# UBUNTU ACADEMY / INTRO / FRAMEWORK

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## INTRO

**Ubuntu Academy is a hothouse for innovation and social change.** We believe that everyone has talents and potential, and we work to unleash that in a diverse group of young people so that they in turn may inspire, guide and change others in their communities. By working with young people's passions we recognise their inner creativity and strengths and provide them with tools and processes so that they can develop personally and professionally.

The Ubuntu Academy programme brings together creative and professional people from all walks of life. By establishing trust, shared experiences and achievements we create social cohesion and mutual learning. With the students and their communities, and our business and media partners, we nurture an international network where the going currency is social capital. Entrepreneurial approaches and leadership are nurtured so that projects can grow that meet needs turned into real opportunities, that are owned by the youth themselves.

The Ubuntu Academy (UA) is based on principles of open innovation, participatory design, systems thinking and sustainability. We create a platform for youth to grow and express opinions, a vessel to stimulate active citizenship, a channel for private and public sector to collaborate, and is an enabler of agents of change and innovation.

## THE PILOT / OUR STORY

**A rollercoaster journey of a start-up.** In 2013 a 2 year pilot programme was launched in Cape Town, South Africa. It was preceded by two research phases during which a team, partners, and local needs were identified. In March 2013 the pilot was kicked off: Auditions were held in three communities: Mitchell's Plain, Blikkiesdorp and Khayelitsha. A total of 55 students were recruited and a team of over 20 coaches, team and volunteers began running a programme on Fridays and Saturdays. The first phase focused on developing the students' talents: workshops were held in music, drama, dance, as well as in film, photography and design. The first goal was to produce a theatre show.

Pretty quickly however the first challenges surfaced: There was confusion within the team as to what the curriculum was and what the learning outcomes should be. There were logistical issues: the public transport system delayed coaches and the transport that was organised to fetch the students was equally ineffective. Security, access and catering were problematic. There was tension within the team since there was little clarity in terms of roles. Then funds ran out more rapidly than expected. Within a few weeks the Ubuntu Academy went from a 55 student, 20+ team to a programme put on hold, and a small team of 4 people trying to save what was possible.

With the help of the founding donor and a crowdfunding campaign the team managed to get students back in and to successfully rehearse and perform a theatre play: Tokoloshe. Then 2014 kicked off with many earnest resolutions: to plan better, create more alignment, raise funds and improve communication with the students. Some students had dropped out few weeks into the programme, since the recruitment process never clearly communicated to them what was expected and what the programme would actually contain. Thus some students simply could not attend due to other commitments, such as work, school or else. On top of that, they felt soon enough that neither organisation nor the curriculum was very stable.

And then STUB happened. Over a 2 week period a series of wonderful workshops were held that deeply engaged and touched students and team alike. The output was a live performance and exhibition of student self portraits and a collective painting, all under design style and guidance of an established artist, funded for by a Dutch fashion brand. The student designs are currently being sold across Europe. We are already planning the next collaborative project with the brand Kuyichi and will reap the profit of the shirt sales. This creative, social and commercial collaboration remains one of our flagship projects and has shown us the possibilities to create win-win-win concepts with creatives and companies. Moreover, the exhibition put us on the map of Cape Town and opened up various new partnerships that remain until today.

After such a high we slowly slumped into a new phase of frustration. Again a funding gap was faced in the middle of the year, again the programme had to be stopped, again the team was scrambling to survive, again the questions of the students could not be answered as to when we would start again. What would happen with all our project ideas, like the community arts project, the music video production, the tour? Slowly, new opportunities arose. We were invited to perform and participate at various events and conferences, such as the World Music Festival, the Open Design Festival, the War Resistance Project, and others. Our founding donor came with friends and funders - so we put on a fantastic last minute play. These either provided some funds, and/or kept us busy enough to keep on working towards specific goals and deadlines.

Soon enough we realised that by reacting to these short-term, rather opportunistic events, we lost sight of our bigger goals: To get each of the students into further education, create or find employment, and/or to support them in their own projects or businesses. So we refocused on the aspects of entrepreneurship and leadership and began inviting professionals to do workshops. The irregularity of funds and the ad hoc workshops did however filter through and the students expressed criticism and opened the team's eyes that something different had to happen.

This coincided with a fundraising event by the founding donor. The outcome - although successful - was not sufficient to cover outstanding costs and to run a minimal programme. And time had flown by, we were already at the end of 2014, meaning that there were just a few months left of the 2 year pilot. So the team again went back to the drawing board, and this time they realised: To best achieve the objectives with the given resources and remaining timeframe, they should go on a camp! So that was what we then began calling our 'happy ending'. The last months were busy and frantic, but many helping hands showed up. Two volunteers, Eva & Jo, worked with the core team to design a mentorship program and camp. The mentorship program would give students continuing contacts and guidance after the programme completed. For the camp the Kaospilots joined forces, and suddenly the team was back up to being 12 people strong, from just 3 a few months before.

The camp was a tremendous success on every level. Having worked as an increasingly intimate family, the camp was the culmination of two years of opening up and trusting each other. Over five days the students and team worked hard, challenged each other, bonded more and had fun. Deep learning, much personal growth, and open reflections and lots of reminiscing took place. Each student gave a final performance, a graduation ceremony took place, and lots of dancing. And everyday we immersed ourselves in new tools, models, processes and games, night hikes and more - all that on a stunning lagoon. The entire group was divided into teams, and everyone had to prepare breakfast, lunch and dinner, as well as morning exercises, games and more. The level of fun, self-initiative, caring, openness and visioning was incredible. We realised, that what we had created was love. Real friendships have been created and the level of trust and joy between students and team are indescribable.

When we came back, our WhatsApp group was buzzing constantly. Students missed each other so much that they decided to organise another performance to raise funds for another camp. This self-organisation is proof to us that students have in fact grown personally and professionally, and how they apply their talents and artistic skills with business minded-approach. Looking back at the first batch of 55 students that were recruited, and the final 21 graduates there is a truly astounding aspect of surprise in terms of how much these students have grown, learned, achieved and taught us, the team.

## CONTEXT / CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

**An extremely young and diverse population in a pretty rough environment.** South Africa is renowned for many things: its legendary liberation struggle, breath-taking flora and fauna, a rich cultural diversity. As the largest economy on the continent South Africa plays a major economic and political role. Despite having inherited a legacy of apartheid that brings a bag full of issues, it does have one of the world's most progressive constitutions. However, within many other reasons that explain institutional failure, the government is also simply overburdened with the amount of work to be done.

South Africa also has one of the youngest populations on the planet - we like to view that as an abundant resource. With a total population of over 50 million, and a youth unemployment rate of 48 %, we are looking at:

- youth / 15-24y / 20% of the total population / 10 million
- young / 0-14y / 30% of the total population / 15 million

This equals 25 million young talents!

Statistically, the majority of young South African are faced with pretty bad chances to receive quality education. In Mitchell's Plain, one of the largest townships of Cape Town, only 3.3% of its population reach certification beyond matric. That means that 97 out of 100 don't finish high school. The failure of public institutions has led to many things, one of them self-organised crime. Gangsterism controls many aspects of daily life for many. Rape, arms and shootings, drug and alcohol abuse, but also teenage pregnancy and epidemic diseases are daily realities for the majority of South Africans.

Many families are stuck in a vicious cycle of poverty and lacking access to education. The Ubuntu Academy believes that a powerful way to turn vicious cycles into virtuous ones: unlocking inherent potential and talents by connecting through what people are passionate about: through education in arts, entrepreneurship and leadership.

**A middle class on the rise.** There is a simple economic argument to reduce poverty and invest in education. Reducing poverty means creating a middle class. The growing African middle class drives demand and economic growth. Investing in education means investing in our youth and our future. It empowers and creates knowledge, builds capacities and creates skills and jobs to fuel this growth. Including arts infuses a dimension that upholds integrity and ethics. It also produces cultural outputs that can be exported around the world, to share the ingenuity of Africans.

"Who are they? They live in urban centres. Middle class households tend to reside in bigger and more permanent dwellings equipped with modern amenities, are small business owners, young and in the acquisitive phase of life, aspirational. And: they have more recreational time, harnessing technology, political assertive, culturally self-confident." (quote from a Deloitte report on "Africa on the Rise", describing the growing African middle class) This is a pretty accurate description of the pilot student graduates. Fact is that South Africa is a unique, resourceful and diverse country. If one can create a mechanism that enables young people to make use of existing resources and a tap into their talents and aspirations one has a formula for disruption, paradigm shifts, systemic change and technological progress.

**African digital natives are on the verge of redefining the cultural landscape.** Mobile phone in Africa is creating a politically conscious class. As keen users of mobile phones and the Internet, including social media networks, Africa's emerging middle class are plugged into the digital world and international news, and there has a role as opinion makers and agents of reform and change. Africa is the world's second most connected region after Asia in 2011, with 616 million mobile subscribers. New mobile telephony applications are continually being developed in areas such as banking, health, education, agriculture, lives will continue to change qualitatively.

## ADVOCACY / LOBBYING / CLAIM-MAKING

**Strengthening democracy and governance.** This is what Ubuntu Academy is all about; what we set out to do and what we want to continue doing. The change starts here, but it does not stop here. We are giving youth a platform:

- to voice needs, concerns and solutions
- that provides a neutral and safe ground for dialogue, debates and different viewpoints
- that lets students co-design structures through which interests can be better represented
- to develop and reach channels where government can hear and work with young leaders to implement innovation and change more systematically
- to grow capacity, a vessel to stimulate active citizenship
- to enable agents of reform and change

**Arts education.** Social sciences are important for human society; it is a qualitative way to keep in check, mirror evolving values and inform policy, decision-makers and more. Arts is a powerful tool to educate on vital subjects such as human rights and environmental awareness; arts is a therapeutic, empowering discipline; arts influences and contributes to breakthroughs in fields including sciences, technology and media around the world; and the artists are visionaries and trendsetters, and play a critical role in society.

**Cultural export.** Increasing demand and value in African arts and culture, such as music, performing arts, design, increasingly innovations from mobile, fintech, and more. There is still a vast need to heal the trauma and divide that apartheid has left and to tell stories around the world, and at home. Youth is immersed in popular culture, and there is a need to shape consumer behaviour to make growth sustainable even in this area.

## NEEDS / MAKE IT HAPPEN

What we really needed to run the pilot was essentially consistent funding and better preparation. The fact that funding was short and irregular massively spiked up the costs of the programme. The organisation was inefficient since many short-term, inexperienced decisions were made. And trial and error is costly.

We also need a sound curriculum that clearly defines learning outcomes and that uses learning frameworks according to best practice, cutting edge schools of thoughts, across pedagogy, academia and various creative disciplines. We really need a clear

and reliable governance structure: so that the Ubuntu Academy can run like an oiled machine: transparent, accountable, professional, effective and dynamic.

**Exponential growth.** Each Ubuntu Academy programme creates entrepreneurial, creative, motivated young people, and builds onto the networks of the previous year. The Ubuntu Academy network would grow in just 3 years:

Year 0: 20 students + 5 team + 5 partners + 20 mentors
Year 1: 25 students + 5 team + 8 partners + 20 mentors
Year 2: 30 students + 6 team + 10 partners + 20 mentors
Year 3: 30 students + 6 team + 15 partners + 20 mentors

= 105 students + 15 team + 15 partners + 60 mentors

Ubuntu Academy family = 215
          + families = 215*4 = 860
          + fans = thousands
          + colleagues = hundreds
          + friends = thousands

**The Ubuntu Academy family = A community of thousands in three years.**

These thousands strong community will have following characteristics:
        * trust
        * work experience
        * creativity
        * entrepreneurial spirit
        * leadership
        * sense of identity
        * common and complementary skills
        * shared ventures, dreams and values
        * more and bigger networks
        * talent

It will be a community of best practice, lead users, early adopters, thought-leaders, entrepreneurs, professionals, investors, and more. On top of that, we will have continued and improved our research, m&e and multimedia documentation. Hopefully we will have our own, or an open, technological platform that enables, accelerates and amplifies our impact. Together, we make it happen!
Apart from introducing to students to new skills, concepts, people and ideas, we give them challenging and thus valuable experiences that inspire them to reflect on who they are, what they want to achieve, and how they can do so. Together, we have started to grow a network that spans a large area and different cultures, and that connects private, public and civic sector, and we instil a fresh mind-set of possibilities. **That is what makes Ubuntu Academy a hothouse for innovation.**