

REPORT: ICT IN EDUCATION FORUM

27th September 2012

This month's ICT in Education Forum brought together Junior High Students from Kanda Cluster of Schools in Accra. The Forum was under the theme **“Raising Educational Achievement of Students; The Role of ICT in Education”**

Giving the opening speech, the Coordinator of GINKS, Mr. Ibrahim Inusah gave a brief background of GINKS and milestone/ achievements of GINKS over the past years in promoting ICT for Development in Ghana. He said GINKS operates under some thematic areas such as ICT in Education, ICT and Health, ICT and Youth, Gender and Agric. He added that as part of its mandate GINKS has been organizing fora, seminars, Research , capacity building training etc under the various themes in an effort of promoting the use of ICT for development.

He also mentioned that GINKS produces a monthly newsletter called Iconnect in pursuit of promoting ICT for development in Ghana and distribute to people without Internet connectivity to share relevant information.

Ibrahim mentioned that GINKS also has an online platform called Dgroups which is basically email based mailing list where members of the network share knowledge on ICT related topics. He urged students to pay partly attention to the forum and make maximum use of the knowledge acquired and make the effort to share with other colleagues both in and out of school.

The first facilitator, Mr. Joseph Kpetigo of GINKS said he is happy to see students in numbers and ready to learn and urged all to make their books ready to note useful things today which can change their life.

He said ICT has come to stay and as they are rising up to become future leaders, they must really take every opportunity to learn ICT right from school which will place them ahead of their peers in the job market in future.

Joseph said many students do not pay attention to the study of ICT simple because they are not aware of the immense benefit it offers.

Starting his presentation, Joseph explained that ICT which stands for - Information and communication technologies (ICTs)—include radio and television, as well as newer digital technologies such as computers and the Internet— which have been labeled as potentially powerful enabling tools for educational change and reform in the 21st century. He said most times students labeled ICT to only computers but exposed students to the fact that ICT goes beyond computers.

"We use one or two of these ICT tools in our homes on daily bases and therefore what the computer can do, the mobile phone can also do same or similar and it works"

He moves on to talk about how the use of ICT in Education help prepare Students for the workplace in the 21st century. He said we cannot run away from technology in the current generation, we may have the good grades and all the first class but without ICT literacy, we cannot do certain kind of work and that is why the Government of Ghana has introduced ICT as a course in the Education System.

Joseph said one of the most commonly cited reasons for using ICTs in the classroom is to better prepare the current generation of students for a workplace where ICTs, particularly computers, the Internet and related technologies, are becoming more and more common. Ability to use ICTs effectively and efficiently, is thus seen as representing a competitive edge in an increasingly globalizing job market. He said girls in particular must not shy away from the use of computers urging them to see it like the mobile phone they use at home.

He mentioned that students need to acquire the 3 most essential skills in other to meet the challenges of today's job market and they are;

- **Creativity**
- **Competitiveness**
- **Collaboration**

Interestingly these 3 qualities can be acquire through ICT as it acts as a useful tool to enhance knowledge and learning of students etc.

Creativity he said is very critical, it can help students to be making money whiles in school by doing something new and selling them online to generate some income. He said many students are using the internet and platforms to advert their products and sell them online through blogs, social media networks such as facebook, twitter etc.

He said the internet is there for our own use as it provides an opportunity to:

- Think and share ideas with others
- Seek the guidance of experts beyond the boundaries of the classroom

He moved on to talk about the potentials of using twitter to learn and share knowledge with others and above all beyond the boundaries of the classroom.

He explained that Twitter as a social networking and microblogging service and its functionality are similar to that of Facebook which most students enjoy using merely for chatting. he said it is time students move away from using social media platform for chatting but begin to be more innovative. He said **social networking service** is a platform that focuses on building and reflecting on social relations among people with common interests.

- About two-thirds of internet users use social networking sites such as **Twitter, Facebook etc.**
- Twitter is a real-time information network that connects you to the latest stories, ideas, opinions, topics and news about what you find interesting and it is Free.

Joseph further stressed that Twitter is useful for **Personal, Educational and Business purposes**. It's a great way to keep in touch with friends and quickly broadcast information about where you are and what you are up to. Almost everyone we know has a twitter account.

Twitter allow informal collaboration and quick information sharing and you can share information with people that you wouldn't normally exchange email or IM messages with.

- Twitter brings great minds together, and gives everyone daily opportunities to learn
- Twitter is GREAT for getting opinions, info...
- Twitter works well as an opinion poll.
- Twitter breaks news faster than other sources
- Twitter helps find other student, friends easily online etc.

Joseph exposed students to what the internet stands for, what constitute the internet and urge students to make the best out of their everyday internet experience. He defined internet as a global network connecting millions of computers all over the world. Internet is powerful and can help students boast their academic work in many great and innovative ways when use properly.

He said students should make use of search engines for all kinds of information on the internet. He said when you want to find out more about specific topic, service or product, you use search engine. Most students find educative information on the Internet by using search engines like Google, MSN Search, Yahoo Search, Alta Vista, Excite, Lycos.

He said Internet research has a lot to offer students when used effectively and entreat them to start using search engines to find out more about particular topic as there is no library as the internet, it has a host of ready-made information for every sector of life from archeology to zoology.

For instance search engines allows students to Search for latest educational information on a subject, students can search for educative images and pictures, it allow students to visit educational website worldwide and get latest news in the area of education. He showcase series of educative videos on ICT in Education of students in other part of the world for them to know that it is possible for students in Ghana to use ICT to do many good things in and out of school.

The second facilitator, Mr. Ogochukwu Nweke who is a Lecturer at the African University College of Communication(AUCC) took over the podium and took students through the educational benefits of using social media networks.

Ogo said one word "possibility" is what came into his mind after watching Joseph's educative videos. He said he wants students to know that having a personal laptop is "possible" and must not think that it is never possible and that it can happen to them as seen in the video.

He mentioned that Facebook is vital for information sharing and it is interesting to note that most prominent people in the society such as President, Members of Parliament etc are on facebook or have facebook account to interact with people.

He reiterate that being on facebook is one of the cheapest things they can get as student and ask what do students use facebook for or what they use it to do. He said they can use their facebook to for instance lobby for one laptop per child in Ghana.

He described the current generation as **privilege** because they have access new things and more options which makes life easier. He explained privilege as something that happen to us in our life. It is also a function or circumstance around us that makes it possible to enjoy certain things in life. He said students are privilege because during his school time some years back, he uses a small block board which they keep in their bags called "SLATE" with chalk for learning and that was the only option. He said now we have TV, Youtube etc to watch video on demand and do lots more.

Ogo said social networking sites provides opportunity for people using the internet to belong to a community and gives us a sense of belonging. If facebook were to be a nation, it will be the number 4 largest community on earth, facebook is a community of people.

"Social network is not just a place to have fun, it has made it possible for us to see physical information before we can make change" OgoChukwu

Facebook can be used to change our country, environment etc. The current generation use range of different languages which cannot be easily understood by the older generation, technology made it so and it is powerful.

Ogo said communication is not complete until the person you are speaking to or writing to understand what you are saying. Most of the books we read in our school are available on the internet. Social media can make it possible for students to learn ahead of their teachers and that students should be more excited about twitter, facebook etc as they can use it to learn and even post questions to source for answers from friends.

Ogo said as Lecturer, he uses his facebook to teach students. Through facebook he also have a link to a group from his village and some of the people in the group he has not seen for a long time but they interact on facebook on what is happening in the village and though they don't meet face to face, they are in one big community made possible by facebook.

Ogo stated emphatically that the fact that people are not in school in a particular day means they cannot do assignment of the day, they are able to know the assignment of the day from facebook and submit to the teacher.

He said search engines are particularly helpful to conducting research. In the past some books are hard to come by but now facebook users can provide link to download electronic books online. Ogo also explained the different between soft copy and hard copy books to the students explaining their advantages and disadvantages.

Ogo added that mobile phone is like computer and they can help us do lots of things such as going to facebook page, emails and calls. He said students can be rich on the internet.

"Anytime you are holding your mobile phone , know that you are holding a great weapon"
OgoChukwu

He demonstrate how he makes money on facebook. He said as part of his work, he talk on relationship and marriage issues and because of that some churches invite him to speak on such topics after reading what he has posted on his facebook page and he makes some money in return.

He said the current generation is called the digital native as they have the skills to manipulate and interact with new devices naturally that is why they are able to effectively use their parents phone than their parents.

He said facebook is a good platform because anything you post on the page today means 60 million people will know about it by the end of the month and it also means that when one is looking for information and post it on facebook, 60 million people will see it and read it.

Ogo went on to talk about how to make NOTE in facebook. He explained that NOTE is simple the ability to drop bit of notes which can be developed in a book and publish it. He has published several books to his credit with the help of using the NOTE application. He said dropping and comparing NOTES about experiences and realities can be compiled into a book.

He urged students to develop the habit of creating journals or note on facebook and see how far that can go stressing that students in the city have more opportunity than those in the remote areas without connectivity. These things when taken seriously can help advance the life of students and their family life.

Student can talk about their school on facebook to encourage others to attend the same school instead of merely socializing. Student can also use facebook to even talk about the pending Ghana election etc. He also entreat students to inculcate the habit of writing poems and stories heard from their grandmothers from the village and post on facebook and that can turn out to be great publication.

He said other students from Ghana are selected to visit International leaders because of what they do. He added that about 98% of people we know are on twitter, facebook etc such as the president, players, musicians etc.

He said students of Ghana should begin to write more stories, poems, articles about Ghana. He said the story of Ghana must be told by Ghanaians and not by any other person. He urge the students to create twitter account and start talking about Ghana and the fine things in Ghana.

He demonstrate how to create twitter account and how it works for some of the students and urge the rest to make the effort to create their twitter account. He said some people abroad do really see Africans as people living on trees because of what people write about the continent Africa.

He said students should use the various social media platform for a better advancement which will add value to us and expand us. Facebook also helps us to choose our friends wisely so that we can communicate with people with similar interest and add value to our community.

"Everything we learn whiles having fun stays with us and facebook can be a good platform for that and students in Ghana can be as equally good as students abroad as demonstrated in the videos showcase" OgoChukwu

OgoChukwu urged student to make good use of their vocational skills to create something new and post it on facebook for sale and people will buy them.

He said there is no library in Ghana better than the various search engines. Ogo said when students are looking for ICT for Development information in Ghana, there is no better place to turn to than GINKS.

In his closing remarks, the Coordinator of GINKS, Mr. Ibrahim Inusah said he hope students are fully packed with knowledge and information and are not going back the same. He entreat students to as much as possible share what they have learnt at the forum with others students and hope the knowledge acquire will help them in their academic life and beyond