

# Educating a new breed

**Haydée Bangerezako** talks to Fred Swaniker, founder of the African Leadership Academy

**F**red Swaniker believes that Africa needs a new breed of leaders and entrepreneurs who will drive change on the continent.

Swaniker's idea is to create a network of leaders whom he believes will find solutions to African problems. "There is not enough being done to groom people to prevent conflicts," he says.

Opening its doors in September 2008, his academy, a private co-education boarding school in northern Johannesburg, will offer a two-year programme and will initially enroll 100 students.

With an International Baccalaureate academic programme, the curriculum will be Africa-oriented. "Students will study African history,

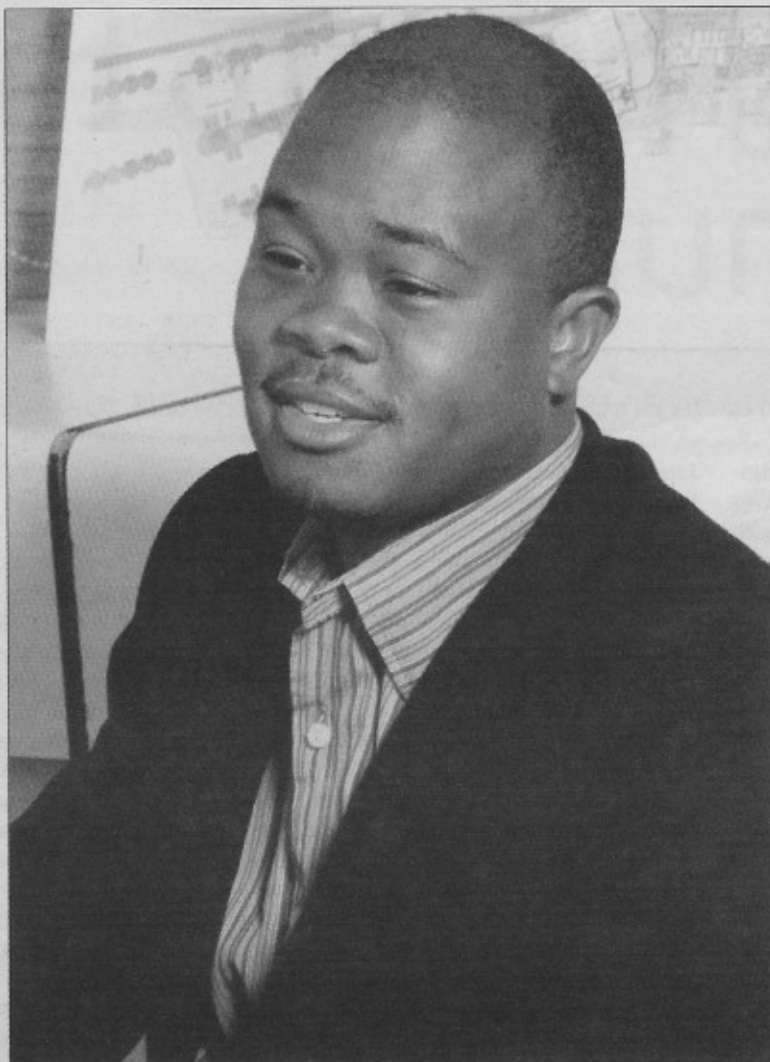
literature, geography and languages in order to develop an appreciation for Africa's culture and customs", according to the academy's website.

Instead of studying plays by Shakespeare, for example, they will study Wole Soyinka plays, read Ngugi wa Thiong'o novels and study African musicians such as Fela Kuti and Miriam Makeba.

Swaniker is keen to share his school's curriculum with other interested schools.

By having an innovative curriculum he says, innovative ways of thinking will result. The unique curriculum will focus on leadership development, entrepreneurial training and a pan-African focus in its studies.

The classes will be small and discussion based, with an average of



**Fred Swaniker's academy's curriculum will be 'Africa-oriented'**

12 students. Teachers will facilitate learning and discussion, a Socrates method of learning, Swaniker explains. "Collectively they will find answers. It teaches people to become

independent thinkers [and to] learn how to express themselves," says Swaniker.

Learners who have completed at least grade 10 and who are in the 15-

to 18-year age bracket are eligible for acceptance. They will complete their last two years of school and they will write an international exit exam.

"The basis for your admission is your potential," says Swaniker. In choosing future students, the academy is looking for leadership potential, entrepreneurial spirit, academic excellence, a commitment to Africa and a passion for service. Learners will also be paired with a mentor from their own country.

The learners will also do several hours of community service, in order to understand public service. "We are developing an ethos of people to serve others and not themselves," says Swaniker, firmly.

Fees will be similar to other private schools, and at least 50% of the learners will be on scholarship. The academy will also help its graduating learners gain admission into some of the best universities in the world.

Funding for the academy has come from a network of individuals, who have donated almost R7,5-million. There is also a Buy-a-Brick campaign, with one brick costing R1 000. This has raised R350 000 for the construction of the academy.

A pilot programme has been running for the past two years in Cape Town. It is a summer school programme that brings learners from all over the world to spend a month, attending seminars on leadership, meeting local leaders, doing local community service and meeting their peers. The programme was so successful that it is now running as a separate entity from the academy.