BRIDGING THE RURAL-URBAN ADMISSION GAP: THE CSSPS PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This study focused on the extent to which the introduction of the computerized school selection and placement system (CSSPS) has been able to bridge the rural – urban admission gap. The introduction of CSSPS is supposed to level the 'playing field' for children from all schools no matter the location or type. A cross-sectional descriptive survey was conducted with an ex-post facto research approach. The study's target population comprised final year students in the Public and Private Junior and Senior High Schools in the Central Region of Ghana. Past BECE results of the selected cohort and time-series data on Senior High School form one intake figures were used for the study. A sample size of 400 comprising 307 final year JHS and SHS students, 78 parents whose children were in the final year class and 15 heads of the 15 selected institutions were involved in the study. It was found that to a large extent the CSSPS bridges the rural-urban gap as its selection is not based on geographical location, economic or socio-cultural background of the students. Also it has led to the increase of intake in all SHS schools especially rural, public and urban private schools.

Introduction

The Ghana Education Service introduced the Computerised School Selection and Placement System (CSSPS) in 2005 to replace the manual selection of qualified BECE candidates into the second cycle schools. This move was intended to improve the system of selection and placement of qualified Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) graduates into public and private Senior Secondary Schools /Technical and Vocational Institute (SSS/TVET). The change of the system of selecting students to senior high schools in the country from manual to computerized had many objectives to achieve. Among these was the aim of closing the gap of opportunities for access to senior high schools, particularly between candidates in rural and urban schools. The schools selection and placement system should provide full access and participation to secondary education to qualified students.

During the 2009/2010 academic year, the Ghana Education Service (GES) reviewed the Computerized School Selection and Placement system (CSSPS) to enable more qualified candidates to gain admission to Senior High Schools. The review was necessitated by the fact that, since its inception in 2005, about 20 per cent of candidates with good scores are not able to get placement into senior high schools.

The schools have been put into six categories of Public Senior High Schools in 'A,' to 'D', Public Technical/Vocational Institutions under category 'T' and Private Senior High Schools and Technical Vocational Institutes in category 'P'. Every candidate is required to choose a total of six schools, stressing that candidates would be allowed to choose only one school from category 'A' and a maximum of two schools from category 'B'. With this new policy, if a candidate makes five choices from categories 'A', 'B', 'C', 'D' and 'T' the sixth school must be either from category 'C' or 'D', 'T' or 'P'. A person who desires to pursue purely Technical courses may select all six choices from category 'P'. The same also goes for candidates who desire to pursue courses in private senior high schools.

The use of computers for schools selection and placement is a way of putting qualified students in their choice of schools without partiality or discrimination. It is envisaged that students who are genuinely selected by the computer will have self confidence and will become functional and productive citizens in the country. The Computerised School Selection and Placement System (CSSPS) is a system used by the Ghana Education Service (GES) to place qualified Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) candidates into Senior High School (SHS)/ Technical Institute (TI)/ Vocational Institute. The operation of the CSSPS is carried out by a Secretariat which is a unit of the Secondary Education Division of GES. CSSPS was a policy change from the GES Council as a result of challenges emanating from the manual system of selection and placement. The CSSPS became operational in September 2005, two years after the GES Council had taken the decision in 2003 to implement it.

It seeks to improve the manual system of selection and placement of qualified BECE candidates into Public and Private SHS, TI and Vocational Institutes by replacing the Manual System with a Computerised one. This was done because the Ministry of Education (MoE)/ GES and other stakeholders in Education including parents identified the following short comings in the Manual Selection and Placement System:

- Human error arising from long and two-stage admission processes and loss of cards;
- Apparent lack of transparency in the selection and placement processes;
- High administrative cost;
- Loss of public confidence arising from many stories of perceived malpractices:
- Anxiety and frustration among parents during the selection and post selection periods;
- Alleged abuse by some Heads of SHS/TI of their discretionary powers to select candidates;
- Admission stories told by some students to fellow students which bother on nepotism, favoritism and preferential treatment – ingredients of school indiscipline;
- Disadvantages of using grades instead of raw scores;
- Restriction to one region in choice of schools.

One of the benefits of the CSSPS was seen to enable candidates to choose schools from any of the ten regions and/or any district of their choice thus removal of regional restriction, and promoting national integration. The system is such that the computer automatically does the selection and placement of candidates, based on candidates' performance and choices (school and programme) made. Also the results of the selection and placement are dispatched to all Senior High Schools, Technical and Vocational Institutes; and copies made available to all Junior High Schools, Regional and Districts Offices of GES on time.

The transition to the second cycle level from the basic school has been a challenging issue in many African countries. According to the Global monitoring report for 2007, high transition rates from the final grade of primary school to lower secondary education (JHS) are common not only in developed countries but also in developing countries. Ghana, Botswana, Seychelles and South Africa are among the countries with transition rate of 90% and above from primary school to the junior secondary level. On the contrary, transition rate from lower secondary to upper secondary is lower in sub- Saharan African countries including Ghana. The majority of students in Sub Saharan-African countries do not make it to secondary schools. Analysis of Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) by Lewin and Caillods (2001) shows that two-thirds of all countries with secondary GER of 40% and below are in Africa.

According to Otieno and K'Oliech, (2007) the factors affecting transition to secondary schools included financing secondary education, Family Networks and Household Composition, the quality and relevance of the curriculum and Inequitable Distribution of Secondary School Opportunities between urban poor, and rural and urban areas. Most governments today are committed to providing universal access to basic education, which includes

lower secondary as well as primary education. According to the 2009 EFA Global Monitoring Report, two measures that have been taken to improve transition rates from primary to secondary school are enforcement of compulsory schooling laws and elimination of primary school-leaving examinations.

According to UNESCO, (2008), access to the first level of education is measured in terms of the proportion of children admitted relative to the total child population eligible for enrolment at that level, and this measure is described as the in-take rate. Access to subsequent levels of education is measured in terms of the proportion of children admitted, relative to the number of those who were, the year before, in the final school-year of the preceding level. This measure is described as the transition rate (UNESCO, 2008). According to the Ghana national development index report, there exist regional differences in access to primary school. For instance, regions in the southern sector of the country have greater access to primary education than the northern sector.

Access differs from urban to rural locations in Ghana. Urban areas have better access to primary education than rural areas (93.2% compared to 81.0% respectively) (UNDP, 2007). The national average for access to secondary school is 43.3 percent; the northern regions are lower which average 15.5 per cent. Apart from the north-south disparities, there exist differences between rural and urban areas. Access to secondary education is higher in urban areas (62.6%) than in rural areas (28.8%). According to Alasia (2003) educational outcomes may be more positive in urban areas simply because urban economic conditions provide greater returns on investment in education. Therefore pupils in urban areas are more likely to go on to participate in higher levels of education so as to benefit more.

Different countries have different ways of pupils gaining access to secondary education. In United Kingdom, for instance England and Wales use the Tripartite System, which is colloquially known as the grammar school system. With this system, secondary schools were divided into three categories, Grammar Schools, Technical Schools and Modern Schools. Pupils were allocated to each according to their performance in the Eleven Plus examination, (Schagen and Schagen, 2001). In Malawi, Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination (PSLCE) terminates the primary cycle which runs for eight-year duration. The PSLCE results are used for certification and selection into Form 1 of the secondary education. For many people, the certification aspect of the PSLCE is not as important as its selection function, because the certificate can no longer be used for employment purposes as is the case with Malawi School Certificate Examination (MSCE). Therefore the pupils are under pressure to perform well enough to be selected into secondary education.

Tua (1998) pointed out that the greatest problem militating against educational achievement is the urban/rural disparity in the distribution of trained teachers, distribution of materials, inadequate facilities, and low morale of teachers and lack of supervision. He further stated that many parents in rural areas are not able to significantly contribute to the improvement of facilities in the schools. These facts have a correlation to rural secondary schools in Ghana where many parents do not want to send their wards to some secondary schools due to lack of adequate teaching-learning facilities. It is also evident that, a good secondary education assures a person the opportunity to proceed to the tertiary level of education.

Statement of the Problem

Ghana has made a lot of strides in the increase of enrolment at the basic level. By 2010/2011 the GER for primary was at 94.6% whilst the JHS GER was 79.6%. Comparatively the enrolment at SHS was 36.8%. With the increase in enrolment and provision of schools at the basic level fueled by Ghana's desire to achieve the goals of its 'Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education Policy' (fCUBE), the demand for senior high school education has risen. Presently with many children completing basic school, what are their chances of moving to the next level which apparently has not had an increase in its provision as what has occurred in the basic level? The disparity that exists between rural and

urban schools as well as private and public schools leads to such schools (rural, urban poor and public) less likely having the opportunity to move on. The introduction of CSSPS was supposed to level the 'playing field' for children from all manner of schools no matter the location or type. The question is, has the CSSPS been able to reduce the rural urban gap in the access to second cycle education. Also what are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the new system of school selection and placement?

The study thus has as the main purpose to assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the new system of schools selection and placement in relation to the goal of creating equal opportunities for students in spite of geographical location (both rural and urban areas) to obtain access and participate in second level education. Also it was to assess whether the CSSPS is bridging equity gap between rural and urban senior high schools. The research questions that guided the study were:

1. How does the CSSPS address the issue of equity in senior high school admission?
2. How does the Computerised Schools Selection and Placement System, affect the Intake Trend in Rural and Urban Senior High Schools in Ghana

Methodology

A cross-sectional descriptive survey was adopted for the study with an ex-post facto research approach which studies the relationship between non-manipulated variables in a natural setting. The survey was adopted to collect data on the assessment of the computerised school selection and placement system (CSSPS) in rural and urban Senior high schools in the Central Region of Ghana. Past BECE results of the selected cohort and time-series data on Senior High School form one intake figures were used for the ex-post facto study.

The Central Region has 17 districts comprising Upper Denkyira East, Upper Denkyira West, Twifo Heman/lower Denkyira, Assin North, Assin South, Abura/Asebu/Kwamankese, Asikuma/Odoben/Brakwa, Agona East, Agona West, Ajumako/Enyan/Esiam, Efutu Municipality, Ewutu /Senya, Gomoa East, Gomoa West, Mfantsiman, Cape Coast and Komenda/ Edina/ Eguafo/Abrem (Statistics Unit: Central Regional Directorate of Education, 2009). There were 1,221 Junior High Schools and 86 Senior High Schools making a total of 1,306 schools in the Central Region. There were 36,343 JHS students and 20,001 SHS students all totaling 56,344 students (GES, Central Regional Directorate School Census, 2009). Final year students in the Public and Private Junior High and Senior High Schools in the Central region of Ghana were involved in the study. The SHS 3 students were chosen for the study because they were the first cohort to experience the CSSPS in Ghana. It was also considered that the experiences of their immediate past seniors and their own high expectations in the selection process would make the JHS students who were then in their transitional period from JHS to SHS, an appropriate group for the inclusion in the study. In addition to the students, parents whose children were in final year class as well as heads of Junior High and Senior High Schools also formed part of the population.

Junior and Senior High Schools in the region were clustered into three geographical zones, thus coastal zone made up of Cape Coast medtropolis, MAwutu Senya, Efutu, Komenda/Edina/Eguafo/Abrem. The Middle zone comprise Abura/Asebu/Kwamankese, Gomoa East, Gomoa West, Agona East, Agona West, Ajumako/Enyan/Esiam and the Northern zone is made up of Upper Denkyira East, Upper Denkyira West, Twifo Hemang lower Denkyira, Assin North, Assin South, and Asikuma/Odobeng/Brakwa. Through a simple random sampling method (Lottery Approach), 15 schools were selected from the three zones based on the proportion of schools in each district.

A cluster of schools from the zones were classified on the basis of Rural/Urban and Public/Private for both Junior High and Senior High. The reason for this classification is that

studies have shown that pupils in private schools perform far better than pupils in public schools in terms of academic achievement (Opare, 1999). It is therefore important to make comparison of private and public schools as well as rural and urban schools to examine which category of schools benefit most from the computerised schools selection and placement system in terms of access to senior high schools. For each zone at least one private and two rural schools were selected through the simple, random method.

Multi-stage stratified random sampling procedure was used to select students from the chosen schools. This was to ensure that the different categories of students (rural, urban, boys, girls and students from different academic programmes) who were of interest for the study were adequately represented in the sample. This did not only help in making assessment of the CSSPS in rural and urban schools but also enabled the researchers to generalise in terms of population. All heads of the selected schools as well as parents of the selected students who were accessible were used. A sample size of 400 comprising 307 final year JHS and SHS students, 78 parents whose children are in final year class and 15 heads of institutions were obtained for the study. Questionnaires were used for eliciting information from students, parents and school heads on experiences related to the CSSPS in Senior High Schools in the Central Region of Ghana. It also took into consideration finding out their views on the category of students who have more access to secondary education with the introduction of the CSSPS.

The instruments were pilot-tested at Edinaman Senior High School and Elmina Methodist JHS all of Komenda Edina Eguafo Abrem (KEEA) district in the Central Region in the rural /public school category. For the urban/public category, Holy Child School in Cape Coast was used for the pilot-test. The analysis of the pilot-test data recorded Cronbach's Alpha reliability co-efficient's of 0.79 for the students' questionnaire, and 0.83 for the parents' instrument. The questionnaires for students and heads for the main study were hand-delivered to them by the researchers. The administration of the students' questionnaire was done in their classrooms and that of the heads were done in their offices. Telephone numbers of parents were used to contact them for further explanations. This gave a general return rate of 96 per cent.

Out of 282 students, 55(19.5%) were JHS students while 227(80.5%) were SHS students. Parent respondents who had children in JHS were 13 and those with children in SHS 55 (80.9%). Fifteen heads of schools of schools responded to the instruments. Frequency distributions, percentages, means, and t-test for mean differences were used to analyse the data.

Table 1 shows the distribution of students per the region of Ghana they come from.

Table 1: Distribution of Students by Region of Ghana

Region	Frequency	%
Central	186	65.9
Western	10	3.6
Eastern	25	9.0
Ashanti	22	7.8
Volta	32	11.3
Greater Accra	7	2.5
Total	282	100

It can be seen from Table 1 that the student respondents come from six of the regions in Ghana, namely; Central, Western, Eastern, Ashanti, Volta and Greater Accra. This picture shows that greater number of students 186(65.9%) who attend junior and senior high schools in the central region are natives of the central region of Ghana.

Results

How the CSSPS addresses the issue of equity in Senior High school admission was used to investigate. The equity dimensions were considered in terms of: rural/urban pupils, rich/poor in the society, gender, socio-cultural background of parents and Public/Private JHSs which pupils attend (Table 2).

Table 2: The CSSPS and Equity in Senior High School Admissions

Equity Dimensions	Parents (N= 68)		Students (282)		Heads (15)	
	Agree No. (%)	Disagree No. (%)	Agree No. (%)	Disagree No. (%)	Agree No. (%)	Disagree No. (%)
Favours urban JHS pupils	25 (36.7)	43 (63.2)	112 (39.7)	170 (60.3)	6 (40)	9 (60)
Favours pupils with rich background	11 (16.2)	57 (83.8)	87 (30.9)	195 (69.1)	2 (13.3)	13 (86.7)
Favours pupils from high socio-cultural Background	17 (25.0)	51 (75.0)	70 (24.8)	212 (75.2)	5 (33.3)	10 (66.7)

In addressing the issue of equity in the admission process, there was the need to find out whether the selection favoured the urban pupils as against those in the rural areas. A total of 43 (63.2%) parents disagreed that the selection favoured the urban students. Again, 170 (60.3%) of students and 9 (60%) heads of schools also disagreed. This means that, roughly 60% of the parents, students and heads of schools all disagreed that the new system of selection into Senior High Schools favours pupils who attend urban Junior High Schools. Again on the issue of equity, there was the need to find out if the system of selection favoured pupils whose parents were somewhat rich and could always pay their way through. The vast majority of parent respondents 57(83.8%) disagreed to the statement.

From the view point of the students, 195 (69.1%) also disagreed to the statement. The opinion of the heads was also not quite different from that of the parents and the students as majority of them 13 (86.7%) did not accept the claim. The study has therefore shown that most of the parents, students and school heads disagreed that the computerised schools selection and placement system favours pupils whose parents are rich. In other words they were of the opinion that the system did not discriminate against or in favour of any particular class of people. The findings thus support the claim made by Somuah (2006) that the new system gives the best students of this country the opportunity to school and develop themselves, irrespective of their backgrounds.

On the issue of whether the system tended to favour pupils whose parents have high socio-cultural background, the pattern of responses from the parents was not different from that of the students. The mainstream of parents 51(75.0%), student respondents 212 (75.2%) and heads 10 (66.7%) all disagreed to the claim. A comparison of the responses of the three categories of people revealed that the system of selection does not take into consideration the socio-cultural background of students.

The general findings on equity in terms of rural or urban JHS, financial and socio-cultural background of parents suggest that, to a very large extent, the CSSPS has addressed the issue of equity. This finding is in line with the statement made by Attise (2006) that, the use of computers for schools selection and placement is a way of putting qualified students in their choice of schools without partiality or discrimination. This is also corroborated by Somuah (2006). On whether the system tended to favour pupils who attend Private JHS it was realized that 40 (58.8%) parents and 193 (68.4%) students did not accept the claim. The headmasters/headmistresses were however, of a different opinion regarding equity in terms of

private and public JHS. Quite a larger number of heads 11 (73.3%) agreed that the CSSPS favours students who attend private JHS. The view of the school heads is in conformity with the findings made by Opare (1999) on academic achievement in private and public schools. He stated that, pupils in private schools did far better than those in public schools in terms of academic achievement. The difference is attributed to the fact that pupils in the private schools come predominantly from middle class homes where parents set high academic standards for their children. He further explained that the private schools are better equipped, better managed, and more supported by parents, hence pupils' high academic performance.

The findings of Ankomah (2002) are also in support of the observation made by heads of schools that the CSSPS favours pupils who attend private Junior High Schools. He mentioned that, while majority of public basic schools continue to record very poor pupil performance, private schools continue to chalk up excellence in pupil performance. The outcome of his study indicated that, the private schools are committed to certain administrative, supervisory and cultural practices that make the schools more effective. The summary of the average transition rate and the school category of all the five JHS schools are shown in Table 3. The averages show whether there has been an increase or decrease in transition rate of the various schools for the period when the CSSPS was introduced. The major comparison is between public and private schools as well as rural and urban schools. The comparison is also based on the last three years of the manual selection period (2002 to 2004) and the first three years of the computerised selection period (2005 to 2007).

Table 3: Average Transition Rate and School Category for all five JHSs from 2002 to 2007

School	School Type	Manual Selection (2002-2004)	CSSPS (2005-2007)	Increase in Transition	Decrease in Transition
FOSCO Demonstration JHS	Urban/Public	61.6%	53.5%	-	8.1%
Abakrampa Catholic JHS	Rural/Public	31.7%	16.4%	-	15.3%
Breman Baako D/A JHS B	Rural/Public	22.7%	45.3%	22.6%	-
UCC JHS	Urban/Private	98.7%	85.7%	-	13%
Swedru International School (SWISS)	Urban/Private	92.7%	93.8%	1.1%	-

As shown in Table 3, the average transition rate for three of the five Junior High Schools showed some decrease during the three years period of the Computerised Selection. Two of these schools whose transition rate decreased were from urban areas while the remaining one was from a rural area. This shows that with the introduction of the CSSPS, the rural JHSs seem to have had more access to SHSs than the urban JHSs. Apparently, fewer schools had benefitted more from the CSSPS in terms of transition to SHS form one than the manual system of selection.

The Research question on how the Computerised Schools Selection and Placement System, Affect the Intake Trend in Rural and Urban Senior High Schools in Ghana was addressed by using time series data on intake trend in rural and urban Senior High Schools collected from the heads of schools to address it. The intake figures collected were for the period of six years, beginning from 2002 to 2007. Table 4 represents the average intake trend during the last three years period of the manual selection, (2002 to 2004) and the average intake trend for the first three years period of the computerised selection, (2005 to 2007). The results of the analysis as depicted in Table 4 seem to suggest that comparatively the CSSPS favoured the rural public and urban private secondary schools. The Urban public schools including the well endowed ones had little change in intake. The change in enrolment between the manual selection period and the computer selection period in private schools was

also very drastic. For instance Sammo SHS moved from 849 students to 1377 students who were enrolled in the first year. The reason might be due to the number of students who were denied admission to the public senior highs schools by the computer system, had no option than to attend a private SHS or to wait and re-sit the following academic year.

According to Quist (2003), during the period of the manual selection, Senior High schools which remained highly selective, meritocratic and elitist, included the Old Cape Coast Schools like Mfantsipim, Wesley Girls, Adisadel, St. Augustine's and Holy Child as well as Achimota in Accra. These were the schools where protocol admission was very much operational due to immense contribution made by the alumni and the missionary bodies towards the development of the schools (Bimpong, (2006).

Table 4: A Summary of SHS Form 1 Average Intake Trend from 2002 to 2007

Name of School	Type of School	Average Intake (Manual Selection: 2002- 2004)	Average Intake (Computerised Selection: 2005-2007)
EGUAFO-ABREM SHS	Rural/Public	87	185
ABAKRAMPA SHS	Rural/Public	33	133
ODOBENG SHS	Rural/Public	81	206
MFANTSIPIM	Urban/Public	576	479
WESLEY GIRLS	Urban/Public	405	401
SWEDRU SHS.	Urban/Public	501	510
SAMMO SHS	Urban/Private	849	1377
UG.SHS (WORKERS C.)	Urban/Private	22	86
CAROLYN STROMAN SHS	Urban/Private	13	103

The reduction in the rate of protocol admission could be a contributory factor to reduction in form one enrolment in the well endowed schools. Another contributory factor might be due to vacancy figures submitted by the heads of schools to the CSSPS secretariat. Before placement is made, all headmasters/headmistresses are asked to declare the number of form one places available in their schools to the CSSPS secretariat. Placement is therefore based on the number sent by the school heads and the existing facilities of the school.

Discussions

The study found that the CSSPS addressed the issue of equity in secondary school admission. The general findings obtained as to how the CSSPS addressed the issue of equity in secondary school admission was that, to a very large extent the computerised system of selection had taken care of equity in terms of rural/urban pupils, rich/poor in the society, gender and socio-cultural background of parents. The implication was that, the new system of selection gave opportunity to all categories of students no matter their gender, the town or village they came from and financial or socio-cultural background of their parents. However, the school heads thought that the CSSPS had not addressed the difference between the admission of private and public junior high school candidates into senior high schools under the equity dimension. They believed that there was still a wide disparity between the private and public junior high schools regarding admission into senior high schools in favour of the private schools.

Another major finding of the study concerns the transition rate from junior high school form three to senior high school form one within the three year period before the introduction of the CSSPS and three years after the introduction of the new system (i.e. 2002-2004 and 2005-2007). The average transition rate for three of the five Junior High Schools used to for the study showed some decrease during the period of the Computerised Selection.

Two of the schools whose transition rate decreased were from urban areas while the remaining one was from rural area. This showed that with the introduction of the CSSPS, the rural JHSs were likely to have more access to SHSs than the urban JHSs.

With regards to how the CSSPS affected the intake trend in rural and urban Senior High Schools in the central region, the following findings were made. The average form 1 intake in all the three rural/public SHSs used for the study increased drastically within the period of the computerised selection. The pattern of rise in enrolment figures in the rural/public schools suggests that, more students were admitted into the schools during the period when the CSSPS was introduced than during the period of the manual selection. The change in enrolment figures in private schools was quite drastic. The picture of intake trend was somewhat different in the well-endowed urban/public SHSs. There were reductions in form one enrolment figures in Mfantsipim and Wesley Girls High school when the CSSPS was introduced. These categories of schools are among the oversubscribed schools in the country where headmasters could admit more than the intake capacity of the school.

The reduction in the rate of protocol admission could be a contributory factor to reduction in form one enrolment in the well endowed school. Another contributory factor might be due to vacancy figures submitted by the heads of schools to the CSSPS secretariat. Before placement was made, all headmasters/headmistresses were asked to declare the number of form one places available in their schools to the CSSPS secretariat. Placement was therefore based on the number sent by the school heads and the existing facilities of the school. The study also disclosed that, for the first three years of the CSSPS, transition rate from JHS3 to SHS1 in urban JHSs had decreased while that of rural schools had increased. It can therefore be inferred that the manual system of selection offered urban JHSs more access to senior high schools than the Computerised system of selection.

Form 1 intake in both rural/public SHSs and private SHSs increased drastically within the period of the computerised selection. The pattern of rise in enrolment figures in these schools suggests that, more students were admitted into the senior high schools during the period when the CSSPS was introduced than the period of the manual selection. Of course other factors like infrastructural expansion and increase in teacher trainees may also have contributed to the increase in form 1 intake in Senior High Schools aside from the CSSPS.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings clearly demonstrate that the CSSPS is addressing the issue of equity in SHS admissions to a large extent. From the perspective of school heads, students and parents the CSSPS enables qualified students to be admitted to SHS without partiality in terms of location of school, as well as economic and socio-cultural background of students. The CSSPS has thus led to an increase in the opportunity for pupils from rural JHSs to enter SHSs. This means that, by enlarge, SHS admissions are solely based on the students' performance. However, it must be noted that school heads were of the view that there is still a disparity between public and private schools (in favour of private JHSs) in relation to admissions to SHSs. This can apparently be attributed to the fact that generally students from private JHSs perform better than students from public JHSs and as the CSSPS ensures that qualified students gain admission to SHS it is more likely that the majority of students from private JHS (who have performed better) will gain admissions to SHSs at the expense of the public school pupils.

Another major effect perceived to have been made by the CSSPS has to do with the trend of intake into SHSs. Intake had generally increased for most SHS, especially rural public and urban private schools. However, intake in well endowed schools that were generally public schools had reduced. This may be due to the reduction in 'protocol' admissions and the school heads submitting low available places for admission of students.

Government has to make efforts to upgrade the model schools in each district by making infrastructural and material expansion in those schools. Efforts also need to be made to meet the increase in the number of second cycle institutions to meet the increasing demand for secondary education. This will help to curtail the reduction in the form 1 intake in the well endowed schools.

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