

## **Research Topic:**

Bridging the Digital Skills Gap: Designing an Innovative Online Learning Platform to Equip Youth with Future-Ready Competencies.

## **Problem Statement**

In today's world, rapid technological change is transforming the global job market, yet in Africa and many developing countries, a persistent digital skills gap continues to exclude millions of young people from emerging opportunities (Muvunyi, 2018). Traditional education systems often lack accessible, practical training aligned with industry demands, resulting in underemployment. This research seeks to bridge that gap by designing an inclusive online learning platform tailored to the unique needs of underserved youth in these regions.

## **Causal Map**

In today's world, the need for digital and soft skills is inevitable for getting meaningful employment and contributing to the rapid economic growth driven by the economy (International Labour Organization, 2022). However, a lot of young people in Africa and other developing countries lack those skills, which affects them in both local and global job markets (Morsy & Mukasa, 2019).

This gap is caused by a lot of deep-rooted problems. In most developing countries, it is still hard to get access to education, and even most of the available schools use outdated lessons, lack enough experienced teachers to cope with this change, and don't have proper technology (Vélez Bustillo & Patrinos, 2023). On the other hand, most of the online learning platforms usually need a lot of internet data, which makes life hard for those curious young people who want to learn new skills needed in the job market (University of Illinois Springfield, n.d.).

The effect of this skills gap is serious and widespread. If nothing is done, the rates of youth unemployment will continue to rise spontaneously, and the gap between poor and rich countries will continue growing. As a result, many young people will be left out of social and economic development, and developing countries will miss out on innovation, entrepreneurship, and leadership that could arise from a digitally empowered society. Without local capacity, these countries will continue to depend on foreign digital solutions and expertise.

To address these challenges, this research proposes the development of a localized, inclusive learning platform that suits the needs of young people in African and underserved regions. The platform will combine both digital and soft skills training and user-friendly design, aiming to bridge the gap between education and employment and empower young people for the future of work.

## Literature

This section presents ten relevant sources that inform the development of an inclusive online learning platform for youth in Africa and other developing regions. Each entry includes the source link, publication year, authors, research title, strengths, and areas for improvement.

Source Link	Publication year	Author(s)	Title	Strengths	Area for Improvement
<a href="#">Link</a>	September 12, 2023	Eduardo Velez Bustillo & Harry A. Patrinos	Four of the biggest problems facing education and four trends that could make a difference.	The article provides a comprehensive view.  Furthermore, the content is written clearly and engagingly.	The article lacks case studies.  The article lacks detailed data.
<a href="#">Link</a>	2022	International Labour Organization	Promoting apprenticeships to meet the skills needs of the digital and knowledge economy.	This resource provides a comprehensive global overview of the future of work and lifelong learning.  Furthermore, it is backed by credible research and policy recommendations.	This resource didn't provide details on regional analysis, especially on specific challenges and solutions relevant to different geographic areas.
<a href="#">Link</a>	March 27, 2018	Leonce Muvunyi	Skills gap among youth to blame for lack of jobs	This article focused on Rwanda's youth unemployment issue and offered insights into the country's context.	The article mentions the youth unemployment rate. However, it does not include enough numbers or trends to clearly show how serious the problem is or how

					it has changed over time.
<a href="#">Link</a>	2019	Hanan Morsy & Adam N. Mukasa	Youth Jobs, Skills and Educational Mismatches in Africa	This resource provided an examination of skills and educational mismatches among African youth; it also used data from ten countries between 2012 and 2015.	The analysis is based on data up to 2015; incorporating more recent statistics could provide updated insights into current trends.
<a href="#">Link</a>	n.d	University of Illinois Springfield	Strengths and weaknesses of online learning	<p>This resource provided a detailed explanation of the advantages and challenges of online learning.</p> <p>This resource also highlights how important time management and staying motivated which is the key to learning online successfully.</p>	<p>The information provided in this resource is more general. Therefore, it would be useful if it used specific examples or case studies to show points more concretely.</p> <p>Furthermore, it lacks quantitative data or empirical studies to support its claim.</p>
<a href="#">Link</a>	Jan 07, 2025	Placidius Ndibalema	Digital literacy gaps in promoting 21st-century skills among students in higher education institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa: a systematic review	<p>This resource provides detailed information about digital literacy gaps and has many citations supporting the claim.</p> <p>This resource emphasized contextual challenges such as infrastructure</p>	<p>This resource could include more recent empirical data to support the synthesis.</p> <p>Furthermore, it lacks actionable policy recommendations or intervention models.</p>

				and access barriers.	
<a href="#">Link</a>	April, 2023	Pritika Reddy, Kaylash Chaudhary, & Shamina Hussein	A digital literacy model to narrow the digital literacy skills gap	This resource effectively synthesizes existing research to support their framework, demonstrating a deep understanding of digital literacy challenges and context.	This resource lacks a detailed explanation of regional, cultural, or infrastructural differences that might affect the applicability of the model across different educational settings.
<a href="#">Link</a>	2016	Jay Douglas & Dr Ahmen Imran & Dr Tim Turner	Designing an e-learning portal for developing countries: An action design approach	Unlike many resources in Western contexts, this work explicitly addresses infrastructure and contextual challenges unique to developing	The article is a bit old because it was written in 2016. Since then, technology has changed a lot, and some of the ideas may need to be updated to fit today's online learning needs.
<a href="#">Link</a>	2023	Include Platform	Digital Skills for Youth Employment in Africa	<p>This resource offers detailed strategies for enhancing digital skills among African youth.</p> <p>Furthermore, it also emphasized the importance of aligning digital education with labor market needs.</p>	This resource primarily provides policy recommendations without extensive empirical evidence or case studies to support the proposed strategies.

## References

- Bustillo, E. V., & Patrinos, H. A. (2023, September 12). *Four of the biggest problems facing education—and four trends that could make a difference*. World Bank Blogs. Retrieved May 24, 2025, from <https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/education/four-biggest-problems-facing-education-and-four-trends-could-make-difference>
- International Labour Organization. (2022). *The Future of Work and Lifelong Learning*. International Labour Organization. Retrieved May 24, 2025, from [https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40ed\\_emp/%40ifp\\_skills/documents/publication/wcms\\_863867.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40ed_emp/%40ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_863867.pdf)
- Morsy, H., & Mukasa, A. N. (2019). *Youth Jobs, Skill and Educational Mismatches in Africa*. African Development Bank. Retrieved May 24, 2025, from [https://www.afdb.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/wps\\_no\\_326\\_youth\\_jobs\\_obs\\_skill\\_and\\_educational\\_mismatches\\_in\\_africa\\_fl.pdf](https://www.afdb.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/wps_no_326_youth_jobs_obs_skill_and_educational_mismatches_in_africa_fl.pdf)
- Muvunyi, L. (2018, March 27). *Skills gap among youth to blame for lack of jobs*. Rwanda Today. Retrieved May 24, 2025, from <https://rwandatoday.africa/rwanda/news/skills-gap-among-youth-to-blame-for-lack-of-jobs-2465434>
- University of Illinois Springfield. (n.d.). *Strengths and weaknesses of online learning*. ION Professional eLearning Programs. <https://www.uis.edu/ion/resources/tutorials/overview/strengths-weaknesses#weaknesses>