

The African Renaissance Movement Presents:

The ARM Pinnacle

Keep Your Minds Always Ticking

...IT Entrepreneur Urges Ashesi Students

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For about twenty years now, the introduction of information technology (IT) firms in Ghana has helped catalyst the growth and market share of many business activates. An evident and current example is the automation of the Ghana Stock Exchange which happened in June 2008 and has made the financial market of Ghana more efficient than ever.

On the eve of 21st March 2009, Ashesi's grounds were graced by the presence of Hermann Chinery-Hesse, the only African recipient of the 'Distinguished Alumnus

Award' from the Texas State Alumni Association and Texas State University- San Marcos, USA. a man who, in



partnership with Joe Jackson, gave birth to one of the largest software companies in Ghana and possibly West Africa, Soft Tribe, the firm that won The Millennium

Excellence Awards for IT in 2005 (nominated in 2000). His visit was in response to an invitation from the Entrepreneur's Club to speak about his life and business in Ghana.

During his talk, the modest-sounding entrepreneur explained that after studying manufacturing and working a bit for a car dealership in the USA, where he acquired his marketing skills, and working a bit in the UK in a computer-related field, he came to Ghana with just about a thousand dollars in his pouch to look for 'greener pastures'. Yes, very ironic! But he explicated that against the wishes of his

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Editorial

Another semester is here, and as sad as it is that we will be saying goodbye to the Class of 2009, we are grateful for how far each of us has come.

It's ASC week. This week, we celebrate Ashesi in a different way each day. How we are

able to transform seemingly mundane activities into loads of fun every day of this week is truly something to behold, and it is for this reason I look forward to ASC week each year. Do enjoy the week's activities and remember to play an active role since life at

Ashesi is what you make it.

I'd like to say a big thank you to all members of the Pinnacle team who contributed in immeasurable ways to make this issue a possibility. Happy ASC week to you all, and stay blessed.

Ogya's Corner



This is the concluding part of Dr. Esi Ansah's article from the last issue. You can read more from Dr Ansah at: <http://ogyakrom.blogspot.com/>

Law enforcement and security in our society is of prime importance. We need a serious overhaul of our law enforcement apparatus – a transformation of our police ‘force’ into a police ‘service.’ A mental re-orientation is needed, proper recruiting and training of our officers, a heavy dose of socializa-

tion and education about their roles in our society, their civic duties etc is crucial, and I can't possibly say it enough. Of course, as we need to do with the teachers, we need to take better care of our service men and women and focus on getting them to understand the philosophical foundations and reasons for their existence. They're supposed to make our nation a prime/choice place for us to live in. If I'm in any difficulty, feel threatened etc, my first option must be to find a serviceperson, and they must be ‘findable.’ They must have the resources to show up and help me, rather than tell me to take it easy with the armed robbers while they go find a car to come to my house and deliver me from robbers.

We need strict enforcement of the law, which means we must educate citizens about their rights and responsibilities so that our law enforcement folks don't take us for a ride. We must know the law, so that when I am stopped for driving without my license, I must know that I have 48 hours by law, to produce it. If I know this, and it's applied fairly, then I won't have to pay the bribe when I'm threatened with a beating and ‘counter-back.’ I really respect the work some of these people do – out in the hot sun, through the night etc, and there's much to be done to instill pride in what they do and equip them to be able to carry out their duties.

Finally, I'd like to focus on what I

call the ‘little foxes’ – issues that seem minor and yet carry more weight than we realize. Fixing the little foxes tackles surface problems that cut across sectors and segments of our lives, and they serve as evidence of deeper, fundamental problems that need to be fixed. Sometimes the way to put out the fire is to first find out where the smoke is coming from. As we find the smoke, make our way through it, then we can find the source of the fire. The little things that will improve life while we tackle the deeper issues have to do with things such as signage, literacy, our addressing system, record keeping/management, and generally, how we do things. I'd label this a **rationalization** campaign. Max Weber, a German sociologist came up with this term to refer to how a system is standardized, depersonalized etc. I won't go into that whole ‘doctrine’, but I would like to propose taking parts of it and applying it to our institutions, our ways of doing things etc.

My rationalization campaign will be combined with technology, so that we can ‘modernize’ and refine the way we do things. Specifically – we will re-organize our addressing system. This ties in to the more fundamental issue of land reform where we will have to do some serious zoning and re-zoning and get to a level where we can actually track people in our system – where people can't just disappear into thin air. This will give us confidence in our credit/lending systems, reduce fraudsters' hiding capabilities, help us to track criminals better, etc. Rationalization includes centralization – record keeping in our public agencies. Why do I have to go to Accra from Koforidua for my vehicle registration information because it is only available in Accra? If record management is properly done, in a decentralized or even

centralized system, we will make life a lot easier. Once again, the fundamental issue of over-centralization of functions and power must be addressed.

When conducting research in Ghana recently, it was very striking, that we barely have signs around that tell us what to do. Go to public agencies, and you're tossed from one office to the other without understanding the process and what's going on. There are no signs to tell you what documents you must have, what the procedure is, how much it will cost you, etc etc., and these are the loose nuts and bolts that cause the system to fall apart because people take advantage of them and exploit the system. If the prices for services are fixed and made publicly visible, then I do not have to pay the ‘kalabule’ price an officer has just quoted because I am well-informed. This ties in to literacy. How many people are functionally literate? Answer lies in education – adult education for those outside the formal, educational system. So you see, this rationalization campaign is a hodge-podge mix of many seemingly minor things that if fixed, will help the system to work better. However, one must remember that these are only symptomatic of deeper problems that need to be fixed.

Okay, so these are my five top issues that are linked as in a chain – they will thrive on each other. Protectionism in manufacturing and processing (regardless of what the world says), agricultural and educational reform, civic education going hand-in-hand with law .

enforcement, and finally, rationalization. There are many other issues – human rights, sanitation, healthcare, etc, but if I were president, these are the top five issues I would start with, and I tell you, by the time I’m done, Ghana will be a better paradise than it already is. To me, it is paradise because of its incredible potential, and I’m madly in love with Oman Ghana. Yes ... I did say PARADISE!

PS. as usual, this was supposed to be a very, very short piece, but you know me ... once I get wound up

If I were running for president, would you vote for me?

About the Author: Dr. Esi Ansah is an Assistant Professor in Ashesi University currently teaching Human Resource Management and Negotiations.

Faculty Focus: Nathan Amanquah

In this issue, we spotlight the much-loved Computer Science faculty member, Nathan Amanquah. He spoke to Sophia Aryeetey in his office recently. Enjoy

SA: Describe Nathan Amanquah in a few words:

NA: Nathan Amanquah. Usually of few words, listens a lot, but can be very expressive when really interested in a subject.

SA: Are you doing your dream job?

NA: Close enough. I derive satisfaction in helping others in two ways: I like work that makes other people's lives more comfortable, particularly by solving/troubleshooting problems encountered (especially of machines). I also derive satisfaction in helping others come to an accurate knowledge and understanding of various facts, and i volunteer my time to do this each month, besides formally lecturing. I like to lecture because its flexible, it is still a 40 to 45-hour week, but I can move preparation

and grading to a convenient time, rather than be glued to a desk all day.



SA: What do you value most in this life?

NA: My relationship with God, which can lead to life itself.

Growing up, I did not get most of the things I desired, but I made the most of it and learnt many lessons for life

SA: Tell us about your family?

NA: I have a family of 3; I’m married to a very intelligent, hardworking chartered accountant who makes the money, (and I spend some of it.) and I have a son also.

SA: What were some of the challenges you faced growing up?

NA: Growing up in an economically challenged family meant I did not get many of the things I desired, but I made the most of it and learnt many lessons for life. I did not grow up watching TV (so I did not know who the Station Master was), but spent my afternoons after school looking after goats and sheep, while reading my textbooks (so I gained a deep knowledge of most subjects I studied)

SA: You seem like a very busy person; do you ever have any time to socialize?

NA: Yes, a good bit. I've got many, many friends, and I also spend time with my wife.

SA: How did you get interested in computers?

NA: I liked machines from when I was small - I wanted to be a pilot, then I got interested in electricity. When I was in class 7, I heard a lot

about computers and wanted to become a computer systems analyst. I learnt to use a computer from a software-based tutor on a Wang computer, along with my dad on weekends. At the end of the tutorial, it said, besides using applications like Wordstar (a word processing program), Supercalc (like excel), you can also instruct the PC to do your bidding by programming. So I went off to the Balme Library at UG to borrow books on the BASIC Language. My goal was to address challenges by programming. I eventually wrote my first major application in 1989 to do continuous assessment at a primary school for my mother who was a teacher. It was in GW-BASIC, and was stored on a cassette (the normal Type I audio cassette). During my National service in 1992, I wrote a program to manage SSS admissions to PRE-SEC. That was my first systems administration task, as I got my colleagues to enter applicant data on different un-networked computers, and I worked to coordinate and combine the data from these PCs using a program I wrote. From there I went off to pursue a career in Electronic and Electrical Engineering. Computing remained and remains a hobby, and I have taken various jobs in computing after school.

SA: Do you think Africa is contributing to or deriving enough from the World Wide Web?

NA: Some countries are, South Africa being a good example. Others like Ghana are laggards in this field. Ghana does not have a lot of information and data that could be accessed online. It would be difficult for one to search for a pair of shoes online or for someone to file a tax return online. Companies that have an online presence (with a few exceptions) tend to have old, outdated, static pages. This does not encourage return visits. Most firms and some government agencies have no online presence at all. There is a lack of payment systems for most African nations, a lack of a trustworthy and effective mailing system, and a poor addressing system. These have all conspired to slow the adoption of electronic commerce. Many Africans will continue to visit established western websites for information, and "window" shop, until the fundamental barriers to participation in information exchange are addressed.

Keep Your Mind Always Ticking - Continued

parents, who believed the returns he could make in Ghana would be negligible as compared to their investments in his education, he saw Ghana as a land of opportunities and made a run for it.

though he was not sure what he really wanted to do, to him Ghana was (and still is) a developing country and therefore had many undeveloped areas as compared to the Western world where 'almost' everything had already been developed.

While in Ghana, suddenly, and as if inspired by the same drive that led Archimedes to cry out 'I have found it! Eureka!', it dawned on him. '... I was a manufacturing engineer and knew a bit of computer programming, so I combined the two and turned my computer into my factory. A factory that just needed me as input and produced software for companies as

SA: What do you think is the greatest challenge facing ICT in Ghana?

NA: While there is not a single answer, a combination of lack of foresight and cost of IT hamper IT development in Ghana. The high cost of everything: bandwidth, equipment, software, hosting charges, technical knowhow (i.e. high charges by less competent IT "experts") etc will slow the uptake and use of ICT. If it is cheap enough, IT will be ubiquitous, and the less educated will learn and make use of it. A lack of foresight in seeing the capabilities and opportunities to be derived from greater use of technology coupled with a lack of education/understanding in this area have not helped much.

SA: Considering the tensions that rose during the election period here in Ghana, do you think that this country is capable of sustaining peace and hence development?

NA: It's anyone's guess.

SA: Politics is often said to be solely driven by principle, values or one's call to serve however events following the election such as the reluctance on the part of political party leaders to throw in the towel has raised doubts concerning the drive for power or the presidential seat. In your view, would you say that wealth (money) plays a more significant role and not so much the call to serve, principles or values.

NA: Principles and politics? Some persons are well intentioned, others are not. History teaches us many lessons in this regard. I hold a view that humans, no matter their best intentions will not be able to "completely" and "satisfactorily" address the problems of today, or indeed the future. Consequently, I do not put my trust in any politician.

SA: Any final words for the students of Ashesi?

NA: Make the best of your time at school. It offers you the opportunity to explore many fields of endeavour—even if it does not count towards your GPA, and faculty is here to help as long as you wish to learn. You have all the time, just now (although students may think otherwise). Make good use of today while you can.

output.' This was his tipping point, and together with his partner and the help of friends in his father's garage SoftTribe begun, and so did his journey to success.

Touching on how he has been able to survive, '... you know, it isn't magic. The opportunities are there, you would have to tune yourself to grab them. ...for example when I sit in an airplane and I feel it move I think to myself, could that have been the tires? Or maybe the wings? My mind is always ticking.' He also attributed his success to his ability to network. '...you should always be up and about! Don't close from school to go home lying down in your little corner with the excuse of fatigue. Go out and make friends...know that people give opportunities to people they like and can trust.'

The Art of Voluntarism

As a growing young lady, a lot of my contemporaries ask or wonder...

Why do you engage in working without pay? Hmm, I would say I engage in voluntary work when I am interested in the activity, when I have time to support the activity to obtain the optimum level, or when someone seeks my aid in whatever activity it may be.

So, what is voluntary service or work? Well, from my experience voluntary work is willingly engaging in an activity without expecting to be paid and it is a way to help someone or a group of people achieve a positive and legal goal.

How did I get interested in voluntary work? I believe I began to volunteer at home. My mother always told me to help out at home. She also encouraged me to help at any family gathering irrespective of some of the harsh comments I received sometimes. As time went on, it became part and parcel of me. I was ready to engage in as many activities that I wanted to join so far as I was interested or did not mind participating in it. There were some my parents agreed to and there were others I had to convince them as to why they should agree. Joining the Head of State Award Scheme after Junior High School made it mandatory for me to partici-

pate in voluntary service. It was a requirement that participants engage in voluntary community service to enable one receive a bronze, silver or gold medal.

Where did I do my first outdoor voluntary service? I did that at Achimota Hospital during my long vacation. Initially, I did not believe I would be able to do it; but after a few weeks of being there, I believed "I could be a doctor without doing science". This was because I learnt how to keep records, check the temperature, blood level, height and weight of a patient.

What motivates me to do voluntary work? A smile!!! A smile of one who appreciates the service I have offered. My ability to help someone loosen a challenge and to let people believe that there is someone available to carry a burden off their chest. At a particular time, when I was volunteering at the educational advising center of the USIS library, my supervisor as well as educational advisor told me that I was service oriented. One may wonder, of what importance was this statement? Well to me this has been the answer to who I am today. At least, it gives me one answer when I am asked "tell me about yourself" in an interview.

How has voluntary work impacted my life? Voluntary service, if I may say has made me who I am today. In participating in voluntary service or work, it has exposed me to different people from different backgrounds, different situations, attitudes and beliefs that have enabled me understand some of the experiences I go through. Voluntary work has taught me to know the kind of person I am. It has exposed me to some of my strengths and weaknesses. It has brought me into contact with lots of people, great and small, known and unknown, powerful and not so powerful, the elite and non-elite. Voluntary service has taught me the power of a positive attitude towards work and people. It has taught me to respect people irrespective of their status in the society. It has also helped me solve my own challenges and given me rewards that will forever be mine.

Voluntary service is not all about the network you create so do not participate in voluntary service because of what you want to achieve and your personal desires because your intentions could be revealed when it fails

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What motivates me to do voluntary work? A smile!!!

Great Expectations...

The elections buzz has all but subsided, and the new government has settled comfortably into their new responsibilities. Before they get too comfortable however, Ashesi students air their views, impressions and expectations of the man in the Jubilee House and his government.

Interviews by Philip Coffie Dzisenu, Class of 2011

Education should be his greatest priority. President Mills should make education accessible to all especially to those in the rural areas. The government should build more public universities and encourage private participation in tertiary education in Ghana.

I want to us to build a strong economic infrastructure with emphasis on capital investment.

-Sandra Osei-Poku 2011 MIS

Good socio-economic policies that will help the country achieve its developmental goals should be the greatest priority of President Mills' government. The government should not focus on satisfying the desires of the masses but should focus on the future. That's where good developmental policies count most.

- Hanan Yoro Boforo 2010 CS

I believe President Mills has his agenda in place but entrepreneurship development in the manufacturing section of the service sec-

tor should be looked at critically. Even though the service sector is fast gaining root in Ghana, the government must generate enough interest and as well encourage the manufacturing sector in this development agenda. Avenues should be created for fast growth in the Food processing industry. Private participation in the emerging vegetable processing industry should be encouraged to avoid waste in the system with focuses on exploiting local and the west African market. It is high time we took advantage of our African market.

I encourage President Mills to eliminate all forms of "quotational leadership". The hardworking man/woman in the background should be recognized.

-Christina Elorm Doe 2009 BA

The new government should try as much as possible to live by their social democratic principles and distribute wealth fairly among the masses. Favorable conditions for private participation in the economy started by the previous government should be sustained. Partnership between foreign contractors and their local counterparts should be demonstrated through the award of government contracts. We need to build faith in the local contractor as well. Efforts should be made at creating local solutions to local problems.

-Francis Nuertey Tetteh 2012 BA

Good economic policies! If there is one thing that Mills' government should try to deal with then it is the worsening economic situation in the country. I believe the global crunch is affecting every nation but Ghana can easily sail through. Our economy is less sophisticated and thus provides us with some form of immunity. We are indeed in a good position to create market for our produce internally and in our sub-region.

-Julia Adwoa-Amoah Appiah 2010 MIS

Truth. Exact solutions to the most important problems. That's all I demand from the new government.

-Melvin Akaba 2011BA

The traffic situation and discipline on our roads in Accra must be improved. As a foreigner, I was surprised at the rate at which I see the police take bribes from drivers for traffic offenses. The police ought to be given enough refresher courses to boost their professionalism. The worsening economic indicators must be curtailed. On the average though, the new government is doing pretty well.

-Omayma Halabi Ahma 2011 BA

Voluntarism—Continued

and you might be disappointed as well.

In addition to my ideals of volunteering, this is something I read that could help you all who want to start volunteering after you have read this.

“Why Volunteer?”

Part of being a great volunteer is loving what you're doing. Find something that you are passionate about or something that inspires you, and then find a need in your community. There are dozens of reasons why you should volunteer - you just need to find the one that feels right.

20 Great Reasons to Volunteer

- Help others
- Make a difference
- Find purpose
- Enjoy a meaningful conversation
- Connect with your community
- Feel involved
- Contribute to a cause that you care about
- Use your skills in a productive way
- Develop new skills
- Meet new people
- Explore new areas of interest
- Meet good people
- Impress yourself
- Expand your horizons
- Get out of the house
- Make new friends
- Strengthen your resume
- Feel better about yourself
- Impress your mom

This article is dedicated to my mum and to the Ashesi Community

Phoebe Selassie Acolatse, Class of 2011

Motherland

A poem by Esi Ansah

Fullness in the West
African woman, African heritage
Horn of the East
Proclaim your greatness
Northern link, slick wealth
Bridge of adventure
Southern glory
Figure of elegance
Motherland of beauty,
Wholeness and perfection
Cradle of innovation

As outstanding as the full moon
Form of grace
Green in abundance, cradle of life
Brown in excess, friend and foe
From the Sahara to the Kalahari
Blue here, blue there, source of life
Scarce, yet plentiful
Curtain of power, heartbeat of Zimbabwe

Birth of civilization, crescent of life
Nile of sustenance, Nile of life
Gold, abundance of wealth
Scattered treasure; found, yet lost
Ore of variety, ore of new experience
Unity in diversity
Healing copper, gift of Lusaka
Zambian pride

Shores of pain, shores of joy
Sandy, breezy, coconut trees
Dancing in the African sun
Shores of virgin encounter,
Hospitality deceived
Forts of force,
The Book and the Cross
Paradox of interests

Highlands and lowlands
Basins of life, basins of nature
Forest-home, animals of skill
Swinging, hopping, climbing, crawling,
Nurturing, living in harmony
Serengeti plains, safari spectacle
Higher and higher,
Children mature
Sources of joy
High as the Kilimanjaro
Beauty without limits
Potential without cuffs
Beautiful motherland!

The Global Economic Recession

An ARM Member's perspective

For the past 10 months or so, unless you have been living outside earth or perhaps under a rock and have not been affected by any economic forces, you would realize the world is in a scary economic crisis.

Perhaps you have noticed that for the past months, the word depression, recession or meltdown have become very popular among people. It therefore becomes important for us to understand the difference between recession and depression. Some people rather believe that there are principles that distinguish the two economic indicators: i.e. depression from recession. By The Economist, a standard recession usually follows a period of tight monetary policy but a depression is the result of a bursting asset, credit bubble and contraction in credit. Therefore looking at its principles and the causes of the current credit crunch, it is evident that we are in a state of depression. Therefore we would be using depression to refer to the current economic times.

The American economy has been faced with a number of depressions and recessions, for example is the Great Depression in the 1930s which was America's deepest economic meltdown. This current economic crisis is affecting mostly two of America's sectors i.e. the financial market and the construction industry. However, sectors like education, health, transport and agriculture are not directly affected by the current economic depression. The underlying cause of the current economic crisis is banks lending credit to unworthy borrowers. The mortgage crisis is an ongoing financial crisis triggered by a dramatic rise in

mortgage failure and foreclosures in the United States, with major adverse consequences for banks and financial markets around the globe. Consequently, those saving with the bank were at a loss. This erupted in 2007 exposing the pitfalls in the financial market and the global financial market.

The media is taken over by the current economic phenomena of several thousand high profile job losses, forced mergers and bankruptcies around the world. Not to mention the smaller companies which do not make the news. Consequently individuals and some businesses that were previously not bothered about the share value of companies, exchange rates and even the inflation rate are now paying much closer attention to all these details to know how close they are to folding up or losing their credit. An interview conducted by the BBC with Jeff Ray (C.E.O of Solid-Works) said the global economic crisis has made individuals, small to large firms begin surfing over the internet to know how the economic downturn is affecting them or how close they are in getting out of market. Also, rather surprising he enlightens businesses of a great pool of opportunities in this global economic.

America has the largest economy in the world and therefore it has some sort of investment in every country around the world. Consequently, these sectors of the country would suffer or benefit from the shifts in its economy, when there is a slight change in the determinants of their economy. This can support the comment by one financial newspaper that "Just about every country in the world is somewhat dependent on U.S consumers and our ravenous consumption, therefore when we are suffering, so is the rest of the world".

We are most certainly falling into a recession, though it does not appear as obvious. One of the major effects that can face the Ghanaian economy is the movement of some immigrants in the U.S to their respective countries. The families of these people who were dependent on these people would now have to devise means of satisfying their own needs. Some socialists blame the entire phenomenon on unrestrained consumer spending and capitalism. However, most capitalists I have spoken to or heard them share their view acknowledges that capitalism is under threat and governments such as the U.S have come up with stimulus packages to solve this. In effect, these actions would help to make capitalism stronger and adaptable.

Discreetly, the American recession is having an indirect effect on the country. This will affect our donor support base. Governments of developed nations are now coming up with strategic plans to cut public spending in areas such as foreign aid, security etc. Therefore donors like America, Japan, China, United Kingdom and others would not be willing and able to give Ghana the needed support.

Just as businesses and governments in the developed nations are coming up with the smartest plans to protect their firms and stay afloat through this tough economic time, our government should also tactfully devise some strategies to safeguard our economy of any future losses. Countries like Iceland, Canada, Japan and China have had their share of the global economic downturn. Sources say two thirds of Iceland citizens move from bottom to crash.

Isaac Bruce, Class of 2012

The ARM Pinnacle Team

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