Editorial: Collaboration as a critical success factor in using ICT for capacity building and community development

Stewart Marshall
The University of the West Indies, Barbados, West Indies

Wal Taylor
Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Cape Town, South Africa

Welcome to the first 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.

Regional economies and communities are facing increasing economic, social and cultural hardship in many parts of the world as economies adjust to the demands of the new orders of commerce and governance. A part of this is the paradox that regional economies and communities can be either enhanced or disadvantaged by information and communication technologies (ICT) products and services. The potential enhancement comes from the increased social, economic and cultural capital that comes from harnessing ICT products and services in a community sense. The disadvantage comes from the power that ICT products and services have in centralizing commerce, service provision and governance away from the regional community.

Unless we get a greater level of access AND adoption of ICT for education and development at community level, we will miss the opportunity to turn the "digital divide into a digital opportunity for all, particularly for those who risk being left behind and being further marginalised" ("Declaration of Principles", WSIS-03/Geneva/Doc/4-E, Principle 10). IJEDICT provides a forum for those who seek to address this issue. In particular, IJEDICT aims to strengthen links between research and practice in ICT in education and development in hitherto less developed parts of the world, e.g., developing countries (especially small states), and rural and remote regions of developed countries. The emphasis is on providing a space for researchers, practitioners and theoreticians to jointly explore ideas using an eclectic mix of research methods and disciplines. It brings together research, action research and case studies in order to assist in the transfer of best practice, the development of policy and the creation of theory. Thus, IJEDICT is of interest to a wide-ranging audience of researchers, policy-makers, practitioners, government officers and other professionals involved in education or development in communities throughout the world.

Despite the huge potential of ICT to assist communities to increase their overall well-being through community development, there are relatively few examples of sustained community networks built around ICT when compared to commercial applications, even in the developed countries where the technology has been increasingly available for up to 20 years. Researchers report a wide range of potential success factors and impediments. Pre-eminent amongst these is that collaborative partnerships, social network strategies and the building of social capital at the local level are key issues for the successful adoption of ICT for development.

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. Indeed, the second issue of IJEDICT will emphasise and broaden this linkage by

looking at "ICT for Education and Development in Southern Africa", this issue being edited by Guest Editors Laura Czerniewicz and Tony Carr from yet another institution in Cape Town, South Africa.

The first issue of IJEDICT also deals with the Caribbean–African linkage in the invited article by the Marshall and Taylor. This article on "Facilitating the use of ICT for community development through collaborative partnerships between universities, governments and communities" describes two successful community ICT projects whose success depended on the use of a collaborative methodology involving universities, governments and communities. The authors contend that researchers in universities can play a crucial role in facilitating this collaborative approach, and have set out to facilitate similar projects in South Africa and in the small island developing states of the Caribbean.

Continuing the theme of collaboration and the Caribbean–African linkage, Lee, Thurab-Nkhosi and Giannini-Gachago describe a case study "Using informal collaboration to develop quality assurance processes for eLearning in developing countries: The case of the University of Botswana and The University of the West Indies Distance Education Centre". The authors share the informal collaborative model used to develop a quality assurance tool for eLearning and compare approaches in eLearning course development and quality assurance procedures at both institutions.

In their article "Designing for learning through multimodal production: Film narrative and spectatorship in Director's Cut", set in the context of a South African university, Deacon, Morrison and Stadler describe the evolving learning design of a computer-based exercise called Director's Cut that challenges students to create their own video sequence from a set of clips.

In his article - "Building ICT4D Capacity in African Universities" - Colle continues the themes of collaboration, the role of universities in developing community capacity, and ICT in Africa. Using the nomenclature of the New Partnership for African Development, the author examines the mutual benefits that universities and telecenters could gain from a stronger relationship, and lays out the kinds of steps that might be taken to build a partnership.

Ifinedo's article - "Measuring Africa's E-readiness in the Global Networked Economy: A Nine-Country Data Analysis" – continues the African theme by computing the e-readiness for nine African countries. The author finds that Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) - with the exception of South Africa and its neighbors - has a poor e-readiness score; on the other hand, North African countries fared better than those in SSA. The author highlights areas of relative strengths where policy makers in the region could exploit as efforts are made towards integrating Africa into the global networked economy.

The article "Evolving Spaces in Landscape Management: Linking Spatial Information for Effective Decision-Making" by Ravindranath and Singh, discusses a participatory Geographic Information System (GIS) with community forest management groups in India and the importance of 'putting people before technology' in order to make GIS a truly participatory process in landscape management. The process of dialogue can lead to better information and more transparency about community needs, strategies and the problems at stake.

Burn and Thongprasert, in their article "A Culture-Based Model for Strategic Implementation of Virtual Education Delivery", examine the critical success factors for implementing Virtual Education Delivery (VED) in Thailand, and identify ways to facilitate such adoption and lead to effective outcomes. Their study incorporated an analysis of three specific factors related to Thai culture: high power distance "Bhun Khun", uncertainty avoidance "Kreng Jai" and, collectivism

"Kam Lang Jai". They propose a strategic framework for successful VED implementation that can be modified for any cultural environment.

The "education" part of the title of IJEDICT is to be broadly conceived, i.e., it is not just formal education that is included, but also informal education or capacity building of any sort. And the "development" part of the title not only refers to developing countries, but also to rural and remote regions of developed countries, that are also at risk of being left behind and further marginalised by the digital divide. In their article - "Building Community Capacities in Evaluating Rural IT Projects: Success Strategies from the LEARNERS Project" - Lennie, Hearn, Simpson and Kimber present the outcomes of a project that aimed to build capacities of people in two Australian rural communities. Based on their critical reflections, the authors present strategies for successful community capacity building projects and sustainable C&IT initiatives in rural areas.

This first issue of IJEDICT also contains two "Project Sheets":

o   "The Caribbean Universities Project for Integrated Distance Education (CUPIDE)" - designed to develop the human resources within the region through enabling each of the five participating universities to develop and deliver quality distance education programmes using ICT;

o   "E-Link Americas" - a project with a social mandate to provide affordable, high speed satellite Internet connectivity for social and community development in Latin America and the Caribbean.

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. Such access is associated with increased readership and increased citation of an author's work. For more information on this approach, see the Public Knowledge Project, which has designed this system to improve the scholarly and public quality of research, and which freely distributes the journal system as well as other software to support the open access publishing of scholarly resources.

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.

Stewart Marshall and Wal Taylor

Chief Editors, IJEDICT