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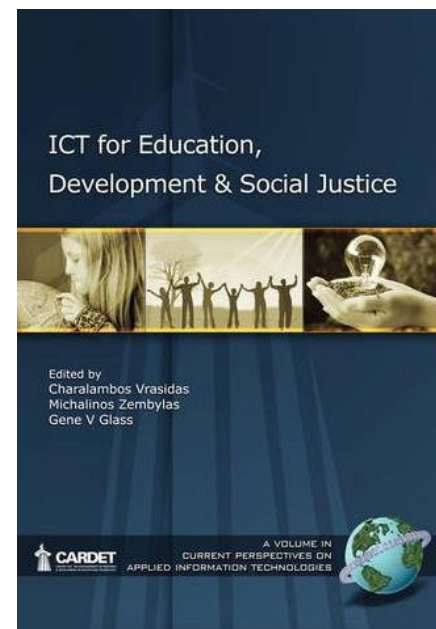
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Is education something enjoyed by all? Is information and communication technology (ICT) useful for development? What can and cannot ICT do to help create a more socially just and democratic society?

On the back cover of *ICT for Education, Development & Social Justice*, the editors state that the book's purpose "is to provide examples of current developments on the role of ICT for education, development, and social justice within an international context." The objectives of the book are to (a) analyze the philosophical, historical, political, and cultural backgrounds and contexts that are constitutive of contemporary challenges and tensions in the role of ICT (Information



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Communication Technology) for education, development, and social justice around the world; (b) appreciate contextual and international dimensions of tensions and challenges faced by educators around the world and contribute to efforts to sketch a vision for addressing their needs; and (c) explore ways in which ICT in education can promote social justice and contribute toward sustaining communities around the world.

Its fourteen chapters are divided into four parts. The first part is an overview that sets the framework for the consideration of ICT as a tool for sustainability through development, education and social justice. The next part discusses the use of ICT for development in education. The third part focuses on the use of ICT to support inclusive educational practices, and the fourth part focuses on ICT for cultural understanding.

Overview

The editors point out asymmetries in the rhetoric around education between developed and developing countries. The rhetoric of lifelong learning prevails in developed countries. In developing countries, the rhetoric focuses on ensuring the Millennium Development Goals (UNESCO, 2007) of a primary education and basic literacy for all by 2015. What role can ICTs play in achieving education equity and social justice under these circumstances?

They observe that ICTs can empower educational efforts to promote development and social justice via three angles: (a) to promote access to education among the underprivileged; (b) to promote awareness of development and the importance of education; and (c) to build learning environments within which individuals and communities can promote social justice. To accomplish these functions, however, requires a critical frame of mind regarding relationships between ICTs and the global context, as without a critical framework, ICTs can also easily be applied in



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ways that are counterproductive to those in developing countries.

In the second chapter Michalinos Zembylas points out two development paradigms linked to the idea of an information society: the modernization development paradigm and the social justice development paradigm. In the former, “development” is part of an economic discourse that drowns out other renditions of its meaning, such as cultural development, personal development, and spiritual development. In the latter, “development” means being rescued from capitalism and simply moving forward in time.



However, there is a problem in the latter: because underdeveloped countries are already excluded from the global system by poverty and other injustices, access to ICT becomes irrelevant to them. In either case, “focusing on the effects of ICT on development, considering its limited impact in addressing poverty and inequality in some parts of the world (i.e., India), distracts from efforts to address pressing basic needs that alleviate poverty and injustice (Hoogevelt, 1997)” (p. 19). For this reason, examining ICT in development and education for social justice must reach beyond a naïve concern focused simply on ICT access to a critically framed examination of ICT as a tool to overcome social exclusion and widen participation. Zembylas closes the chapter with a call for more research on “how ICT and discourses on the digital divide may inadvertently or purposely recycle the very educational inequalities they claim they want to eradicate” (p. 27)

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ICT for development

Gustavo Fischman and José Luis Ramírez Romero lead this section about relationships between ICT and education for development in Argentina, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and México. They note a tendency in Latin America to implement ICTs in education without a plan and without the support of well-thought-out education policy for its use. As a result ICT projects tend to have multiple, contradictory goals. This is an example of the naïve focus on the

technology itself that Zembylas argued against earlier in the book.

In their research, Fischman and Ramírez Romero found enthusiastic response to the technology itself but little evidence of translation of that response into innovative education for their constituencies. One could interpret in Fischman's and Ramírez Romero's findings that the Latin American educators did not "own" the implementation of the ICT; it was thrust upon them. So it is little wonder that another theme emerging in this case is the educators' concern that there is no coordination between programs. As the authors point out, "Religion, ideologies and science have been fertile fields providing innovative technologies that when applied, produced enormous damage to those who were deemed not worthy or unable to understand the miraculous nature of the innovation" (p. 47). This observation echoes those of others, such as Jorge González (2004), who once noted that it appears that descriptive research that originates in the North often migrates south of the border and becomes prescriptive.

Sir John Daniel reports that future growth in higher education will be in the developing world. In a decade or two, most college and university students will be in the developing world. This reality will redefine higher education norms considerably. Daniel looks to open and distance learning as a good way to reach these large numbers of students. He reports that distance learning is already a significant presence in higher education in India. He notes a number of challenges to Indian higher education as it makes the transition from elite to mass systems aimed at the needs of democracy: affordability, accessibility, appropriateness, accreditation, and acceptability. Over time, a number of for-profit ventures have introduced various e-learning technologies, which have had mixed outcomes with respect to each of these challenges. It is easy for ICTs to give an appearance of addressing each of these challenges. Appearances can also be deceiving.

Amy Leh, Lee Grafton, and Sylvester Robertson report on a project that used ICT to bridge the achievement gap in

mathematics in Palm Springs, California, schools, where over 80% of the students were low-income status and of that percentage the majority was Hispanic. A suite of hardware and software applications was used to engage sixth to eighth grade students in mathematics, involve parents, monitor student achievement to guide data-driven decision-making, and provide for teacher development in structuring mathematics education to meet California standards in mathematics in sixth to eighth grade. The project was an overall success, though there were some challenges. For example, low-income students were less likely to have access to the technology at home, and teachers need time to learn the technology before they will be able to employ it for instructional and assessment purposes. These challenges notwithstanding, the authors reported that how mathematics education was conducted in this school was transformed.

Tim Power, Kimberley Porteus, Brian Ramadiro, Nomakholwa Tshume, Shumi Makalema, and Rhodri Thomas report on the use of ICTs in one of the poorest, rural provinces in South Africa, the Eastern Cape through collaboration between the Nelson Mandela Institute for Education, South Africa, and the UK Open University. A consortium came together to create “ICT centres of excellence” in fifteen schools in the Eastern Cape, aiming to “put ICT into school as tools for educators to use primarily to deepen the process of teaching and learning. Though the findings were positive, the authors also reported that the project lacked curriculum resources to use ICT for literacy, numeracy, science or other subjects. Intervention design emphasized technical rather than educational or social capacity building. Donor interventions provided equipment and sometimes training and then left schools to go it alone. The perception that technology produces educational quality disempowers educators who are learning the technology and whose other attributes (i.e., knowledge, values, and educational practices) are not recognized. The outcome is an erosion of rural educators’ agency by locating “quality” away from their locus of control.

Marina Stock McIasac and António Moreira report on the use of open source educational resources as catalysts for

social change through inquiry, problem solving and knowledge building in Cape Verde and Nigeria. They assert that these educational resources are sustainable because they are openly available to everyone without changes in access or increased costs over time. These characteristics are conducive to meeting many of the Millennium Development Goals, especially the goals of achieving universal primary education and promoting gender equity. The archipelago of Cape Verde has few local resources and relies on open source ICTs for teacher training that is provided by the University of Aveiro, Portugal. Despite the positive outcomes of the arrangement for teacher education in Cape Verde, there are a number of obstacles, including difficulties related to maintaining reliable Internet connections, lack of institutional pricing for Internet access, and ownership issues that keep educational resources as the property of the University of Aveiro, rather than developing them into materials owned by Cape Verde educational institutions.

In Nigeria, distance education has spread knowledge for democracy by enabling rural poor and marginalized students to obtain an education and prepare for the workforce. The National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) opened its doors in 2002 with 32,000 students and is now graduating thousands of students each year. Unlike Cape Verde, Internet access is much better, and in rural areas without a robust landline infrastructure, Nigerian educators have begun to embrace wireless mobile technologies to facilitate information and knowledge exchange among all people in Nigeria's rural areas. However, additional conditions must be met: (a) Content and instruction must meet local needs; (b) Instruction must be pedagogically sound; (c) Teachers must be well trained; (d) All stakeholders must be involved; (e) Governments must make education a priority; and (f) Telecommunications industry must provide affordable service.

ICT for inclusion

The three chapters of the next section represent ICT for inclusion through discussion of teacher education in Sub-Saharan Africa, disability education in the United States, and

school-community relationships in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand.

Tom Power and James Sankale elaborate on examples of harnessing the potential of mobile devices for educational and development purposes in Kenya and in South Africa. In both countries, as well as across much of Sub-Saharan Africa, mobile phone use surpasses the use of landline telephones.

In Kenya, text messaging is used to improve the organization and administration of teacher education workshops and programs and to provide support, continuity, guidance, and peer coaching within clusters of schools participating in teacher professional development. Despite its strengths, a number of social justice issues remain: (a) the schools lack technologies and infrastructure required for other types of ICT; (b) disadvantaged demographics encounter challenges in their freedom to access their professional networks; and (c) rural communities out of range of the wireless signals were unable to participate. In the Eastern Cape province of South Africa, educators used “pocketPC” technologies to support professional development and curriculum development by teachers. Teachers used the devices to access multimedia resources and digital texts, as well as email and Web access. Teacher response to this experience was similar to that of respondents in the Fishman & Ramírez Romero chapter earlier in this book. Many felt lost with the handheld computer, though they could see new possibilities emerging from its use.

Jason Brent Ellis, Carla Abreu-Ellis and Amber Ricker report on assistive ICTs used to bridge the digital divide in disability in education. They point out that students with disabilities can benefit from these tools, but inequity exists for students with low self-advocacy skills or from families with low socio-economic status. Students with disabilities are further challenged in their academic success by uninformed teachers who lack awareness in disability and universal design principles in education. These principles would make educational content seamlessly available to

students with disabilities in an inclusive context. They remind us also that social justice for students with disabilities requires a shift in focus to changing society's opinions about disabilities in general, so that students with disabilities receive maximum benefits from assistive technologies designed to support them in their educational pursuits.

Cher Ping Lim and John Hedberg focus on the use of ICTs in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand to support school-community connections for a culture of thinking, lifelong learning, and social responsibility. Their research yielded these conclusions: (a) ICT bridges and strengthens the home-school connection and promotes parents' involvement in school, when properly implemented; (b) When parents are encouraged to participate in school management activities, changes occur quickly; and (c) ICT opens opportunities for collaboration between organizations and people with local and international communities and lead to strengthening of students' personal and social development.

ICT for cultural understanding

The last section of the book focuses on a variety of ICT-mediated approaches to improving intercultural understanding. Mary Kayler, Debra Sprague, and Chris Dede report on the potential of "massively multiplayer online role playing games" (MMORPG) to support interaction among individuals from all over the world in real time. One of the findings of their study revealed that simply talking with others in this gaming environment was the primary way they learned about each other's cultures. The players reported that moderators helped them focus on topics that were not controversial and that enabled them to develop intercultural understandings in the context of online friendships and community. However, they also thought that the censorship might go too far because such censorship might also exclude constructive criticism.

Zvi Bekerman and Gabriel Horenczyk report on the use of ICTs to support collaborative intercultural education

between Palestinian and Jewish students in Israel. The *Yad2Yad* Project facilitated virtual contact toward the reduction of intergroup conflict. A closed and secure completely Arab-Hebrew bilingual website aims to foster a culture of mutual respect and tolerance among students between the ages of 13 and 16. Activities on the website are designed to encourage Jewish and Palestinian Arab children to share ideas related to culture, identity, and common citizenship. This project is an example of computer-supported collaborative conflict resolution programs that are becoming a trend for conflict resolution purposes. Such programs rely heavily on institutional support by teachers and principals and show promise for peace education.

Edward Brantmeier and Jayson Richardson pick up on the discussion of the use of ICTs for peace education through this question: In the context of technological globalization, how are information communication technologies (ICTs) used as a means for reconciliation and peacemaking? Drawing from research in Cambodia and Tibet, they argue in favor of using ICTs to rebuild relationships by forgiving atrocities inflicted on them through connections with their internal and diasporic neighbors to Tibet and Cambodia. ICTs enable the free-flow of information that supports the dialogue needed to achieve forgiveness of past events in order to move on to a better future. Different types of ICTs serve different purposes, such as providing information, helping people process information, improving decision making, reducing scarcity, supporting relationships, and helping people understand each other. The challenge is in knowing which technology to apply at which point to service which purpose.

Finally, Carrie O'Connor and Rebecca Skulnick report on a case on how a social networking application was used by undergraduate students to raise questions and seek socially just, multicultural understanding. Through a case study on an online discussion about an incident on *Facebook*, where photos depicting discriminatory writing and ethnic and sexist slurs were posted, the authors comment on the limitations of social networking technology in functioning as a space to bring divergent views together: un-moderated space is not

necessarily the best place to resolve emotionally charged issues about which there are multiple perspectives.

This book makes for interesting reading in light of recent literature on philosophies of science and science and technology studies. For example, in her reprise of European sociologists Michael Gibbons, Helga Nowotny, and Peter Scott's (2001) work, the esteemed science studies scholar Sandra Harding (2008, 2002) concludes that "the more socially robust one's knowledge claims, the more empirically reliable they will be" and "the more scientific research projects engage with their social environments in egalitarian discussions, the higher the quality of the results of that research" (2008, p. 97). Harding's observation makes a similar case to that of James Banks (2009) about the importance of interrogating curriculum and instruction in globalized contexts. It is also consistent with Gordon Allport's (1954) seminal work on necessary conditions to reduce prejudice. The observations of the contributors to *ICT for Education, Development & Social Justice* are similarly situated.

The contributors to this volume provide compelling arguments for interrogating underlying ICTs philosophies, ontologies, and epistemologies, as well as the curriculum and instructional content that ICTs carry, in research and development on the use of ICTs to support peoples' self-determined efforts to achieve social justice. Together, the contributors point to the importance of a globally contextualized view of the use of ICTs that honors science and tradition as co-constructors of knowledge. In this schema, there is no "Other" because no one is marginalized because no one is excluded. Under these circumstances social justice can be more readily achieved. The contents and organization of the book model this view.

This book achieves its purpose and aims and is essential reading for those interested in advancing the study of ICTs beyond a narrow technoscientific view that privileges technology and science over social concerns. Its scope provides readers with insights into the use of ICTs to support education for development and social justice on a

global scale. These insights are useful to a broader, inclusive scientific community as it rethinks how and by whom science is done and communicated and for whose and what purpose in the globalized 21st century.

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