

The **eLearning** **AFRICA** REPORT 2014

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Editorial

The Key to the Future

The mood of optimism among Africans is unmistakable. It has been noticeable for at least the last two years and it is easy to understand the reason for it.

The World Bank estimates that economic growth across Africa will rise to 5.2% in 2014. African economies have been growing at a much faster rate than their European, North American and even Asian counterparts for several years now, their GDP boosted by rising investment in natural resources and infrastructure. Even resource-poor countries, such as Ethiopia and Rwanda, have started to experience solid economic growth. Across the continent, growth has begun to look as though it can sustain itself, as strong household spending is fed back into the economy.

Africa's economic optimism is something we have started to notice in the world of eLearning too. Our survey*, the results of which we publish in this edition, confirms that African eLearning professionals are feeling confident about the future. This is more good news for the continent because the combination of education and technology is clearly a powerful driver for growth. Nelson Mandela believed not only that education was a powerful weapon to change the world but that it is the key to everything.

This is increasingly clear in a number of sectors. In agriculture, for example, ICTs are spreading education and information in ways which are making a reality of the African Union's dream of a "transformed continent". Farmers are more efficient and aware. Their yields are increasing because

they know more about land management techniques and their incomes are growing because of better access to information about prices and markets. Excited investors now talk about African agriculture as a booming business, capable of feeding not just regional populations but a much larger slice of humanity.

Continuing investment in the continent's telecommunications infrastructure is crucial to sustaining growth. As Brahim Sanou, the Director of the Development Department of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) points out in his interview with us, "high-speed international connectivity is a major constraint on the delivery of broadband services in Africa". Broadband ICT is, as he says, "an essential part of the long-term economic development strategy" for Africa.

African education will depend increasingly on good communications and connectivity. The opportunities are enormous. As Mr Sanou says, "the advent of low cost mobile tablets massive market rollout stand to revolutionise education because of the pedagogical implications of being able to deliver more content on a larger screen". The implications of such developments for Africa are incalculable.

It's time to focus on education and infrastructure. If education is the key to everything, the key to the education of the future is infrastructure.

**Throughout this edition of the eLearning Africa Report, illustrating many of our contributors' pieces, you will find infographics depicting the results of our survey.*

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