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Africa's Next Big Thing: Choosing Software Development as a Career

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Introduction

Africa is entering a new tech-driven era. According to Solanke (2024), although global investment in African tech startups declined slightly in 2024, with \$3.2 billion raised, signs of recovery are visible due to easing global interest rates and growing investor confidence. The rise of digital payment platforms, fintech innovations, and inclusive regulatory reforms—such as South Africa's integration of non-banks into national payment systems—demonstrates a continent embracing digitalisation not just as a trend, but as a vital pathway for sustainable economic participation. Africa's youth-driven, tech-savvy population, coupled with scalable innovations that address real-life problems, positions the continent at the forefront of a digital revolution that prioritises impact over unicorn status.

Why Choose Software Development?

Software development is more than just writing code; it is about building solutions to real-life challenges. According to DeVry University (2013), software development involves the use of programming languages and design knowledge to build software that solves problems and identifies solutions for users and businesses. Ghoshal (2020) explains that software engineering offers endless career progression, decent pay, and the chance to creatively solve problems. Developers not only get to think critically and innovate but also enjoy continuous learning, project-based work, and collaboration with teams across sectors.

Africa's Digital Future

The World Bank (2020) has partnered with the African Union Commission and other regional bodies through the Digital Economy for Africa (DE4A) initiative to support digital transformation. These efforts harmonise policies and investments to help Africa achieve its digital ambitions. Organizations like Smart Africa Alliance are working with 31 African countries to usher the continent into the knowledge economy. Central banks are also playing a role in integrating non-traditional financial service providers to increase financial inclusion (Solanke, 2024).

Benefits of Choosing Software Development in Africa

Software development is especially beneficial in Africa due to the increasing demand for digital skills and technological solutions across sectors. As a BCom Information Systems student at North West University, I have experienced firsthand the growing interest in software development. This program exposes students to the core aspects of information systems and equips them with the ability to design and manage digital solutions. It provides both theoretical knowledge and practical skills, including data analytics, systems development, and cybersecurity, preparing students for the digital economy.

Africa's youthful population is increasingly embracing technology, creating a large pool of potential developers. The rise in mobile penetration, e-commerce, e-learning, and digital banking creates a ripe environment for software developers to thrive and make meaningful contributions.

Skills Needed and Learning Pathways

To succeed in software development, one must develop both technical and soft skills. These include problem-solving, analytical thinking, creativity, teamwork, and communication (Ghoshal, 2020). Educational institutions like North West University play a pivotal role in nurturing these skills. In my studies at NWU, I've learned the importance of programming logic, data management, and digital innovation. Online platforms like Coursera, Udemy, and freeCodeCamp also offer additional learning paths for those outside the traditional education system.

Challenges Facing Aspiring Developers in Africa

Despite the potential, aspiring developers in Africa face challenges such as limited access to high-speed internet, lack of funding for startups, and insufficient exposure to real-world projects. However, these obstacles are being addressed through community-led coding bootcamps, hackathons, university partnerships, and government support. As a student, I have benefited from university workshops and online communities that bridge the gap between academic theory and industry needs.

Conclusion

Africa is well on its way to becoming a global tech hub. With increasing investment in digital infrastructure, a young and innovative population, and supportive educational institutions like North West University, the continent is ready to lead in software development. For students like myself studying BCom in Information Systems, the opportunity to be part of this digital revolution is both exciting and rewarding. Choosing software development is not just a career choice—it's a commitment to shaping Africa's future.

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