

6 CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of the study was to determine how community-driven initiatives can ensure the social sustainability of e-centres in the Western Cape. Interviews were carried out at three e-centres in the Western Cape with e-centre managers, a development leader, and users to assist help answering the research questions, the main research question being, “how can community-driven initiatives enhance the social sustainability of e-centres in the Western Cape? The Secondary questions that were answered were: How do community members participate in designing e-centre programmes? How does the relationship between e-centre stakeholders influence e-centre usage? What are the current methods used for community engagement to ensure feedback mechanisms between e-centres and the community? What are the perceived benefits do communities experience from having e-centres in their geographic areas? A summary of where and how the research objectives were addressed is presented along with the main outcomes of the research. The chapter concludes with suggestions for future research.

6.2 Research questions and objectives

6.2.1 Objective 1: To explore current methods used for community engagement

Chapter 4.5.4: Various communication media is used by the e-centres with word-of-mouth ranking higher than the rest. The information came from the interviews done with e-centre managers, development leader, and the community members.

As there are already various communication methods available and are currently being used, the e-centre could measure which of these mediums are the most effective. The e-centre could then prepare communication pieces that can be shared on these platforms, they could continuously push content around the services offered and joint initiatives between e-centres and community. They could also use the platforms to stipulate how community members could become co-creators. This could drive more people to the e-centre and more people to participate as contributors. Leveraging off existing mediums that people are already comfortable and familiar with.

6.2.2 Objective 2: To explore the level of community members’ participation in designing e-centre program

Chapter 2.1 and section 2.3. The sections discuss various digital inclusion projects in communities and community participation, respectively. It was discussed that having someone familiar with the

area as the lead of the project as well as involving community members from the inception project has experienced better success as the community has better insights into the needs of the community. It has been noted that it is important to maintain the same level of engagement with the community from planning, inception until the operational state. When the level of community engagement is dropped in the middle of the process, issues of misalignment may arise. Chapter 4.5.2. We learnt that in the services that are offered to the community by the e-centre a more top-down approach is followed where the funding/managing organisation decides on the programs to be offered. It is in the e-centres that were operating within communities where there were some changes made to the programs in response to the needs of the communities.

There is currently a low level of community participation as there are no formal structures that have been formed in most e-centres to achieve this. More formal structures would need to be put in place to ensure that all stakeholders involved are clear about their roles in the e-centre. An example of a formal structure would be the establishment of a committee that represents the community together with the e-centre staff and management. The different representatives from the community would ensure that the voice of the community is given a platform where they could be heard. The e-centre management could hear what challenges the community has that could be solved with ICT interventions. Affording two-way communication where the people could understand what it is that the e-centres handle and are equipped with assisting with managing expectations from the community. The committee could meet monthly with quarterly reports going out to the rest of the stakeholders to understand what initiatives are currently running, who the beneficiaries are and what they will do once they have completed their training. This would help improve participation as there would be transparency from the e-centre and people would understand how they can get involved in being more than users at the e-centre to being contributors.

6.2.3 Objective 3: To establish how relationships between e-centre stakeholders influence the use of e-centres

Chapters 2.1 and 2.6 illustrate the relationship between the funders, community and those running the e-centre must be functional in a manner where all the stakeholders support the project, discord in these relationships leads to communication, less support where required and ultimately in the initiative's failure. In chapter 4.4 we learnt about the various stakeholder relationships and the roles

that each of them plays in bringing people to the e-centre and ensuring that the e-centre is running successfully. Where there was a misalignment between the management company and the e-centre manager, the e-centre was found to experience quite a few challenges.

Functioning equipment and relevant content are key in ensuring e-centre usage. When equipment breaks down for months without any repairs or repair timelines in place and with no communication to e-centre management and staff. That leads to the community losing trust towards the e-centre as it would struggle to provide services. This would in turn reduce the number of existing users and as they share their negative experiences with other members of the community, potential users may choose to not use the e-centre anymore. The committees mentioned above could help in fostering better relationships with all concerned parties. Any issues that arise from the e-centre that could threaten the usage thereof could be handled constructively.

6.2.4 Objective 4: To identify current methods used for community engagement to ensure feedback mechanisms between e-centres and the community

Chapter 4.5.4: Various communication media is used by the e-centres with word-of-mouth ranking higher than the rest. The information came from the interviews done with e-centre managers, development leader, and the community members.

As there are already various communication methods available and are currently being used, the e-centre could measure which of these mediums are the most effective. The e-centre could then prepare communication pieces that can be shared on these platforms, they could continuously push content around the services offered and joint initiatives between e-centres and community. They could also use the platforms to stipulate how community members could become co-creators. This could drive more people to the e-centre and more people to participate as contributors. Leveraging off existing mediums that people are already comfortable and familiar with.

6.2.5 Objective 4: To assess the perceived benefits of the e-centre by e-centre users

Chapter 4.6: The e-centre users had indicated how the e-centre has improved learning for their school going children and how the e-centre also helps keep them out of trouble. There have been additional benefits that the community has realised which are outside of the technology gains. In the e-centre where users were engaged, they could articulate the benefit that they have gained from the e-centre in their community. In Paarl, the e-centre helped keep the scholars occupied They

mentioned that the e-centre helped with keeping the school going children out of trouble as they spend their time at the e-centre instead of getting involved with gangsters in the area.

6.3 Outcomes of the research

The aim of the research was to establish how e-centres in the Western Cape can be gain social sustainability through community-driven initiatives. Factors that contribute to e-centre sustainability were discussed in the literature. From the interviews conducted it was established that communities are not usually involved in the inception stages of an e-centre in contributing towards services that can be offered.

It was further identified that e-centres that operate within communities try to adapt their service offering to respond to the needs of the community. This is sometimes prompted by challenges faces by the e-centre, where the e-centre faces challenges of not being accepted by the community it operates in as seen in the Franschoek e-centre. In the Paarl e-centre this was brought about by the drive from the e-centre manager to bring about a positive change in the community they operate in as well as the community having means to communicate their needs to e-centre management.

The relationships between the community and an e-centre are important in ensuring sustainability of the e-centre. By having a collaborative relationship, the e-centre can receive feedback from community and the e-centre can respond by providing services that speak to the needs of the community. Forming close relationships with users or a community is not easy for an e-centre in operating in the CBD compared to e-centres operating within communities. E-centre users only come to the e-centre in the CBD to gain ICT skills to be employable. There is also no time spent to understand the community as users come from different areas. The relationship between the management company and e-centre staff is also important as it helps with the overall operations of the e-centre. Instability in these relationships can have a negative impact on the e-centre overall.

It is apparent from the e-centres understand the benefits that they get to enjoy at the e-centre. School going children have a place they can go to for assignments and holiday programs designed for them. The benefits however for the rest of the e-centres are not fully understood beyond course certificates, curriculum vitae, social media, and printing.

E-centres have the potential to play a much bigger role towards enriching the lives of the people in the communities they serve. ICTs can offer more to people than skills to react to job

opportunities created by external parties. They could offer skills that would enable users to create economic opportunities for themselves. Recommendations of how this can be achieved will be discussed in the recommendations below.

6.4 Limitations of the study

This segment acknowledges the study's limitations. The study encompassed three e-centres situated in the Western Cape, with a total of eleven participants. This group comprised two e-centre managers different e-centres, along with an e-centre development manager from another. Additionally, eight e-centre users were included in the sample. The selection of this sample was based on factors such as availability, accessibility, and a willingness to participate.

The number of participants did not compromise the study's validity. However, it is essential to note that the study's findings may not be universally applicable to all e-centres in the Western Cape, as various contextual factors may come into play. Generalising the results beyond the specific e-centres studied should be approached with caution due to potential variations in different settings.

6.5 Recommendations

6.5.1 Academic Recommendations

The study was only carried out in the Western Cape from only three different e-centres with a limited number of participants. A similar study can be carried out in more e-centres around the country to determine if similar conclusions will be reached. The sample size needs to be larger to collect a variety of responses from multiple participants to provide rich data. E-centre users from various e-centres should be included to be able to assess whether they have similar experiences and lessons could be drawn from insights provided that may differ in the various e-centres and regions. The study could be extended to include non-e-centre users to gain insights on the reasons for not making use of the e-centres. This would provide more input in understanding issues that could lead to failure of e-centres.

6.5.2 Practical Recommendations

The models currently employed are lacking in formal structures that can be employed in ensuring the effective participation of community members for community-driven initiatives social sustainability of e-centres. A framework could be established to provide guidelines that could be followed to ensure effective collaboration between sponsors and community members.

Components that could be considered in the framework could be:

1. The Method of engagement – workshops could be employed as one of these methods. The workshops are to inform the communities of ICT services available and their benefits, the community can decide based on the benefits presented and their needs what services they would prefer. Furthermore, to make the workshops more collaborative, upon receiving feedback from the community regarding challenges faced in that community. The funding or management organisation could come back with practical examples to show the community how ICTs could address the issues.
2. Reduced sponsor/funding organisation involvement – this would need to include the events that need to be completed for the project to be handed over to the community. The duration of each event would need to be stipulated and tracked throughout the process. The community would need to be part of these processes as co-creators.
3. The handover process – where funding would be provided for a limited time and ownership handed over to the community, a detailed plan of what needs to be considered to ensure that the e-centre continues to operate would need to be provided. The community would need to be engaged so that they could contribute to make sure that they fully understand what ownership of the e-centre means. The skills that are required to keep it running and how to ensure that they can meet its operational costs.
4. The training of the e-centre staff and the frequency thereof to ensure that they keep up to date with the latest technology trends which could then be extended as part of the services at the e-centre.
5. Regular meetings with the community regarding the e-centre to ensure that the e-centre is still serving the community. The meetings could be used as one channel that can be used to review the services provided. The community can provide feedback and the managing and funding companies could evaluate the social and economic benefits of the community.

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8 APPENDIX I: RESEARCH TOOLS/INSTRUMENTS

8.1 Individual interviews Centre Managers

Groups and Networks

1. How long have you been working at the e-centre for?
2. Do you come from the community you serve?
3. Who constitutes the team that runs the e-centre?
4. Are there any other organisations that you are part of?
 - a. If yes, how does that impact your work at the e-centre?
 - b. If no, why not?

Trust and Solidarity

5. How is the relationship between e-centre staff and Cape Access management?
6. How is the relationship between the community and the e-centre?
7. What would you say is the level of trust between the community and e-centre?
 - a. Low
 - b. Moderate
 - c. High

Collective action and Cooperation

8. How are the programs offered at the e-centre designed and implemented?
9. Are there any suggestions that have been made by the community that have been implemented?
10. What are the things that are considered to determine whether or not a program should be offered?
11. How are the suggestions from the community members captured (or documented)?
 - a. If yes, how long did it take for them to be implemented?
 - b. If no, what are the reasons behind that?
12. Was the program successful?
13. Information and Communication
14. What mediums are used to communicate services offered by the e-centre to the community?
15. Are the current methods used able to reach the majority of the community?
16. What could be done to improve how the services are communicated to the community?

Social Cohesion and Inclusion

17. There are often differences in characteristics between people living in the same community. For example, differences in wealth, income, social status, ethnic or linguistic background/race. There can also be differences in religious or political beliefs, or there can be differences due to age or sex. To what extent do any such differences characterize your community?

- a. To a very great extent
- b. To a great extent
- c. Neither great nor small extent
- d. To a small extent
- e. To a very small extent

18. Do any of these differences cause problems?

- a. Yes
- b. No → go to question 22

19. Which two differences most often cause problems?

- a. Differences in education
- b. Differences in landholding
- c. Differences in wealth/material possessions
- d. Differences in social status
- e. Differences between men and women
- f. Differences between younger and older generations
- g. Differences between long-term and recent residents
- h. Differences in political party affiliations
- i. Differences in religious beliefs
- j. Differences in ethnic
- k. Other differences

20. Do those differences affect how people interact at the e-centre?

Empowerment and Political action

21. How does the e-centre manage its operational costs?

22. Are the courses that are offered on a fee basis?

23. If yes, how is the pricing determined (are views from the community taken into consideration)?

24. Are there any attempts you make to get non-users to use the e-centre?

8.2 Individual Interview Questions (Community members)

Groups and Networks

1. I would like to start by asking you about the groups or organisations, networks, associations to which you or any member of your household belong. These could be formally organized groups or just groups of people who get together regularly to do an activity or talk about things. Of how many such groups are you or any one in your household a member?

2. Of all these groups to which you or members of your household belong, which one is the most important to your household?

_____ [Name of group]

3. Thinking about the members of this group, are most of them of the same....

	Yes/No
A. Religion	
B. Gender	
C. Ethnic or linguistic background/ race	

4. Do members mostly have the same...

	Yes/No
A. Occupation	
B. Educational background or level	

5. Does this group work with or interact with groups outside the community?

1. No
2. Yes, occasionally
3. Yes, frequently

6. About how many close friends do you have these days? These are people you feel at ease with, can talk to about private matters, or call on for help.

7. Would you be comfortable with asking assistance with the courses you do at the e-centre from these people?

1. Definitely
2. Probably
3. Unsure

- 4. Probably not
- 5. Definitely not

Trust and Solidarity

8. Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?

- 1. People can be trusted
- 2. You can't be too careful

9. In general, do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	1 Agree strongly, 2 Agree somewhat, 3 Neither agree or disagree, 4 Disagree somewhat, 5 Disagree strongly
A. Most people at the e-centre are willing to help if you need it.	
B. At the e-centre, one has to be alert or someone is likely to take advantage of you.	

10. How much do you trust....

	1 To a very great extent: 2 To a great extent 3 Neither great nor small extent: 4 To a small extent: 5 To a very small extent
A. Local government officials	
B. Central government officials	

11. If a community project does not directly benefit you but has benefits for many others in the community, would you contribute time or money to the project?

- A. Time
- B. Money

Collective Action and Cooperation

12. In the past 12 months did you or any one in your household participate in any communal activities, in which people came together to do some work for the benefit of the community?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No (skip to question 14)

13. How many times in the past 12 months?

14. If there was a new project at the e-centre, how likely is it that people will cooperate and participate in the project?

- a. Very likely
- b. Somewhat likely
- c. Neither likely or unlikely
- d. Somewhat unlikely
- e. Very unlikely

Information and communication

15. How did you find out about the e-centre?

16. How many people in your neighbourhood would you say know about the e-centre?

- a. Less than half of the neighbourhood
- b. About half of the neighbourhood
- c. More than half of the neighbourhood

Social and Cohesion and Inclusion

17. There are often differences in characteristics between people living in the same community. For example, differences in wealth, income, social status, ethnic or linguistic background/race. There can also be differences in religious or political beliefs, or there can be differences due to age or sex. To what extent do any such differences characterize your community?

- a. To a very great extent
- b. To a great extent
- c. Neither great nor small extent
- d. To a small extent
- e. To a very small extent

18. Do any of these differences cause problems?

- a. Yes
- b. No → go to question 18

19. Which two differences most often cause problems?

- a. Differences in education

- b. . Differences in landholding
- c. . Differences in wealth/material possessions
- d. Differences in social status
- e. Differences between men and women
- f. Differences between younger and older generations
- g. Differences between long-term and recent residents
- h. Differences in political party affiliations
- i. Differences in religious beliefs
- j. Differences in ethnic
- k. Other differences

- 20. Do those differences affect how people interact at the e-centre?
- 21. How is the relationship between the centre staff and users?
- 22. What role does the e-centre play in the community?
- 23. What programs would you like to be offered in the e-centre that are not offered currently?
- 24. Have you made your wishes known by the e-centre?
- 25. What do you think could be improved in the current way that things are done at the e-centre?

Empowerment and Political action

- 26. Are community members allowed to have a say on who is in charge at the e-centre?
- 27. If there is a staff member the community is unhappy about; how does the community approach the e-centre?

9 APPENDIX II: ETHICS FORMS

9.1 Consent Form

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Research Project Consent Form

Community-driven initiatives for e-centre sustainability

I have read the information presented in the Information letter about a study being conducted by Vuyiswa Sigwadi towards the Master's Programme at the Information Systems (IS) Department at the University of the Western Cape (UWC).

This study has been described to me in a language that I understand and I feel freely and voluntarily agree to participate. My questions about the study have been answered.

I understand that my identity will not be disclosed and was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time by advising the student researcher.

With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree to participate in this study.

Signing this consent form documents your agreement to participate as an interview subject in this study.

Participant name : _____

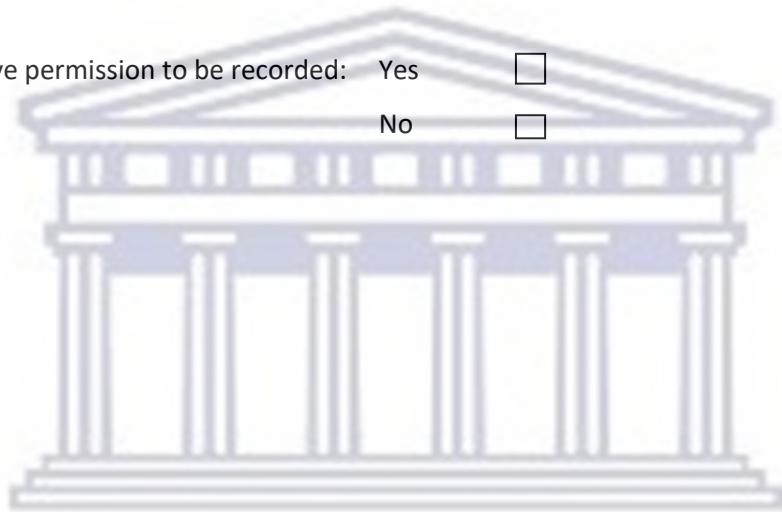
Participant signature : _____

Date : _____

Place : _____

Do you give you give permission to be recorded: Yes

No



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WESTERN CAPE

9.2 Research Participation Letter

Community-driven initiatives for e-centre sustainability

Dear Participant

Vuyiswa Sigwadi is conducting research as part of her Master's thesis. Her research is about community-driven initiatives for e-centre sustainability. This letter serves to introduce Vuyiswa Sigwadi as well as request your consent to participate in the research.

Before you decide to participate, it is important for you to understand the purpose of the research and what it would entail. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. If you are unclear of anything, I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Purpose of the Study

The study intends to determine how the community works with the e-centre to develop, design and implement projects to ensure e-centre sustainability. This is done by examining community members' participation in the programs offered by the e-centre as well as contributions they make in informing management about courses that could be offered.

Description

The main aim of the study is to establish how e-centre sustainability could be gained through community members and e-centre management working together. This study will seek to contribute to the knowledge gathering that will determine the steps that could be done in encouraging communities in taking ownership of programs offered in the e-centres to ensure sustainability.

Signed by Vuyiswa Patiance Sigwadi

Signed _____ Date _____

Confidentiality

Please be advised that the results of the study will neither divulge the organisation's, participant's nor the individual particulars, as to maintain confidentiality at all times. Any information that can connect

the responses to an individual or organisation will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. The researcher shall keep all records and tapes of your participation, including a signed consent form which is required from you should you agree to participate in this research study, and locked away at all times.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary, which means that you are free to decline from participation. It is your decision to choose whether you take part. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequence of any kind. If you decide to participate in the study, you are free to withdraw at any time – and without reason. You may also choose not to answer particular questions that are asked in the study. If there is anything that you would prefer not to discuss, please feel free to say so.

Payment for Participation

There is no payment for participating in the study.

Informed Consent

Your signed consent to participate in this research study is required before I proceed to interview you. I have included the consent form with this information sheet so that you will be able to review the consent form and then decide whether you would like to participate in this study.

Questions

Should you have any further questions or wish to know more, I can be contacted as follows:

Student Name : Vuyiswa Patiance Sigwadi
Student Number : 3177687
Email : 3177687@myuwc.ac.za
Personal Number : 078 716 5857

I am accountable to my supervisor:

UWC Information Systems Department

Name : Prof. James Njenga
Telephone : 021 959 3680
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