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Experts Discuss Role Of ICT In Education

By Samuel Amoako

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VICE President Aliu Mahama yesterday opened the third International Conference on ICT for development, education and training in Accra. The three-day conference dubbed "eLearning Africa" is aimed at promoting education through ICT besides offering as many people as possible the opportunity to enroll in schools at all levels.

eLearning is the technology that enables people to be educated at any time and anywhere usually through online technology. It also aims at strengthening Africa's numerous and varied educational technology initiatives and projects through unprecedented opportunity for African professionals and stakeholders to learn, share and develop networks.

About 1,500 participants from 83 countries across the world are attending the conference which will discuss topics such as "Unleashing the capabilities of universities through ICTs", "Corporate learning in Africa and beyond", "Introducing learning into the school system" and "Building the infrastructure for education in the 21st century".

Vice President Mahama said the imaginative use of ICT should help to engage more learners in the excitement of learning. By borrowing ideas from the world of interactive games, he said, reluctant learners could even be motivated to practice complex skills and achieve much more than they would through traditional means.

In the light of that, he said, the government was committed to a comprehensive programme of rapid deployment and utilisation of ICT within the education sector to transform the system and thereby improve on the lives of the people. He said it has been intended that the NEPAD schools initiative will by 2015, develop all African schools into NEPAD schools which will transform the entire educational arena in Africa to bridge the digital divide. That, he said, will be the key to providing the requisite human resource base to drive the development agenda.

Alhaji Mahama touched on the government's programme to promote ICT in Ghana and said all Teacher Training Colleges in the country have since last year, been training their students in how to integrate technology in the teaching – learning process.

The Minister of Education, Science and Sports, Professor Dominic Fobih, reiterated the government's commitment to pursuing an ICT programme for accelerated development policy.

That national policy, he said, outlines plans and strategies for the development of Ghana's information society and seeks to provide a framework on how ICT can be

used to facilitate the goals of "transforming Ghana into an information and knowledge driven ICT literate nation." He said the government, recognising the broad nature of ICT, has sought partnership with public and private organisations to provide enabling environment for achieving set objectives.

Prof. Fobih said the government was committed to transforming the agro-based primary producing economy into an information rich and knowledge-based economy with ICT as tools.

The Principal of the Ghana Telecom University College, Dr Osei Darkwa, who was the keynote speaker, noted that exploring the full potential of innovative learning systems to facilitate development was the surest road out of poverty for most African countries, adding "we cannot win this war on poverty without dramatic improvements in our educational system.

"It is this road that will bring equality and social justice to our people, it is this road that will lead to sustained economic growth and improved living standards; and it is this road that will lead our people to the educational promised land," he said. Dr Adarkwa said it was time for Africans to re-consider their ancient way of providing education to our people which began with buildings with classrooms, lecture halls and dormitories.

He noted that the ancient way of providing education requires huge sums of money and said those from rural communities would have to migrate to the cities in pursuit of higher education.

"In a very real sense, education beyond the primary level has become a kind of internal brain-drain that requires our talented youth to leave their homes, communities and crowd into urban educational structures that cannot grow fast enough to house and teach them," he said.

Dr Darkwa said the expansion and enrichment of Africa's educational system can only be possible if the continent is able to harness the power of ICT to connect teachers and learning organisations.