

Chapter 6

ICT Ethical Issues, Globalization and Knowledge Society

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter, the authors will parse the current ethical issues in the information and communication technology research associated with the economic phenomenon of globalization. These issues will include: the digital divide between developed and developing countries, poverty, piracy, cybercrimes, human rights, and gender equality. The chapter will go on to discuss themes in the development of the “knowledge society” that are germane to the ethics of globalization such as societal transformation and wealth generation. The chapter will develop a framework that will associate ICT ethical issues with knowledge society. Finally, the authors will present conclusions and details some of the findings discussed in the previous sections. A glimpse of the future will be provided.

INTRODUCTION

Information and communication technology (ICT) is an omnipresent technology that has an impact on all facets of life. It is becoming the accelerator of service levels that could be extended to every citizen and multiplier of user segments sharing the knowledge products for development (Vijayaditya, 2005). The growth of ICT has established

that the data transformed into information has a business proposition which has given a competitive advantage. ICT can be used for beneficial or harmful purposes.

Gorniack-Kocikowska (2007) claimed that since ICT contains the “communication component,” therefore it can be justifiably seen as the most human technology there was in a very long time, and for this reason, the social impact of ICT can be stronger than the social impact of other technologies have been. In this context, ICT

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ethics has to alert to the possibilities of harmful use of ICT.

In today's world, the world is seen as a global village where everything and everybody can be accessed from anywhere and anytime through the power of ICT. Globalization is like a process by which different human communities and nations become integrated in one single system, that is, global village. It also refers to a new paradigm composed of integrated and interdependent economies (Ochoa-Morales, 2004). As a result, the world is becoming more homogeneous and the borders, political and geographic, are fading out (Czinkota, Ronkainen & Moffet, 1996).

Meanwhile, knowledge is one of the most precious commodities in the global ICT society. In the 21st century, knowledge society is emerging where knowledge is the primary production resource instead of capital and labour, and major contributor towards economic and social growth (Rohrbach, R., 2007). In other words, the societies nowadays are complemented by knowledge. Knowledge society also called global ICT society is a society based on knowledge economy (Gorniak-Kocikowska, 2007). Rohrbach (2007) stated that knowledge society is a society in which the knowledge sector represents the most significant share of the economy. It encompasses creating, sharing and using knowledge to bring prosperity and a sense of well-beings to the people.

The following section of this chapter begins with ICT ethical issues in brief, followed by definition of knowledge society and its concepts. Then, the chapter proceeds with the relation between ICT ethical issues and knowledge society, and subsequently present a framework. The chapter finally ends with conclusion and future research directions.

ICT ETHICAL ISSUES

The fast development of ICT globally has led the growth of new ethical issues such as the digital divide, poverty, piracy, cybercrimes, human rights,

and gender equality, all of which have affected people's lives, culture, and values either directly or indirectly. These issues are discussed below.

Digital Divide

The digital divide refers to the gap between those who can effectively benefit from information and computing technologies (ICTs) and those who cannot. Ryder (2006) states that the digital divide raises ethical questions of universal access, that is, access to imperative information has moral and ethical implications that merit consideration in the formation of public policy. On the other hand, ICT has the potential of improving the living conditions of disadvantages or rural groups by helping them increase their income.

Poverty

Poverty is a concept uniquely applied to humans to indicate when a specific person has fallen below the standard of life thought appropriate for someone in that culture. According to Lotter (2007), poverty can be seen as a lack of adequate economic capacities to maintain physical health and engage in social activities distinctive of human beings in a particular society. 'Economic capacities' refer both to available resources as well as human abilities and capacities to utilize resources effectively. This definition of poverty can be split into two parts. One part refers to absolute poverty which means that persons do not have adequate economic capacities to provide enough food, clothing, shelter, security, and medical care to maintain their physical health. It stands to reason that people living in absolute poverty will find the cost of access to ICTs, and training in their use, prohibitive.

Another part refers to relative poverty which means that although people have adequate economic capacities to provide enough food, clothing, shelter, security, and medical care to maintain their physical health, they cannot participate in any other activities regarded as indicative of being

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