

GINKS ICT and EDUCATION FORUM 2009

“ICT & Education, a look at the Computerised Schools Selection and Placement System (CSSPS)”



Education they say is the KEY to success but how are the authorities in charge of the Ghana education sector handling this to make the dreams of our children a reality and even becoming responsible future leaders of this nation? It is alarming, the rate at which the current Computerised Schools Selection and Placement System is generating debates and discussion through the mass media. Is the Computerised Schools Placement System (CSSPS) the best for Ghana? How fair and effective is the process? Is the system addressing issues compared to the manual admission process? Have stakeholders been educated enough to understand the system? These are some of the questions that parents, teachers, students, the media, relevant government authorities and other stake holders came together to address at the International Press Centre on November 16, 2009.

This forum organized by the Ghana Information Network for Knowledge Sharing, as part of its contribution to the development of the nation through the use of ICTs. Speaking at the opening after a short word of prayer, Mr. Edward Addo-Dankwa, the moderator for the forum and a board member of GINKS, introduced the organization, its structure, vision and objectives, stating particular that GINKS geared towards using ICT and ICT tools as a means of fostering development in Ghana. He said that the discuss for the day’s gathering, is of great importance to Ghana as a nation at this juncture of its existence, adding that the outcome of the meeting will definitely add value to the advancement of the use of ICTs in Ghana’s education.

After his welcome address, the moderator called on the first speaker, a representative of the WAEC to speak on the “**Role of WAEC in the CSSPS**”. Mr. J.J.K. Baku, the DR/Head of the WAEC research department, said first that the issue of CSSPS is a very simple issue and hoped that by the end of the meeting, clarity will be received as to the bedeviling issues and the way forward. He noted that the primary challenge with the CSSPS process was that students were meant to choose schools according to the competitive strengths of the schools, but most students chose schools with equal competitive strength. He added that GES also has requirements that determine who qualifies to move on to senior high school. Other processes depend on available facilities in the schools, and the vacancies available. WAEC does only the screening for placement according to the guidelines and documents for screening stated by GES



He went on to say that BECE is a national examination and it has standards. It is not a criterion reference test, but a reference test, wherein students' performance are compared.



Second to speak was Madam Victoria Opoku, the Director of Secondary Education Division at the Ghana Education Service (GES). Agreeing with the assertions of Mr. Baku, she added that GES believes that the raw score is better than the aggregate (which is used in the manual selection), because the raw score certifies and guarantees that people qualify on merit. She also said that it is worth noting that the CSSPS used by the Ministry of Education Service is just one of the administrative functions of the service, which employs the use of ICT for the placement of students into schools.

The placement system she said, has been in place since 2005 and has actually performed credibly though there have been some few problems.

On **“the role of CHASS in the school selection process”**, the headmaster of Accra academy, who is also CHASS president, Mr. Samuel Ofori-Adjei made a few observations including the fact that there should be a re-visiting of the CSSPS. He said that if the CSSPS is properly organized, it will go well and will be effective. Implementers are facing very serious problems due to the choices that the students and their parents make. He concluded that education is very important to all of us and we must go beyond mere talk, in order to achieve the purpose of CSSPS.



The last presentation on the effect of CSSPS on **“the psychological well being of the students”**, was given by Bridgitt Sloan McMullen, Uniterria/WUSC volunteer on behalf of Child's Rights International. She said that the introduction of ICTs to education in Ghana has really helped to shape the education system. Like every new technology, there will be challenges with the CSSPS, but its advantages are enormous in terms of the eradication of the corruptions associated with school selections in the past. But one of the most important considerations on CSSPS should be the best interest of the child – a child's right to education is essential and the environment where that is possible cannot be over-emphasized.

Observations, Questions and Answers.

- There are many districts without connectivity which makes checking the results online very difficult, if not outright possible
- Accra is not Ghana, so the plight of other disadvantaged communities as far as the CSSPS and the issue of what students in rural areas go through in order to have their results certified, should be considered by GES
- The issues that culminate into a successful system should be considered and effected before the CSSPS is implemented

Reacting to the issue on the rural-urban divide, the CHASS president said that in spite of the perceived disadvantages, the project of certification is very important.

The GES representative suggested that the issue of connectivity should be taken up by the district assemblies. Communities should work within their realm of activities to see what they can get going until the problem of infrastructure becomes a thing of the past.

The WAEC representative said that the issue of the card for accessing results will be taken to the relevant department at WAEC for address.

- The presentations have been an eye opener, and it will help parents to make the right choices.
- We must not pretend that there is no political and protocol dimension to the CSSPS

Reactions

- Research must be based on empirical evidence – CSSPS allows candidates to choose schools in any part of the country. The allegation that headmasters and mistresses do not declare the actual status of vacancy in their school, so that they can accommodate the admissions of the children and wards of influential people in the society is not proper and should not be basis for the assessment of the Ghana education system
- We must stop over emphasizing on grammar education

Closing the forum, Mr. Ibrahim Inusah (GINKS co-ordinator) thanked the speakers and the participants for a very fruitful discussion, and recommended that the members of the media and other stake holders present take the rich information that the meeting has availed on the CSSPS, to the society, so that everyone will align with the objectiveness, so that the CSSPS project will be an annual success.

