

Doctoral Colloquium

Aziza *Policy making in the era of Globalization: An examination of the use of Information and Communication Technology for development strategies in the Caribbean.*

**POLICY MAKING IN THE ERA OF GLOBALIZATION: AN
EXAMINATION OF THE USE OF INFORMATION AND
COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT
STRATEGIES IN THE CARIBBEAN**

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RATIONALE FOR THE WORK

In 1995 the government of Jamaica declared its first policy for using information technology for development. This was prefaced by the statement that “As we begin a new century, and come to terms with the Digital Age, Jamaica has the opportunity to embrace the new concept of a “knowledge-based society” for social and economic development. We must, therefore, seize the initiative and build on the foundation that we have already laid, to establish new partnerships, develop new industries, to become more competitive in this new age” The strategic plan continued by declaring that “In recognition of this new environment, the Jamaican Government has made the integration of information technology into the Jamaican economy a high priority and a strategic imperative. Jamaica must become the center for IT activities and investment in the Caribbean”. In 2007 a second policy E-Powering Jamaica followed. The policy claimed to embody the vision that “Jamaica will become an inclusive, development-oriented, knowledge-based society that achieves economic and social growth through the integration of ICTs into all aspects of the nation’s life. The aim is to magnify Jamaica’s position as a leader in the delivery of ICT enhanced services and new investment opportunities in the Caribbean”. This second policy was followed by the National development policy ICT sector Plan which asserted that “Information and Communications Technologies have become engines for social and economic growth globally. The appropriate utilization of ICT can improve the lives of all Jamaicans and the vision is for Jamaica is to utilize Information and Communications Technology (ICT) to attain developed country status by 2030”.

Between 1995 and 2007 the Government of Jamaica has consistently restated the believe that information and communication is essential to ensuring and securing social and economic development for the island. Strengthening the IT sector has also been viewed as a critical component to development this is based on the acceptance that the world is defined by the information age and that societies should be moving towards the knowledge societies.

The Jamaican government has acted in accordance with the international call for governments to implement national Information and Communication for Development (ICT4D) strategies or E-strategies.

Other developing countries as also acted in a similar vein pursuing E-strategies.

Publications by the major international development agencies, and the agencies themselves; the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme are representative of the currents in thinking on ICT4D as well as its importance on the international agenda for development cooperation and action in that area. The perception is that ICTs possess great potential in assisting development and leapfrogging countries into stages of development. This new tool has therefore to be utilized by developing countries.

There are two primary concerns which guide my enquire into this area. Firstly, that policy determination as it relates to the use of ICTs for development are seemingly heavily influenced by the prescriptions of international development agencies and international policy networks that is the adoption and that among developing countries there is an uncritical approach to adopt e-strategies especially in light of historical experience with non-indigenous technology and research findings on rates of success in the use of ICT for development.

A second concern is the motivation for developing country governments adopting ICT4D. Whereas no one will argues about the utility of technology for development and the important uses of information and communication technologies their ability to deliver social and economic development for developing countries and potentially leapfrog them into stages of development has been questioned.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The questions which interested me are as follows and the research questions are formulated from these;

- Why do governments choose E-strategies as a national tool for development?
- What are the drivers putting ICT4D on the national policy agenda?
- What is the evidence that ICT4d has led to an improvement in development objectives and outcomes of developing countries?
- How do ICT4D polices relate to the development objectives of the country?
- How are the strategies formulated?
- Which actors are the principal drivers in ICT4D policy?
- What are the implications of specific actor involvement?

Based on these initial questions I derive the following research question:

- Why do Jamaican Policy makers use ICT as a national strategy for development?
- What are the drivers putting E-strategies on the national policy agenda?
- How are E-strategies used to achieve development objectives?
- What is the impact on social and economic development based on the use of ICT as a strategy for development?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The Research is designed to use a multiple embedded case study or a comparative case study to examine and explain the use of ICT4D as a tool for development among developing countries specifically in the Caribbean Region. The cases selected were Jamaica, Trinidad, Barbados, Guyana and Grenada.

Unit of Analysis and Methods of Data Collection

Within each case the following was considered to be the unit of analysis : the ICT4D policies/E-strategies, Projects under the policies and the policy makers /stakeholders who were consulted in the process of drafting the ICT4D policy. As such the methods of data collection are Semi-structured Interviews, secondary data analysis, field observation-Community access Points in some countries and other Project sites and Programmes. Where possible field visits will be carried out in some of the cases. A number of community access points, stakeholder meetings and special programme events were visited in the Jamaica. Secondary data analysis constitutes an examination of the E-strategies, and supporting policy documents.

Selection of interviewees

For countries with E-strategies, list were ascertained of persons who participated in stakeholder consultations for drafting the ICT4D strategies and a purposive sampling method was used to select persons to represent government private sector and non-governmental organizations. A total of 15 persons who were involved in the consultation process were selected to be interviewed in each case. Snowball sampling techniques will also be employed to identify an additional 5-10 persons who were involved in the field of development and development policy in the countries. For countries without ICT4D strategies interviewees were selected based on their responsibility and position within the responsible Ministry; this decision employed the use of purposive sampling methodology as well as snowball sampling techniques to select interviewees.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework suggests that the extent to which governments draft national development policy is largely shaped by the international policy arena where there are several factors at play. The framework suggests that policy networks which include research groups, institutes, international conferences and international organizations impact and determine the perception of required development policy particularly in emerging areas such as ICT. Consequently policy determination, content and to some extent implementation is shaped by these events, institutions, ideas and people.

The framework focuses on how ideas emerge and are transformed into national development policy it therefore emphasizes the connection between ideas the medium through which this is conveyed and policy.

The framework proposed incorporates some significant components of that developed by Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) in their policy transfer model. Policy transfer is a framework for analyzing the process of policy making. It is based on the assumption that knowledge of ideas, institutions, polices and programmes in one setting is fed into the policy in another setting.

SUMMARY OF ANY INITIAL FINDINGS AND PLANNED ANALYSIS APPROACH

Based on the analysis of the E-strategies from Jamaica, Trinidad, Barbados, Guyana and Grenada there were several emerging themes which explain why governments use ICT as a tool for development. The Emerging Themes are divided into different groups, the drivers for ICT as a strategy for development are categorized as Attitudes, ideologies, People, events and institutions. While the reasons for using ICT as a strategy for development are presented uncategorized.

The emerging themes comprise of interview responses as well as material from the E-strategies of Barbados, Guyana , Grenada, Trinidad and Jamaica.

The Reasons for using E-strategies are to be seen as dynamic and a combination of factors. The themes which have been identified reflect the dominant ideas or the central concepts which we can use to understand the decision by governments. These reasons are to be seen as related to the drivers for using ICT for development which were found to be the need to be competitive, and the perception of ICT as tools for Development. The Reasons identified were the ability to drive development, Need to lead, Power of technology, Aspect of national development plan, State government policy, ICT playing a central role in society.

When E-strategies from Jamaica and Trinidad were examined it was determined that governments used mostly a project or programme format to implement the strategies. In the case of Jamaica a rather disjointed pattern of implementation.