

Editorial

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Empirical studies and surveys form important experimental vehicles for areas such as Information Technology in developing countries. Ehikhamenor's paper titled, "Cognitive information foundation of university students: index of information and communication technology in Nigeria" reports a study to assess the awareness of information and communication technology among the Nigerian population. The study is based on responses to a questionnaire given to candidates joining a university course. The questionnaire itself was built on the idea that the awareness of an area is reflected in the familiarity with jargon in that area. This provides a simple yardstick for measurement of technology awareness results.

We have one more paper based on a survey. Huang's paper, "Flying freely but in a cage – an empirical study of using Internet for the democratic development in China" studies the postings in a number of Internet news groups related to China. The goal was to analyse the impact of such technological media in the political scenario of China. The paper concludes that just the availability of technology does not cause significant political changes.

Studies of this nature, based on questionnaires, contributions to discussion forums and news groups, accesses to Web locations, etc., can provide significant insights into some of the problems – for example, the effectiveness of IT usage, the profile of IT users, etc. – being constantly discussed in forums such as IT for Development.

Dulle's paper on networking of agricultural libraries in Tanzania is an investigative paper on improving the effectiveness of libraries through the use of information technology. The paper examines the technologies that are relevant and proposes solutions for the problems that are likely to arise in an endeavour of this nature.

We also have an analytical paper by Ramani and Dholakia, which proposes a model to forecast cement demand in a country. The use of computer models and automated processing, contributes significantly to improve the forecasting models used for planning and other developmental activities. This improvement comes from the ability to handle data of a lower granularity resulting in more accurate forecast for smaller geographical regions, as well as the ability to handle a larger range of factors such as seasonal variations. Given that planning and allocation of resources is of strategic importance for developing countries, this is an important way in which IT can contribute to their development.

The Editorial Team