

Facilitating Policy Implementation using ICT in a
Development Context: A South African Ubuntu Approach

by

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Declaration

I declare that the thesis which I hereby submit for the degree PhD (Information Technology) at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

CA	Amartya Sen's Capabilities Approach
CDW	Community Development Workers
CE	Collaboration Engineering
GSS	Group Support System
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ICT4D	ICT for development
ICT4E	ICT for Entrepreneurship
IS	Information Systems
PAJA	Promotion of Administrative Justice Act 3 of 2000
PAJA Project	The research project in which research was immersed
SEDA	State Enterprise Development Agency
SEIDET	Siyabuswa Educational Improvement and Development Trust
TCA	Jürgen Habermas' Theory of Communication Action
TSC	Thusong Service Centre
UDF	Ubuntu Development Framework
UN	United Nations

Abstract

The road of development through e-government is covered with deep potholes and dead ends. This is because Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are adopted and e-government policies are developed with a blind focus on the ICT tools and with little reflection on the contribution of ICT to development (Heeks and Bailur, 2007, p. 243, Avgerou, 2009, p. 14). To assist with this reflection Information Systems (IS) researchers are increasingly calling for the development of local contextual theory or a framework in ICT for Development (ICT4D) (Avgerou, 2009, p. 14, Madon et al., 2007, Walsham, 2003, Walsham, 1997).

This thesis responds to that call by investigating the role of e-government towards development within the South African context. The means of inquiry was a three year ethnographic immersion in a longitudinal research project. The aim of the longitudinal research project was to investigate how a specialised type of ICT (Group Support Systems) can enable interaction between government and citizens in attaining specific human rights.

The research project centred on creating an awareness among the public in South Africa of a newly enacted Act, the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act No 3 of 2000 (PAJA). The rich data collected was analysed using Grounded Theory, resulting in a substantive theory that suggests that within the South African context e-government could contribute to development if it is used to facilitate policy implementation within the spirit of Ubuntu.

The thesis delineates the journey up to the emergence of the substantive theory. The substantive theory has important implications for IS theory and IS practice. For IS theory, the substantive theory demonstrates that research on ICT4D in Africa could usefully be undertaken by following an action research strategy within a critical-interpretive paradigm. The substantive theory also suggests the importance of taking into account the contextual collaborative nature of African culture in the spirit of Ubuntu when conducting such research. For practice, the substantive theory proposes a potential framework where ICT could provide the collaborative environment or shared space in the spirit of Ubuntu for policy implementation towards development. Checked against implementation requirements on the

South African policy on entrepreneurship, the substantive theory framework proves to be equally valuable.

Keywords:

ICT for Development, e-Government, Ethnography, Grounded Theory, Theory of Communicative Action, Diffusion of Innovations, Actor Network Theory, Capabilities Approach.