

Editorial: ICT for capacity building and knowledge communities

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Welcome to the third issue of the International Journal of Education and Development using Information and Communication Technology (IJEDICT) - an e-journal that provides free and open access to all of its content. IJEDICT emphasises collaboration across disciplines, across professions, across institutions, across sectors, and across continents in an attempt to freely share and promote best practice and best research. The journal is itself an example of the usefulness of such an approach, being the result of collaboration between two institutions, one in the Caribbean and the other in Cape Town, South Africa. Several articles in this third issue of IJEDICT continue the strong African linkage of the journal.

In “Experimenting eLearning with a Large Class” by Oduronke Eyitayo looks at the areas of application of eLearning for large classes and how it was applied at the University of Botswana for the GEC121 course, students and tutors view of the course, as well as experiences from its use. “Capacity building using an online training course” by Magagula reports on the findings of an evaluation of an online course for policy-makers in Southern Africa. The objectives of the study were to determine: appropriateness and effectiveness of the management process leading to the development and implementation of the online course; the use of the platform and CD for online discussions; quality of the online course materials; the user-friendliness of the online system; the worthiness of the different types of support systems; the learners’ views of the online course.

In their article “ICT provision to disadvantaged urban communities: A study in South Africa and Nigeria”, Herselman and Jacobs describe research to develop a sustainable ICT model in a Nigerian community, by evaluating ICT provision in South Africa’s disadvantaged communities and comparing it with the Nigerian situation. Four ICT centres were involved in the case study. The authors argue that bridging the digital divide in disadvantaged communities requires adequate knowledge of the underlying causes of the divide, a favourable Government policy, a focus on the benefits of providing ICT, the provision of suitable infrastructure, and a committed management that is prepared to get round the various barriers or risks found in disadvantaged communities. In the second article by the same authors - “An ICT-Hub model for rural communities” - Jacobs and Herselman discuss how the ICT-Hub model or mechanism for integrated service delivery to rural communities can enable communities to manage their own development, by providing access to appropriate information, facilities, resources, training and services.

In the article “Wiring sub-Saharan Africa for development”, Tokunbo Ojo discusses the uses of ICT, the dimensions of access and the digital divide, and the development of telecentres in the Sub-Saharan African region. The article shows how technical access to ICT is often seen as the only prerequisite to economic and social development, whereas social access to literacy, content, housing and health are not given much consideration in the development agenda. The author discusses experiences at one of the telecentres, the Nakaseke Multipurpose Telecentre in Uganda, by drawing on data from the evaluative report of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC)-sponsored telecentres in Africa.

Sander, Bell & Rice, in “MIS Sustainability in Sub-Saharan Africa: Three Case Studies from The Gambia”, discuss how failure to correctly employ ICT systems has resulted in the wastage of scarce development funds and the diverting of scarce local skilled personnel away from other, productive tasks. They propose a phased implementation project model that includes, in addition to the provision of hardware and software solutions, ICT awareness building and training of user personnel as well as ongoing monitoring of the system's impact.

Moving from Africa to Asia, “Peer assessment and Computer Literacy for Junior High School Students in Geography Lessons in Hong Kong”, by Wong and Ng, discusses an interdisciplinary approach to teaching geography to junior high school students. Computer literacy lessons were given to 166 grade eight students for a geography assignment. The students submitted their work onto a central server at school using secure file transfer software. Then the students assessed one another's work using an online survey tool. The results revealed that in general, the students were satisfied with the use of online assignment submission and networked peer assessment.

“Development of a multi-scaled virtual field trip for the teaching and learning of geospatial science”, by Arrowsmith, Counihan and McGreevy, discusses the development of a virtual field trip to facilitate action learning and action research to enhance the field experience obtained by undergraduate geospatial science students when preparing for fieldwork. Preliminary evaluation indicates that students are able to obtain a general overview of the area into which they will be working and obtain background information in an interactive three-dimensional model that will enable them to maximise their experience when away on fieldwork.

In “Elemental analysis of the online learning experience” by Kevin Carmody and Zane Berge compare four contemporary methods of online teaching and learning: 1) student-centered, 2) subject-centered, 3) teacher-centered, and 4) teaching-centered. Their article argues that the most effective methods are those that engage six dimensions of human existence: physical, social, emotional, psychological, intellectual, and spiritual. With an understanding of the personal nature of the learning interaction, the most effective teaching methods are those that engage individuals in an intimate way.

IJEDICT seeks to support the community of researchers and practitioners involved in ICT for education and development, and we welcome feedback and suggestions as to how the journal can better serve this community.

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Chief Editors, IJEDICT

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