



REPUBLIC OF GHANA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

REPORT ON ALLEDGED CORRUPTION IN THE
2021 SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL PLACEMENT

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1.0 Introduction

The Computerized School Selection and Placement System (CSSPS) is a merit-based automated system used for the placement of qualified Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) candidates into public Second Cycle Institutions (Senior High Schools and Technical/Vocational Institutes). The Ministry of Education as a policy introduced the CSSPS in 2005. It is to be implemented by Ghana Education Service and TVET Service in the schools, however, Free SHS Secretariat was set up to oversee the Policy implementation. The purpose among others is to:

- Improve and enhance efficiency in the school transition process from Junior High Schools to Second Cycle Institutions;
- Promote transparency and fairness in the placement of students and
- Ensure equity and speed in the selection and placement process.

The 2021 school placement was announced and released to the general public on 26th March 2022. A total of 367,811 candidates out of the total of 555,353 who qualified for placement were placed automatically. The remaining 187,542 went through the self-placement model.

2.0 Background

The CSSPS was intended to address the widespread allegations of corruption and unfairness that characterized the SHS admission process in the past. However, the programme has been recording complaints of corruption from parents and the general public, a development that undermines the credibility and purpose of the programme.

The 2021 placement was no exception from the numerous allegations of corruption against officials by the general public. This resulted in the then Director-General of the Ghana Education Service calling on the National Investigative Bureau (NIB) and the Criminal Investigative Department (CID) of the Ghana Police Service to conduct a comprehensive investigation into these allegations.

Subsequently, the Minister for National Security in a letter reference No. NSCS 355 VOL. 49/1481 dated 8th April, 2022 requested the Ministry of Education to investigate the allegations and sanction culpable persons accordingly.

In furtherance to this, the Acting Chief Director of the Ministry of Education set up a Six (6) Member Committee to;

- Investigate the allegations of corruption at the CSSPS during the 2021 Free Senior High School (FSHS) placement of qualified Basic Education Certificate Examination Candidates in the First Year of Senior High Schools;

- Submit its findings and Recommendations to the Hon. Minister for Education for onward submission to the National Security Ministry for necessary action;
- Ascertain on any other matter relevant to the issues that may be related to this subject matter if any.

The Membership of the Committee is as follows:

- Mr. Edward Fiawoyife - Director Internal Audit - Chairman
- Mrs. Matilda Awiah Azuimah (ESQ) - Head of Legal, MoE - Member
- Mrs. Cynthia Storph-Tagoe (ESQ) - Head of Legal, GES – Member
- Mr. David Prah - Dep. D-G, TVET Service – Member
- Nana Baffour Awuah Richard - Director Pre-Tertiary - Member
- Mr. Patrick Arthur - Prin. Plann. Officer, MoE – Secretary

The investigations including the hearings spanned a period of ten (10) weeks; during which various documents were received and reviewed, interviews were held with persons that had access to do placement and information was collected and evaluated.

The Committee sat eight (8) times and the following persons appeared before the Committee:

- i. Mr Daniel Sarpong Duah - Chief Operating Officer, BK Grand Ltd
- ii. Mr Asamoah Kweku Acheampong - Software Engineer, BK Grand
- iii. Prof. Kwesi Opoku Amakwa - Director-General, GES
- iv. Mr. Mark Sosu Mensah - CSSPS Coordinator
- v. Mr. William Darkwah - Free SHS Coordinator
- vi. Vera Andoh - Dep. Free SHS Coordinator
- vii. Ernestina Afra Mensah - Dep. Free SHS Coordinator
- viii. Isaac Duke Asante - Officer, FSHS Secretariat
- ix. Mohammed Kamel Issah - Officer, FSHS Secretariat
- x. Richard Appiah Kubi - Officer, FSHS Secretariat
- xi. Kwame Opoku Siaw - Officer, FSHS Secretariat
- xii. Rocklyn Abena Konadu - Officer, FSHS Secretariat
- xiii. Suzzy Owusuwaa - Officer, FSHS Secretariat
- xiv. Dr. Yaw Osei Adutwum - The Hon. Minister for Education

3.0 Allegations

The specific allegations as indicated in the letter from the Ministry of National Security included the following:

- a. "Report indicate that officials of the Computer School Selection Placement Centre (CSSPS) allegedly charge between One Thousand Five Hundred Ghana Cedis

(GH¢1,500.00) to Six Thousand Ghana Cedis (GH¢6,000.00) to post Junior High School (JHS) graduates to their preferred Senior High Schools (SHSs)".

- b. "It was gathered that a number of students with aggregate scores ranging from fourteen (14) to twenty-five (25) did not secure placement in any of their preferred schools, while some students with poorer grades were placed in relatively high-performing schools".

Based on B above the investigative Committee wrote the Minister of National Security to furnish the Committee with the information they gathered aid the Committee's work.

4.0 Summary of Deliberations

4.1 Mr. Daniel Sarpong Duah

Mr. Daniel Sarpong Duah is the Chief Technical Officer for BK Grand, the company (consultant) responsible for the Computerized School Selection and Placement System (CSSPS). He appeared before the Committee with Mr. Asamoah Kweku Acheampong, a Software Engineer with BK Grand. Mr. Daniel Sarpong Duah was invited to help the Committee understand the placement process and how the system works. He took the Committee through the whole placement process from the pre-placement phase through to the post placement phase.

He started his presentation by informing the Committee that what his company does is to provide a platform / system which use data from the West African Examinations Council (WAEC), Computerized School Selection and Placement Centre and the Free SHS Secretariat. He went on further to indicate the various types of data they receive from each of the above-mentioned institutions as follows:

- WAEC – (Choice Files, Bio-Data)
- CSSPS – (School Register, Junior High Schools)
- Free SHS Secretariat– (Vacancy declaration)

He however indicated that the choice file for the 2021 placement did not come directly from WAEC but rather a system (CSSPS Verifier) that was deployed by CSSPS/Free SHS to "clean" the data by allowing registered candidates to verify their school choices and make corrections where necessary. Mr. Sarpong Duah informed the house that the actual placement starts when the above-mentioned data had been verified and 'cleaned' by all parties involved.

He further informed the house that the placement is guided by the Placement Policy Document which is reviewed yearly by the Free SHS Secretariat and the CSSPS with the aim of improving the system. The Placement Policy Document

outlines the means by which the placement should be done and that is what the Consultant relies on in delivering his mandate for a particular year's placement.

Mr. Sarpong Duah took members through a copy of the final Placement Policy Document they used in the 2021 school placement. He explained the placement processes and arrangements under the following:

- Automatic Placement
- Self-Placement
- Manual Placement
 - ✓ Seminary Placement
 - ✓ Protocol

In addressing one of the allegations, the Committee sought to find out if it was possible for a student with a relatively worse grade to be placed in a "good" school ahead of a student with a better grade. Mr. Sarpong Duah responded in the affirmative and explained with an illustration of circumstances that may result in such a situation. He explained that under the Automatic Placement, the Programme of choice and the Residential preference of the student are some of the factors that can lead to a student with a relatively worse grade being placed in a "good" school ahead of a student with a better grade. He further stated that the situation could also occur when a student is placed manually through Protocol.

The Committee sought to know the processes and the arrangement surrounding the granting of Access to the placement system. In his response, Mr. Sarpong Duah explained that the Consultant receives instruction in the form of a Memo generated by the Free SHS Coordinator and signed by the Hon. Minister to assign Protocol Access to some identified officers. The Memo has the name of the Officer, their designation, the nature of Access (full or partial) as well as the responsibilities. A copy of the Memo was presented to the Committee as exhibit. (Exhibit "A")

It emerged during the discussion that changes were made to the initial Access in the course of the placement based on the instructions of the Hon. Minister though these instructions were not documented. ✎

On the alleged issue of bribery and corruption in the placement of students in their preferred choice of school, the Consultant explained that as soon as the system goes live, his company does not interact with it in any form unless they are instructed to make changes on the system. He further explained that once the system goes "live" they are only given permission to assign access and not to place students. ✎

The Committee sought to find out if there were any forms of breach on the system during the 2021 school placement. In his response, Mr. Sarpong Duah informed the Committee that the platform/system was tested by the National

Communications Authority before it went live. He further indicated that the system has been designed such that you can only get into it if you have been given access and thus, any form of breach can only be internal. He therefore dispelled the assertion that the system was hacked and was being used to place students at a fee.

After our deliberations, the Committee requested for some information and reports from the consultant, which he indicated, should be officially communicated to the company. In view of that, the Committee in a letter dated 30th June 2022 requested the consultant to furnish the Committee with the under-listed information to assist the work of the Committee:

- A copy of the report on the 2021 School Placement
- A copy of the document shared with the Committee (preferably in pdf format)
- A copy of the Memo authorizing the Company to assign Access Codes to officers
- Any other information that will be relevant to the work of the Committee

From the above-mentioned request, the consultant was able to submit for the Committee's review the following:

- A copy of the document shared with the Committee in pdf.
- A copy of the Memo authorizing the Company to assign Access Codes to officers

4.2 Mr. Mark Sosu Mensah

Mr. Mark Sosu Mensah is the Coordinator for the Computerized School Selection and Placement System (CSSPS) Centre. He was appointed as Coordinator in 2017. According to him, the mandate of the CSSPS Centre is to see to the placement of successful BECE candidates in the various public Senior High and TVET schools across the country. He further indicated that his role as a Coordinator is to coordinate all relevant stakeholders and collect relevant data from WAEC, Free SHS Secretariat, GES (Basic Education Division and Secondary Education Division) and the TVET Service to facilitate the placement process.

He the Committee through the placement process and briefed the Committee on activities under each of the three (3) phases of the placement process namely the Pre-Placement Phase, Placement Phase and the Post-Placement Phase. He also confirmed the set of data needed for a successful placement to include:

- The Bio-Data

• WAEC

- Choice File - WAEC
- Merit File and JHS File - WAEC
- The Catchment Area File - CSSPS
- The Vacancy File - FSHS Secretariat
- School Register - which is compiled and updated annually by a team from GES, TVET Service, Free SHS and the CSSPS).

According to him, as part of the recommendations from the previous year's review report, a Resolution Centre was created at the GNAT Hall in Accra to receive issues and complains from the public. In addition, a Call Centre was also set up at the Science Resource Centre to also receive and compile complains for redress. This, according to him, helped to minimize the pressure from the general public. Another innovation in the 2021 placement was the system that was put in place to give feedback to parents and students after their issue had been resolved.

On the issue of Access to the placement system, Mr Sosu Mensah indicated that the access to place qualified students for the 2021 placement was Categorized into A, A1, B, B1 and C. He was initially given Access to category B1 and was later upgraded to category B schools. His access was communicated to him **verbally** by the Free SHS Coordinator. According to him, it was only in 2017 that his access was officially communicated to him in writing by the Hon. Minister. ✱

On the question of students with "good" grades missing out on their preferred choice of schools and students with "bad" grades rather getting the "good" schools, Mr Sosu Mensah said it could be as a result of a number of factors such as the program of choice and residential preference of the student. He also said a number of students with good grades were not placed in any of their choice of schools during the automatic placement this year. This, he attributed partly to some results that were withheld by WAEC pending investigations into various issues of examination malpractices. These students with good grades were however, given priority during the manual placement.

On the alleged issue of bribery and corruption in the placement of students in their preferred choice of schools, Mr Sosu explained that he did not receive any such report or complaints from any member of his team or the general public. He indicated that he also heard the allegations in the media. It however emerged that Access to check the call log on the system was limited this year so it made it impossible for him as a coordinator to even follow up on a complaint and check whose access was used to do the placement for which the allegation was being made. He indicated that it wasn't so in previous years. ✱

In response to the question on how the phenomenon can be eradicated, the CSSPS Coordinator proposed that a separate interphase should be developed and used for protocol placement in order to streamline it. He also indicated

that someone should be assigned with a "super" Access to monitor the work of other officers that have been given Access to undertake placement of students on the system.

4.3 Mr. William Darkwah

Mr. William Darkwah is the head of the Free SHS Secretariat. He was appointed in 2017 when the Free SHS Programme commenced. He was relieved of his post in 2020 and was re-appointed in 2021.

In response to a question about his role in the 2021 school placement, Mr Darkwah informed the Committee of the two (2) main objectives he worked towards. The first one is to make sure the placement is in line with the projected number of enrolment as indicated in the budget, as well as ensure adherence to the Day/Boarding ratio used in the preparation of the budget. He touched on the formation of the annual placement Committee, the revision of the placement policy which guides the placement process every year and he finally took the Committee through the various data sets needed for the placement activity and placement process itself.

On the issue of granting Access to Officers on the placement system, Mr Darkwah admitted that the document that assigned Access to the system was initiated by his office for the Hon. Minister's approval for onward submission to the consultant. Each person's credentials (username and initial password) for accessing the system was sent to them via email by the system administrator (consultant). He was assigned Access to category "B" schools and that was what he worked with. In addressing the issue of delegation of Access, he said his access was not delegated any other person for use to work.

On the issue of manual and protocol placement, the coordinator indicated that no officer was assigned to work on only protocol list. Any officer that had Access to place can work on a protocol list. It emerged that the 5% protocol from the schools can be identified and tracked on the system but it will be difficult to disaggregate the 5% national protocol from the other forms of manual placement which includes the issues that were resolved from the Resolution Centre as well as the Call Centres.

On the alleged issue of bribery and corruption in the placement of students in their preferred choice of schools, the Free SHS Coordinator said he did not receive complaints from the public or any member of his team on it. He revealed that he also heard these issues and allegations from the media. He went on to further state that with the manner in which "protocol list" came in from various quarters and people, it will be difficult to know if someone has paid money for their name to be included in a protocol list that has been assigned to them to work on. He ended by saying that people are exploiting their relationships" and that is what is causing all this issue.

4. Ms. Vera Andoh

Ms. Vera Andoh is a Deputy Free SHS Coordinator in charge of Finance and Procurement. Her role in the 2021 school placement was to ensure that the final placement result goes live and is accessible to the general public. She took the placement Committee through the placement process from the formation of the placement Committee through the collection of all the necessary data to the final publishing of the placement results. She had Access to Categories B2 schools and according to her, she did not delegate her access to anybody and no one else gave his/her access to her to work with.

It emerged during her presentation that some schools deliberately under-declared their vacancies because of the protocol arrangement. The Committee sought to find out if there are records of all protocol lists that were worked on during the placement process and she responded No.

On the alleged issue of bribery and corruption in the placement of students in their preferred choice of schools, she revealed that she did not receive any complaints from the public or any member of his team. She also heard it from social media.

4.5 Ms. Ernestina Afra Mensah

Ms. Afra Mensah is the Deputy Free SHS Coordinator in charge of Operations. She was in charge of the resolution center at the GNAT Hall. The resolution centre was set up to receive and compile issues and complaints from the general public, resolve the ones within their access mandate and submit the rest to the placement center on a daily basis for resolution. She was initially given access to Category C schools but was later upgraded to category B because the initial access couldn't resolve most of the issues that came up at the resolution centre.

She said that issues gathered from the resolution and call centres were sent to the placement centre at the end of each day to be worked on by the team stationed at the placement centre. Ms. Afra indicated that in spite of the above-mentioned arrangement, she realized that just a few people were working on the issues they submit to the placement center thereby creating a lot of backlog and pressure on her team. This resulted in a situation where the team from the resolution center had to come back to the placement center in the evenings to work on the issues themselves.

In response to a question as to whether she delegated her credentials for other officers to access the system, she answered in the affirmative and disclosed that she could even log onto the system with her access for multiple users to use to fast-track the resolution of the issues due to the huge numbers, this assertion was contrary to the account from all the previous people we had

interviewed including the consultant that the credentials access could not be used on multiple gadgets.

On the alleged issue of bribery and corruption in the placement of students in their preferred choice of school, she indicated that she heard it in the media and received a number of complaints from a few acquaintances. She however indicated that she could not verify from the system because she did not have access to the log report on the system. More so, these people were not willing to come out publicly because of fear that their wards may be victimized in their respective schools. Ms. Afra Mensah revealed that a gentleman who was impersonating as a member of her team and was charging parents to resolve their issues for them was accosted and handed over to the police at the resolution centre. However, she could not tell the Committee about the status of that particular case with the police as at the time we met her.

4.6 Isaac Duke Asante

Mr. Isaac Duke Asante is an IT Officer at the Free SHS Secretariat. He said his role in the 2021 school placement was to ensure that the vacancies declared by the schools is accurate for the placement exercise. This involved ensuring that the numbers declared by the schools are the numbers they can actually admit to avoid over-crowding as well as under-declaration by the schools. His work also involved generating the list of schools with vacancies on a daily basis for the team in the resolution and call centers to enable parents and guardians choose the schools for their wards. It was his duty to generate a report for the Hon. Minister on a daily basis on the number of issues submitted by the resolution and call centers, the number of issues resolved by the placement center and the number of feedbacks given to parents and guardians.

On the issue of schools requesting for extra vacancies / space during the placement process, Mr. Asante admitted that the schools do submit request for vacancy expansion. It however emerged that the vacancy expansion request from the schools is not routed through any official channel because it is sent to the Free SHS Secretariat via WhatsApp. He also explained that in situations where a student with a very good grade misses out on all of his/her choice of schools, the Secretariat usually engage the head of the schools, especially the category "A" schools to create additional space to enable them resolve such issues. This practice, according to him, is not new.

Mr. Asante said he was assigned access to Category "C" schools during the placement and he was reluctant to disclose the identity of officers that had access to both Category "A" and "B" schools though he knew.

On the alleged issue of bribery and corruption in the placement of students in their preferred choice of school, he disclosed that he did not encounter any such thing. He was not approached and offered any form of incentive to place

anybody during the placement process. He also heard them in the news like the other officers we interviewed.

4.7 Mohammed Kamel Issa

Mohammed Kamel Issa is an Assistant Research Officer in charge of procurement at the Free SHS Secretariat. His initial task at the placement center was to assist the Funds Procurement and Management Unit (FPMU) of the Ministry to compile the furniture needs submitted by the schools sequel to a meeting the Ministry had with members of the Conference of Assisted Secondary Schools (CHASS) in Kumasi earlier in the year. He was later given access to category "C" schools to help resolve placement issues submitted by the resolution center. He indicated that sometimes, he is given an additional task to sort the issues from the resolution center into the various categories. He admitted that he delegated his access to other officers to help him with the work under his supervision. Kamel was however, not able to tell the Committee the name (s) of officers that had access to category "A" schools. *

Based on information gathered from the previous interviews, the Committee sought from Kamel the circumstances under which his Access was taken from him two weeks into the placement process? In his response, Kamel indicated that he realized that he could not log onto the system with his credentials two weeks into the placement process so he complained to Mr. William Darkwah, the Free SHS Coordinator who assured him that the access will be restored. The Coordinator later informed him that the Hon. Minister had requested to meet him in his office at the Ministry. *

According to Kamel, he sought to find out from his supervisors the purpose of the intended meeting with the Hon. Minister as well as the reasons for the revocation of his Access but he did not get any response from them. The meeting with the Hon. Minister however, did not come on because the Free SHS Coordinator later came to inform him that the Minister did not need him again. Kamel indicated that though his access was taken from him, he stayed with the team for about four weeks till the placement process came to an end. He was therefore working with the access of either Ms. Afra Mensah or Benedicta to help resolve issues. *

The Committee sought to find out from Kamel if he heard anything from his colleagues or anyone apart from his supervisors as to the reason(s) behind the revocation of his access to the system. He responded that he did not hear anything from his colleagues on the issue. The Committee therefore put it to him that there was an alleged issue of bribery that was traced to his access and that was the reason why his access was taken from him. Mr. Kamel denied this allegation and indicated that he had access to category "C" school and no one pays money to be placed in category "C" schools. *

access was taken from him without any explanation or official communication.

3 Mr. Richard Appiah Kubi

Richard Appiah Kubi is a member of the operations team at the Free SHS Secretariat. He was attached to the resolution centre stationed at the GNAT Hall to receive complaints from the general public and resolve the ones within his access level. Mr. Appiah Kubi took members through the daily routine work at the resolution center. He indicated that, they assembled and addressed the parents in the morning by telling them the process and procedure parents will have to go through to lodge their complaints. They then compile all the issues, categorized and labeled them under the various categories and submit them to the placement center in the evening for resolution.

As a member of the operations team at the resolution center, he was given access to category "C" schools just like most officers at the resolution center. It was later during the placement period that the leader of the Resolution Team, Mrs Afra Mensah had her access upgraded from category "C" to category "B" schools. From Mr Appiah-Kubi's observation, most of the issues submitted to the placement center from the GNAT Hall were being resolved by Mohammed Kamel Issa and due to the overwhelming number of issues submitted, the team from the resolution center had no option than to join the team in the placement center every evening to resolve the issues.

On the alleged issue of bribery and corruption in the placement of students in their preferred choice of schools, Appiah indicated that a parent approached him to help him change his ward's school for him but he declined. He said the following day, that person came back with a different issue and told him that the previous issue he brought has been resolved for him at a fee of GHS 6,000. The person did not disclose the identity of the person who took the money and he indicated that he could not check who did that particular placement because he did not have access to check the log report on the system to determine who did what. *

He sighted an example in 2019 where he went into the system to follow up on an alleged complaint about bribery and he was able to identify the access that was used in placing the student. Mr Appiah-Kubi went on further to inform the Committee that you can't make any changes on the system without an internal involvement. He also said that it is possible to assist someone with placement without the officer knowing that money has changed hands because it will come as part of a protocol list from a genuine source. *

Mr Appiah told the Committee that he got a report that a parent paid GH¢20,000 for the ward to be placed in Wesley Girls to read science but because he did not have access to the log report on the system, he could not *

check who did that placement. He indicated that it will be difficult to get parents to openly come out and “confess” that they paid for their wards to be placed. He therefore took the Committee through the process of identifying the “unusual” placement after analyzing information on the system using the students’ aggregate and the programme they are reading.

According to Appiah Kubi, Access to category “B” schools should be given to more officers and he believes that can minimize the issue of bribery and corruption. He also indicated that permission to access the call log should not be restricted like it used to be in previous years. ✖

4.9 Kwame Opoku Siaw

Mr. Kwame Opoku Siaw is an IT officer with the Free SHS Secretariat. He said he has been a core team member since 2017. His role in the 2021 school placement was to help with the setting up of the call centre, provide the various centers with routers and internet access for the work of officers. He assisted the team to set up a system called the Top 2 which is a trouble ticketing system used for logging the complaints from the call center.

He was given access to category “C” schools but he did not use his access because of the nature of the work he was doing. He was moving from the Call Center, Resolution Center and the placement center to ensure they have constant internet and other gadgets for their work. He therefore gave his access to Mrs Christiana Biney, a senior officer with the secondary division of the Ghana Education Service who was attached to the call center to enable her assist the team to resolve some of the issues they received at the call center. ✖

On the issue of people taking money to facilitate the placement of students, Mr Siaw Opoku indicated that it is not a new phenomenon and went further to say it is so because the officers at the resolution and placement centers are not in a position to determine if the person that is submitting an issue has taken money from a parent or guardian. He was of the opinion that the level of desperation from parents and guardians during the placement period is what fuels the bribery and corruption during the period because they are the ones that approach officers with “juicy” offers to help them place their wards.

On the alleged issue of bribery and corruption in the placement of students in their preferred choice of schools, Mr. Siaw indicated that he did not receive any complaint from anybody but also heard of the allegations in the media. He went further to indicate that hardly do people pay money to go to category “C” schools and thus, the focus of the investigations should be on access to category “A” and “B” schools. He was of the view that the general public should be sensitized to know that they should not pay anybody for placement to sanitize the system. ✖

1.10 Ms. Rocklin Abena Konadu

Ms. Rocklin Abena Konadu, an Administrative Officer has been working with the Free SHS Secretariat since 2017. She was assigned to work on issues coming from the Upper East and Upper West Regions. In view of that, she was working closely with the regional coordinators from the above-mentioned regions. She was with the resolution team stationed at the GNAT hall to resolve complaints from the general public and comes to the placement center (Aknac Hotel) in the evening to resolve the issues she had compiled from the two regional coordinators during the day. She had access to category "C" schools so after resolving issues in the category "C" schools, the other issues from the other categories is then submitted to Mr. William Darkwah to be given to officers that have access to those schools.

It once again emerged that the team in the placement center were not really working on the issues from the resolution and call centers and thus the officers from the resolution center had to come to the placement center in the evenings to resolve the issues they received.

According to Ms. Abena Konadu, she delegated her access to other officers mostly National Service Personnel during the weekends to help her resolve the issues due to their huge numbers and this was done under her close supervision. It came to light that she could use her credential to log in on multiple gadgets for the service personnel. She indicated that she barred them from bringing along their phones to minimize distraction and also to avoid them from being influenced to use her access to do anything untoward.

On the issue of using National Service Personnel to work on something as sensitive as the school placement, Ms Konadu indicated that it has its positive and negative sides. She was of the opinion that their involvement helps the team to resolve a lot of issues and this minimizes the pressure on the placement team. She however went further to indicate that the negative aspect with regards to their involvement in the placement is the danger of them using one's access to do things that can implicate staff of the placement center.

On the alleged issue of bribery and corruption in the placement of students in their preferred choice of schools, Ms. Konadu indicated that a lady approached her with the promise of giving her "anything" she wants for her to help place her daughter into Holy Child SHS. According to her, she declined and told the woman that the Ministry does not charge for placement to be done. She said she went further and reported the woman to her immediate superior at the resolution center, Ms. Afra Mensah.

In addition, Ms Konadu informed the Committee that a gentleman who was posing as a staff of the CSSPS and had collected money from parents with a promise of getting their wards placed was apprehended at the GNAT Hall and

ended over to the police. She could however not tell the Committee the status of the case with the police as at the time we were interviewing her.

s. Abena Konadu was of the view that the only way to eliminate this canker is to put a ban on protocol placement because that is the avenue used mostly by people to take money from parents and guardians. *

11 Ms. Suzzy Owusuaa

Ms. Suzzy Owusuaa is a Principal Superintendent from GES and on secondment with the Free SHS Secretariat. She was assigned access to category "C" schools to resolve issues from the Western and the Western North regions. She received and compiled complaints and issues from the regional coordinators via email on daily basis for her to resolve them. Because she was assigned category "C" access, she resolved issues related to that category and the other issues relating to categories "A" and "B", she indicated that she was asked by the Free SHS Coordinator to hand them over to Mr. Isaac Duke Asante. Although she was assigned to resolve regional issues, she was stationed at the placement center (Aknac Hotel) but leaves for home in the evening because she was a nursing mother. *

She said she did not delegate her access to anybody to work with but informed the Committee that at the instance of the Hon. Minister, the Free SHS Coordinator and the CSSPS Coordinator logged in using their credentials for other officers at the placement center to enable them fast-track the work on some category "B" issues presented by the resolution and call centers. So, she confirmed that it is possible to use your credential to log onto multiple gadget so far as the gadget has been configured. Ms. Owusuaa presented and took the Committee through a sample of some of the issues from the regional coordinators. *

On the alleged issue of bribery and corruption in the placement of students in their preferred choice of school, Ms. Owusuaa said a gentleman approached her and a service personnel in the Free SHS secretariat prior to the placement process with the promise of giving them money to facilitate his placement for him. According to her, she informed the gentleman that placement is not done at a fee. Ms. Owusuaa therefore advocated for more sensitization to be done to educate parents and guardians because she feels most of these people are ignorant of the placement processes and think it is normal to pay for placement.

Aside this, she indicated that she also heard rumors of people taking money to the tune of GHS10,000 for category "A" schools and GHS 6,000 for category "B" schools from parents to place students but she did not personally encounter any and does not have any form of evidence. *

She recounted an instance in 2019 where a service personnel at the Free SHS Secretariat was picked up by the police for using an access that has been delegated to him to place students at a fee.

4.12 Prof Kwesi Opoku Amankwa

Prof. Kwesi Opoku Amankwa, the Director-General of the Ghana Education Service at the time took the Committee through a brief history of the school placement system and re-iterated the fact that reviews are done at the end of the placement process every year and measures are put in place to improve the process over that of the previous years.

Prof Amankwa indicated that with the coming on board of the Ghana TVET Service, the Hon. Minister moved the whole placement process from the Ghana Education Service to the Ministry of Education for the 2021 school placement. He was assigned access to category "A" schools within the Ghana Education Service. He went further to say that out of the 5% protocol that is retained at the national level, he was assigned 20% and the Hon. Minister had 80%.

Officially, the category "A" access was between the Hon. Minister, himself and the Director General of the TVET Service. However, the Minister had the authority to instruct the consultant to create additional access for other people so he could not confirm if they were the only people with the category "A" access.

On the alleged issue of bribery and corruption in the placement of students in their preferred choice of schools, Prof Opoku Amankwa said it may be difficult to get to the root of this issue because there are people (goro boys) who do not have anything to do with the Ministry or GES and yet go out in the name of officials of the Ministry or GES to do what they do. Some of these guys take money from people and channel their placement request through reliable institutions to be presented as part of their protocol list. He therefore indicated that the biggest problem with the placement has to do with the protocol placement. He went further to say that the heads of schools cannot be absolved either because they have a way of managing their 5% protocol.

Additionally, he said that if there are allegations of corruption, then the bulk of it stops with himself and the Hon Minister because they were the only people assigned access to category "A" schools and these are the schools for which people pay money to be placed into.

He sighted an example in one of the cases that was reported that an amount of GHS7,000 had been charged to place someone at Wesley Girls or Achimota School. A probe using the log report on the system showed that it was done with the Hon. Minister's access, which was being handled by Ms. Vera Amoah. Prof Amankwa went on to say that subsequently, his permission to the log

report on the placement system was blocked and so could not trace and act on complaints that came in thereafter. 4

In view of these reports as well as the ones coming from the media on the alleged corruption in the placement exercise, management of the Ghana Education Service in a letter dated 5th April 2022 officially wrote to the National Investigative Bureau (NIB) and the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of the Ghana Police Service to investigate these allegations. In furtherance to this, a team from the NIB visited him for a discussion on the request for investigations into the placement process and later officially wrote to GES in a letter dated 5th May, 2022 to request the GES to forward their complaints to the CID for investigations.

Because the GES had already written to Criminal Investigation Department (CID) to also investigate the alleged issues of bribery and corruption in the school placement process, the CID also visited GES as part of their investigations.

However, as at the time of meeting Prof. Kwasi Opoku Amankwa on 25th August, 2022, the GES had not received any feedback on the investigations being conducted by the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) of the Ghana Police Service.

In conclusion, the Director-General admitted that he cannot fully absolve himself from any issues of corruption because he delegated his access to one of his officers to do the work for him. He however went on to say that one good thing about the system is that anytime someone logs in with his credentials, he gets a notification alert to enable him inquire into what was being done. Prof. Opoku Amankwa also indicated that he has records detailing the source of all the protocol placement he did using his access, so he is readily available to cooperate and assist with any form of investigations that will be undertaken.

The Director-General of the Ghana Education Service also prompted the Committee to look through issues surrounding the sale of PIN Codes in the 2021 school placement.

4.13 Mr. Daniel Sarpong Duah (2)

After meeting with all the key players in the 2021 placement process and based on the information gathered during these deliberations, it became necessary to invite the consultant again to take the Committee through a "live" session on the CSSPS system and to generate a number of reports to assist the work of the Committee. In view of that, Mr Daniel Sarpong Duah, the Chief Operations Officer for BK Grand appeared before the Committee for the second time on 25th August, 2022.

response to our request, Mr. Sarpong Duah informed the Committee that the placement system had been shut down and thus, cannot operate and generate "placement" reports for the Committee as requested. The system was shut down six (6) months after placement as was agreed during the contract negotiations with the Ministry. He said previously, they use to host the data on the server for a whole year and in that case, the system stayed live for a whole year and the system continued every year. However, the Ministry opined that the cost of infrastructure for hosting the data on the server was quite high and in view of that, requested that after six months, the data should be pulled down and the data archived.

He said because the data was currently offline and had been archived, there was the need to specifically and officially request for the type and nature of data needed to be given to the data engineers for them to work on.

The Committee therefore officially wrote in a letter dated 8th September 2022 to request the consultant to provide among others the under-listed data to the Committee;

- Data on all placements in category "A and B" schools (both automatic and manual) to include the placement trail and log reports
- Pre and Post placement vacancy declaration
- Report on the 30% Equity Measure
- Additional vacancies declared in the Category A and B schools
- PIN CODES
 - Number of Pin Codes generated
 - Number of Pin Codes Sold
 - Number of Pin Codes utilized

The consultant however did not respond to the Committee's request for the above mentioned data and reports. *

14. Dr. Yaw Osei Adu Twum (Hon. Minister for Education)

The Hon. Minister was the last person the Committee interviewed to conclude the investigation.

The Hon. Minister took the Committee through how access is given to each member of the Team that did the placement. He indicated that he and the Director General were the only people that had access to category A schools. He told the Committee that due to the nature of the placement and how people are able to use their name to have their way he decided to hide the identity of the person he delegated his access to so that the person cannot be compromised in anyway. He indicated that due to the corruption issues that come up every year he thinks it is better to keep the one he delegates to work for him on the placement anonymous. *

he Hon. Minister indicated that during his tenure as a Deputy Minister it was only the Minister that assign people access and he respected that decision and work with it as such. *

5.0 Findings

The Committee found out the following:

1. No parent was willing to come out clear with evidence of bribing any officer to place their wards in their schools of choice.
2. There were approaches by people to bribe some officers but they declined the offer.
3. One person was arrested for attempting to bribe officers at the placement Centre at GNAT hall.
4. Access to the system has been delegated to others including service personnel to assist in resolving issues brought to the resolution center.
5. One access could be used to log onto multiple computers
6. Category 'A' access were delegated to other staff to work on category 'A' issues on behalf of the Hon. Minister and Director General of GES, however their identities were not disclosed to the Committee.
7. There is no monitoring of the system by any independent person to identify who does what at what time of the placement process.
8. The Committee was limited in scope because we could not have access to the life system to probe into the real processes of placement.
9. The Placement Team has become permanent except if there are changes at the GES or the Ministerial level.
10. There has not been any system audit of the software deployed to determine whether there are weaknesses in the system and controls that needed to be put in place to curtail the risks identified.
11. The annual placement is shrouded in secrecy and not transparent.

6.0 Recommendations

We recommend the following for the consideration of Management:

- A. There should be more education to parents and students as well on the considerations that go into the placement of students.
- B. There should be a follow up on the case of attempted bribery pending with the police and the perpetrator(s) prosecuted if possible.
- C. Those who have access to place students should be given strict instructions for compliance on their dos and don'ts.
- D. An independent person for example Internal Auditor should be given access to monitor the placement when it goes live and report independently to the Hon. Minister through the Chief Director.
- E. The system should always be audited before the data is archived.
- F. The placement system should be transparent to Management of the Ministry, GES and TVET Service.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion the risk of the system especially corruption risk is high due to the secrecy nature of the placement. There is the need to implement the recommendations to mitigate the risk. The Committee is grateful to Management and everyone that assisted in the Committee's work for their cooperation. We are grateful for the opportunity to serve on this all important Committee.

Kindly submitted please.



Mr. Edward Fawoyife

Chairman



Mrs. Cynthia Storph-Tagoe (ESQ)

Member



Nana Baffour Awuah Richard

Member

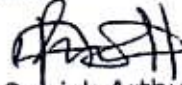


Mrs. Matilda Awiah Azuimah (ESQ)

Member

Mr. David Prah

Member



Mr. Patrick Arthur

Secretary