues to cause Africa’s underdevelopment. Amongst them, it is the inherited and still functioning colonial political and social
structures that Africans are still governed with. More so, it is the invisible and dangerous colonial mindset Africans embody. Mazama explains:

The reason for this is that colonization was not simply an enterprise of economic exploitation and political control, as it was commonly held, but also an on-going enterprise of conceptual distortion and invasion, leading to widespread confusion and ultimately, “mental incarceration’ (Mazama, 2003, p.3).

Further on, she notes:

The mental/conceptual aspect of colonization has never stopped. It has simply taken on new names in the nineteenth century to modernization, development, democracy, globalization and free market nowadays… our main problem is usually our unconscious adoption of the western worldview and their attendant conceptual framework (Mazama, 2003, p.4).

Although some ALA students argued that African minds are still colonized, but, in general, this problem was not adequately problematized and ALA’s approach to solving this was not apparent.

Having said this, my intention is not to downplay the role African leaders have played in regressing Africa or not to acknowledge the paucity of good African leaders. But to say that poor leadership is only a part of the big picture of Africa’s problem. From a practical lens, it is really a case of Albert Einstein’s (n.d) observation: “We can’t solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.”

The observed gap in ALA’s problem statement paves the way for more critical questions about ALA’s ideology and theory of change to be asked. In *Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon notes that Africa will not be able to move ahead without an ideology. Kwame Nkurumah’s ideology and theory of change for Africa was also clear. He was a Pan-Africanist and a socialist who made it clear that Western colonial structures has to be eliminated and Africans must reclaim and rebuild on their own terms. In a private
correspondence, Professor Guy Martin of Winston Salem State University rightfully points out that Ake’s theory of popular democracy is not mutually exclusive from his popular movement vision. Ake’s vision for African democracy is vehemently against liberal democracy and does not see Western standards as ideals to aspire towards.

Drawing from my conversation with ALA students and teachers, a coherent theory of change for the continent and accompanying political ideology could not be discerned. Amongst the students, they were not able to identify a theory of change for the continent and could not explain how their actions in ALA and subsequent plans contribute to or align with the theory. Some ALA teachers expressed a preference for a social democracy while the Founder’s articulation about what ALA’s success looks like reflected an alignment with attributes and outcomes of a Liberal democracy. The quote below captures this:

If we look back 50 years, 100 years from now and we say, how has the continent changed? Who drove that change? It was the leaders from ALA. Right? So who made that agricultural breakthrough that allowed us to feed 50 million people in Ethiopia? Who came up with that solution that allowed us to bring affordable healthcare to every person in Africa? Who solved Malaria for the continent? Who created the Walmart, the Googles and the Yahoos (emphasis mine) of Africa that brought employment to 250 million people? right? It is the people who came out of the Academy with their innovations and ideas, political leadership and the policies they have brought up. How many jobs did we create? How many millions of lives do we touch everyday through the innovation these young leaders come up with? How much wealth is created for people in Africa? How many Nobel Prize (emphasis mine) winners do we get out of this school? So that is success to us. (Fred Swaniker, Co-founder/CEO of ALA)

The scholars in my theoretical framework will strongly disagree with Fred Swaniker on his aspiration for a transformed Africa being characterized by capitalism, saturated with big corporations like Walmarts. They will be wary of ALA’s success being determined by Western prizes. The scholars will want to see something new come out of Africa;
initiatives that draw from a body of knowledge that is not individualistic and profit driven but is community and people centered and committed to providing essential necessities to Africans. They will also want to see that essential needs like water, education and social services are provided at no cost to Africans. This aspiration by ALA’s founder connects to the leadership discussion brought up earlier and reflects a Liberal notion of development that benchmarks its success on economic development and prosperity. This also expresses a material and economic understanding of Africa’s colonization. This line of thinking may suggest that if Africans have more money, they will be happier. But this is not always the case. The less obvious, salient and often-neglected aspect of colonization – mental incarceration, cultural and historical denigration must be paid attention to and put at the center in dreaming about a new Africa.

The danger with a laudable institution like ALA not having a theory of change beyond the academy that it openly declares and subscribes to is that it becomes susceptible to other people’s (funders, supporters, super power countries) political and ideological agenda for Africa. As we have learnt from Colonialism and its enduring legacy, the aspiration of non-Africans for Africans and current African elite has always been in conflict with what is inherently good for Africa’s majority. As Muiu and Martin (2009) observe, Africa and its citizens are perceived and treated as a source of raw material and cheap labour for the West. The 1884-1885 Scramble for Africa that led to the creation of current African states by the West and based on their economic interests is a living testimony of this concern. In contrast, Africans are seeking for the ability to self determine themselves and to be independent. They are seeking for cognitive justice, access to basic needs and the freedom to engage with the world on their own terms
amongst other things. Bringing Ake’s vision of a social democracy back to the burner, his theory of development is targeted at a critical mass but ALA focuses on 100 students per year.

Clearly, it is impossible to analyze the future of ALA within the context of Ake’s vision of African democracy. In the most probable case, ALA students as well as a legion of other Africans will have to come together to instigate any kind of social change movement for the continent.

Situating ALA’s program within a broader Afro-centered and Afro-written body of knowledge on Africa’s development is to activate the communal consciousness and to create communal intellectual dialogue for Africa’s transformation through the academy’s continuous growth. Indeed, as the famous African proverb instructs, “it takes a village to raise a child”, it will take a village/community of all forms to transform the continent in every sphere of society and especially in education. Quite more importantly, a critical goal for my scholarship in this context is to till the soil for much needed advocacy and theoretical construction that could lead to radical education reform in Africa.

Dilemmas and factors that inhibit African led development

Reflecting on the concerns of ALA students, analyzing the academy through the lens of African centered scholars and from my advocacy experience on the continent, some of the challenges that emerge from ALA are reflective of the dilemma and contradictions Black bodies in a colonial world face and must operate within to get ahead. Pump and plain, global politics and economic structures does not enable Africans operate on their own terms even if they wanted to. The privileges of being Western or/and perceived to be
closer to White is real. Even though Africans sitting for Cambridge exams as a matter of principle is an insult as it is a “voluntary” immersion in a body of knowledge that does not align with our reality, has stooped and humiliated our ancestors and continues to oppress us in numerous epistemological ways, we must still take the exams if we want to “get ahead”.

ALA’s Vice Principal of Academics also acknowledges that ALA will not have been recognized for its amazing work if not for the Cambridge exams that provides international fluidity for the students. The over $35 million scholarships ALA students have gotten is as a result of their participation in Cambridge and thus the international recognition of their qualifications. The social capital the students earn and have is through their exposure to a global stage whose amazement of them may also be from a condescending awe of Africans or a matter of low expectations from Africa and Africans.

On the topic of African led, centered and African driven development, these colonial global structures challenge them. As mind-boggling as this is, it is easier for an American to help Africa in South Africa than it is for a Nigerian to help Africa in South Africa. Africans still face the challenge of applying for visa to move around. This happened to my younger sister and I in February 2014. We were scheduled to travel to South Africa to prepare for the launch of an African youth empowerment program in Nigeria. Even though we applied for our visas over a month before our travel date and that I am a permanent resident of Canada, I still had several back and forth with the South African Embassy. Far from the norm, the embassy officials wanted me to pay for my hotel fees in full and asked that I submit a corresponding receipt before a visa can be issued. I finally received my visa a few days before my travel while my sister’s passport was not released
before the scheduled travel date. She lost the money on the ticket. Meanwhile, our American colleagues did not have to think about applying for a Visa, they literally showed up at the airport two hours before their flight. It is really interesting that the British and Dutch who were complicit, aided and abated South Africa’s apartheid do not require a visa to visit South Africa but Nigerians who accommodated South African youths and participated in the struggle require a visa to visit the country. In a different way, African leaders abate this problem. By eliminating or/and not upholding the value of Africans learning about their history and social issues, Africans end up knowing little about their history, social issues and due to the unjust living conditions for many, many Africans are trapped in a race for daily survival and thus do not have the luxury of thinking and talking about social change. On the other hand, westerners do not have the same barriers. They often get to see and read African books and movies before it comes to the continent. Many African students attest to learning more about their continent when they come to the West. In my case, it took me coming all the way to Canada to do an undergraduate degree where I learnt about all the issues that had to be fixed in my continent and now completing a graduate degree to learn about colonialism in a nuanced way. I learnt about my indigenous history – Biafara war in a recently published book and movie – *Half of a Yellow Sun* that was screened at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2013. Sadly and ironically, in March 2014, the Nigerian government banned the screening of *Half of a Yellow Sun* in Nigeria. From this standpoint, one can see how it is easier, more convenient and in some instances, Westerners know more about Africa than Africans may know.
Funds to build many more ALAs’ as private institutions are in the hands of the West. As such, you will need to play the Western card and politics (which in some cases include surrounding your initiative with White people) to have a taste of the required start up capital. Choosing not to do so, I will argue, is a luxury many Africans cannot afford at the moment but we must keep fighting.

On race and Whiteness, the perks, the rewards, and associated violence on human agency and dignity are real on the continent. You see its legacy on the continent. If you ever go to Johannesburg, just pay very “loose” attention to the people in the nice cars and then look around for the people walking along the streets: it is like night and day; you will see Black folks walking around and many times aimlessly in almost every corner. When you get to Lagos, Nigeria, sniff around and ask about the owners of all the big hotels, restaurants and major construction projects in the state, it’s the White folks and the Nigerians who have decoded the colonial puzzle of economic prosperity in Colonial West Africa. As one can imagine, it pays to hang out with White folks and it costs a truckload of money to hang out with them or hang out in places they normally go to. As a South African taxi driver told me during my research visit in December 2013, White South Africans may choose not to associate with Blackness or Black folks in public places such as restaurants by increasing the price of Coke from say 5rands to 15rands. I testify to this statement; I bought my 10 days of Whiteness in South Africa; I stayed in a guest house that was owned by a Whiteman with a large span of land (I could not help but think about the real owners of this land and how they would have been forced out of it) that he rents out for dog training on Sundays. All day long, his Black workers are sweeping, cleaning, gate watching, greeting “Good day Ma’m” and smiling. The ones that live on site, at
night, they shuffle up and sleep in what looked like 6*6 Bamboo shacks he built for them. This was reminiscent of the few slave movies I managed to watch in my recent years of becoming aware of colonial domination in my life.

I remember when Mandela’s state funeral was going on, I wondered why my White Guest House “driver” was not talking about Mandela nor was the radio tuned to a station that aired the funeral. I quickly realized that even Mandela was not a common denominator between this fellow and I. What we had in common was my spending power (which as I came to understand is not representative of the average Black South African) and what may have warranted a different treatment from him towards me in comparison to the workers in his Guest House is this same spending ability, my affiliation to Canada and perhaps my every now and then “hard to place” accent.

The point of this discursive is not to suggest that Africans should not work with the West but to say that it is quintessential to the collective African agency for more Africans to take ownership of the continent in every way possible. I also wanted to express the dilemma Africans face when they attempt to initiate transformative projects in the continent.

The case of ALA as well as other well-intentioned projects that involve collaboration with non-Africans raises serious questions. Are Africans able to operate on their own terms when it is a White person making negotiations and decisions on their behalf? How will Africans learn to take responsibility for the continent if White people are coming from America to teach Africans subjects African professionals in Africa and in Diaspora can teach? Yet, to get more money to run African initiatives, Africans need the endorsement of and affiliation with White people to get ahead. It is also mainstream
knowledge that African elites are not as generous with their funds for social projects like ALA. Additionally, contrary to popular belief or perhaps, often not theorized, racism and an economic apartheid still exists on the continent. As illustrated in the Coke example and my South African experience above, these experiences hurt the African soul and numb the African agency. One way to fix this is by restoring cognitive justice to Africans, spreading awareness and nurturing the African agency. African agency is developed by Africans taking action, hence, the imperative for more Africans to be involved in ALA as well as other African initiatives.

These experiences are real, bitter realities, and in need of theorization and not normalization. However, the battle against societal injustice (including colonialism and its enduring legacy) like the one ALA fights for Africa will require a global alliance consisting of White and Black; each playing their part but not compromising on ensuring Africans, Africa’s decolonization, Africa’s need to recuperate culture, traditions, and indigenous knowledge and Africa’s interest is always at the core when it comes to African issues. Achieving this will require rooting the academy in Afrocentric body of knowledge, tact, politics and an explicit call out for collaboration with passionate and more experienced Afrocentric scholars and practitioners. It will also require Africans getting involved and actively participating/being present in these colonial systems with the goal of getting to a level where one can get ahead and shake the system. When we get ahead, it becomes a question of: do we have a full subversive and political theory of action? Are we aware that social change is not a question of who is the most compassionate? It is a question of politics and power. Do we know our politics? What
type of politics must we play to give us the necessary outcome of being able to bring
more Africans around the table to speak about and solve their own problems?
Chapter 8: Conclusion

The last seven chapters of this thesis focused on making a case for a different type of education system in Africa which should be informed by an African centered and driven development agenda. By showcasing ALA, my goal was to move beyond theory to action and to provide a concrete example of an education system (in content and form) that should be provided to Africans so that they can lead their lives and facilitate their continent’s development. Accordingly, in chapter 1, I provided a rationale and the motivation for this thesis. Africans choosing to continue in a Eurocentric and defunct education system is tantamount to committing ontological suicide. It is the height of self-inflicted abuse on the cognition of Africans. Also, for Africans to continue to question why things are not getting better in the continent without understanding and problematizing the colonial construction of their reality and political structures, addressing its enduring legacy and making a concerted effort to develop noble Africans who can serve as followers and leaders will be to make a show to the world and make a mockery of ourselves. To this end, Claude Ake’s conceptualization of Africa’s underdevelopment and theory of development resonated with me and I adopted it as a theoretical framework. Chapter 2 of the thesis puts a spot light on Ake’s theory of development with specific emphasis on one of his principles of development – Africans serving as the agents, means and ends of their development. Drawing from five other scholars (Mueni wa Muiu, Guy Martin, Jeremiah Arowosegbe, Tukumbi Lumumba-Kasango, and Victor Adetula) and the Afrocentric literature, I expanded Ake’s theory of development for the purpose of analyzing African Leadership Academy. In Chapter 3, I
provided a brief overview of African Leadership Academy and synthesized the theoretical framework with the overview of ALA and developed a conceptual framework that guided me during the research stage.

Chapter 4 focused on research methods, data collection and data analysis methods. To obtain detailed information about the Academy, I used a qualitative case study approach and spoke to 19 students, teachers, and administrators. The research findings for this thesis were presented in two chapters. Chapter 5 was a detailed overview of African Leadership Academy: ALA’s aims, philosophy, program structure, model and content as well as the academy’s conception of student success. In Chapter 6, based on my theoretical framework, I identified nine themes that emerged from ALA. These themes included:

1. African led development
2. Servant Leadership
3. The Desire for a Culturally relevant African Development
4. The Preference for a Social democracy and Social entrepreneurship in Africa
5. The promotion of Pan-Africanism
6. African centered teaching and learning
7. Youth Centered and Mindset Development
8. ALA students as Agents of Change
9. ALA’s classrooms as Classrooms without Borders.

Chapter 7, the discussion chapter answers the main question of the thesis: *To what extent does ALA align with Ake’s principle of development?* By illustrating eight attributes of ALA, I argued that ALA aligns with Ake’s theory of development to a fair extent. I also
showed how ALA misaligns with Ake’s theory of development. The observed misalignment included the seeming significant American influence in the academy, the absence of a plan of decolonization and indigenous knowledge in the curricula and the absence of a theory of change amongst other things. Interestingly, ALA students identified some of the observed misalignment in ALA.

As stated above, at the core of my thesis is the desire to buttress the clarion call for an African centered and driven development agenda and an appropriate education system to bring that about. More importantly, my thesis is about moving Africans and all the well-intentioned African development practitioners from theory about African centered and driven development to action.

For over a century now, Africa has been a spectacle for the West. All sorts of experimentations and theorizations about Africans, their reality and their future have been ongoing. Specifically, the crusade for quality education for the African child has been ongoing since the Jomtien conference of 1990 (Skillbeck, 2000) to the recent Global Education for All movement. Even though, more Africans have access to primary education than in the 90’s (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2011; UNESCO, 2012), Africans have been unable to bring about a people centered society that upholds human dignity regardless of social class, provides basic needs for all and brings about a culturally relevant democracy. Cited by Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah, the observation of this anonymous scholar about the African education system is apt:

African educational systems have surprising outcomes. The smartest students pass with first class and get admissions to Medical and Engineering schools. The 2nd class students get MBAs and LLBs to manage the First class students. The 3rd class students enter Politics and rule both the 1st and 2nd class students. The failures enter the underworld of crime and control the politicians and the businesses. And, best of all, those who did not attend school become prophets and
everyone follows them. (This Day Newspaper, Backpage, June 13, 2014).

In addition to the perplexing nature of the education system, an assessment by the output and teacher quality reveals that the system is defunct. More than 75% of the 15-19 year-olds in Sub-Saharan Africa lack foundational skills (UNESCO, 2012). The unemployability of youth in Africa’s most populous country - Nigeria is an open secret (Solanke, 2014). Many graduates are unable to write simple letters. Looking at teaching quality, Education Support Sector Program Nigeria (ESSPIN) conducted a Teachers Development Needs Assessment in Kwara State, Nigeria. Of the 19,000 plus teachers that were assessed in basic knowledge of numeracy and literacy (grades 4 and 6), 98% of the teachers scored below 80% in the test and over 50% of the teachers scored between 40 – 50% (ESSPIN, 2008).

Amongst the many things that the state of Africa’s education reveals is that critical questions about the content and purpose of education in the continent needs to be asked. Certainly, the African context is different from the Western context. As such, education for Africans needs to be unpacked and presented in details. We cannot universalize the content of education. When we call for access to quality education, we must ask what does quality education mean for Africans? What must constitute the content of education Africans receive such that Africans are enabled to tackle their own problems, bring about their development and institute better leadership and followership in the country? How do we know when we have successfully educated an African? What are the indicators of success? Given the African dilemma where political and social structures are elite centered, the majority of the population who will be required to bring about change are trapped in a daily race of survival and as a result, do not have the privilege of actively
participating in social change, how must education be re-conceptualized and delivered so that this majority are not hindered from civic participation? In this context, what must be the purpose of education? How do we merge the pursuit for social change to the daily race for survival for the African majority who live on less than $1/day? These foundational questions and more are often overlooked when discussing education in and for Africa. Yet, they are necessary to bring about a culturally relevant and responsive education system on the continent.

Ideologically speaking, it is counter intuitive to expect Africans to transform their continent by learning about themselves from a Eurocentric education system that doesn’t center them and their reality. It takes away from one’s human dignity to have grown up in a system that extinct you without you knowing it. It is the height of cognitive abuse. In the light of all of this, the significance of my thesis lies in not only the questions it sets forth but in the concrete alternative it presents as a starting point for education reform in Africa. ALA’s Africa centered approach to teaching, promotion of Pan-Africanism, the academy’s commitment to the students’ success and student capacity is commendable and appropriate. The agency and passion exhibited by the students, teachers and administrators is awe-inspiring and befitting for the difficult task of transforming Africa that this academy has taken upon itself to do. It also begs the question: why is that only 100 Africans are deserving of this type of education? Shouldn’t every African be entitled to such humanizing education? With the current millennium development goals being due for re-evaluation in 2015, world leaders will be coming together in September 2015 (United Nations website) to adopt new goals and initiatives to facilitate the achievement of MDG goals.
Although not perfect and as should be, a work in progress, ALA is an alternative education system that serves as an example of an African centered education system and shows the potential of a youth and Africa centered education system. In this way, this thesis could inform a blueprint for advocacy and education reform efforts that the post 2015 MDG education agenda pushes forward. The thesis also brings in an important but often neglected perspective into the discussion of Africa’s development: the voice of Africans (especially the youth). Throughout the thesis, the aspirations, concerns and passion of the citizens of the continent are presented. Africans are tired of being pitied and saved by the West. These voices and aspirations must be taken seriously. To this end, Western NGOs working in Africa need to re-conceptualize their measure of success to reflect a plan and organizational structure that aims for their redundancy and irrelevance in Africa. Through ALA as well as the other scholars I cite in this thesis, we see that the world can help Africa by enabling Africans help themselves. Africans need an education system that helps Africans unlock possibilities around them and captures local ways of solving day-to-day problems. Asking critical questions about the content of Africa’s education, advocating for the institution of an African centered education system at a policy level across the continent, supporting further research on Afrocentric education in Africa, facilitating the adaptation of ALA’s education into civic programs for out of school youth and low-income Africans and supporting institutions like ALA are a few of the many ways the West can truly support Africans.

In ALA’s shortcomings, the academy helps make a case for African leaders to sit up and see it as their duty to engage Africans for Africa’s development. Clearly, African leaders
need to intensify their commitment to the average African, create a people centered society and provide Afrocentric education at a universal level for every African child.

Reflections on the data collected from ALA and my experience in the academy unearth questions for further research. These questions include: How can the ALA’s education be adapted into civic programs targeted at Africa’s out of school youth population? How can ALA’s education be adapted into early childhood education, university and teacher education in Africa? How should the impact of ALA on the continent be understood, evaluated and tracked? How can Afrocentric education be adapted to engage Africa’s rural population, especially women? What kind of coalition (international, national and local) will be required to bring about Afrocentric education in Africa? What kind of reform will be required in teacher education to facilitate the institution of Afrocentric education in Africa? These and more are questions that could be explored towards the development of the continent.

The success of ALA as an institution and its ability to reach its potential of transforming the continent will be dependent on the openness of the academy to external advise, its connection to a wider network of Africa centered scholars and well intentioned practitioners and the support of society at large in supporting the noble efforts of the academy in whatever way they require. The beauty of ALA is in its intentionality about engineering a different future for Africa, its foresight and its audacity to go Pan-African even when Pan-Africanism is not popular amongst current African political leaders, African schools and society in general. Also, the development of African elites who are compassionate, Africa centered Africans, brilliant, have global social capital and are
committed to Africa’s transformation is invaluable to the continent. Through these passionate and awe-inspiring students at ALA, the possibility and practicality of Kwame Nkurumah’s United States of Africa dream comes alive. They will serve as the shapers and facilitators of the different African future. ALA’s potential and the academy’s bright future lies in the extent to which it can move beyond educating only 100 Africans who will become leaders to also developing Africans who will serve as fellow leaders and follower leaders. Bringing about wide spread change on the continent requires cooperation between the leaders, citizen base and a system change. The current political and social system benefits African elites, their Western sponsors where applicable and the colonial empire. As such, it will take more than sprinkles of African elites across society to transform the continent. A critical mass of Africans with the right mindset, skillset, passion, cultural and economic capital and are strategically positioned across society will be needed for this transformation.

Recommendations for ALA are sprinkled through out chapter 6 and 7. Ideas for improvement and reflection can also be gleaned from the questions I raised in these chapters. Specific ideas that will be useful to look into in the short term include the adoption of a theory of change, incorporation of indigenous knowledge into the curriculum, creation of an evaluation metrics for measuring and capturing overall student success amongst others.

Africa’s bright future lies within the continent and its citizens. Specifically, in its introspection, it’s union and youthful population. Central to any form of meaningful advancement on the continent is economic power to cater for the needs of her citizens.
From a socio-economic standpoint, Africa shortchanges itself. Currently, intra-African trade is at 12% while trade with the rest of the world is at 88% (Economic Commission for Africa, 2013). Comparatively speaking, intra-North America trade is at 40% while Intra-Europe trade is at 72% (Economic Commission for Africa, 2013). Even though 60% of the world’s uncultivated arable land is in Africa (Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2013), intra African trade on agriculture and food is at 15% (Economic Commission for Africa, 2013). Surprisingly, only 4% of Africans study agriculture (Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2013). Even though Democratic Republic of Congo has the capacity to electrify the whole continent (Muiu & Martin, 2009) and Africa produces 7% of the world’s electricity (UNECA, 2010), 75% of the continent’s population lack access to electricity and Africa consumes only 3% of the world’s commercial energy (UNECA, 2010).

Africa’s production and export sector are outward looking and has not changed since colonialism ended. Maranga (1993) observed that the exports of African countries are not useful in the continent; African economies do not complement each other, and are structured to cater to the commodity needs of former Western colonies. For example, Maranga (1993) points out that the cocoa produced in Ghana and Benin is exported to Europe for processing and then imported back to the continent as chocolate. Cotton produced in Burkina Faso is exported to Europe and returns to the continent as English and Dutch wax (African print materials). Nigeria on the other hand produces its cocoa, so doesn’t need to buy from Ghana. Petroleum exported out of Nigeria is shipped back as value added petroleum products such as refined fuel and Vaseline amongst other things. Some of the reasons cited by Maranga (1993) for these economic shortcomings include strong political ties between African countries and former colonizers, poor infrastructure...
and high transaction cost. Intra-African road networks and railways are poor to non-existent (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), 2010); Africa’s road access is at 34% (Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2013). The UNECA 2010 report show that Africa has the highest transportation cost in the world. At a transaction cost of 7.7% of export value, it is twice as expensive to trade within the continent as it is for African countries to trade with the rest of the world (UNECA, 2010). Yet, African countries are closer to each other in distance, have more shared social and cultural connections than with the rest of the world. The physical infrastructure within African countries support the colonial policies that led to the building of road networks to ports and mining centers and allowed for easy export to Western countries (Maranga, 1993).

Population wise, Africa’s greatest asset and potential burden are its youthful population. Currently, at least 63% of the continent’s population is under the age of 25 (UNESCO, 2012). By 2015, the median age in Africa will be 19 (Rotberg, 2013). By 2050, 25% of the world’s working population will be African (Mo Ibrahim, 2013). In about 21 years, Africa will have a larger working age population than China or India. For a continent that is relatively still in its formative years and has had the opportunity to see the rest of the world develop, Africa’s youthful population could serve as the innovators and engineers of a different future through Pan-African integration.

The continent’s dignity, prosperity and independence are trapped in its ability to break down colonial borders that mentally and physically divide it. It is also in its ability to unite, collaborate and strategically use its resources to cater for the needs of Africans and to aspire to become a powerhouse that sets the pace for the world’s progress. More importantly, it is in its ability to create not only an Afrocentric society but a Youthcentric
continent: a continent that relies heavily on the energy, passion and commitment of its youth to develop.

However, the toughest and enduring question for Africa and Africans is not whether it will develop, it is in the question of how will Africa develop? What will be the quality of that development? What will be the humanity of that development? How can we make Africa’s development as true as possible to Africans, their culture and history? Will the development be people centered or African elite centered or Western Corporation centered? How do we make the process of Africa’s development inclusive and transformative? How will Africa’s development engage and rely on the commitment and energy of its youthful population? Will Africa make the same mistakes other countries have made in their path towards development? These salient questions must set the tone for Africa’s leadership and citizenship development. Africa needs visionary and audacious leadership that takes on these questions and more as its burden but also grounds itself in the history and culture of the land, will and aspirations of its people.

Africa needs audacious leadership that is charged by the potential of this great continent, by the millions of African lives lost, and stands on the shoulders of African independence fighters and thinkers such as Queen Amina of Zau Zau, Yaa Asantewaa – Ashanti Queen, Kwame Nkurumah, Patrice Lumumba, Thomas Sankara, Amilcar Cabral, Claude Ake, and many more to bring justice to the land, keep alive the spirit of our ancestors and bring Ubuntu to the forefront. An African centered education system that branches out to formal and informal systems remains the only hope for the continent to bring about this
new generation of audacious, people centered, Afrocentric and decolonized Africans who can drive the continent closer to the dreams of our African ancestors and heroes/sheroes.
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Appendices

Appendix A: Information Letters

Letter to Founder and Administrator

(TO BE PUT ON OISE/OUFT LETTER HEAD)

Dear Founder/Administrator,

Invitation to African Leadership Academy to Participate in a University of Toronto, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) Research Study Focusing on the Role African Teenagers and Education can play in Africa’s development.

My name is Chizoba Imoka, I am a 2nd year Masters student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto, Ontario working under the supervision of University of Toronto professor, Dr. John Portelli. I write to you in relation to my thesis research focused on Teenagers and Social Change in Africa. Please accept this as an official communiqué soliciting your organization’s participation in my research. Details of the proposed study are provided below.

In his acclaimed book – Democracy and Development in Africa, late Claude Ake, a renowned Political Economist argues that wrong assumptions are being made about development in Africa. He proclaims, ‘The problem is not so much that development has failed in Africa as that it was never really on the agenda in the first place’ (Ake, 2006, p.1). Real development, he contends, will be driven by a critical mass of citizens in pursuit of a social democracy (Olaopa, 2012).

The lack of a critical mass of committed citizens with the capacity to pursue a social change in Africa is arguably Africa’s greatest impediment to development. Using education as a vehicle for change, my thesis explores how a social democracy as envisioned by Claude Ake can be achieved with teenagers (13 – 19) as the principal actors. Taking off from Ake’s principle of development where he argues that sustainable development has to be people centered and have citizens as its agents, means and ends of development (p.143), I am looking to study African Leadership Academy (ALA) whose focus is on developing the next generation of African Leaders.

ALA was chosen as the focus of this study because of the alignment I see between Ake’s principle of development, my conceptualization of Ake’s philosophy from an education lens and ALA’s philosophy/approach to development in Africa. Examples of this alignment are provided below:

1) ALA’s futuristic and proactive approach to Africa’s development evidenced in this quote from ALA’s website: “But these efforts will never stop unless we develop leaders who prevent wars from occurring in the first place, entrepreneurs
who create jobs, and scientists who sustainably increase food production and access to healthcare”. Ake’s assertion that the ideology of development was adopted by African independence leaders as a strategy to maintain power and not to bring about development in the way we conceive it today suggests the need to proactively and exclusively plan for development in Africa.

2) ALA’s curriculum focus (Leadership, Entrepreneurship and African Studies) and pedagogical approach is consistent with my hypothesis about the kind of education that could lead to Ake’s social democracy. This pedagogical approach has the potential to nurture some of Ake’s citizen dispositions for change: self empowerment, self reliance, self confidence, and self esteem which he argues is necessary for citizens to possess in order to drive change.

3) ALA’s 360 approach to developing young leaders through classroom instruction, student led projects, student involvement in tackling real social issues, mentoring, life long guidance and a focus on social entrepreneurship signals an embodiment of Ake’s principle of sustainable development: Citizens as agent, means and ends of development.

4) ALA’s focus on youth between 15 -19 falls within the category of youth my thesis focuses on.

Put together, these attributes exhibited by ALA are manifested in the conceptual framework of my thesis thus making your organization a good case study for this research.

In researching your organization, I am specifically looking to understand the extent to which Ake’s vision of social democracy is realizable through your Two year Pre - University Program. From an education perspective, I have conceptualized Ake’s education using a transformative and critical democracy lens with the goal of developing socially engaged Africans who are culturally competent and have the capacity to engage Africa’s under development with a historical - socio-political –economic lens. Additionally, the education seeks to develop Africans who are ethical, compassionate and passionate about Africa’s development. At the core of the hypothesized education are citizens playing not only as agents of development but also as the means and end of development. That is, the development that can come about through the envisioned education comes about through the citizens and they also are the social and economic beneficiaries of the development. My research will be seeking to identify and understand how these features are manifested in ALA’s program.

To enable me perform this analysis, I will need to conduct a 75 minutes – 90 minutes interview with the founder and administrator. With the founder, I will be asking a series of questions about the organization’s view on Africa’s development, philosophy, ideology, models, and theory of change. The goal of my interview with the administrator is to get a sense of how the organization’s philosophy comes alive in the programs,
practices and systems. Questions will span across curriculum, pedagogical approach, school programs, and success thus far amongst other things.

To gain a full picture, I also need to interview four students and four teachers to capture how this philosophy is experienced in the ALA experience and how it manifests itself in class or other related learning environments. Student interviews will take 45 - 60 minutes while teacher interviews will take 75 - 90 minutes. I will require your assistance in recruiting students and teachers who are willing to participate in the study by disseminating/pasting posters in the school. The interviews will be audio-recorded with the participants’ permission and later transcribed. To ensure reliability and accuracy of information, I will provide you with a synthesis of the collected data before incorporating into my final thesis.

Additionally, I will conduct a document analysis on curriculum documents, lesson plans and publicly available document such as the content on your website and other related sites. To conduct this analysis, I will need you to provide me with sample curriculum documents and lessons plans. In sum, these interviews and document analysis will enable me discern how ALA’s two year pre-University program expresses Ake’s philosophy about Africa’s development and his principle of development – Citizen’s as agents, means and end of development.

Benefit wise, your organizations’ participation in the study will afford it increased publicity within the renowned scholarly community of University of Toronto and its networks. Also, it will give your organization a strategic opportunity to obtain commentary about its program within a larger context of transformative and critical democratic pedagogy and from an academic lens.

Should you be willing to participate in the study or/and require further information, please email me directly at c.imoka@mail.utoronto.ca. You are not obligated to participate in the study and if on the day of the research you decide to opt out, your wishes will be respected.

I will be available for an interview in September 2013 during which I estimate I would have received ethical approval for my proposed research. For the interviews, I will come to a location in South Africa that is convenient for all the research participants. In appreciation, you will receive a small token for your time and effort.

To protect the privacy of the research participants while ensuring the confidentiality and validity of the study, the names of the teacher and student research participants will be kept confidential from other participants. You can have access to the final report, which will be located in the OISE/UT thesis collection and which can be accessed electronically in the University of Toronto Research Repository (T Space) at https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/handle/1807/9944

If you would like to get more information about the study in general, please feel free to contact my supervisor – Professor John Portelli at john.portelli@oise.utoronto.ca. If you
have any questions related to your rights as a participant in this study, please contact the Office of Research Ethics, ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273.

I thank you in advance for your cooperation and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Chizoba Imoka,
Graduate Student,
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto,
Leadership, Higher and Adult Education (LHAE).
252 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ontario,
M5S 1V6, Canada.
Telephone: (647) 631-1244
Dear African Leadership Academy Teacher:

My name is Chizoba Imoka, I am a graduate student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, Toronto Canada. I am writing to solicit your participation in a University of Toronto study that I am conducting on the role African teenagers can play in bringing about social change in Africa. Specifically, my study examines how African teenagers can be engaged through education for the purpose of facilitating development in Africa. This study is conducted under the supervision of University of Toronto professor, Dr. John Portelli.

Your school, African Leadership Academy was selected as the focus of the study because of its emphasis on developing young Africans to excel in leadership and entrepreneurship specifically for the purpose of transforming Africa. Also, your school’s philosophy and approach towards Africa’s development appears to be in alignment with the conceptual framework of my research on Africa’s development, which is influenced by the late Claude Ake. For the late Claude Ake, sustainable development in Africa must be brought about by Africans and Africans must serve not only as the agents of change, but the means and ends of development.

To this end, my research is seeking to examine how Claude Ake’s principle on development is expressed in your school and if Claude Ake’s vision for Africa is realizable through your school’s two-year pre-university curriculum. In talking with you in a one 75–90 minutes interview, I want to learn more about what and how you teach the ALA students. All these information will enable me get a full picture of ALA’s two-year pre-university curriculum which I will be analyzing within the context of Ake’s vision. My goal with this research is to be able to contribute to discussions about Africa’s development through education and the engagement of African teenagers. Your input will inform the creation of educational initiatives that has the potential of engaging more teenagers across the continent for the purpose of Africa’s transformation.

As a research participant, your identity will not be revealed to the founder and administrator. Your identity will not be revealed in the research report, or any other publication, as pseudonyms will be used in place of your name. After transcribing the interview, I will send you a copy for your approval before final analysis. Your privacy is assured, as interview tapes will be destroyed after transcription and analysis. The transcribed data will be saved in an encrypted and password protected hard drive. Electronic data from the research will be stored for five years on an encrypted hard drive and paper stored in a locked file cabinet that resides in OISE, University of Toronto that only the researcher has access to. After that time they will be erased and/or shredded.

I will be available to interview you from September 2013 onwards. I do plan to come to your school in South Africa and will conduct the interview at a convenient location and
time for you. In appreciation of your time and efforts, you will receive a token of appreciation.

Please email me directly at c.imoka@utoronto.mail.ca if you require further clarifications and are willing to participate in the research. In the case that you are unable to participate in the research on the scheduled interview day, your feelings will be respected. If you have questions about this study or require clarifications, you may also contact my research supervisor – Professor John Portelli at john.portelli@mail.utoronto.ca.

If you have any questions related to your rights as a participant in this study please or if you have any complaints or concerns about how you have been treated as a research participant, please contact the Office of Research Ethics, ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.
Sincerely,

Chizoba Imoka,
Graduate Student,
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, Leadership, Higher and Adult Education (LHAE).
252 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ontario,
M5S 1V6, Canada.
Telephone: (647) 631-1244
Letter to Interested Students

Dear African Leadership Academy Student:

My name is Chizoba Imoka, I am a graduate student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, Toronto Canada. I am writing to solicit your participation in a research study that I am conducting on the role African teenagers can play in bringing about social change in Africa. Specifically, my study examines how African teenagers can be engaged through education for the purpose of facilitating development in Africa. This study is conducted under the supervision of University of Toronto professor, Dr. John Portelli.

Your school, African Leadership Academy was selected as the focus of the study because of its emphasis on developing young Africans to excel in leadership and entrepreneurship specifically for the purpose of transforming Africa. Also, your school’s philosophy and approach towards Africa’s development appears to be in alignment with the conceptual framework of my research on Africa’s development, which is influenced by the late Claude Ake. For the late Claude Ake, sustainable development in Africa must be brought about by Africans and Africans must serve not only as the agents of change, but the means and ends of development.

To this end, my research is seeking to examine how Claude Ake’s principle on development is expressed in your school and if Claude Ake’s vision for Africa is realizable through your school’s two-year pre-university curriculum. In talking with you in a one 45 – 60 minutes interview, I want to learn more about your ALA experience, the impact it has had on you, the projects you are working on and your future prospects as a result of this experience. All these information will enable me get a full picture of ALA’s two-year pre-university curriculum which I will be analyzing within the context of Ake’s vision. My goal with this research is to be able to contribute to discussions about Africa’s development through education and the engagement of African teenagers. Your input will inform the creation of educational initiatives that has the potential of engaging more teenagers across the continent.

My interview with you will be audio-recorded and later transcribed. As a research participant, your identity will not be revealed to your teachers but the founder and administrator may be aware of your participation because interviews will be held in your school. Your identity will not be revealed in the research report, or any other publication, as pseudonyms will be used in place of your name. After transcribing the interview, I will send you a copy for your approval before final analysis. The transcribed data will be saved in an encrypted and password protected hard drive. Electronic data from the research will be stored for five years on an encrypted hard drive and paper stored in a locked file cabinet that resides in OISE, University of Toronto that only the researcher has access to. After that time they will be erased and/or shredded.

I will be available to interview you from September 2013 onwards. I do plan to come to your school in South Africa and will conduct the interview at a convenient location and
time for you. In appreciation of your time and efforts, you will receive a token of appreciation.

Please email me directly at c.imoka@utoronto.mail.ca if you require further clarifications are willing to participate in the research. In the case that you are unable to participate in the research on the scheduled interview day, your feelings will be respected. If you have questions about this study or require clarifications, you may also contact my research supervisor – Professor John Portelli at john.portelli@mail.utoronto.ca. If you have any questions related to your rights as a participant in this study please or if you have any complaints or concerns about how you have been treated as a research participant, please contact the Office of Research Ethics, ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Chizoba Imoka,
Graduate Student,
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto,
Leadership, Higher and Adult Education (LHAE).
252 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ontario,
M5S 1V6, Canada.
Telephone: (647) 631-1244
Appendix B: Interview Protocols

Questions for Semi-Structured Interview with the Founder

1. What motivated you to start this organization?
2. When was your organization founded?
3. What did you do prior to setting up this organization?
4. What is the vision of your organization?
5. In your organization’s website, one reads: “But these efforts will never stop unless we develop leaders who prevent wars from occurring in the first place, entrepreneurs who create jobs, and scientists who sustainably increase food production and access to healthcare”. Would you please comment or add more to the statement?
6. In light of the statement above, what problem is ALA trying to solve?
7. What is the philosophy behind ALA?
8. How does ALA’s philosophy and its problem statement translate into the pre-university program?
9. Why is ALA’s focus on the teenage population – 16 years plus?
10. Why is the curriculum rooted in leadership, entrepreneurship and African history?
11. Through your programs and organization’s vision, how exactly do you envision change will be created in Africa? In other words, what is your organization’s theory of change?
12. How does ALA measure its success?

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5 Adapted from Figure 7.7, Page 226 of Creswell 2012’s Educational Research
13. How does ALA understand student success? How does it measure and assess student success?

14. What role do you think African citizens including your students must play in bringing about sustainable change and development in Africa?

15. Does ALA’s pre-university program empower the students economically, socially and politically? If so, how? If not, what does ALA empower the students in?

16. What are the human attributes and disposition that ALA finds important for Africans to possess in order to contribute to social change? Are ALA students acquiring these attributes and disposition? If so, how? If not, why?

17. Have you heard of Claude Ake? If you do, would you please comment on Ake’s view and work?

18. Late Claude Ake argued that real development in Africa would be achieved through a social democracy that benefits the critical mass of the population. In his social democracy vision, he says that citizens must serve as the “agents, means and the end of development” (p. 143) both economically and politically. Does ALA embody this principle/philosophy? If yes/no, please explain.

19. Speaking of development, Ake also said: In all probability it will emphasize concrete economic and social rights rather than abstract political rights; it [the development plan] will insist on the democratization of economic opportunities, the social betterment of people
and a strong social welfare system. To achieve these goals, it will have to be effectively participative and will have to draw on African traditions to adapt democracy to the cultural and historical experience of ordinary people (p.141 – 142). What do you think about this statement? Does ALA reflect or express any element of this statement? If so, how?

a. Any final thoughts or comments about Africa’s development and the role teenagers may play in it. Asking the founder about AKe’s principles without calling Ake’s name?
Questions for Semi-Structured Interview with the Administrator⁶

1. What exactly do you think ALA is trying to achieve?

2. How is it being achieved?

3. How long have you worked in this institution?

4. What motivated you to join the institution?

5. What happens in the pre-university program? Who is eligible to apply?

6. How does ALA’s vision connect to ALA’s two year Pre-University Program?

7. How does the vision and program goals influence the pedagogical approach?

8. Is there a favored pedagogical approach? If so, please explain.

9. What is the content of the curriculum; what constitutes the curriculum?

10. Who are the teachers?

11. How are they trained to teach the program?

12. Is there a favored teaching approach? If so, please explain.

13. How is student learning understood?

14. How is student learning measured and assessed?

15. Is there an interaction between the classroom and the community? If so, how? If not, why?

16. How is the school’s environment intended to contribute to student learning and the achievement of program goals?

17. How do you measure success of the pre-university program?

18. What has been ALA’s success so far?

19. How is student success understood? How is it measured and assessed?

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⁶ Adapted from Figure 7.7, Page 226 of Creswell 2012’s Educational Research
20. How is student engagement understood? How is it brought alive in the program? How is it measured and assessed?

21. What are the human attributes ALA’s pre-university program foregrounds as important for the students to acquire?

22. From your program perspective, what role must African citizens including your students play in bringing about development in the continent? How does your program prepare your students prepare and fulfill the role?

23. Have you heard of Claude Ake? If yes, please explain.

24. Claude Ake, an African political economist argued that real development in Africa will be achieved through a social democracy that benefits the critical mass of the population. In his social democracy vision, he says that citizens must serve as the “agents, means and the end of development” (p. 143) both economically and politically. To what extent do you think ALA’s pre-university program embodies this Ake’s principle of sustainable change: Citizens must serve as the “agent, means and end of development? Please explain.

25. Any final thoughts or comments?
Questions for Semi-Structured Interview with the Teachers

1. How many years have you been teaching in ALA for?

2. What were you doing prior to joining ALA?

3. What subject do you teach?

4. Why did you decide to join ALA?

5. What motivates you as a teacher?

6. How would you describe your role in achieving ALA’s vision of developing the next generation of African leaders?

7. Tell me about your syllabus and lesson plans. What influences their content? How do you prepare for class?

8. What are the topics covered in your subject over a typical semester or session? What influences the topic selection for the semester?

9. Would you please describe what a typical classroom looks like? How do you teach the students? What is your approach to teaching? What is your teaching style? Is there a preferred teaching approach? If so, please explain.

10. Does the favored style connect with ALA’s vision, philosophy and the pre-university program goals?

11. How do you try to engage the students in learning?

12. Is there an interaction between the classroom and the community? If so/if not, please explain.

13. What role do the students play in classroom learning?


15. How is student learning understood? How is it assessed and measured?

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Adapted from Figure 7.7, Page 226 of Creswell 2012’s Educational Research
16. How do you understand student success? How do you measure and assess it?

17. How do you measure your success as a teacher?

18. What role do you think Africans including your students must play to bring about change in Africa? Does your teaching intentionally attempt to prepare the students for the role? If so, how?

19. Are there attributes, values, skills and disposition you aim for your students to acquire? How do they connect to ALA’s broad vision of developing African leaders? How do they connect to the students’ capacity to create change in Africa?

20. Have you heard of the Late Claude Ake? If yes/no, would you please comment on what you know about him?

21. Late Claude Ake argued that real development in Africa will be achieved through a social democracy that benefits the critical mass of the population. In his social democracy vision, he says that citizens must serve as the “agents, means and the end of development” (p. 143) both economically and politically. Does ALA’s pre-university program embody this Ake’s principle/philosophy? Please explain.

22. Any final thoughts or comments on Africa’s development and the role young Africans could play?
Questions for Semi-Structured Interview with the Students

1. Tell me about yourself.

2. When did you graduate from high school?

3. Which country are you from?

4. Why did you apply to ALA?

5. What do you think about the current state of affairs in Africa?

6. What role do you think young people play in Africa’s future? What role do you think you play in Africa’s future?

7. What are your future plans?

8. What are you learning here at ALA?

9. How are you taught and what role do you play in the classroom and school?

10. Tell me about your class and school projects. Are you working on any now?

11. Have you taken on any leadership and community activism roles as a result of ALA’s program? If yes, please tell me more.

12. Has the ALA’s pre-university program empowered you socially, politically and economically? If yes, tell me how. If not, how could it.

13. How would you describe ALA’s impact in your life and future prospect?


15. In what ways and how are you engaged in school learning and after school? What is the most important engagement in your student engagement?

16. How do you understand success as a student? How do you measure your success?

17. Have you heard of the Late Claude Ake? If yes, please explain.

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Adapted from Figure 7.7, Page 226 of Creswell 2012’s Educational Research
18. Claude Ake, an African political economist argued that real development in Africa would be achieved through a social democracy that benefits the critical mass of the population. In his social democracy vision, he says that citizens must serve as the “agents, means and the end of development” (p. 143) both economically and politically. Would you say ALA’s program enables you serve as the agent, means and end of Africa’s development? Please explain.

19. How do you think change will happen in Africa?

20. Any final thoughts or comments?
Appendix C: Letter of Consents

Letter Requesting Administrative Consent

July 24, 2013

Mr. Fred Swaniker
Founder/CEO
African Leadership Academy (ALA)
Postnet Suite 413, Private Bag X1,
Northcliff 2115 South Africa,

Dear Mr. Swaniker,


As a follow up to the last letter dated July 15, 2013 inviting African Leadership Academy to participate in University of Toronto research study, below are more details about the project. To begin the project, I require your written consent. The information provided below will enable you to give the required consent.

The purpose of the study is to determine if the late Claude Ake’s vision of a social democracy in Africa is realizable through ALA’s two-year pre-university program. Specifically, my study is looking to see how ALA’s Pre-University program (in philosophy, practice, student and teacher experience) expresses Ake’s principle of development, which posits, “citizens have to be the agents, means and ends of development” (Democracy and Development in Africa, p.). All together, ten people (Founder, Administrator, 4 teachers and 4 students) will participate in the study. Teachers will be selected based on the number of years they have worked in the ALA Pre-University program (greater than three years) In addition, a balance between male and female and between first year and second year teachers (if applicable) will be sought. Similarly, a balance between male and female/ first year and second year students will be sought.

The study involves semi-structured interviews in which participants will be asked questions ranging from ALA’s philosophy, theory of change, practice, school environment, teaching content, pedagogical approach, impact, school experience and views on Africa’s development. Research participants will be well informed about the nature of the study and their participation, including the assurance that they may withdraw at any time. In addition, they may request that any information, whether in written form or audiotape, be eliminated from the project. Participants will at no time be judged or evaluated, and will at no time be at risk of harm. An analysis of curriculum documents, lesson plans and publicly available information will also be conducted.
The information gathered from both document analysis and interviews will be kept in strict confidence and stored at a secure location – University of Toronto, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (252 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Canada). With your permission, the identity of the school (ALA), the interviewed administrator and yourself will be revealed. However, the identity of the interviewed students and teachers will not be revealed. Pseudonyms will be used in place of their names in the report. To protect the interviewed teachers/students and ensure the confidentiality of this study, the interviewed teachers will not be known by yourself or the founder. The interviews may be conducted at a location outside of ALA. Similarly, the interviewed students will not be known by the teachers but may be known by yourself and the administrator. The student interviews will happen in ALA’s campus. All data collected will be used for the purposes of my Masters thesis and perhaps for subsequent research articles, public presentations and related publications. Tape recordings will be destroyed after transcription. All raw data (i.e. transcripts, field notes) will be destroyed five years after the completion of the study.

If you agree, please sign the letter below. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (647) 631 1244 or at c.imoka@mail.utoronto.ca. You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. John Portelli at (416) 978-1277. Finally, you may also contact the U of T Office of Research Ethics for questions about your rights as a research participant at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation and support.

Sincerely,

Chizoba Imoka,
Graduate Student, Leadership, Higher and Adult Education
OISE/University of Toronto
252 Street Bloor West, Toronto, ON, M5S 1V6
Telephone: (647) 6311244
Email: c.imoka@mail.utoronto.ca

_____________________________________
Administrator’s name

_____________________________________
Administrator’s signature

_____________________________________
Date
Consent Letter for teacher participants


Dear Research participant;

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study. Included in this document are pertinent details about the proposed interview. Please sign and date the bottom of this form in the space provided. If you have any questions, comments or require further clarifications, please feel free to contact me (Chizoba Imoka) via email c.imoka@mail.utoronto.ca or phone at (647) 6311244. Thank you.

I understand that I am participating in an interview with Chizoba Imoka, a graduate student from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto for a study that explores how African teenagers can play a role in creating sustainable social change in Africa. Specifically, we will be discussing how the vision, goals, programs and practices of my institution (ALA) align with Claude Ake’s vision of Social Democracy in Africa as a vehicle for sustainable change. This is a University of Toronto study conducted under the supervision of Dr. John Portelli.

I understand that we will be discussing about ALA’s Pre-University Program and how it expresses Ake’s principle of development: citizens as “agents, means and ends of development” through the curriculum, school practices, teaching and organizational philosophy. The interview is estimated to take 75–90 minutes of your time.

I understand that there are minimal risks involved in participating in this study and that the identity of the organization and interviewed administrator and founder will be disclosed unless otherwise requested. Because of the close-knit community in your school, there is a possibility that you may be easily identified as a research participant. However, I will ensure that your confidentiality is kept by not using any direct quotes that can be attributed back to you in the report. All the collected data will be synthesized in a way that conceals the identity of all the research participants. Your personal identity as a participant in this study will not be revealed to the administrator and founder. Your identity will also not be revealed in the final report and related publications. A pseudonym will be used in place of your name. At no time, will you be judged or evaluated because of your responses.

As an interview participant, I understand that my participation is completely voluntary. If at any time before or during the interview I wish not to participate, my desires will be respected. Any collected data at the time of withdrawal will be deleted (electronic) or shredded (paper). To withdraw from the study, you can send an email to the researcher –
Chizoba Imoka at c.imoka@mail.utoronto.ca indicating your wish to withdraw. If during the interview I choose not to answer any question, I am free to do so without explanation and negative consequences. In compensation for your time, a token of appreciation will be given to you. Even if you withdraw from the study, the compensation will still be given to you. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, please feel free to contact the Office of Research Ethics Board via email ethics.research@utoronto.ca or phone on 416-946-3273. You may also contact my supervisor via email john.portelli@utoronto.ca.

I agree to have the interview audio recorded for the purposes of transcription. The audio recordings will be destroyed after transcription and the interview transcript/electronic data will be destroyed after five years unless otherwise stated. Electronic data will be saved in an encrypted password protected hard drive and stored in a locked cabinet that will reside at the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto. Access to the data will be exclusively available to the researcher and supervisor - Prof. John Portelli.

Interview transcript will be provided to you for review before the final analysis and incorporation into the thesis. A copy of the research report will be provided to me. Subsequently, You can have access to the final report, which will be located in the OISE/UT thesis collection and which can be accessed electronically in the University of Toronto Research Repository (T Space) at https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/handle/1807/9944.

Results from this study will be published in the form of a thesis, articles, blog posts, academic papers and other related publications. Public presentations about this research will also be conducted. In these publications, the school’s identity will be revealed as necessary but your identity will remain confidential. Pseudonyms will be used. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (647) 6311244 or at c.imoka@mail.utoronto.ca. You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. John Portelli at (416) 978-1277. Finally, you may also contact the U of T Office of Research Ethics for questions about your rights as a research participant at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

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Graduate Student, Leadership, Higher and Adult Education  
OISE/University of Toronto  
252 Street Bloor West, Toronto, ON, M5S 1V6  
Telephone: (647) 6311244  
Email: c.imoka@mail.utoronto.ca

Dr. John Portelli,  
Professor, Leadership, Higher and Adult Education  
OISE/University of Toronto  
252 Street Bloor West, Toronto, ON, M5S 1V6  
Telephone: (416) 978-1277  
Email: john.portelli@mail.utoronto.ca
By signing below, you are indicating that you are willing to participate in the study, you have received a copy of this letter, and you are fully aware of the conditions above.

Name: _________________________________ Institution: _________________________________

Signed: _________________________________ Date: _________________________________
Please initial if you would like a summary of the findings of the study upon completion: _____

Please initial if you agree to have your interview audio taped: _____
Please keep a copy of this form for your records.
Consent letter for student participants


Dear Research participant;

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study. Included in this document are pertinent details about the proposed interview. Please sign and date the bottom of this form in the space provided. If you have any questions, comments or require further clarifications, please feel free to contact me (Chizoba Imoka) via email c.imoka@mail.utoronto.ca or phone at (647) 6311244

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I understand that we will be discussing about ALA’s Pre-University Program and how it expresses Ake’s principle of development: citizens as “agents, means and ends of development” through the curriculum, school practices, teaching and organizational philosophy. The interview is estimated to take 45 – 60 minutes of your time.

I understand that there are minimal risks involved in participating in this study and that the identity of the organization and interviewed administrator and founder will be disclosed unless otherwise requested. Your personal identity as a participant in this study will not be revealed to the administrator and founder. Because of the close-knit community in your school, there is a possibility that you may be easily identified as a research participant. However, I will ensure that your confidentiality is kept by not using any direct quotes that can be attributed back to you in the report. All the collected data will be synthesized in a way that conceals the identity of all the research participants. Your identity will also not be revealed in the final report and related publications. A pseudonym will be used in place of your name. At no time, will you be judged or evaluated because of your responses.

As an interview participant, I understand that my participation is completely voluntary. If at any time before or during the interview I wish not to participate, my desires will be
respected. If during the interview I choose not to answer any question, I am free to do so without explanation and negative consequences. Any collected data at the time of withdrawal will be deleted (electronic) or shredded (paper). To withdraw from the study, you can send an email to the researcher – Chizoba Imoka at c.imoka@mail.utoronto.ca indicating your wish to withdraw. In compensation for your time, a token of appreciation will be given to you. Even if you withdraw from the study, the compensation will still be given to you.

I agree to have this interview audio recorded for the purposes of transcription. The audio recordings will be destroyed after transcription and the interview transcript/electronic data will be destroyed after five years unless otherwise stated. Electronic data will be saved on an encrypted and password protected hard drive and stored in a locked cabinet that will reside at the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto. Access to the data will be exclusively available to the researcher and supervisor - Prof. John Portelli.

Your participation in the research does not put you at risk of harm. At no time, will you be judged or evaluated because of your responses. To protect your privacy, your identity will not be revealed. A pseudonym will be used. Interview transcript will be provided to you for review before the final analysis and incorporation into the thesis. A copy of the research report will be provided to me. Subsequently, You can have access to the final report, which will be located in the OISE/UT thesis collection and which can be accessed electronically in the University of Toronto Research Repository (T Space) at [https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/handle/1807/9944](https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/handle/1807/9944).

Results from this study will be published in the form of a thesis, articles, academic papers and other related publications. Public presentations about this research will also be conducted. In these publications, the school’s identity will be revealed as necessary but your identity will remain confidential. Pseudonyms will be used in place of your name and the data will be synthesized in a way that no direct quote will be attributed back to you. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (647) 6311244 or at c.imoka@mail.utoronto.ca. You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. John Portelli at (416) 978-1277. Finally, you may also contact the U of T Office of Research Ethics for questions about your rights as a research participant at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273.

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Email: john.portelliortelli@mail.utoronto.ca
By signing below, you are indicating that you are willing to participate in the study, you have received a copy of this letter, and you are fully aware of the conditions above.

Name: _________________________________ Institution: _________________________________

Signed: _________________________________ Date: _________________________________

Please initial if you would like a summary of the findings of the study upon completion: _____

Please initial if you agree to have your interview audio taped: _____

Please keep a copy of this form for your records.
TO BE PUT ON OISE/UOFT LETTER HEAD

Consent letter for Founder/Administrator


Dear Research participant;

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study. Included in this document are pertinent details about the proposed interview. Please sign and date the bottom of this form in the space provided. If you have any questions, comments or require further clarifications, please feel free to contact me (Chizoba Imoka) via email c.imoka@mail.utoronto.ca or phone at (647) 6311244

Thank you.

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I understand that we will be discussing about ALA’s programs from a lens that attempts to see how students in the ALA Pre-University Program are engaged as “agents, means and ends of development” through the curriculum, school practices, teaching and organizational philosophy. The interview is estimated to take 75 – 90 minutes of your time.

I understand that there are minimal risks involved in participating in this study and that the identity of the organization and interviewed administrator and founder will be disclosed unless otherwise requested. However, the collected data will be synthesized in a way that keeps the spotlight on the school while protecting your privacy.

As an interview participant, I understand that my participation is completely voluntary. If at any time before or during the interview I wish not to participate, my desires will be respected. If during the interview I choose not to answer any question, I am free to do so without explanation and negative consequences. In compensation for your time, a token of appreciation will be given to you. Even if you withdraw from the study, the compensation will still be given to you. Any collected data at the time of withdrawal will be deleted (electronic) or shredded (paper). To withdraw from the study, you can send an email to the researcher – Chizoba Imoka at c.imoka@mail.utoronto.ca indicating your wish to withdraw.
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Thank you in advance for your participation.

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Signed: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________
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Please keep a copy of this form for your records.