

## Box 18.2: Google opens Africa's first centre for artificial intelligence

In April 2019, Google opened Africa's first centre for artificial intelligence (AI), in Accra, Ghana. The centre has a multinational team, with software engineers and research scientists hailing from Ghana, Nigeria, Lesotho, Senegal and Uganda, as well as Canada, Ireland, Israel, the UK, USA and elsewhere.

The CEO is, himself, from Senegal. In 2018, Dr Moustapha Cissé founded the first African Master's of Machine Intelligence degree at the African Institute for Mathematical Sciences, with the sponsorship of Facebook and Google.

The Accra centre is collaborating with local universities to roll out African solutions to prevailing problems. It intends to provide research grants and PhD scholarships to drive research in AI.

In June 2019, the centre organized a symposium with the Department of Computer Science at the University of Ghana on the theme of challenging the status quo: the role of AI in Africa.

In June 2018, Jeff Dean and Moustapha Cissé penned a blog\* on Google's AI website announcing the forthcoming AI centre and affirming that, over the ten years Google had been present on the continent, two million Africans had benefited from the company's digital skills training programme. 'We're supporting 100 000 developers and over 60 tech startups through our Launchpad Accelerator Africa', they said. 'We're also adapting our products to make it easy for people to discover the best of the Internet, even on low-Random Access Memory smartphones or unstable network connections'.

The Launchpad Accelerator Africa provides African start-ups with equity-free support, access to Google engineers and intensive mentoring, as well as training in public relations. It accepts applications from top seed-stage African start-ups located in Algeria, Botswana, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

Unlike IBM in South Africa (see Box 20.4), Google has not signed an agreement with the government relating to its corporate social responsibility in Ghana.

*Source:* compiled by authors

\*See: <https://www.blog.google/around-the-globe/google-africa/google-ai-ghana/>