

The meetings of various Committees of the West African Examinations Council (WAEC), Sierra Leone were held in Freetown from Tuesday, October 26 to Friday, October 29, 2010. The Committees that met during the period included the Sierra Leone Aptitude Tests and Examinations Committee (SLATEC), Sierra Leone Administrative and Finance Committee (SLAF) and the Sierra Leone National Committee (SLNC) which is the highest decision-making organ of the Council in Sierra Leone. The Council's Committees are made up of Government nominees as well as representatives of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, Universities, Conference of Principals of Secondary Schools (CPSS) and other interests.

The Sierra Leone Aptitude Tests and Examinations Committee, at its meeting, received reports on the examinations conducted by WAEC in Sierra Leone in the 2009/2010 reporting period. It considered reports on irregularity cases and applied appropriate sanctions against perpetrators of the malaise – teachers, candidates and schools. It also advised WAEC to relocate the private candidates' examination centres from areas that were prone to malpractice. The Committee endorsed for implementation by government, teachers, parents, candidates, schools and other stakeholders the recommendations contained in the Chief Examiners' Reports to enhance candidates' performance in subsequent examinations. The Committee urged WAEC and the Conference of Principals of Secondary Schools to continue to sensitize candidates, schools and other operators of the novel e-registration process so that the problems associated with poor handling of the facility would be eliminated.

The Committee reiterated its earlier call on the Government of Sierra Leone to take a decisive look at the low candidature subjects like Shorthand and Typewriting with a view to effecting their replacement by development-oriented subjects like ICT in the teaching curriculum. It observed with deep concern that the decision to adopt the 6-3-4-4 System of Education in Sierra Leone was yet to be officially communicated to WAEC for the implementation of the aspects of the Government's decision relating to the examinations conducted by the Council. It then urged the relevant government agencies and/or departments to always endeavour to keep the Council abreast of any change/shift in government policy and provide the guidance needed by the Council to continue to discharge its responsibilities creditably.

The Sierra Leone Administrative and Finance Committee, at its meeting, considered among other matters, the Reports of the Internal and External Auditors on the National Office Accounts. The Committee commended the Management for prudent management of resources and for ensuring strict compliance with the Council's existing monitoring mechanisms for the prevention of waste and fraud.

It called on the Government of Sierra Leone to give the desired urgent attention to the

consideration and endorsement of the proposed marginal increase in the examination fees charged by the Council to enable the Office to stay afloat in the face of the rising cost of developing and printing of test papers, conduct of examinations, marking of candidates' scripts, processing of results, etc., etc.

The Sierra Leone National Committee commended WAEC for initiating awards for top-performing candidates in its examinations in Sierra Leone. It appealed to the government, corporate organisations and philanthropic private individuals to institute prizes and awards similar to what obtains in some other Member Countries of WAEC, to motivate the candidates to aim at excellence in their academic pursuits. The Committee urged the National Office to sustain the current tempo of its ICT deployment in service delivery through which it had assisted the nation to build capacity of the youths and other stakeholders. It expressed the need for stakeholders in education to constantly accentuate the problem of examination malpractice, with a view to finding lasting solution to the evil.

The Committee noted with delight, that the statistics made available to it at the meeting showed greater gender parity in the enrolment for the various examinations, comparatively better performance by female candidates than their male counterparts in certain subjects (including some that were hitherto dominated by male candidates) as well as a general improvement in candidates' performance. The Committee therefore, commended the government for its people-oriented policies and programmes, which were already showing prospects and positive implications for national growth and manpower development.

At the end of the weeklong series of meetings, the Registrar to Council, Alhaja (Mrs.) Mulikat A. Bello, expressed appreciation to the President and Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone for the visible efforts being made to increase both access and quality in education.

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