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Editorial: The Impact of ICT Investment and Usage

Richard Boateng
ICITD, Southern University, richard@icitd.com

Victor Mbarika
Southern University, victor@mbarika.com

Peter Meso
Kennesaw State University, pmeso@ggc.edu

John Effah
University of Salford, j.effah@pgr.salford.ac.uk

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EDITORIAL

This third issue of the first volume of AJIS presents two research papers examining the impact of information and communication technology (ICT) investment and Usage in microfinance institutions (MFIs) and public sector utilities firms. Both information systems practitioners and academic literature continues to devote considerable attention to the evaluation of information systems investments due to their role as complimentary resources for competitive advantage in organisations. This issue of AJIS introduces the perspective of firms in sub-Saharan Africa to the discourse in which such perspective has been fairly absent. In the first paper Ssewanyana examines the impact of ICT usage on microfinance institutions in Uganda. From a survey of MFIs in Uganda the study uses descriptive statistics to explore the type of software, hardware and network technologies used by MFIs, the benefits obtained and the barriers which influence ICT usage. The findings suggest that ICT usage in MFIs has been on the rise in Uganda and applications being used include free and open-source software which tends to be the adoption path for small MFIs as compared to large MFIs. The study also suggests that the current ICT policies such as tax exemption on computer hardware are not sufficient to achieve the desired growth in adoption and usage of ICTs in MFIs. The emphasis is on the need for progressive policies that provide relevant technical and managerial ICT training programs and advocacy for the use of free and open-source software as alternative to relatively dear proprietary software applications. The study also calls for the extension of its findings in future research in other sub-Saharan countries and application of different research methods to develop more thorough conclusions from the findings.

In the second paper Ojedokun and Moahi investigate the impact of computer technology on the billing process and quality of bills produced by two public sector utility companies in Botswana. The study examined the input-output relationship with computers as one of the inputs. The other
input is labour represented by the Meter Reading Hours and the Supervisory Hours. The study
drew on the economic production theory and time series approach to determine the impact of the
inputs on the output. The findings suggest that there is no significant statistical evidence that
computer technology is positively linked to improvement in total quality bills invoiced per
month. Workplace practices – length of working hours, employee supervision, and actual work
processes – tend to influence the usage of computer technology and the output, thus its impact on
productivity in organisations. Hence, the study argues that computer technology alone is an
insufficient predictor of productivity improvement. The study is, perhaps, the first ICT
investment study or among a few, in sub-Saharan Africa to compare the impact of computer
technology on productivity improvement among government utility corporations. These findings
may inform the development of appropriate policies on investments in IT in organisations. The
study in extending ICT in public sector research also opens opportunities for future research to
examine the impact of related IT applications – billing systems, postal system and inventory
systems in firms in other sub-Saharan countries.

The two papers bring us a step closer to understanding how the unique idiosyncrasies in Africa
influence the adoption and use of ICT at the firm-level. There is still more to be done in terms of
research to develop new or extend existing theoretical frameworks in order to build up a more
practice-oriented understanding of how to develop, deploy and manage contextually relevant
ICTs to achieve and sustain the potential benefits.

**AJIS JOURNAL ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Introduction of French Section**

We are very pleased to announce the introduction of a French section of the AJIS which will
accept submissions in French. Article submissions can be emailed to Dr. Bangaly Kaba,
International University of Grand-Bassam, Cote D'Ivoire (kaba.bangaly@uigb.org).

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cycle time. Our purpose is not to create a ‘one best format’, but to offer guidelines in the
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