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Policies and Laws that direct the ICT Sector in Uganda – A Critique

F F Tusubira

Associate Professor, Director, DICTS, Makerere University

tusu@dicts.mak.ac.ug <http://www.fftusubira.com/>



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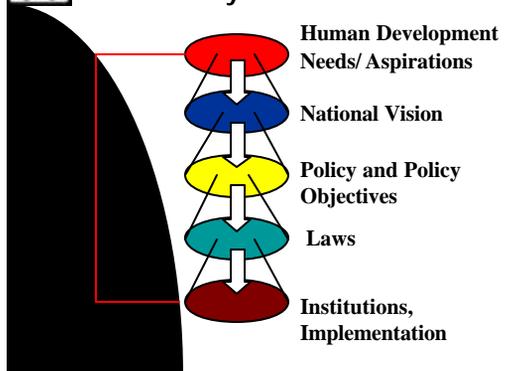


Policy: Presumption...

- Underlying premise: **Ownership** and **awareness** by stakeholders, and **commitment** at the highest level of any organisation or country are critical ingredients for the success of any policy. *The process of policy formulation then becomes as important as the content of the policy.*



Public Policy Value Chain



Challenge 1: Vision 2025

- Is the National Vision (Vision 2025) known and owned by the stakeholders? – **Largely, not any more**
- Does it capture the national development aspirations and objectives? - **To a good extent**
- Does it capture the role of timely access to relevant and accurate information, as well as its integration into knowledge that will enable achievement of the Vision? - **It certainly does not**



Challenge 2: Sufficiency of the millenium development goals

- Are the MDGs, and WSIS recommendations known and owned by the people of Uganda?
- Do the MDGs, and WSIS Recommendations, correctly and fully capture our national aspirations and objectives?
- What additions do we need thereto? How do we translate them to action in Uganda?



Challenge 3: Poverty Eradication Action Plan 3 (2004/5 – 2007/8)(1)

- The broad response to Vision 2025 and specific response to the MDGs is PEAP3
- Is it owned by other the Uganda Technocrats?
- Does PEAP3 correctly /sufficiently capture the role of timely access to relevant and accurate information, as well as its integration into knowledge, as a critical enabler?
- Do the PEAP policy actions under the different pillars point to a coordinated harnessing of ICT to support the pillars?



Challenge 3: Poverty Eradication Action Plan 3 (2004/5 – 2007/8)(2)

- Does not present **any coordinated direction in harnessing ICT to support the development process – ICT not recognised as a national priority.**
- Mentions EMIS, GIS, HMIS, IFMS, LGFIAS, LOGICS, NARS – all as isolated rather than coordinated facets
- Under Pillar 2 (Enhancing Production, Competitiveness and Incomes) – Roads, electricity, railways, airports, water supply – all considered as key, but not IT or telecommunication systems.



Challenge 4: The National ICT Policy (1)

- Prima facie, this document provides a good policy framework
- “The Government of Uganda Recognises the important role information and ICT play in national development. The government consequently unreservedly commits itself to champion the development and use of ICT in Uganda” – **Brave but still empty words!**
- Is there awareness and ownership?
- Is there top level commitment?



Challenge 4: The National ICT Policy (2)

- Does it give a coordinated response to PEAP? NICTP assumes a role – but the role is not clearly legitimised by PEAP that is not even mentioned except in the foreword.
- Measurable objectives and budgetary projections are needed to actualise the framework into a full policy
- The institutional framework and the proposed home have created controversy instead of harmony: MOWHC? MOPPED? UCC? NITA-U?



Challenge 5: Policy, Laws and Institutions (1)

- Is there a self consistent set of policy, laws and institutional arrangements that will enable the translation of the National ICT policy into actions that not only support PEAP but enable the growth of the ICT sector?
- Is there a single and consistent voice that speaks for the sector at political level?
- Is there political leadership whose focus is the sector (rather than elements of the sector being low priority appendages)?



Challenge 5: Policy, Laws and Institutions (2) – Which Policy?

- The National ICT Policy framework is supposed to be the mother. Any major public policy should go to Parliament where enabling laws are enacted. NICTP has not been tabled to parliament
- The National Broadcasting Policy 2004?
- The Proposed Revised Telecommunications Sector Policy?
- The higher level National Information Policy – no document other than the constitutional provision



Challenge 5: Laws and Institutions... (2) Which law/Bill? (Not comprehensive)

- The Electronic Media Statute, Cap 104,
- The Press and Journalist Statute 1995, Cap 105
- The Uganda Communications Act, Cap 106
- Copyright Act, Cap 215, Trademarks Act, Cap 217, Patents Act, Cap 216
- The National Information Technology Bill
- The Access to Information Bill, 2004,
- The Electronic Transactions Bill
- The Electronic Signatures Bill
- The Computer Misuse Bill
- The problem – inconsistencies and driven by external interests rather than internal strategy



Challenge 5: Laws and Institutions... (3) Which Institution?

- The National Information Technology Agency
- The Uganda Communications Commission
- The Media Council
- The Broadcasting Council
- The Uganda National Council for Science and Technology
- The Department of Information, OoP
- MOFPED
- The Ministry of Works, Housing and Communications



Where are we? A Building designed by many Architects, each independent, each with other priorities

- The Department of Information (+ BC, MC)
- The Ministry of Works, Housing and Communications (+ UCC)
- The Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development (+ NITA-U; + UNCST)
- NPA? Dev. Partners? Consumers? Private Sector?
- Each Architect has engaged a different builder, focusing on self rather than national interest
- Result – An uncoordinated building, neither pleasing to the eye no functionally useful!



What we must do....

- Create greater awareness about the MDGs, WSIS Recs; get them owned by Ugandans
- Vision 2035: let it be truly National rather than party-political; capture ICT as a sector
- PEAP – Let it capture the place and role of ICT as a coordinated whole; as a pillar
- The National ICT Policy – actualise it; table to Parliament; let it be owned
- Have a single architect – single political leadership, and a single builder: unify ICT starting at the political level down to the laws and institutional arrangements



Positive signs....

- Increasing interaction and consultation among some institutions – UCC, NITA-U, BC (*but still clouded by suspicion*)
- Recognition by most institutions that it is technocrat level disintegration that has promoted failure to achieve political level unification
- Recognition that ICT will be marginalised until there is integration
- Efforts through NPA to capture the role of ICT in the high level policy and strategy documents
 - **THANK YOU**