

The Effects Of The Use Of Mobile Phones On Second Cycle Students In Ghana

Ebenezer Akaglo, John Nimako-Kodua

New Abirem/Afosu Senior High School, Department of Information and Communications Technology; Valley View University—Kumasi Campus, School of Education
P. O. Box NK 660, Nkawkaw, Ghana, PH- 233 20 924 2498
ebenezer.akaglo@vvu.edu.gh; ebenezeraakaglo@gmail.com

St. Joseph College of Education, Bechem, Department of Mathematics and ICT
St. Joseph College of Education, Bechem, P. O. Box 15, Bechem, Ghana, PH-233 24 204 2375
jinimakokodua@joscobechem.edu.gh; kodua2011@gmail.com

Abstract: Although mobile phone is one of the tools of information and communications technology (ICT) that supports learning and teaching, it still poses a threat to the academic progress of students of both junior and second cycle institutions, in that it interferes or disrupts learning and teaching. Many students in second cycle institutions covertly sneak and use mobile phones while in school despite its ban by the Ghana Education Service (GES), and this ban must still be enforced until they are configured to prevent access to inappropriate websites.

Keywords: blogs, e-learning, Ghana Education Service, global positioning system (GPS), GNAT, mobile phones, phone booths, second cycle institutions, smartphones, learner-centred, teacher-centred method, WhatsApp, wikis

1. Introduction

Communication is an essential component of modern society with the telephone systems at the centre. Mobile phones are widespread across the globe since it is very convenient for a person to carry from one place to another with uninterrupted telephone services. Mobile phones have become an integral part of the human life of late. Individuals, institutions and organisations seldom operate without mobile phones. Educational institutions cannot be left out of the many benefits of this modern communication trend. We, therefore, see it prudent to look at the effects of using mobile phones among second cycle students in Ghana. There have been a series of vigorous debates in Ghana regarding the use of mobile phones by students in second cycle institutions. The Ghana Education Service (GES) has presently outlawed the use of mobile phones by these students because it believes that mobile phones use in second cycle institutions contribute to gross indiscipline and its associated consequences of poor academic performance. Majority of the students, especially those in their final year secretly possess and use mobile phones while in school. Some stakeholders including teachers and parents are of the view that the use of mobile phones would instead enable students to complement traditional classroom learning with online learning or e-learning by reading additional instructional materials from the Internet since most of the schools do not have reliable and stable internet access in their libraries and computer laboratories. Also, it would enable students to easily communicate with their peers and parents for support, among other things. There has been an installation of phone booths across all second cycle institutions in Ghana to afford students the opportunity to communicate with their friends and family members, but most of these phones booths have become faulty and have not seen any repairs for several years. Due to this, students keep bringing mobile phones to school for communication and research, but we believe that the students are unable to have adequate control over their use since they cause many distractions to them in pursuing their academic work.

2. Pros of the Issue

The use of a mobile phone makes learning learner-centred as opposed to teacher-centred. Students can always access up-to-date knowledge on any subject matter at any given time via the internet, and this will undoubtedly not only make learning more easily but more enjoyable. The mobile device can serve as a guide or instructor for the provision of information. Students can access audio-visual materials, which teachers rarely use in the classroom, on Youtube for clarification and more in-depth understanding of the content at their own convenient time. In this regard, students would not have to wait for their teacher to explain materials that they did not quite understand during instructional hours. The use of mobile phone provides a means for students to do research. Students can access information about their assignments and projects so quickly without having to go to the library which may not have up-to-date information. With the vast volume of information available on the internet, students can always read ahead and have prior or fair knowledge of lessons yet to be taught to them by the teacher. This will avoid the teaching-learning situation where the student almost always becomes entirely dependent on the teacher for every piece of information. In other words, the teaching-learning process where the teacher still gives the student information to process and comprehend (cognitivism) is minimized. Mobile phone promotes collaborative learning. Students can always acquire knowledge from one another collaboratively, and from the teacher regardless of distance through the use of wikis, blogs or WhatsApp. For example, a teacher can be part of a WhatsApp group of students for specific lessons where students can post questions on lessons that they did not quite understand in the classroom, for clarification by their peers or the teacher. Students can use mobile phones in an emergency situation, such as communicating with their parents to send them money, calling teachers for clarification of issues, calling the fire service in case of fire outbreak and calling the police in times of attack. Denying students, the opportunity to use mobile phones in schools will deprive them of the numerous benefits offered by mobile phones today. These benefits include;

learning support, communications, mobile money, alarm note and reminder, GPS for location identification, entertainment, calendar, calculator and internet for unlimited applications and utilities.

3. Cons of the Issue

Students are unlikely to have control over the use of mobile phone and can easily get distracted by it. Students will find it uneasy to focus on useful academic activities and will instead tend to spend a lot of their time on the internet, engaging in unproductive activities and on social media chatting with friends online deep into the night without realising the passage of time. That will consequently lead to fatigue, stress and its concomitant problem of attention in class. The internet is inundated with a lot of inappropriate websites which contain pornography that is a powerful propaganda tool capable of destroying every facet of students' life. Pornography has addictive substance just like drugs, such as cocaine and heroin and most of the violent and sexual acts, such as masturbation, homosexuality, lesbianism and rape among students are primarily attributed to students' exposure to pornography via the internet. To this end, some educationists, including teacher unions, such as the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) and National Association of Graduate Teachers (NAGRAT), are of the view that, an attempt to lift the ban on the use of mobile phone among students in second cycle institutions will exacerbate the already existing problems of violent and sexual immoralities among students. The use of mobile phones by students can also be a source of disturbance to other peers in class and dormitories. A phone can ring at locations such as the classroom and library to distract the teaching and learning process. Moreover, a student can engage in a lengthy phone conversation, particularly at night to disturb other peers from having rest.

4. Our Opinion on the Issue

There was a controversy on the issue of whether students in junior and second-cycle institutions should use mobile phones in school at the fifth quadrennial regional delegate's conference of the Greater Accra branch of the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) in Accra in 2017. In that debate an educationist and Founder of Gifted and Talented Education (GATE), Mr. Anis Haffar, encouraged the use of smartphones in such schools, saying students can access an unlimited amount of information as opposed to what the teacher can provide. The GNAT was against any attempt to allow such students whom they considered as immature enough to have control over its usage in school. In this digital age, it is known that mobile/smartphone has taken centre stage and life without it can become quite cumbersome. The mobile phone has been part of human life and introducing its usage to second cycle students may be in the right direction—depending on how well school authorities and stakeholders manage it. However, in our opinion, the use of mobile phones among students in the second cycle will mostly have adverse effects on teaching and learning. Although the use of mobile/smartphones is illegal among second-cycle students in school, a sample of 100 students from two different senior high schools indicates that 65% of students use mobile phones in school. Mobile phones ceased from students—particularly boys contain sexually explicit materials and those used by girls facilitate their exposure to the outside world for sexual exploitation. In

our part of the world allowing students to use mobile phones in school at these levels will be a recipe for indiscipline and a sharp decline in academic performance. A careful observation of students in boarding house has always been that many of the students who dodge classes are always found using their phones in the dormitory. Most of the students are obsessed with their phones such that they usually stay on their phones for a much longer time while using it because of their inability to restrain themselves from playing games and chatting on social media. Late night games can deprive them of much-needed sleep time, and in consequence, students will suffer from depression, drowsiness and difficulty in concentrating. Students who possess mobile phones in school are continually looking forward to the next opportunity to use it, and that is seen from the fact that mobile phones are usually ceased from students during private studies time and in the classroom during instructional periods. Some of them do make conscious efforts to cut back on time spend on the phone but repeatedly fail. Mobile phone usage by students in second-cycle institutions will make most students miss essential social and academic events due to addiction. During the West African Senior High School Examinations (WASSCE) many candidates depend so much on their mobile phones, especially late at night for any possible access to so-called leaked examination questions and answers instead of using their phones for other profitable academic activity. Some also use their mobile phones for listening to music while reading at the same time. That deprives candidates of spending quality time with their books. The best approach to apply technology to facilitate teaching and learning in junior and senior high schools in our part of the world is to have libraries with internet facilities where students can access information via the internet and e-books on computers. We, however, recommend that mobile phones configured for only academic work can be procured for students to use while in school. The configuration of such phones will have to filter inappropriate websites and social media which consume much of students' time.

5. Conclusion

As we early on indicated in spite of the fact that possession of mobile phones by students in second cycle institutions in Ghana is currently outlawed by the Ghana Education Service (GES), many of the students still possess and use mobile phones for purposes other than academic. Some educationists are of the view that students in second cycle institutions are allowed to use mobile phones in school to enhance learning, but the teacher associations, particularly the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) disagree because of the adverse effects on the students moral and academic performance. Based on our experience as teachers we are of the view that that mobile phones could only be used in second cycle institutions if only specially configured ones that can be used for academic purpose only, are procured for them.

References

- [1] Ngnenbe, T. (2017, August 23). Allow SHS students to use mobile phones – Educationist suggests. Graphic Online, Retrieved from <https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/allow-shs-students-to-use-mobile-phones-educationist-suggests.html>
- [2] Formulate policy on mobile phone use in SHSs (2018, March 19). Graphic Online, Retrieved from <https://www.graphic.com.gh/daily-graphic-editorials/formulate-policy-on-mobile-phone-use-in-shss.html>
- [3] GES urged to rethink stance against mobile phone use in SHS (2018, March 21). Joy Online, Retrieved from (<https://www.myjoyonline.com/news/2018/March-21st/ges-urged-to-rethink-on-mobile-phone-use-in-shs.php>)
- [4] Advantages and Disadvantages of Mobile Phones For Students (n.d.). Worth of Read, Retrieved from <https://www.worthofread.com/advantages-and-disadvantages-of-mobile-phones-for-students/>

Authors Profile



Ebenezer Akaglo received the B.Ed. and M.Sc. degrees in Information Technology from University of Education, Winneba and Sikkim Manipal University in 2009 and 2013, respectively. He also received Microsoft Certified System Engineer 2003 (MCSE) from IPMC and a certificate in Developing Windows Applications using VB.Net from NIIT in 2009 and 2012, respectively. During 2012-2013, he taught Internet technologies at Blue Crest College, Ghana and from 2013-2014, he taught e-Commerce, pc maintenance, HCI and computer applications in management at West End University College, Ghana. He has since 2013 to date been teaching at Valley View University, Kumasi Campus as a part-time lecturer and is also the head of Department of ICT at New Abirem/Afosu Senior High School.



John Nimako-Kodua received the B.Ed. and M.Sc. degrees in Information Technology from University of Education, Winneba and Sikkim Manipal University in 2009 and 2013, respectively. He has taught Information and Communications Technology related courses such as Computer Networking, Web Designing, TCP/IP, Computer Fundamentals, Programming Languages like VB, C++ and Java at Konongo-Odumase Senior High School and Sikkim Manipal University, Kumasi Campus. He is now a tutor St. Joseph College of Education, Bechem Ghana.