



eLearning Africa Report 2019

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The eLearning platform addresses especially young people looking for qualification and jobs as well as marginalised groups such as girls, women and people living in rural and remote areas.

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Editorial

Leapfrogging on the road to 2063

BELIEVING IN THE AFRICAN DREAM

Plenty of challenges and obstacles lie on the road ahead but there is now a real sense of optimism about reaching the ultimate destination.

The African Union set the year 2063 as the deadline for its ambitious plan to turn Africa into a “transformed continent.” By that year, the AU hopes, Africa will have conquered the endemic problems of poverty, disease and internal conflict, which beset the continent, and turned itself, if not into a land of milk and honey, at least into a place of opportunity, peace and prosperity.

The dream is not so far divorced from reality as to be unachievable. It could happen. There is a programme of tasks. We know what needs to be done. We are aware of both the challenges and the opportunities. We can now see the details. We understand that there are things that must be done and, if we do not do them, we will fail.

We know the advantages Africa has – its resources, its demographics, its energy, its spirit. We see how the world is changing and how technology offers Africa the possibility to ‘leapfrog’ competing regions and seize the initiative by harnessing the power of youth and encouraging innovation, entrepreneurship and creativity.

The cynics tell us we’ve heard it all before. They say African leaders talk the talk but never deliver on their promises. They say the well paid people in the big offices in the international organisations are very good at coming up with fancy plans and lots of big ideas but concrete actions rarely follow their words. They say the dream of 2063 will inevitably evaporate into the same depressing reality of under-achievement, corruption and failure as every other grandiose scheme to transform Africa.

And yet, this time, something really is different. There is something tangible. Progress is already being made in so many areas. We are beginning to feel success. We are starting to appreciate that real, transformative, sustainable change is within reach. We are beginning to believe in the African dream.

The next decade will be crucial. Big technological changes will compound the effect of the ICT revolution which is changing every aspect of African society. Blockchain, artificial intelligence and the ‘Fourth Industrial Revolution,’ are among many developments set to sweep across Africa and the world.

Leading experts and advisers, such as Ibrahima Guimba Saidou, whom we interview in this report on page xxx, know that, in starting from a relatively low technological threshold, many African countries actually enjoy a competitive advantage in comparison with much of the supposedly ‘developed’ world, where economies are often hidebound by traditional industries and ageing populations. Africa, by contrast, is in a position to implement new technological solutions very quickly and take advantage of its dynamic, youthful population, steady and impressive progress.

The game’s afoot and there’s everything to play for. As our country reports show, most African countries are making steady and impressive progress. Many have exciting and imaginative plans for implementing the UN sustainable development goals or boosting education outcomes. And, as we explain, there is a real chance that the prospect of an African Common Free Trade Association may soon become a reality.

What African leaders need to do now is to focus on the key decisions that will contribute to progress and collectively amount to the transformation of the continent. “The time for excuses,” as our columnist Max Bankole Jarrett points out, “is over.”

Investment in education and technology must be at the top of the list of priorities. There must be a concerted effort to address what we have called the Four As: accessibility, affordability, ability (the lack of e-skills) and appetite (the lack of local content).

If African Governments can make progress in these areas, the benefits will quickly be apparent and we will be well on the way to the ‘transformed continent.’



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