EXPLORING THE USE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT) IN EDUCATION FOR ADOLESCENTS IN URBAN POVERTY

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Abstract: Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is a technology tool to help and facilitate communication and processing besides information delivery through electronic means. The life of adolescents in urban poverty communities is usually associated with society in poor urban communities. Many problems and challenges are faced by the urban poverty community from the aspect of using ICT in terms of educational aspects. Hence, the youth in urban poverty are recommended to take various initiatives in using ICT based tools given that ICT use is able to change their lifestyle and wellbeing.

INTRODUCTION

Noor (2006) defined the term information and communications technology (ICT) as a technology tool for aiding in communications and processing and sending of information in electronic form. The era of information technology use began in latter part of the 1990s, developing rapidly until now. National development in Malaysia has undergone various changes beginning from the agricultural era to the industrial development and currently the transformation in theICT field. Walsham et al. (2007) stated that ICT use helps in the development and growth of a national economy especially in developing countries.

The emergence of the internet has contributed greatly to the rapid delivery and dissemination of information and indirectly has benefited social development in the community. With the rapid development of ICT in the development of a country, countries in the world have taken the opportunity to apply technology in raising the living standards of their population. Among the examples of ICT tools in use are the Internet, telephone, transaction systems, integrated devices, multimedia and so forth.Nayak et al. (2010) noted that ICT use can benefit users because it can help in disseminating information, enable social interaction, help in economic and trade development, politics, media, education, entertainment, health and so forth.

From the aspect of digital technology use in Malaysia, the use of telephone network had been introduced in 1874, followed by the introduction of computer technology in 1966. The Malaysian government had taken the step to inculcate ICT based economic development in the Eighth Malaysia Plan, followed by the Ninth and Tenth plans where ICT was seen as a key enabler and one of the components and major objectives in national development. Various steps were taken and efforts implemented inorder to achieve sustainability in programs and projects carried out such as Smart Schools, telehealth, research and development cluster, Multimedia Super Corridor, cyber city and so forth (Musa et al., 2012).

One of the elements that can facilitate economic development and social development in a country is by rapid development in information and communications technology (ICT) use. From the aspect of economic development of a country, Krizdan Qureshi (2009) state that ICT use is regarded as a tool contributing to economic development.This scenario shows thatmost countries all over the world have used various approaches to implement ICT usage in developing society. According to Elgar (2009), most countries all over the world have taken the opportunity to widen ICT usage in community development.

ICT USE AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN URBAN POVERTY

The term "youth" in general refers to those in transition between childhood and adulthood or aged in the range 12 years to more than 20 years. According to Wikipedia (2013),the term "youth" is from the Latin word meaning "heading for maturity" where this group always has the urge to try and is heading for adulthood.This group plays a very important role as the foundation of national prosperity and econopmic development. Youths who stay in the urban poverty areas form the urban poverty who usually are associated with the community living in poverty in

urban areas. Although poverty is also happening in the rural areas, the urban locations are more often mentioned in any diuscussion on poverty. According to KamusDewan (2007), the term poverty is related to poor, lack and indigence. Mohamed Zaini Omar (2010) stated that to measure the level of poverty of a household, one guideline is the poverty level.

The National Statistics Department of Malaysia (2013) stated that the poverty level income is the minimum basic food needed by the household members, meaning that it is the non-food requirement for each member. The basic household income or basic needs obtained allows them to function in society. Based on the Poverty Level Income (PGK) the household is regarded as poor if its monthly income falls below the PGK. Hence, if the monthly household income is lower than the PGK, for example the household is only able to fulfilthe basic needs from the aspect of minimum nutritional needs of the household members to have a healthy body, they will be regarded as the absolute poor.

The issue of digital divide emerged when there exists disparity between the areas using technology and those areas lacking in technology use. This term paints a picture related to the disparity between urban and rural areas (World Youth Report, 2003). According to Kemly (2006), digital divide can be categorized into several aspects such as access to ICT facilities, the level of ICT use as well as quality or awareness in using the technology. Norfatimah (2013) stated that in the use of broadband in 2013, Malaysia is in the second place in terms of broadband usage in the Asean region. However, there are some challenges and problems faced by the urban poverty in ICT usage. According to Siti Masayu (2014), among the problems and challenges faced are limited infrastructures, incapability to buy ICT equipment, lack of knowledge on ICT use, lack of skills, lack of training in ICT use and so forth. This clearly shows that focus on the urban poverty is needed in ICT usage. The appropriate focus should be given in order to help the urban poverty raise their standard of living.

Giligan (2006) emphasized that the location aspect of an area also influences ICT use whereby for rich or modern areas, the rate of Internet use is higher than that in poor and backward areas. Studies by Owo (2010) support Giligan (2006) by revealing that users of ICT are more likely among the rich and well educated as opposed to the poor. This clearly shows that the urban poverty community is made up of the marginalized and those dropouts from the mainstream development unless positive steps are taken to narrow the digital divide.

Adolescents who live in urban poverty areas are often associated with social ills and environmental lifestyle factors that are unhealthy because youth are often influenced by peers, relatives and the local community.ICT also plays a role in affecting in a positive or negative way the life of youth. Access to the world without borders has influenced the life of adolescents with modernization and globalization these days.

Mohd Dahlan A. Malek and Ida Shafinaz (2010) state that the cyber world does not only have positive effect but also exposes adolescents to negative effects subsequently leading to criminal activity. They will be easily influenced by negative elements and could be involved in wrongdoing, bad behavior and so forth. Developments in technology mean that the sources of information transcend borders and adolescents will be easily exposed to all types of information whether good and true or false.

ICT USE IN EDUCATION TO HELP ADOLESCENTS IN URBAN POVERTY

Malaysia targets to be a developed nation by 2020 and also has taken the initiative to widen ICT usage in societyin order to bridge the digital divide and in efforts to expand the knowledge based economy. In 1994, the Malaysian government introduced the National Telecommunications Policy to enhance the capacity to use ICT in society. The national Vision 2020 envisages a society based on information and knowledge. In efforts to achieve Vision 2020, the Government has carried out several programs and prepared the requisite infrastructure.

Siti (2009) stated that poverty encompasses multiple elemnents such as lack of nutrition, and low health status, low education and low income, unemployment, unsafe housing, not having modern necessities, having unstable job prospects, negative attitude to life and outdated thinking.The findings in Hamidah and Siti Hajar (2015) stated that poverty status encompasses issues in aspects of health and nutrition forming one of the factors contributing to juvenile delinquency among the urban poverty.

According to Ruth (2007), ICT usage also is an element that can help in overcoming poverty in a country. Furthermore, according to Ruth (2007), the areas taking advantage of ICT use will attain many benefits from ICT tools. Musa Hassan (2002) sates that ICT plays an important role in community life because it is capable of

improving effectiveness and raising the daily standard of living of the community. Mohd Yassir (2010) agrees that ICT plays a key role in the life of society at every level.

Among the roles of ICT in education among adolescents in urban poverty is the use of technology as a channel that can:

a) Channel and deliver information related to education issues. For example, the use of web and blog can help to disseminate to adolescents information related to educational aspects.

b) Give awareness to adolescents regarding the importance of education in their life.

c) Dealing with social issues such as adolescent involvement in drugs, vandalism, theft and so forth. Through ICT use, adolescents can be encouraged to attend training and short courses on mastering ICT skills. This can help to lessen the cases of juvenile delinquency.

d) Encouraging communication and interaction among adolescents, teachers in school and the community by using social media such as Facebook, Twitter and so forth. From the social and psychological aspect, adolescents will be prepared to share their problems with others more effectively. This good relationship can help to create a more happy existence and better understanding among the adolescents.

e) Mass media should not just report widely on the social ills and bad behavior of adolescents in the electronic media. The mass media has a role in showing the examples that can motivate adolescents toward more positive attitudes.

CONCLUSION

All parties must play their part in ensuring they cooperate so that ICT use in urban poverty areas is beneficial and maximized in line with developments in urban areas. This will help bridge the digital divide in ICT use between rural and urban society. Adolescents living in urban poverty areas need to make full use of various initiatives to use ICT based tools considering that ICT use is capable of changing their lives. It is suggested that guidelines be developed as well as working plan for evaluating the effectiveness of ICT use to help develop the economy of the urban poverty community.This is because ICT practice and use can enhance productivity as well as the living standards of the urban poverty

The well-being in life practiced by urban adolescents can be achieved if every level of society adopts a healthy lifestyle.Attention must be given to the pattern of ICT use among adolescents especially adolescents in urban poverty in terms of purpose of ICT use, factors influencing ICT usage and effectiveness of using such tools among the urban poverty adolescents; this will ensure ICT usage in education can help develop their healthy lifestyle practices among adolescents in future.

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