

GINKS NORTHERN ICT4D SERIES - OCTOBER SESSION 2010

THEME: Computerised Schools Selection and Placement System (CSSPS)

An ICT teacher at the Saint Charles Minor Seminary Senior High School in Tamale, Mr. Raphael McClure Adomey has intimated that the introduction of the Computerised Schools Selection and Placement System (CSSPS) was a necessity. Mr. Adomey was speaking at the October session of the Northern ICT4D Forum on the theme the "Computerised Schools Selection and Placement System (CSSPS)".

Mr. Adomey explained that before the introduction of the CSSPS, the manual selection and placement of qualified BECE candidates into Second Cycle schools of their choice was performed manually. He said that every year, heads of Senior Secondary Schools and Technical Institutes together with the Ghana Education Service (GES) officials converged at selected regional centres to conduct the selection exercises.

Mr. Adomey explained that the manual system had some major problems associated it. He said there was difficulty in handling large numbers of qualified students as the number of registered candidates increased every year. Also, prospective Junior High School Pupils were restricted to choosing all their preferred Senior High Schools from one region of the country.

He further added that the entire process was vulnerable to pressures from parents / guardians and also abuse / misuse of discretionary powers of public servants in charge of the system and that the system caused a lot of anxiety, frustrations and confusion especially for parents of qualified candidates. He indicated that it was also susceptible to problems due to movements of registration cards and delays in the placement of such candidates and an eventual loss of confidence in the old system by the public.

According to Mr. Adomey, the change from the manual system to the CSSPS is as a result of the following;

1. The government's long-term objective of achieving universal basic education, expanding, and increasing access to secondary and tertiary education will be realised.
2. To have a reduction in Class Societies since the system does not discriminate between the rich and the poor.
3. To have an enhancement in national integration through the system's ability to allow students to choose schools from more than one region
4. An improvement in the teaching and learning since selection and placement is done on merit.
5. Technological Change
6. It ensures good governance

Mr. Adomey further added that as a result of the change, there will be a reduction in the high administrative cost associated with the old manual system of placement of JHS students into second cycle schools. Also, there would be no protocol admissions and candidates would be selected based on the total scores obtained in order of merit for every school selected. There will also be a reduction or elimination of human error.

On the history of the new system, Mr. Raphael Adomey mentioned that it was developed by Somuah Information Systems Co. (SISCO), a local IT Services Company on behalf of the Ghana Education Service.

On the technology used, the speaker said the CSSPS with all its modules was developed using a Component-Based Architecture. The technology standards used are well established in the industry and are implemented to promote and support the development and deployment of scalable, interoperable, and reusable computing platforms and components. He said the Microsoft .Net framework was used as the basis for the development of all the modules CSSPS. The .NET Framework is a new computing platform that simplifies application development in the highly distributed environment of the Internet. CSSPS utilises an N-Tier based architectural framework to develop the components for the application.

Mr. Adomey gave a practical example of how the system works and generates the postings. He explained that the modified raw score in the placement process, thus obtaining Grade 1 in all subjects (or 10 ones), does not necessarily mean that a candidate should get his/her first choice school by all means. He said for the placement into Senior High Schools (SHS), 4 core subjects and 2 best subjects are used in the grading. He added that English, Science, Mathematics and Social Studies are the four main core subjects used in the placement system so if one did not pass in any of them, one will not qualify for placement.

Mr. Adomey ended his presentation by highlighting the advantages of the computerized system. He stated that the Implementation of the computerized method of selection and placement of candidates has brought several advantages including,

- Efficiency, transparency, simplicity and speed in the procedure of selection and placement
- Removal of regionalized selection constraints by allowing the choice of schools from any combination of regions
- Promoting fairness and equity by enabling pupils who performed well to gain admission to their choice irrespective of whether the school is a 1st, 2nd or 3rd option. The system also ensures that no school admits more students than vacancies available in each programme
- Reduction in human error during the process of capturing registration data
- Easy access to placement results through SMS where a candidate only texts the candidates ID and instantly receives a reply on his/her placement status indicating the secondary school where he/she was placed and the program