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About 20 million Africans graduate from high school every year and only 8% of them go to college.

Exclusive interview with

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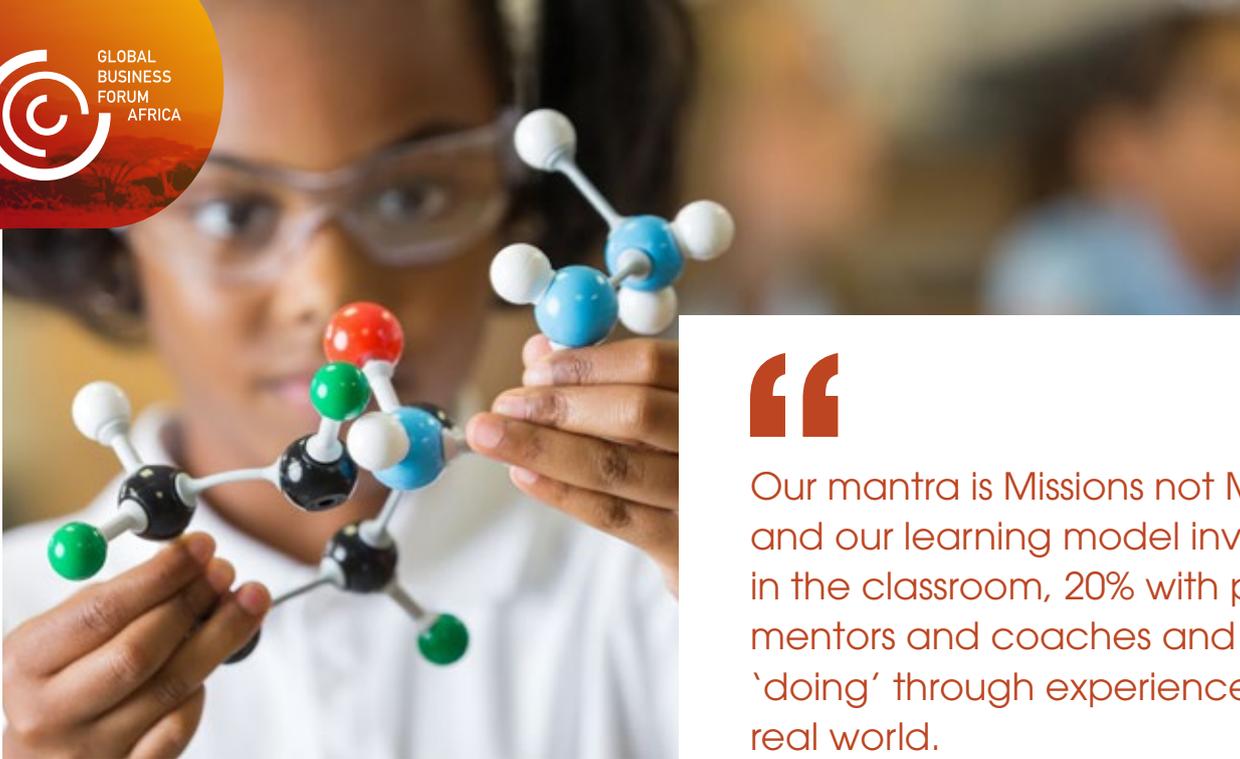


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## The biggest obstacle to developing the workforce of the future in Africa.

I think the biggest obstacles are how we approach education on the continent and how we provide access to opportunities in the form of capital, global markets and work across the globe.

Most institutions in Africa and the world right now are taking the conventional approach to education - come in, pick a course and get a degree but in reality, very few people are working in the field that they spent so many years and so much money studying in school. It doesn't work. This is the primary obstacle that we are tackling at African Leadership University. We are taking the unconventional approach to education by helping the next generation of passionate, ambitious and gifted leaders find their purpose and unlock their potential.

We identified 7 grand challenges that the world faces and ask each of our students to select the opportunities they want to create from these challenges. Our mantra is Missions not Majors and our learning model involves 10% in the classroom, 20% with peers, mentors and coaches and 70% 'doing' through experiences in the real world.

Once we change the way we approach education, we must then provide access to opportunities. I always say that talent is equally distributed but opportunity is not and so we must ask ourselves how we can connect the next generation to global opportunities. We have so many talented young Africans who can really improve the continent but they don't have access to affordable

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education or scholarships, capital, global markets, mentorship, etc.

We started The Room for this purpose. The Room is a community created to help the world's most extraordinary talent fulfill their potential. We are building a strong online and offline global community of selected senior executives, successful entrepreneurs, mid career individuals, corporates, VCs and young leaders that can create and accelerate access and impact across the globe through relationships with each other.

If more institutions and organisations are able to tackle these obstacles, I believe that the African workforce will arguably be one of the strongest in the world.

## With Africa's rapid technological growth, which jobs are safe from digital replacement?

I am an advocate for forming human connections and relationships and I believe the answer to this question lies somewhere in there. As technology grows and more jobs are becoming automated, the people who will still find work will be the ones who can show skills that the robots can't.

We need people that will be ethical leaders, we need people to be entrepreneurs, we need individuals with deep empathy and emotional intelligence to communicate and negotiate, we need critical thinkers and complex problem solvers for when a solution is no longer working.

Ultimately, we need human beings and human interactions to continue to grow and so I believe that any jobs that solve these problems will always be safe from automation. There is also a new and growing job pool specifically for people in tech and I believe that although they will evolve as time goes on, tech jobs will continue to be in high demand going forward.

## The top five most sought-after skills for the future workforce in Africa

Over the years I have spoken to many companies and hiring managers to understand their needs and it has been interesting to hear what they are currently looking for in talent, and what skills they believe will set them apart. What I've consistently found from these interactions is that the most sought after skills are soft and adaptable, and that digital and entrepreneurial skills are instrumental for the future of work.

Skills like ethical leadership and emotional intelligence are the soft skills essential for navigating relationships and human interaction. Adaptable skills will help many young leaders continue to innovate and change as the world evolves. Digital skills, especially since the Covid-19 virus hit, are in high demand. In fact, there is currently a global scarcity of tech talent that needs to be filled very quickly and so I believe that the digital skills will be relevant for many many years to come.

Finally, the world needs entrepreneurial skills like it needs air to breathe. SMEs account for approximately 90% of businesses and 50% of the employment opportunities in the world. That number will only continue to go up as the population increases. So the most sought-after skills for the future workforce in Africa are soft skills like ethical leadership and emotional intelligence, adaptable skills, digital skills and entrepreneurial skills.



The most sought-after skills for the future workforce in Africa are ethical leadership and emotional intelligence, adaptable, digital and entrepreneurial skills.

## 33% of GBF Africa delegates find the lack of highly skilled labour in Africa a challenge that foreign investors face. Why is that?

I absolutely agree with this and here are 3 reasons why:

### 1. Education and literacy levels are still very low

Studies have shown only 20million Africans graduate from high school every year and only 8% of them go to college. This clearly shows the demand for highly skilled talent is much higher in Africa than what we currently supply.

### 2. Extraordinarily talented people struggle to find opportunities

Without relationships, the Africans who have gone on to college or other higher institutions are thrown into the same pool, making it very difficult for the truly exceptional ones to get ahead. In a recent survey we conducted at AL Group we found that companies screened between 75 - 200 CVs for one role, and they believe that about 50 - 80% of the people they interview lie about the skills on those CVs. They also shared that finding individuals with extraordinary talent among the pool is extremely difficult and time consuming. The truly exceptional talents are lost in the sea of everybody else.

### 3. Foreign Investors don't know where to look

Africa is the second most populated continent in the world so looking for highly skilled labour is equivalent to searching for a needle in a haystack. Foreign investors typically seek talent on job boards and popular recruitment websites which are accessible by just about everybody. What they need is a platform that can guarantee a smaller pool of only the most extraordinary people. A platform like The Room.



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Don't miss his session '**Renew - The future workforce**' to find out how governments shape robust education policies to prepare tomorrow's workforce, and how UAE's focus on education and talent retention is paying dividends across the economy.

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