Participation in the UNESCO global study on Internet-issues

Feedback and views by the African Centre of Excellence for Information Ethics to Mr Getachew Engida Deputy Director-General of UNESCO on matters related to the UNESCO global study on Internet-issues

25 November 2014
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UNESCO global study on Internet-issues

November 2014

Feedback and views by the African Centre of Excellence for Information Ethics to Mr Getachew Engida Deputy Director-General of UNESCO on matters related to the UNESCO global study on Internet-issues

Background

The response to the November 2014 UNESCO global questionnaire on Internet-related issues is based on the work of the African Centre of Excellence for Information Ethics (ACEIE). Publications and documents referred to are available on the website: www.up.ac.za/aceie, while personal notes are based on the experiences and observations by the writer. As background information the ACEIE wishes to make 6 notes:

Note 1

The ACEIE at the University of Pretoria is a joint project based on a formal Memorandum of Agreement between your Department and the University of Pretoria. During the past three years the ACEIE focused on matters related to Information Ethics and Information Societies for Development as well as the related objectives set by UNESCO, WSIS and IFAP activities in Africa. The main objective of the ACEIE was to manage specialised research, publications and teachings on the subject of Information Ethics in Africa. During the past 3 years the ACEIE conducted conferences and workshops on the topic of Information Ethics in Africa and facilitated the publication of 5 books and more than 20 academic articles during this time. This document will refer to the website of the ACEIE where readers will have full access to all the publications and academic articles.

Note 2

In addition to the need for the continuation of current activities a further need during the period 2015–2019 was identified for the creation of greater awareness of Cyber Security. This obviously includes the dilemmas related to diversion of international secret information officers and hacking of public- and private information sites. However, the specific need for broader interventions at school level thus focusing on younger persons is also already demanding and growing with the increase in access to broadband. The combined and interdisciplinary objectives of the ACEIE programme for Ethics in ICT for Schools will form
an integral part of the envisaged interventions. As regards basic education needs the ACEIE and the UNESCO IFAP project identified ICT facilities, broadband availability and school libraries as active platforms to enhance the 5 objectives of IFAP, namely to increase/extend: Information for development, Information accessibility, Information for literacy, Information preservation and Information Ethics.

Note 3

From an African perspective the HIV/AIDS and recent Ebola health crises also urged an additional focus on the management of local-to-global and global-to-local information. This remark does not imply that government to government communication structures are not necessary or inaccurate or influenced by attempts to manipulate country/governance images during times of disaster. A new focus and dimensions of the existing Information For All Programme (IFAP) possible needs to be extended to include a Information By All Programme (IBAP). In future it might be necessary for individuals, local communities and non-governmental organisations to consult/report/cooperate with global structures (like the WHO) to receive information/advice in times of disasters and crisis. Such model for communication/sharing of information needs a global perspective that is based on a common good for all approach. It should be envisaged that the social media (with all its opportunities and limitations) could be an important platform for this level of disaster-communication. This perspective must be sensitively developed to enhance localised participation and sharing of personal observations/information without failing the normal ethical concerns. This document will thus plea and suggest a supportive model in designing such new way of thinking.

Note 4

In addressing the background to the questions the ACEIE acknowledges the multi-facet methodology that forms part of the reality on the African continent. Various technologies will be needed in achieving internet/communication objectives. While the undersea cable network is expanding and largely contributes to aspects of macro Internet-issues, the geography of some African countries does not allow access to this cable network. Further to this hostile neighbouring environment also calls for other supportive ICT network technologies. All known technologies are dependent on some forms of sustainable energy while electricity is not always available in basic networks. Simplistic international guidelines, plans and advice will therefore not be applicable in all countries and communities. The ACEIE contribution will therefore try to inter alia reflect on matters that are discussed but not yet fully researched or investigated to establish a thorough academic position. These
contributions therefore aim to also guide future research for African-based academic institutions

Note 5

The ACEIE responses acknowledge the diversity of views on relatively new matters related to ICT and the sometimes theoretical priorities linked to these matters. These matters are in many cases observed within a policy environment that is inundated with day to day challenges in communities while many individuals in these communities try to sustain their socio-economical existence on less than $1 per day. In this regard the ACEIE acknowledges the role, involvement and importance of the African Union, Pan African Parliament and other recognised authorities in the sub-Sahara African region. Based on the role of institutions that monitor development on the African continent, it might be practical that many of the envisaged country assessments on Internet related issues could form part of the on-going valuations by the African Peer Review Mechanism.

Note 6

With the response to the UNESCO questionnaire the ACEIE wishes to make inputs and share observations and research results on Internet-related issues based on our projects, workshops and experiences in Africa. Some responses to questions are in the form of general remarks and observations. These observations are not all academically researched or published yet but are based on conferences and workshops in more than 16 African countries with more than 50 tertiary training institutions between 2012 and 2014. The ACEIE response will not attend to all the questions but will focus on those that are related to our objectives.

The ACEIE feels honoured to be part of the comprehensive Internet-related study that was mandated by UNESCO’s 195 Member States through Resolution 52 of the Organization’s 37th General Conference Resolution in November 2013. The ACEIE response appreciates our cooperation with UNESCO, the South Africa Department of Communications and the Department of Information Science at the University of Pretoria as well as our other international partners. The ACEIE trusts that the contribution will add value to the first draft in the forthcoming Internet Conference at UNESCO Headquarters during March 2015.
Response to the November 2014 UNESCO global questionnaire on Internet-related issues

Section A: Questions related to the field of Access to information and knowledge

Question A1: What can be done to reinforce the right to seek and receive information in the online environment?

Question A3: How can greater progress be made as regards inclusive strategies for women and girls as well as marginalized and disabled people?

Question A4: How can accessibility be facilitated through increases in locally produced and relevant content in different languages?

Question A5: What can be done to institutionalize MIL effectively in national educational systems?

Response to Section A questions

A first personal observation is that the possibility of further growth in the existing markets for ICT equipment is fairly limited. Most strategies to enhance profits seem to focus on selling of data to the existing ICT consumers and markets. In terms of substantial growth it seems that the only significant possible growth in the selling of new equipment is in the market numbers of school learners. These projects hold huge potential for the inclusive strategies for women and girls as well as marginalized and disabled people and developing communities at large. Projects towards these objectives are known in various African countries and due to the magnitudes and related costs, mostly closely linked to technology suppliers (private sector) and governments. Many of these school-related projects offer opportunities for ICT manufacturers to expand their operations to new countries and thus contribute to local economic development. Based on various discussions with political role players and government officials, it seems that the funding for these projects might include a small local portion while the remaining funds are mainly from international donor sources. While these school-related ICT possibilities could significantly contribute to access to information and knowledge it seems to also present a win-win opportunity for ICT manufacturers and governments in terms of local economic development and better school systems.

The UNESCO relationship with Intel and the ACEIE could be used as a platform to further put detail to this observation. The detail of this observation should in future formally be researched towards an academic response to questions A1, A3, A4 and A5.
A second observation relates to the role out of undersea cable networks and ICT related satellite systems. Based on the undersea cable network website the global undersea cable network is expanding and will include various African countries. The undersea cable network together with satellite facilities one can accept that available broadband will benefit new communities with both access and accessibility to information. The detail of this observation should also be formally researched towards an academic response to questions A1, A3, A4 and A5.

Based on the mentioned observations, it seems the main areas of focus in Africa to establish and reinforce the right to seek and receive information in the online environment, need to include the following:

- Growth in the availability of ICT and equipment to schools and learners in a learn-and-live model. (meaning that the equipment should be available for the learners both at school and after school hours in their private lives, thus becoming a way of living and not only a way of learning)
- In addition to access to basic services (like electricity), the ‘last-mile-connection’ that link networks to users will determine the success of the right to seek and receive information in the online environment
- Both access to safe information and safe access to information will define the real levels of sustainability in the seeking and receiving information in the online environment
- Accepted policy frameworks, best practices and legislation in neighbouring- and regionally link countries will not only reinforce the right to seek and receive information in the online environment but more important will increase usefulness in joining the online environment

**Section D: Questions related to the field of Ethics**

**Question D 20: How can ethical principles based on international human rights advance accessibility, openness, and multi-stakeholder participation on the Internet?**

**Response to Question D 20**

Two requirements are at stake in the response to this question. The first requirement is review of definitions of existing human rights. Reviewed/upgraded definitions will have to reflect issues related to the Internet. The second requirement is a description of possible new human rights in the Information Society. Adding of new concepts to the traditional
framework of human rights should attend to Information Society and the position of individuals, their vulnerabilities, rights related to access and accessibility to ICT, communication networks as well as information and knowledge. These new human rights concepts should also include specific groups like children, women and people with disabilities.

Concepts that could summarise the new human rights in ICT should include a platform that emphasise **Safe Access to Information** and **Access to Safe Information**. Some of these concepts were already described in the 2012 ACEIE publication on Concepts in Information Ethics. This book is available on [www.up.ac.za/aceie](http://www.up.ac.za/aceie)

**Response to Question D 21**

**Question D 21**: What conceptual frameworks or processes of inquiry could serve to analyse, assess, and thereby inform the choices that confront stakeholders in the new social uses and applications of information and knowledge?

**As well as**

**Section F: Questions related to options and role of UNESCO**

**Question F 28**: What might be the options for the role of UNESCO within the wider UN system in regard to the distinct issues of online access to information and knowledge, freedom of expression, privacy and ethical dimensions of the information society?

**Question F 29**: What might be options for the role of UNESCO in relation to stakeholders outside the UN system such as individual governments, Internet companies, civil society and individual users, in regard to the distinct issues of online Access to information and knowledge, Freedom of Expression, Privacy and Ethical dimensions of the information society.

**Question F 30**: For each study field, what specific options might UNESCO Member States consider, including for the Organization’s Global Priorities of Africa and Gender Equality, shaping the post-2015 development agenda, supporting the goals of Small Island Developing States and taking forward the Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures?

The purpose of this contribution is to present elements of a possible model for inquiries or analysis in each participating country. The model involves an approach towards a
leadership- and technical assistive environment where the important concepts and practices of matters related to Access to information, Freedom of Expression, Privacy and Ethical dimensions can thrive.

The writer of this document acknowledges the information overload new ICT activities that are bombarding Africa countries at the moment. Once can be sure that the outcome of this UNESCO study will also indicate the overwhelming new challenges and opportunities that confronts policy makers, private sector government officials and ICT users. The approach of this document is therefore rather to assist in structuring and organising the platform for future role players who will manage the expectations of stake holders. This document accepts that role players and stakeholders should not be afraid/threatened but rather guided to cooperate with UNESCO / IFAP towards the full advantage of a well-structured ICT environment to the benefit of all.

Note:

For the purpose of this document it is needed to refer to a responsible body that can observe, ask the questions, coordinate the information and do the analysis that are referred to in Question D21. Without consultation or without any status to this personal remark the writer of this document uses IFAP as that body. If needed UNESCO and the CI commission could replace IFAP with any other credible entity.

The following elements of a model are tabled for possible consideration and further discussion:

The suggested supportive approach is based on the observation during workshops in many African countries that the local role players and stakeholders are in agreement with of the basic UNESCO objectives but not sufficiently experienced to formulate the documents or policy guidelines. One should be aware that in many countries ICT-related challenges and needs are not well researched or in many cases not yet a priority. When problems and future challenges are discussed via examples the need for operational guidelines, policy frameworks and documented best practices are immediately observed and accepted. Towards an African solution it seems that the following base should be established:

- Availability of a clear and accepted definition of what ACCESS and ACCESABILITY are and/or should be
• A set of designed draft policy papers, white papers or a list of formulated best practices that are made available could support the African environment to provide a access-orientated ICT environment

• A UNESCO (or other international body) that could assist through advocacy and guidance to authorities on route towards an access-orientated ICT environment

In terms of a practical methodology it seems that the first step towards evaluating the wider range of matters related to Access to information, Freedom of Expression, Privacy and Ethical dimensions associated with the Information Society and the internet will be to establish what the ideal (or close to ideal) position is. The next step will then to measure all countries, communities or organisations according to a set of criteria that describe the ideal position. A next step will be to guide/assist/force all involved entities to comply with or to grow towards the ideal position. For this 3 step approach the following commitments are needed:

• Establish an IFAP structure in each member country;
• Assess each country’s level of compliance with acceptable standards
• Support each participating country to compile a report of their current position
• Identify and address the capacity building requirements with a view to address the gaps
• Support the participating countries on the level where assistance is needed

Confirmation of the commitments and possible support will have to be linked to a country-roadmap towards the UNESCO objectives and the way forward. The way forward for each country will obviously differ but the following could form part of the mentioned roadmap:

• Objective monitoring of the implementation progress
• Mobilization and management of external and internal committed resources and capacity building
• Networking with other African countries in similar positions and sharing of best practices
• Further management of objectives and targets as a agreed Programmes of Action for each participating country
It seems that some countries might be fearful of a methodology that could embarrass the country. This is mostly due to a lack of knowledge and fear for public embarrassment by role players on lower levels of governance within countries. One can accept that once participating countries envisage the potential benefit - within a framework of friendly and assisted involvement - many will positively consider participating in any envisaged monitoring processes to establish the matters of Access to Information, Freedom of Expression, Privacy and Ethical dimensions as envisaged by this study.

The active participation in the Information Society will without doubt benefit countries in the short, medium and long-term. Benefits will not only include direct developmental aid but will also include indirect financial investments, social- and political stability and peace.

Although not directly relevant to this study one should observe some practical elements in any methodology that will be implemented in Africa. In support of any way forward a number of categories/problems for countries to participate need to be observed. These very basic remarks include the following:

- The fear that fingers will be pointed to individuals rather than to identify problems in general.
- The normal fear that forms part of any situation of evaluation where shortcomings and limitations are known but the capacity to correct them seems not to exist
- Role players would be less afraid to be held accountable for limitations if they are going to be assisted in putting corrective actions in place. They however do not want to be embarrassed publicly
- Countries/communities will be hesitant to participate if the Definitions and Standards of acceptable levels of Access to Information, Freedom of Expression, Privacy and Ethical dimensions will be used to unfairly influence non-related governing philosophies or policy frameworks
- Countries/communities could be motivated if evaluation will lead to possible solutions which could be implemented by themselves and not by the interference by unwanted outside countries or unwanted role players
- One should acknowledge the possible categories of participating countries that could include:
  o Participating countries where all criteria are observed and implemented
  o Participating countries not observing all criteria due to uncertainties and a lack of motivation
  o Participating countries not participating in all criteria due to the lack of political will and/or a choice for unacceptable practices
o Non-participating countries who want to start participate in UNESCO programmes
o Countries who do not wish to participate in any of these activities or objectives

The implementation of an environment supportive of matters of Access to Information, Freedom of Expression, Privacy and Ethical dimensions in each country must be seen as a process and not as a single event. This process should use examples of how countries could benefit from their involvement in a well-structured Information Society. Once countries experience the methodology and criteria for matters of Access to Information, Freedom of Expression, Privacy and Ethical dimensions to be a fair and reasonable it will enhance their full participation and their efforts will be more productive.

The suggested IFAP structures could as an initial project assist some already committed countries in preparing themselves in the privacy of their own environment for their first country report. Positive reports and achievable objectives could further motivate countries on matters related to Access to Information, Freedom of Expression, Privacy and Ethical dimensions (Refer to the role of a mentor during the preparation of a student for exams).

The proposed IFAP assistance could inter alia attend to the following:

- Assist countries with country-specific interpretation of the UNESCO defined objectives, standards and indicative criteria for measuring Access to information, Freedom of Expression, Privacy and Ethical dimensions
- Assist countries in the identification of a framework for best practices to address possible shortcomings and limitations in managing their position on Access to information, Freedom of Expression, Privacy and Ethical dimensions
- Assist countries with the implementation strategies and timeframes to address possible shortcomings and limitations in their position on Access to information, Freedom of Expression, Privacy and Ethical dimensions

Some current non-participating countries might appreciate a protected environment in which they could identify their possible shortcomings and limitations in managing their position on Access to information, Freedom of Expression, Privacy and Ethical dimensions. Within this model and with the support of the IFAP team these countries could then have the opportunity to implement capacity building programmes and policy frameworks for best practice in order to ensure progress towards compliance with accepted standards.
This option could also leave the door open for countries that would like to sensitively and privately debate and identify their shortcomings and limitations within the proposed UNESCO guidelines. Due to cultural practices and traditional customs this process might take time and could presume insensitive if under the immediate pressure.

The urgency, importance and underlying philosophies of the practical framework towards Access to information, Freedom of Expression, Privacy and Ethical dimensions will have to become part of the International- and African Leadership agendas. Advocacy and principle-based leadership will be the only long-term investment that would ensure progress towards acceptable levels of accountability and responsibility within the practical framework towards Access to information, Freedom of Expression, Privacy and Ethical dimensions. Sustainable commitment to the levels of accountability and responsibility should be one of the main concerns of the IFAP team and UNESCO. A leadership profile and advocacy programme could include the following:

- Leaders who can see and believe in the benefits of the short-, medium- and long-term results of full inclusion in the Information Society
- Leaders who will create an environment favourable for the values entrenched in the objectives and standards as formulated by UNESCO
- Leaders who can sell the mentioned objectives and standards to their administrations and constituencies
- Leaders who can manage transformation in communities and effectively implement new policy frameworks
- The advocacy process will in addition to political leaders include business leaders in corporate and SMME organisations as well as community leaders in professional and voluntary capacities.

Response to Question D 23, E 24 and E 27

Question D 23: How can ethics, - i.e. the simultaneous affirmation of human rights, peace, equity, and justice - inform law and regulation about the Internet?

as well as

Section E: Broader issues

Question E 24: What international, regional and national frameworks, normative guidelines and accountability mechanisms exist of relevance to one or more fields of the study?
**Question E 27:** What pertinent information materials exist that cut across or which are relevant to the four fields of the study?

The ACEIE embarked on the road to do research on Information Ethics in Africa, conduct awareness workshops, present lectures and to develop a curriculum to teach Information Ethics at universities in Africa. The ACEIE team realised that the mere attempt to teach Ethics and thus also Information Ethics is highly contentious and had to be approached in an integrated and holistic manner.

The overview of the ACEIE activities and results are available on the website: [www.up.ac.za/aceie](http://www.up.ac.za/aceie) and published in the Innovation Journal (ISSN 1025-8892, Number 46, June 2013 as an article titled: Chronological discussion of ANIE events 2007 - 2012 by Coetzee Bester and Rachel Bothma. In this article Information ethics is classified as a descriptive and emancipatory discipline dealing with the study of the changes in the relationship between people and the world due to information and communication technologies. The article discusses the African environment for Information ethics as an unique platform to build an Information and Knowledge Society driven by critical reflection on ethos and values within the African context. It addresses opportunities and challenges unique to the development of African societies.

The article refers to a group of international academics in the fields of Information Technology, Philosophy and Politics who came together in 2007 to form an academic network to do research on Information Ethics. This network is now known as the African Network on Information Ethics (ANIE). ANIE identified a gap in the academic representation of the African continent on the global stage, specifically pertaining to Information Ethics, and therefore started organising events to stimulate research on Information Ethics in Africa. The result of these activities and international collaboration has led to a partnership with the South African National Department of Communication, the United Nations Education, Scientific and Culture Organisation (UNESCO) and various universities across Africa. Finally, this collaboration contributed to the establishment of the African Centre of Excellence for Information Ethics (ACEIE). The aim of this article was to give an overview of the activities that took place from 2007 to 2012 that culminated in the ACEIE at the University of Pretoria.
ACEIE publications related to Information Ethics in Africa include:

- Africa Reader on Information Ethics (2007)
- Concepts in Information Ethics – an introductory workbook (2012)
- Innovation Journal – 14 reflections on Information Ethics (June 2013)
- Innovation Journal – 12 reflections on Information Ethics (Dec 2013)

Reference to these publications is available for free on the ACEIE website: www.up.ac.za/aceie

ACEIE and IFAP

Under the auspices of the South African CI Commission, the South African IFAP committee was constituted in October 2014. During its first meeting it was decided to request the ACEIE to manage the administration of the IFAP projects. The meeting took note of various existing projects by participating South African role players and stakeholders that could already be listed as activities supportive of the IFAP objectives and focus areas that includes:

- Information for development
- Information literacy
- Information preservation
- Information ethics
- Information accessibility

IFAP then formulated a document that aims to receive some feedback from participating departments and organisations on projects that could support the IFAP objectives. Each project will be reported on and be recognised as a contribution by the executing body. Where possible the IFAP committee will assist in coordinating activities to ensure interaction and support to each other’s projects.

In order to structure the information this proposed format for reporting lists each of the IFAP objectives and therefore allows for participating organisations to share their projects and results in a structured way for future reporting and use in research on IFAP activities in South Africa.
Africa Network for Information Ethics (ANIE)

The ACEIE already established a voluntary academic and government stakeholders’ forum in participating countries. These forums are known as ANIE Chapters for participating counties. Current chapters are in Tanzania, Namibia, Uganda and Lesotho while in South Africa the coordination is done by the ACEIE. These forums could form part of an IFAP structure to empower advocacy programmes.

In each country the participants to the workshop identified a number of activities to continue their involvement in the research and study of Information Ethics. These included formal agreements with other international universities, doctoral- and master studies, participation in writing of a text book on foundation for Ethical thinking, student activities and the establishment of a network between academic and government institutions to coordinate all research and teaching on Information Ethics.

The membership in each country is inclusive and new participating academic institutions as well as individual members will continuously be recruited. The contact detail of all participating institutions and individuals will be kept on a country database and will be shared with each other and with the ANIE and ACEIE structures.

Each of the participating institutions and academia will observe opportunities to enhance the general awareness and knowledge in matters related to Information Ethics in their respective countries. The following activities were listed as guidelines:

- Contact with participants via emails, face book and other available social media
- Inter- and intra-institutional guest lecturing
- Joint student projects
- Joint community projects
- Joint contact with Tanzanian government structures on all levels
- Assistance in development and alignment of policies and best practices
- Research projects (jointly and individually)
- Interdisciplinary contact with colleagues
- Virtual classes and lecturing (internationally)
- Participation in ACEIE and ANIE conferences, seminars and other international activities

The ACEIE office captures the contact detail of all workshop participants on both country lists and ACEIE lists. These lists are used for:
- Communication between participants all over Africa
- Sharing of information on all ANIE and ACEIE activities and projects
- Sharing of research opportunities on Information Ethics in Africa

**Teaching Information Ethics in Africa – curriculum design and implementation**

The detail of the proposed curriculum to teach Information Ethics in Africa was recently described in a yet unpublished article by Dr Beverley Malan, a curriculum specialist and Coetze Bester who is the Director of the ACEIE at the University of Pretoria.

In the abstract to the article it is stated that according to Professor Rafael Capurro in 2008 Information Ethics, a relatively new field of study, focuses on “changes in the relationship between people and the world due to information communications technology”. It also described that in 2007 a group of academics from different countries established a network known as the African Network on Information Ethics (ANIE). Aimed at addressing the under-representation of academics from Africa on information ethics web-sites and at international conferences, ANIE committed itself to raising awareness of and stimulating research on information ethics issues by means of conferences/ workshops across the African continent. These networking activities contributed to the creation of the African Centre of Excellence for Information Ethics (ACEIE) in May 2012. The dual brief of the ACEIE was to conduct research on information ethics issues in Africa, and to develop an Information Ethics curriculum for Africa that could be piloted at selected higher education institutions on the continent. This article starts with a description of the background to and rationale for the development of such an Information Ethics Curriculum. Following the description is a summary of Curriculum Framework components and an explanation of the different ways in which institutions could use the Framework in the design and implementation of their own curriculum offerings. The article concludes with an indication of the contribution that the development and implementation of the Information Ethics Framework and associated curriculum offerings could make to research in the field of Information Ethics and the development of Africa as a globally competitive information and knowledge society. The article also describe that Access to information is a basic human right in constitutions across the globe.

The complete curriculum to teach Information Ethics in Africa is available under the title: *Curriculum to teach Information Ethics in Africa* on the ACEIE website: [www.up.ac.za/aceie](http://www.up.ac.za/aceie)
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• UNESCO. Training Workshop on *Information Ethics and e-governance in Sub-Saharan Africa* in February 2009 at Magaliesberg


• ACEIE publications and references on website: [www.up.ac.za/aceie](http://www.up.ac.za/aceie)