

HP's plan to bridge gap between tech, education and Africa's hidden talent

 By Imran Saie

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Elisabeth Moreno, vice president and managing director of HP Africa, believes that Africa's untapped talent can help the continent's economy grow to new heights. This belief is her dream that she would like to see come to fruition. She now sheds light on what needs to be done for the dream to become a reality.



Her dream is based on these two pillars: Improving access to quality education and using technology to enable growth for Africa. I spoke with Moreno to find out how education and big technology companies like HP can bridge the gap between economic growth and talent.

■ ***Why do you feel that education and technology are so important for the change you want?***

Education is a fundamental human right that should be available regardless of a person's gender, class, race or location. Having access to quality education has helped me to get to where I am today, so I am very passionate about education. Combining this with technology, we can bridge the digital divide and connect people and communities to greater learning opportunities.

Technology and education enable the expansion of learning beyond the classroom, encouraging creativity, collaboration, and participation. HP creates technology solutions that support engaging, personalised education experiences for students, parents, and educators.

■ ***HP is a big-time player in the technology field. How can companies like HP play a part in creating more women entrepreneurs in Africa?***

We need to make women more visible in management positions in the technology sector. I coach and I give goals to my managers so that they coach and develop the women in my organisation. During the annual review, I look at the way in which salary increases or stock options are given and make sure that there are no forgotten women. Likewise, when we

have an annual discount, I make sure that there are as many women as men. This battle is not a battle of men against women, it is a battle so that women who considerably lack self-confidence dare to take the light.

Role modelling is also important. If we want to increase the number of girls and women to join this tech world, we have to motivate and inspire them in sharing what is possible. I try to share my personal story as much as I can. Telling them that IT is not just for geeks and as tech is impacting every part of our lives, we need to make sure women and all kinds of diversity are represented in this sphere.

🔱 *How is HP bridging the gap between youth and education that is quality?*

HP is passionate about creating solutions that provide early learners with the opportunity to expand their tools and their minds. With cloud-based mobile learning becoming increasingly relevant, HP's new provision of Chromebooks helps students create and collaborate to deliver meaningful outcomes for themselves and their communities.

There are 30 million students and educators worldwide using Chromebooks for learning today, and HP is the #1 Chromebook vendor in the world. The use of chrome books enhances learning and creativity and is built to stand up to tough handling learning experiences.

🔱 *How much potential is there among young people in Africa and how can their potential help Africa's economy?*

Technology is rapidly changing the employment landscape, generating jobs that demand a range of digital skills. On one hand, unemployment is one of the biggest challenges in the continent. On the other hand, as the pace of technological change accelerates, so does the technology-driven evolution of jobs and skills. And most of these jobs do not exist yet. This is a fantastic opportunity for the youth in Africa, as many developed economies will face worker shortages.

If young Africans are to compete for high-tech jobs and take advantage of increasing opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship, digital skills training must be at the core.

Africa is a region of entrepreneurs, engineers, students and scholars, farmers and future leaders eager to help transform the overall economy. With that said, African leaders must provide a strong digital infrastructure, and remove legal, regulatory, procedural and institutional barriers to business and direct investment towards the technology sector.

🔱 *Could you share any future plans of HP?*

Moving forward, as personalisation becomes key, HP will be more customer-focused, digitally powered and data-driven. The choices we make right now are all with an eye to the future, to set the company on the right course and position HP so it can continue to lead with innovation and execute with purpose. We are transforming from a position of strength: it's about building on our recent progress and capitalising on future opportunities so that we continue to grow in the sector of education in particular.

We have a great team, a great strategy, the will and the imagination needed to prosper. We are incredibly excited about what the future holds for HP as we write this next chapter.

■ ***Since being appointed as managing director for HP Inc. Africa in 2019, what has your journey been like and what has been the biggest highlight since your appointment?***

In the past year, I have had an opportunity to journey through Africa, meeting hundreds of our employees, customers and partners. What I learned was that there is a lot of hope and excitement in Africa; there is so much talent and people are ready to help Africa grow and thrive.

My vision is to help improve access to quality education for all; drive economic growth; create jobs and improve the ease of doing business for young entrepreneurs using future technologies, providing the most secure devices in the market.

There is a lot that needs to happen for Africa to realise this vision. Companies are going to need to partner with our ecosystem, distributors and resellers plus the various governments to help drive the change and prepare our citizens for this technologically advanced era.

ABOUT IMRAN SALIE

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