

## **Editorial: Planning, policies and strategies for using ICT**

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Welcome to Volume 4 Issue 3 of the International Journal of Education and Development using Information and Communication Technology (IJEDICT). In this issue we have articles on planning, policies, frameworks and strategies for ICT provision in Australia, Bangladesh, Botswana, Cameroon, China, Ethiopia, Iran, Lebanon, Malaysia, Republic of the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Turkey and Uganda. It also brings more postings to the blog: "CEDICT: Communication, Education and Development using ICT" - <http://cedict.blogspot.com/>

The first article in this issue tackles a reality faced by so many developing countries – ICT provision to the poor. In their article, "An extended sharing model to provide ICT services to the rural poor", Duc Dang, Bilkish Sultana and Katsuhiro Umemoto investigate the shared access model through telecentres, phone kiosks or multiple community centres that has become the standard to cope with financial problems in providing ICT service to the poor in rural areas of many developing countries. Instead of just having shared access, their study suggests that "sharing" can be applied at all stages in the value chain of ICT service.

In his article, "A policy and planning framework on information and communication technology for basic education in the Philippines", Alexander Flor investigates the issues that prevent the education sector from fully tapping the potentials of ICT and finds deficiencies in existing policies. His paper addresses these gaps with a recommended comprehensive Appropriate Use Policy on Information and Communication Technology for Education (ICT4E) for the Philippines.

Alireza Abbasi, Abolghasem Sadeghi Niaraki and Behzad Mirzaeian Dehkordi argue that Iran needs to base its national ICT strategy on a much greater consideration of local cultural and social issues. In their article, "A review of the ICT status and development strategy plan in Iran", they point out that hard technological determinism can only be countered by very real and well thought out national strategies. The government must play an important role, not only as a major user, but also through its other role as regulator, promoter and diffuser.

"Challenges of managing information and communication technologies for education: Experiences from Sokoine National Agricultural Library" by Grace Emmanuel and Alfred S. Sife looks at the challenges the new technologies provide in libraries, in particular those related to acquisition, preservation, maintenance and security issues, training of users, and lack of awareness and commitment among key stakeholders. They highlight measures to overcome some of these challenges, and propose strategies for proper management of ICTs in libraries.

In "Seven major challenges for e-learning in developing countries: Case study eBIT, Sri Lanka", Annika Andersson uses an extensive framework for e-learning enablers and disablers (including 37 factors) to identify which of these are most salient for an e-learning course in Sri Lanka. A quantitative approach is taken to identify the most important factors followed by a qualitative analysis to explain why and how they are important. The study identified seven major challenges which are then discussed and solutions suggested.

In the article “A formative assessment of information communication technology in Lebanese schools”, Ramzi N. Nasser measures the level of ICTs in Lebanese public and private schools for the academic year 2005/2006 and evaluates the effectiveness of ICT on student school performance. A two-by-two factorial design using type of school (private/public), level of ICT (high/low) and PCs (high/low) was run on the baccalaureate-passing rate. Although a significant difference between public and private schools was found, there were no differences between the two ICT levels (high/low) or PC levels (high/low) per student.

Given the high penetration of mobile phones in many developing countries, attention is increasingly turning to mobile devices as a means of facilitating learning. In “Undergraduate students’ adoption of handheld devices and Web 2.0 applications to supplement formal learning experiences: Case studies in Australia, Ethiopia and Malaysia”, Beverley Oliver and Veronica Goerke report on research into undergraduates’ adoption of handheld devices as supplementary learning tools. Students enrolled in Engineering and Business in Australia, Ethiopia and Malaysia volunteered to participate in a study of their use of the HP iPAQ from mid-2005 to late-2006. Researchers observed and analysed the participants’ commencing levels of technology adoption, and then their subsequent adoption and perceptions of the usefulness of the iPAQ and its Web 2.0 applications to supplement their formal learning experiences.

“The effectiveness of ‘VELT’ in promoting English language communication skills: A case study in Malaysia” by Robinson Samuel and Zaitun Bakar examine if the newly created Virtual English Language Tool (VELT) could be used to improve the listening and speaking skills of primary school pupils in a sub-urban environment in Malaysia. A Year 5 class used VELT for a period of nine months. Donald Kirkpatrick’s four-level model was used to evaluate this e-learning tool. The findings of the case study were quite encouraging.

In the article “Information System Based Implementation of Semester-to-Semester Progression at University of Botswana”, J.S.J. Daka discusses the main aspects of the 2007 regulations and their implementation via a computer program at the University of Botswana. The author shows that a complete implementation of the regulations is possible using a computer program. The program was applied to sample students’ academic results to provide progression recommendations that were found to agree with expected results. The author concludes that an information system based implementation ensures uniform application of regulations.

The open source learning management system Moodle has become extremely popular as a cheaper and more flexible alternative to the proprietary systems. The article “Evaluation of an online social constructivist tool based on a secondary school experience in a Middle East country”, by Ayse Kok, presents the “Moodling” experience within a secondary school in Turkey. The study reveals that secondary school teachers are willing to participate in a virtual learning environment in addition to the traditional methods of teaching despite the lack of infrastructure and the inadequate ICT literacy skills of the teachers. The author identifies the critical points that need to be taken into consideration so that an effective collaborative online platform can be created for both teachers and students to learn together.

In the “*Research in Progress*” section, we have “Research design in a computer-assisted language learning (CALL) study” by Bin Zou. In this article, the author presents research questions, various approaches of data collection and analysis taken in a study focusing on computer-assisted language learning, and aims to integrate the results to carry out a holistic study.

The final article in this issue, in the “*Notes from the Field*” section, is a short reality check – an article on “The computer revolution: Struggling for survival in rural Cameroon”, from Tamara Palamakumbura. The article discusses their efforts to “bridge the digital divide” in the face of chronic poverty and computer illiteracy. And yet attempts to provide free internet training do not necessarily succeed.

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