

Editorial: Culture, content and learning for development

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Welcome to the first issue of volume 2 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. This issue deals with culture, content and learning for development, and brings articles from and/or about India, Syria, Southern Africa and Australia.

Four articles in this issue come from India. Ratnam, Krishna Reddy and Reddy, in their article "eSagu: An IT based personalized agricultural extension system prototype – analysis of 51 Farmers' case studies" describe the "eSagu system - an IT-based personalized agricultural extension system to improve agricultural productivity by disseminating expert agricultural advice to the farmers, both in a timely and personalized manner. The authors provide an analysis of 51 registered farmers' regarding compliance of advice and corresponding effect. Their analysis showed that about fifty percent of farmers followed the practices which increase yield and reduce input cost. A high positive correlation was observed between the compliance rate and the yields.

Ashok Patel in the article "Education through multimedia among Agricultural Diploma school students: An impact study" describes a study conducted in the Gujarat State of India to measure the effectiveness of a multimedia on paddy cultivation on gain and retention of knowledge of students of Agricultural Diploma school. The results indicated that the knowledge level before viewing the multimedia was correlated with some of the personal characteristics of the students; while no such correlation was observed with the level of knowledge after viewing the multimedia. Similar results were also observed at the level of retention.

The article "eNRICH: Archiving and accessing local information" by Sarita Sharma describes ethnographic action research undertaken in a site in urban north India using information and communication technologies (ICTs) towards development of the local community. It discusses the usage of eNRICH², a web based browser. It includes experiences about how the software can be used in the given field situation and the challenges towards the consistent functionality of such software in an ICT initiative meant to reach the poor and the marginalised. Since the software facilitates recording and archiving of content, the article also briefly touches upon issues of local content development, the cornerstone of ICTs for development.

In "ICT learning: Is it more valuable for the young?" Savithri Subramanian describes ethnographic action research undertaken from early 2003 to July 2005 in a rural area of Tamil Nadu, India. Small centres were set up in the houses of women in the villages in order to create access to ICTs for these rural women. While women have learnt to use some of these modern ICTs and do make use of them, increasingly it is the young boys and girls of the community who more often access the centres. The paper explores some of the socio-cultural factors that may be leading to this subtle but definite change.

In "Cultural perceptions: The missing element in the implementation of ICT in developing countries", Abdulkafi Albirini describes a study that explored the cultural perceptions of high school EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers in Syria toward ICT. The findings point to a

notable conservatism in participants' perception of ICT in education and society at large. Teachers were mainly concerned about the morally damaging effect of ICT (particularly the Internet), its inattentiveness to their cultural and language needs, and its growing primacy at the expense of other societal needs. Hence, participants urged for the creation of local computers and software that would better serve Syrian identity and culture.

From Southern Africa, in "Information Literacy Skills Course delivery through WebCT: The University of Botswana Library experience", Edward Lumande, Ayo Ojedokun and Babakisi Fidzani describe a user-education programme designed to address the problems of large classes, assessment of students in relation to large number of scripts to mark, shortage of staff, timetable clashes, and the need for consistency in delivery of content. The implementation of the pilot by the library started in 2003 with the first year social science students. Their article shares the library's experiences during implementation.

From Australia, in "Investigating ethical crimes" Edward Morris and Catherine Zuluaga describe how they devised a five-step procedure based on a standard investigative procedure used at crime scenes to improve final year information technology undergraduate students' ability to analyse ethical issues. They evaluated the success of their ethical 'crime' investigation procedure by comparison with previous student cohorts given the same issues to analyse. To help online students learn to investigate ethical issues, they used object oriented learning methodology to design a class of learning objects. This facilitates dynamic instantiation of an individualised learning object for, or by, a student during a lesson. This enables the lesson to be not only more highly interactive but also far less predetermined in its sequence of activities for each student.

Finally, Ed Brandon in "Commitment or Public Relations?" reviews the book *Empowering Children: Children's Rights Education as a Pathway to Citizenship*, by R. Brian Howe and Katherine Covell. He points out that the book deals with an issue in development that is potentially one of the most far-reaching that can be seriously considered, and one that will require extensive and unavoidable educational action. Although the book does not invoke ICT – apart from a couple of remarks to the effect that a government's putting some material on a web-page is hardly an adequate fulfillment of its responsibilities in this area – ICT-enhanced educational activity can certainly form a significant part of any adequate response.

IJEDICT provides open access to all of its content on the principle that making research freely available to the public supports a greater global exchange of knowledge. In this 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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