

**A CRITICAL INVESTIGATION OF TELECENTRE PROVISION AND
UTILIZATION BY RURAL WOMEN: WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO
BOTLOKWA YOUTH TELECENTRE**

by

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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation hereby submitted to the University of Limpopo for the degree of Masters of Arts in Media Studied has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other University; that is my own work in design and execution, and that all material contained herein has been duly acknowledged.

Signed Mr/ Mrs ...MRS N.M. MADIMA

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my family, especially my wonderful husband Tshisamphiri and lovely children Andanani and Shumi, my close friends Ms Emily Shilakoe, Phakama Sibanda my camera man, and Zandi Lidwaba who has always been a pillar of strength and supported me spiritually, financially, emotionally and otherwise-you are always amazing and you have given me the reason to go on in life. I love you all. Above all, I dedicate this to my Creator Who has made the impossible possible.

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ABSTRACT

There is gross uneven access and utilization of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) between developed and underdeveloped communities in South Africa. As a result the majority of the underdeveloped communities which are mainly found in rural areas fail to participate in the global ICT arena. Rural communities' especially rural women are subjected to deprivation, poverty and isolation. Government sought to reverse the situation through the provision of Telecentres and Multi-purpose Community Centres (MPCCs).

To understand the plight of the rural women, different theories ranging from capitalism to socialism were reviewed in an attempt to trace the mode of South African production which caused the problem and some understanding of the solution possible. The theory of oppression by Paul Freire (1970) serves as the main point of focus on how rural women fail to utilize Telecentres and MPCCs.

Qualitative and quantitative approaches were adopted in order to present the perceptual views of these women. Various methods of collecting data were used in order to have a wider perspective of how Telecentres and MPCCs are utilized by rural women. This includes a profound investigation through which a pilot study, participant observation, focus group, interviews and questionnaires became instrumental to the whole research.

The findings of the pilot study conducted in Mogalakwena Hewlett Packard inclusive of community (HPi-community) reflected that there are discrepancies and deficiencies which exist between Mogalakwena HPi-community and the three Telecentres Botlokwa, Mankweng and Mohodi. The tripartite marriage between Government Hewlett Packard and the municipality enable the Mogalakwena HPi-community to provide better ICT facilities. The other three Telecentres fail to meet the standard of the Mogalakwena HPi-community due to the fact that they lack financial support. Participant observation assisted in discovering that ICT access created a good relationship between Botlokwa Telecentre and its neighbouring institutions. It was also discovered that most youths come for computer-skill acquisition. Focus groups interviews were conducted using English and the local language (Sepedi) in order to meet the rural women's level of understanding. Through in depth analysis, the study indicates that poverty, unemployment, limited funding, illiteracy, and unavailability of ICT facilities for the disabled are the main issues that contribute to the low impact of Telecentre and MPCC utilization. Apart from this analysis, ICT access has a significant impact on the lives of rural communities especially women. However, there is still a need for an accelerated growth in ICT utilization.

It is recommended that effective mechanisms be put in place to assist improve the situation in ICT provision. This must involve the people themselves taking initiatives, of course with the active support of government.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study aims to explore and provide investigated evidence on the existence and sustenance of Telecentres and its core focus is on rural women. The main issue is to examine how these women engage themselves in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) access.

To provide a clear picture of aspects involved in this study, the point of entry explains and describes the nature of rural women. Therefore, the study is arranged in such a way that it establishes its background under which the profile of these rural women is described. Their location is also given in order to understand their environmental situation as well as of the Telecentres. The study will therefore unfold to its main aim.

This study is aimed at finding out the level of ICT needs and utilization. Its objectives are there to regulate the study as the guiding form of an appropriate decision to be taken. This also involves going through a route related to questions of the study.

The type of decision taken, therefore basically becomes reflective of the relevant theory for the community based Telecentre. This is done by reviewing literature with regard to comparison and assessment of the existing situation of the researched Telecentres. Therefore, a particular strategy which is methodology shows how the level of utilization has been assessed using different methods. Those are namely: participant observation, focus group interviews and questionnaires. The hypothesis testing and analysis of data collected represent the prevalent situation faced by rural women in Telecentres. Interpretation of the available data thus leads to a discussion of issues raised from the research findings. Therefore, the relevant recommendations are provided suggesting what needs to be done in order to draw attention to Telecentre utilization.

Women empowerment and full participation on the basis of equality are fundamental. However, rural women are still incompetent when it comes to ICT access. Through the background of this study one explanation is given as to who rural women are.

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Women have been disadvantaged for a very long time, all over the world. The trivialization of women is particularly prevalent in the developing world with Africa having the majority of these underprivileged groups of women. What is particularly worrying is that these women spread over a whole spectrum of ages; in some cases children as young as twelve are treated as grown women. In Africa and perhaps in many other developing scenarios, the causes of the underdevelopment of women are many. These include trivialization of the given roles of women in the society; lack of education, isolation, abuse to women, the global perception of women as weak species and so on.

In South Africa the Department of Communications has tried to tackle this problem by establishing Telecentres which provide Information and Communication Technology (ICT) access to all community members, particularly women and children. The availability of ICT access allows Information and knowledge to flow. As the information and knowledge increasingly flow, the whole world becomes a global village. In South Africa, this has been made possible in rural areas through the establishment of Telecentres and Multi- purpose Community Centres (MPCCs). The system of bridging the digital divide is aimed at gradually building an informed society.

These centres are used as distributive media of mass communication into outlying rural areas. For the rural areas to become beneficiaries of mass communication, Telecentres are equipped with ICT facilities. This has been made possible because of the new democratic era in South Africa. In 1994, the new government felt challenged to address

all forms of telephone access. A progressive programme to generate accessible ICT service was created by the Department of Communications to deal with the telecommunications backlog.

These new efforts resulted in the establishment of the statutory body which is the Universal Service Agency (USA). Its main aim is to promote universal service access through the rolling out of community-based Telecentres in under serviced areas. USA together with the South African Government Communication and Information Service (GCIS) started the process of bridging the digital divide between the urban and rural areas. This has been done in order to create universal access to ICT for all members of the community, particularly the rural communities including women and children.

The creation of these new ICT centres can change the lives of the rural people, especially women. Large numbers of rural women who have had to adopt certain survival modes of communication before the democratic era, found themselves being exposed to various ICT opportunities such as capacity-building, education enhancement, development and empowerment through skill-acquisition in computing inter alia.

This study intends to explore the circumstances that surround the provision of Telecentres and their utilization by rural women with a special focus on Botlokwa Youth Telecentre in the Limpopo Province.

The two catch phrases in this topic namely, provision of Telecentres and utilization by rural women will have to be profiled so that more light could be shed on the topic.

1.2 A PROFILE OF RURAL WOMEN

The Concise Oxford Dictionary (1998), defines the word 'rural' as relating to characteristic of the country side rather than town. In relation to this meaning, rural

women are those women found in the country side, rather than in towns. This report discusses rural women found in Botlokwa, Mohodi and Mankweng rural areas which are involved in Telecentre utilization. As rural women are characterized by various obstacles caused by gender stereotypes, these Telecentres are perceived by these women as a symbol of hope. While trying to obtain ICT access, they are able to rise to other challenges that they were always faced with.

1.3 CHARACTERISTICS AND CHALLENGES OF RURAL WOMEN

Most rural women are affected by issues pertaining to poverty, oppression, deprivation, isolation, lack of education, intimidation, humiliation, underestimation, discrimination against opportunities, dominance of patriarchal system. In some places there is a belief that a woman should not be educated because she will be cleverer than a man. In other words they should always remain inferior. In other places like Kwazulu Natal and in Venda where the patriarchal system is still rife, women have no say and their place exists only in the kitchen. A man's gratification is reached when he has exercised a lot of emotional pressure and hardship on a woman.

As the majority of men leave home to seek for jobs in urban and industrial areas, women remain at home to look after children. Poverty and oppression become part of their lives. As a result it becomes extremely difficult if not impossible for such women to get formal education. As cultural norms and values expect women to be discriminated against during decision making opportunities, men hold their meetings during which women are not allowed to participate. As a result women have their own special means of communication and information dissemination. Women's way of participating in the community is through activities like society clubs, "Tshisevhesevhe" and "Tshitokofela" in Venda and "Masingcwabisane" (which in Zulu means let us bury together helping one

another,) and "VukaUzakhe" (meaning wake up and do it on your own). Sharing of information and knowledge occurs when these women meet. Although this is a form of development for these women, there is always intimidation that prevents these women from fulfilling development and empowerment since they always need men's permission to allow them to be fully involved in such meetings. This is a form of emotional abuse since they are denied from making a choice in life.

Fortunately, for these women USA and GCIS are there to give them technological and revolutionary 'schools' in the form of Telecentres and MPCCs. Through these centres which are found in villages, rural women are accessing ICT service and they are gradually breaking the chains of poverty and ignorance. They are actually learning a lot through ICT facilities and undergoing a process of transition.

Locating where these ICT centres are and their rate of utilization and success, help researchers to get a better understanding as to whether these rural women interact and participate in ICT projects for change and development.

1.4 LOCATION

Botlokwa village is part of Molemole municipality which in turn falls under Capricon District in the Limpopo Province. (See map 1) It lies on the western side of the N 1 road from Polokwane to Musina, via Makhado town.

Botlokwa Youth Telecentre is found \pm 500 m from the N 1 North road and about 450 m from an informal business area comprising of a taxi rank, petrol station and shops that sell convenience goods. The centre is situated next to Botlokwalkageng monument which is a reminder of the anti-forced Removal victory for the community. The centre is situated next to Machaka Traditional office, a community bank, and a satellite police office. (See map 2.)

Statistics at Machaka Traditional office, indicate that Botlokwa village consists of ten wards with a population of 12097 women and 21930 girls. Botlokwa Youth Telecentre was named after the community members had agreed upon the fact that the youth should be given an opportunity to access ICT opportunities. The centre was established and managed by youth. This centre was launched by Dr Ivy MatsepeCasaburi the Minister of Communications and NgoakoRamatlodi the former Premier of Limpopo Province. It has also earned itself a certificate of Recognition and the Black ICT Achievers Award of 2001 which is a Presidential award to recognize communities bridging the digital divide. See the Telecentre pictures in annexure 6.

Currently, Botlokwa Youth centre qualifies to be reclassified as a MPCC. This is because there are various activities which take place in the complex housing the centre.

These other services include a Community Radio (CR); Eskom Vending outlet where electricity card payments are made, as well as agriculture offices for skills and training, land care, vegetable and plant production, field crop production and animal production. As has been mentioned above, there is also Machaka Traditional Authority which deals with distribution of sites and traditional land court cases.

The Home Affairs Department also has an office to deal with issuing of identity documents, birth, marriage, and death certificates and passports. There is also an office for postal services, a satellite police station for crime prevention and a community bank which deals with issues pertaining to banking such as withdrawals, loans, selling of shares and deposits. This bank is a great help to those who can use Automatic Tele-Machine (ATM) operation. An office of the Department of Communications, is also available there which focuses on disseminating government communication.

The study was not only conducted at BotlokwaTelecentre, Mankweng and MohodiTelecentres were also included as control points and Mogalakwena ICT centre known as 'HPi community' was used for a pilot study. In all these centres the focus was on aspects such as the utilization of Telecentres by rural women.

The international ICT Company, Hewlett–Packard (HP,) launched the HPi community as part of the United Nations (UN) World Summit on Sustainable Development in September 2002. The “i” in the title refers to “inclusion”. This centre is supported by an alliance of three: Public Private Partnership (PPP) between HP; the Limpopo Provincial Government; MogalakwenaMunicipality and Mokopane Educational Multi-purpose Centre in Mahwereleng.

The project's goal is to establish a model of social and economical development by linking the region's towns, villages, organizations and people together via a comprehensive ICT infrastructure. The fundamental intention is to introduce ICT to government, education and healthcare services. In this regard, HPi community is playing an important role through its holistic approach using ICT innovation to promote sustainability and development. Other companies, non-governmental organizations and charities also play important roles in supporting this project. This project also has the personal support of President Thabo Mbeki and H P CEO Carly Fiorina. President Thabo Mbeki therefore makes annual visits to this centre in order to review and evaluate the project's progress. As a result, the centre's sustainability may be guaranteed (see article 2).

The aim of this study is therefore regarded as the guiding factor of the whole research project.

1.5 AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study is to examine the level of ICT needs and utilization by rural women and youth in Botlokwa community.

1.6 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study are to:

- find out the impact of ICT on rural women's benefits and achievements.
- examine the location of Telecentre provision.
- evaluate rural women's cultural perception of the provision of Telecentres.
- examine the type of assistance offered by the Telecentres staff.
- examine the appropriateness of services within the Telecentres

1.7 HYPOTHESIS

- The provision of the Telecentres and the MPCCs is changing the communication and the cultural behaviour of rural communities, especially women.

1.8 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study will make various contributions in the following aspects to be discussed hereunder.

- This study will review and reveal the strength and weaknesses of the operation of Telecentres with regard to their utilization by rural women. This will assist in identifying relevant issues to be addressed.

- Necessary guidance will be given on how future Telecentres should be established. In this regard, the research will add educational value and identify strategies to enhance skills acquisition.
- It will also make a contribution to the body of literature on ICT access through the utilization of Telecentres. From this process a lesson can be learnt by other Telecentres in the province, in order for them to avoid the discovered inadequacies.
- This study will also assist in unearthing other critical issues related to needs and utilization of Telecentres by rural women. This will include a key point that involves economic aspect.

In the case of the Universal service Agency (USA) and the Government Communication and Information Services (GCIS), the study may help in the sense that the essential needs of the rural communities would be identified from the general findings of the study. The study will therefore try and discuss global recommendations in order to close the existing ICT gaps in MPCCs and Telecentres in as far as Universal access and utilization are concerned. This study will therefore need to ask some of the questions like those in 1.9 below.

1.9 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study attempts to answer several questions in current South African societies.

1. How can Telecentres close the digital divide between the urban and rural areas through access to ICT facilities?

The modern world is made of “haves and have nots.” This phenomenon is not new but nowadays, it has been accelerated by technologies especially ICT or communication

technology. It is therefore important to find out how these facilities can close the digital divide between the urban and rural areas. This will be one of the questions the study will try to answer.

2. How can Telecentres and MPCCs be located to service the greatest number of rural women in order to achieve ICT skills?

Rural areas have been previously disadvantaged when it comes to ICT provision; however, the provision of Telecentres has enabled rural women to have an access to ICT facilities. The nagging issue that needs to be addressed is how the majority of rural women can benefit from Telecentres without having to walk long distances in order to acquire ICT skills.

3. How can Telecentres and MPCCs be utilized to equip the rural women with ICT skills to improve their social capacity?

Telecentre managers are people who are trained on how to run Telecentres but the training part that is neglected is how to make Telecentres effective enough to engage a lot of rural women in ICT skills in order to improve their social capacity.

4. What are the most critical ICT devices that need to be provided in a Telecentre in order to increase the number of Telecentre users?

ICT services providers are relevant to rural women's consumption, however, the system seems to neglect critical ICT devices that accommodate the disabled people like braille for the blind.

5. What should be done to ensure that rural women utilize ICT resources optimally for their full benefits?

The training given to Telecentre managers needs to be readdressed. This issue is raised because there is a need for optimal utilization. The question is how it can be made possible.

6. How are Telecentres addressing beneficial and developmental aspects?

If Telecentre managers are the sole operators of Telecentre devices without giving these rural women an equal opportunity to operate some of the available devices on their own, the problem of optimal development remains unsolved. This aspect needs serious attention so that like effective mechanisms or strategies can be adopted to utilize these centres.

These questions are an indication of what the study will focus on.

1.10 HOW THE RESEARCH IS ORGANISED

Chapter 1 serves as an introduction of the whole study and it consists of the following: background of the study, a profile of the rural women, location, aim of the study, objectives, hypothesis and the significance of the study. Chapter 2 will be Literature Review, whereby research of the different scholars are reviewed and analyzed according to the topic. This part of the study will consist of theoretical framework, historical overview and literature review based on what is written on the topic. In chapter 3, which focuses on research methodology, various methods will be discussed, including the method used to conduct this study. This study uses a survey method using questionnaires and focus group interviews which are accompanied by a video footage. This chapter includes discussion on data collection and analysis. Chapter 4 is all about

data interpretation: reporting and analyzing the views of the rural communities and Chapter 5, is about issues raised in Chapter 4. Before recommendations of what needs to be done, a discussion will be presented to bring awareness on influential factors that lead to Telecentre failure and conclusion.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Different theories contribute towards the understanding of how societies and communities have evolved through time, which has led to a choice of modes of production based on the goals and objectives to be achieved. The mode of production determines how goods and services will be consumed and distributed in the society. Communication contributes immensely to the economic development. The understanding of these theories will help in the understanding of why different governments are providing Telecentres and how such centres link with the mode of production operative in those societies. The idea will be to understand how different schools of thought view Telecentres and what their roles in the community should be. Having expounded some of the major theories, an attempt will be made to express a view on how Telecentre provision can be interpreted. This will form the basis of the conclusions and recommendations to follow in subsequent chapters.

There is always a question that is frequently asked when a topic about Telecentres is introduced: "what is a Telecentre?" To avoid confusion and a similar question all the time, hereunder, an explanation on a community based Telecentre would be discussed.

A community based Telecentre is a centre that is identified owned and controlled by the community members. This kind of the centre is usually identified by the members of the community with the aim of establishing ICT access. Once this issue has been raised, Universal Service Agency (USA) provides a seed money for the necessary equipment. The expected equipment that a Telecentre should have , are devices such as photocopier, a scanner, fax machine, television, video and video cassettes, internet and

e-mail. Telecentres are known with different names from different places (<http://www.telecom.net.et>).

These centres are defined as fusion of telecommunications, information, multimedia and computing functions to help address a variety of community problems and needs. In Ethiopia, which is one of the developing countries, they are known as Virtual village halls, Multi purpose Community Telecentres (MLTs), In India, they are known as Public Access Points (PAPs) (<http://www.telecom.net.et>). In Limpopo, in Mogalakwena municipality they are known as Community Access Points (CAPs) and Multi-purpose Community Centres (MPCCs) or Multi- Media Development Centres (MDC).

In SA, community based Telecentres are partially found under government service of the Department of Communications. They were established in 1997 by the Universal Service Agency (USA) which is of purely South African initiative under the Telecommunications Act number 103 of 1996 as amended in 2001 to promote Information and Communication Technology (ICT) access. This was made possible through the help of the South African Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (SATRA) which upholds the involvement of women in ICT utilization and production.

The following theories will then trace the economic dichotomy that exists in South Africa between rural and urban areas especially in connection with women. An identified theory will be used to explain why government deems it fit to spend a lot of money through the establishment of Telecentres and what the ultimate goal is. The theories will be expounded to try and find out which theory (ies) would best suit the local South African environment. Parallels, contrasts and inferences will be drawn to show approaches that could be adopted in the quest to make the Telecentres regime a hopeful success.

2.1 THEORETICAL VIEWS ON THE PROVISION OF TELECENTRES

2. 1.1 THE THEORY OF OPPRESSION AND FREEDOM

Paulo Freire (1970) sees oppression as a systematic creation of a situation that makes the recipient feel worthless. His/Her life is characterized by uncertainties, abject obedience, injustice, exploitation, fear, domination, conquest, manipulation, creation of myths around realities, and mental callousness. The oppressor keeps the status quo through subjugation and deposits contradictions that confuse and paralyze the oppressed. The oppressed then becomes ineffective, redundant, and literally put their lives in the hands of others. The result hereof is, the oppressed becomes less eventful, unimaginative, over believing in religious fate up to a point where the oppressed sees no future. Hopelessness sets in and the oppressed lose bearings.

Freire says the oppressor needs to keep on servicing the wheels of oppression. By so doing they become slaves of their own creation. They run short of ideas on how to reverse the situation. Freire says it is at this point that the oppressed should rise and liberate themselves.

The rural women's fate is not different from the explanation above. Being subjugated to patriarchal domination, ignorance, banishment to abject poverty and other forms of oppression, they recollected themselves and liberated themselves from the bondage. Therefore, the Telecentre movement is coming into an area where there is resistance to oppression due to the inner self that stood out and fought oppression albeit silently. Therefore, these women are hopeful and would welcome any effort meant to alleviate their struggle against any form of oppression. The Telecentre regime therefore should come in as a form of strategy to fight oppression this time from an ICT perspective. Rural women will thus support it, a thing that will justify the investment by government.

2.1.2 FUNCTIONALISM

The theory stems from the understanding that communication and participation are necessitated by the desire to create a whole. The whole is made up of interrelated and interdependent parts. Each part of the system fulfils a function, that is, makes a contribution to the smooth functioning and maintenance of the entire system. When all individual parts properly fulfill their functions, the system is in balance (equilibrium). The system can only accommodate minor changes, such as minor deviations from the proper fulfillment of a prescribed function, while drastic or fundamental changes contribute a threat to the survival of the system.' Jansen and Steinberg (1991:p9-16)

The theory presupposes that rural communities are not in their state of equilibrium as far as ICT access is concerned. A culture or state of inequilibrium has resulted which needs to be addressed as nations agree that access to ICT is a priority/right for all communities. The new democratic government in SA has realized the inefficiency of this culture and would want rural communities, especially women, to be part of global equilibrium in so far as access to information is concerned through establishment of Telecentres. As the system can only accommodate minor changes, Telecentres would be regarded as minor changes if there is no hope for better future.

De Fleur and Ball –Rokeach (1975) argue that the functionalism theory cannot occur outside the motives of the ruling class. The ruling class always has an agenda which they implement through designing 'low-taste content' distributed to a larger number of individuals. The content is designed to be in line with their beliefs. The mass therefore, pays money so as to consume these commodities to satisfy their ambitions to be part of the ruling class. This is achieved through stable and repetitive behavioral pattern which offers the recipients little choice of disagreeing. They become immune and even pay

money which is the main requirement to keep the system at an equilibrium state in communities. Communities get hooked to what Telecentres provide for the sake of their cultural state of equilibrium. This influences them to the point that they will continue to pay money for the production or reproduction of the new material (ICT access) because they cannot do without.

2.1.3 EXISTENTIALISM

In this theory propounded by Kierkegaard (1846), human existence is seen as a thing that confronts an individual who then gives it a meaning. Human existence is authentic to the extent that it is expressive of each and every person's individuality. The meaning of human life is not determined collectively, but by personal appropriation of meaning. Jansen and Steinberg, (1991:20) contends that an individual needs to be constantly actualizing and being aware of himself. This he does through communicating with others where the self acknowledges and affirms the existence of others as well. Kierkegaard goes on to say that the 'self' is composed of many contradictions where the most important are temporal and the eternal, finitude and infinity and necessity and freedom. The task of actualizing oneself is the task of finding ways to reconcile the contraries in oneself", Jansen and Steinberg (1991:9-21)

Kierkegaard mentions existence also in terms of spheres. He identifies three aspects such as aesthetic, ethical and religious spheres. He, however, values the religious aspect as the most important sphere. This was mainly influenced by his Christian background. He asserts that communication has failed to achieve its objective due to the way in which lessons or sermons were delivered. He identifies two types of communication which are: direct and indirect.

Direct communication 'involves straight forward statement as to what a particular matter is all about', Jansen and Steinberg (1991:220.) Individuals are prevented from discovering their own meaning.

Indirect communication involves 'the placing together of dialectical contrasts without offering any explanation that may influence the recipient's interpretation. Individuals are left to discover the meaning by themselves. They are encouraged to be critical and explore intensive meaning of the subject matter. Therefore, Kierkegaard propounds that what ever new material is destined to improve existence focus should start with an individual. When the individual has discovered the meaning, the following aspects such as aesthetic, ethical and religious spheres are boosted. This will make an individual a better participant in the existence of both himself and others.

Kierkegaard would therefore, see the establishment of Telecentres as a way of boosting self actualization. He would support programmes that would make individuals discover meaning and not become passive recipients. However, the theory has limiting factors in that not all individuals can develop without the existence or copying from others. Guidance is always part of human existence and meaning is also a derivative form of humans, where compliance is governed by rules and regulations which are the order of the day.

The emphasis on Christianity as the highest point in self actualization is misleading as not individuals believe in Christianity. Some individuals are non-Christians. Regardless of its limitations, the theory is useful in that it discourages low-content material communication.

McLuhan's theory (1964) on existentialism postulates that people adapt to their environment through a certain balance or ratio of sense. All media are extensional of our

senses and functions. Each medium exaggerates a particular sense and leads to new modes of perception, and finally new relationship with the environment and other people who exist, Jansen and Steinberg, (1991:28).

He differentiates between the aural and visual media. He says man, before writing, became a medium of information, the aural sense was the most predominant sense. When writing or print media was introduced the visual sense developed better. McLuhan distinguishes between hot and cool media in terms of

how they affect individuals perceptually. Hot media like print requires minimal participation by the recipient for the message to become complete.

Cool media requires the individual's perceptual participation by filling in the spaces created in the mind. Television would be classified as a cool medium. McLuhan sees both print and electronic media as today's medium of communication that brings about the balance between aural and visual senses. McLuhan would thus see Telecentres as centres that should provide the much needed balance between aural and visual senses. His theory seems to have influenced the choice of services to be provided in the Telecentres.

McLuhan's theory is criticized for being illogical, circular, repetitious, unqualifiedgnomic and outrageous. It is accused of being technologically over deterministic and reduces people to things by ignoring their participation in the construction of meaning, Jansen and Steinberg (1991:31)

Raymond Williams, (1991) a Neo-Marxist, sees McLuhan's theory as concealing ideological assumption by reflecting life devoid of social and political problems. The

ruling regime always has an agenda which they may want to implement in the pretext of exposing people to Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Regardless of the technology, McLuhan manages to stimulate the way in which people should look at communication with regard to scope extent and the impact of the media. His contribution made public speakers aware of their personal images.

2.1.4 HERMENEUTICS

Friedrich Schleiermacher and Wilhelm Dilthey (1768), assert that there are always geographic and historical gaps between the writer of a script and the reader in so far as the meaning is concerned. For the reader to interpret the meaning, he/she should be coming from the same past with the script writer. This will make them reconstruct the author's feelings and intentions. As a result the reader through some scientific methods then makes sense of the text. When viewed from a Telecentre's point of view this would mean that whether it was print or electronic media, the reader or viewer would have to drift back into the past to understand the text. What would be problematic therefore, would be the fact that foreign scripts bear no historical resemblance to the local situation and that would be difficult to understand. People have been enjoying films and plays to mention a few, whose historical backgrounds were completely foreign.

Gadamer (1991), therefore, argues that the important factor in the text is not engagement with the author, but to have some dialogue with the text. This means whatever the reader reads, should be interpreted and have meaning attached to it. He argues that it is not possible to attach the same meaning of a text with the author. But as long as people interrogate the script and give it meaning, which is related or may not be related to their environment, the objective of learning shall have been achieved. Gadamer's theory thus suggests that the users of Telecentre facilities should be people

who, at the end, will be able to engage with a text and derive useful meaning. This means there is a need to orientate Telecentre users through Telecentre staff to engage in some form of dialogical confrontation with the script. The skills deserved hereof will make them interpret the scripts and ultimately interpret the world better. Should this happen, the digital divide that has been there will be closing which is one of the main ideas of the establishment of Telecentres.

The theory also falls prey to ideological criticism. Certain scripts are difficult to understand. Educational levels of the users also play a part in one's ability to engage with a script. In deep rural areas of South Africa where literacy levels are very low, the success of dialogical engagement could be highly limited. Be that as it may, Gadamer, suggests that Telecentre users should not be passive recipients of scripts and texts, but should try to interpret the meaning thereof.

2.1.5 CYBERNETICS

Morbet Wiener's (1834) theory of cybernetics "is based on the assumption that a system operates and ensures survival by counteracting chaos. Order is reflected in a state of balance or "homeostasis" (Jansen and Steinberg, (1991:41). It is also maintained through a control mechanism described as feed back on how a phenomenon is operating. The system adjusts and readjusts itself in line with the quality of the information feedback. This means that there is a norm that defines what a desirable condition of the system is and allows for some degree of variation. Two sets of feedback have been observed as critical and those are namely: positive and negative feedback.

Negative feedback is regarded as more useful because negativities are the least desirable. As soon as negativities are dealt with, positive feedback will set in and the system will be at a state of homeostasis again.

Cybernetic theories would then see Telecentres as facilities that are there to help bring about the state of homeostasis in the rural areas. The theory presupposes that rural areas have been out of balance in so far as ICT is concerned. There has been negative feedback indicating that something needs to be done. The response was then the establishment of Telecentres. The theories also postulate that an assessment should be done to determine the impact thereof. This should be evaluated against the set of norms so that the degree of variation can be determined. Therefore cybernetics and system theorists would urge for the evaluation of the Telecentre regime to bring about homeostasis be it at various levels.

These theories seem to down play the existence of where the system is affected. Some upheavals lead not to amendment or adjustment of a system, but to its death.

The theory seems to suggest that human beings are all the same and behave much in the same way. When human beings pursue life as human beings, the concept of a system does not work anymore.

2.1.6 TOTALITARIANISM

George Orwell (1945) looks at communication as a function of totalitarianism. Totalitarianism thrives in misinformation. He argues that communication in capitalist societies is determined by the political agenda that the ruling regime wants to propagate. The message communicated is meant to limit individual thoughts and expression and manipulates the mass through the use of distorted language. His book 'Animal Farm'

(1945) pointed out that even in the so-called full democratic societies; some animals are more equal than others.

Orwell would therefore, see the establishment of Telecentres as a fortification of the totalitarianist tendency by capital. The agenda is set through programmes that subjugate viewers, listeners and readers to a particular way of life. For example, television, radio and newspapers would always write about the goods and services that the ruling elite is delivering to their societies, but little, if any, will be said about what they are not doing.

Orwell therefore, would support Telecentres whose message would lead to all animals being equal and devoid of subjugation, manipulation and impersonalisation. Orwell does not give a formula of what needs to be done to fight totalitarianism. The solution expounded in 'Animal Farm' suggested the overthrow of the ruling elite which is then replaced by the workers. After the overthrow, workers themselves get trapped in the same fate that they sought to undo.

The theory also over emphasizes the politics problems as the main culprit in a society, therefore, not identifying other forces in life that determine how life will be led for example, economic, social, religious to mention but a few.

2.1.7 LIBERITARIANISM

Herbert Marcuse (1969) argues that the ruling elite class uses Technology as an instrument of repression. "The abundant supply of mass produced goods, for example, is used to sustain the material or false needs which have been predetermined by the interests of a capitalist society. False needs are thus superimposed on the individual by economic and political interests, and include the needs to relax, to have firm decision to behave and consume in accordance with advertisements and to love and hate what others love and hate. The fulfillment of false needs, serves to subvert the recognition of

real or qualitative needs in the lives of the individual, Jansen and Steinberg (1991: 78). Marcuse further argues that modern man cannot determine true needs because he is 'not true'. His mind has been arrested in such a way that the consciousness of a need for qualitative change in his/her life is annihilated. He propounds that, the downtrodden should rise and revolt against repression.

To him Telecentre messages should enable the oppressed to regain their qualitative worth. This will enable them to revolt against the system right up to a point of breaking it down, thereby regaining their freedom. Modern Telecentres to him would be an extension of toil and suffering which is crowned by the inability to think objectively.

The theory seems to suggest that, all the oppressed have one thing in common which is the ability to revolt, from the misrepresentation of facts.

This theory asserts that, media in capitalist societies subjugate the mass through mass communication.

Regardless of the critics above western societies elevate consumerism at the expense of spiritual values. The challenge in modern societies therefore, is how to balance the two.

Charles Wright Mills (1998) blames the problem in communication on the evolution from a liberal society to a modern society. He points out the characteristics of a liberal society as the following:

- Discussion groups of liberal publics
- Continuous interpersonal contact among members
- Constant debate and exchange of opinion
- Discussion made through negotiation

- Genuine public opinion
- Mass media that extended free flows of opinion from one public to another
- Individuals occupy a central position

On the other hand he saw modern society as being characterized by

- Bureaucratization – large structures of executive power in the economic military and political sectors – this limited an individual's personal sphere of influence severely;
- Centralization of power – this led to opinion formation and the rise of mass media;
- A new middle class group of white collar employees who replaced the old middle class;
- Rural community of publics replaced by a rising metropolis – This created new contexts where only part of an individual's personality was covered thereby disrupting the old system.

This resulted in the following:

- No more personal contact when communicating;
- The power elite only meet through mass media;
- Communicators are unknown
- The elite from their hideouts determine what could be communicated and what may not
- Recipients lost influence on the messages
- Recipients become passive recipients

- The elite changed and controlled cultural backgrounds
- Recipients became stereotyped
- New cultural yardsticks were created to measure self image on how individuals are performing.

Mills therefore, would see the establishment of Telecentres as a way of recreating the old liberal society where personal contact and participation in messages would be promoted.

Mills' postulation could probably apply in small societies of the past which had defined boundaries. In modern societies where globalization is the new order, it would be impossible to revert to the old liberal society.

2.1.8 TECHNOCRATICISM

Jacques Ellul (1912) contends that techniques rather than technology determine how individuals will choose their mode of existence. Ellul argues that all techniques are the same. They have the capacity to create a different system of values which is then imposed on human beings. These techniques cannot distinguish between moral and immoral systems.

Techniques are powerful tools because of the following:

- Self augmentation characterizes programmes that can be transmitted throughout the world by different TV stations and transmission media.
- Universalism: The drive for efficiency transcends cultural boundaries and makes all civilization uniform. Programmes can be translated into different languages of the world.

- Operate as a closed system: The utilization of a particular technique has laws that should be followed, for example, the utilization of different Micro Soft versions have modified the individual aspects of an individual's life.

Many people now use cell phones, telephones, computers and so on. These instruments have taken over life completely such that living without them is a nightmare and have become basic needs.

Ellul therefore, would view Telecentres as places where individuals learn about self discovery. However, he would promote a situation where people rise above these techniques and control the way they are to be used. Ellul's postulation seems to down play the effect of globalization which is a reality these days.

There are three major theories that developed from the mode of productions, societies adopt in their quest to develop themselves namely: capitalism, structural functionalism and socialism.

The three modes of production gave rise to different theoretical perspectives about various authors have written.

2.1.9 CAPITALISM

Capitalism is based on a mode of production in which the market is said to be a fair distributor of goods and services. Supply and demand are the main determinants of who gets what is based on their ability to pay. Demand determines supply and vice versa, price is determined by the relationship between demand and supply.

However, there is an acknowledgement that not every member of the society can participate in the market as a result of certain market imperfections that create elements

commonly known as 'disutilities'. The state should then intervene and ensure that, disutilities are remedied so that the market can function normally. This brings about the idea of basic needs which a government has to support because the markets fail to provide for such needs.

When viewed from the media context and the provision of Telecentres in particular, there is a universal concern and agreement that exists among nations on their consumption of Information and Communication Technology that, it is unacceptable and such concerns should be addressed. Governments are called upon to provide communication service and the provision of Telecentres to answer this call, has been one such effort. Therefore, Telecentres are similar basic needs, such as food, shelter, health and education that are to be subsidised by all responsible and democratic governments.

2.1.10 STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONALISM

This theory stems from the understanding that communities and societies operate in an integrated manner, due to mutual interdependence. Interdependence results from the fact that individual members of communities and societies have varying degrees of talents, roles and responsibilities. This tendency compels individuals to specialize in one aspect of a job resulting in distinct division of labour. When each individual member performs her functions, the sum total thereof surpasses individual contribution. This brings about a state of equilibrium in the community or society.

The provision of Telecentres therefore, provides the communities with an opportunity to play their meaningful role in ICT consumption. This leads to differentiation of duties to be performed and subsequent division of labour – a situation that shows the interdependence and proper functioning of their systems.

The discussion continues with an examination of the following scholars looked at structural functionalism from different perspectives.

2.1.11 COLLECTIVISM

Auguste Comte (1798) propounded a concept of collective organisms. To him a society can be viewed as a type of organism that he called 'collective organism'. This is a type of organism that has structures that specialize in certain aspects while functioning together. Comte viewed the diversity of tasks, goals and functions and concluded that in the beginning this might look like individuals pursuing their own rational self interest, but in the end such contributions result in a harmonious functioning system: which leads to general equilibrium and finally the achieving of a general goal.

He cautions though that, overspecialization of self interest leads to detachment of groups. This results in a state of non-equilibrium which could be disruptive of the collective organism. Equilibrium will again be achieved when other groups exert themselves in the quest for sharing. This usually happens when members of the collective organism share information.

2.1.12 EVOLUTION

The contribution of Herbert Spencer (1887) comes from the theory of evolution. He studied social order, its growth, structures, and functions and how organs operate. He discovered that, societies were like biological organs of animals, held together by division of labour. He advocates for more of a laissez-faire approach in the operation of the organism. To him, Telecentres would have to produce quality goods that will be able to excel in whatever field. Such achievers will enable them to move to the next level, thereby justifying why digital gap existing between poor and rich communities as well as rural and urban should be bridged.

2.1.13 CULTURAL EVOLUTION

Darwin (1973) holds that since human species evolved from lower life forms to Homo sapiens, culture also evolves. Consequently, some cultures may be considered advanced and others primitive. Most contemporary scholars reject this view because the judgment that distinguishes one culture from another has no basis in science and are instead based on individual values and preferences as to what constitutes “civilized” and what constitutes “primitive”. Cultural relativism on the other hand, holds that all cultures are different but that no culture is either superior or inferior to the other (Berry, Poorting, Segall and Dasen, 1992). This view played a major role in the infusion of cultural materials into contemporary technology. Therefore, as Telecentres are meant to offer universal service that brings ICT access to communities that are faced with ICT deficiencies, they should redress the imbalances of ICT access in under-serviced areas. However, this does not mean that they should provide uniform services as attitudes, beliefs, needs and cultural backgrounds of communities are different. Therefore, Telecentres are established to learn about other people’s discoveries that can enrich and improve local knowledge so that communities can be active participants in the global village.

2.1.14 SOCIAL BONDS

Ferdinand Tonnies (1912), propounded a theory of social bonds. He uses the concepts known as GemeinschaftvsGesdllschaft as typical bonds that bind communities together.

Gemeinschaft is a concept he uses to describe the interdependence of groups by different kinds of relationships such as a family, community in a village, and so on. There are no formal regulatory mechanisms that monitor these relationship but responsibility and a notion of good citizen prevails.

Gesellschaft on the other hand expresses the idea that people are also bound together by formal written contracts. "The individual is placed with a social system that is impersonal and anonymous. It is a situation where individuals are not treated or valued for their personal qualities, but where they are appreciated to the degree that they can uphold their end of contracted obligations. It is a system of competitive relationships where individuals seek to maximize what they can get from exchanges and minimize what they give at the same time learning to be wary of others"(De Fleur and Ball-Rokeach 1988: 155)

Tonnies would therefore, see the establishment of Telecentres as providing for both Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft. Telecentres that would not be able to provide for this would have failed to achieve their objectives.

2.1.15 SOCIAL SOLIDARITY

Emile Durkheim (1893) propounded the theory of social solidarity: He referred to solidarity as a kind of social psychological bond that unites members of a community. Durkheim distinguishes between organic solidarity and mechanical solidarity. Mechanical solidarity refers to a situation where members are alike. They work out different value systems in the form of culture and beliefs and require common sense to comply. Organic solidarity refers to a situation where it is acknowledged that life is not static. It is continually changing and offers scope for improvement and change. Here division of labour is very elaborate and specialized. It is run in terms of specific do's and don'ts. Durkheim also asserts that when division of labour is at an advanced stage it creates unexpected results which he calls 'anomie', a situation that can break organic solidarity down. He then suggests that there should be progression from mechanical to

organic solidarity. Anomie should be avoided at all costs. (George Simpson 1947 347-71).

When this theory is judged in terms of Telecentres the view expressed is that Telecentres should be centres where relationships in poor communities are transformed from mechanical solidarity. Individuals should therefore take up their respective roles and progress with them. While doing that, anomies are avoided.

2.1.16 ACCULTURATION

DeVito (1938), talks of interaction of culture and communication. According to him, culture refers to the relatively specialized lifestyle of a group of people consisting of values, beliefs, artifacts ways of behaving and ways of communication.

He also mentions the fact that culture is transmitted from one generation to another through enculturation which is a process by which one learns the culture into which one is born (one's natural culture). He explains that parents, peer groups, schools, religious institutions and government agencies are the main teachers of culture. He goes further to say that one new instrument for spreading culture is the internet. He gives the reason that the internet is dominated by the culture of the United States. As evidence of that, one media watcher expressed his feeling of unhappiness that the encroachment of American culture from jeans to Mickey Mouse and TV programmes will influence their culture which will then be further eroded by an American dominance.

DeVito also speaks of acculturation which he regards as the different processes by which one learns the rules and norms of a culture different from one's native culture. He explains that through acculturation, one's original or native culture is modified through direct contact with or exposure to a new different culture. He gives an example of immigrants when they settle in the United States (host culture) their culture is influenced

by the host culture. Gradually the values and ways of behaving and beliefs of the host culture becomes more of the part of the migrants' culture.

At the same time, the host's culture changes too, as it gradually interacts with the immigrant's culture. However, the culture of the immigrants changes more. The reason for this, is that, the host country's members far outnumber the immigrant group and the media is largely reflecting the values and customs of the host culture.

In the case of Telecentres, acculturation takes place in the form of universal service and universal access to ICT. The concept 'Universal Service' refers to a Telecommunication service given to the people whereby each and every household has a telephone and information is made accessible to all the people or members of a community. As mentioned before, a host culture can be modified by the culture of immigrants which in this case are Telecentres. As communication is one of the key ingredients of life, it is therefore essential for it to adopt and adapt to the life style of technology. Telecommunication is defined as ways in which communication is made possible by means of technology.

2.1.17 THE THEORY OF HOPE

According to Paulo Freire (1970) hope is where things start. He stresses that hope is an essential thing in ones life. It is an ontological need that is anchoring life to practice. As an ontological entity it needs practice in order to become historically concrete. In brief, he says just to hope for the sake of hoping is to hope in vain. One needs minimum hope or else one will fail to start a struggle.

Rural women in Limpopo, more especially adults are faced with a huge problem such as fear, isolation, poverty, lack of education to mention but a few. These are the contributing factors which deprive them from acquiring computer skills. If they disengage

themselves in a struggle to fight against this fear, hope as an ontological need dissipates and loses its bearings, a situation that will lead to hopelessness. According to Freire, once hopelessness manifests itself, life becomes tragic and people fall into despair. These women will then be slaves of circumstances for the rest of their lives.

It is said that it is never too late to learn nor to turn, rural women too, can learn new things in their lives through ICT access, utilizing Telecentres. Through hope and dream anything is possible. Being hopeful means being alive and if one is not alive, one cannot dream and be hopeful. Therefore, Freire encourages those that are suffering from hopelessness to pick themselves up and struggle to free themselves. Rural women have already shown some initiatives in this regard. The Tshisevhesevhe, Tshitokofela, Masingcwabisane are signs of the will and ability to break the bond of hopelessness. This means any efforts to bring hope will not be in vain. Thus there is hope that the Telecentre intervention is not going to be an effort in futility.

Paulo Freire, in his book: "Pedagogy of the oppressed" talks of the power of education that it can free those who are poverty oppressed through a dedicated struggle to teach illiterates. As an educator who once taught in Latin America, to him education is the practice to bring about logic of the present system and bring about conformity or practice of freedom. According to him, acquiring knowledge and information means that men and women can deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world

2.2 DEVELOPMENT OF ICT IN OTHER COUNTRIES

Various countries have introduced the notion of Telecentre which has resulted in the empowerment of women in an unprecedented way. The results have justified the investment that went into it.

In India, Telecentres are used for empowerment and development. Information is shared with everybody, with the aim of empowering and developing people in computer skills through telecommuting jobs and this includes encouraging the youth to be self – employed. ([http:// www.itu.int](http://www.itu.int) Connectingremotecomunities.html (2004/07/05)

In Bangladesh, which is a developing country, women are given loans by Grameen Bank known as “micro – lenders” as a business empowerment. This has been a trend as early as 1998. Besides other activities, research shows that villagers especially the youth and women should be provided with the relevant equipment for the success of the Telecentres. Should that become impossible, failure of the Telecentre is the outcome.

In Mexico, Telecentres failed because of funding. Lack of funding is one of the factors that deprive communities from sharing information that Telecentres could provide. Robinson, (1999) mentions the point that sometimes such failure emanates from gender-inequalities-based issues, such as deprivation of economic empowerment, access to better paid jobs, and decision-making by women. In Nigeria, in the Delta region, women’s economic power has been greatly enhanced by the acquisition of ICT skills. This has enabled many women to gain employment in establishment such as banks corporate organizations, offer computer services such as data entry and statistics, internet service providers and many others. Women organizations under NGOs that work with female sex workers have empowered about thirty of them with computer skills. (EmenOkon, 2000)

In Swaziland women have been advancing from being just simple typists, to consultants and IT skills trainers through the power of the modern PC. The power of working from home has lifted their computer literate standards up to an extent that they are typing scripts, reports, court proceedings, designing books, business cards and web pages.

This has enabled them to earn a good income for their families. ('Acrobat Reader', Report online).

2.3 WORK UNDERTAKEN BY OTHER RESEARCHERS ON THE TOPIC

Different researchers have written about the topic resulting in a wealth of knowledge that explains the efforts different government put in their quest to bridge the ICT gaps. This section will trace the work done on the topic elucidating what the main arguments or contentions are, and conclusions arrived at. The understanding of these discussions will assist in an identification of the areas not properly covered, which should give focus to this study.

Mphahlele and Maepa (2000) produced an article based on a study commissioned by Universal Service Agency (USA) and funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). The aim of the article was to investigate the operation and effectiveness of the six Telecentres in Limpopo. Their assignment was to determine critical success factors which will make Telecentres sustainable. Among others, they had to come up with the following:

- Determination of the need for a Telecentre in earmarked areas
- Community support required;
- Continuous training for the Telecentres' managers, sound management skills and vigorous marketing strategy;
- Creation of a learning environment that would be used as a foundation in the establishment of future Telecentres;
- Investigation of the role of Telecentres in the promotion of entrepreneurship and the identification strategies that can be employed to make Telecentres sustainable.

They recommended the following:

- Word of mouth to share information and news.
- Directional visible signs showing towards the location of a Telecentre;
- Notices and pamphlets to create awareness of the existence of the Telecentre.
- Announcements to be made in community gatherings (likgotla).
- Community radio stations for marketing Telecentre services.

Dolamo, Maepa, Lekoloane and Molefe (2000) conducted a study on the Mankweng Telecentre. The main objective of their study was to investigate and prioritize community needs and come up with the best strategy to address the problems identified to enable the Telecentre to adopt best practices to make it sustainable. (Dolamo, Maepa, Lekoloane and Molefe 2000: 1). They discovered that Mankweng Telecentre was not functioning properly due to inefficiencies in the running of the facility. They recommended that the centre:

- Market its services
- Also provide non-ICT services to attract more clientele
- managers should establish a working relationships with other Telecentre managers to share experiences
- Advertise its services on radio,
- Establish a computer course for the community to be accredited by the University of the North,
- Improve the management of the centre, that is, well-qualified, competent, people-orientated and properly remunerated staff should be appointed.
- Telecentre to produce local news by collaborating with local businesses.

They discovered that the majority of rural areas lack accesses to Telecommunication services. They included that USA committed itself to providing Telecentres in order to introduce a strategy to redress the previous Telecommunication imbalances.

CONCLUSION

In terms of the theories postulated above, which seem to view things from different angles, there is a common thread that runs through, namely that the digital divide should be bridged. The 'how' part and the objectives to be achieved, should be left to individual governments. There is a point of convergence, which is the acknowledgement that all societies are members of the global village. Thus services to be provided should enable Telecentre-users to be active participants in the global village where the main language in the village is obtained through ICT access.

Lessons learnt from other countries show that there are considerable benefits that accrue from the establishment of Telecentres. Although through these centres rural women were introduced to a situation that was foreign to them, They benefited by acquiring computer skills which enabled them to do jobs- doing jobs which they never thought they could do. If rural women in other counties can learn skills from Telecentres, so can South African women.

Exploratory studies conducted have also shown that a great deal of work has gone into the Telecentre establishment. It was through such studies that more Telecentres were established. The challenge that is existing at the moment is whether the intended beneficiaries are utilizing the facility as anticipated and whether the objectives set are being achieved, hence this topic.

To answer the issues raised above, a survey needs to be conducted where beneficiaries will shed some light on how they see the Telecentre operating. This leads to the next chapter, which is Research Methodology.

to portray patterns that are emerging from the collected data. These patterns were displayed graphically and analyzed. Using Excel programme, the data was fed into the computer where tables and graphs were drawn for analysis purposes. The analysis was then followed by an interpretation of what the distribution reflects. The interpretation brought up a list of issues that required attention to make a Telecentre function as anticipated.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

This chapter seeks to narrate how the data was collected. In order to have a wider perspective on how Telecentres are utilized by rural women, three kinds of methods of collecting data were used. Those are namely: participant observation, focus group, interviews and questionnaires.

The aim of using these methods is to find out the impact of Telecentres with regard to empowerment and development through ICT access. This research seeks to evaluate a particular practical situation whereby the researcher comes into contact with respondents in order to gain critical in-depth insight. This has been made possible through participant observation method. A pilot study was done in order to have a clear initial picture of the availability of the procedure that will be followed.

3.1 PILOT STUDY

In the New Dictionary of Social Work (1995:45) a 'pilot study' is defined as the process whereby the research design for a prospective survey is tested. Bless and Higson-Smith (2000:155) further explain it as a small study conducted prior to a larger piece of research to determine whether the methodology, sampling, instruments and analysis are adequate and appropriate.

The purpose of a Pilot Study is viewed by Huysamen (1993:205) as an investigation of the feasibility of a planned project, as well as to bring possible deficiencies in the measuring procedure to the fore.

A pilot study was undertaken before the research was conducted. MogalakwenaHPI-community, an MPCC which could be regarded as a model of good practice in Mahwereleng in Mokopane town, was visited. ICT facilities found in this centre were funded by government, USA, and Hewlett Packard. The Municipality has been entrusted with the responsibility of managing and maintaining the centre

The purpose of the study is to explore and expose the existing different circumstances surrounding the provision of Telecentres and MPCCs with regard to utilization by rural women, Therefore, results of the study will be used to gauge the success of the three Telecentres, especially Botlokwa. The following is a report of how the pilot study was done.

A pilot study with structured interview, was held with the Municipal manager, Mr. Ntsoane who is in charge of MogalakwenaHPI-community. Similar questions as those which appear in the major project were asked and the findings are as follow:

3.1.1 FINDINGS OF THE PILOT STUDY

The findings show some differences in the situations in the MogalakwenaHPI-community as compared to the three Telecentres Botlokwa, Mankweng and Mohodi.

According to the interview, MogalakwenaHPI-community is able to meet both the social and economic needs of the members of the community. In addition, the study also showed that:

- Security level is too high. There are surveillance cameras from Universal Service Agency (USA) that monitor ICT learners.
- The tripartite marriage between Government, Hewlett Packard and the Municipality led to better facilities being provided.
- HPI-community is meeting its aims through the establishment of information network that is based on a comprehensive technology infrastructure that links the region's towns, villages, organizations and people together.
- The project partners are also developing innovative solutions that help meet the food security, water source, sanitation and alternative energy needs of the people.
- A Learnership programme has been planned which will provide the centre with skilled personnel to assist clients.

3.1.2 REASONS AND COMPARISONS

Mogalakwena H Pi-community is capable of offering various activities using ICT facilities. In this regard, various needs of the community are therefore being met. This is basically possible because of the existing tri-partite relationship which makes sure that the center's sustainability is maintained. The other three Telecentres (Botlokwa, Mankweng and Mohodi) ICT standards are very low that they need more support for their accelerated growth.

In Mankweng and MohodiTelecentre, security is one of the main challenges since both of these centers complain of theft. Botlokwa does not complain of such problems because there is police satellite office nearby. This issue needs to be addressed for the benefit of the users.

The level of financial assistance offered to women in HPI-community marks the degree of care which is shown to these women. Therefore, some financial strategy needs to be adopted by these three Telecentres but that will be possible through substantial sponsorship or company donation.

Government support is also needed for these three Telecentres. Through the State President Thabo Mbeki's ten-year plan programme of Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Programme (ISRDP), rural women can be helped. This programme is aimed at eradicating poverty and initiating development for rural communities, especially for women. Rural women in Botlokwa, Mankweng and Mohodi Telecentres also need such support. This will be part of given encouragement to them to fight their battles of ignorance.

That ICT can bring agricultural support, is true, but it is impossible in Mankweng and Mohodi for the reason being that, strong financial help is needed to make agriculture profitable in those areas. An improved agricultural sector is vital in such communities as poor agricultural returns affect rural women in particular. The impact of a Telecentre becomes reduced if not all rural women are able to participate in a centre.

The Mogalakwena HPI-community are meeting their aims through the establishment of information network that is based on a comprehensive technology infrastructure that links the region's towns, villages, organizations and people together because there is Hewlett Packard ICT Company that is fully supporting this project. The other three Telecentres in Molemole Municipality cannot afford the standard found in the Mogalakwena HPI-community.

The project partners are also developing innovative solutions that help meet the community's needs such as food security, water source, and sanitation. In Botlokwa, Mankweng and Mohodi villages, they cannot afford the above mentioned facilities in their Telecentres. The reason is that, their level of service delivery still needs to develop further to meet the rural requirements for participatory development.

Learnership is part of a broad-based ICT programme because it encourages the poor and gives them opportunities for their progressive empowerment. Learnership programmes are also not available in Botlokwa, Mankweng and Mohodi Telecentres and it is for the same that a lot needs to be done to improve the situation in order to create more hope for rural women to continue with their journey to success with ICT access.

For the actual research data to be collected, method used starts by reporting on the nature of sample size used.

3.2 SAMPLE SIZE

Arkava and Lane (1983:27) define a 'sample' as an aspect which comprises the elements of the population considered for actual inclusion in a study or it can be viewed as a subset of measurements drawn from a population which the study focuses on.

According to Reid and Smith (1981:170) and Sarantakos (2000:139) the major reason for sampling is feasibility since a complete coverage of the total population is usually not possible. Therefore, if the population is relatively small, the sample could comprise a reasonably large percentage.

Scientifically a sample of 5-10% is admissible in research. A sample size which is more than 10% is regarded as more accurate in the representation of facts.

According to what is taking place in BotlokwaTelecentre, a population of about fifty women utilizes the centre per day. Calculations are therefore worked out as the following: $35 \div 50 \times 100 = 70\%$. As the total number of women who daily use BotlokwaTelecentre is fifty (50), an interview using a questionnaire was targeted at 35 respondents. These are the women who form part of the frequent users of the centre thereby giving a sample size of 70%.

3.3 PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

Participant observation is one of the qualitative research methods. It makes use of phenomenological approach in order to get an in-depth insight. This kind of investigation has been chosen in order to observe the following aspects: namely, optimal Telecentre utilization by rural women, appropriateness of Telecentre facilities and the interrelationship between the Telecentre management and the Telecentre users.

Botlokwa Youth Telecentre was identified as a research case study. This Telecentre has internet service for ICT access and it works collaboratively with a community radio station in terms of internet service and broadcasting.

Participant observation assisted in discovering that, the station manager of Botlokwa Community Radio station makes use of the Telecentre internet. The reason given is that such service is cheaper in the centre as compared to the Radio station. Another discovery was that women who work on the farms use the photocopier in order to have copies of their identity books made. Other ICT facilities such as telephones, are mostly used for emergency calls and phoning their loved ones. Adults stressed an additional point when it comes to internet, that they appreciate its presence in the centre however, it is not for them but only for the youths' consumption.

There is a relationship established between local schools and the Telecentre where the schools and teachers are allowed to use Telecentre facilities on credit bases. This has created a bond between the schools and the Telecentre.

Most youths come for computer skills acquisition since this creates employment for them. Some of the certificates obtained by youths were on display and it was reported that some of them are working as clerks in neighbouring schools, some as tellers in the banks and in some of the supermarkets in town. Although there are still issues that need to be resolved, what is happening in BotlokwaTelecentre shows the great need for the centre.

3.3.1 ISSUES TO BE RESOLVED

The community is gradually getting used to Telecentre services; however issues like Telecentre congestion, lack of Telecentre management skills and marketing can make this Telecentre inefficient. There are volunteers assisting with teaching the community how to use the Telecentre's services. There is a dissatisfaction brewing as they receive no remuneration for their services. They feel that maybe it is time for them to be absorbed and become permanent members of the Telecentre establishment. If they were to leave, a gap will be created to reduce the impact of Telecentre utilization. This is a challenge that faces the Department of Communications and its agencies.

3.4 FOCUS GROUP

This research method is organized in a structured interview system. It involves issues such as age group, sex, interest and location. According to this method, age is a determinant factor in selecting a particular group

3.4.1 RELEVANCY TO THE STUDY

The focus group interview method was selected as the study focuses on the impact of Telecentres or MPCCs. To be able to ascertain the effectiveness of these centres, information from the actual users would unearth critical issues that would bolster the analysis and interpretation of data collected.

With the assistance of the manager, women who are between the ages of 21 to 35 (commonly known as youths) and 36 to 60 (referred to as adults), were selected. The division between these women was meant to reflect their different ICT access level of acquisition. Each group consisted of five members. The youth category was composed of those who had acquired computer skills and the adult category, consisted of the frequent Telecentre users. This selection was made in order to reflect the rural women's perception about Telecentres.

3.4.2 INTERVIEWS WITH THE FOCUS GROUP

Appointments were made in order to avoid a clash between the participants' an interviews and their computer classes. Mother tongue was used as the medium of instruction, to facilitate easy communication. The questions asked were meant to evaluate how the computers and other services in the Telecentre developed the rural women.

The following questions were asked:

1. How long have you been using the Telecentre or MPCCs?
'Kelebaka le lekae le shumisha di Telecentre?'
2. Why did you decide to use it?
'Kekalebaka la eng le kgetha go shomisha di Telecentre?'

3. What have you gained through access to Information and Communication Technology (ITC)?

'Go le thushitsekaeng go shomisha Technology yatsebo le di poledishano?'

4. How do you use the skills acquired from the centre?

'Le kashomishabjangstebo e le e hweditsegomo go di Telecentre?'

5. Which of the Telecentre's devices do you find most important?

Why?

'Keefeya di dirishwatse le di banagodilebohlokwa?

Gobaneng?'

6. What do you think should be done in order to attract more people to this centres?

'Keengeo o gopolago gore e swanetse go dirwa gore batho battle go di centre tse?'

The results of the questions asked are as follow:

3.4.3 RESULTS

The Youth Group: the following are the responses given:

- That those taught computer skills at the Centre have been appointed at local schools as clerks.

- That they type scripts and assignments for other people thereby earning money used to support their families.
- That those not appointed as yet are now using the Centre to apply for jobs elsewhere.

The Adult Group

- They feel that computers are gadgets for the youth.
- They can manage to use the telephones without assistance from the staff members.
- The Telecentre staff assists them in photocopying and faxing. The reason they do not do it themselves is that the staff wants to prevent disfunctioning of the machines due to lack of wrong usage by the customers.
- They feel that a library should be added to the centre so that their children could have access to books. They also hope that books meant to assist the illiterate would be provided thereby raising the level of literacy in the area.

3.5 QUESTIONNAIRES

This type of survey comprises a list of questions that are scientifically and systematically organized which is usually used to collect data. Most of the time, a researcher expects respondents to respond to the questions by ticking inside the provided blocks. This format provides the information needed.

3.5.1 INFORMATION NEEDED

The information needed is reflected in the structure of the questions that had been compiled in the questionnaire. Questions are divided into six sections and sought information on age, gender; marital status, services offered by a Telecentre, utilization of Telecentre and communication needs.

3.5.2 QUESTION TYPES

These are the questions that give respondents an opportunity to tick a relevant or the most appropriate answer in the spaces provided.

Question 1 – Age

This question seeks to inquire about personal details, and in this case the question was on the age group of the participants. The answers helped to determine the needs of a certain age group in as far as ICT access is concerned. The age of the participant is a determinant factor as it assists to differentiate between the youth and adult's views with regard to Telecentre facilities.

Question 2 – Gender

This question intends to assess only women. The main focus is on both adults and youth. The study intends to investigate how these women use a Telecentre.

Question 3 – Marital status

This question requires marital status of the respondents with regard to their level of engagement and perceptions on ICT facilities.

Question 4 – Education qualification

Questions are based on the qualifications obtained by the respondents. This question made education a determinant factor on how respondents with various education categories view Telecentre utilization. The assumption is that different needs may be identified based on the education capacity of the respondents. In this regard, diversity may contribute in bringing quality to the Telecentre since the educated and the uneducated interact differently in ICT access.

Question 5 – Employment status

This question is aimed at investigating the employment status of the rural women who make use of this Telecentre. This also provides information on employment. Their views will provide a picture of the employment status of those who utilize a Telecentre and also contribute in exposing the way how they use it.

SECTION B

Question 6 – Services offered by a Telecentre

This question seeks to investigate the nature and the level of service offered by a Telecentre. Such information makes it easier to comment on whether the centre is appropriate enough to serve its participants. The answer will also contribute to raising issues that need to be considered in terms of the Telecentre's impact.

Question 7 – Reason for being unavailable

This is an example of a matrix type question, since it leads to more in-depth knowledge and finer details. This type of a question is aimed at finding out if respondents are aware

of what is going on in a Telecentre. It is also aimed at measuring how bad the situation is in as far as ICT facilities are concerned. This is done in order to detect factors that can cripple the impact of a Telecentre.

Question 8 –What role do the following service provide for the community?

This is also a matrix type of a question which is aimed at establishing roles played by each ICT facility to empower the rural communities. This was done in order to bring an understanding of how rural women become empowered through utilization of the devices found in a Telecentre. Once these strategies have identified a clear picture of how Telecentres impact on these women can be created and the necessary analysis can be done.

Question 9a – Utilization of Telecentre: How often do you visit the Telecentre?

This is an example of a self-anchored rating scale question. Respondents were asked to reflect how frequently they visit a Telecentre. The reason for this question is to find out the rate at which this centre is used and also see if the roles played by devices available correspond with the frequency. Therefore, this will indicate how needed the Telecentre is.

Question 9b – Follow up question

The main aim is to get finer details. Through follow up question, more information about respondents' view on a previous question can be obtained. In fact, this can determine if the centre has or has not achieved its main aim, which is to allow ICT access.

Question 10 – How much does it cost?

This question is regarded as an ordinal type since it is meant to assign values to a series of aspects by placing them in a certain order. The amount spent in Telecentres for a particular device may raise various issues about a Telecentre, such as interest or effectiveness of that particular device, financial status of the Telecentre users and awareness just to mention but a few. At any rate, the amount spent in a Telecentre reflects the meaning and the true situation of whether the centre is viable or sustainable. This kind of information assists in creating a better understanding of an existing Telecentre, in terms of how it should be rated.

Question 11 – How does the Telecentre staff manage to help in the centre?

Respondents were expected to choose from the given statements. The main aim is to find out how effective the centre staff is. This will provide information with what the staff can and cannot offer to the customers. In other words, this question intends to examine the strength and weaknesses of the Telecentre staff.

Question 12 – Section D communication needs

This question seeks to examine communication needs. This is the level at which the Telecentre's devices are rated in terms of the users' priority needs. By so doing, various issues such as awareness, optimal development and interest is ascertained. Therefore, those ICT devices regarded as very important reflect the level of the users' utilization based on users' awareness and the devices meaning to customers their lives. This will eventually enable a researcher to identify the most required facilities.

Question 13 intends to establish a situation for assessing the available devices in the Telecentre utilization. This means evaluating the way in which ICT facilities are used and the value these facilities have on rural women's lives. In other words this question tries to evaluate the level of the Telecentre utilization.

Question 14 is targeted at knowledge sharing and how that knowledge is passed on. If it is passed on, the level at which it is transferred will determine the impact of the Telecentre.

Question 15 is Section E which focuses on location of the Telecentre. Its main aim is to determine the distance between the Telecentre and the users' homes and what needs to be done in case a distance problem exists. What needs to be done will be identified from the various suggestions to be offered in question 16.

Question 16 provides a space for respondent's views or opinions on how future Telecentres should be established. Suggested issues come as an indication of what is expected by them in terms of how future Telecentres should be established.

A variety of methods have been explained and defined in terms of how data has been collected. In this regard, a platform has been created on which data analysis and data interpretations can be done.

Statistical graphs were used to analyze the data. Pie graphs and tables were utilized to show the distribution of the phenomena and their implication on the topic. Therefore, Chapter 4 is the critical analysis of the findings.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

INTRODUCTION

Data collected needs to be presented in a manner that certain conclusions can be arrived at. Statistical tools were used

4.1 ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.1.1 AGE

The table and the pie chart below show how the collected data was analysed and interpreted.

AGE GROUPS	BOTLOKWA		MANKWENG		MOHODI	
	FREQUENCY	%	FREQUENCY	%	FREQUENCY	%
LESS THAN 20 YEARS	2	(6%)	5	(15%)	3	(9%)
20-35	16	(45%)	19	(55%)	12	(34%)
36-35	8	(23%)	5	(15%)	12	(34%)
46-55	8	(23%)	4	(12%)	1	(3%)
MORE THAN 55	1	(3%)	1	(3%)	7	(20%)

TABLE 1

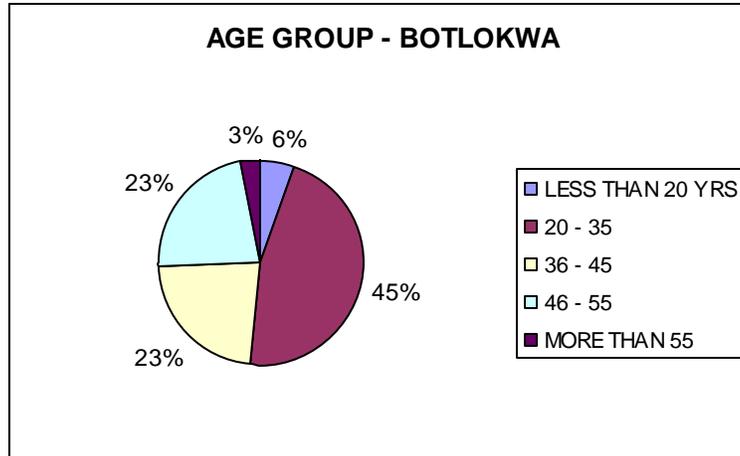


FIGURE 1

The trend is the same in the other two control points as in Table 1. The majority of the Telecentre users (91%) are between 20 and 55 years old. These are people who are in the job market who probably want to add computer skills in their curriculum vitae to bolster their chances of being employed. Those that are working prefer to use the Telecentre because it is inexpensive to use the computers for internet, e-mail and use the photo copier and the fax machines for duplicating and transmitting information. Those that are over 55 years of age could be looking at modern technology in the Telecentre as a facility for the younger generation. 45% of youths showed interest in Telecentre utilization. This is a good sign that Telecentres will be utilized in future. This therefore is an indication that youth is ready for change which comes through learning new things, brought about by ICT access.

The challenge is to raise the 3% in the category that falls under the 55 age group to a target of 20% as it is the case in Mohodi. How this can be done is to ensure that more youths are exposed to the objectives of the Telecentre as an information access point.

This therefore, confirms the point that the greatest interest in ICT utilization is found among youth since adults have Telecentre phobia (fear). This phobia may be due to lack of acculturation which can be overcome by teaching people about the new culture (ICT access) until they get use to it.

4.1.2 GENDER

According to the research study, the main focus is on rural women and only females were interviewed. This was done to understand how females perceive and utilize a Telecentre. It can be deduced from table 1, that 45% are youth meaning that the youth is the group that can be used to attract others. One way of doing this is through the establishment of entertainment activities that can contribute in increasing Telecentre users. The next issue that had to be considered among these women was their marital status.

4.1.3 MARITAL STATUS

This is an indication of the various categories involved in marital status and the answers are represented in a table and a pie chart.

CATEGORIES	BOTLOKWA		MANKWENG		MOHODI	
	FREQUENCY	%	FREQUENCY	%	FREQUENCY	%
SINGLE	22	(63%)	22	(77%)	15	(43%)
MARIED	7	(20%)	5	(17%)	16	(46%)
WIDOWED	6	(17%)	1	(3%)	4	(11%)
DIVORCED	0	(0%)	1	(3%)	0	(0%)

TABLE 2

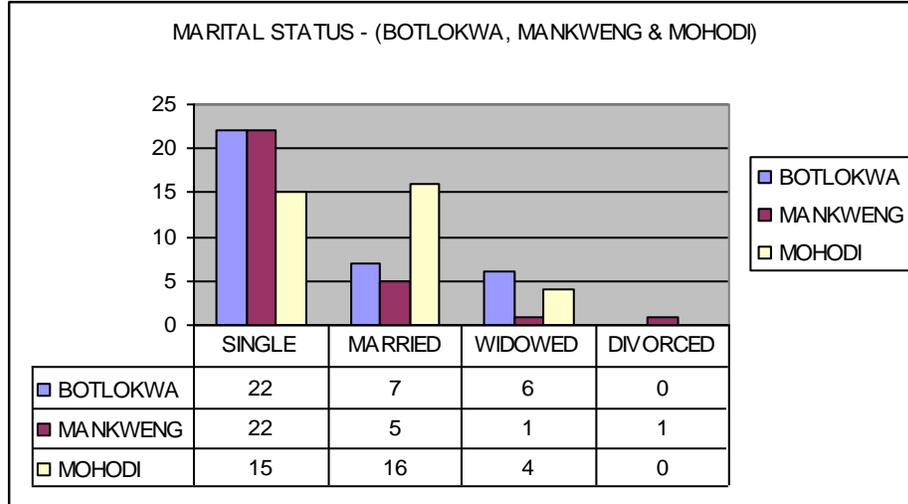


FIGURE 2 (a)

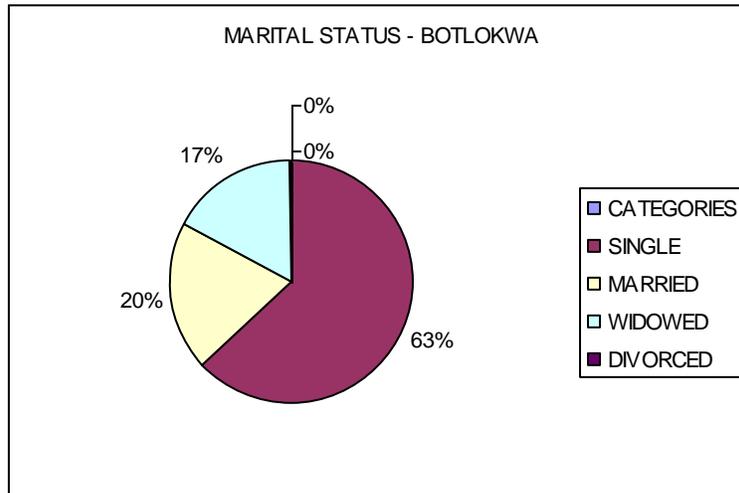


FIGURE 2 (b)

The trend is the same, except for the fact that in the married category the challenge is to raise the 20% of the married grouping the other centres to 46% as it is the case in Mohodi. 63% of the respondents were single women, 20% were married and 17% widowed. The biggest percentage of respondents which is 63% is made of youths. Matured females who are not married seem to have time to visit the Telecentre. This could be based on the fact that adults show an element of regarding internet as a thing that is only meant for youths. Some of those that are using ICT services could be utilizing the Telecentre to upgrade themselves to assist their husbands in support of their families. If unemployed, they could be looking for posts from the internet and also applying for such posts. Sometimes certain jobs require that individuals send CV's to prospective employers, which is where photocopying and faxing come in handy. Widowed females, especially those that are single parents would be breadwinners and they would fully utilize the Telecentre to ensure that there is food on the table at home.

4.1.4 EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

CATEGORIES	BOTLOKWA		MANKWENG		MOHODI	
	FREQUENCY	%	FREQUENCY	%	FREQUENCY	%
PRIMARY	3	(9%)	7	(29%)	10	(29%)
MATRIC	15	(42%)	16	(45%)	16	(45%)
DIPLOMA	4	(11%)	0	(0%)	0	(0%)
DEGREE	6	(17%)	2	(6%)	2	(9%)
SENIOR DEGREE	3	(9%)	0	(0%)	0	(0%)
UNEDUCATED	3	(9%)	4	(11%)	4	(11%)
OTHER	1	(3%)	3	(9%)	3	(6%)

TABLE 3

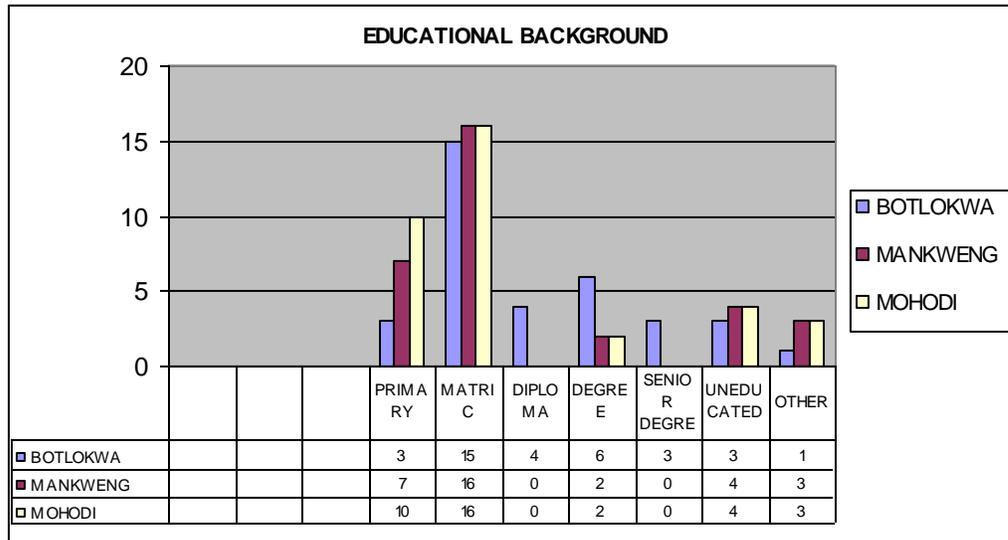


FIGURE 3 (a)

Looking at what is displayed on the table above, the challenge is to encourage self employment which could raise rural women ICT utilization from 18- 35%. It can be deduced that the level of education of rural women, who make use of a Telecentre, is very low.

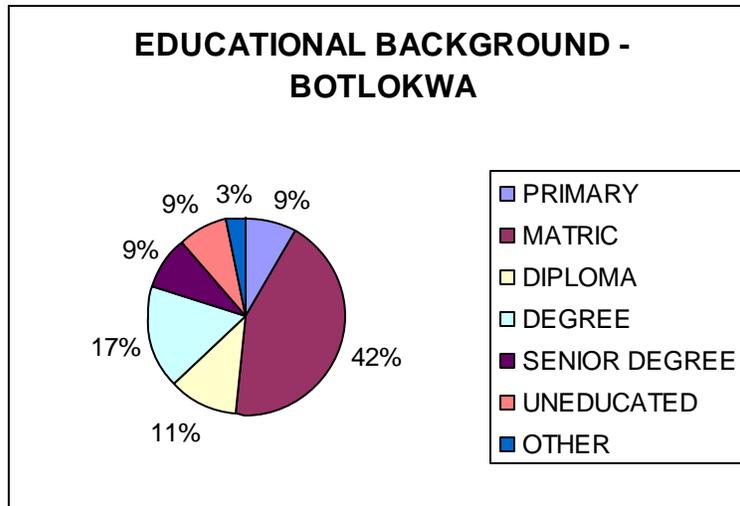


FIGURE 3 (b)

About 88% of the respondents have some kind of education which would be a strong foundation for the utilization of computers in the Telecentre. 42% have matric qualifications while 17% have degrees, 11% have post matric qualifications and 9% have primary education and another 9% have senior degrees. A further 9% of the uneducated also utilize Telecentres. These are mainly domestic servants sent by their masters to either fax or photocopy materials. The level of education depicted above shows that there is a strong possibility for the utilization of the Telecentre by local people. Some will need orientation by the Telecentre staff and a progressive marketing of the centre itself. The main question therefore, is whether the Telecentre staff is equipped with the right skills to take up the challenge.

4.1.5 EMPLOYMENT STATUS

	BOTLOKWA	MANKWENG	MOHODI
	FREQUENCY		
	%		

		FREQUENCY	%	FREQUENCY	%	
CATEGORIES						
UNEMPLOYMENT	20	(58%)	17	(61%)	16	(47%)
SELFEMPLOYED	6	(18%)	6	(21%)	12	(35%)
EMPLOYED	8	(24%)	5	(18%)	4	(12%)
OTHER	0	(0%)	0	(0%)	2	(6%)

TABLE 4

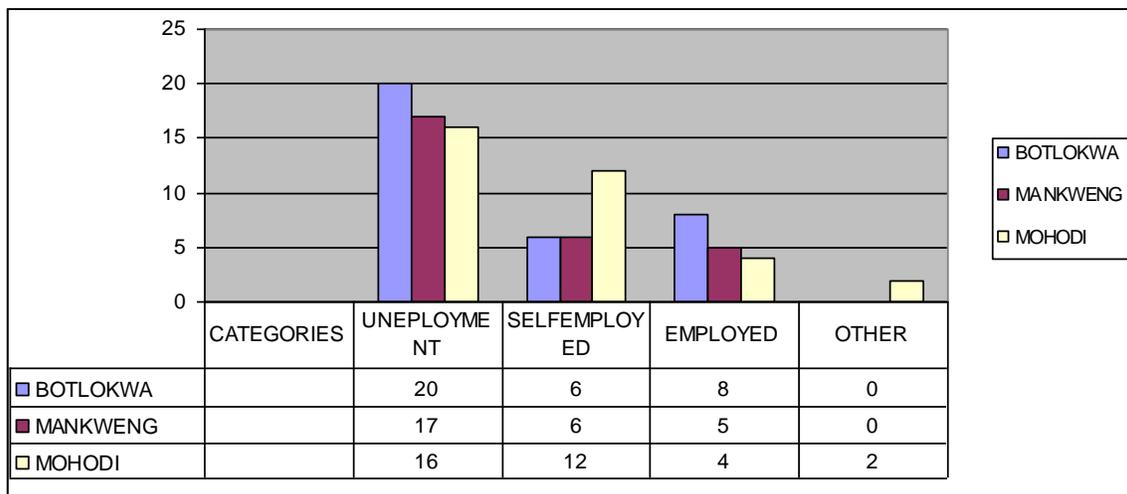


FIGURE 4 (a)

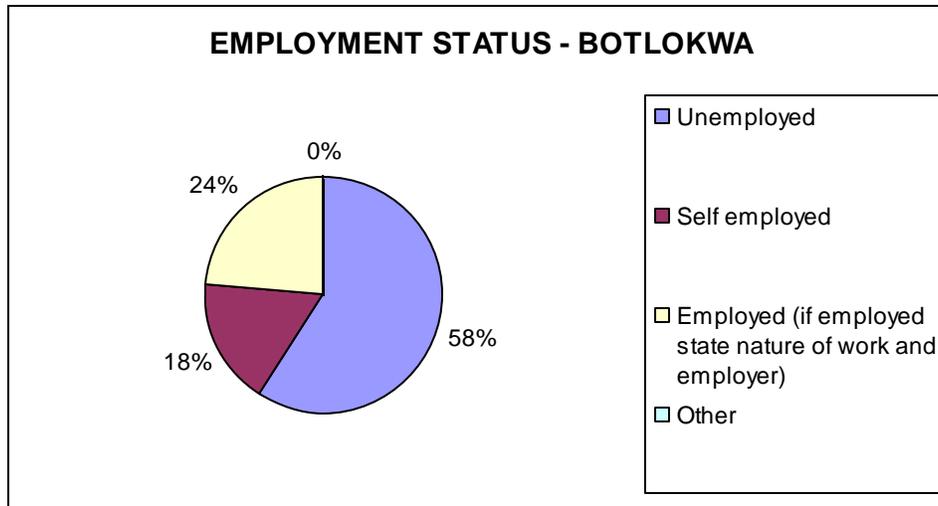


FIGURE 4 (b)

In figures 4, 4a, 4b it looks like very few people use computers in BotlokwaTelecentre hence the low number of utilization as compared to 64% and 54% in Mankweng and Mohodi respectively.

58% of the respondents are unemployed while 42% are employed. This means that those that are unemployed can only afford to utilize those relatively cheaper services. It is thus doubtful if those that are employed are paying enough to cover the costs of the Telecentre. A desirable situation is one where the numbers of those that are employed, by far, outnumber those that are not working. This will ensure the centres breakers in their finances or cross-subsidization can take place. This suggests that there is less income derived from users, and this can be a situation that seriously challenges the sustainability of a Telecentre. As unemployment is a national phenomenon, it then means that the Telecentre will have to receive support from government or donors in the foreseeable future. If ICT access is viewed as a basic need, Telecentre users who are unemployed may have to receive a subsidy as it is the case with other basic needs, like

free basic services and housing. The question therefore is whether the South African Treasury can afford it without increasing taxes which may cause a national out-cry.

4.1.6 AVAILABLE SERVICE OFFERED BY THE TELECENTRE

CATEGORIES	BOTLOKWA		MANKWENG		MOHODI	
	FREQUENCY	%	FREQUENCY	%	FREQUENCY	%
PUBLIC TELEPHONE	29	17%	3	8%	3	7%
COMPUTERS	32	19%	23	64%	23	54%
LIBRARY	2	1%	0	0%	7	16%
INTERNET	32	19%	0	0%	0	0%
E-MAIL	30	18%	0	0%	0	0%
FAX	26	15%	6	17%	6	14%
OTHER	19	11%	4	11%	4	9%

TABLE 5

It looks like in Botlokwa very few people use computers, hence the low percentage of utilization compared to 64% and 54% in Mankweng and Mohodi respectively. The majority of youth in Mankweng and Mohodi would say that it is because this is the area in which they are interested.

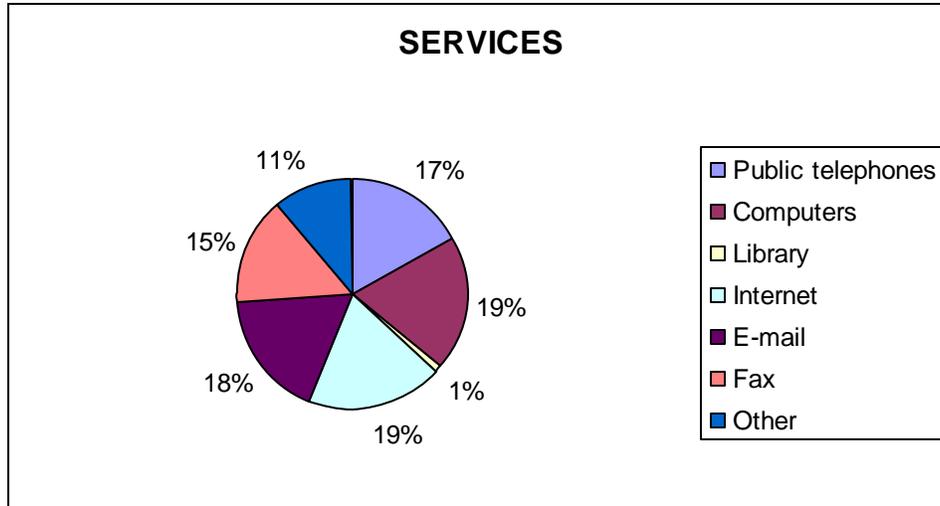


FIGURE 5

The most utilized services in the Telecentre are computers (19%) then internet (19%), e-mail (18%), public telephones (17%), and fax (15%). This state of affairs seems to corroborate the view expressed already that job seeking and transmission of information could be the main activities at the Telecentre. In an event where the frequently used services are out of order, damaged, or not paid for, the Telecentre could be regarded as non functional. This therefore implies that maintenance of the “main” services is of critical importance. It would be desirable if the Telecentre staff could ensure that all users are well trained so that they could derive maximum benefit from using the facility. Whether the Telecentre staff is equipped to take up the challenge is another thing.

4.1.7 REASONS FOR UNAVAILABLE SERVICES

CATEGORIES	REASONS	BOTLOKWA		MANKWENG		MOHODI	
		FREQUENCY	%	FREQUENCY	%	FREQUENCY	%
PUBLIC PHONES	DAMAGED	0	0%	0	0%	0	0
	STOLEN	0	0%	24	100%	4	57%
	NOT YET PROVIDED	0	0%	0	0%	1	39%
						0	0%
						1	4%

	OUT OF ORDER	3	100%	0	0%		
	SERVICE SUSPENDED	0	0%	0	0%		
COMPUTERS	DAMAGED	0	0%	2	20%	4	0%
	STOLEN	1	50%	1	3%	1	4%
	NOT YET PROVIDED	0	0%	5	77%	25	89%
	OUT OF ORDER	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
	SERVICE SUSPENDED	0	0%	0	0%	2	7%
LIBRARY	DAMAGED	0	0	0	0%	1	5%
	STOLEN	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
	NOT YET PROVIDED	24	100%	25	100%	19	5%
	OUT OF ORDER	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
	SERVICE SUSPENDED	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
INTERNET	DAMAGED	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
	STOLEN	0	0%	0	0%	1	4%
	NOT YET PROVIDED	24	100%	8	48%	25	89%
	OUT OF ORDER	0	0%	1	6%	0	0%
	SERVICE SUSPENDED	0	0%	8	48%	2	7%
E-MAIL	DAMAGED	0	0%	0	0%	1	4%
	STOLEN	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
	NOT YET PROVIDED	2	100%	8	44%	22	88%
	OUT OF ORDER	0	0%	1	6%	0	0%
	SERVICE SUSPENDED	0	0%	9	50%	2	8%
FAX	DAMAGED	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
	STOLEN	0	0%	7	87%	1	50%
	NOT YET PROVIDED	7	100%	1	13%	1	50%
	OUT OF ORDER	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
	SERVICE						

	SUSPENDED	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
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TABLE 6

There is no problem of theft in Botlokwa. The reason for this is that there is a satellite police office in the yard of the centre.

According to table number 6, there is unawareness of the uses of these centres to be addressed. This means that education and training are needed. Both Telecentre users and managers need to be trained in order to bring awareness to available Telecentre devices. Respondents seem not to be aware of the difference between a computer and internet and this may have affected the results.

100% of respondents indicated that most of the public phones are out of order. Public telephones are some of the services that are frequently utilized. Being out of order for sometime means a critical service is denied. The Telecentre staff should make it a point that public phones get repaired as a matter of urgency. There is a stiff competition nowadays in the provision of public telephones brought by ICT providers such as Vodacom, MTN, Cell C, and Telkom including those that are provided by individuals at their homesteads and on street sides. This competition has a potential of steering the public towards alternatives perceived to be more reliable. Should that be the case, services in the Telecentre could stand idle, which is a thing that will be against the aims for their establishment.

Some of the respondents show different perceptions in terms of computer availability. 50% of them say that computers are not available because they were stolen and the other 50% say that computers are not available because they have not yet been

provided. While it is impossible to have something stolen before it is provided, it could well be that computers were stolen in the past. The respondents may not have been aware that those computers have been replaced. The response could have been influenced by what the respondents frequently use at the Telecentre. When the interviews were conducted, computers were there and they were functioning properly. Assessing what has been said, it means there is lack of awareness and knowledge among some of respondents. During focus groups and participant observation session, most of the adults showed that they do not know the difference between the internet and the computer. This is therefore, an indication for an essential intensive training for Telecentre users.

When it comes to the issue of library, 100% of respondents say that a library is not available and during the interviews held, respondents raised library facilities as an issue to be considered by Telecentre providers. They made it clear that library is essential for education enhancement and also for sharing of information and knowledge.

The internet is also an important tool for it enables one to gain information and knowledge but it has become an enigma in this Telecentre. The majority of the centre's users seem to be lost about that service. Had it been known what an internet is, no one would have mentioned the absence of the internet at Botlokwa Youth Telecentre because the service is provided.

To prove the point that an increase in the awareness of what a centre provides is needed, 100% of the respondents indicated that there is no e-mail, while it was there. Many respondents chose not to answer the question probably because they do not know if it is there or not. This is evidenced by those that ventured to answer the question. There is therefore a need to increase awareness, information and knowledge of services

that are available at the Telecentre. The ignorance of users therefore means that the Telecentre is not optimally utilized by rural women. In other words, this means that ICT is not accessible as it is expected. A rigorous information session should be conducted to inform users about all the services provided so that they can benefit from this centre.

A fax machine was also regarded as not yet provided which means customers use the device without knowing it. Many of the fax users bring documents to be faxed with a note that requests Telecentre staff to assist with the faxing of these documents. This means relying on a manager to operate the fax machine for them. In this case this means that rural women are not being empowered. This also means that there is no self-reliance and development. Therefore, Telecentre managers need to transform and teach the Telecentre users how to access ICT optimally. The situation can also be improved by marketing the services available at the Telecentre.

4.1.8 THE ROLE PROVIDED BY THE TELECENTRE SERVICES

		BOTLOKWA	MANKWENG	MOHODI
		FREQUENCY %	FREQUENCY %	FREQUENCY %
CATEGORIES	ROLES			
COMPUTERS	PROVIDE COPMUTER SKILLS	10 (30%)	1 5%	10 19%
COMPUTERS	FACILITATE SHARING OF KNOWLEGE	8 (24%)	2 10%	2 4%
PUBLIC TELEPHONE	MAKE COMMUNICATION EASIER	13 (40%)	13 61%	19 37%

COMPUTERS AND PHONES	FACILITATE BUSINESS	2 (6%)	5 (24%)	21 (40%)
OTHER	LEARN ABOUT TECHNOLOGY	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

TABLE 7

6% of respondents show that a lot of women are not business people. As a result they do not know that computers facilitate business. According to table 7 above, about 40% of respondents say that public phones make communication easier while 30% of the respondents say that computers provide computer skills. On the other hand 24% of the respondents stress the fact that computers facilitate sharing of knowledge.

The results show that computers are seen as the most important ICT facilities preferred by the youth. This is confirmed by the computer certificates obtained by youth which have enabled them to be employed.

4.1.9(a) FREQUENCY OF TELECENTRE VISITS

CATEGORIES	BOTLOKWA	MANKWENG	MOHODI
	FREQUENCY %	FREQUENCY %	FREQUENCY %
EVERYDAY	27 (70%)	11 (37%)	24 (70%)
ONCE A WEEK	5 (15%)	4 (13%)	5 (15%)
FORTNIGHTLY	1 (3%)	11 (37%)	2 (6%)
ONCE A MONTH	1 (3%)	4 (13%)	0 (0%)

NOT AT ALL	0	(0%)	0	0%	0	0%
OTHER	1	0%	0	0%	3	9%

TABLE 8

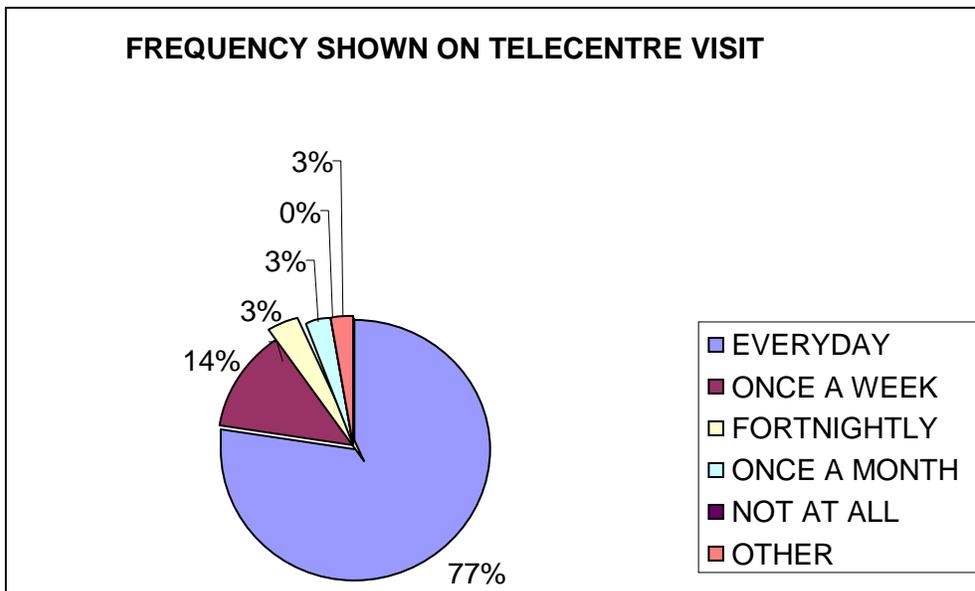


FIGURE 6

70% of the Telecentre users indicate that they use this centre everyday. This means that the establishment of this centre provides a service of great value for the rural women. The challenge therefore, is to keep the service going so as to create loyalty and dependency on the centre for information and self development.

4.1.9(b) THE REASON FOR BEING UNABLE TO USE A TELECENTRE

CATEGORIES	BOTLOKWA	MANKWENG	MOHODI
	FREQUENCY %	FREQUENCY %	FREQUENCY %
NO ACCOMMODATION FOR THE DISABLED	7 31%	4 18%	4 25%
YOUTH FACILITIES	3 13%	1 5%	2 13%
FEMALES NOT TAKEN SERIOUSLY	1 4%	0 0%	0 0%
TELECENTRE STAFF UNTRAINED	6 26%	2 9%	0 0%
PUBLIC TELEPHONES NOT PROVIDED	0 0%	13 59%	3 19%
OTHER	6 26%	2 9%	7 43%

TABLE 9

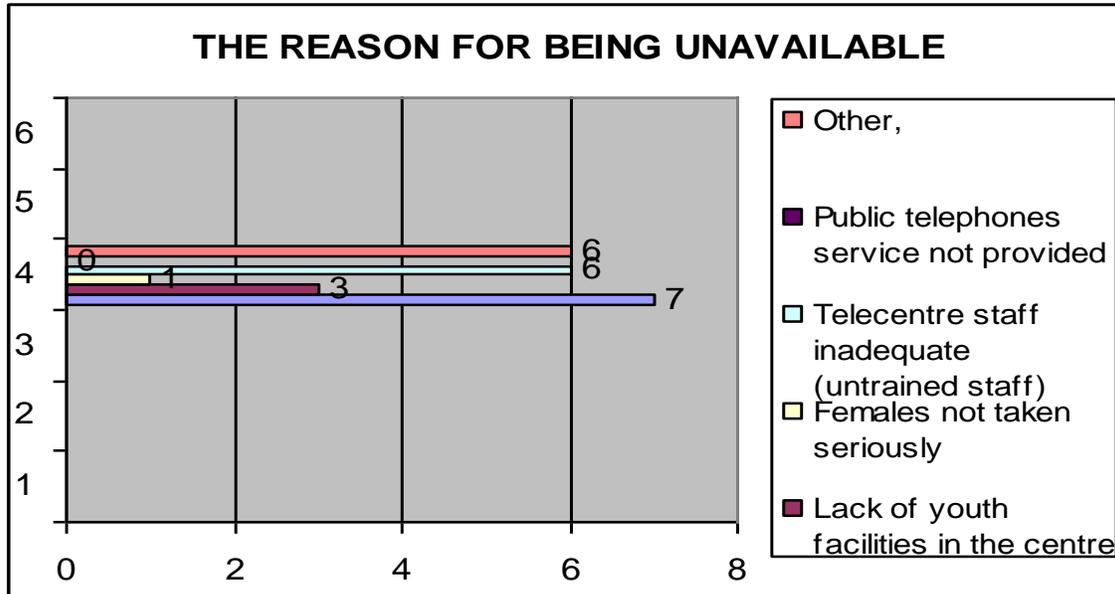


FIGURE 7

This figure is based on reasons, as to why women are unable to utilize the Telecentre. The most important reasons are that there is no accommodation for the disabled (31%), Telecentre staff not adequately trained (26%) and other reasons not specified account for (26%) of the responses. Another reason which seems important, but is not provided by the statistics, is lack of facilities for youths and children (13%). Domestic workers would find it impossible to take children to the Telecentre for fear of retribution by their employers. There is a perception that children are noisy and will disturb those that are trying to concentrate. However this is unfortunate as it is now obligatory to provide facilities for children at work places. If children were to get used to using the Telecentre at an early age, they will become users of the future. This is an idea that may not have been entertained by rural people due to historical, traditional and cultural perspectives. By not providing such facilities the government runs the risk of entrenching old beliefs and habits. A Telecentre should stand out as an element of change and light to the underprivileged.

4.1.10 ESTIMATED AMOUNT SPENT ON VARIOUS SERVICES

TELECENTRE INCOME ON DAILY BASES

4.1.10(a) TYPING

CATEGORIES	BOTLOKWA		MANKWENG		MOHODI	
	FREQUENCY	%	FREQUENCY	%	FREQUENCY	%
R 5.00-R10.00	30	88%	21	100%	21	7%
R10.00-R20.00	2	6%	0	0%	7	25%
R20.00-R30.00	1	3%	0	0%	0	0%
R30.00+	1	3%	0	0%	0	0%
OTHER	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%

TABLE 10

88% of the respondents seem to be spending R5- R 10 for typing on daily bases which means that there is not much this centre is making on typing. In this regard, a Telecentre needs to create some other means of bringing money for its sustainability.

4.1.10(b) PUBLIC TELEPHONE

CATEGORIES	BOTLOKWA		MANKWENG		MOHODI	
	FREQUENCY	%				

		FREQUENCY	%	FREQUENCY	%	
50C-R1.00	22	65%	4	49%	10	40%
R2.00-R5.00	1	3%	0	0%	0	0%
R5.00-R10.00	10	29%	3	38%	14	56%
R25.00-R35.00	1	3%	1	13%	1	4%
OTHER	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%

TABLE 11

There is no doubt; people go to the centres to phone. 65% of respondents are able to spend 50c-R1 daily for using public telephone. 29% can afford to pay more for phoning by spending R10-R20 for a day which means a Telecentre's sustainability is mainly based on public telephone. This also shows the level of poverty among rural women. This also means that something must be done to bring more money for the maintenance of the Telecentre. Contributing factors such as theft should be dealt with, accordingly, in order to avoid the issue of stolen public telephones. If security is not improved the Telecentre income will be constantly reduced.

4.1.10(c) FAX

CATEGORIES	BOTLOKWA	MANKWENG	MOHODI
	FREQUENCY %	FREQUENCY %	FREQUENCY %
R5.00-R10.00	24 89%	12 75%	15 (65%)
R10.00-R20.00	2 7%	3 19%	8 (35%)
R20.00-R30.00	1 4%	1 6%	0 (0%)

TABLE 12

89% of respondents spend R5-R10 per day faxing. This is an indication that rural life is really changing, ICT access is now a necessity not a luxury. This means that rural women need more experience and training on such issues for them to come in numbers and teach others. This is mentioned because it is only 7% of respondents who can afford to spend R10-R20 for faxing and the rest, its either they are afraid of technology or they are financially unable to do so.

4.1.10(d) INTERNET

CATEGORIES	BOTLOKWA	MANKWENG	MOHODI
	FREQUENCY %	FREQUENCY %	FREQUENCY %
R15.00-R30.00	22 81%	3 50%	1 (100%)
R30.00-R60.00	4 15%	0 0%	0 (0%)
R60.00-R90.00	1 4%	2 33%	0 (0%)
R90.00-R120.00	0 0%	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Other	0 0%	1 17%	0 (0%)

TABLE 13

81% of respondents spend from R15- R30 for internet consumption and this indicates awareness and the importance of internet in rural women's lives. Therefore, internet is needed in rural communities for the Telecentres' sustainability. The main issue that needs attention is how to increase 15% of the respondents who are prepared to pay R30-R60 for internet. If that can become possible, the sustainability of the Telecentre will improve.

4.1.11 ASSISTANCE OFFERED BY TELECENTRE STAFF

CATEGORIES	BOTLOKWA	MANKWENG	MOHODI
	FREQUENCY %	FREQUENCY %	FREQUENCY %
ASSISTANCE ON FAX, TYPING AND E-MAIL	20 26%	7 19%	7 36%
COMPUTER TRAINING	28 37%	14 38%	2 11%
ASSIST TECHNOLOGICALLY	12 16%	7 19%	5 26%
ALLOW SHARING OF KNOWLEDGE	12 16%	9 24%	3 16%
SHARING OF INFORMATION	4 5%	0 0%	0 0%
ALLOW PARTICIPATION THROUGH RADIO STATION	0 0%	0 0%	2 11%
OTHER	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%

TABLE 14

The results indicate the same trend in all centres. 37% of respondents agree on the fact that computers allow everybody to gain skills. This is an indication of the popularity of one of the most important services that a Telecentre can offer to develop and empower

rural women. 25% of respondents agree that the Telecentre staff assist by teaching everybody how to fax, e-mail and type. The only thing lacking is optimal user development since the Telecentre users cannot use ICT facilities independently.

4.1.12 COMMUNICATION NEEDS

The following devices are arranged in order of priority: (a) very important, (b) important, (c) less important (d) not important.

4.1.12(a) SIGNIFICANCE OF FAX

CATEGORIES	BOTLOKWA		MANKWENG		MOHODI	
	FREQUENCY	%	FREQUENCY	%	FREQUENCY	%
A	20	76%	8	50%	6	25%
B	3	12%	7	44%	9	38%
C	3	12%	1	6%	9	38%
D	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%

TABLE 15

A fax is regarded as the most important device in a Telecentre. This is confirmed by 76% of respondents. According to the statistics, fax is also one of the devices that is a regular source of income in a Telecentre.

4.1.12 (b) SIGNIFICANCE OF TELEPHONE

CATEGORIES	BOTLOKWA	MANKWENG	MOHODI
	FREQUENCY %	FREQUENCY %	FREQUENCY %
A	24 73%	21 84%	22 42%
B	8 24%	4 16%	4 8%
C	1 3%	0 0%	0 0%
D	0 0%	0 0%	26 50%

TABLE 16

73% of the respondents in Botlokwa rate public telephone utilization the highest. The Telecentre is surrounded by various services such as Community Radio, Eskom Vending outlet, Government Departments, Machaka Traditional Authority to mention but a few. Therefore, people who come for the above mentioned services also use public telephones. In this regard, a Telecentre's income through public phones adds value to the economic situation of the area.

In Mankweng Telecentre, the same trend can be observed. 84% of the respondents reflect the significance of telephone in this centre. One of the ICT service providers MTN, donated public phones to the centre which makes the cost per unit reasonable as compared to Botlokwa and MohodiTelecentres. There is an Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) that is taking place in the Telecentre's building. The course is highly supported and it attracts more learners. The most accessible and affordable means of

communication for ABET students, are public telephones. Telephones are therefore more effective in creating a vibrant market for the Telecentre.

4.1.12(c)SIGNIFICANCE OF INTERNET

CATEGORIES	BOTLOKWA		MANKWENG		MOHODI	
	FREQUENCY	%	FREQUENCY	%	FREQUENCY	%
A	19	65%	11	61%	20	77%
B	4	14%	7	39%	6	23%
C	4	14%	0	0%	0	0%
D	2	7%	0	0%	0	0%

TABLE 17

The trend is the same throughout the three centres 65% of respondents evaluated the internet as important particularly because they are aware or capable of using a computer.

4.1.12(d) SIGNIFICANCE OF COMPUTER

CATEGORIES	BOTLOKWA		MANKWENG		MOHODI	
	FREQUENCY	%	FREQUENCY	%	FREQUENCY	%

		FREQUENCY	%	FREQUENCY	%
A	29		85%	20	91%
B	4		12%	2	9%
C	1		3%	0	0%
D	0		0%	0	0%

TABLE 18

85% of respondents regard the computer as very important, like in the case of internet, respondents focus on what they know better.

4.1.12(e) SIGNIFICANCE OF E-MAIL

CATEGORIES	BOTLOKWA		MANKWENG		MOHODI	
	FREQUENCY	%	FREQUENCY	%	FREQUENCY	%
A	17	59%	7	41%	3	60%
B	5	17%	9	53%	2	40%
C	4	14%	1	6%	0	0%
D	3	10%	0	0%	0	0%

TABLE 19

59% of respondents say e-mail is important, and it is again an important issue of capability and awareness of the available devices in a Telecentre.

4.1.12 (f) SIGNIFICANCE OF LIBRARY

CATEGORIES	BOTLOKWA		MANKWENG		MOHODI	
	FREQUENCY	%	FREQUENCY	%	FREQUENCY	%
A	12	86%	9	64%	2	50%
B	1	7%	4	29%	1	25%
C	1	7%	1	7%	0	0%
D	0	0%	0	0%	1	25%

TABLE 20

In as far as library facilities are concerned; 86% of respondents say is necessary to have a library near a Telecentre or inside it.

4.1.13 THE REASON WHY ICT SERVICES ARE NEEDED

CATEGORIES	BOTLOKWA	MANKWENG	MOHODI
	FREQUENCY %	FREQUENCY %	FREQUENCY %
WOMEN PHONE THEIR SPOUSES	17 17%	6 13%	19 26%
YOUTH COMMUNICATE WITH THEIR LOVED ONES	18 18%	6 13 %	17 23%
LONG DISTANCE LEARNERS	18 18%	1 2%	6 8%
JOB CREATION	26 27%	17 39%	24 32%
LEARNERS GAIN KNOWLEDGE	16 16%	4 9%	6 8%
OTHER	4 4%	11 24%	2 3%

TABLE 21

27% of respondents said that computer skills empower people by making them employable. 18% of respondents say public phones are important because the youth can communicate with their loved ones, whereas 18% of respondents say that public phones enable women to phone their spouses. Therefore, the general consensus is that computers play an important role in empowering people by giving them access to jobs.

Public phones were also mentioned as there is a need for them for both youth and adults in a Telecentre establishment.

4.1.14 SHARING OF KNOWLEDGE ACQUIRED FROM THE TELECENTRE

CATEGORIES	BOTLOKWA	MANKWENG	MOHODI
	FREQUENCY %	FREQUENCY %	FREQUENCY %
WOMEN COMMUNICATE WITH CLUBS	14 20%	4 13%	15 23%
SOME MEMBERS HAVE CREATED JOBS FOR THEM SELVES	9 13%	3 10%	5 8%
MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY SHARE BUSINESS INFORMATON	11 16%	4 13%	8 13%
EDUCATION CAPACITY IS ENHANCED	15 22%	12 38%	23 36%
ADULTS LEARN SOME SKILLS FROM YOUTH	18 26%	7 23%	11 17%
OTHER	2 3%	1 3%	2 3%

TABLE 22

26% of respondents reported that services are needed so that the community can share knowledge acquired from the centre and adults learn some skills from the youth.22% say

that education capacity is enhanced and 20% indicate that women communicate their information with clubs. The statistics given, show that the establishment of the Telecentre has serious impact on rural women that it has changed their lives for better in as far as ICT access is concerned.

4.1.15 LOCATION OF A TELECENTRE

CATEGORIES	BOTLOKWA		MANKWENG		MOHODI	
	FREQUENCY	%	FREQUENCY	%	FREQUENCY	%
LESS THAN KILMETER	11	42%	3	10%	7	28%
BETWEEN 1 AND 2 KM	8	31%	7	23%	7	28%
BETWEEN 4 AND 5 KM	7	27%	7	23%	11	44%
MORE THAN 5 KM	0	0%	11	37%	0	0%
OTHER	0	0%	2	7%	0	0%

TABLE 23

BotlokwaTelecentre is properly located because 42% of respondents travel less than a kilometer to a Telecentre and 31% travel between 1 and 3 kilometers in order to come into contact with ICT facilities. This therefore comes as an alarming statement to Telecentre establishers that something needs to be done. Telecentre location plays an important part in decreasing and increasing frequency of participants. The closer they are, the greater the interest provided.

CATEGORIES	BOTLOKWA	MANKWENG	MOHODI
	FREQUENCY %	FREQUENCY %	FREQUENCY %
LEARNING ENVIROMENT	4 13%	4 16%	5 28%
INTERNET TO TEACH COMMUNITY	1 3%	1 4%	1 6%
PROVIDE SECURITY	1 3%	1 4%	1 6%
PROVIDE FOR YOUTH AND DISABLED	2 7%	2 8%	1 6%
PROVIDE OUTLET FOR NEWSPAPER AND CELLPHONE	3 10%	5 20%	0 0%
TRAIN TELECENTRE STAFF	2 7%	5 20%	2 12%
REDUCE WALKING DISTANCE BY ESTABLISHING MORE TELECENTRES	4 35%	6 24%	4 24%
REFURBISHMENT	13 44%	1 4%	3 18%

TABLE 24

The response shows that the users do not look at the Telecentre as something for the future but they are only interested in what it can do for them at the particular moment, hence low scores on the percentages. Various suggestions have been given and the main issue is based on the Telecentre refurbishment, provision of appropriate learning

environment for skills acquisition and the problem of walking distance. All the above mentioned factors contribute to the Telecentre less impact. This means that the existing Telecentre is deprived of what it can provide due to existing obstacles such as Telecentre congestion.

A closer analysis of the results reveals that the whole issue revolves around how a Telecentre is utilized by rural women which is the core issue of this study. Attached to the utilization of a Telecentre, there are very important issues that have been raised and seem to be contributing either to the increase of utilization.

4.2 SUSTAINABILITY OF TELECENTRES AND MPCCs

The survival of Telecentres and MPCCs is based on a variety of factors such as demand and supply of goods, availability and affordability of devices and the manner in which they are utilized; cost stipulated on the devices, operational hours of the Telecentre and its geographical location, nature of the people, interest shown in the Telecentre user, frequency of utilization, sponsors and donations. All of these above mentioned aspects are contributing factors affecting the Telecentre market. The following records are an indication of the economic situation with regard to Botlokwa, Mankweng and Mohodi Telecentre's ICT devices

COMPUTER COURSE

Botlokwa Telecentre charges R800.00 for the registration of computer course that takes two months. Each prospective member is expected to pay a deposit of R400.00 upfront and the balance is paid before the issuing out of the certificate. Their records show that in 2005 they managed to register twenty four females (24) for the computer course. In 2006 their records show progress since they managed to register forty (40) females. This shows that the demand

for computer course is high; however, the space to add more computers is limited, therefore affecting how many more they can accommodate. Same amount of registration is paid in Mankweng Telecentre; the difference is with the deposit of R250.00 which has to be paid upfront. However, there is a deviation to this financial situation.

In Mohodi Telecentre, prospective members are expected to pay an amount of R412.00 for registration in a computer courses and a deposit of R200.00 is paid upfront and the balance is paid on easy terms until the member pays it up in order to get the certificate. This kind of arrangement is necessitated by factors such as the standard of living and the geographical location of these students. Prospective members in Botlokwa and Mankweng can afford to pay the stipulated amount since they have access to income –generating projects from which they can earn a living. Those in Mohodi cannot afford to pay R800.00 as this is a poorer area.

PUBLIC PHONES

In the Botlokwa Telecentre, public phones are charged at the rate of 90c per unit. Those women who use phones a lot spend ± R40.00 per visit. It depends on the frequency made by such individuals and if such a person comes twice per week that means more money in that particular week. If about 50 women utilize this centre and the majority come to use public phones, that means more money for the centre through public phones.

In Mankweng where the competition for such services is high, the centre can also make money because one of the ICT service providers, MTN donated public phones to the centre in the beginning of 2006. This kind of donation improved the centre in such a way that it cannot make less than R180.00 per day. During busy days the centre can make ± R300.00. Users show interest in these phones because they are economical. The user pays 90c for the first

unit and when that unit is finished, the phone charges 45c per unit up until the consumer finishes her conversation.

In MohodiTelecentre, consumers use public phones that are provided by Vodacom and they are expected to pay the same amount paid in Mankweng Telecentre. This centre can make about R300.00 per day when the schools are open. According to the Telecentre manager, about 45 women, young and old visit this centre per day. In this regard one would say the number of the consumers fluctuates and this means the socio-economic situation of this centre is controlled by seasonal factors

INTERNET

Internet access is charged per minute in BotlokwaTelecentre. To access it the consumer pays R15.00 for 30 minutes and about ± R45.00 is made per day. Unfortunately at the Mankweng Telecentre there is no internet service. A similar situation had existed in Mohodi but recently it has installed an internet service. The centre's impact is very limited if one of the expected devices is missing.

FAX

Fax machine charging rates go according to the transmission's duration. In BotlokwaTelecentre, one pays R5.00 for local transmission per page and R8.00 is paid for provincial transmission. National charges are done at a cost of R 10.00 per page. For international documents a cost of R20.00 is charged. On the average of about 11 pages are faxed each day.

WORK TO BE TYPED

A similar trend is followed in Botlokwa and Mohodi in terms of typing per page. A lot of women come for work to be typed and they are charged R5.00 per page. These centres make not less than R50.00 per day.

PHOTOCOPIER

A photocopier is available in Botlokwa Telecentre and copies cost from 60c per copy and about ±R20.00 is accumulated from this service per day. This service is very popular amongst the women since they are the people who use it for children's birth certificates, various receipts, to mention but a few. As for e-mail, it is neither known nor used by most of the rural women, this is another factor which leads to the lower level in a Telecentre's income. The average monthly income for each centre is, R7000.00 although a centre can make more than that. In Mankweng centre they manage to raise R5000.00 as monthly income, from which the salary of the manager, which is R1200.00 has to be deducted. As it has been indicated, in Mohodi Telecentre the center's income relies on schools around the centre, it means when the schools are closed the centre makes less than R6000.00. This therefore is an indication that rural women are gradually becoming financially emancipated.

4.3 RURAL WOMEN AND TELECENTRE UTILIZATION

The role played by each centre for the rural women depends on the centre's content and its level of development. Different stories are told about different experiences encountered by these women in terms of these centre's utilization. ICT access in Telecentres and MPCCs has been provided to create and inculcate a spirit hope and eradicate poverty among rural women. For example, HP i community which is one of the centres in Magalakwena Municipality, which was selected to pilot the model on sustainable socio-economic development through the leverage of ICT infrastructure is utilized by women in a variety of ways. Rural women use

ICT facilities to learn how to draw a business plan, market and advertise their business and gain information on business administration. This centre receives support through donations provided by Hewlett Packard Company. Therefore MogalakwenaHPi centre is an outstanding and centre in terms of the ICT facilities found in it. The marketing strategy that this centre practice creates a lot of interest amongst women, strategies like hosting a women's day breakfast can change even the hardest hearts because it makes women realize that they are recognized even though they are in rural areas. (See article 3 under annexure)

The members of Mahwereleng community, who make use of this centre, cannot be compared with members who make use of Botlokwa Mankweng and Mohodi Telecentres. The reason is that Mogalakwena H Pi-community users are exposed to a wide range of ICT devices.

In MohodiTelecentre, frequency rate of utilization by rural women is very low. Poverty, unemployment and the geographical location are the key issues to be addressed. The center is only used by a few who have money including those who are employed by farmers. Such customers get a chance of visiting the centre when they are told by employers to get an Identity Document copy (ID) and also to phone when there is an emergency. However, the situation changes when the schools are open. The youth and teachers phone a lot and utilize a lot of computer services giving the centre financial support.

In Mankweng Telecentre, ICT service is offered in order to support the rural women's struggle against ICT illiteracy. The type of ICT education found in this centre consists of computer training which is divided into various course contents such as Microsoft word (MS WORD), MS Excel, MS Power Point windows. ICT session also makes customers aware of what the Independent Communication Authority of South Africa (ICASA) policy is all about, how to operate an ATM and also to understand how robots function.

This centre qualifies to be called an MPCC because of the various activities found in the same yard, such as a Gym, bakery, Lesedi pre-school and a stall for fresh vegetable produce. After the board members reviewed the whole situation, they felt they should approach the Premier's office so that the centre can be upgraded into MPCC. Members also feel that there is a need to provide a clinic for the members of the community so that they can benefit in acquiring health-based services. It is not only a clinic, but also the establishment of a satellite Home Affairs office.

4.4 WOMEN'S PERCEPTION OF TELCENTRE UTILIZATION

The perception that Mohodi women have of a Telecentre is that it is a means of survival. Mrs. Manthanta, one of the School Governing Body (SGB) says ICT access brought to this centre is like 'a pool where people would be baptized by Jesus and they come out being healed'. She also regards a Telecentre as a 'spiritual healing herb' for rural women in her village. Her key point with regard to Telecentres is that computer-skill acquisition is like a driver's licence that one has to acquire in order to be able to drive 'one's life'. Since computer skill is a necessity, for these days to become employed, one has 'to carry it like a driver's licence card'.

The same appreciation is expressed by users of Mankweng Telecentre. Women mainly utilize this centre and their perceptions vary according to the type of the centre's content. Few of them have been selected to demonstrate Telecentres' impact on rural women as the reflection of the Telecentres impact on rural women.

A story of an old woman who is in her late 60s shows the community's enthusiasm and desire for ICT knowledge. Her name is Thelma Mkhuzangwe. This woman had a burning interest to operate an ATM. She came to a Telecentre to learn how to type. At the end of the day she acquired basic computer skill, and learned how to operate an ATM machine.

Ms Dora Makhado, a retired teacher used to hear her grandchildren talking about 'save, 'click' and 'double click' and this kept her burning with desire to know how to click and double click with a computer. Eventually, she paid a visit to a Telecentre where she learned how to type, click and double click on her own. With this hope she can struggle against computer illiteracy.

Lesedi Crèche and Adult Basic Education Training (ABET) are found in the same building where Mankweng Telecentre is found. Female teachers who teach in the Crèche use the Telecentres for photocopying the learning materials which create concrete lessons to young children. As the majority of the ABET students are females, they also make use of the centre for photocopying cooking receipts and typing what is part of their lessons and phoning. If other services like internet and e-mail were available, the centre would have become useful to everybody who needs it.

A relationship between a Telecentre and the Mankweng hospital through ICT access has also been formed. Female hospital-cleaners use a Telecentre facilities in order to work on ABET lessons. This has changed these women in such a way that they are psychologically and financially empowered. These cleaners who have passed level four (L 4) which is equivalent to Matric got themselves registered as student nurses and others were given salary increments.

Through these Telecentres transformation takes place but there are still challenges that need to be addressed.

4.5 CHALLENGES

Challenges faced and disadvantages of these Telecentres, involve issues such as poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, limited funding, theft, high level of congestion, mismanagement, lack

of directional signs, and efficient facilities to accommodate the needs of those who are physically challenged. Additional problems also come from the Telecentre managers who sometimes show a negative attitude to the users when help is needed. Some of the Telecentre staff members leave for better paying jobs as they are not given basic salaries and others work as volunteers. This situation is certainly a challenge that the board members need to address and review positively. Telecentres are capable enough to produce people with ICT skills who then work as volunteers with no appropriate incentive.

In spite of all the challenges, South African Telecentres seem to have potential in providing its users with various skills such as, computer, facsimile and telephone skills. Most of the rural women have and are still utilizing ICT facilities in order to enhance their educational capacity and also for empowering and developing themselves in various aspects. In addition, one of the biggest challenges not to be ignored is the need for an accelerated growth in ICT utilization. Attached to the utilization of a Telecentre, there are very imperative issues that have been raised and they seem to be contributing to declining utilization situation. Therefore they are presented in a discussion form.

4.6 DISCUSSION

This discussion is aimed at presenting fundamental issues attached to the findings of the study. This is discussed in order to address the essential needs of cultural link to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) utilization.

CULTURAL LINK

Culture is a belief or an ideology that is interwoven with social practices and activities of human kind. Rural women participate in Telecentres for ICT access. They utilize these

centres with a perspective of understanding that they can develop a sense of empowerment and development through ICT services. However, the number of these women using Telecentres is very low. This means that there is a need of an effective mechanism to lure a high rate of the Telecentre utilization. Therefore, the fundamental process that needs to be addressed is a cultural-link. This includes connecting ICT access to an interwoven social practices and activities as discussed below.

As Telecentres are providers of ICT services to rural women armed with their cultural background, introducing interaction of culture and ICT access can create transformative empowerment in their Telecentre and Multi-purpose Community Centre (MPCC) utilization. Therefore, guiding and educating these women about cultural involvement in ICT services can draw an increased positive sense of acceptance of these centres. Acculturation thus, needs to be established in Telecentres for the benefit of these women. Acculturation means learning and adopting some aspects of foreign culture and practices as if they were part of your own. This means an introduction of ICT service with cultural oriented system based on rural women's beliefs.

Telecentres can be used as a data bank for cultural activities. The introduction of a new system using a vernacular language can simplify a complicated situation for the illiterates. These centres can be used with an approach that supports information-based programmes for various kinds of people. Internet, as a relevant tool to spread culture, can be navigated for example, by traditional healers in rural areas to enhance their skill-capacity in healing. The provision of a database with rural activities, can transform a Telecentre into a democratic tool for preserving indigenous knowledge for the generation to come. Enculturation can occur in Telecentres. Enculturation means learning culture that one is born in. The results indicate that Telecentres can be regarded as tools of the restored rural culture.

Telecentres are meant to provide ICT access. They are mainly used by poor people who are not employed; however, these people are expected to pay for ICT services. These centres on the other hand are supposed to be sustainable. This means that they need to raise funds that will keep them afloat and not rely solely on subsidies and other hand-outs. In order to alleviate poverty a special intervention is required to attract communities to use Telecentres. If this does not happen, Telecentres will soon find themselves as white elephants.

Telecentres are also haunted by under-funding. As a result there are inadequate numbers of equipments such as computers, photocopiers, telephones to mention but a few. Due to lack of funding, these equipments become dysfunctional and it takes time to have them repaired.

DONATIONS

For Telecentres to give support and be supported by others, a new motivational system is needed. Donations can stimulate everybody's interest; especially pensioners can be kept busy by ICT donated equipments. For Telecentre users like Mrs. Dora Makhado who is seventy nine years old as mentioned above needs a computer to exercise her acquired computer-skill. This can encourage one of the activities, such as 'work from home' through a Telecentre's help. Some of the pensioners are former teachers and they can be helpful in a centre.

Improving Telecentres means improving Information and Communication Technology (ICT). These centres are not only about access to ICT service but also about capacity building and sharing the information.

ILLITERACY

Illiteracy means inability to read, write, and communicate. Telecentres experience problems in creating a strategy to lure more adults to use Telecentres, and limited awareness impedes Telecentre utilization. According to the findings of this study, the level of illiteracy is very high such that there are very few people who can utilize these Telecentres. Therefore, there is a need to introduce an intervention that can boost the literacy rate of community members.

As the majority of rural women are computer illiterate, computer –based skills are needed in order to meet ICT global requirements. For the rural women to understand the needs of ICT access, Telecentres are essential and play a role of educating these women about the power of information. The kind of ICT that is required is one that can even accommodate individuals who are physically challenged. These centres are expected to be sources of information whereby knowledge is obtained even through the usage of braille and so on.

DIVERSITY OF SERVICES PROVIDED BY TELECENTRES

Telecentres can be educative resources, whereby rural women can be taught various things such as banking procedures and accounting to mention but a few. These women can also be lured into Telecentres by a system whereby collaboration of broadcasting and Telecentres is used as a form of entertainment. These centres can also encourage popular culture that can increase the level of interaction of culture and communication.

The findings of this study have been raised and discussed, the question is, what needs to be done and how should it be done? In the next chapter which is all about recommendations, a clear picture of the whole issue will be depicted.

CHAPTER 5

RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Having analyzed and interpreted the data collected, a list of issues was compiled showing aspects that need attention so that Telecentres can function in an improved manner. In this chapter a plan of action will be proposed and responsibilities allocated to institutions and individuals. It is anticipated that should the plan be adopted and implemented as proposed, there should be a marked improvement in the utilization of the Telecentre. Its impact on the lives of the rural women of Botlokwa would be significant thereby moving closer to the ideal of having the digital divide between advantaged and disadvantaged areas narrowed. For each issue raised, a proposed solution and responsible individual or institution would be suggested.

5.1 ISSUE: How to lure more adults to use Telecentres.

PROPOSED SOLUTION: Provide free basic skills lessons using Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET). Part of the lessons after reading and writing have been achieved should be the use of Telecentre, services computers included. This will create a pool of Telecentre users thereby transforming the Telecentre into a useful facility whose role and value in the community would be unparalleled.

RESPONSIBILITY: The Department of Communication together with the Department of Education should budget for the expenditure in the short to medium term. As time goes on, it should be a responsibility of local municipalities to provide such funding.

5.2 ISSUE: How to reduce illiteracy and unawareness since they impede Telecentre utilization.

PROPOSED SOLUTION: The community should be introduced to Telecentres operations and services. Illiteracy should be dealt with in terms of proposal made in 5.1. Unawareness or lack of interest should be dealt with through a robust marketing drive of the Telecentre. Pamphlets should be prepared and distributed by the Telecentre staff assisted by communication agencies to communicate to communities in the catchment area of a Telecentre. Such pamphlets should be in Sepedi and Tshivenda as these are the main languages spoken in the area.

Road shows would be another marketing strategy that can bear fruit. The Mayor and Councillors could have a day on which they go to the community promoting literacy and pointing at the Telecentre as a facility to be used in this regard. This could go a long way in marketing the centre.

There is a community radio station known as Radio Botlokwa in the area whose working relationship with the Telecentre is cordial. The station should from time to time convey messages that explain the services in the centre and that they are meant for them. A catch phrase like “Botlokwa Telecentre keyalena, e somiseng” which means “Botlokwa Telecentre is yours, utilize it” could improve the way in which the community associates with the centre.

T-shirts bearing the catch phrase could be printed and worn by the staff members from time to time. A few can be printed and given to frequent Telecentre users. This could assist with the conveyance of the message.

RESPONSIBILITY: Communication agencies, Telecentre staff and the local municipality should consider implementing the proposal. To make sure that this gets implemented,

specific officials should be identified and this assignment be made part of their performance agreement. The Mayor's office should set a day aside for the road show. This should appear as a commitment by the Mayor and it is reflected in his/her diary. In any event if the Mayor cannot attend, arrangements for substitutions should be made.

5.3 ISSUE: How to reduce effects of unemployment since it limits the ability of users to use the Telecentre facilities.

PROPOSED SOLUTION: As unemployment is a National tragedy and cannot be left to the Botlokwa community to resolve, subsidy becomes an inescapable strategy. Other countries in the world have adopted ICT access as a basic human right; as a result ICT access is free. South Africa has a Free Basic Services policy where community members earning R1000 or less qualify for free water and electricity up to a prescribed limit per month. The same can be extended to ICT access. Details hereof are beyond the scope of the dissertation. Should this be implemented, Telecentres throughout the country could breathe a sigh of relief, and so will Botlokwa Telecentre.

Local Economic Development projects should be started in the community so as to boost employment opportunities. Should this be the case, the reliance on subsidies will be minimized.

There are ICT access donors who would want to assist poor communities like Botlokwa. They should be identified and their financial assistance secured to boost temporal sustainability while South Africa looks for long-term solutions. **RESPONSIBILITY:** The Department of Communications should interact with other Departments such as Trade and Industry (DTI) Sports Arts and Culture, and Department of Provincial and Local Government to form an integrated system whereby Local Economic Development is promoted for the empowerment and accelerated growth initiative for rural women. Local

municipalities should also come on board and promote the implementation of Local Economic Development.

5.4 ISSUE: How to increase the limited number of computers in a Telecentre.

PROPOSED SOLUTION: There are companies in South Africa who dispose of “old computers” which are still usable. A national call should be made through the media requesting that such computers should be donated to Telecentres in poor communities of which Botlokwa Telecentre could be one of the beneficiaries. Computer companies can be asked to donate computers either from old stock that they want to dispose of or as gesture of goodwill.

RESPONSIBILITY: The Department of Communications assisted by its agencies should spearhead the campaign. ICT players such as Telkom, MTN, Vodacom, Cell C and Thintana should take part in replacing and supplying computers for Telecentres.

5.5 ISSUE: How the Telecentre staff can be inadequately trained to assist the Telecentre users.

PROPOSED SOLUTION: There should be a variety of skills training offered in a centre. Skills such as customer care, marketing strategies, procurement and the financial planning should be provided for the staff. This could either be in a modular form or workshops. When future additional staff is needed, as soon as interviews have been conducted and suitable candidates appointed, they should be trained on those aspects of Telecentre management that are vital.

A provision should be made to have the Telecentre staff attend refresher courses on the skills required to manage the Centre. This should be extended to cover new requirements that would be introduced.

RESPONSIBILITY: The Department of Communication together with USA and GCIS are responsible for the above mentioned matter. All that is expected from them is to see to it that advanced and intense training is available and implemented. This should be done in order to conform to any transition brought about by modern technology and globalisation.

5.6 ISSUE: How to improve the functioning of the equipment as devices such as telephones, fax machine and photocopier.

PROPOSED SOLUTION: There should be security in Telecentres to ensure protection and safety to prevent theft. A local police forum should be brought on board to enforce security. Before devices are taken for repairs there should be funds first. Rented machines are easier to fix as the rental contract covers maintenance. Where fixing the machine would take long, a relief machine should be provided in the meantime. This ensures continuity of service. Where some of the machines have been donated, service type agreements with companies that can fix the machines need to be entered into. This will speed up the process of fixing the machines.

RESPONSIBILITY: USA and GCIS coordinators, as well the Telecentre management, should ensure that proposals that are mentioned above become implemented.

5.7 ISSUE: Provision should be made to accommodate both children and people who are physically challenged (disabled).

PROPOSED SOLUTION: This calls for the establishment of a library and a crèche and other government-related services like Home affairs offices, electricity vending machines, to mention but a few, in the Telecentre. The idea can be implemented well if the concept of a multi-purpose centre where services are also shared is built. While this description of the centre makes it sound like an activity centre where government services are provided under one roof, there is really no problem with the set up.

Provision for the disabled should be addressed through building regulations and by-laws where all buildings are supposed to provide for ramps and lifts to cater for people on wheel chairs.

RESPONSIBILITY: The local municipality should ensure that all public buildings comply with the requirements that such buildings should be disabled-friendly. On the other hand government departments should entertain the notion of providing a shared centre where government's services are under one roof. They can do this by sharing plans at the Integrated Development Planning Representative Forum where the municipality is the presiding officer.

5.8ISSUE: Telecentres should support and be supported by users.

PROPOSED SOLUTION: Telecentres should be surrounded by other non-Telecentre activities, for example teaching of Braille to the blind, teaching sewing to both adults and youth, crèche, shops, market, taxi bus ranks to mention but a few. This means that, the location of Telecentres should be part of other institutions in order to make more income. In Botlokwa some of the above mentioned facilities have already been provided. What needs to happen is to strengthen the concept of centre-location whereby plans need to be drawn to provide a conducive Telecentre-environment.

RESPONSIBILITY: Municipality planning office and the office of the Traditional leaders should ensure that future applications of Telecentre-allocation meet the above mentioned requirements. This applies to government departments as well. In as much as the government's efforts are applauded in Mogalakwena H Pi-community, the guidance and help to Botlokwa, Mankweng and MohodiTelecentres need to be provided in terms of lifting up the standard of rural women through ICT access.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

ICT access is a world – wide phenomenon that is on the agenda of societies and nations. This is because of the evolution of the global village that straddles any form of boundaries that existed in the past. South Africa should not be left behind, hence the establishment of Telecentres within poor communities in the rural areas. Some of the beneficiaries of the programme are women whose participation could be constrained by certain cultural considerations and beliefs. However, women should shake off these impediments and joined the rest of the world in utilizing ICT services.

The utilization process is not without its own problems as is explained by the beneficiaries during interviews and confirmed by the research during data analysis and interpretation stage. The research has identified a number of problem areas ranging from unemployment to government operation inefficiencies. To this end a number of proposals have been made aimed at improving the utilization situation. A number of key institutions have been identified that can make a difference. If relevant institutions can take up their responsibilities, and face the reality of ICT access, the battle against the digital divide that is so wide between the rich and the poor countries, can be narrowed.

The issue of poverty and unemployment will continue to haunt utilization if a new system of subsidizing the beneficiaries is not found. As an area ravaged by poverty people will choose to use the little money they could lay their hands on, on foodstuffs. A surplus needs to be created so that Telecentre services can be part of the budget as well.

The study also shows that Telecentres are not isolated features. They are an integral part of an integrated service machinery of government. They support other services and in turn they are also supported by them. The programme can be successful if viewed from an angle of Integrated Development Planning where all development practitioners come to sketch the development path of the municipality.

Capacity is another factor that came out clearly. The Telecentre staff need to have the necessary skills to direct the centre in the required direction and destination. As a new baby on the block it needs unqualified support from the Department of Communications, USA, GCIS and other government communication agents. The private sector has a role to play which can not be overemphasized. It is when there is enough capacity that communities will benefit and that will improve utilization; otherwise the Telecentre-ideals may never be achieved, and women may at last break the bondages stated above.

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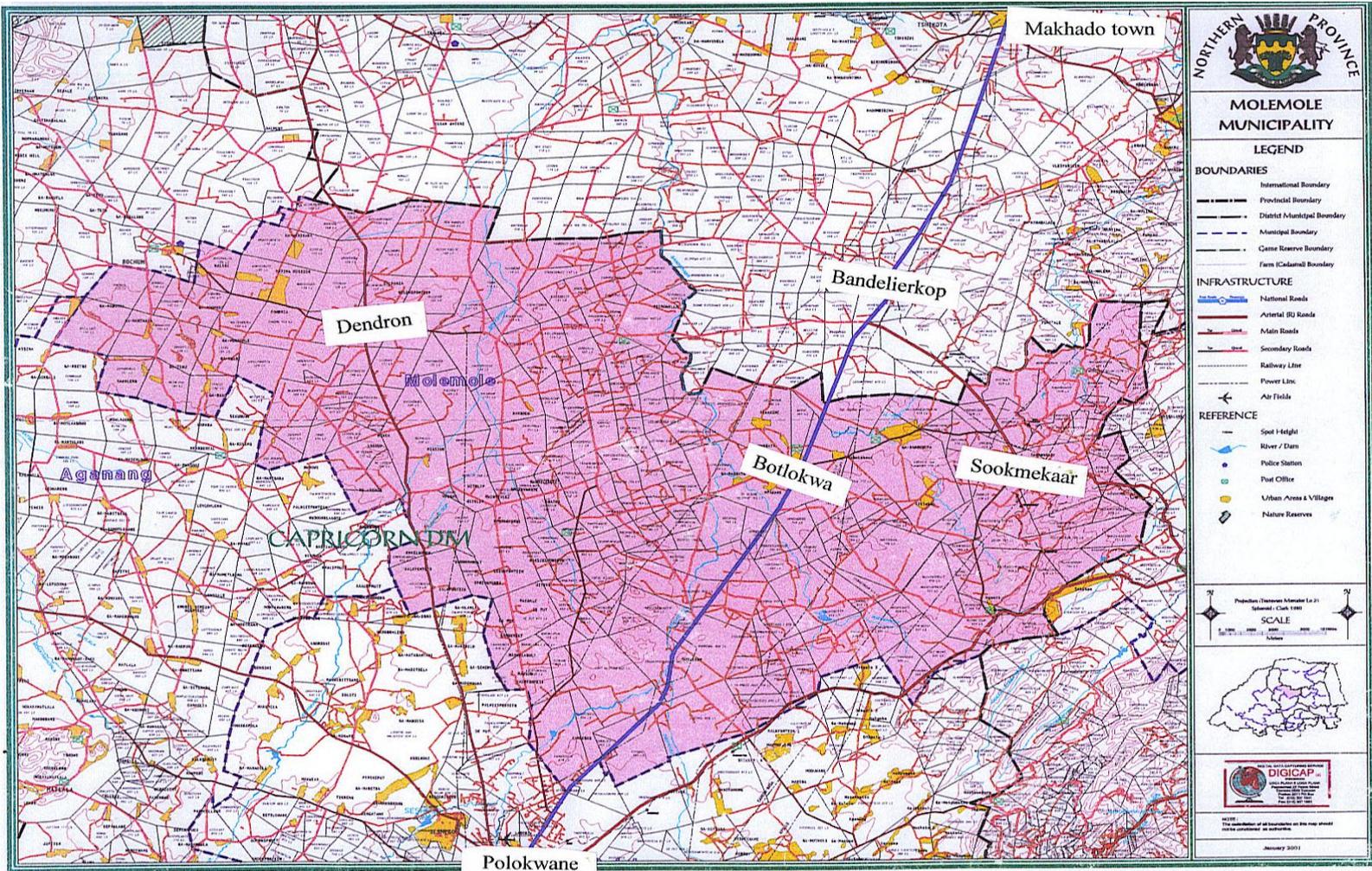
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MAP3

ANNEXTURE 2

PHOTOGRAPHS OF WOMEN IN TELECENTRES

1. The BotlokwaTelecentre manager and the users of this centre.



This is the BotlokwaTelecentre Manager, Nurse Mokwena showing the certificate that is obtained after completing computer courses.



Nurse Mokwena, the Telecentre Manager is standing next to the centre that she runs with passion and dignity and the writing on the wall shows the history behind it.



This is one of the BotlokwaTelecentre users busy accessing ICT skills through the computer utilization.

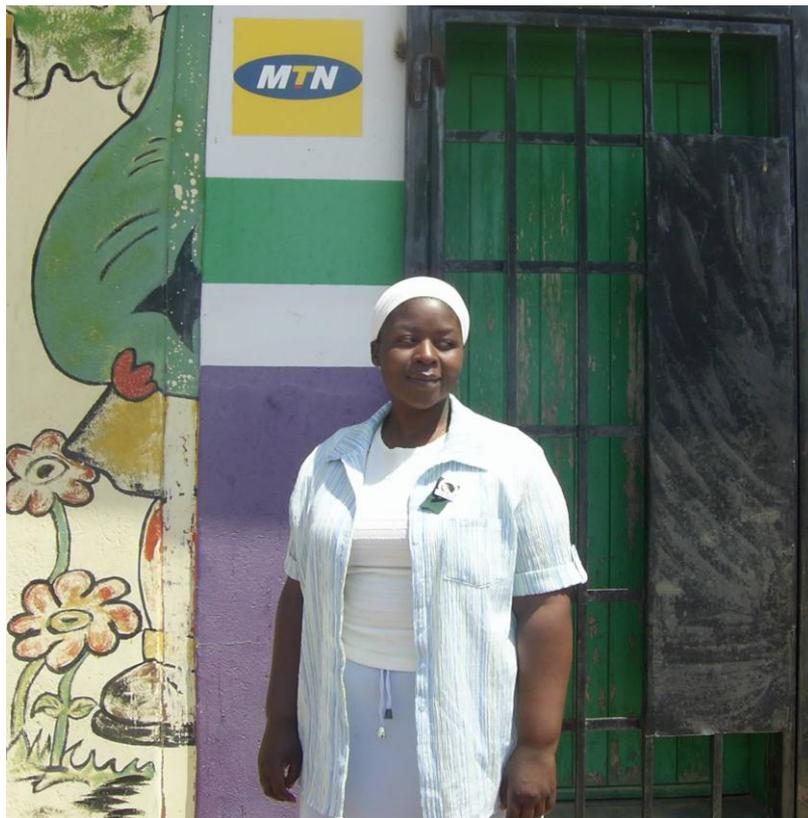


This shows various devices expected to be found in a Telecentre for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) access.

2. The Mankweng Telecentre users that participate in Adult Basic Education Training (ABET).



This is Maria and her friends; DorcusMaska, DuduSkatani and Celina Ralitloka. They are all attending ABET lessons and also participate in Telecentre utilization. They praise MTN for telephone donation to this centre since the phones enable them to phone their spouses.



This is Mankweng Telecentre, standing in front of it, is Maria Maphuka who is doing level 4 in Adult Basic Education (ABET). This centre has established a new learning culture of combining ICT and ABET. Maria and her classmates are taught various subjects in ABET as

level 4 is equivalent to Matric. ICT provides them with basic skills such as power point whereby they learn how to construct maps designs and artistic decorations like the one next to where she is standing.



This is Ms Dora Makhado who is 79 years old and she has acquired a computer-skill at Mankweng Telecentre. She is now in need of a computer for her to exercises the acquired skill.

ANNEXURE 3

A COMPACT DISC: WITH RURAL WOMEN PARTICIPATING IN BOTLOKWA,
MANKWENG AND MOHODI TELECENTRES.

