

Ayariga challenges CHRAJ's figures

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...on school dropout rate

The Deputy Education Minister Mahama Ayariga is challenging figures from the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice which say parents are withdrawing their wards from school due to the paucity of the capitation grant.

Commissioner Laretta Lamptey in highlighting research findings by the Commission noted the country is at the risk of collapsing its basic education.

She said, some parents, unable to pay extra fees due to the inadequacy of the capitation grant, have decided to withdraw their wards from school.

“The Commission commends the government for increasing the capitation grant to 4.50p per child in 2009. However in the view of the Commission, this rate is still too low. We therefore recommend that the capitation grant be increased to 7.00 per child in 2012,” she said.

Mrs Lamptey also called for the expansion of School Feeding Programme from its current one million children to 2 million by September 2012.

This she noted would encourage parents to keep their wards in school in order for them to acquire basic education as stipulated in the 1992 Constitution.

But Mahama Ayariga, in reacting to the Commissioner said: “I beg to differ that parents were withdrawing their wards from school” because the capitation grant was not enough.

On the contrary the deputy Minister said figures available to the Ministry show an increase in the enrolment of pupils into basic schools.

He said government’s interventions like free school uniforms, free supply of text books, increase in the capitation grant has led to an increase in enrolment.

“I do not have evidence to that effect and I don’t know where they [CHRAJ] are getting that from. The evidence rather is that there is so much enrolment in our schools and part of the reason why children are being enrolled by their parents is the fact that the state is expending so many other facilities that otherwise parents would have paid for,” he explained.

“...I do not have evidence to show that children are dropping out because some schools are asking parents to make some contributions. It may be happening but the question is what is the scale and whether, indeed, those schools need additional resources.

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He called for more thorough investigations and research in order to come out with the actual figures of school enrolment at the basic level.

Ayariga conceded the amount of the grant may be low but said any such increase as was being recommended by CHRAJ would be an index of the amount of money available to government and how much of it is allotted to the education ministry.

He is convinced that government would always prioritize education and make the necessary expenses as and when it is needed.