

# **THE 2012 CIVIL SOCIETY EDUCATION MANIFESTO: IMPLEMENTING POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ON SECONDARY EDUCATION BY KOFI ASARE, AUGUST 2012**

After diagnosing the key causal and symptomatic issues in secondary education, civil society is of full conviction that the direction of secondary education policy in the next four years, should focus on expanding equitable access (less than 50% of junior high school graduates enter secondary schools), reducing the cost and improving the quality of science and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) education. The key issues in secondary education requiring urgent attention from the incoming administration are among others, the duration of secondary education, low admission rates into Senior High Schools (SHS), provision of science and ICT resource centres, reduction in the cost of secondary education and improving the operation of the Computerised School Selection and Placement System (CSSPS).

Civil society believes that the long standing debate surrounding the duration of secondary education has been politicised and should end. Indications are that, should there be a change of government, there could be a reversal of the current 3-year duration of secondary education to 4-years. Civil society is extremely concerned about the erratic changes in secondary education duration on the performance, outcomes and future of secondary education in Ghana.

Of immense relevance is the declining numbers of JHS graduates entering SHS in the past decade. Out of 375,000 BECE candidates in 2011, only 202,339 were able to transit into SHS. The huge dropout rate of about 47% is due to economic and academic reasons and portends negative prospects for the economic and social development of Ghana. Among the causal factors to low enrolments into SHS is the issue of cost. The cost of secondary education still remains unaffordable to many Ghanaian families. The current GES approved termly school fee of GHS 328 (for boarding schools) is beyond the reach of many poor families, taking into cognisance the per capita household expenditure (\$175) incurred on secondary school students. This situation is worsened by the absence of statutory scholarships for needy students who qualify but are unable to afford SHS fees, thereby dropping out, and the teeming masses of students who pass the BECE but fail to secure school placements through the CSSPS.

The CSSPS continues to pose severe challenges to accessing secondary education in Ghana. The following key issues associated with the CSSPS require urgent attention by the incoming administration:

- a. Most parents lack the financial capacity to finance the schooling of their wards when placed in distant or boarding schools by the computer. This leads to drop-outs.
- b. The CSSPSS breeds corruption among school heads and education officials, as they superintend protocol admissions to politicians, cronies and elites.
- c. The computer is unable to place students who attain between aggregate 24 and 36, yet they are deemed to have passed.
- d. There is a gap between school vacancies and computer placements. This denies students who have been duly placed by the computer in a particular school, an admission.

In spite of the huge government investment into ICT education, there still remain huge inadequacies in the provision of ICT and science resource centres in secondary schools. This compels most SHS to travel to access science laboratories during science practical lessons, while most ICT teachers teach without adequate number and quality of computers. In fact, the absence of electricity in most day senior high schools makes the teaching of ICT a luxury beyond access in rural areas without electricity.

**Among the numerous policy demands, civil society advises the next government to;**

1. Maintain the current 3-year duration of secondary education but also up-grade and expand secondary school infrastructure, provide the requisite teaching and learning equipment and increase teacher motivation to enhance the delivery of teaching and learning in secondary schools.
2. Set up and re-equip all science resource centres in secondary schools nationwide.
3. Build 212 more day senior high schools to absorb the envisioned increase in SHS enrolment. With an initial capacity of 300 students per year group, some 84,000 more students can access secondary education. This will increase the current enrolment in secondary schools by 42% from the current 202,339 to 286,339.
4. Recruit and train more qualified teachers in SHS to address the worsening pupil-teacher ratio that will result from the building of an additional 212 schools.
5. Develop and implement a national policy on secondary education scholarships, targeting female students choosing science and mathematics courses and needy students in general.

6. Abolish all unapproved admission fees charged by secondary schools and provide a 50% subsidy on feeding fees in secondary schools.
7. Improve the operations of the CSSPS by:
  - a. Ridding it off all forms of interferences
  - b. Aligning school placements with school vacancies.
  - c. Declaring as illegal any other means of admission into secondary schools.
  - d. Adopting a computerised mop-up system for the re-placing of non-assigned and ill-assigned pupils with the right passes and aggregates.