



In 1948, the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate and the University of London School Examinations Matriculation Council discussed with the West African Departments of Education the future policy of school examinations as would be best suited to the needs of West Africa. Following this discussion, the late Dr. G. B. Jeffery, F.R.S., Director of the University of London's Institute of Education, was invited in October 1949 by the British Secretary of State for the Colonies to visit West Africa to study and advise on a "proposal that there should be instituted a WEST AFRICAN SCHOOL EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL".

After a three-month visit to West Africa, touring The Gambia, Sierra Leone, Ghana (then called The Gold Coast) and Nigeria from December 1949 to March 1950, Dr. Jeffery submitted a report (since known as the Jeffery Report) strongly supporting the proposal for a WEST AFRICAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL and making detailed recommendations on the composition and duties of the Council. The four West African governments adopted and published the report in late March 1950, without reservation and an ordinance establishing the Council as a corporate body was drafted by the West African Inter-Territorial Secretariat in consultation with the governments. The ordinance was first passed by the Legislative Assembly of the Gold Coast in December 1951 as the West African Examinations Council Ordinance No. 40 of 1951 and was later made effective by similar enactments by the Governments of Nigeria, Sierra Leone and The Gambia.

The Ordinances charged the Council with determining the examinations required in the public interest in West Africa and empowered it to conduct such examinations and to award certificates, provided that the certificates did not represent a lower standard of attainment than equivalent certificates of examining authorities in the United Kingdom.

A temporary office with a small staff headed by the late Mr. Kenneth Humphreys, the first Registrar to the Council, was set up at the offices of the West African Inter-Territorial Secretariat in Accra. Early in 1953, the Accra Office moved to a building near the former Department of Education on Rowe Road which the Gold Coast Government made available, and a site for more permanent offices was secured at Achimota. Later in the year, the new office buildings at Achimota were occupied.

In Lagos, in the same year, the Government of Nigeria also made available a large block of offices at the Technical Institute, Yaba, which became the seat of the Deputy Registrar. In Sierra Leone and The Gambia, the Council, in the meantime, worked through the Department of Education.

An office was opened in Freetown in 1958, the year in which the Council's London Office was also opened. The national office of the Council in The Gambia was opened in Banjul (then Bathurst) in January 1973.

The first meeting of the Council took place in Accra from 24th to 27th of March, 1953. It was attended by three nominees of the Secretary of State, namely the Chairman of the Council, Mr.

A. N. Galsworthy; Chief Secretary of the West African Inter-Territorial Secretariat, Dr. G. B. Jeffery (representing the University of London); and Mr. J. L. Brereton, Secretary of the Cambridge Syndicate (representing the University of Cambridge). There were, in addition, 13 members nominated by the governments of The Gambia, Sierra Leone, Ghana and Nigeria, and ten observers. The Council received from the Registrar a brief report of work done since his arrival and proceeded to establish five committees, namely, the Administrative and Finance Committee (initially called the Executive Committee), the School Examinations Committee, the Public Service Examinations Committee, the Professional, Technical and Commercial Examinations Committee, and the Local Committee (replaced in 1956 by the National Committee).

Since then, the names of the Committees have changed and new ones created. The Committees now include the Administrative and Finance Committee, the Appointments Committee and the Examinations Committee, at both the international and national levels. In each country, there is a National Committee to which all Local Committees report.

Liberia became the fifth member country when she was admitted into full membership of the Council at the 22nd Annual Meeting held in Lagos in March 1974. Two years later, in April 1976, an office of the Council was established in Liberia and in January 1977, the Council moved into its separate building in Monrovia.

In March 2002, the Council celebrated its 50th anniversary in Abuja, Nigeria, with the theme 'WAEC: 50 Years of Excellence'. The highlight of the celebration was the launching of a book on the history of the Council- The West African Examinations Council (1952-2002): Half a Century of Commitment to Excellence and Regional Cooperation.