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Reports
prepared for UNESCO
on the occasion of the
International Association of Media
and Communication Research
(IAMCR) 50th Anniversary
Conference 2007

Media, Communication, Information:
Celebrating 50 Years of Theories and
Practice



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Preface

In July 2007 UNESCO and the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) co-organized the IAMCR's 50th Anniversary Conference at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, France. The Conference theme was "Media, Communication, Information: Celebrating 50 Years of Theories and Practices". These last fifty years have seen a number of theoretical evolutions and practical advances in the domains which relate media to information and communication. In celebration of the anniversary, the IAMCR 2007 Conference tried to reflect new tendencies in information and communication.

In UNESCO we are well aware of the central role that the rapid transformations brought about by the new information and communication technologies (ICTs) plays for sustainable development and of their contribution in particular to poverty reduction and income generation, empowerment and consolidation of democracy, disease prevention and sustainable health as well as to the protection of the environment.

The greatest challenge that all those working in the development field have to face is the digital divide, since societies are only equitable if all people benefit equally from ICTs. Everybody should be enabled to use ICTs for networking, information sharing, creating knowledge resources and developing skills that can help them to live and work in the new digital environment.

In order to achieve these results we encourage the research on questions concerning the digital divide and the problems of information and communication in developing countries. Therefore we were very delighted to support and co-organize the IAMCR's 50th Anniversary Conference and to enable international researchers on media and communication to participate in this meeting and to contribute to it by preparing reports.

Abdul Waheed Khan

Assistant Director-General for Communication
and Information
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Introduction

The International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) is the worldwide professional organization in the field of media and communication research. Its members promote global inclusiveness and excellence within the best traditions of critical research in the field. IAMCR's members undertake research that seeks to put ethical considerations centrally on the agenda for discussion, to develop new theoretical frameworks, and to encourage distinctive research approaches that embrace local as well as global developments in media and communications.

IAMCR celebrated its 50th Anniversary during its conference in Paris in July 2007. The four reports in this publication were commissioned by UNESCO as part of its generous support for the IAMCR conference.

In the first of these reports Natasha Bolognesi and Leslie Swartz examine factors contributing to the persistence of negative media reporting on HIV/AIDS, in this case, in South Africa. Alarmist and misleading representations of the HIV/AIDS epidemic have serious consequences for a vulnerable public which they review. Their analysis of news reporting strategies and the press highlights the obstacles journalists face in their attempts to cover this issue. Bolognesi and Swartz offer practical guidance that might encourage more accurate reporting, emphasizing the issues rather than news events. They also call for a 'democratization of communication' and 'bottom-up' approaches, consistent with a more socially responsible media.

Fostering a more socially responsible media and communication environment is a major concern in the second report by Linje Manyozo. He offers a critical assessment of the way social science researchers have addressed the role of communication in development contexts. He emphasizes the need to consider this role in terms of its contribution to meaningful development, that is, linking communication initiatives to the aspirations, needs and freedoms of those who are expected to benefit. He traces research in this area from the 1940s to the present, focusing on the importance of encouraging widespread participation in the media and in the development of information and communication technology strategies. Manyozo shows that attention to indigenous contexts, to training and to people-centred approaches is essential for successful strategies.

Putting people in the centre of efforts to use information and communication technologies is central to Africanus Diedong's discussion of ethics and the information society in the third report. He argues that if policies in this area become more concerned with human solidarity, justice and respect for a sense of human dignity there would be a greater likelihood of information and communication technologies being developed in ways that empower people in line with their own aspirations. Taking the situation in Ghana as an example, Diedong highlights policy measures aimed at inclusion and at combating high rates of illiteracy. He cautions those in Africa who promote information societies to take all stakeholders into account and to ensure that older and newer means of communication are developed together with an ongoing dialogue about ethical standards and journalism practice.

The final report by Hopeton Dunn and Sheena Johnson-Brown tackles the issue of literacies and the potential for empowerment through the use of information and communication technologies. This contribution highlights the need for research that privileges a multiplicity of literacies consistent with the perspectives of people located in countries in the 'global south'. These authors challenge universal perspectives on what literacy entails and outline a multi-sectoral approach. They recommend a strong commitment by the public and private sectors and education supported by the traditional and newer media, including the Internet, which embraces popular music and art forms alongside other approaches to strengthening literacy.

The authors of all these reports demonstrate a strong commitment to tackling important policy-relevant issues through research that is theoretically and empirically well-informed. They also offer practical advice for media practitioners as well as policy makers concerned with many aspects of the roles of information and communication and related technologies in today's intensely mediated environments.

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March 2008

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The Media Management of HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa with Particular Reference to South Africa: A Window to Developing Communication Strategies for the Epidemic in the Region

By Natasha Bolognesi and Leslie Swartz

Introduction

On December 14 and 15, 2004, the Associated Press (AP) created an international media domino effect by reporting irresponsibly on the antiretroviral (ARV) drug nevirapine (Soloman, 2004).

Nevirapine, administered both as a single dose (sdNVP) and as a combination drug, is highly effective in preventing the vertical or perinatal mother to child transmission (PMTCT) of the AIDS-causing virus, HIV. The AP reports charged that severe side effects of sdNVP had been swept under the carpet by the American National Institute of Health (NIH) during the HIVNET 012 clinical trial in Uganda between 1997 and 1999.

It later transpired that the AP Ugandan trial allegations were false and that the misunderstandings were sparked by administrative hiccups: there never was any indication of sdNVP side effects and, to date, continued medical surveillance shows that sdNVP does not result in toxicity.

The damage, however, had already been done with a number of patients from Africa culture eschewing nevirapine as a suspicious Western treatment. The general consensus was:

“Doctors using [nevirapine] to good effect throughout Africa rightly fear the NIH fumbles could spur pressure to stop using the drug before alternatives are available... That could spell disaster for a multitude of African children... and deprive a struggling continent of an undeniable blessing” (*Minneapolis Star Tribune*).

The nevirapine issue is an example of how the clinical aspects of HIV/AIDS, the social and cultural context of sub-Saharan Africa (the region where the disease is most widely spread) and pre-existing communication problems, demand socially responsible reporting on the epidemic.

Before we turn to the specific issue of HIV in Africa, though, it is important to provide an international perspective on issues of social responsibility.

While developed societies may not appear to be as susceptible as developing societies to alarmist reporting, they are, in fact, still vulnerable to the social amplification of risk brought on by “controversy and debate [which] exacerbate divergences between expert and public assessment and often erode confidence in the risk decision process” (Kasperson et al, 1988: 178). This perception is illustrated by how the media misrepresentation of scientific data in the United Kingdom in 1998 triggered a hypothesised link between measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccination and autism. The negative influence on the public was overwhelming, with coverage rates falling dramatically and not recovering until 2004 (Burgess, 2006: 3921).

What follows in this report discusses HIV in Africa specifically, but a key background issue is that anywhere in the world, the public are vulnerable to media misrepresentation (often spawned by an event-driven rather than an issue-driven media approach) and false beliefs about science – even where this public is very well educated and apparently media literate.

The aim, therefore, of this report is to offer suggestions as to how media practitioners can play a more beneficial role within this socially and clinically demanding context.

Suggestions, however, will motivate an improvement in media communication, and a subsequent dissemination of empowering information amongst the AIDS-afflicted, only after insight is gained into the following key issues:

- the role of the journalist reporting on HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa
- the media management of HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa
- what the texts of the media mean in a region where issues of race, culture and identity threaten the essence of AIDS science
- the challenges journalists face when reporting on HIV/AIDS

It should be noted that the empirical research for this report did not extend to an analysis of the gaps in education programmes designed for training journalism students or to an in-depth examination of the extent to which universities

provide training in investigative or science journalism. Future research would benefit from work in this area. In addition, the present study does not provide an analysis of organizational dynamics within the news room to critically examine workplace and editorial policies in relation to the business and economic environment and its implications for HIV/AIDS reporting.

This report highlights the characteristics of the media texts that have been produced in reports on HIV/AIDS and places the analysis of those texts within a framework that considers the challenges of socially responsible agenda setting. Space limitations prevent a full analysis of the wider political agendas in which reporting on HIV/AIDS occurs.

Theoretical background

Why it is important to get reporting on HIV/AIDS right in sub-Saharan Africa

- **The epidemic itself**

The role of the science journalist in the accurate communication of HIV/AIDS-related issues (clinical, social and cultural) is all the more important in countries in sub-Saharan Africa where the disease is endemic.

According to the 2006 United Nations AIDS epidemic update report almost two thirds, or 63 percent, of all people infected with HIV (a total of 24.7 million people) live in sub-Saharan Africa (UNAIDS/WHO, 2006) with the highest number (between 5.5 and 6 million) in South Africa where the prevalence continues to increase.

- **Pre-existing communication problems about the epidemic**

The threat of the epidemic in the sub-Saharan social context

Poverty, coupled with past political injustices (such as the apartheid regime in South Africa), denies the majority of people in developing countries and new democracies basic scientific knowledge. This lack of knowledge thus renders media audiences in the region susceptible to false and alarmist reporting on AIDS.

Lynn Dalrymple, professor of drama at the University of Zululand in South Africa and HIV/AIDS communication researcher in South Africa explains:

“The general population in South Africa has grown up under a system that ensured that they would be poorly educated, particularly in scientific matters... Many people do not have the skills to distinguish between sensationalist reporting and the factual matter... so that everything that is read is taken as fact” (Dalrymple in Galloway, 2000).

This lack of technical knowledge and appreciation undoubtedly shapes the social experience of media communicated risk. This population is particularly vulnerable to the social amplification of risk whereby: “In communications theory, amplification denotes the process of intensifying or attenuating signals during the transmission of information from an information source, to intermediate transmitters, and finally to a receiver” (Kasperson et al., 1988: 180).

South African AIDS clinician Mitch Besser observes that in Mpumalanga (in the north east of the country)¹:

“There is enormous resistance to nevirapine because of the messages put out by the government which have been represented in the press. These messages have been passed down to the people who now see this as a toxic drug” (Bolognesi, 2006:158).

AIDS denialism

The one country in sub-Saharan Africa most affected by AIDS is ironically and tragically subject to an intense lack of political leadership on the epidemic: South African leaders of state, rather than providing responsible role models to a society in the midst of a health crisis, seem set on their misleading and dangerous trail of intense AIDS denialism:

- 1999-2001: the height of Government AIDS denial in South Africa when President, Thabo Mbeki suggests that HIV is not responsible for AIDS and the disease’s symptoms are, rather, a result of poverty (Nattrass, 2004:49)
- October 2000: Mbeki announces his withdrawal from the AIDS debate in October 2000 (Nattrass, 2004:54). His silence speaks volumes and he has not, to date, backtracked on his denialist AIDS stance (Nattrass, 2007: 170)
- July 2001: South Africa’s most effective AIDS activist organisation TAC (Treatment Action Campaign) instigates legal proceedings against the government to force it to implement a PMTCTP programme (Nattrass,

¹ Besser, M, Interview: April 2005. Groote Schuur Hospital, Cape Town.

2004:48)

- In 2005: South Africa's health minister, Manto Tshabalala-Msimang, publicly states, "It doesn't work just to dish out antiretrovirals just because they are available... Raw garlic and a skin of the lemon – not only do they give you a beautiful face and skin but they also protect you from disease (CNN, 2005)
- July 2006: Tshabalala-Msimang promotes her natural remedies at the Toronto AIDS conference (*Nature* 443, 134–135; 2006); (Nattrass, 2007: 11)
- 2006: Mbeki establishes the 'Presidential Project on African Traditional Medicine' to explore herbal remedies "that seem to have dramatic curative effects" (Nattrass, 2007:180)
- August 2007: South Africa's deputy health minister, the outspoken and respected anti-AIDS denialist Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge, is fired by Mbeki with no public explanation

The issue of race and identity

In explanation of AIDS denial it is suggested that "issues of race and identity... lie at the heart of responses to the AIDS pandemic and to AIDS science" (Robins, 2005: 113), and that the past racist view that AIDS was a 'black disease' as well as "racist narratives about the sexually promiscuous, pathological and uncontrolled black African fuelled [the] African nationalist response" (Robins, 2005: 121).

Despite today's widespread awareness that AIDS infects and affects all races and social classes, the old 'black stigmas' seem indelible. It is these early associations which account for the persistent shame associated with the disease as well as the perpetuation of the African nationalist stance of AIDS denialism in South Africa (Robins, 2005: 121).

Furthermore, in terms of identity stereotypes, science is commonly privileged (white) and representative of the developed Western world where technical rationality, which "puts its faith in empirical evidence and the scientific method" (Fischer, 2005: 55), is directly opposed to 'cultural rationality' which "is geared to, or at least gives equal weight to, personal and familiar experiences rather than depersonalized technical calculations" (Fischer, 2005: 55).

It is well established throughout the world that people may choose healing systems which are consonant with their own identity and may rely on a mixture of cultural and personal resources for their faith in healers and healing systems

(Helman, 2007). This is by no means unique to South Africa, but where access to credible science which is perceived to have had a track record of advancing the interests of the entire population is limited, people may be especially vulnerable to making health and lifestyle choices on the basis of identity and cultural politics.

The issue of making poor health and lifestyle choices on the basis of identity politics in the context of oppression is not new, and not unique to sub-Saharan Africa. In the early days of the HIV epidemic in the USA, HIV was seen to affect mainly gay men, a group who had only very recently achieved some degree of social and cultural liberation in the 1970s and 1980s. At that time, having multiple sexual partners and frequenting gay bathhouses were seen as a way in which gay men could not only express themselves sexually, but also take on an identity which questioned mainstream sexual-cultural morality. When gay men were advised to stop engaging in unsafe sex and bathhouses were starting to be closed, some gay men saw this as an assault on their hard won sexual and cultural freedom (Shilts, 1987). There is a clear parallel here with arguments from African people as a globally oppressed group that safer sex education is an attempt to limit legitimate African sexuality and procreation. Myths about African hyper sexuality and hyper fecundity have indeed for centuries been used as a way of attempting to control African people's bodies (Butchart, 2007), and it is tragic that the echoes of this form of control now can be found to be contributing to the current HIV epidemic.

Gender

Women are more likely to contract HIV, and at a younger age, than men in Africa.

Research shows that, as in the rest of sub-Saharan Africa, the epidemic in South Africa disproportionately affects women. Young women (15–24 years) are four times more likely to be HIV-infected than are young men: in 2005, prevalence among young women was 17% compared with 4.4% among young men (Shisana in UNAIDS, 2006: 11) And today the estimated average life expectancy for women in Zimbabwe is 34 years - among the lowest in the world. For men, it is estimated to be 37 years (WHO, 2006).

Many women and young teenage girls in sub-Saharan Africa are at the mercy of a patriarchal society where cultural inequalities render them highly vulnerable to contracting HIV:

“Culturally-entrenched gender roles and norms about sexuality help to fuel the spread of HIV/AIDS, and women and girls are particularly vulnerable to infection because of the cultural practices and norms which continue to keep women in a position of inequality” (Nkutha and Mtintso, 2004: 73).

The power of some African gender roles concerning sexual relations is illustrated in this saying from East Africa: “*Acha Inuie, Dogo-dog Sintaacha* [in Swahili]: “Let it (AIDS) kill me but I will not leave the young girls” (Haram 2001: 50 in Natrass: 27).

There are several ways in which gender inequality hinders women’s fight against AIDS:

1. A key concept in curbing the spread of AIDS is the practice of safe sex, but:

“Because of the unequal power relations between men and women, women are not able to negotiate safer sex especially where the only known method for reducing the spread of the disease (short of abstinence) is the condom – a device almost exclusively controlled by men” (Lowe Morna, 2004: 18).

2. “Gender inequality and poverty go hand in hand, and the two feed HIV/AIDS” (Seidman, 2004: 83). In situations of poverty and scarce educational and earning opportunities for women, it follows that young women should marry men considerably older than themselves to protect them financially. Unfaithful partners may however infect these young women with HIV (Oriang, 2004: 6). In addition to this “Women living in poverty may adopt behavior that exposes them to HIV infection, including the exchange of sex for food, shelter or money” (Seidman, 2004: 83).

3. “The common traditional practice of a man having sex with a virgin to cure himself of AIDS, fuels the power imbalance between men and women and inflicts a death sentence on the latter” (Lowe Morna, 2004: 18). Though there is some debate about the virgin cleansing myth, and about how widespread it is, Groce and Trasi (2004) have shown that in a range of cultural contexts (and not just African contexts) there have been beliefs about the curative nature of having sex with a virgin.

4. Cultural beliefs pressurize women and girls to remain ignorant about sexual matters, an ignorance which prohibits self-protection against HIV infection. These beliefs may include:

- mothers cannot talk about sex to their daughters: it is the duty of the aunt
- when a girl falls pregnant, she should not let her parents know

- anything related to sex and reproductive organs is taboo, so child abuse cannot be reported to the authorities
 - culture does not allow children to be too close to their parents; parents wield too much power for the children to be able to open up
 - women should learn in silence
 - women should not question men on anything
- (Nkutha and Mtintso, 2004: 73).

In addition to a woman's cultural vulnerability to HIV infection, there is also the biological consideration:

“Women are physically more susceptible to HIV infection than men, and gender-based violence makes them even more vulnerable... For many girls and young women, their first sexual encounter is often coerced; the experience or fear of violence is a daily reality, and increasingly, so is HIV/AIDS “ (World Health Organisation, 2004).

It is the responsibility of media communicators to play a role in preventing the spread of AIDS by accurate and sensitive reporting on the educational, social/cultural, clinical and treatment aspects of the disease: they will do this far more effectively if they have an in-depth understanding (and a subsequent heightened sense of compassion and social responsibility) of how African cultures fuel gender inequality and so disempower women in the fight against HIV infection.

Role of the media in the sub-Saharan social context

Media is especially important in contexts where there is social instability or where the state and/or civil society is generally weak as in the case with the majority of most countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

The threat of the AIDS epidemic, a general lack of scientific knowledge, coupled with past political injustices, poverty, AIDS denialism and issues of racial conflict and gender in the sub-Saharan region, means that a large proportion of the population turns trustingly to the media for direction in their decision-making processes.

Indeed, South African research suggests that the broader public 'trusts the messenger', as seen in the results from a study on the public and elite opinions on the credibility of the printed media:

“Although there is general agreement that the print media can be more

balanced in its reporting, it appears as if the vast majority in all respondent groups [including Black, White, Coloured and Indian race groups across various income brackets] do not doubt its *bona fides*" (Hofmeyr, 2003: 18).

An empirical observation such as this clearly illustrates the functional media-society theory which: "posits that the more an audience is reliant on the mass media for information and the more a society is in a state of crisis or instability, then the more power the media are likely to have (or be credited with)" (McQuail, 200: 79). The question of media literacy as a whole must be linked to colonial and apartheid histories which have tended to produce a lack of critical thinking skills (Chisolm, 2004).

The challenge of socially responsible agenda setting in sub-Saharan Africa

Science journalists, therefore, have an important social role to fulfil in under-educated societies grappling with an enormous health epidemic such as HIV/AIDS. As Lucy Oriang, the deputy managing editor of the *Daily Nation*, the flagship publication of the Nairobi-based Nation Media Group, says:

"Without doubt, journalists have the power to shape and influence the way people think and make decisions. This agenda-setting role has never been more urgent, given the impact of HIV/AIDS on ordinary lives in eastern and southern Africa" (Oriang, 2005: 6).

Mbennah et al. (2002) suggest that the Western media tendency to report largely on conflict and violence in Africa rather than focussing on socially reconstructive news values, has carried through to the 21st century (Mbennah et al: 2002:59). The reason for this may be twofold:

- Local media, to a large degree internationally owned, rely on commercially news/event-driven values, rather than on issue-driven values. In February 1994 one of South Africa's largest newspaper and publishing groups, The Argus Printing and Publishing Company, sold the majority of its shares to Irish press magnate Tony O'Reilly and the new group was named Independent Newspapers. The transaction effectively transferred ownership to an international conglomerate which also owned 65 percent of the newspapers in Ireland, and which has interests in Australia (Diederichs and de Beer; 2002: 94).

The concern here is that commercial Western news values (which have an enormous amount of cannon fodder in the scientific and cultural disputes surrounding HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa, and in South Africa particularly) may eclipse, to a large extent, socially responsible agenda setting better suited to developing countries in the grip of an enormous health epidemic.

- Africa's continued news dependency on Western agencies.

The democratic paradox

The new democracies of post-colonial Africa are a melting pot of cultures, traditions and beliefs, and it is undoubtedly the media's responsibility to represent this diversity and give all opinions a voice.

Science, furthermore, is inevitably associated with access to privilege and education and, hence, with the parts of the world complicit in oppressing Africans for centuries. AIDS denial, in South Africa, for example, can thus be seen as a reflection of the democratic right of the post-apartheid government to voice its own opinion on the disease:

“In the face of relentless criticism of the President's pro-dissident stance, his spokespersons and supporters argued against the guild-like exclusivism (sic) of the scientific community and insisted upon the democratic right of the President to participate in debates on AIDS science” (Robins, 2005:16).

Race and identity do not warrant AIDS denial, however. Within the disease context the issue of a culture battle (Western scientific vs. African unscientific) needs to fall away to make room for the irrefutable fact that proven antiretroviral treatment (ART) is “demonstrably capable of saving and extending lives” (Nattrass, 2007: 165).

It is important to remember that not everybody has equal access to information about scientific issues, and HIV/AIDS, in particular. It is, in this context, the duty of the press (and the state) to “mobilise the full power of medical science to save the lives of... people” (Nattrass, 2007: 164).

Contributing to this mobilizing goal requires multiple strategies. Among these are the efforts of United Nations agencies to encourage new perspectives that can assist journalists and others to communicate about the HIV/AIDS epidemic

in more effective ways. For example, UNESCO (2006) produced guidelines regarding the use of language, highlighting the difficulties created by the use of stigmatizing terms and offering insight into how language can be used to achieve greater precision and differentiation of terms consistent with developing a culturally-sensitive language.² And UNESCO, together with UNAIDS and EDUCAIDS, has produced pamphlets covering issues such as the role of the media and communication in developing tools for increasing awareness about HIV/AIDS in the education sector, generally, and in the workplace.³

In addition, the Association of African Universities has produced a toolkit on HIV/AIDS for higher education institutions in Africa specifically designed to “fill the gap in the availability of trained personnel by giving training to academic staff, students and support staff of the institutions to work with their peers to reduce personal risk and to engage with families and communities”.⁴ Subsequent to the publication of this toolkit the Commonwealth Secretariat together with ADEA prepared an extensive report on “learning from good practices in Africa”.⁵ Further support for developing good practices in this area in education in tertiary institutions is available from the World Bank’s report on the design and implementation of institutional strategies.⁶ There are major websites containing numerous documents of this kind.⁷

In it is in the light of the foregoing theoretical framework which synthesises insights from the scholarly literature that locates the HIV/AIDS epidemic within a wider debate about factors contributing to denialism relating to issues of race and identity formation, gender discrimination, and the role of the media and democratisation, that this report examines the actual reporting on HIV/AIDS which has appeared in the South African press in recent years.

The theoretical perspective offers an essential context for the interpretation of the results of the empirical analysis of such reporting. Without this context it is very difficult to understand why news reporting which is not in line with many of the approaches suggested by HIV/AIDS toolkits and other communication strategies to increase awareness and underpin enhanced education of journalists

² See “UNESCO Guidelines on Language and Content in HIV- and AIDS Related Materials” available at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001447/144725e.pdf>.

³ See UNESCO, EDUCAIDS, UNAIDS “Communication and Media in the Education Sector Response to HIV & AIDS” and related briefing papers.

⁴ See Association of African Universities (2004) <http://www.aau.org/aur-hiv-aids/toolkit.htm>.

⁵ See Rispel et al. (2006) <http://www.adeanet.org/downloadcenter/education%20HIV-AIDS%20doc.pdf>.

⁶ World Bank (2004) http://siteresources.worldbank.org/AFRICAEXT/Resources/no_64.pdf

⁷ See for example, http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=33487&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

and others, persists in the way that is highlighted in the present report. Following the analysis of the texts of media reporting in this area, we provide suggestions for media practitioners based on this evidence.

Key research questions

Against this theoretical and strategic background the status of HIV/AIDS reporting principally in South Africa is revealed on the basis of the following questions:

- Is AIDS reporting clear and accurate?
- What are the agendas – educational, scientific or political?
- Is there a source balance between officials and the public?
- Are the reports gender-sensitive or do they disempower women?
- What are the underlying causes for the status of HIV/AIDS reporting in the media?
- How does the public experience AIDS reporting?
- How best can the challenges of causes and consequences be addressed?

Methodology

A review of the content analysis (quantitative) of written reporting on HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa undertaken in 2006 as well as in-depth interviews (qualitative) with media practitioners, clinicians and (People Living With AIDS) PLWA between 2004 and 2005, the most recent reports available, provide a perspective on the:

- Status of HIV/AIDS reporting
- The causes for the HIV/AIDS reporting status
- The consequences of the content for the public.⁸

⁸ The following studies provided the basis for the content analysis review conducted for the purposes of this report: Bolognesi, N. 2006. *The Media Management of Nevirapine: content, causes and consequences* - A study focusing on the media's portrayal of the antiretroviral drug Nevirapine in three Western Cape dailies: *The Cape Times, The Argus, Die Burger*, between April 2004 and April 2005; De Wet, G. 2004. The voices of the infected and affected: HIV/AIDS news sources. *Ecquid Novi*. 25 (1): 94 -114 - A study focusing on the sources used by a cross section of the mainstream printed newspapers in South Africa when reporting on HIV/AIDS during December 2001; and Lowe Morna, C. 2006. *The Southern African HIV and AIDS and Gender Baseline Study*. An extensive study which monitored 37 000 news items in the mainstream print and broadcasting media in eleven countries of Southern Africa (Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe) between October and November 2005. The study was conducted by the southern African Media Monitoring Project (MMP) - which leads the monitoring and evaluation leg of the Media Action Plan (MAP) which is led by the Southern African Editors Forum.

Key findings

Status of HIV/AIDS reporting

- A distinct lack of in-depth science reporting on HIV/AIDS issues with elements of incorrect scientific fact (De Wet, 2004: 110); (Bolognesi, 2006: 107)

An evaluation of 83 written reports on nevirapine... revealed that “it is on issues of treatment distinction, resistance, toxicity and statistics that media practitioners are most challenged in their presentation of accurate information” (Bolognesi, 2006: 107).

- HIV/AIDS constitutes only 3 percent of total media coverage of the region (Lowe Morna, 2006: 1)
- Only 30 percent of HIV/AIDS reporting in the region is balanced and professional (Lowe Morna, 2006:3)
- Reporting on HIV/AIDS is largely political and event-driven (Bolognesi, 2006: 97)

“AIDS is such a political issue, nowadays if you are a health reporter you spend time in parliament and go to political rallies because the big story is a political story” (Johann de Villiers, health reporter for the South African daily *Die Burger*, in Bolognesi, 2006: 141:)

- AIDS denialist (dissident) sources are used more often than the public or PLWA for nevirapine coverage in South Africa (Bolognesi, 2006)
- Clinical experts accounted for a mere 12 percent of sources (Lowe Morna, 2006: 8)
- PLWA constitute a mere 4 percent of all sources (Lowe Morna, 2006: 7).
- All three of the South African Western Cape dailies assessed resorted to government sources more than any other source and to public sources the least (Bolognesi, 2006: 106)
- A lack of gender awareness in HIV/AIDS reporting throughout the region where sub-topics such as PMTCT, gender-based violence, the role of men and boys, cross-generational sex, cultural practices and sex work received less than 5 percent of coverage (Lowe Morna, 2006: 8, 41). And of this coverage only 15 percent was HIV and gender aware (Lowe Morna, 2006: 4)
- All is not doom and gloom however: Journalists often have a sense of social responsibility even though it is not directly reflected in their reporting

(Bolognesi, 2006). Furthermore, the HIV and AIDS Gender Baseline Study revealed that there are some encouraging signs of greater depth in coverage: although 78 percent of coverage is short news items, 10 percent of all items are classified as feature and analysis (Lowe Morna, 2006: 8); 77 percent of stories in the region on HIV/AIDS are original written or added to by journalists, as opposed to those obtained from agencies (Lowe Morna, 2006: 8); fewer than 10% of the items monitored were classified as perpetuating stereotypes on HIV and AIDS (Lowe Morna, 2006:40)

Causes reported

The reasons for the status of HIV/AIDS reporting in South African and the rest of the sub-Saharan region are varied and complex:

- A lack of time, scientific knowledge and scientific resource explains superficial and erroneous HIV/AIDS coverage - respectively:

Former news editor of *Die Burger* in South Africa: “In the many news rooms I have worked in my experience tells me that 10 years ago people were very dedicated and actually appointed AIDS writers to write just about AIDS. But today, due to staff shortages, AIDS writers have had to become health writers: health is such a wide field and AIDS subsequently becomes marginalised. The pity is nobody fought for AIDS reporters.

Science editor of *Business Day* in South Africa, Tamar Kahn: “I think a lot of the really good health writers simply burn out and leave because of the immense pressure on them.”

“Research suggests that journalists and information officers tend to have a superficial medical understanding of HIV/AIDS” (Albertyn, 2004: 9)

and:

“Scientists are known as dismissive and they are also sick to death of this issue and I think they are really, really, really tired of talking to the media and I know that a lot of them feel that what they say is distorted, poorly understood and does more harm than good” (Tamar Kahn, 2005: South African *Business Day* Science Editor in Bolognesi, 2005)

- **Agenda setting:** A Western-style media with commercial news values and which, as such, is event-driven and not issue-driven, determines the general low level of HIV reporting and the high level of political content (especially

in South Africa) when HIV/AIDS is reported on. This commercial news environment dictates journalistic allegiance to commercial news values which “tend to favour events that are about elite people, elite nations and negative happenings” (McQuail, 2000: 341).

- **Sources:** The commercial news value system further depends on elitist sources which explains the high journalistic recourse to official and political sourcing and the low level of public sourcing, especially those directly affected by HIV/AIDS: “some sources are also more powerful than others or they have more bargaining power because of their status, market dominance or intrinsic market value... news is often reports of what prominent people say about events rather than reports of the events themselves” (Oosthuizen, 2001: 205).
- **News values:** Hot selling commercial news values may also contribute to the paucity of gender-aware reporting on HIV/AIDS in the region: “Research suggests that journalists and information officers tend to have... little knowledge of the gender dimensions and socio-cultural factors which fuel the spread of AIDS” (Albertyn, 2005: 9). It may, however, be suggested that existing journalistic gender and social responsibility awareness (Bolognesi, 2006: 166) are bulldozed by the commercial news value system. According to the former news editor of the South African *Die Burger* Estelle Ellis: “news values have become more commercially driven in the last five to six years. We are much more aware that the paper is not there so we can exercise our journalistic freedom the way we want to” (Ellis in Bolognesi, 2006: 175).

Consequences of reporting

The consequences of inaccurate and superficial reporting on HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan reiterate the importance of the role of television, radio and newspapers which “select and call to the public’s attention both ideas and events” (De Beer, 2002: 20) and “simply by the fact of paying attention to some issues and neglecting others will have an effect on public opinion” (McQuail and Windhal, 1981: 62).

A journalistic **lack of scientific knowledge and resource** can interfere drastically with treatment campaigns. Doctor Mitchell Besser is the founder and medical director of The Mothers’ Programmes, a South African NGO which uses education and empowerment as tools to prevent mother to child transmission of

HIV, support a mother's adherence to medical treatment, and reduce the likelihood of AIDS orphans. He says: "In Mpumalanga [northern South Africa], where we run some programmes, there is a community called Draaifontein, where there is *enormous* resistance to nevirapine because of the messages put out by the government which have been represented in the press. These messages have come down to the people who now see this as a toxic drug...I think patients react to the last and loudest thing they heard. If the last thing patients heard was that nevirapine is toxic, the patients will believe it. Misinformation goes a long way" (Besser, 2006: 158).

Besser's experience also illustrates the '**stigma consequence**' which can be brought on by irresponsible risk reporting, as in this case where nevirapine has become stigmatised as a toxic drug. "Stigma has come to mean almost anything people do or say that stands in the way of rational responses to public health campaigns on HIV/AIDS" (Deacon et al., 2005: 9). Deacon et al.'s 'rational responses' can be defined as a technical rationality which puts its faith in empirical evidence and the scientific method as opposed to cultural rationality which trusts traditional processes over outcomes (Fischer, 2005: 55).

It is a foregone conclusion, therefore, that if the media portrayal of HIV/AIDS issues is erroneous and ambiguous, through a heavy reliance on elitist government sources, "the presence of cultural rationality is especially strong, when there is reason to believe in the possibility of deception or manipulation (Fischer, 2005: 57).

"I think the government is sending out the wrong signals and it does filter through to communities, it does reach them and I think it has tragic effects. Stigma is still a problem in communities and the government should be leaders in that regard instead of allowing it to become a political game" (Inge Paschke, South African community health doctor quoted in Bolognesi, 2006: 159).

It is within this context of cultural rationality that the African nationalist denial of AIDS science, rooted in issues of race and identity in a post-oppressed society, holds such influence as it sends out a message of mistrust for empirical science.

And it is the event-driven nature of the media which, by feeding on AIDS denial and dissidence, turns up the volume of African nationalist denial of AIDS science which enhances messages of mistrust for empirical science, cloaking AIDS science in a fog of ambiguity which sparks a culturally rational response which, in turn, throws up a barrier to the prevention, spread and treatment of the

disease.

As Besser says: “If there is ambiguity in terms of health messages, people who are unclear will be confused. People will not take medicine if they are told that they don’t have to” (Besser in Bolognesi, 2006: 160).

AIDS fraud

Messages of AIDS denial coming from a government level and given unbalanced voice in the media not only confuse the public but also create an ambiance conducive to AIDS charlatans. AIDS fraud is not uncommon in the developing world, especially in Africa where combined elements of poverty and cultural beliefs render the AIDS afflicted highly vulnerable to false medicinal claims. AIDS dissident Matthias Rath, founder of the Rath Foundation which promotes vitamins above and beyond ARVs, has the support of the South African health

minister. Rath has made numerous media headlines throughout recent years. Constantly in the public eye, Rath has seriously compromised HIV/AIDS treatment programmes:

“Many of us [medical doctors] have had experiences with HIV-infected patients who have had their health compromised by stopping their antiretrovirals due to the activities of this [Rath] Foundation” (Health-e, 2005: excerpt of a signed statement sent to the Western

Cape Health Minister Pierre Uys from 199 health professionals demanding a ban on AIDS dissident Matthias Rath’s Rath Foundation).

The media wittingly gives voice to AIDS dissidence through its hard news selling approach.

The media’s **focus on AIDS events rather than AIDS issues** has largely diverted attention from the AIDS-afflicted desperately in need of facts on the

The Science writer’s tool box

Fraud alert:

- Gain clinical knowledge on HIV/AIDS
- Seek objective expert advice
- Be aware of the quality of peer review
- Beware of claims made in public statements
- Beware of claims based on anecdotal evidence

(Bolognesi b, 2006: 723-724)

Communicating scientific fact:

- Provide accurate and up to date information
- Do not dumb down the science
- Use clear simple language
- Report responsibly on statistics
- Use responsible risk reporting techniques which do not sensationalize and capitalize on the ‘fear factor’

(Ansell, 2005: 210-222)

disease. As a result those who look for information in the media often do not get it. For example women interviewed at the Sibanye Economic Empowerment Training Centre in Khayelitsha outside Cape Town, said they get the information they need on HIV/AIDS from support groups because the media, including radio, television and community papers, does not fulfil that role (Bolognesi, 2006:164).

The news-driven media policy, which relies largely on **official and elitist sources**, is at times responsible for the perpetuation of stigma and stereotyping around HIV/AIDS issues. Media insensitivity to gender inequality through a lack of awareness of those cultural beliefs which encourage gender inequality and fuel the spread of AIDS (such as a man's insistence on dry sex, female genital mutilation and cross-generation sex partners) is apparent in the media's inappropriate use of language and images: "By marginalising those most affected by AIDS and failing to access *their* [italics own] views the media effectively silences them" (Lowe Morna, 2006: 41).

"When others express stigmatising ideologies, people living with AIDS experience the status loss and moral judgments projected onto them: this may be direct (when a person expresses stigma directly to them) or indirect (when a person living with HIV/AIDS reads a newspaper in which stigmatising views are expressed)" (Deacon, 2006: 31). The media must realize that by perpetuating stigma and stereotyping they are also responsible for threatening the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS:

"The media tends to write and produce stories on cultural practices in a sensational and unbalanced way often perpetuating stereotypes, norms and myths. Such unbalanced reporting further entrenches norms and beliefs rather than challenging practices which perpetuate gender inequality and which lay a basis for the spread of AIDS" (Nkutha and Mtintso, 2004: 76).

This outline of the consequences of socially irresponsible science reporting on HIV/AIDS illustrates that the media does indeed mould public perception. Within this context the discussion highlights the need for suggestions for effective HIV/AIDS communication strategies in the region because, as Sue Goldstein of Soul City says, "how anyone is supposed to get the correct picture in the barrage of this incorrect information is fascinating...."⁹.

⁹ Goldstein.2007. Interview: July 5, 2007.

Suggestions for change

Based on the findings of this analytical review of the media management of HIV/AIDS and related issues in the African press, it may be suggested that reporting on HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa does not marry well with a media policy which is event-driven and reactive in its role of surveillance. The dependence on commercial news values, negativity, elitism and political agenda setting largely robs HIV/AIDS reporting of scientific fact and clouds the opportunity for education.

It is only through the consistent criticism of media content that the NWIO ideal of a socially reconstructive press in Africa may be attained:

“The media is regulated by legal and financial means largely determined by the political balance of power in each society. There is little that the academic research community can do about it but there is an untapped potential for indirect participation in the democratic process of media accountability – through media criticism” (Nordenstreng, 1999).

Within the context of the findings of this analytical review of the media management of HIV/AIDS and related issues in the sub-Saharan African press, it would be reasonable to surmise that a shift in media policy from a developed world perspective to a developing world perspective is needed for HIV/AIDS reporting: “Western powers continue to set the agenda for Africa and her people... Media organisations in Africa need to urgently address the question of content and resources” (Molefe, 2004: 119).

Democratisation of communication

It may be suggested that reporting on AIDS in the cultural and social context of sub-Saharan Africa requires a democratisation of communication whereby:

- The individual becomes an active partner and not a mere object of communication
- The variety of messages exchanged increases
- The extent and quality of social representation or participation in communication is augmented

(De Beer, 2002: 466).

This ‘bottom-up’ approach by the media would be in line with the NWIO ideal of positive social restructuring as it:

- Voices the opinions of the public through relying on this sector as providing the socially appropriate sources
- Humanizes AIDS by giving it the faces of those who are HIV positive and who are approaching their illness as a manageable chronic condition
- Promotes a positive and accepting public spirit
- Encourages social learning
- Empowers not disempowers (essential in patriarchal societies)

Development journalism and choosing carefully

This bottom-up approach incorporates the element of participatory communication which is at the heart of development journalism:

“Participatory communication takes into consideration the views and input of the receiver of information. It initiates an inquiry process leading to sharpened consciousness of social, human and political developments.... Participation is the key element to awakening people’s desire to assess their problems critically, to ask why these problems occur and how to overcome them using their own wisdom, experience and knowledge” (Mkonza, 2004: 116).

Not only does the AIDS epidemic demand a shift in media policy, it has also somewhat ironically paved the way for a constructive implementation thereof:

“Culture is constantly being reshaped as the AIDS epidemic cuts a swath of death through communities – and as the HAART rollout offers new hope of life” (Nattrass, 2007: 165).

By educational agenda setting and serving as a resource to communities, the media can contribute to a social learning process which “can empower people, transform their health and lead to new social groupings” (Nattrass, 2007: 165).

A suggested shift in media policy does not, however, warrant a full adoption of developmental journalism which, in spite of its nation-building attributes, must be approached with caution and implemented with balance in order to avoid the risk of “sunshine journalism”, such that the development theory incorporates the right of the state “to intervene by restricting and censoring the media” (Fourie, 2001: 274).

Indeed, “more complex and nuanced theories than old normative frameworks such as the four theories of the press (where the debate often gets stuck between

the two equally undesirable options of a libertarian or a developmental model) need to be found” (Wasserman, 2003: 223).

This is especially true when it comes to the media management of HIV/AIDS within the context of the complicated cultural fabric of sub-Saharan Africa, in particular South Africa, where issues of identity, race and culture within the young post-colonial democracies clash with science:

“Are material issues being obscured by a focus on race, culture and identity? Further research is much needed into how and within what structural parameters the media (and meta-debates about the media’s role) in post-apartheid South Africa construct identities and how the media can provide subjects with the agency to contend fixed, static ideas of identity” (Wasserman, 2003: 223).

It may be suggested, therefore, that while, on levels of eradicating stigma and promoting a positive social restructuring process, the democratisation of communication is desirable within the context of reporting on HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa, strict parameters must be integrated to ensure that scientific expertise is not ignored and that all knowledge are not treated as empirically equal.

It is extremely important that the material issue of saving lives through the administration of clinically proven drugs is not lost through an event-driven media focus on the conflict between science and race, culture and identity.

The media’s failure to prioritise and endorse a biomedical approach to the AIDS epidemic in Africa is nothing short of penning a death sentence for a socially and culturally vulnerable population.

Conclusion

Western-style media, through a commercially and event-driven news value system, relies on elitist sources and event-driven agendas to sell. This can have a negative media audience outcome in sub-Saharan Africa where AIDS is endemic and the disease is fuelled by socio-cultural beliefs and gender inequality. Media policy which sets news agendas with a high political content, rather than issue-driven agendas, highlights the disputes, not the facts, around HIV/AIDS. This is particularly undesirable in a region where the majority of those affected by AIDS rely on the media for information to assist them in their decision-making process. The undesirable outcome is public confusion over a life-threatening

disease as a result of ambiguity on AIDS science as portrayed in the written and spoken press.

A shift from a commercial news value system to a more socially responsible media approach in sub-Saharan Africa for HIV/AIDS reporting, through the democratisation of communication which also prioritises the importance of biomedicine in the fight against the disease, would encourage a more practical and positive media audience experience on HIV/AIDS. In addition the bottom up approach, through its recourse to public voices, would ensure that issues of culture and gender which fuel the spread of AIDS are brought out into the open and dealt with effectively through a social learning process

In conclusion:

“The media has arguably one of the deciding roles to fulfil in Africa’s re-awakening. It is the modern drum of Africa, connecting villages and communities, cities and countries, through both traditional media (print, radio and television) and modern communication technologies.... The media should inform, not disinform. Connect, not divide. Empower, not disempower. And: be a catalyst for development according to Africa’s needs, not the West’s” (Rabe, 2004: 3).

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Communication for Development: An Historical Overview

By Linje Patrick Manyozo,

1. Introduction

Debates on the role of communications in development emphasise the empowerment of citizens, challenging them to collaboratively and democratically generate, exchange and utilise relevant knowledge towards improving their communities, livelihoods and the environment. Such debates also acknowledge the increasing importance of community participation, indigenous knowledge as well as information and communication technologies (ICT) as strategies for empowering communities to formulate realistic and meaningful development policies. Building on specific case studies from the African continent, this report examines how the philosophy of communication for development has shaped the design and implementation of meaningful development interventions.

The report reviews the theory and practice of communication for development since the 1950s. It examines the different definitions and experiments that emerged within the different schools of thought. The discussion draws on the concept of meaningful development as articulated by Amartya Kumar Sen (1999) and the *African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation* (United Nations, 1990), and then examines case studies from Africa.

2. Searching for meaningful development

There have been many approaches employed towards understanding and resolving the great development dilemmas; there is, however, a common agreement over three fundamentals. The first is that in development method and practice, cultural and social dimensions are important areas for consideration. Development does not simply constitute economic recovery, adjustment and transformation (Adedeji, 1993; Quebral, 1988; Rodney, 1972). The second is that for development to be sustainable, interventions should focus on alleviating a

people's poverty (Chambers, 1997). The third is that meaningful development should engage the intended beneficiaries in decision-making with regards to planning and implementation of policies (Escobar, 1995). It is on the basis of this last factor, that scholars, policy makers, development planners, governments and organizations have formulated different approaches towards achieving community participation, local democracy and empowerment as major pathways towards sustainable development.

2.1 Modernizing the periphery

Emerging from the 1940s modernisation was principally a dominant approach of viewing poverty and underdevelopment as direct consequences of self-afflicted and traditional practices by the developing world (Kidd, 1982). The emphasis of this paradigm and the related communication approaches was on technology and knowledge transfer and on the removal of 'traditional and indigenous obstacles to development' (Asante, 1991; Deng, 1998; Melkote and Steeves, 2001: 51, 84). The dominant development strategies that developing countries implemented were 'incompatible with indigenous economic structures and social values', and only managed to marginalise developing countries by enhancing them as an economic periphery (Adedeji, 1993; Asante, 1991; Deng, 1998).

The integration of communication in development or on 'modernising the periphery' was viewed in what Lerner describes as encompassing general 'processes of attitude formation and attitude change by which a society is shaped' (Lerner, 1977: 151, 162). Key theoretical works underpinning the modernisation approaches towards communication and development included Schramm's *Mass Media and National Development* (1964), Rostow's *The Process of Economic Growth* (1950), Lerner's *The Passing of Traditional Society* (1959), and Rogers' *Diffusion of Innovation* (1962). Rogers (1962) discusses the diffusion model which had four main elements – innovation, communication channel, period and social system, the focus being on understanding the social networks through which an innovation spreads from one member to another member of a system. By the mid-1970s however, communication scholars began to question their earlier assumptions. Though believing in persuasion as a major tool in behavioural and social change, Schramm (1979: 9-14) appreciates the importance of locality and participation in communication, arguing that a local horizontal communication strategy must be 'at the centre of a development strategy', so as to facilitate local decision making.

2.2 Dependency theory

The second development trajectory spanned from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s and was characterised by the dependency and structuralist approaches which emerged as a critique of the modernisation paradigm. Policy makers viewed poverty and underdevelopment as consequences of structural inequalities that forced developing nations to rely on developed nations for economic decisions and strategies (Kidd, 1982). This decade was marked by the 1974 *Declaration of the Establishment of the New International Economic Order* and the Oil Shock, itself an aftermath of the Arab-Israel War (Deng, 1998). Radical thinkers such as Adebayo Adedeji, Andre Gundar Frank and Michael Todaro raised logical, moral, political and historical questions on the nature and objectives of development and the causes of underdevelopment (Asante, 1991).

The dependency theory was highly critical of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) which Western financial institutions forced developing world economies to adopt as measures in slowing poverty and strengthening their economies. SAPs targeted the liberalisation of economy, removal of subsidies and reduction in government expenditure, but they only managed to increase social and economic marginalisation (Adedeji, 1993; Deng, 1998). Lacking the capacity to deal with the inherited, weak and destabilised economic structures, developing nations were forced to increase foreign debt with which to balance up payments as a result of high import and low export prices in the global market (Chambers, 1997). This period is also known as the dependence and dispossession period, because the heavy borrowing disempowered developing nations through the increase in foreign investment (Adedeji, 1993).

Consequently, development and communication scholars began to introduce concepts of integrated rural development, the focus being on development support communication (DSC) and participatory rural appraisal (PRA) as tools for designing meaningful development projects. Schramm would express his disappointment for his 1960s emphasis on the marketing of development information, arguing, 'the field was in a flux and we did not know much about it then' (1979: 9). He acknowledged that careful consideration should have been given to the "social requirements and uncertainties" that make development different'. Scholars had thus realised the need for building local capacity in communication skills, so that communicators should 'learn to speak well and persuasively; learning to use the local media; learning to read so that they can use resource materials; and facilitating knowledge exchange among

development stakeholders (Schramm, 1979:14).

2.3 Participatory development

Between the late 1980s and 1990s, participatory development became a postmodernist paradigm of development, emphasizing 'plurality of viewpoints and multiplicity of voices' (Barroso, 2006; Servaes, 1996). Adedeji (1991) observes that increasing debt and aid conditionality constituted major albatrosses around the necks of many developing countries. Alternative strategies of dependence-structuralist paradigms 'undermined the cornerstones of development in the developing world, such as family-hood and sharing' and instead, promoted individualism (Deng, 1998: 43). Increasing poverty made scholars conduct one of the post-mortems on development, during which questions of power relations and indigenous knowledge systems in the design and implementation of interventions loomed large.

Consequently, communication scholars began to rethink the concepts of culture, communication and participation. Barroso (2006) notes that resulting from the criticism of the dependency paradigm of development, emerged the paradigm of participatory development, which gave rise to a new communication for development paradigm based on human dignity, and respect for the other's culture and diversity. Elsewhere, this paradigm has been referred to as multiplicity or another development (Servaes, 1996). Participation in development presents implications for a range of social, economic and cultural institutions. It is only reasonable, as noted by the World Bank's Development Communication Unit, communication planning thus becomes a principal component of development planning (Santucci, 2004).

3. Communication for development: Problematics of definition

The term communication for development originates from, and has been oftentimes used interchangeably with the term, development communication. The concept of development communication was actually coined by Nora Quebral, who in the 1970s, defined *ComDev* as the 'art and science of human communication applied to speedy transformation of a country and a mass of its people from poverty to a dynamic state of economic growth' so as to achieve 'greater social equality' (Quebral, 1975: 2; Lent, 1977:2). The definitions have varied with time and place since then. Keval Kumar (1994: 77) and Royal Colle

(2003: 1) lament the 'different perceptions of defining characteristics' as well as the 'lack of agreement on the concept' of communication for development.

Recently Karin Gwinn Wilkins and Bella Mody (2001: 385) have defined communication for development as a process of strategic intervention toward social change, initiated by institutions and communities. Acknowledging the many changes her own concept and definition have undergone during the 'years of jostling with reality,' Quebral (2002: 16) redefines *ComDev* as 'the art and science of human communication linked to a society's planned transformation, from a state of poverty to one of dynamic socio-economic growth, that makes for greater equity and the larger unfolding of individual potential'.

The Rockefeller Foundation introduces and discusses an integrated model of communication for social change, as 'an interactive process where community dialogue and collective action work together to produce social change in a community' so as to improve the health and welfare of communities (Figueroa, Kincaid, Rani and Lewis, 2002: 5). This *ComDev* model is built on the 'broad literature on development communication' as developed by largely Western or Latin American researchers (Figueroa, Kincaid, Rani and Lewis, 2002: 2).

Manyozo (2006) defines modern-day *ComDev* as a group of method-driven and theory-based community engagement strategies which are built on participatory generation, sharing and utilisation of knowledge towards building sustainable communities, livelihoods and environment. In practice, *ComDev* is characterised by diverse methodological and theoretical trajectories, but centres on participatory production and utilisation of knowledge towards social change. The emphasis is on empowerment, social change, local and indigenous knowledge.

4. Schools of thought in communication for development

Examining the historical development of a field as complex as communication for development also requires paying critical attention to the non-Western theoretical developments and experiments. Communication for development should therefore be discussed in plural and divided into schools of thoughts, whose categorisations are based on planned, systematic and strategic communications; coherent method; attachment to academic, training and research institutions; and sources of project funding. These schools are *Bretton Woods*, *Latin American*, *Indian*, *African*, *Los Baños* and the *Communication for Development and Social Change* (Manyozo, 2006).

The origins of the **Bretton Woods** School can be located within the post WWII Marshall Plan economic strategies and the subsequent establishment of the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1944. Development had become an international ideology for achieving hegemony after President Truman's State of the Union address in January 1949 (Lerner, 1977; Escobar, 1995). The Bretton Woods School comprises institutions such as the World Bank UNESCO, FAO, Rockefeller Foundation, DFID, Ford Foundation and universities like Michigan State, Texas, Cornell, Ohio, Wisconsin, Leeds, Colombia, Iowa, Southern California, and New Mexico. Among the School's major publications was the *Development Communication Report*, published by the USAID-funded Clearing House on Development Communication, under the Academy for Educational Development (AED). Its research finds outlets through major publishers such as Sage or Hampton.

Today, the World Bank (n.d) conceptualises communication for development as an 'integration of strategic communication in development projects' that is based on a clear understanding of indigenous contexts. Seemingly paraphrasing Quebral's 1970s definition, Neville Jayaweera (1987) conceptualises development communication as a communication aspect of a country's development plan. The realisation has been that communication involving community participation formulates a very important facet in the promotion of sustainable social change and communities (Bessette, 2004; Cadiz, 1991, 1994; Mayo and Craig, 1995; Schramm, 1979).

The **Latin American** School can be traced to 1947, when Radio *Sutatenza* was established by a Roman Catholic priest, Jose Joachim Salcedo in Colombia, followed by Bolivia's *Radios Mineras* (Miners' Radio Stations) in 1949. *Sutatenza* tested the practice of *las escuelas radiofonicas*, or radio schools, which was pioneered and promoted by the country's *Acción Cultural Popular* (ACPO) (Gumucio, 2001, 2004; Hein, 1988; Vargas, 1995). On the other hand, Bolivia's network of miners' radios started in 1949 with one radio station in Catavi, but by the 1970s, twenty-six radio stations were in operation. Regarding financing and management the radio stations were 'independent, self sustained, self-managed and faithfully served the interests of their communities' probably because they 'planned and conceived by the miners' who created and produced the programming locally (Gumucio, 2001).

Critical to the school's theoretical foundation were the works of Juan Diaz Bordenave, Ramiro Beltran, Rodriguez, Gumucio, Sabido and Freire. Their communication approaches emphasised culture and indigenous knowledge as

springboards on which to build successful and effective social communications in which communities participate to share and manage knowledge. Supporting academic institutions have comprised universities in Peru, Colombia and Bolivia. Radio *Sutatenza* and the Miners' Radio stations therefore provided a blueprint of a participatory community-oriented radio and a major pathways towards empowering peasants and other ordinary people to be full and equal participants in development and the maintenance of just, equitable and democratic societies (Gumucio, 2001).

Though by 1933, listening communities had been established in rural India to listen to broadcasts in *Marathi*, *Gujarati* and *Kannada* languages, coherent *ComDev* experiments would begin in the 1950s, when, in collaboration with UNESCO, the Indian government introduced a carefully designed network of rural radio forums (Kumar, 1981). The **Indian** School then expanded, when in the 1970s, the government introduced two rural television for development projects under which television sets were installed in village schools and the programmes were received directly' from locally-installed satellite receivers (Kumar, 1981). Simultaneously from 1969, the *Hindustan Times*, embarked on a development journalism experiment, when it began regularly publishing a column about village life, known as 'Our Village *Chhatera*'. Its reporters became extension workers, change agents and public relations officers and were able to 'play the role of catalysts, planting new ideas in the minds of the villagers and articulating their aspiration' (Verghese, 1976).

Notable among the school's academic institutions were the University of Poona, the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi University, the Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, and the University of Kerala. India's communication for development was operated within a well-defined government policy, a case example being the First Five Year Plan of 1951 (Rogers, Braun and Vermilion, 1977). The Plan observes that a widespread understanding of development priorities enables citizens to embrace a country's vision of the future (Raghawan and Gopalakrishnan, 1979). It highlights the development of appropriate communications to be used in approaching people, with a focus on disseminating development research in local languages and contexts (Raghawan and Gopalakrishnan, 1979).

The **Los Baños** School emerged from the 1950s and 1960s, when the College of Agriculture at the University of Philippines, intensified the efforts by the teaching staff to share the results of agricultural sciences research with farmers and other end users of the new knowledge and technology (Maslog, 1999;

Quebral, 1988). In 1974, the school introduced the first ever *ComDev* degree, offering majors in development journalism, community broadcasting, ICT and telecommunication in development, educational communication and agricultural development (Quebral, 1975). Alongside the Los Baños School, were the University of Philippines College of Mass Communication, the Philippine Press Institute, the Press Foundation for Asia, the Asian Institute of Journalism and Communication, the Asian Institute for Development Communication, Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre, UNDP's Development Communication Support Service, International Rice Research Institute, Universities in Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia (Maslog, 1999; Quebral, 1988).

The **African** School of communication for development emerged in the 1960s, out of the post-colonial and communist movements which provided a springboard from which African scholars began to rethink concepts of culture, communication and development (Kamlongera, 1988; Mlama, 1971). The School had two approaches: rural radio and theatre. The concept of 'taking radio to the people' started as farm broadcasting, that is, agricultural programming broadcast from state broadcasters to the largely rural audiences. Rural radio has however, expanded from being development-centric and is now being discussed in relation to democratisation, proximity, local circumstances and community participation in defining content and management. The implication is that rural radio no longer refers just to a broadcasting approach towards rural people, but rather refers to a local rural station that belongs to the people (Ilboudo, 2003).

Theatre for development, on the other hand, is a term describing a group of methodologies, which 'deliberately and consciously' employ song, drama and dance as modes of sensitising and empowering communities to improve their status quo (Kidd, 1982: 2; Kamlongera, 1988; Mda, 1993; Mlama, 1971). The objective is to 'reinforce a process of social change' through the employment of performance as a communication process rather than one oriented towards communicating development content (Kidd, 1982: 2, 8). In theatre for development, theatre becomes a discourse and a forum through which local people critically analyse development issues, linking effects to causes, thereby attaining mental liberation or conscientisation in the Freirean praxis (Servaes, 1996; Mda, 1993).

The **Communication for Development and Social Change (CFD&SC)** School comprises institutional collaboration involving development research and training organizations from the five schools of thought. This collaboration

has not been smooth, as there seems to be some disagreement on issues of social change, communication process and appropriate theory between the various academic and development institutions. Replacing the *Development Communication Report* has been *Mazi*, a newsletter being published by the Communication for Social Change Consortium. Productions of the *Global Journal of Communication for Development and Social Change* (Hampton Press) and a book series of the same name (Southbound Publishers) are being coordinated by Queensland University's School of Journalism and Communication.

The key concept underpinning the work of the CFD&SC School is participation, in which the media are just tools (UNESCO/UNDP, 2007). The *Isang Bagsak* network has involved community-based natural resource management initiatives by Latin American, South East Asian, African and Canadian institutions. Bessette observes that *Isang Bagsak* is a research and development initiative that empowers development partners to employ participatory development communication (PDC) tools and approaches in order to promote community-based natural resource management (Bessette, 2004). PDC is a communication tool with which to facilitate community involvement in local development (Bessette, 2004). Communication systems and approaches should be 'indigenised', thus including indigenous communication systems into the 'mainstream communications', so as to create 'holistic development communications' (Ansu-Kyeremeh, 1994: 109).

5. The centrality of freedom in communication for development: Amartya Sen

The United Nations recently underscored key issues connecting development to freedom as comprising a rights based approach to development; the achievement of the MDGs; the importance of national ownership in formulating and implementing national development strategies; the necessity for good governance, particularly the capacity of citizens to hold governments to account for delivery of services; recognizing the importance of globalization; the importance of coherence, alignment and harmonization of development policy; and managing for results (UNESCO/UNDP, 2007).

Key to the work of development and freedom has been the development economist, Amartya Kumar Sen, whose teaching and research has focused on establishing sustainable solutions to challenges of poverty, famine and

underdevelopment. A Lamont University Professor at Harvard University, Sen's research on welfare economics won him the 1998 Bank of Sweden Prize in Economic Sciences (Nobel Prize for Economics). His publications have influenced contemporary thinking in human development theory. An annual publication of UNDP's *Human Development Report* draws much from Sen's work on capabilities.

Much criticism of Sen's welfare economics has focused on his "silence" on globalization and privatization as well as on his being perceived to be an "anti-market proponent" (Sen 2004). Globalization for Sen (2004) "is a difficult issue" since economic and political "inequalities are monumental." He however believes "greater global contact has been a very strong force for good over thousands of years", further arguing, that "despite the inequality of power," there has been a "positive contribution that a global movement of ideas, of knowledge and understanding makes" (Sen, 2004). He also believes that "economic globalization itself could be a source of major advancement of living conditions," such that "globalization can become more equitable and effective" (Sen, 2004).

Sen (2004) observes that development thinking has been primarily influenced by economic growth theory, based on the assumption that poor countries "are just low-income countries." Instead, Sen (2004) advances the thought that development has to be "concerned with advancing human well-being and human freedom." He does not entirely reject income levels as a contributing factor to welfare and freedom, but acknowledges that it is one of the many factors (Sen, 1999, 2004). Drawing on the work of Mahbub ul-Haq, Sen conceptualizes human development as an "approach" that is concerned with "advancing the richness of the economy in which human beings live" (Sen, 2004). He gives examples of "some policies emanating from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, which have not been "ideally suited for the advancement of an agenda of human development" (Sen, 2004).

Sen (2004) acknowledges the "inequalities in the governing structure" of the two organizations which were established at a time when many countries were not fully democratic and independent, resulting in a lack of equality "in terms of the influence of different perspectives." He acknowledges the "vocal and influential" power that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as OXFAM have over development policy thinking and practice with regard to "making the voices of the poor and the underprivileged heard" and also for "fighting for the underdogs of society" (Sen, 2004).

Development is conceptualised as the “process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy” (Sen, 199: 3). Sen argues that economic indicators of development can become important means to expanding these freedoms which encompass *political freedoms, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees* and *protective security* (Sen, 1999, 2004). These freedoms are central to human development due to two factors: the ability of development to enhance them and the ability of people to participate as free agents in pursuing these freedoms (Sen, 1999: 4). Freedom, in Sen’s concept, are those essentialist aspirations that offer us the ability and capability to “live as we would like”, the capability to “live really long and to have a good life while alive” (Sen, 2004: 13-14).

One of the central thoughts in *Development as Freedom* involves the questions of “social choice” and “social values” which Sen (1999: 149) contends, are critical to achieving “reasoned progress”, or what Nora Quebral (2002) terms “planned change.” Sen is quick to recognize that societies have a “heterogeneity of preferences and values” which would make it difficult to have a “reasoned” social assessment (1999: 249). He does however believe that political freedoms, public debates and discussions are vital in the formation and utilization of social values, civil rights and social existence (1999: 287).

For communication for development thinking today, Sen (1999: 153) advises that political freedoms and civil rights are very instrumental in ensuring that there are policy responses to economic needs, attainment of which requires exercising of such civil rights. Assessing social and political challenges thus requires the “reach and effectiveness” of open dialogues (Sen, 1999: 153). Sen therefore rightly concludes that a healthy democratic system is a key to achieving human development (1999: 157). People’s participation in development should begin from policy making through implementation and evaluation, and not just as beneficiaries.

5. 1 United Nations and communication for development

Drawing in part upon Sen’s conceptualisation of human development, the United Nations has adopted a concept of communication for development that addresses development as freedom, through highlighting the need for meeting the Millennium Development Goals which comprise visions to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; achieve universal primary education; promote gender equality and empower women; reduce child mortality; improve maternal health; combat HIV/AIDS malaria and other diseases; and ensure environmental

sustainability. To address such development challenges which Sen advocates, the UN advances a *ComDev* concept, whose key issues comprise people, sustainable change, poverty, indigenous knowledge, dialogue, culture and local context.

The UN Roundtables as well as the World Congress on Communication for Development, have thus defined *ComDev* as a “social process based on dialogue using a broad range of tools and methods; and includes seeking change at different levels including listening, building trust, sharing knowledge and skills, building policies, debating and learning for sustained and meaningful change” (UNESCO/UNDP, 2007: 38). This *ComDev* concept is built on three trajectories, namely, communication in governance, or communication as participation; communication in support of specific development sectors; and knowledge and information and communication technologies (UNESCO/UNDP, 2007).

Regarding **communication in governance**, the UN envisions communication as a tool and process of enabling people to perform their citizenship, enabling them to actively participate in public debates on issues affecting the welfare of their families and communities. Much work by UNESCO has involved initiating studies and projects that promote access and rights to information; rights-based social mobilization, communication for social change, public communication and journalism; development and building of media and capacity; and cultural diversity (UNESCO/UNDP, 2007). On **communication in support of development sectors**, the UN charts out the role of communication in motivating people to adopt better and safer practices in areas such as health, natural resource management, agriculture, livelihoods, gender, and education (UNESCO/UNDP, 2007). In behavioural change communication, the key issue is empowering people to take action on important development debates and initiatives. The question of **knowledge and information and communication technologies** encompasses appropriate and dynamic ICT policy environments; the use of ICTs in development; increasing rural access to ICTS, ICTs and social economic development, e-governance; and telecentres and knowledge centres (UNESCO/UNDP, 2007).

The issues are crosscutting and relate to each other; and the UN observes that *ComDev* is largely about citizen’s empowerment and is linked to questions of freedom of expression, media independence and the creation of a healthy public sphere (UNESCO/UNDP, 2007). Sen’s human development focuses on satisfying the needs of the local people and not on the demand of the global market; hence human beings are the very purpose of development endeavours

(Babu in Rodney, 1972: 315; Nyerere, 1974: 28). Participatory development should address the dreams, problems, fears and aspirations as identified by the poor themselves, which strengthens the personalisation of resulting interventions (Babu in Rodney, 1972). Much as a people's poverty alleviation remains the primary goal in human development, issues of participation, self-identity, self-reliance and good governance remain the principal ideals (Rahman, 1995: 30).

5.2 The African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation

Similarly, the *African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation* (UN, 1990) adopted by African governments in Tanzania in 1990, recognises popular participation as a fundamental right and the 'driving force for collective commitment for the determination of people-based development processes'. The first section, *Asserting the Role of Popular Participation*, is an affirmation of solidarity with and recognition of the non-economic nature of Africa's development problem, mainly due to poor governance and mismanagement of resources, factors that have 'severely constrained and curtailed' people's motivation, and that 'their collective and individual creativity has been undervalued and underutilised' (UN, 1990). Nation building, healthy economies and livelihoods cannot be built 'without the popular support and full participation of the people', who must be empowered 'to determine the direction and content of development' (UN, 1990).

The second section, *Promoting Popular Participation*, calls for democratic structures, which tolerate different opinions and provides avenues for consensus which will enable citizens to be empowered and involved to 'effectively involve themselves in designing structures, policies and programmes that serve the interests of all'. Communities should establish machinery for consultation at different levels and for sharing of experiences and promoting co-operation and interrelationships on sub-regional and regional levels. This will enable citizens to commit themselves to establishing grass-root organizations that are voluntary, democratic, independent, and rooted in the tradition and culture of the society (UN, 1990). Governments should protect human rights by promoting peace, ending all armed conflicts, and importantly, implement human rights charters such as the *African Charter on Human and People's Rights* and the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

The third section, *Popular Participation in Development*, proposes logistical strategies for achieving participation, by implementing policies that are in line with people's aspirations and which incorporate African values and socio-economic realities. This section also mandates the civil society to share information and knowledge. The fourth and last section, *Monitoring Popular Participation*, recognises the 'urgent necessity' to involve the people in monitoring popular participation, on the basis of indicators like literacy rates, freedom of association, rule of law, social and economic justice, employment rates, and decentralisation of decision-making processes and institutions (UN, 1990). The section emphasises the 'necessity to follow-up and monitor the implementation of this Charter and to report periodically on progress achieved as well as problems encountered'.

6. Communication for development in Africa

6.1. The media development projects: Strengthening good governance

Media development initiatives largely originate from the recommendations of *Many Voices, One World*, the UNESCO-commissioned *International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems* (ICSCP), carried out in the 1970s. The ICSCP Report (1980) emphasises the importance of community participation in programming and management of communication systems, for the empowerment and development of marginalised communities; the need for communities and individuals to create their own alternative communications; and that small media be 'used for social purposes, as a support to local development schemes' which also includes initiatives 'where conscious involvement of local populations is felt necessary'.

Media development involves supporting and building the capacity of media policies, structures and ownership as pathways towards strengthening good governance and building fragile democracies (IPDC, n.d). The International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) is a "multilateral forum" within the United Nations established with the aim of mobilizing and promoting media development. IPDC projects have promoted media independence and pluralism, development of community media, radio and television organizations, modernization of national and regional news agencies, and training of media professionals (IPDC, n.d).

In Mozambique, the Media Development Project started in 1998 as a

collaborative initiative between UNESCO-Mozambique and UNDP, with the aim of 'strengthening democracy and governance' through development of the media in Mozambique, by further supporting processes of decentralisation, pluralism and independence of the media (Media Development Project, n.d). The project aims at building the capacity of journalists and editors, supporting the emerging, independent print press, capacity building of communities to establish and sustain community radio stations and multimedia centres, supporting the national public broadcaster, strengthening the role of women in the media, and providing capacity building in development reporting (Jallov, 2005; Media Development Project, n.d).

In South Africa, the government set up the Media Development and Diversity Agency through an Act of Parliament (Act 14 of 2002). The aim has been to develop the country's media environment and infrastructure as a vehicle for empowering "communities marginalised by years of racial segregation and political conflict" to have access to media as managers, producers and active consumers' (MDDA, n.d). The initiative has focused on community and small commercial media, such as community and rural radios or indigenous newspapers. MDDA observes that it encourages ownership and control of, and access to, media by historically disadvantaged communities and language groups; builds the capacity of local communities to own and manage media structures; and facilitates active research in the development and diversification of media (MDDA, n.d).

Media Development should therefore be seen as the praxis of 'understanding and challenging the hegemony of existing frameworks of economic and political power' (Gumucio, 2001: 12; Rahman, 1995: 26-27). Freire observes that the less people are asked 'about their expectations, the less the democracy we have' (Freire and Horton, 1990: 146).

6.2. Community theatre for development

From the 1980s, international organizations realised the importance of employing popular and indigenous art forms in mobilizing communities towards development initiatives. The community theatre movement has moved from universities to the rural communities, where smaller groups are actively involved in various developmental mobilization activities. Traditional and popular forms of communication contribute in sustaining culture and development through inclusion of development messages; acting as research tools for analysing development problems as well as creating critical awareness and potential for

action to solve those problems (Mlama, 1971).

Kamlongera (1988) details how the Chancellor College Travelling Theatre employed community theatre to sensitise people in Malawi through the newly built rural growth centre by the same name. Zakes Mda (1993) discusses how, with the Morotholi Travelling Theatre, he toured Lesotho, sensitising communities on sanitation, alcoholism, and health, among other issues. Kamlongera (1988) and David Kerr (1989) discuss how, together with the Chancellor College Travelling Theatre, they toured Malawi's districts in sensitising communities to issues of primary health care and other development interventions. Similarly, the USAID-funded Girls' Attainment of Basic Literacy Education (GABLE) Project in Malawi involved theatre troupe members researching and performing dramas depicting real-life situations that impeded primary school education for girls; and, at the same time, showed villagers how to overcome those problems (Manyozo, 2002).

6.3. Rural and community radio initiatives

The ICSCP Report (1980: 256) promotes the 'utilisation of local radio' to 'facilitate the production of programmes relevant to community development efforts, stimulating participation and providing opportunity for diversified cultural expression'. On the African continent, rural and community broadcasting emerged when public broadcasters began producing educational and indigenous language programming targeted at the rural constituency. With the help of CIERRO (the the Inter-African Centre for Rural Radio Studies) in Ouagadougou, governments and development organizations started organized attempts at establishing independent stations located in rural areas, and whose management and programming resulted from community participation.

Independent stations were first opened up in West Africa, such as Benin, Togo, Ghana, Mali, but largely aimed at supporting development initiatives. In Southern Africa, the concept of community broadcasting started taking root from the 1980s with organizations such as AMARC and PANOS, who have been interested in strengthening the media's role in the new democracies. An important milestone in community broadcasting was the adoption of the *2001 African Charter on Broadcasting*. The Charter underscores the importance of freedom of expression and conceptualises community broadcasting as "broadcasting for, by and about the community." Community broadcasters have been established in many countries largely with donor funding, principal among them being UNESCO.

6.4. ICT for Development

The *2001 African Charter on Broadcasting* emphasizes the rights of communities to have access to ICTs such as telephones, email, internet and multi-media centres; and this includes mobilizing and building the capacity of communities, liberalization of the ICT industry, and promotion of e-commerce and e-governance. Chigovanyika (2007) discusses the use of ICTs in the rural Mutare district in Zimbabwe, where, despite the challenge of English language, community groups are employing ICTs in supporting their socio-economic activities. Similarly, Mapi, Dalvit and Terzoli (2007) provide a critical assessment of an ICT for development initiative in Eastern Cape in South Africa, where under the Siyakhula project undertaken by the Universities of Fort Hare and Rhodes, an ICT infrastructure was established in Dwesa comprising computers, network and related software.

A capacity building initiative in computer literacy is underway which has seen the training of school teachers as well as community groups in using the hardware and software to promote education and socio-economic development. The challenge however, has been to mobilise communities on the importance and benefits of using computers. Communities face the challenge of the language impediment, as computer and Internet content is largely in English, which also widens the digital divide (Mapi, Dalvit and Terzoli, 2007). Another challenge is with regard to accepting the changes that employing ICTs in businesses would bring about.

6.5. Behavioural change communication

Behavioural change communication has covered many aspects of people's livelihoods especially public health. The Soul City Institute has pioneered innovative and multimedia approaches towards health promotion and social change, providing a framework for behavioural change communications in the SADC region (Soul City, n.d). The Institute is interested in critically examining health and development issues, "imparting information and impacting on social norms, attitudes and practice." Its impact is aimed at the level of the "individual, the community and the socio-political environment" (Soul City, n.d). It produces booklets, radio and television drama series for both adults and children, engages in education and training, advocacy, research and evaluation and well as coordinating a regional health communication programme that involved numerous partners in Southern Africa.

Similarly, the Media for Development Trust in Zimbabwe promotes the sharing of knowledge of development issues through the use of video and film (MfD, n.d). The organization's productions have included *Consequences* (1988), *It's Not Easy* (1989), *Neria* (1990), *More Time* (1993), *Everyone's Child* (1996) and *Yellow Card* (2000). MfD also focuses on developing and producing "support materials for video programmes and has implemented "grassroots distribution" programmes in several countries throughout the region" (MfD, n.d). Similarly in Kenya, the "Youth Variety Show" used to be an upbeat, interactive, entertaining, and non-judgemental weekly English-language radio show. The programme "addressed the issues of being an adolescent including health, emotional development, physical changes, pregnancy, STDs, and drug and substance abuse." Numerous behavioural change initiatives are being implemented all over the continent.

7. Afterthoughts and recommendations

The foregoing has briefly explored the theory and practice of communication for development from the 1950s as it evolved from the 1940s both within and outside the universities. Communication for development may have different definitions, but suffice to mention here that in theory and practice, the concept deals with community engagement, participatory generation, sharing and utilisation of knowledge as well as sustainable communities, livelihoods and environment. Key to communication for development is the strengthening of local decision-making structures, empowerment and social change.

The discussion has emphasized the concept of meaningful development as raised by Amartya Sen and the *African Charter for Popular Participation in Development*, the focus being on linking development to the aspirations, needs and freedoms of beneficiaries. Sen's *Development as Freedom* provides a theoretical conceptualisation of more participatory forms of communication for development. His work might be criticised for not providing a model or framework for designing and implementing meaningful development, but is still vital as a philosophy that should govern the design and implementation of sustainable development interventions.

This study has also identified the UN's three main trajectories characterising *ComDev* as comprising communication in governance, or communication as participation; communication in support of specific development sectors; and knowledge and information and communication technologies (UNESCO/UNDP,

2007). Resulting from that, this study has discussed *ComDev* case studies from the African continent. The report makes a few but critical recommendations.

- Collaborative research is needed between academics and civil society and community groups.
- Building of community capacity to use ICTs for development purposes is essential.
- Promoting the use of local languages in new ICTs is crucial.
- Communication for development teaching should focus on producing graduates who master tools for living and engaging with people.
- There is need for testing of people-centred impact evaluations, to help build the capacity of communities to design and carry out their own evaluations.
- Media development initiatives should combine indigenous communication systems with appropriate use of modern low-cost communications technology so as to strengthen their communication capacities for development' (UN, 1990).
- Efforts should be made to recognise non-western forms of *ComDev*.

The media might be conceptualised as just tools, but it should be emphasized here that they are still vital, since successful design and implementation of numerous communication for development praxes (as in media-based behavioural change communications such as *Soul City* series) relies on their taking a centre stage. So they are not just tools, they are a major pathway in communication for development. Nevertheless, the successful design and implementation of *ComDev* interventions faces numerous challenges such as: lack of unified policy frameworks on ICTs and their role in development; rising commercialism in public and community media; misunderstanding over what *ComDev* entails, resulting in equating the practice with public relations or publicity; and inadequate training opportunities.

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Ethical Dimension of the Information Society

By Africanus L. Diedong

1.0 Introduction

The need to create and sustain a just information society requires the full participation of civil society in its conception, implementation, and operation. Yet in many developing countries, despite the fact that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has gained a central place in governments' development plans and policies, the central ethical problematics in the adoption and use of ICT resources which are equity, participation, access and social responsibility, are often overlooked. If equity, participation, access and social responsibility could be dealt with from an ethical point of view, there might be better outcomes as a result of the ICT policies being adopted in Africa.

The broad ICT policy objectives in Africa are geared towards the promotion of the public interest. However, without an explicitly defined ethical approach in the ICT policies, it is difficult to see how initiatives that are in the public interest can be properly guaranteed. In the ICT policies being adopted in Africa, there is the tendency of defining the public interest or common good in economic and legal terms which are limited in scope and depth. Apart from the limitation created by the definition of such terms, it generally results in support of particular interests instead of a more profound and meaningful approach which might introduce the element of "a certain transcendent quality" with respect to ICT policy.

To achieve such a "transcendent quality" the ethical factor is crucial in ICT policies. Indeed, these policies should be guided by fundamental principles such as the preservation of nature and life, non-violence, a sense of human solidarity, harmony and, above all, justice or respect for a sense of human dignity and security. The common good as currently articulated in ICT policies in Africa is far from being socially inclusive because an essentially 'dialogical' ethics of communication, one that embraces the major norms/measures for evaluating the quality of communication, is not explicitly encapsulated in the policies. These values are universals which many communication scholars agree upon as being crucial ethical issues in social communications (Mowlana, 1989; Cooper,

1989; White, 1995; Christians & Traber, 1997; Christians & Nordenstreng 2004).

Since the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) took place in Tunis, Tunisia in November 2005, many African countries have become actively involved in efforts aimed at implementing the WSIS Action Plan (WSIS, 2005).

As a prelude to the second phase of the WSIS in Tunisia, Ghana hosted in February 2005 the African Conference on the WSIS under the theme: “Access - Africa’s Key to an Inclusive Information Society.” The main resolutions adopted at the end of the conference included the need to establish after Tunis 2005 appropriate implementing mechanisms as well as to seek adequate financing.

There is no doubt that internet connectivity in most African countries has improved over the years. However, the spread of ICTs has to a large extent been confined to towns and urban areas. Many people in rural areas in Africa still lack access to the media - television, radio and newspapers. Perhaps the development of ICT and attempts being made to bridge the digital divide between the North and South, coupled with a judicious blend of the use of other media resources such as video, television, radio, newspapers and traditional media by African countries can give a realistic opportunity to many people to be active participants in the fast-evolving information society. If this happened it would meet an ethical standard of a sense of participation by all peoples from different cultures to maximise the development and deployment of communication resources for the common good.

African countries can give meaning to their membership in the information and knowledge-based society if they are willing and committed to consciously building and nurturing a new Africa around these new technologies without necessarily losing sight of fundamental values which are grounded in a communitarian ethical stance where “community as a fundamental human good, advocates a life of mutual consideration and aid and of interdependence, a life in which one shares the fate of the other – bearing one another up – a life which provides a viable framework for the fulfilment of the individual’s nature or potentials” Gyekye, (1992, 120). Attempts at building a new ICT-oriented society must incorporate into that vision the ethical dimension which ultimately will lead to the integral development of the human person. The act of communication – ‘the communicational deed’ to use the language of Habermas – raises moral as well as technical questions. The choice between information either as a means or end in itself boils down to a choice between human beings as means and ends – bearing in mind that as Kant points out, to consider

individuals as means is to rule out any morals from the deed or intention. Morals, therefore lie at the very root of information and communication; and conversely, information and communication lie at the very heart of morals (Encabo, 1995). African Communication experts, such as Ekwow Spio-Garbrah (2007), Chief Executive of the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organization, have indicated how the critical challenges in rolling out ICT in Africa are best identified under the rubrics of policy, regulation operations, technology, finance, human resource, and consumer awareness.

Without disputing how relevant these aspects are in the fashioning of functional ICT strategies, it is equally important to always emphasise the ethical implications of the use of ICT. How has the challenge of conducting an ethical dialogue been part and parcel of the discourses on the expected benefits of the use of ICT, especially those which envisage initiatives that can “leap frog” earlier stages of development in developing countries? The challenge of an ethical dialogue should empower people with sufficient platforms in a sustained manner to enable them to engage in a dialogue with policies makers and stakeholders in the communication industry in a spirit of openness and freedom regarding problems such as cyber fraud and pornography which have become more pronounced in the ICT era. The engagement of everyone in discussions about the ethical challenges of the use of ICT facilities will, in the long run, raise public awareness of the concerns and probably foster a sense of collective resolve to be guided by fundamental values in their choices and use of ICT facilities.

ICT is remarkably beneficial in the life of people in many African countries and this is seen in how mobile telephony is playing an important role in Africa's political, economic, social and cultural growth and development. However, it should be pointed out that this kind of benefit is not equivalent to having achieved an ethical approach to ICTs. In Ghana, just as in many countries in Africa with free press regimes, ordinary citizens have been empowered to participate in the processes of governance and effective democracy through call-ins to radio and TV discussion programmes as well as by alerting law enforcement bodies to robberies or other anti-social practices. Despite the reported exponential growth rates of mobile penetration in some countries, less than 15 percent of Africans own a mobile handset (Addo, 2006).

Just as it is a challenge for Africa to harness ICT as a traded commodity for their common good, there is the need to take into consideration the ethical dimension of the structures and systems within which ICTs are used so as to get the best out of these resources. This implies that it is important for especially African

countries and organisations to build a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented information society, where everyone can feel sufficiently empowered to access, utilise and share information and knowledge geared toward sustainable development in order to improve the quality of their lives. African countries need to fashion ethically sound strategies in order to avert the risk of creating a culture whereby the means of communication, particularly the new ICT products, are consumed principally for the sake of economic fulfilment. This is becoming culturally fashionable, especially among the young because of a lack of an ethical consciousness about how best to use ICT facilities to enhance their knowledge, human dignity, and contribute effectively towards human growth and development. In the technologically advanced age, the right to private ownership of productive goods, which includes sophisticated ICT equipment, has strong validity. However, the social character of ownership implies that people must consider in this matter not only their own interests but also the common good/public interest. Therefore, public authority can determine more accurately what should be permitted and not permitted in the use of their properties (Rodger, 1999). This means that there is the need to pose some fundamental questions.

- Is there a place for ethics in ICT-driven development planning policies in Africa?
- How can the consumption of ICT products by African countries contribute to the integral development of people?
- To what extent are people viewed as an end in measures of communication in an emerging information society in Africa?

2.0 Methodological Approach

The data for this research was collected through interviews with major stakeholders in the ICT industry (end users and regulators). It also involved a critical review of relevant documents to see whether, within the euphoria about ICTs on the part of African countries, and especially Ghana, to embrace ICTs which has resulted in the commercialisation of the sector, the state has also been taking the valorisation or ethical dimension of communication services seriously.

Relevant documents and discourses produced by debates on fostering an information-rich society in which people are ethically conscious and empowered to play a leading role in building the kind of information society they need have been critically analysed.

3.0 ICT Initiatives in Africa after the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS)

Ghana is privileged to be among the first countries in Africa to achieve connection to the Internet. The Network Computer Systems, a privately owned entity, which introduced the internet in 1995, is credited with registering the gh.com domain name. Today, over 140 new Internet Service Providers (ISPs) have been licensed, even though a handful remains active. The problem is partly because there is stiff competition among ISPs to attract a significant share of the small customer base for their services. Internet penetration is estimated at around 2 per cent (Darkwa, 2007). As compared to developed countries, the current figure of 120,000 internet users with 10,000 internet locations in Ghana is highly inadequate. Only 2.5 per cent of Africa's 800 million people have internet access, compared with 17.8 per cent in the rest of the world (Madamombe, 2007). At a recent New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) conference in Nairobi, Kenya, experts warned that development would be seriously hindered if Africa failed to bridge the ICT gap that separated the continent from developed countries. It is no wonder that Africa in general is described as "the most unconnected in an increasingly connected world." (Wiafe, 2007)

However, mobile phone coverage in sub-Saharan Africa is growing impressively, up from 20 per cent population coverage in 2000 to over 60 per cent in 2006. According to an in-depth report published in June by the GSM Association (Jere-Malanda, 2007), a global trade association representing over 700 GSM mobile phone operators across 218 countries, mobile phone penetration has increased dramatically in sub-Saharan Africa, up from 1 per cent in 2000 to 18 per cent in 2006. This is due to the fact that mobile services are becoming more affordable and handset prices are declining. In many African countries, the past six years has witnessed the number of mobile phone subscribers overtaking the number of fixed phones. In Kenya, for example, mobile connections now outnumber fixed lines by 18 to 1 and in Tanzania by 32 to 1 (Jere-Malanda, 2007).

Aware that a nation's capability and capacity to accelerate its socio-economic development depends very much on the extent to which it can develop, use and sell information, knowledge and technology, the Ministry of Communication in Ghana has steadily facilitated the development of the country's ICT policy and blueprint (the Policy was passed into law in 2004) to guide Ghana in gaining a competitive advantage as a result of ICT deployment (ICT4AD, 2003). The

Economic Commission for Africa in partnership with key partners has assisted over 28 African countries to develop ICT national strategies for accelerating their socio-economic development and is also working with a number of these countries to embark on implementation.

Other African countries like Mauritius, Rwanda, Mozambique, South Africa, and Senegal have put in place comprehensive ICT policies and most of these countries are at an advanced stage of implementing these programmes across their economies and societies. In fact, Rwanda is one of the leading African countries to have developed a comprehensive ICT-led accelerated development policy, including strategies and programmes aimed at transforming the Rwandan society and economy within 20 years. To a large extent, the policy plans are ambitious and may be quite difficult to implement partly because of lack of funds and a strong political will. This report will draw specifically on Ghana with a view to drawing out the wider implications as regards African country initiatives to implement the WSIS Plan of Action.

Currently as one of the objectives to ensure that there will be a concerted effort to encourage the involvement of the private sector, the donor community, and bilateral and multilateral organisations in the implementation of the policies and strategies that have been developed, the ICT Policy and Plan Development Committee under the Ghana Ministry of Communication is responsible for the development of the following specific **ICT action and implementation plans** over the time-span of 2007-2010. The implementation plans are to be the basis for the hosting of major roundtable discussions during the last quarter of the year to attract potential investment into the various sectors.

- The E-Government sub-plan: It aims at facilitating government administration and service delivery, including the promotion of electronic government and governance initiatives. In Africa though governments are using different approaches to implement E-Government programmes, one goal that remains central to all plans is to provide citizens with a one-stop-shop on-line delivery service that is accessible at all times. Currently, similar initiatives such as e-Nigeria, e-Rwanda, e-Mauritius, etc. are being undertaken.
- The Accelerated Human Development Sub-plan: For promoting human resource development targeting key skills areas necessary for developing Ghana's information and knowledge economy and society.
- The E-Education Sub-plan: For promoting ICTs in education, targeting all

levels of the education system from primary to university.

- The Private Sector Development Sub-plan: For supporting the development of the private sector including promoting the use of ICTs to support sectoral development, including key economic sectors like: agriculture, services and the manufacturing sectors.
- The E-Commerce Development Sub-plan: For targeting the development of e-commerce services and products and ICT services in Ghana.
- The ICTs-in-Community Sub-plan: Targeted at programmes and initiatives for facilitating the rapid deployment of ICTs within the community to promote universal access to and the exploitation of ICTs and its resources in the population at large.
- The E-Health Sub-plan: For facilitating the deployment of and exploitation of ICTs to facilitate health care delivery in Ghana.
- The ICT and Physical Infrastructural Development and Roll-out Sub-plan: For facilitating infrastructural development including physical and the telecommunications and communications infrastructure.
- The Legal, Regulatory, Institutional Provisions and Standards Sub-plan: For supporting the creation of the necessary legal and regulatory environment to support the development and exploitation of ICTs within the economy and society.
- Industrial and Scientific Research Sub-plan: For facilitating and promoting industrial scientific research that will lead to the development of an ICT production industry in Ghana.
- Foreign Direct Investment Drive (FDI) in ICTs Sub-plan: For targeting the promotion of ICT-related FDIs into Ghana to support the development of the ICT industry and sector to drive efforts towards the development of Ghana's information and knowledge economy and society.
- The E-Security Sub-plan: For addressing national security and law and order issues to support and promote ICTs exploitation in the country.

Efforts aimed at improving the ICT/Telecom deployment in Ghana are indicated by the appreciable growth achieved within the Telecom sector within the past five year

Five Year Growth Trend in Fixed and Mobile Telephony Table 1:

	Dec. 2001	March 2007
Fixed Lines	248,940	365,991
Mobile Lines	215,921	5,363,299
Total (F & M)	464,861	5,729,290

Source: Ministry of Communication, Ghana, June 22, 2007.

From a 2001 total fixed line figure of 248, 940, as at March 2007 the number had increased to 365,991, representing a five-year increase of 47 per cent. As regards mobile subscriptions, from a 2001 figure of 215,921, as at March 2007 the number had shot up to 5,363,299. For 2006, there was an incremental move to 20 per cent from a 2005 teledensity of 15 per cent. In 2007, the projection is that Ghana will hit a teledensity of 35-40 per cent.

As regards access indicators, a lot more concrete action is needed in Ghana to bridge the digital divide.

Access Indicators Table 2:

i.	No. of fixed line subscribers as at 1 st Quarter 2007	365,911
ii.	No. of cell phone subscribers as at 1 st Quarter 2007	5363,229
iii.	No. of payphones as at 1 st Quarter 2007	11,636
iv	No. of Internet Users	1,500,000
v	No. of operational Internet Service Providers as at 1 st Quarter	29
vi	No. of Broadband subscribers	12,000

Source: Ministry of Communication, Ghana, June 22, 2007.

In August 2006, the Ghana Ministry of Communication in conjunction with Chinese experts, produced a comprehensive rural telephony access plan for Ghana which, when linked to the National Fibre Optic Project, which is to link all communities in the country via telecommunication, will aid internet services provision in rural areas where two-thirds of the people live. The first phase of the project is under construction with the assistance of the Chinese government

which has provided a concessionary loan of facility of \$30 million. The second phase of the facility is estimated to cost \$70 million. According to the Ministry of Communication, the government of Ghana is expecting a \$150 million Chinese assistance package to facilitate the extension of telephony services in rural areas. Currently, in Ghana the Fibre optic ring covers only the southern part of the country.

At the moment, the Indian Ocean's Eastern African seabed is the only one in the world without a submarine fibre optic cable, hence the region's reliance on limited and expensive satellite links. This means Africa has some of the highest communication costs in the world. A 2005 study by a UN task force found that 90 per cent of calls between African countries are routed by satellite through Europe or North America, at a cost of \$400m a year. The estimated cost of laying the fibre optic cable stretching up to 8,000 miles along the Indian Ocean ranges from \$100m to \$200m (Jere-Malanda, 2007).

In a document released in April, *Missing Link*, the World Bank's Global Information and Communication Technologies Department (GICT) decries how sub-Saharan Africa accounts for less than 1 per cent of the world's international bandwidth capacity (Jere-Malanda, 2007). This practically means that connecting to the high-speed internet or making an international phone call is out of reach of the majority of people in many African countries. The GICT has, therefore, set up the Africa Regional Communications Infrastructure Programme (RCIP) to address the "missing link" and to improve access to international connectivity by focusing on closing the terrestrial connectivity gap. Kenya, Burundi and Madagascar are involved in the first phase of RCIP which has a combined volume of \$164.5m, out of a \$424m envelop for the overall programme. Other eligible countries in East and Southern Africa can join future phases of the programme on a readiness basis (Jere-Malanda, 2007).

These developments aimed at promoting universal access to ICT facilities, is quite commendable because it demonstrates that international solidarity can contribute to the bridging of the digital divide both at the local and international levels. Furthermore, from a Judeo-Christian perspective, there is the belief that all men and women are equal in human dignity and that the wealth of the world was given to mankind in order that all might enjoy a good life; thus, the degree of inequality should not be so great that it means there is social injustice (Rodger, 1999).

4.0 Citizens and Participation in ICT: Democratic Participation and Prospects for Change

Universal access and service can serve as indicators of fairness in the distribution of national resources for the common good. In fact, in order to practically demonstrate to people that they are living in the information age, there must be a concrete shift from 'digital rhetoric' to social inclusion in the use of ICT facilities by every citizen of the global village. As part of the tangible steps being taken to promote universal access and services, the Ghana Investment Fund for Telecommunications (GIFTEL) has been established to facilitate the extension of telecommunication services to underserved and unserved areas through the provision of subsidies for the building of common telecommunications facilities. Under the 2007 programme a total of twenty-nine towns have been approved for the award of subsidies for the provision of common telecommunications facilities. It is estimated that by the end of this year a total of forty-four telecommunications facilities would have been provided by GIFTEL across the country.

The common usage of these infrastructures by Telecom Operators to serve the towns and their environs is expected to reduce connectivity cost and, correspondingly, to bring down the cost of service provision to these hitherto underserved areas. The Telecom Operators, namely Ghana Telecom, the only national carrier for telecommunication services in Ghana who operate both a fixed and mobile service; Westel, a private company, one of the two national fixed line carriers; and another three private players, TIGO (the first cellular service), MTN and Kasapa, which provide mobile services as well, are committed to the payment of 1 per cent of their net profit to sustain the operations of GIFTEL. The payment of these fees which can be described as a kind of Universal Service Fund (USF) is one of the ways Telecom operators can show their corporate social responsibility. However, it should be noted that, viewed from a business perspective, the financial commitment they have willingly contributed to subsidizing the construction of common telecom tower service facilities at selected sites across the country will enlarge their customer base. The gesture by the private telecom companies, though commendable, is not purely motivated by any explicit ethical policy initiative of the government of Ghana.

4.1 Community Information Centre (CICs)

The CIC concept has been developed to promote an all-inclusive information and knowledge society to benefit underserved and rural areas. To date, 72 CICs have

been constructed. This year, GIFTEL has been tasked to facilitate connectivity solutions and equipment supply. By the close of 2007, 37 CICs are expected to be fully operational. In terms of need or population 37 is a small number, considering the fact that the rural population in Ghana is about 70 per cent of the approximate 20 million population of Ghana. The programme is being supported by the United Nations Development Fund (UNDP).

In addition to the CIC programme, the setting up of eCARE (eCommerce and Renewal Energy) across the country under the collaborative effort of Ghana Telecom, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Fund, the Ghana Investment Fund for Telecommunications and the Kumasi Institute of Technology and Environment is in process. Known as Rural Business Centres (RBCs), the eCARE Centres comprise 20-foot metal containers powered by solar energy and fitted with such gadgets as telephones, computers, printers, internet connectivity and other ICT facilities. The eCARE project, which was initiated in December 2003, has so far put into successful operation 52 RBCs. Given the need in rural areas this figure is woefully inadequate.

In fact, in Ghana the thorny problem is not exactly the telephone lines though the penetration rate is not high. The crux of the matter, even for people in urban areas in Africa, is the issue of affordability of IT facilities for communication. Due to low income levels coupled with high unemployment levels in Africa many people cannot buy computers for personal use at home. In the private sector, connectivity is not very impressive. Many small and medium scale businesses are not connected to the internet. One of the challenges has been the monthly subscription charges. The average cost for broadband service is close to US \$70 per month. In view of the high incidence of unemployment and under-employment in many countries in African, including Ghana US \$70 per month is high. Most individuals and small-scale private enterprises cannot afford such a fee.

As a concrete measure to promote ICT literacy and increase PC penetration in Ghana, there is an initiative known as the Government Assisted PC Programme (GAPP) which is aimed at assisting employees and students to have access to computers at a more affordable rate of \$300. About 70 per cent of Ghanaians who live in the rural areas are engaged in agriculture. Their income barely caters for their basic needs such as healthcare, shelter, food and clothing. Many of them lack access to electricity and telephone facilities. As a result, the majority of rural folk, apart from their inability to acquire and use computers, cannot be connected to the internet. It can be concluded that the same percentage are

computer illiterate. Generally in Africa, even in the cities where there is connection to the internet, it is expensive and the average person on the street cannot afford it.

Code-named iADVANCE, this programme was successfully launched in 2006 (Oquaye, 2006). The Government of Ghana through the Procurement Board has granted a one-year sole sourcing right to all Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) to buy the computers under the Programme (GAPP). This is expected to save the government millions in revenue that would otherwise have been lost through the purchase of expensive brand name computers. In order to make it easy for salaried workers to buy the package, an installment payment plan has been arranged through a partner bank to ensure that all salaried workers intending to purchase an iADVANCE product can have access to the product through a flexible payment plan. Under the iADVANCE programme, close to 10,000 PCs have been sold to institutions and individuals so far.

The Ministry of Communications has begun discussions with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning on the possibility of reducing taxes on ICT equipment in Ghana. The issue of a reduction of taxes on ICT equipment, according to the Ghana Ministry of Communications, is a project component supported by the World Trade Organisation and it is being implemented in some African countries (Jafaru, 2007).

4.2 The Involvement of Schools and Institutions in ICT Development

Ghana has a high illiteracy rate of close to 40 per cent of the population above the age of 6 years who have never been to school with only about 3 per cent of the population with tertiary level education. Since about 70 per cent of Ghanaians live in the rural areas and many do not have access to electricity and telephone facilities, and for that reason cannot use computers let alone connect to the internet, it can be concluded that the same percentage of people are computer illiterate. Based on the current population growth rate of 2.5 per cent annually, Ghana's population will be about 38 million, double the 2000 figure, by 2028 (CAFDIL, 2006). The projected rate of growth of Ghana's population is likely to give rise to a number of socio-economic development challenges including those relating to: pressure on social expenditure in areas like education.

According to the Ghana ICT for Accelerated Development (ICT4D) Policy, under the E-Education Sub-plan the key implementation agencies, players and

stakeholders are the following:

- The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports
- The Universities, Polytechnics, Colleges and Research Institutions
- Local and Foreign Educational and Training Provision Organizations.

In Ghana, despite improvements in the performance of the education sector in the past few years, there are still significant problems especially with regard to the expansion of schools and other learning facilities to people in rural areas. As a response to rectify the prevailing inequality in access to education and knowledge in Ghana, a distance learning project known as the Cardinal Turkson's Foundation for Distance Learning (CAFDIL) in the Central Region of Ghana is being established to take advantage of DVD technology and modern wireless telecommunications technology for transmission. This is dubbed the Multi-Channel Multi-Point Distribution System (MMDS) to bring education to the door steps of the marginalized youth.

The CAFDIL project, the first of its kind in Ghana, is expected to generate benefits through improvements in the numbers of disadvantaged people with access to education, reduction of poverty, and improved educational equity and quality. In the first two years (2007-2009), CAFDIL will operate selected learning centers on a pilot basis in the Central and Western Regions of Ghana. In addition, plans are being put in place by CAFDIL for networking with universities and institutions which run distance-learning programmes in Ghana such as the University of Cape Coast and University of Education in Winneba (CAFDIL, 2006).

Civil society participation in efforts to create awareness of the relevance of ICT among pupils and teachers in Ghana is a new development that must be supported. For example, at a recent Information Technology Week organized by the Northern Information Network for Schools in collaboration with the Ghana Information Network for Knowledge Sharing (GINKS) on the theme: "ICTs, Promoting Education," the participants were taken through the potential of ICT and its proper usage, the digital divide and the need to bridge the gap. In many countries in Africa, local NGOs are demonstrating interest in helping to bridge the ICT gap by donating ICT equipment to schools as a way of providing technological solutions to the educational needs of pupils.

The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) Global Education Digest 2005 monitored the flows of students moving from the primary to secondary level of education across the world. In Africa, only 62 per cent of pupils complete

primary education and are therefore ready to pursue their studies, compared to an average completion rate of 94 per cent in North America and 88 per cent in Asia. According to the latest figures in the *Digest*, Africa has the lowest primary completion ratios in the world (Gyau, 2007). In fact, only eight reach this level: Algeria, Botswana, Cape Verde, Egypt, Mauritius, Seychelles, South Africa and Tunisia. The World Bank has emphasized the need to reduce poverty through the improved quality of education. There is therefore the need for African countries to rapidly adapt their education systems to develop the skills and talents of young people by harnessing the full range of ICT facilities.

Since 1995 the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport in Ghana has made a conscious effort to integrate ICT into the Science Resource Centre Project. Under the New Education Reform in September 2007, ICT will constitute one of the subjects of study at the first and second levels of education in Ghana. The percentage of Senior Secondary Schools with computer laboratories ranging from 5 to 100 computers is about 64 per cent. Some of these schools are connected to the internet, while others have been compelled to disconnect from the internet because of the high subscription fees to access the internet. In mid 2007, the ICT Unit of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports in Ghana was carrying out a nation-wide E-Readiness Survey in schools. Key questions the study aims at answering are the following:

- What specifically are the computers being used for?
- What are the training needs of the schools?
- What kinds of soft and hardware are being used and how do they impact on teaching and learning?
- What security arrangements are put in place in the use of the ICT facilities?

The study, coming at a time that the electronic-school (or e-school) initiative of NEPAD is being implemented in 16 countries in Africa including Ghana is likely to offer some useful indicators as to the best strategies of using ICT facilities in schools, especially in deprived communities.

The NEPAD e-Schools Initiative was publicly launched in Durban at the Africa Summit of the World Economic Forum in June 2003. The initiative aims to impart ICT skills to young Africans in primary and secondary schools as well as to harness ICT technology to improve, enrich and expand education in African countries. The aim is to equip all African primary and secondary schools with ICT apparatus such as computers, radio and television sets, phones and fax machines, communication equipment, scanners, digital cameras, copiers, etc.,

and to connect them to the internet. The NEPAD e-schools Initiative will be executed over a ten year period, with the secondary school component being completed in the first five years. Three phases are envisaged: 15-20 countries in each phase. The primary funders of the project are members of the Information Society Partnership for Africa Development (ISPAD). In Ghana, for example Oracle and Cisco, who are implementing the 16 NEPAD e-schools demonstration projects, will bear all the costs of implementation for a year. Afterwards, the running of the e-schools will be the responsibility of the management of the e-schools in collaboration with the respective district assemblies in which the e-schools are situated.

The countries invited to participate in the first phase were selected from those that joined the NEPAD's voluntary African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and were as follows: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa and Uganda. In total, more than 600,000 schools across the continent will enjoy the benefits of ICT and connectivity to the NEPAD e-Schools satellite network on completion of the project. In rural Uganda, a 17-year-old student, Munhana Paul Rogers from the very first institution to receive computers under the e-school initiative of NEPAD testified: "Since Bugulumbya received computers, we see a big difference in the way we learn. When you have the internet, it's like you have another five teachers in the classroom. It helps us find information we need on anything, International football matches, how to protect yourself from HIV/AIDS - it is all there" (Madamombe, 2007). Under the initiative, thirteen private companies are initially supplying the necessary equipment and training to students and teachers. Respective governments will later take over the administration of the NEPAD e-School Demonstration Project which serves as a learning mechanism prior to full-scale roll-out of the initiative. Each participating country is to nominate six schools and later, one special school (for the handicapped) for the Demonstration Project.

In Ghana the project which started in 2005 is being implemented by Cisco and Oracle which are members of the Information Partnership for Africa Development (ISPAD). The ISPAD Forum comprises governmental, intergovernmental, business, non-profit and civil society entities that are significant contributors to the work of the E-Africa Commission and have made a commitment toward the fulfilment of the objectives of the NEPAD ICT Programme.

At the tertiary level of education in Africa, many of the leading universities and polytechnics are connected to the internet. What still remains as a serious challenge for higher institutions of learning is how to increase the ICT facilities to cater for the high demand arising from increasing enrolment of students. More importantly the task of digitizing information available in public libraries in Africa to make it more easily available is far from being achieved. In other words, the use of ICT to facilitate the process of learning and make learning materials more accessible to students is a challenge especially for higher institutions of learning in most parts of Africa. In Ghana, for instance, even though most of the public universities and the private university are connected to the internet, the quality of ICT resources and the efficiency of the services provided leaves much to be desired.

In Africa, as in other parts of the world, public libraries are important centres that provide information resources to people and which ought to be connected to the internet in order to increase their information storage and delivery capacity. However, in many African countries the process of getting libraries to participate actively in the ICT revolution is quite appallingly slow. In Ghana, an exception to this is the case of private libraries such as the British Council Library and the US Information Centre which are well resourced with the requisite modern equipment that facilitates learning. Currently, the Ghana Library Board is undertaking a project to connect libraries in the regional capital cities to the internet. Even if the process of making ICT facilities available in public libraries is successfully completed, a lot of people especially in the rural areas will not be able to benefit from such facilities since they will be limited to the cities. Therefore, this creates a problem of inequity in accessing learning resources which every citizen ought to have an equal right to enjoy. Generally the implications of this kind of inequity are an indication of a morally irresponsible and unacceptable attitude of policy makers who fail to effectively mobilise and tap the talents and skills of a section of the population who equally have a stake in the cultural and economic development of their country

Despite the fact that most African governments now have their ministries, departments and agencies connected to the internet, the information presented on their websites is in some cases inadequate and offers no opportunity for people to access government services in a more efficient, timely and transparent manner. The need to let people become well informed about government policies and programmes to enable them to participate actively in governance could be improved through a systematic and well coordinated use of the internet if the mode of communication used is made more interactive and is more broadly-

based.

The freedom to seek information in fulfilment of certain legitimate goals of people is a public good and requires an enabling environment to facilitate the process. Therefore, the creation of a socially conducive environment that fosters a more beneficial and meaningful use of ICT resources has become a challenge to all people of goodwill who are interested in the promotion of the common good. Anything that detracts from seeing ICT resources as an enrichment and facilitator in people's quests for knowledge and information to enhance the quality of their lives ought to be brought to the fore and thoroughly discussed in order to prick the consciences of people to do the right thing.

5.0 ICT and the Incidence of Cyber Crime in Africa

ICT has introduced a new way of life especially among the youths in Africa. It has created a fertile avenue for business transactions in many countries the world over. The freedom to use ICT resources in pursuit of one's legitimate goals is good. However, what has become a major cause of concern is the wrongful use of ICT facilities by anti-social people, especially to cause harm to peace loving and law abiding citizens. In situations where there are indications of ICT facilities being used by some members of society to show disrespect for the privacy of other persons as well as to create a sense of insecurity in society, there is something basically wrong as regards people's appreciation of the fundamental values of life. In a global village, the approach adopted in the use of ICT facilities ought to be guided by fundamental principles such as the preservation of nature and life, the need to foster a sense of human solidarity/community, and, above all, the need to promote the dignity of the human person. These values are universals as indicated earlier.

In Ghana, for example, according to the Statistics and Information Technology Unit of the Ghana Police Service, there is an increase in ICT related fraud. During the first quarter of 2007, a total of about 4,445 cases were reported as against 2,675 in 2006. The commonest kinds of wrongful use of the ICT facilities in Ghana include: dating fraud, 419 syndrome, and Credit Card/ATM fraud. The internet has also brought sex tourism into the country. According to the recent survey report of the Coalition on the Rights of the Child, most of the children and youths polled have been contacted and engaging in relationships on the internet with its consequential social problems (Twum, 2007). The *Daily Graphic* (Owusu, 2007) reported that some five Nigerians were arrested for

their alleged involvement in internet fraud. According to the report, the foreigners scanned letterheads of organisations, signatures and legal documents which appeared authentic enough to enable them to defraud unsuspecting foreigners who wanted to conduct business in Ghana. The most prevalent cyber crime in Ghana is the credit card fraud. The scammers buy or steal credit card and verification numbers from hotel employees and cashiers in super markets, either in the country or from abroad. This situation has dented the reputation of the country leading to the blacklisting of Ghana purchasing items from commercial sites in the United States and Europe (Coomson, 2006). The reported case of Zambia's most famous case of cyber-crime involved the hacking of a government website, and saw a picture of then President Frederick Chiluba replaced with a cartoon (BBC News, 2004).

In the wake of such incidences, many countries such as Zambia and Ghana are pushing for the enactment of cyber-crime laws. In Ghana the Ministry of Communications has drafted the Ghana Electronic Transactions Bill which hopefully will be put before parliament by the close of 2007. The objects of the Bill when passed into law will provide for and facilitate electronic communications and related transactions in the public interest. If passed into law the challenge will be whether the law enforcement agencies will effectively enforce the law. The Ghana Police Service, the main law enforcement body, presently lacks the necessary logistics to enable them to effectively and efficiently discharge their obligations as expected of them. Notwithstanding that, the arguments by critics that such laws, if adopted, could be used to curb access to the internet, have no basis because there is the need to maintain social order and security for internet users to operate in a peaceful and conducive environment. It is important to note that in discussing the ethical dimension of the Information Society, taking on board the legal framework of the ICT sector, rather than completely isolating the two areas, can enrich the debate regarding the best approaches to adopt in order to instil in people the need to do what is right in using ICT facilities.

6.0 Towards Improved ICT Policies

There are substantial indications from the ICT policies of African countries such as Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Mauritius, Nigeria, The Gambia, and Zimbabwe which are in accord with the proponents of ICT who take an optimistic view and highlight the positive effects of the internet and other forms of ICT to create new economic, social, and political opportunities to “leapfrog” development in Africa

(World Bank 2001, UNDP). The afore-mention countries have sub-sector strategies on e-commerce, e-government and e-learning. However, if the gains expected from the applications of ICT in African societies are to become more meaningful to people there is the need to incorporate the following key points within ICT policies and strategies in Africa:

- Encouragement of ICT professional bodies to foster professional ethics in order to be in a better position to influence public policy for the common good.
- Include the ethical dimension of ICT in civic education programmes.
- Encouragement of relevant stakeholders such as academia and civil society organisations to conduct research on the ethical dimensions of ICTs.
- Make the ethical dimension of communication a subject in the curricula of secondary and tertiary levels of education.
- Adopt a multi-media approach to communication in order not to crowd out especially traditional media or folk media which should have a rightful place in a modern information society. Even though their economic value is yet to be fully exploited in the fast emerging ICT-based society, the wisdom and knowledge expressed in traditional songs, proverbs, dance and drama has an influence on the conscience and the dignity especially of indigenous people.

Notably, although a lot has been said by academics and by the leaderships of various African states about the need to develop the ICT potentials of African countries, in these discussions relatively little is being done to create awareness among the public about the need to judiciously utilise ICT resources in the public interest. The articulation of the public interest in ICT policies mostly in economic terms does not take into account the collective needs and aspirations of society. So far the emphasis has been on how to increase the physical availability of computers to people, especially in urban areas in Africa. Elements of the human and social dimensions which include literacy levels, poverty levels and the question of relevant content, should be part and parcel of the ethical discourse in the emerging information society in Africa (Alhassan, 2004).

Apart from a conference organised by UNESCO in South Africa on the ethical dimension of information society in 2007 (http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=23930&URL_DO=DO_PRINTPAGE&URL_SECTION=201.html) there seems to be no concrete initiative on the issue by stakeholders in the ICT industry to enrich the use of ICT resources by end users. The 'missing link' is

that in almost all the communication policies designed so far in Africa, the ethical dimension is not considered as an integral part of the policies. As a result, initiatives toward implementation of aspects of the policies so far fail to take account of the ethical dimension in the process. The main themes the info-ethical debate addressed at the UNESCO conference included the following:

- Modern ICTs and their impact on development and poverty reduction.
- Global security, human security and individual security.
- Respect for human dignity as it is expressed in a variety of information rights.
- Cultural and language diversity and globalization.
- Spamming and other forms of information wrongdoings, information corruption and information injustice.
- Protection and promotion of indigenous knowledge that includes the legal and moral protection and promotion of indigenous knowledge.
- Internet and exclusion - emphasis specifically on the impact that this kind of exclusion has on the educational and cultural aspects as well as on the social and economic development of African countries.

7.0 Conclusions

In Africa effective and efficient deployment and exploitation of ICT facilities by governments and other stakeholders, including development partners, need to consider the human development factor as a fundamental issue. A socially responsible use of ICT resources in the current democratic dispensation in most African countries implies that the issue of ethics should not only belong to the realm of specialised professional bodies in the knowledge-based economy, but rather there is the need for governance policies and structures to consider more profoundly the standards that put human security, human dignity and justice first (Hamelink, 2000). In their quest to create an information society based on the maximization of ICT resources, it is necessary for African countries to put in place measures that will ensure that economic concerns do not override the human dignity and security concerns.

Therefore, conscientious reflection on the ethical dimension of the information society should lead to initiatives aimed at placing the interests of the human being above profit. The trends in the consumption of ICT resources – both soft and hardware – have placed most developing countries in a disadvantaged position. Even though they have the freedom to acquire the kinds of ICT resources they need if they have the funds, they are disadvantaged in terms of

developing affordable software that can adequately respond to their socio-cultural needs and aspirations. African countries need to add more value in their attempts to participate in the information society and to access ICT facilities in order to enable them take the centre stage in evolving strategies capable of bringing about the integral development of their people. In the wake of cultural interpenetration and the exchange of cultural products, values such as respect, honesty, the sense of community, the dignity of the human person, and non-violence can be compromised if care is not taken in the manner of using modern ICTs.

In respect of two key areas of the Geneva WSIS Action Plan C10 on the ethical dimension of the Information Society - Protection and promotion of indigenous knowledge that includes the legal and moral protection and promotion of indigenous knowledge and cultural and language diversity and globalization, it is high time that African governments incorporated the ethical dimension of the Information Society into the communication policies they have designed. African governments need to take concrete steps to ensure that a touch of innovativeness, which is uniquely African in terms of the two key areas mentioned above, becomes the cornerstone in the development of software. In the absence of such initiatives by African countries, the current one-way unbridled consumption of foreign ICT software products will eventually make people in Africa lose a sense of their cultural roots which encompass all aspects of their lives. The inequity in the international flow of information between the developed countries and developing countries will persist and even deepen with time if African countries do not make the best of the opportunities provided by ICT facilities in the competitive global “marketplace of ideas.”

However, it must be noted that there are a few examples of ICT institutions such as the Ghana Multi-Media Incubator Centre (GMIC) which provides opportunities for the incubation of ideas, concepts and software development. The Centre offers training skills for business process outsourcing with a monitoring programme. If the necessary support is given to such laudable initiatives, more meaning will be given to efforts being made by African countries to have a real sense of participation and access and distribution of ICT resources could be improved in order to bridge the digital divide. A genuine sense of commitment by all stakeholders in the ICT sector to support such initiatives across Africa, would debunk the argument that there is little sign of developing countries being able to compete with the massive advantages which still lie in the West, and in the US and UK in particular, in the import and export of information and entertainment (Smith, 1980).

Given the current dynamics of the ICT scene in Africa, in a future study it would be important and interesting to find out whether within the current political logic of the ICT market, civil society organisations can play an effective advocacy role in making the values of justice, access and participation essential parts of initiatives by all stakeholders to enable people fully to benefit from the emergent knowledge-based and information society. Currently, the role of these organisations in Ghana in championing the ethical agenda, though it is yet to be well defined, is very relevant in the sense that by raising awareness among underserved communities of the benefits of ICT, people are being empowered to be proactive and to demand their right to ICT facilities as enjoyed by their counterparts in urban areas.

Overall, an ethical strategy in ICT policies in Africa needs the collective engagement of all stakeholders in ICT industry and civil society organisations in ethical discourses that would focus attention on putting human security, human dignity, solidarity and justice first. In view of this there is the need to design strategies to create regular platforms for such important discourses. Perhaps, it could be said that many people, especially the youths, are engaged in anti-social activities through the internet because of a lack of ethical awareness about how to use ICT facilities appropriately. An ethical approach to journalism needs to emphasise the relevance of codes of ethics in guiding professional conduct. However, what is ennobling and can be more meaningful in order to enhance media quality for the common good is the virtuous disposition of communicators which is essential.

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Information Literacies and Digital Empowerment in the Global South

*By Hopeton S. Dunn and Sheena Johnson-Brown**

Introduction

Traditional notions of literacy stem from a broader enquiry into cognition, as well as the search for new ways of knowing. In the Universalist sense literacy is seen as a tool to attain greater understanding of the world which was a much desired quality from the Grecian era. The modern approach to literacy and literacy education has not changed significantly from the ideology which underpinned the approach by ancient Greece.

Goody and Watt as cited by Collins (1995) outline three dimensions of the consequences of literacy in the Universalist perspective:

- a) a distinction between myth and history
- b) a distinction between opinion and truth
- c) a distinction between acceptance of received tradition and skepticism of tradition.

There are other frameworks, which are congruent with the Universalist perspective, which draws a sharp distinction between spoken and written language, or the oral tradition of literacy and written texts. Jack Goody's, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* (1977), which played an integral role in this framework, is critiqued by Trimbur (1982), suggesting that:

“Goody’s argument rests on a rather delicate balance. He wishes to side-step the extreme dualism that makes primitive and civilized modes of thought mutually exclusive, but without lapsing into a diffuse relativism that fails to recognize differences in cognitive processes where they do exist.”

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Goody approached his work from an anthropological perspective and did most of his field work in remote parts of West Africa and India. And though he found that members of deeply remote communities had abstract systems of thinking such as counting mechanisms, he was still insistent that by western standards they were pre-literate because they lacked an explicit system of writing and relied more on oral traditions of developing, disseminating and storing information.

An immediate criticism of Goody's approach and the **U**niversalist perspective is that they implicitly establish an indictment against the oral tradition of knowledge, in favour of the documented approaches in Greek texts.

In reality, the oral tradition of information literacy has been acknowledged and adopted as an integral factor in information development and preservation for several generations across many cultures. The oral tradition of cultural knowledge has been represented particularly in western media, ethnography and creative writing as a characteristic of indigenous peoples who were not exposed to the learning conventions of western civilization, and therefore were in need of redemption from their illiteracy.

In light of this classical context and taking account of the value of indigenous cultures and oral traditions, this paper seeks to re-interpret and further interrogate the received interpretations of literacy and seeks to define, not a monolithic literacy, but a multiplicity of literacies from the perspective of nations of the global South. We have questioned the idea of literacy as a thing-in-itself, as a single autonomous knowledge technology, something that is easily quantified, measured and transferred. The paper challenges such uni-dimensional definitions and approaches to literacy and advocates a more pluralistic conception that incorporates oral knowledge traditions and synthesizes the approaches offered by such organizations as UNESCO, ACRL (Association of College and Research Libraries), SCONUL (Society of College National and University Libraries), ANZIIL (Australia and New Zealand Information Literacy Framework) and others.

One definition within this school suggests literacy is a “uniform set of technologies and users of language, with identifiable stages and clear consequences for culture and cognition, and relativist and situated literacies, seen as diverse, historically and culturally variable practices with texts.” (Collins, 1995). The paper embraces Collins' perspective, but in a broader and more inclusive approach. At the centre of our discussion will be the more modern phenomenon of information literacy as one expression of a range of human

literacies.

Considering the diversity in the nature of countries in the global South, it is imperative that we establish a definition and framework appropriate to the empowerment needs of these countries and their communities. Countries of the Caribbean for example while facing a common set of vulnerabilities and challenges, are distinct in their stages of development; some of these countries are Small Island Developing States (SIDS); many characterized as recovering from social upheavals and colonial exploitation. The diversity of countries of the region in terms of cultural differences and development levels among other factors reflects the necessity to master more than one type of literacy by their citizens.

This report is divided into two sections: the first develops and establishes a conceptual framework for the research topic and establishes the distinction between the perspectives prevalent among writers in the industrialized North and nations of the global South on information literacy. It defines an approach to better understanding information literacy and discusses the historical and traditional views of literacy. Section I also looks at information literacy as a tool for community empowerment. It specifically explores information literacy and community empowerment in the global South, in the context of the digital era and the need for wider access to information and communication technologies. The second presents the conclusions and recommendations.

Information Literacy:

Conceptual Framework and Community Empowerment

How the concept [Information Literacy] is defined, understood and applied differs at this early stage in the concept's development from one nation, one culture or one linguistic group to another. But in made-simple language, what Information Literacy means is that understanding technologies is not enough

(Horton 2007: 5)

Concepts and Definitions of Literacy

Historically, literacy connoted the basic ability to produce and understand written texts at a basic level of proficiency. Literacy was seen as a matter of

enabling individuals to acquire a set of technical skills namely; reading, writing and calculating. This view was supported by methods of promoting literacy as a single model approach, where a general set of techniques was seen to be easily applicable and transferable irrespective of content, method of distribution and cultural context.

The Universalist claim of literacy or autonomous literacy is “seen as a general, uniform set of techniques and uses of language, with identifiable stages and clear consequences for culture and cognition” (Collins 1995). The Universalist approach was primarily promoted as the method by which individuals could acquire these skills and also influenced the conception of mass literacy campaigns. Collins points out that this method tends “to assume a clear cumulative distinction between literacy and orality and, as formulated initially, that the literacy of the West was somehow exceptional to all other literacies” (p. 76).

Critics of the Universalist approach point out that the single model approach was too limited and that literacy is not autonomous or a set of discrete technical and objective skills that can be applied across contexts. Instead, they posit that literacy is determined by the cultural, political, and historical contexts of the community in which it is used, drawing on academic disciplines including cultural anthropology and linguistic anthropology to make the case.

The central assumption that literacy can be treated as a “thing in itself” has met with arguments that there are “diverse, historically and culturally viable practices with texts”. This concern of multiple literacies focused on “the diversity and social embeddedness of those ways with text we call literacy, emphasizing the ways as much as the texts”. (Collins, 1995 p. 75- 76)

It is associated with comparative anthropological criticism of claims made for a unitary or autonomous literacy, questioning literacy's causal consequences in social development or cognitive development with detailed ethnographic studies of inscription and discourse. This approach undermined the notion of separable domains of orality and literacy and with revisionist historical scholarship, reperiodizing and reframing the debate about literacy and social development in the West. (Collins, 1995 p. 76)

This ongoing debate has influenced international agreed-upon definitions of literacy. In 1958 UNESCO provided a definition which stated that “a literate person is one who can with understanding, both read and write a short simple statement on his or her everyday life” (UNESCO 2004). This often quoted

definition was revised by 1970 as a result of attention being given “to the ways in which literacy is linked with socio-economic development” (UNESCO 2004, p. 9). The concept of “functional literacy” was conceived where literacy was valued as a technical solution to socio-economic problems.

A functionally literate person is one who can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for the effective functioning of his or her group and community and also for enabling him or her to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his or her own and the community’s development (UNESCO 2004, p. 9).

UNESCO continued to be diligent in defining and advocating literacy in an effort to capture the full complexity and diversity of the concept. In the 1980s and 1990s, UNESCO promoted a positive approach in distinguishing literacy as technical skill to literacy as a “set of practices defined by social relations and cultural process- a view exploring the range of uses of literacy in the entire spectrum of daily life from the exercise of civil and political rights through matters of work, commerce and childcare to self-instruction, spiritual enlightenment and even recreation.” (p. 10)

In 2003 a proposed operational definition was formulated which aimed to include several different dimensions of literacy.

“Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society.” (UNESCO 2004, p 13)

A corollary to this definition was that it remained text based and needed to be “centered on the life of the individual person, more reflection should be given to incorporating into it the various circumstances in which individual learners live their lives.” (UNESCO, 2004).

The international community no longer saw literacy as a “stand alone” skill and embraced the evolving plural concepts of literacy as a “key element of life long learning in its lived context”. (UNESCO, 2004)

“The plurality of literacy refers to the many ways in which literacy is employed and the many things with which it is associated in a community or society and throughout the life of an individual. People acquire and

apply literacy for different purposes in different situations, all of which are shaped by culture, history, language, religion and socio-economic conditions. The plural notion of literacy latches upon these different purposes and situations. Rather than seeing literacy as only a generic set of technical skills, it looks at the social dimensions of acquiring and applying literacy. It emphasizes that literacy is not uniform, but is instead culturally and linguistically and even temporally diverse. It is shaped by social as well as educational institutions: the family, community, workplace, religious establishments and the state.” (UNESCO 2004, p.13)

At the same time, however, the report acknowledges that in view of actual practices, it cannot be alleged that all approaches to literacy that do not depart from the premise of multiple literacies have failed. A number of countries within the global South implemented politically motivated functional literacy campaigns which produced remarkable results including the transformation of fundamental literacy practices in countries such as China, Cuba, Nicaragua, the United Republic of Tanzania, the former USSR and Viet Nam. The important role of political will and social mobilization in literacy efforts also influenced literacy campaigns in Ecuador, India and South Africa. These countries have also “achieved remarkable results in meeting the learning needs of different groups, paving the way for more advanced literacy practices and continuous learning opportunities.” (UNESCO, 2004).

These mass literacy campaigns based on the premise of functional literacy can also be considered as falling within the spectrum that the plurality of literacy encompasses. There are a number of inferences from the plural notion of literacy that will be useful for orienting the discussion on information literacy to include critical issues important to the global South such as cultural and social contexts, access and empowerment. But first it is necessary to explore the origins of information literacy and to examine the leading definitions and models of the concept.

Origins of Information Literacy

Literacy assumed a multifaceted visage in the 21st century with the emergence of new forms of technologies that are now enshrined as a part of everyday living. The rapid advancement of the information and telecommunications landscape has driven profound changes in the ways information is being created, integrated, transmitted, accessed and stored. In response, the concept of

Information literacy has emerged to meet the challenge of managing, understanding and using this diversity of information.

The term “information literates” was first used in 1974 by Paul Zurkowski, and then the president of the Information Industry Association (IIA), in a paper prepared for the National Commission for Librarians and Information Science (NCLIS). In response to what he viewed as a growing need for improved management in the increasing proliferation of information in the workplace, Zurkowski (as cited by Lee 2002), suggested that "people trained in the application of information resources to their work can be called information literates. They have learned techniques and skills for utilizing the wide range of information tools as well as primary sources in molding information-solutions to their problems."

The concept of information literacy was built upon and expanded by efforts of librarians to help their users learn and utilize research tools and materials in their own libraries. Librarians have produced a significant amount of the literature on information literacy with links to the practice of bibliographic instruction and library skills training. Campbell (2004) states that information literacy is a concept that is largely discussed in the context of higher education. She further elaborates that the practice of teaching information skills through academic libraries has a philosophical and practical source.

The practice of librarians undertaking the teaching of information skills has two sources, one philosophical and one practical. At the philosophical level, most librarians believe that information literacy is a part of a student’s well-rounded skill set that will help him or her be more efficient and effective in the future. At the practical level, information literacy instruction is a self-defense mechanism. Librarian to student ratios are so low in most post-secondary institutions that librarians must teach students to be information self-sufficient and do so mostly in classroom settings. As the environments of academic libraries have changed, the terminology and definition have changed and broadened. What started as a library orientation grew to be library instruction and bibliographic instruction and finally became information literacy. (Campbell, 2004 p.2)

Changes in definitions, theories and standards of literacy and educational reform movements have shaped the concept of Information Literacy. The ideas on information literacy, how it is defined and applied, reflect a convergence of thinking from multiple streams of research assisted by the revolution in information and communication technologies.

Information Literacy: Definitions and Models

The definitions and models of Information Literacy emanate from the North and tend to be universalistic in their approach to how information literacy can be employed. In this section, the paper will outline the main models of information literacy and then critically examine these approaches especially within the context of their relevance to countries in the global South.

The most popular and often quoted definition of information literacy is by the American Library Association (ALA) in their Presidential Committee on Information Literacy Report in 1989:

Information literacy is a set of abilities requiring individuals to “recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information.” (ALA, 1989)

From the ALA viewpoint, this broad definition identifies a clear set of outcomes: ‘locate’, ‘evaluate’ ‘use’, which can be translated into pedagogical practices by librarians and teachers. The ALA definition has been adopted and adapted in the construction of the information literacy frameworks of the United Kingdom by SCONUL (Society of College National and University Libraries) and that of Australia and New Zealand by ANZIIL (Australian and New Zealand Information Literacy Framework).

An influential approach from the United States is the Big6 information problem solving model. Developed by Mike Eisenberg and Bob Berkowitz, the Big6 is a well known and widely used approach to teaching information and technology skills. According to Eisenberg (2007) we all suffer from information overload and “we can never seem to find what we want, when we want it, and in a form we want it so that we can use it effectively.” The Big6 model focuses on the process that people go through in order to solve an information problem. This process is identified in six stages:

1. Task Definition
2. Information Seeking Strategies
3. Location and Access
4. Use of Information
5. Synthesis
6. Evaluation

“People go through these Big6 stages—consciously or not—when they seek or apply information to solve a problem or make a decision. It’s not

necessary to complete these stages in a linear order, and a given stage doesn't have to take a lot of time. We have found that almost all successful problem-solving situations address all stages." (Eisenberg, www.big6.com).

Sharing similarities with the Big6 model is the ACRL (Association of College and Research Libraries) in their document "Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education", which aims to provide students "with a framework for gaining control over how they interact with information in their environment" (ACRL, 2000).

"Information literacy... is an intellectual framework for understanding, finding, evaluating, and using information—activities which may be accomplished in part by fluency with information technology, in part by sound investigative methods, but most important, through critical discernment and reasoning. Information literacy initiates, sustains, and extends lifelong learning through abilities which may use technologies but are ultimately independent of them." (ACRL, 2000 p.3).

The ACRL Framework offers six standards to be achieved in order to be information literate. The information literate individual is able to:

1. Determine the extent of information needed
2. Access the needed information effectively and efficiently
3. Evaluate information and its sources critically
4. Incorporate selected information into one's knowledge base
5. Use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose
6. Understand the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information, and access and use information ethically and legally

(ACRL, 2000 p.2-3)

The use of these standards provides a structure for the assessment of the information literate individual. However ACRL acknowledges that "all students are expected to demonstrate all of the competencies described ...but not everyone will demonstrate them to the same level of proficiency or at the same speed."

As mentioned earlier, the ALA definition and the ACRL standards of information literacy inspired similar developments in the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand. These definitions share common elements but have been adapted

to suit the development of each country's information literacy models and what is perceived as critical issues that need to be addressed in relation to information literacy.

The SCONUL definition and the seven pillars model focused on the development of information skills and information technology skills as an essential part of the concept of information literacy.

“Information literacy encompasses library user education, information skills training and education, and those areas of personal, transferable or 'key' skills relating to the use and manipulation of information in the context of learning, teaching and research issues in higher education.” (SCONUL 2004, p.5).

In the SCONUL (1999) Briefing Paper, consideration is given to the questions concerning the importance of information skills. How can they be defined? In answering these questions, SCONUL identified seven headline skills;

1. The ability to recognize a need for information
2. The ability to distinguish ways in which the information 'gap' may be addressed
3. The ability to construct strategies for locating information
4. The ability to locate and access information
5. The ability to compare and evaluate information obtained from different sources
6. The ability to organize, apply and communicate information to others in ways appropriate to the situation
7. The ability to synthesize and build upon existing information, contributing to the creation of new knowledge

(SCONUL, 1999 p.6)

The seven pillars diagram (in Appendix I) proposes a range of competencies, whereby each of the seven pillars is part of a recursive process whereby information users progress, by practicing the skills, to the level of the proficient information literacy expert.

In turning to the Australian and New Zealand Information Literacy Framework, the concern is expressed that information literacy is required because of the

“ongoing proliferation of information resources and the variable methods of access.”

“Increasingly information comes unfiltered. This raises questions about authenticity, validity and reliability. ...The uncertain quality and expanding quantity also pose large challenges for society. Sheer abundance of information and technology will not itself create more informed citizens without a complementary understanding and capacity to use information effectively.” (ANZIIL, 2004 p.3).

The Australian and New Zealand information literacy framework is based on four overarching principles. These are, that information literate people:

1. Engage in independent learning through constructing new meaning, understanding and knowledge
2. Derive satisfaction and personal fulfilment from using information wisely
3. Individually and collectively search for and use information for decision making and problem solving in order to address personal, professional and societal issues
4. Demonstrate social responsibility through a commitment to lifelong learning and community participation. (ANZIIL, 2004 p.11)

These principles frame six core standards that underpin information literacy acquisition, understanding and application by an individual. Similar to SCONUL, the ANZIIL core standards include being able to apply prior and new information to construct new concepts and to use the information with understanding that acknowledges cultural, ethical, economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information.

The importance of information literacy is further highlighted in the Australian model as it is seen as a prerequisite for “participative citizenship and social inclusion”. (ANZIIL, 2004 p.4)

Information Literacy: Criticisms and Discussions

In critically examining the concept of information literacy, the discussion will focus on concerns raised about the definition of information literacy and a call for a definition that recognizes the cultural and social constructs of developing countries.

The first round of criticism is aimed at the use of the term “information literacy”. Suggestions have been made for other names, such as Information Fluency or Information Competency. However Information Literacy remains the dominant name in academic circles. Critics have argued that it implies that persons should be functionally literate, possess the skills of reading and writing, in order to be considered information literate. Therefore it is argued information literacy excludes a large portion of the world’s population, mainly located in the global South. This criticism takes on an added dimension in light of ANZIIL’s criteria that information literacy is essential for social inclusion and participatory citizenship.

Campbell (2004) takes a similar stance and offers a description of what is seen as the information literate user:

“When we in academic libraries think of the information-literate user, we have a particular picture in mind. We think of a person who has all the skills required to access the vast quantities of information that we have carefully collected and arranged for them. We think of people who can use a computer, connect to the internet, access a variety of kinds of information, distinguish between levels of quality and validity of information, comprehend the content of the information so that they can apply it and are aware of the rules around the use of information.” (Campbell, 2004 p.2).

This picture of the information literate person is disturbingly narrow and raises questions linked to the issues of access from the perspective of countries in the global South. Are people who have never been to a library or are part of a higher education process to be considered as information illiterate? Should information literacy skills and practices be dependent on technology?

Campbell provocatively offers a response by stating that “if we test the general population’s information literacy skills against the ALA definition, we find that they meet the definition quite well. Further, if we were to put ourselves into their environment, we might find our own information skills woefully inadequate” (Campbell 2004, p.3).

The argument is strengthened by an example from Jamaica, a small developing country in the Caribbean with a strong oral history and African ancestry linked to the British TransAtlantic slave trade. Prior to the emancipation in the British colonies in 1838, Jamaica had several rebellious uprisings by enslaved and free Africans who were determined to end this inhuman condition. A majority of the

free Africans were known as Maroons. These were formerly enslaved persons who ran away from the sugar plantations and hid in the mountainous landscape of the country. The Maroons developed into a fierce and proud community of fighters who outwitted, outmanoeuvred and eventually defeated the troops of the British army. The Maroons had the strategic advantage of being intimately familiar with the terrain of the country, which served to camouflage their activities and to launch several ambush attacks. They developed a highly sophisticated information communication system whereby slaves on the plantation would relay signals about the activities and plans of the British.

The Maroons can be considered as information literate. They had a clear need for information regarding the plans of the British. They knew who to approach to get the information; they evaluated it and used it in their counter attack measures in fighting the British troops. To this day persons who wish to visit the historical and cultural sites in the Maroon communities would require the information literacy skills of Maroon guides which have been learnt orally and memorized from generation to generation. Interestingly, the Maroon community is not limited to learning in their traditional methods as all the Maroon communities are accessible via cell phone and they actively use post modern media technologies in the promotion of their annual celebrations. The point here is that traditional notions of literacy have been shown to be superseded by a more inclusive approach correlated to Western knowledge options.

In returning to the examination of the concept of information literacy, another line of criticism stems from the consideration that information literacy is defined as a set of measurable skills that can be applied in any situation or socio-cultural context. This view faces similar comments levelled at the traditional view of literacy. Gorman and Dorner (2006) outline their view that the “issue of cultural influence on information literacy education in particular has received insufficient attention, yet it has major impact on the entire enterprise – from how we define information literacy, to how we seek to structure programmes, and to how we deliver information literacy content” (Gorman and Dorner 2006 p.3).

Gorman and Dorner further argue for an effective, robust definition for developing countries “one that recognizes the social construction and cultural authority of knowledge, and works within this paradigm”.

Thus we are left with this operational definition of information literacy in developing countries: The ability of individuals or groups:

- to be aware of why, how and by whom information is created, communicated and controlled, and how it contributes to the construction of knowledge
- to understand when information can be used to improve their daily living or to contribute to the resolution of needs related to specific situations, such as at work or school
- to know how to locate information and to critique its relevance and appropriateness to their context
- To understand how to integrate relevant and appropriate information with what they already know to construct new knowledge that increases their capacity to improve their daily living or to resolve needs related to specific situations that have arisen.

(Gorman and Dorner, 2006 p. 5)

Gorman and Dorner's position shares common ground with the plurality of literacy as both take into account the different processes that interrelate in a given social and cultural context. The promotion of literacy in the global South should foster the capacity to express or communicate in one's own terms and language(s). As stated in the Report of the Thematic Debate on Information Literacy (UNESCO, 2005), the concept "information literacy" may have to be re-examined as it "is not well understood by Governments or societies; the term does not translate easily into French or other languages and this makes it difficult to promote at an international level".

For the global South, information literacy should involve the empowerment of local communities to critique existing knowledge and also to create new knowledge that satisfies their information needs. Therefore an information literacy policy or programme can be built on local knowledge and expertise. In this light we shall turn to the relationship between information literacy and lifelong learning as a suitable way forward for the global South.

"Information literacy and lifelong learning have been described as the beacons of the Information Society, illuminating the courses to development, prosperity and freedom. Information literacy empowers people in all walks of life to seek, evaluate, use and create information effectively to achieve their personal, social, occupational and educational goals. It is a basic human right in a digital world and promotes social inclusion in all nations." (www.unesco.org).

The concept of lifelong learning and information literacy can be seen as part of a multi stage lifecycle where learning opportunities are comprised of all forms of

formal and informal learning. Horton (2007) explains this inter-relationship between information literacy and lifelong learning by stating that both concepts are mainly self-motivated and self-directed in that they do not require the mediation of an outside individual. Both concepts are also described as self-empowering and self-actuating:

Self-empowering, which means that they are aimed at helping people of all age groups, genders, races, religions, ethnic groups, and national origins, and no matter what their social or economic status may be, or role and place in their communities or society in general; and

“Self-actuating, which is to say the more information literate an individual becomes, and the longer the person sustains good information literacy learning and practicing habits and attitudes, the greater the self-enlightenment that occurs, especially if practiced over an entire lifetime.” (Horton, 2007 p. 11).

Horton’s position draws support from The Prague Declaration (2003) and the Alexandria Proclamation on Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning (2006):

“Information Literacy encompasses knowledge of one’s information concerns and needs, and the ability to identify, locate, evaluate, organize and effectively create, use and communicate information to address issues or problems at hand; it is a prerequisite for participating effectively in the Information Society, and is part of the basic human right of life long learning.” (The Prague Declaration, 2003)

“Information Literacy comprises the competencies to recognize information needs and to locate, evaluate, apply and create information within cultural and social contexts...[it] extends beyond current technologies to encompass learning, critical thinking and interpretative skills across professional boundaries and empowers individuals and communities.” (Alexandria Proclamation on Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning 2006, p. 3)

The Prague Declaration and the Alexandria Proclamation provide a supportive framework within which all countries can strongly advocate for the development for interdisciplinary programme to promote information literacy and the adoption of lifelong learning strategies.

However it is vital to state that what matters from the viewpoint of the global South, is how within this interconnectedness of literacies can we form our own

relationship with the concept of information literacy and not just as an imported ideal from the North. There is no best answer. However, in the negotiation of this matter, it is important that we understand the prerequisites to make it happen. For the global South, information literacy has to go beyond expanding the supply of education to people, we have to look at the diversification, transformation and articulation of our systems of education, government policy and programmes and the work environment.

These are recognizable challenges for the application and adaptation of information literacy in the underdeveloped world. Linked to this are the problems faced by having little or no access or availability of information. Simply put, if one cannot access information that is needed, how can one become empowered to achieve personal, social and occupational goals?

Denial or limitation of access to and availability of information can lead to genuine information illiteracy. The core principle of empowerment relies in achieving the full potential of an individual, community, country and even a more profound grasp of information literacy as a concept.

Developing nations could realize increased community empowerment and the development of different forms of literacies especially where there are no critical impediments to access all forms of information and communication technologies. This point is further corroborated by Mäkinen (2006, p.?), when she states that:

“With information technology people gain new abilities and ways to participate and express themselves in a networked society. This can be called digital empowerment, which is not a direct consequence of having and using technical facilities, but a multi-phased process to gain better networking, communication and co-operation opportunities, and to increase the competence of individuals and communities to act as influential participants in the information society...empowerment is used in the sense of enablement, i.e., enabling people to do what is important to them, and enabling people to grow as competent subjects who have control over their lives and surroundings”.

The WSIS Geneva declaration of principles shares the same vision as Mäkinen of empowerment through ICTs when it states that ICTs provide the platform on which everyone can, “create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge, enabling individuals, communities and peoples to achieve their full potential in promoting their sustainable development and improving their

quality of life” (WSIS, 2003). And so, in keeping with the WSIS framework, the paper will now examine the interplay between access to ICTs and literacies and further explore how this interplay may lead to more empowered communities where individuals exert more control over the direction of their lives.

ICTs possess a number of unique characteristics, as indicated in, “Creating a Development Dynamic”, a report by the UNDP and the Markle Foundation (2001) which offers pro poor support capabilities. Says the report, “ICT is pervasive and cross-cutting. ICT can be applied to the full range of human activity from personal use to business and government. It is multifunctional and flexible, allowing for tailored solutions—based on personalization and localization—to meet diverse needs”. Further it states, “ICT fosters the *dissemination of information and knowledge* by separating content from its physical location. This flow of information is largely impervious to geographic boundaries—allowing remote communities to become integrated into global networks and making information, knowledge and culture accessible, in theory, to anyone”. These characteristics are a direct response and enabler to the two areas of critical importance highlighted by the lifecycle process of information literacy; it is a conduit for the creation of new knowledge and also a tool for the safeguarding of information.

While it may be construed that proposing widespread usage of ICTs is contradictory to the type of literacy envisaged in this paper, the undeniable truth is that such technologies are becoming indispensable to various sectors of our lives: education, personal safety, health, commercial activities and social networking. The integration of global economies, culture and experiences are facilitated through the emergence of global technologies and an ICT syntax, which has been interwoven in the language of everyday activities. Therefore, the linchpin argument is that, the global South must move with immediate speed to create a policy framework where low income earning groups have widespread access to ICTs. ICT does not, an information literate society make, but the technologies are enablers of multi-phase plural literacies, lifelong learning and the empowerment process. This is so because they give the user greater control over the rate at which information is consumed and understood, the time when such information is used and the power to create content. As we have seen the core principle of empowerment relies on achieving the full potential of an individual, community, and country, and in an information economy ICTs can be leveraged to achieve such an end.

ICTs can be used as a tool for community empowerment, while simultaneously

allowing persons to develop varying types of literacies. Teleworking is one of the fast emerging forms of work ushered in by ICTS.

Teleworking as pointed out by Di Martino (2005) was defined by the International Labour Organization from as far back as 1990, as the concept of distance working, away from a central office setting facilitated by the use of information and communication technologies. The rapid emergence of ICTs and their many applications in society have created a whole new interface of employment opportunities for individuals capable of utilizing such technologies, while presenting the opportunity for others to learn. In light of this, the growth and development of teleworking offer a form of double bonus opportunity: greater scope for employment and the possibility of gaining functional literacy. One could take the issue of cultural literacy as an example. Individuals working in the cultural and creative industries could be afforded new opportunities with the advent of teleworking or telecommuting for example

Heikes, as cited by Cowell and Dunn (2006), observes that:

“Telecommuting....allows an employee to perform assigned duties at an alternative site (usually home) during some or all of his/her scheduled work hours.....Telecommunications is the partial or total substitution of telecommunications technology for the trip to and from the primary workplace along with the associated changes in policy, organization, management, and work structure.”

Globalization has swept in a tide of opportunities for teleworkers especially through the growth of multinational companies in developing nations as a part of their outsourcing strategy. In face of such opportunities, Cowell and Dunn (2006), delineate a range of possible teleworkers that might emerge; telehomeworkers, occasional teleworkers and nomadic teleworkers. Telehomeworkers are home based workers, such as private consultants in one country or another. Occasional teleworkers are those with jobs on a centralized office basis, but occasionally work from home or some other remote location, whereas, nomadic teleworkers are those who spend a significant portion of their time away from a centralized office moving from one geographic area to another. Di Martino (2005), in a country profile of Argentina, indicated that several companies were vanguards in the adoption of teleworking. He asserted that IBM Argentina had 700 teleworkers among its 1500 employees, and a further 400 were mobile workers spending anywhere up to 60 % of their time outside of the traditional workplace.

Teleworking requires a form of information literacy as a pre-requisite. It has huge potential for the growth and development of many networked communities in Latin American and Caribbean. With many multinationals outsourcing their production processes, people for example may be able to find gainful employment in telecentres or in other companies that span the spectrum of service providers to manufacturing operations. Companies that have outsourced in Latin America and have utilized teleworkers include Johnson and Johnson, IBM, and CISCO Systems. The outsourcing of jobs from urban areas to rural areas, new entrepreneurial activities, and greater educational pursuits are all manifestations of the thrust towards teleworking and the use of information literacy skills in operational and practical aspects of people's lives.

It should be noted however that the fullest potential of teleworking will not be derived unless there is an infusion of governmental support coupled with solid plans for the integration of low income earning communities in the development agenda.

E-Government is another mechanism towards community empowerment using information literacies and digital technologies. Durrant (2006) suggests that e-government can be seen as “use by governments of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) to achieve administration of government, delivery of public services and interaction with citizens individually and as communities”. E-government is an exciting alternative and emerging medium for accessing public services and for interacting with public sector providers using ICT functionalities. When operated effectively e-government can achieve a synergistic interplay with other developmental variables which can accelerate the achievement of community empowerment and progress. E-government can enhance literacy, whether political and or functional literacy, to the extent that individuals are provided with the avenue through which they can learn about the political process, their role in governance and elements of functional literacy at their own pace and in their own environment. It is once again reiterated that ICTs provide the best opportunity to achieve such desired ends.

E-learning also provides a workable avenue through which such goals may be pursued with relative ease of access. E-Learning has been interpreted as the use of internet technologies, wireless technologies and other types of digital technologies in pursuit of education and training. ICTs span a gamut of functionalities that facilitate skill development and can aid the pursuit of higher education or professional development. This degree of flexibility afforded, on the one hand, makes it easier for widespread educational pursuits and, on the other

hand, it augurs well for a society which is determined to provide opportunities for human resource development; such opportunities empower communities to play a greater role in their own economic and social development through education and training.

E-learning, particularly asynchronous e-learning, can facilitate independent and lifelong education, and offers a multiplicity of benefits to rural communities. These include reduced transportation costs and greater control over the learning process. For educational institutions it eliminates the need for large infra-structural capacity.

Closely related to e-learning are e-services. The opportunities that digital technologies afford **service sectors** include e-learning, and a whole gamut of other possibilities, that span easy access to government services, banking services and other commercial activities. These could be considered as administrative support for communities to conduct business, enquiries and personal activities easily.

These approaches to community empowerment are crucial points in the manifestation of digital technologies in rural communities. These however cannot be achieved without particular conditions which have been already established. The paper will now offer some recommendations towards the development of an appropriate environment for greater ICT adoption and usage.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This paper argues that the 21st century information economy demands a plurality of literacies from individuals even for basic survival. Having interrogated the traditional notions and approaches to literacy, we advocate a definition of information literacies which embraces lifelong learning and an approach to knowledge that focuses on an individual's lived reality and cultural and social context.

A plurality of literacies however demands an enabling framework, which includes widespread infrastructural development, trained people, flexible regulatory and policy structures, and a buoyant economy among other attributes. The environmental context necessary for the incubation of such literacies is often absent from developing nations whose scarce resources have to be optimized amidst unlimited basic demands by the people. This paper concludes, however, that information literacy is a basic human right. Several

recommendations which we believe can specifically facilitate greater literacy and serve as broader development catalysts are put forward.

- Training and Education are very important in the thrust towards the development and empowerment of countries in the global South. It may be achieved in part through the revamping of school curricula and investments in infra-structure to support and accommodate access by a wider cross section of citizens. In this regard we propose several strategies that we think can facilitate an increase in community and digital empowerment through education and training. These strategies are consistent with those proposed by Dunn and Duggan (2006), in *E-powering Jamaica*, A National ICT Strategic Plan, prepared for the Government of Jamaica:
- Computer education must be integrated into the pre-primary, primary and secondary school curricula as a compulsory course of study.
- Avenues must be created through which individuals wanting a “second chance” to literacy and life long learning may attain these through structured programmes in educational institutions with the use of ICTs.
- Low-cost, reliable high-speed Internet access to be provided to all educational institutions.
- Online, mixed mode and other forms of distance learning must be encouraged at all universities and tertiary institutions.
- Increased capacity in teacher training institutions for IT skills development must be created to enable technology-assisted education and effective classroom teaching of ICT.
- Indigenous culture must be integrated into curriculum development as an effective method of instruction.

We endorse recommendations for the development of a policy framework which facilitates competition and efficiency in the ICT environment, thereby creating greater access to, and facilitating, the emergence of technologies at cheaper rates. Government incentives for the development of Small and Medium size ICTs enterprises should also be considered. Information literacy should be used to encourage the growth and development of other literacies, industries and sectors such as domestic financial markets; as well as to accelerate the development of ICT business incubators at the community level. Dunn and Duggan (2006) further recommend:

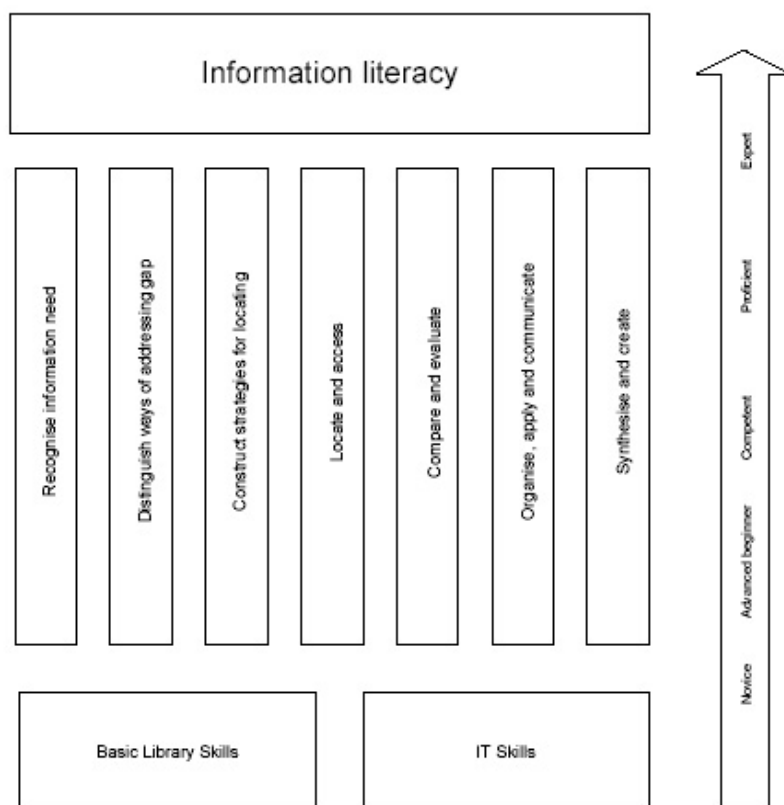
- Government incentives for the development of small and medium enterprises.
- The systematic transformation of user networks from dial-up to broadband connectivity.
- Ensuring of interlocking and interoperable networks to schools and other educational institutions.
- Developing an ICT infrastructure that effectively supports national information processing requirements for trade, commerce and service delivery.
- Investment in emerging personal computer prototypes for easy access at accessible rates.
- Legislating a Universal Access Fund, where telecommunications operators and other service providers contribute a portion of their gross revenues towards further development of industry.

Countries of the global South must take bold decisions to acknowledge the right of access to information, by enacting statutes oriented towards such empowerment, followed by the appropriate institutional framework to achieve this desired end. There should also be improved internet governance from a multi-lateral perspective, to offer greater financial and technical assistance for developing nations in infra-structural development and in supporting widespread ICT access.

A multi sectoral approach to information literacy is possible way forward for all countries whereby the commitment of government is backed by the initiatives of private sector groups and organizations. Information literacy needs to be discussed within a series of sustainable dialogues, including through the use of the media, student or work exchange programmes and through the use of the Internet in popular music and art forms.

Appendix 1

Scnul Seven Pillars



“At the base of the model are the twin fundamental building blocks of basic library skills and basic IT skills. ...Between the base and the higher level concept of ‘information literacy’ appear the seven headline skills and attributes, the iterative practice of which leads from being a competent user to the expert level of reflection and critical awareness of information as an intellectual resource. The progression from novice to expert is indicated by an arrow. First year undergraduates will largely be at the bottom of the arrow, perhaps only practicing the first four skills, whilst postgraduate and research students will aim to aim to be towards the expert end, and will be aspiring to the seventh.” (SCONUL, 1999 p.8).

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Abstracts

Natasha Bolognesi and Leslie Swartz:

The Media Management of HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa with Particular Reference to South Africa: A Window to Developing Communication Strategies for the Epidemic in the Region

An analytic perspective on the media management of HIV/AIDS in the written press in sub-Saharan Africa provides insight into the roles, responsibilities and challenges media practitioners face in reporting on HIV/AIDS-related issues in the region. Recent research conducted in sub-Saharan Africa reveals a relatively high level of negative media communication of HIV/AIDS in leading daily newspapers. Discussions with clinicians and patients confirm the dangerous consequences of a developed world reporting style, ill-suited to developing nations where media sensationalism is often read as fact by a majority proportion of the population. A lack of journalistic understanding of the science of the disease as well as a lack of awareness of the gender, cultural and social issues which fuel the spread of AIDS throughout the region, are shown to be the underlying causes for poor quality HIV/AIDS reporting. In South Africa particularly, a Western-style media policy compromises the delivery of clear scientific fact on an endemic disease through the reliance on elitist sources with a distorted view of HIV/AIDS and its treatment. This report will offer suggestions as to how media practitioners, including policy makers and journalists, could, by adopting a more socially responsible approach, play a much more beneficial role for Africans when reporting on HIV/AIDS.

Linje Patrick Manyozo:

Communication for Development. A historical overview

The discussion reviews the theory and practice of communication for development since the 1950s. The report builds on the definitions and experiments that emerged within the different schools of thought. It draws on the concept of meaningful development as articulated by Amartya Kumar Sen (1999) and the *African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation* (United Nations, 1990), and then examines specific case studies from the African continent, concluding with some recommendations.

Africanus L. Diedong:

Ethical Dimension of the Information Society

In the global knowledge economy in which we live the need to effectively develop and deploy ICT resources, especially in developing countries is crucial. Perhaps, it is in recognition of this fact that the broad ICT policy objectives in Africa are geared towards the promotion of public interest. However, the articulation of public interest in ICT policies being implemented in many African countries, mostly in economic terms does not take into account the collective needs and aspirations of society. The relevant factor of public interest can only be appropriately addressed within a framework of ICT policies which duly consider the ethical dimension of the information society. This means that if issues of equity, participation, access and social responsibility could be tackled from an ethical point of view, there might be better outcomes as a result of the ICT policies being adopted in Africa. It is important for the newly fashioned ICT policies to have a more profound social and moral quality aimed at the integral development of human beings. Therefore, in order to render the policies more meaningful and beneficial to people, they (policies) should be anchored on, and guided by, fundamental principles such as the preservation of nature and life, non-violence, a sense of human solidarity, harmony and, above all, justice or respect for a sense of human dignity and security. Anything short of such an ethical approach in ICT policies might suggest that current initiatives by African governments and the private sector to promote the development and use of ICT resources place profit above the integral development of people.

Hopeton S. Dunn and Sheena Johnson-Brown:

Information Literacies and Digital Empowerment in the Global South

This report is a contribution to the literature on information literacy from the perspective of the global south. The authors challenge commonly held unidimensional and traditional conceptions of information literacy as a set of discrete and transferable skills, and suggest that a re-conception of traditional notions of literacy is necessary, to include social, economic, and cultural factors which all affect an individual's relationship to information and society. The report argues that ideally, an individual is best equipped with a variety of literacies to operate functionally in his or her environment. Accordingly, it advances the idea of 'information literacies' as central to the type of information society envisioned in the global South.

The authors explore the limitations inherent in certain established models of information literacy and argue that these frameworks are uni-dimensional and lack a more diverse and nuanced approach to the subject. In supporting this more interconnected approach to literacy, the report argues that it is vital for the global South to develop its own application of the concept along these lines. The report draws on documentation such as the Prague and Alexandria declarations to buttress the argument in favour of lifelong learning and further supports the view that information and communication technologies can empower individuals and communities. Among the concluding recommendations of the paper is the need for greater investment in the ICT infrastructure of developing countries. It also calls for systematic revisions and more effective implementation of curricula for schools, engendering a multi-dimensional approach to information literacies.

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