

Editorial

In this issue

Case studies form a major ingredient in the study of IT for Development. Rarely are these case studies grouped and analysed to learn generally useful lessons or to develop models to understand the concerned subject better. Baark and Heeks undertake such a task in their paper titled "Donor-funded information technology transfer projects: evaluating the life-cycle approach in four Chinese science and technology projects". Though the samples considered are small in number, the model derived is interesting and feasible. The subject is Technology Transfer related to IT projects. They identify two types of projects – the general application projects aimed at solving a specific problem and the IT specific projects which may include development of expertise in some areas of IT. The authors propose a five phase lifecycle for IT projects covering both these cases. We would be happy to know of our readers' reaction to this model in the light of their experiences. Such feedback will be useful to analyse and thereby strengthen the model proposed.

Montealegre's paper is also related to case study research, specifically of projects covering IT transfer to LDCs. The issues related to technology transfer to developing countries from developed nations has been a subject of much research and we have carried papers on this topic in this journal before. Montealegre observes that inadequate attention is being paid to issues outside IT in such case studies. The paper calls for more case studies covering such issues including the social/organisational setting within which projects are implemented and the impact of such projects on the people earlier associated with the task.

A case study on the management of accounting information in the Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs) in Nigeria is the focus of the paper by Toluyemi of ARMTI, Nigeria. Based on a study he observes that communication of account information is poor among the staff involved in the project. This, the author feels can have adverse effect on the sustainability of the projects. A number of factors are cited for the lack of a good accounting information system, including the common case of lack of awareness of the usefulness. The paper provides a close view of the reality in the specific context of Nigerian ADPs and offers a number of suggestions to rectify and improve the situation.

One question that institutions in their early stages of IT adoption face is the place of IT in the institution. IT often tends to be viewed as a separate unit or department, rather than as a pervasive force integrated into the breadth of the institution. Since IT is often a means to improve and enhance the functionality, efficiency and effectiveness of the institution, such compartmentalisation tends to defeat the purpose. Lwehabura and Matovelo's paper discusses this issue in the context of library services in African universities. As information availability is shifting more and more to digital medium, and new forms/sources of information are becoming available which are heavily IT-based, libraries will need to absorb IT as an integral part of their structure. The authors analyse the state of library automation in African universities, explore the advantages and disadvantages of coupling library and computer centre services and argue for convergence of these two.

The Editorial Team