

**A critical analysis of information poverty from a social justice perspective**

By

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Thesis

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I declare that

**A critical analysis of information poverty from a social justice perspective**

Is my own work and that all the sources that I have quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete reference

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JJ Britz' with a stylized flourish at the end.

JJ Britz

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## **Summary**

### **A critical analysis of information poverty from a social justice perspective**

Information poverty is one of the main forms of poverty today that affects the lives of billions of people on a daily basis and as such it is argued in this thesis that this form of poverty should be on the world's moral agenda – not merely as a discussion item but as an action item. It is furthermore argued that the information and knowledge society cannot be build without taking into consideration the moral challenges associated with this form of poverty.

The research question guiding this thesis is as follows: What is information poverty and why is it a serious moral issue that needs to be addressed today? To be able to answer this question five key issues are addressed. They are as follows:

- The analysing, unpacking and understanding of the different dimensions and moral implications of poverty through the use of social sciences (Chapter 1).
- The investigation and analyzing of the notion of information, specifically in terms of its relationship to poverty. (Chapters 2 & 3).
- The analysing, unpacking and understanding of information poverty, both in terms of its complexity as well as social, political, personal and moral dimensions (Chapter 4).
- A reflection, from a social justice perspective, on the moral concerns associated with information poverty. This is done through the use of philosophy and social sciences (Chapter 5).
- The development, based on social justice and human rights, moral guidelines that can be used to address the different moral concerns associated with information poverty (Chapter 6).

In Chapter 2 poverty is defined as that condition of life where the majority of people lack sufficient resources to supply their basic needs for survival. As such it indicates the socio-economic status of people and communities, together with its impact on just about every aspect of their lives. It is illustrated that poverty has a strong moral claim on society.

In Chapter 3 the notion of information is discussed from a diachronic perspective and an own approach to information is presented. Based on the three worlds of Popper different characteristics of information are identified and discussed. The implications of these characteristics on information poverty are illustrated.

Chapter 4 focuses on information poverty. A basic definition is presented and different degrees as well as levels of information poverty are also distinguished. It is argued that this form of poverty has an overall impact on the development of people.

In Chapter 5 information poverty as a serious moral issue is discussed. Following from this social justice in terms of its scope, application and functions is analysed with regards to information poverty. Based on the value statement that the alleviation of information poverty serves a common good purpose, it is argued that there are two moral principles that meet the requirement of universal validity and that can be used to guide moral decision-making regarding information poverty. These are justice and human rights.

In Chapter 6 several moral guidelines, based on social justice, are presented that can be used to address the moral concerns raised by the condition of information poverty.

**Keywords:**

Information, data, knowledge, poverty, information poverty, social justice, human rights, globalization, economics of information, ethics, morality, information and communication technologies.

## Opsomming

### **‘n Kritiese analise van inligtingsarmoede vanuit ‘n sosiale geregtigheid perspektief**

Inligtingsarmoede kan beskou word as een van die primêre vorme van armoede wat die lewe van biljoene mense op ‘n daaglikse basis beïnvloed. Dit is om die rede dat daar in hierdie proefskrif geargumenteer word dat inligtingsarmoede tuis hoort onder die internasionale morele agenda – nie net in terme van ‘n agenda item nie, maar as ‘n aksie item. Daar word ook verder geargumenteer dat dit onmoontlik is om inligting- en kennisgemeenskappe te bou sonder om die morele aspek van inligtingsarmoede in berekening te bring.

Die navorsingsvraag van hierdie proefskrif kan as volg geformuleer word: Wat moet verstaan word onder inligtingsarmoede, waarom is dit ‘n ernstige morele saak en wat kan daaromtrent gedoen word? Ten einde hierdie sentrale vraag te beantwoord is vyf sake aangespreek. Hierdie sake kan as volg saamgevat word:

- Die ontleding, analisering en verstaan van armoede met sy verskillende dimensies en morele implikasies. Dit is gedoen vanuit ‘n sosiaal wetenskaplike perspektief (Hoofstuk 2);
- Die ondersoek na, en analisering van inligting, met spesifieke klem op die verhouding waarmee inligting staan tot armoede (Hoofstuk 3);
- Die ontleding en verstaan van inligtingsarmoede in terme van die kompleksiteit daarvan asook die sosiale, politieke, ekonomiese en individuele dimensies daarvan (Hoofstuk 4);
- ‘n Refleksie, vanuit die perspektief van sosiale geregtigheid, op die morele dimensies van inligtingsarmoede. Dit is gedoen vanuit die Filosofie asook Sosiale Wetenskappe (hoofstuk 5);
- Die ontwikkeling van morele riglyne wat gebruik kan word om inligtingsarmoede te help oplos. Hierdie riglyne is gefundeer in sosiale geregtigheid asook menseregte (Hoofstuk 6).

In hoofstuk 2 is armoede omskryf as daardie kondisie van lewe waar die meerderheid mense ‘n gebrek het aan die noodsaaklike hulpbronne om te kan oorleef. Hiermee word die sosio-ekonomiese status van mense aangedui waarvolgens bykans elke aspek van hul lewe geraak word. Die morele implikasies van armoede is ook bespreek.

Hoofstuk 3 bespreek, vanuit 'n diakroniese perspektief, die begrip inligting en 'n eie benadering tot inligting word voorgestel. Gebaseer op die 3-wêreldbeeld van Popper word unieke eienskappe van inligting beskryf. Die implikasies ten opsigte van inligtingsarmoede word duidelik uiteengesit.

Hoofstuk 4 fokus op inligtingsarmoede self. 'n Werksdefinisie word gegee en die verskille vlakke en grade van inligtingsarmoede word beskryf. Klem word gelê op die feit dat hierdie vorm van armoede bykans alle sferes van die menslike lewe kan beïnvloed.

In hoofstuk 5 word die ernstige morele aspekte wat geassosieer word met inligtingsarmoede bespreek. Na aanleiding hiervan word sosiale geregtigheid in terme van reikwydte, impak en toepassing volledig bespreek. Dit word gedoen met die oog op die toepassing daarvan op inligtingsarmoede. Gebaseer op die waardestelling dat die oplossing van inligtingsarmoede deel uitmaak van die gemeenskaplike streef van die mensdom word voorgestel dat sosiale geregtigheid en menseregte dié twee morele konsepte is wat universele validasie het om hierdie probleem aan te spreek.

In hoofstuk 6 word agt morele riglyne geformuleer wat gebruik kan word om inligtingsarmoede mee aan te spreek. Hierdie riglyne is gebaseer op sosiale geregtigheid asook menseregte.

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