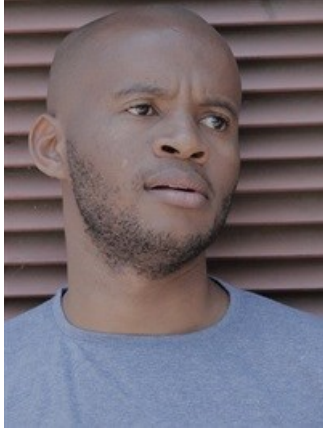


Two ways for Africa to grow exponentially

By [Tiisetso Maloma](#)

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One way to define Africa's challenge is a lot of us do not know how to embed ourselves in the world economy, provide innovatively and freely without trying to rope in perceived gatekeepers.



Tiisetso Maloma

Online shipping system that quotes buyers instantly to anywhere in the world

At the backdrop of the South African Post Office having 'going concern' challenges, there are a number of local courier companies mushrooming. Interesting!

I am still not over the pain SAPO cost my book business last year when they went on strike for months. We do not have bookstore distribution for my books in South Africa or across Africa. We use SAPO to ship. The post office is relatively cheaper. I so wish they had an instant online shipment-quoting-system, instead of having to go to them every time. Even better, a shopper instructed quoting system you can plug into web stores.

It got me thinking that the ability to sell online via an online store, where the customers, anywhere in the world, can instantly get a shipping quote, can be exponential for Africa's growth. We did some little research of what is available out there. There is Shopify. Anyone can set up an online store instantly with it. Then we discovered a courier company called Dawn Wing, they have a free Shopify plugin. Anyone can set up a store there with capabilities to give instant shipping quotes to anywhere in the world.

Imagine this power that any creator of products in Africa can set up an online store instantly and have automatic international shipping. This is what free markets are about. It won't matter whom their marketing reaches. They can get it to them.

Think of this point as a metaphor for 'freedom to access'. These days we do not have to buy billboards (expensive and unaffordable to startups) to access markets. There is Facebook Ads, wherein for R10 a day, you can advertise to your selected niche and reach over a 500 people.

Teaching coding to primary school kids

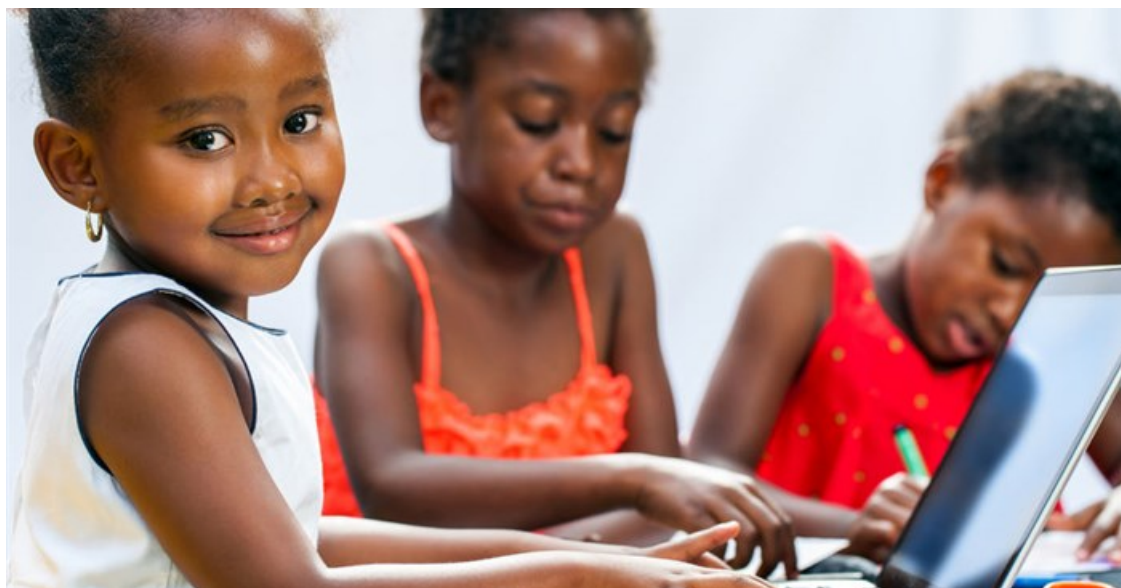
My generation of high scholars, I suspect even the current generation, cannot readily identify how their subjects work into their lives now and in future careers.

Back in high school I could not figure how to apply geometry, accounting or science to my life situation - then and in the future. Many years later as an entrepreneur, I find myself learning things with a purpose. I read marketing articles so I can know effective ways of promoting products. The only way maths applied to my life then was that it is for learning at school and practicing at home - nothing outside.

There is something about coding (computer programming) - I do not, cannot and do not want to code. But I can readily understand the purpose it serves in most things I use daily: mobile phone, DSTV decoder, Buffer App (for scheduling tweets), printer, ebook reader, etc. It basically runs most things in life today and more so in the future. The beer we drink is made with programmed machines. The cars we drive. Robots. Microwaves.

If kids in primary and high schools can be taught basic programming and its possible uses, as they go through their days, they will realise most things are programmed: electric toys, music players, games, etc. The thing which will stand out is the different purposes which programming is used for and can be used for. The basics of programming will always connect

with workings of different products and their purposes. They will see deficiencies in workings of programmed products and get a sense they can improve them. Then they will get ideas of what uses they program for.



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A driven will

I read story of two kid brothers in Nigeria (Osine - 13 and Anesi Ikhianosime - 15) who taught themselves coding and created a web browser enhanced for feature and low-end phones because they were "fed up with Google Chrome". They saw a deficiency that international web browsers aren't enhanced for Africa's slow internet. The web browser is called Crocodile Browser Lite and is available on the Google Play store.

I believe the leading drive for learning how to code wasn't necessarily to just have the skill, but the perceived purposes or ideas for which they can use it. The internet is abundant with free coding lessons and shortcuts. When people understand the purpose which this skill can serve, they will be motivated to teach themselves. If African kids can be introduced to coding in primary and high school, the world then has millions of coders who will contribute to newer uses of coding, improve deficiencies in how products work and do so at their own driven will - which is entrepreneurial.

I think of WordPress and the thousands of plugins it has that were created by private individuals. They offer them partially free, but you have to purchase to get their full use. Even Shopify has private coders for profit. There are plugins for website sign-up forms, product order forms, videos displaying, shopping carts, etc. Imagine if African kids were in there competing and contributing. The rest of Africa (and the world) would be benefiting and jobs would be creating themselves.

Kids of 10 years old could independently be able to contribute economically by the time they are 17 or even before then. This is how the next Mark Shuttleworths will come out. He knew coding and coded for a purpose. Look where it got him.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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