

TECHNOLOGY SOLUTION FOR THE MARGINALIZED

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Abstract

A new pattern for research and innovation policies seems to be emerging, characterized by its direct relation with passing social needs with reference to marginalization. The conjecture is discussed in connection with academic production and policy initiatives in the area of ICT. Such pattern is discussed as a possible answer to the problem of Marginalization. Preliminary examples related with this research are given in this paper.

Keywords: Technology Solution, Marginalized, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), e-World Wide Group (e-WWW).

Introduction:

What does it mean to be marginalized? Marginalization can be defined as not belonging to the main stream culture, and thus lacking the “social capital” to partake from the benefits of a society and to have an effect on its culture. Reasons might be found in poverty, lack of competences in mainstream language and/or culture, or lack of motivation. These are main factors for exclusion of young people from full participation in societies and culture.

ICT solutions can be seen as providers of social cohesion and integration, as a means for inclusion. Young people adapt quickly to new technologies and they often seem to live in both the physical and virtual world. This informed the reason why the national policy on education (2004:17) places emphasis on the provision and utilization of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) when it states that because of the prominent role of

Information and Communication Technology in advancing knowledge and skills necessary for effective functioning in the modern world, there is urgent need to integrate Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into education in Nigeria.

Big differences exist in what youngsters are doing with digital media, which devices and software they preferable use and which kinds of individual or social experiences they carry on with them. New kinds of digital devices are arising among the young generation, which does not only result from having no or limited access to ICT, but is produced by “remaining only a user” versus “becoming critical and competent actor” who can exploit virtual experiences in order to increase his or her culture, social and economic capital. From an ICT perspective, a crucial question with respect to the integration of marginalized young people is how the technology can be designed and used to enable marginalized young people in bringing their social capital into society, developing their creativity, intellectual skill, or social attitudes and acquiring key competences.

ICT the Right Solution for the Marginalized

ICTs are proved to be the most effective in empowering the marginalized communities especially youth and women. This scenario is in line with the aspiration of the UNESCO (2005) which describes education sustainable development (ESD) as a vision of education that seeks to empower people to assume responsibility for creating a sustainable future. The rates of youth unemployment and gender discrimination are the major problems of the developing world and need to be addressed in a timely manner to ensure the development of their communities and nations. Information and Communication Technology 4 Development (ICT4D) is a general term referring to the application of Information Communication Technology (ICTs) within the field of socioeconomic development, international development and human rights.

The extensive knowledge and vast experience of ICT experts, enables beneficiaries to formulate strategies and roadmaps for addressing the issues of Youth unemployment. They also specialize in creating policies and strategies for enabling gender empowerment by means of providing access to relevant information, trainings, skills development and livelihood generation opportunities.

ICTs are being used as the solution to all problems of marginalized communities; ICTs are also being used for empowering the disabled.

International ICT experts can create strategies for empowering the disabled by providing them opportunities, education and skills development. They also specialize in

creating need specific telecentres for the disabled allowing them to groom and become an active part of the society.

It is believed that correctly developed and implemented Information and Communication Technology (ICT) solutions have great potential to assist disenfranchised and marginalized communities around the world. They fully recognize the importance of the contributions that local authorities and the voluntary and community sectors have to make in addressing social inclusion. It is also recognized that action by national and local agencies is unlikely to be fully effective without the support and commitment of community and voluntary groups.

ICT as Solution for the Marginalized through E-Governance

ICTs have a valuable potential to help meet good governance as they can create a link between the government institutions and the public. Citizen feedback is a must for improving the Government services. ICTs support in keeping the citizens informed, providing them with details of Government activities.

E-governance can not only improve efficiency, accountability and transparency of government processes, but it can also be a tool to encourage citizens to participate in the government processes. A team of ICT experts enables us to create winning strategies for implementing multidimensional e Governance Initiatives including research, planning, design, implementation and evaluation.

ICT as Solution for the Marginalized through E-Health

E-Health is about using ICT for better information, communication and Organization of healthcare. It is a strategic change management concept and an infrastructural framework. It is a common platform for all digital services within healthcare.

E-Health is not a technological issue. It is a change management in health care by using ICT. The major shift is the understanding that healthcare is not only about the practice of medicine, it is about how a healthy population generates a healthy economy. The benefits are two-fold; budgets are spent more productively and can create jobs and build a healthy service industry.

E- worldwide group (eWWG) has a team of international e-Health experts, who specializes in creating strategies and frameworks in the field of healthcare systems, they are innovatively contributing in the fields of Medical Informatics, e-Health, Telemedicine and

Telehealth, business development in e-Health, research and development for online- advice, web-based behavioral support and Integrated HealthCare Services.

ICT as Solution for the Marginalized through Poverty Alleviation

ICTs are effectively been used to reduce poverty and empower the poor to help themselves. Information and knowledge are critical components of poverty alleviation strategies, and ICTs offer the promise of easy access to relevant information useful for the marginalized communities. A team of international ICT experts specializes in creating strategies and frameworks for alleviating poverty by devising ways of providing relevant, useful, need based and timely information to the poor.

They can assist Governments and Development Agencies in creating and designing comprehensive poverty alleviation strategies for efficiently addressing the issues of Poverty.

Livelihood Generation

ICTs have brought a revolution in economic development, they have made the impossible possible through introduction of state of the art communication technologies and endless business opportunities. “Livelihood Generation”, is now associated with ICT. Their expertise lies in tying the knot between ICT and Income Generation opportunities.

Their advisory board consists of a diverse group of ICT experts who have proven track record in ICT policy making. They can devise livelihood generation strategies for community, province or national level for both rural and urban areas. They can make sector specific strategies to address the income generation for youth, women and disadvantaged communities.

Telecentre Localization and Adaptability

The e Worldwide Group has global experience and expertise in the designing localized Telecentres. Localized content and adaptability by the community are the key factors in ensuring the sustainability of every Telecentre.

They can formulate comprehensive strategies for enabling the localization and adaptability of existing telecentres as well as creating roadmaps for establishing localized telecentres based on the specific needs of the community they are serving. The experts can analyze telecentre models recommended for replication and assess their relevance and adaptability within the targeted community.

E World Wide Group because of its vast experience and knowledge critical success factors such as localization and adaptability can ensure the success of telecentres.

Telemedicine

Telemedicine allows transmission of health care services to wherever a patient is in need, from doctors at a remote location through different types of communication solutions. Telemedicine narrows the gap between medical expertise and health care delivery.

Their team of international experts can create strategies for initiating telemedicine services in the remote areas enabling the provision of better health services to the marginalized communities.

They can assist Governments and Development agencies in formulating policies, designing and deploying telemedicine solutions in underserved urban and rural areas.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development refers to, balancing the fulfillment of human needs in a way that these needs can be met not only in the present, but in the indefinite future.

ICTs are playing a key role in ensuring sustainable development. They can create comprehensive strategies for introducing development initiatives addressing the critical issues of marginalized communities. The vast experience of international ICT experts enables us to formulate roadmaps for initiating multidimensional development projects ensuring their sustainability.

Community and Asset Management

Asset Management by communities ensures that the assets are kept in a good condition for a much longer time and creates a sense of ownership in the local communities. This is a two way approach where asset is well kept and cared for as well as it provides a mode of income by employing local inhabitants.

The community development and asset management experts can assist local governments and public service providers (water / sanitation etc) in developing community asset management strategies. SAMF can facilitate in creating Community Asset Management Strategies ensuring the involvement of local communities in the development projects.

ICT for Peace and Harmony

The lack of information sharing and communication tools have been noted as key contributing factors in some of the recent crisis situations. ICTs can provide access to critical and real time information, which is crucial in timely and appropriate decision making in such situations.

ICTs help to facilitate sharing of information and communication amongst multiple organizations and agencies working in crisis management and allow multi-stakeholder coordination.

A team of international ICT experts can create strategies to improve the safety and security of all crisis management agencies and personnel in crisis areas. They can also create strategies for early warning on threats and prevention of conflicts.

Linkages for Knowledge Society

This is called the age of information. A knowledge society refers to the association of people and organizations with similar goals and objectives.

A team of international ICT experts can create linkages with governments, development agencies and NGOs around the region to share best practices and critical success factors ensuring the development of marginalized communities.

Millennium Development Goals

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are eight goals to be achieved by 2015 that respond to the world's main development challenges. The MDGs are drawn from the actions and targets contained in the Millennium Declaration that was adopted by 189 nations-and signed by 147 heads of state and governments during the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000.

Strategic Plans for Achieving MDGs

The extensive knowledge and vast experience of team of international experts enable us to create effective and efficient strategies and frameworks for the Governments of Developing countries to meet the MDGs.

MDGs Progress Measurement

ICT experts also specialize in assessment and monitoring. They can effectively track and evaluate the progress on various ICT4D initiatives. They can create Key Success indicators and measure the performance accordingly.

Inclusion

People with Special Needs

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Women

Correctly developed and implemented Information and Communication Technology (ICT) solutions have great potential to assist disenfranchised and marginalized communities around the world. They fully recognize the importance of the contributions that local authorities and the voluntary and community sectors have to make in addressing social inclusion. It is also recognized that action by national and local agencies is unlikely to be fully effective without the support and commitment of community and voluntary groups. eWWG has been involved in community development by promoting inclusion in the information society and knowledge economy for marginalized communities specifically women.

Innovative use of Assistive Technologies

Assistive technology (AT) is a generic term that includes assistive, adaptive, and rehabilitative devices for people with disabilities, special needs and includes the process used in selecting, locating, and using them. An ever increasing number of enlightened, citizen-focused governments across the globe are embracing AT not only as a matter of law, but also as top national priorities to harness the "intellectual powers" of all their citizens and building a "competition-ready", productive, enabled citizenry. IT is not only a matter of altruistic humanitarian values for societies wanting to enable, integrate their entire

populations in healthy, productive societies, but also a paramount imperative that enables global competition, presence in an "integrated" technology world.

Creation of Multi Stakeholder Partnership

Every project involves various stakeholders i.e. vendors / suppliers, donors, Government Authorities etc. if the linkages between them are properly maintained and utilized they can result in minimizing cost and maximizing benefits for all stakeholders and finally resulting in sustainable models.

Having in depth understanding of ICT4D allows us identify the key players and create linkages both at national and international level with suppliers, ICT experts, Donors, and Governments agencies to support any given initiative. They can assist you right from introduction to the final agreement of partnership.

Regional Cooperation for Development

Regional Cooperation is the key to ensure sustainable development for the marginalized communities in the developing world.

International ICT experts from countries like India (which is referred as ICT revolution's test laboratory), Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh who share many socio-economic similarities among themselves.

Skillful ICT experts allow us to share knowledge about "What really Works", which we utilize for our clients to generate sustainable development projects to overcome the digital divide.

Project Management

The e Worldwide Group has global experience and expertise in project management. They can provide consultancy services and complete project management including the Research, Planning, Needs Assessment, Gap Analysis, Designing, Securing Partnership Options, Deployment, Monitoring and evaluation of the Telecentre after its deployment.

The e World Wide Group because of its vast experience and knowledge about various ICT4D initiatives can successfully manage all kinds of development projects.

Assessments of ICT4D Initiatives

"Evaluation has been defined as the Systematic assessment of the worth or merit of some object". A team of international experts is capable of conducting critical assessment

and evaluation of different ICT projects. They can create key success indicators as well as conducting assessments on incremental basis through critical monitoring and evaluation.

Research and Data Collection

“Research has been defined as the systematic collection of information for the purpose of answering questions about phenomenon under investigation”

Research and Data Collection are the baseline for every project. A team of dynamic researchers is capable of conducting multi dimensional research for all ICT projects. They can efficiently conduct research projects including data gathering, critically analyzing the data and creating comprehensive formal reports.

They can conduct on ground situation analysis, needs assessment, surveys and focus group interviews to assess the critical needs of a particular community. They are capable of creating survey forms and questionnaires for understanding the requirements of the targeted population.

Conclusion

All of the projects in the programme pointed to some solid lessons for the introduction of ICT into the process of providing public services to communities living in poverty. The lessons were not, however, mainly concerned with the technology itself, but more with the ways in which technology can be introduced and embedded in the community to best effect.

All of the projects confirmed that tools making use of some form of ICT were capable of performing a useful function in the context of public service provision and that people would use them, find them helpful and begin to take more control of their interaction with officialdom. The question that was introduced in the Introduction to this article as to how far technology was of use to the poorest and least privileged whose knowledge and skills do not obviously fit them to make confident use of ICT was addressed most usefully by the Indian project.

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