

Wall of hopes

- 1) More debate within academic circles and the funding agencies about the role of intermediaries in the development process.
- 2) Funding agencies will allow research to take more time so that it can include the cycles of failure and success in a project.
- 3) Senior managers will accept that change is possible.

Wall of laments

- 1) A huge investment is still being made in top-down projects, despite a growing recognition of their limitations.
- 2) Researchers worry more about what is, and what is not, a 'sexy' subject. Consequently, they tend to frame their research question around a subject that is more likely to attract funding. In this way, the research agenda is being decided by the market.
- 3) A lot of discussion about 'ICT for development' relates to 'success stories' which are not properly connected with empirical research. There are also not enough discussions on the links between research and policy.

Research gap

The participants also noted that there is not enough research at the grassroots level and this is an important gap in the literature. There seems to be a 'disconnect' between the policymakers and practice, and ground level contextual details/localization. Emergence at the local level is often not recognized and is disconnected from decision-making power structures. Much research on this topic is high-jacked by 'managerialism' and is influenced by management research. There is a need for more social theory to be incorporated in research on ICT for development. This will allow the research in this domain to expose otherwise normative power relations.

The participants are intent on changing the nature of the academic field concerned with this area. They also accept that not all new ideas and situations are the result of emergence: many are the result of expensive, well-planned campaigns by political or economic interests to make change happen in a certain way. However, emergence or the nature of change in general can never be controlled, even if you explicitly try to do it. Therefore emergence has tremendous value. Recent evidence from India shows that if you allow emergence to happen, if you allow people to take ownership and adapt new technologies, then the outcomes are very different, and because of the rapidity of change there is often no other way.

What is all the research for?

One basic question is 'What is all the research for?' A simple answer is 'to inform policy and practice'. However, it is easier said than done. It is the practice element that is more important because the policy can be written and just ignored. So, how do we develop research which is going to have an impact on practice? A clearer understanding of what evidence is needed and how it can be collected and presented is required here.

The next steps

At the end of the workshop, some concrete actions were suggested for those who want to take the process forward: an e-mail list for sharing ideas; blogs, wikipedia, Facebook and structured online discussions; special issues of journals and mainstream media to share ideas emerging from the workshop; a book about the potential impact of emergent thinking on the practice of development and development research; and a debate on these issues at the next ICTD conference in London, December 2010.

About this IKM Summary

This *IKM Summary* provides an overview of the following *IKM Working Paper*:

Adnan Rafiq and Nazish Rafiq (2010) Good planning or benign imposition? Innovation, emergence and risk in developmental research: Learning from ICTD. Final Report. JBS-IKM-BDDG Workshop 17-18 September 2009. *IKM Working Paper* No. 9, January 2010, 29 pp.

http://wiki.ikmemergent.net/index.php/File:Working_Paper_9-CambridgeReport.pdf

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