

In Africa, a university degree is still sold as the golden ticket. Four years. Thousands of dollars. Endless lectures. And at the end? A paper certificate with no job attached. No real world skills to compete in the job market.

Every year, millions graduate into unemployment. Lecturers are always on strike. Classrooms are crowded.

And while the world races ahead in AI, Web3, remote work. Africa's curriculum? Still stuck in 1987. But what if education didn't need walls? What if a laptop, internet, and mentorship were enough?

This is the incredible story of AltSchool Africa. The online school went from an idea to 60,000 students in under two years. Backed by some of Africa's biggest tech names. And now on a mission to train 10 million Africans for the future of work.

This isn't just another online school. It's a rebellion to change access to global opportunities for Africans.

The Visionaries: From Storyteller to School Builder

At the heart of AltSchool Africa is Adewale Yusuf, a university dropout who built Techpoint Africa, one of the continent's most respected tech publications.

Adewale Yusuf didn't start by building startups. He started by telling their stories. In 2015, long before the Lagos tech scene had unicorns and YC logos, Adewale launched Techpoint Africa. A bold, bootstrapped attempt to document Africa's rising digital economy.

He was there when Paystack raised its seed round. He interviewed founders before they had traction. He listened to pitch after pitch, across Lagos, Nairobi, and Accra. And over time, a pattern started to emerge. The money was coming in. But the talent pipeline was broken. Recruiters were flying to Europe to fill roles Africans could've done. The gap wasn't intelligence, it was access.

After years of telling Africa's startup stories. Covering the fundraises, the failures, and the unicorn dreams. Adewale Yusuf had seen enough. He had watched founders raise millions only to pause hiring because they couldn't find skilled engineers. He saw brilliant African youth hungry, talented but locked out of global opportunities.

The stories were inspiring. But the gaps were painful. And eventually, the storyteller decided. It was time to build a solution of his own.

To turn his insight into action, Adewale brought in two people who'd lived that same frustration just from different angles.

Opeyemi Awoyemi co-founder of Jobberman, Nigeria's largest job platform. A tech operator with deep insight into Africa's employment landscape. **Akintunde Sultan**, a talented software engineer and prolific tech community leader, known for mentoring thousands of beginners and building grassroots developer ecosystems from scratch.

Together, the trio launched **TalentQL**, a bold attempt to connect Africa's hidden talent with the global tech economy.

The mission? To find talented African developers, prepare them and connect them to remote jobs in the U.S., Europe, and beyond. It worked. In just months, TalentQL placed engineers in global teams.

But behind the success was a supply problem. The demand was there. The global appetite for African tech talent was growing. But the talent was not ready. Too many young Africans wanted tech careers but lacked the training, structure, and access to get there.

That's when the lightbulb moment came: If TalentQL could connect global companies to African talent. Then maybe the next step was to train that talent from scratch. Not with old university curriculums. But with skills employers actually wanted.

The Birth of AltSchool Africa

And so, in 2021. AltSchool Africa was born with a simple mission, to train Africans with in-demand tech skills to launch their careers.

Universities in Africa were built for a different time. A time when jobs were predictable. Degrees were enough. And technology was optional. But the world changed. Tech moved fast. And traditional education stayed slow. In Nigeria, many computer science students graduate without ever writing real code. In Ghana, Kenya, and Uganda, similar stories across the whole African continent. That's the gap AltSchool Africa was created to close.

AltSchool's Explosive Growth

When AltSchool Africa launched in late 2021, It didn't look like much. Just a landing page, a Twitter announcement, and a bold promise: "We'll teach you tech skills that companies actually want. No degree needed."

In a continent where millions were stuck in broken school systems. The idea hit a nerve.

The first cohort, AltSchool Africa received over 8,000 applications from 20 different nations in the four months since its introduction, with the first cohort set to begin in April 2022. By the end of 2023, AltSchool had enrolled over 60,000 learners in 30+ countries. From university dropouts in Kampala, to bankers pivoting careers in Accra, to stay-at-home moms in Nairobi learning backend development. AltSchool was no longer just a platform.

It was becoming a movement. Everyone on Twitter was talking about AltSchool

The startup caught the attention of Africa's tech elite. And in less than a year of its founding, It had already raised a US\$1 million pre-seed round from institutional investors including Voltron Capital, NestCoin, Odba VC. Olugbenga Agboola of Flutterwave, Shola Akinlade of Paystack, Dr. Ola Brown, and entertainment stars Folarin 'Falz' Falana and Akitoye Balogun, popularly known as 'Ajebutter22' also took part in the funding round.

In a matter of months, AltSchool became one of Africa's most-watched edtech companies. But it wasn't just hype. AltSchool delivered something traditional universities hadn't in decades: from their School of Engineering, Its graduates were landing internships and jobs locally and remotely. Many earning in dollars.

The Rise

AltSchool Africa didn't stop at Nigeria. In less than two years, it launched operations and partnerships in Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, and the diaspora. In 2023, AltSchool opened an office at the prestigious Norrsken Hub right in the heart of Kigali's growing innovation ecosystem. Built local teams, hosted country tours. Signed MOUs with regional governments.

And in 2024, announced a pan-African expansion strategy.

What started as a developer school was now becoming a full-stack digital university alternative.

They added new schools:

- ♦ School of **Data**
- ♦ School of **Product**
- ♦ School of the **Creative Economy**

Each designed with one goal: Market-ready skills. Not theory. And instead of degrees, AltSchool offered career diplomas with a clear path to jobs or freelance income.

But they knew that for real credibility, they would need more than just good branding. So in 2023, AltSchool partnered with **NOUN** Nigeria's National Open University. And began pursuing international accreditation for its programs. AltSchool was not just a startup anymore. It was now a fully fledged online university.

Funding, Ambassadors & Global Recognition

Investors doubled down. AltSchool raised **\$3 million** from VC firms like Angaza Capital, working with Rwanda's Innovation Fund, led the round marking a significant leap forward. This wasn't just cash, it was strategic backing. The Rwandan Innovation Fund, seeded with a \$30 million African Development Bank loan, offered AltSchool hands-on support to scale across East Africa.

Global media took notice: Forbes, Bloomberg, and even TechCrunch featured the school as a model for African edtech.

The Roadblocks & The Pivot

At launch, AltSchool made a radical promise:

Pay just \$20 application fee

Learn for a full year

And only pay the full tuition AFTER landing a job

It was bold. Disruptive. Education without the debt trap. Access without privilege. And it worked. Thousands signed up almost overnight. But as cohorts grew so did costs. Mentorship, curriculum, operations were expensive to scale.

And job placements? Much harder than expected. In 2023, AltSchool quietly **pivoted**.

The original "pay-after-you-get-a-job" model was scrapped. Students now had to choose a payment plan:

Pay upfront and save some money,

Or split the cost into quarterly or monthly installments

Either way, the free ride was over. Learning now had a price tag. And for some, that changed everything. Some understood. Others felt betrayed.

And then came the cracks in the foundation

High Dropout Rates – Some cohorts saw dropout rates above 40%.

Overloaded Mentors – With thousands of students, one-on-one guidance was rare.

Job Placement Gaps – The biggest promise “we will help you get a job” was hard to scale.

Critics asked tough questions: Was AltSchool becoming just another online course with startup hype but no outcomes? Had they scaled too quickly trading quality for quantity? And if thousands were joining, why were only a fraction landing jobs?

In many ways, AltSchool Africa was caught between two truths:

One: Africa needs new models of education. And two: Building that model is brutally hard especially when lives, dreams, and reputations are on the line. It's one thing to attract users. It's another to retain them. And a whole different game to deliver on the promise of jobs.

What's Next? The AI Bet & the Future of African EdTech

After proving it could scale, AltSchool Africa is now asking: What comes after scale? In early 2025, AltSchool announced an ambitious “**AI for 10 million Africans**” initiative. With free foundational courses and advanced training in machine learning, AI engineering, and data science, the goal is bold: Turn Africa into a continent of AI creators, not just consumers. Courses will be offered in Swahili, French, Portuguese, Arabic, Hausa and more, to bridge language gaps.

With jobs in coding not always accessible, AltSchool has doubled down on the Creative Economy teaching music business (Afrobeats), content creation, sales, and digital storytelling all part of its new Creative Economy School.

These programs are run by facilitators including Mr Macaroni, Aproko Doctor, and Joey Akan. It's a shift from just tech to a broader, more inclusive vision of Africa's digital future.

Tech alone isn't enough. Completion rates stayed a challenge. So in **Q2 2025**, AltSchool will launch “**Campus by AltSchool**” a hybrid learning experience with in-person meetups. Pilots are confirmed in **Lagos and Kigali**, run in partnership with Techpoint Africa and Pistis Hub.

Students come onsite three times a week for hands-on support, monthly events, and faster access to power and internet. These short, masterclass-style programs run for four months, designed to increase retention and mentor engagement.

Expansion to Europe & Beyond

The continent was just the beginning.

In **late 2024**, AltSchool began expansion into **Europe**, starting with **Malta**, targeting learners across 12+ European countries. They plan to blend online curriculum with enterprise licensing, offering custom workforce training to companies and governments alike. AltSchool is now approaching profitability, according to leadership statements.

For AltSchool Africa, growth is no longer just about enrollment numbers.

It's about building resilience, bridging online delivery with physical touchpoints, diversifying education tracks, and leading Africa into the AI era.

The real question now is: Can these new initiatives fix the gaps of the past and redefine the education model that Africa needs?

AltSchool Africa is reimagining what education can look like on the continent, turning smartphones into classrooms, and skills into real opportunity. The journey has been far from perfect. But in a world where what you know matters more than where you learned it, AltSchool is helping Africans not just rethink school But rewrite their place in the global economy.

