Introducing Information and Communication Technology Training for Rural Women in South Africa:
Innovative Strategies for the Advancement of Livelihoods

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ABSTRACT

In a contemporary world, ICT training is vital for socio-economic advancement, which is why it should be included in the curriculum that seeks to empower rural women with computer skills to enhance their livelihoods. Rural women lack access to ICTs and they do not know how to use them. A lack of knowledge and skills in ICTs can result in unemployment, poverty and societal discrimination. Through the lens of the human capital theory, this article investigates and reports on the strategies for introducing ICT in the teaching and learning of rural women. Document analysis approach was used to investigate journals, government policy documents and reports from studies to arrive at the findings which include, among others, the employment of computer experts to teach rural women in disadvantaged communities. The study concludes that the introduction of ICT in the curriculum of rural women especially can ensure their socio-economic transformation.

KEYWORDS

INTRODUCTION

Individuals define Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in different ways. Sujatha, Swarnalatha, and Kumari, (2016) define ICT as the different types of technologies used in teaching and learning and for the exchange of information. The ICT tools used for information exchange include cell phones, home telephones, radio, television, satellite and computers (Kumari, 2016). The overarching goal of this document aims to outline the use of a computer to advance the livelihood of rural women in South Africa. Ultimately it recommends strategies for introducing computer training/skills to women in rural areas to enhance their socio-economic development.

In contemporary South Africa where there is explosive growth in computer use, it is important to introduce ICT training in the programmes of teaching and learning of adult learners, especially for women in impoverished communities to aid in the advancement of their livelihoods. The South African government sees ICT training as an important means to develop its citizens, particularly women in rural areas. According to Phillips and Smith (2010), the government of South Africa aims to equip its citizens with ICT training to advance socio-economic development. Adu and Galloway (2015) confirm that the government established a policy on e-Education to promote the use of computers in teaching and learning. The e-Education policy states that every leaner in the General Education and Training (GET) band, Further Education and Training (FET), and Universities, must have access to ICT by 2013 (Adu & Galloway, 2015). The e-Education policy includes information about the importance of equipping theses learners with the skills and knowledge required for ICT to improve education and socio-economic development outcomes (White Paper, 2003). However, very little is said about the introduction of ICT solely for women in rural communities (Isaacs, 2007; Gilward & Stork, 2009).

Noting the value of ICT training in the lives of women in rural areas, stakeholders in education, such as the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) have decided to introduce ICT training into adult education programmes that seek to empower rural women (DHET, 2017). Quan-Baffour (2013) upholds that the DHET planned to use technology in the teaching and learning programmes for adults in general because it is necessary for their development and livelihood. The authors of this document concur that ICT training is vital for socio-economic development hence it must be included in the learning programmes of women, particularly in rural areas. The authors sought to contribute to the current discussion by investigating and to report on the value and strategies of introducing ICT in the curriculum of rural women in South Africa.

Isaacs (2007) states that the South African government has established educational policies to integrate ICT into its education system, however, very little research has been done to introduce ICT in adult education programmes, especially for women in rural areas. The emphasis of ICT training is on formal schools such as Further Education and Training (FET) colleges and universities in the country. As a result, the introduction of ICT in the informal sector such as Community Learning Centres

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