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**ICT and The Case for Quality Education in Ghana: The Contributions of Savana Signatures**



In 1996, the government of Ghana launched the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) programme, which targets every child of school-going age living in either urban or rural Ghana. The programme was designed to improve access to education in Ghana's basic school system and to get all children of school-going age into school.

## Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) programme

The government of Ghana's implementation of the FCUBE programme is partly in fulfilment of a constitutional provision in chapter 6, Section 38, Sub-Section 2 of the Fourth Republican Constitution of Ghana.

This constitutional provision makes education a right for all children in the country.

The main policy goal of the FCUBE at the time of its promulgation was to provide for every child of school-going age in Ghana an opportunity of quality basic education by the year 2005.

To achieve this, Ghana Education Service (GES) developed three broad objectives; to enhance the quality of teaching and learning, to improve efficiency in the management of the education sector and to provide full access to educational opportunities by empowering all partners to

participate in the provision of education to all children.

Though implementation of FCUBE over the years has increased enrolment in schools, its implementation has not been without challenges.

Among these challenges are high pupil- teacher ratio in schools, infrastructure deficit in schools including ICTs equipment, lack of teaching and learning materials, all of which have contributed to the fallen standards of education in Ghana.

The number of children per teacher is more than he/she can control, the infrastructure deficit, the lack of teaching and learning materials to teacher shortfall compounded the problem leading to the fallen standard of education in Ghana.

### **School Management**

Per the FCUBE policy, district assemblies have the mandate to provide school infrastructure, equip and maintain schools towards delivering quality education at the district level. However, this has been

difficult to achieve owing to resource constraint faced by the district assemblies.

Though the assemblies are making efforts to provide school infrastructure and provide the necessary teaching and learning materials as well as quality teachers towards enhancing the quality of teaching and learning, progress towards achieving these has been slow.

These have worked against the overall target of the Ghana Education Service (GES) in achieving quality education by 2005, as set out in the FCUBE policy.





A teacher delivering lesson in class using ICT tools

In fact, some educationists have argued that, the FCUBE policy has contributed to the fallen standards of education in the country.

This assertion is based on the fact that, the government and for that matter district assemblies have not been able to provide infrastructure, the needed teaching and learning materials and qualified

teaching staff to aid the implementation of FCUBE to improve the desired quality of education in Ghana.

### **Integrating ICT in Education**

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) with its potential to improve the quality of teaching and learning has not been given the needed attention to aid and improve the delivery of quality education. The FCUBE policy also failed to acknowledge the potential of ICT towards improvement of quality of education.



A pupil learning computer



**Some students taking ICT practicing the use of computer**

In spite of the increasing prominence of ICT in education across the world, the government of Ghana through the GES is doing little to integrate ICTs in education. This is not to say efforts are not being made at all.

In 2008, the government of Ghana launched an ICT in education policy. The policy is aimed at integrating ICT in education. After the launch of the policy, the failure of government and for that matter GES to provide the needed ICT infrastructure in all schools

has delayed the complete integration of ICT in education.

Though the ICT in Education policy recommended and made ICT an examinable subject in basic and secondary schools, this was done without the requisite ICT infrastructure in schools.

Besides this, the majority of teachers and GES officials have not been equipped with the needed skills and knowledge on the use of ICT tools to monitor, design and deliver lessons.

More so, many schools, particularly in rural communities are not connected to the national electricity grid and therefore are unable to use computers in their classrooms.

This has led to a situation where teachers in these schools conceptually teach ICT subject. As a result, the policy has not achieved the desired result years after its launch.

## **Savana Signatures' ICT in Education Intervention**

Savana Signatures since 2012 has been implementing the **Integration of ICT in Education Project (IIEP)**, with funding support from **EDUCO** aimed to equip both teachers and students with the requisite ICT knowledge to improve quality of education.

The IIEP is focused on the provision of ICT infrastructure to schools, training of teachers and school administrators on the use of ICT tools to prepare and deliver lessons and for school data management.

Through IIEP, Savana Signatures has been able to provide 11-seater computer laboratories for 13 basic schools in the Savelugu/Nanton Municipality, one 11-seater computer laboratory for a school in Tamale Metropolis, One 11-seater computer laboratory for a school in Sagnerigu District and two (2), 11-seater computer laboratories for 2 schools in Ho Municipality in the Volta region of Ghana.

Over 450 teachers in the Northern and Volta regions of Ghana have received basic ICT maintenance skills and ICT pedagogy training.

In addition, Savana Signatures through IIEP has offered various ICT related training to Circuit Supervisors and school administrators based in these 2 regions all aimed at improving school management practices. The project objectives fall in line with the mission of the organization, *“To equip youth, women and vulnerable groups with ICT skills for personal and professional development” and a vision of “A society where relevant information, knowledge and skills for development are enhanced by equal access to and use of ICT”.*



It has been proven that the use of ICTs can empower teachers and students to transform teaching and learning processes for good, shifting classroom teaching and learning activities from being teacher focused to being student-centered.



Circuit supervisors from Savelugu learning the use of ICT

In the schools that IIEP is being implemented, there is an observed transformation in teaching and learning practices resulting in increased active learning among students.

The availability of computers in schools for students' use has provided them with opportunities to be

creative, and developed in them informational reasoning skills, problem-solving abilities, and communication skills.

Teaching and learning in IIEP schools particularly in subject areas in which ICT tools are used have become participatory and made learning easier and fun.

The implementation of IIEP by Savana Signatures over the years has been geared towards supporting Ghana to realize the provisions set in the 2008 ICT in Education Policy.

The successes chalked by the project so far, as well as the challenges faced in its implementation in the Savelugu Nanton Municipality offer useful lessons as to how the ICT in Education policy can be implemented across the country to improve quality education delivery.

It is generally acknowledged across the world that, quality in education can be achieved when there exist adequate infrastructure and conducive learning environment, and teaching and learning materials in schools, with trained and committed teachers who use

active teaching and learning methodologies to facilitate teaching and learning processes in the classroom.

Effective school management and governance practices also play an important role in improving teaching and learning.

All these quality education indicators are inter-dependent and inter-connect to improve learning outcomes, and the use of ICTs across these areas maximizes their potential to contribute to quality education delivery.

ICT tools in themselves do not enhance educational outcome but a combination of ICT tools with trained and committed teachers as well as the availability of teaching and learning materials in schools will no doubt lead to improving learning outcomes in schools.

The ability of the government to implement these areas of education in an interconnected way will improve learning outcomes for students and

ultimately offer them opportunities of employment in the future. It is for this reason that the government of Ghana has to commit political will and resources to see to the effective implementation of the 2008 ICT in Education policy towards achieving quality education delivery in the country.



*“The ability of the government to connect these interrelated practices will bring out an excellent academic performance that offers students the best grounding for their future occupation. Also, teacher training colleges must be practical and ICT oriented rather than theoretical as it is in the present state”.*

## Children Trained to Advocate Child Rights



**The Northern Regional Director of Ghana Education Service, Alhaji Mohammed Haroon Cambodia**

Children should be able to advocate their rights to education, clean drinking water, good sanitation, and quality healthcare. To do this effectively, children advocates will need reliable but free platforms. Digital media has provided this opportunity and made this easier for people to create content and share with the world.

To provide this voice to children in Ghana, Savana Signatures through the Integration of ICT in Education project (IIEP) adapted a UNICEF training module called the Young Reporters Training Guide to train a selected number of school children on how to report on child rights violations in their schools and communities.

The Young Reporter's training guide was developed to train children to speak up on issues affecting their wellbeing and rights through content sharing on voices of youth platform.

The Young Reporters training given to students who are called "Young Reporters" equips them with skills and knowledge on how to identify child rights violations in their communities and schools, develop these issues into stories and



**A young reporter drafting her story**

share with the wider world through online platform and radio.

The Young Reporters component of the IIEP also provides an opportunity to children to learn about life in their communities and know the issues that affect children's rights in these communities. This happens through interactions and interviews they have with community members and stakeholders on child rights issues.

To ensure continuous training for selected students/pupils as Young Reporters, teacher mentors for the Young Reporters clubs from the 10 IIEP schools in the Savelugu Nanton municipality were brought together and trained on the use of the "Young Reporters" training guide.

The training was meant to capacitate these teachers as trainers of Young Reporters in their individual schools in the areas of; the concept of child rights, community mapping to identify issues that affect the rights of young people, interviewing skills, how to develop a story,

Picture and video taking, how to share child rights media content via the Voices of Youth platform among other topics.

The voice of youth platform was developed by UNICEF for young people to share their opinions on issues affecting them. The platform can best be described as a global youth platform. Through the Young Reporters activities, Savana Signatures has trained about 100 school children as child rights advocates.

The one-day training for the teacher mentors was meant to get teachers to understand issues of child rights and how to use digital media to advocate change.

The training facilitator Abdul-Rashid Imoro urged teachers to make judicious use of the training guide to empower children with the requisite writing and storytelling skills to be able to advocate their rights. The project officer,

Simon Eten said, the project had already trained 100 children who were currently speaking up on issues affecting children's rights in the Savelugu-Nanton Municipality on the specific issues of



Section of participants during the training

child labour, child fosterage, lack of library facilities in schools, lack of portable water in schools, among other issues.

The participants were taken through topics such as community mapping, the concept of child rights, photo taking and editing for the web.

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