

Empowering women entrepreneurship through digital skills

By [Fathima Ussuph](#), issued by [Regent Business School](#) 28 Jun 2019

No country can flourish by neglecting the potential of its women workforce. With economic liberalisation and globalisation, the number of women entrepreneurs is increasing globally. The latent entrepreneurial capabilities of women have been gradually coming to the fore with the developments in socio-political environment in society, and in this respect, South Africa is no exception.



The digital revolution, characterised by artificial intelligence, big data, cloud computing and mobile robotics could improve female participation in economic life and enhance the economic and social autonomy of women.

Digital technologies could help more women access new markets, work flexibly and distantly, acquire and interact with customers, receive training and provide mentoring, improve financial autonomy and access finance for their ventures.

There are plenty of successful women entrepreneurs in a variety of sectors in our country. Their outstanding performance in their respective fields has set an example for various emerging women entrepreneurs. However, they face a large number of challenges including male domination, family obligations, lack of education, poor self-confidence, financial problems, reduced mobility and limited managerial skills.

Often, women possess superior social skills, that can result in attractive entrepreneurial rewards in the digital age. Such social skills feature predominantly in jobs that women excel in and include competencies such as a heightened sense of responsibility towards the wider community, greater empathy, more effective communication and a greater willingness to adapt to changing circumstances.

Skill, adaptability and knowledge in business are the main drivers for women to undertake new business ventures. The female social skills advantage could be developed even further if complemented by competencies in abstract or cognitive skills and advanced digital literacy, which is a core requirement in the digital age.

Technology, particularly the information and communication technology, is viewed as a potent force in transforming social, economic and political life across the globe. In many instances, the continuous development and application of technology has created vast new economic and employment opportunities. Most developing countries are harnessing the use of technology to accelerate their development process.

In order to meet the technological challenge, there is a need for development strategies that combine new

technological capacity with investments in a broad variety of traditional and non-traditional economic sectors. These strategies need to be supported by improvements in education, skills development and vocational training. Training in the use of technology is essential and a key step in taking advantage of emerging economic opportunities. Both are critical for creating greater opportunities for women entrepreneurs.

There is growing global consensus on women's economic empowerment as a force multiplier for good governance, economic growth, poverty eradication, ending hunger and achieving food security and nutrition, achieving sustainable consumption and production patterns and environmental sustainability.

However, we can never lose sight of the fact that efforts to promote women's economic empowerment require approaches and incentives that must go hand in hand with creating a deliberate ecosystem that enables women to realise their rights and level the capacity and opportunity playing field.

Entrepreneurship and decent work are the bedrocks of economic empowerment. They support the economic empowerment of women and men, families, communities, and countries.

Indeed, women are increasingly contributing to the economic development of South Africa, while continuing to provide for their families. A Chinese proverb says that "women hold up half the sky" and, to help them realise their full economic potential, Regent Business School provides women an empowerment programme with knowledge, skills and technologies so they can engage in productive activities. This is part of the institution's effort to address the unemployment crisis in the country. The programme provides training and coaching to encourage self-employment and enterprise creation. Expanding the economic opportunities available for women is also vital for poverty eradication.

Recognising that advancing women's economic empowerment has a catalytic potential in achieving the South Africa's development imperative, Regent Business School established new creative spaces such as Makerspaces or Innovation Hubs that offer the latest exponential technologies and learning experiences that women can use to help carry out their ideas and create innovative enterprises. With courses such as robotics, coding, 3D design and printing, women can produce anything from drones to robots using open-source technologies and rapid prototyping tools like 3D printers and other manufacturing techniques.

We are firmly of the view that if women are given the knowledge and skills needed to expand their businesses, diversify and undertake value addition, they will be in a position to better contribute to economic growth and development of the country.

Women's economic empowerment is one of the world's most promising areas of investment, biggest emerging markets, talent pools and demographic dividends to be tapped, for now and into the future.

We invite women who wish to be considered for empowerment in the use of 21st century skills for their entrepreneurship endeavours to submit an application to entrepreneurship@regent.ac.za.

The application should include full names, email address and mobile number together with a **One Page Motivation** as to why you should be considered for Regent Business School's **Women Entrepreneurs Programme**.

The **closing date for applications is the 30 June 2019**. Seats are limited, so please apply timeously. A successful candidate will be informed by 3 July 2019.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Fathima Ussuph is a member of the Executive Team at Regent Business School and writes in her personal capacity.

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