

SECTION ONE BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

1.1 Education and Training in Sierra Leone

The Constitution of Sierra Leone, 1991 enjoins the Government to “direct its policy towards ensuring that there are equal rights and adequate educational opportunities for all citizens at all levels by –

- a) ensuring that every citizen is given the opportunity to be educated to the best of his [her] ability, aptitude and inclination by providing educational facilities at all levels and aspects of education such as primary, secondary, vocational, technical, college and university;
- b) safeguarding the rights of vulnerable groups, such as children, women and the disabled in securing educational opportunities; and
- c) providing the necessary structures, finance and supportive facilities for education as and when practicable.

Eradication of illiteracy through free adult literacy programmes, free compulsory basic education and primary and junior secondary school levels are some of the means through which the constitutional educational objectives shall be realized.

In the process of realizing the educational objectives the Government has been supported by international agencies and partners and have been influenced by policy developments and programmes in education globally. Thinking and acting globally and locally have been the watchwords in the educational development processes in Sierra Leone.

A significant international education event in 1990, the World Conference on Education for All (EFA), has greatly impacted education policy and programmes for over a decade and a half. The Conference Declaration re-emphasized “the right to education for all”.

As the delegates at the Jomtien Conference deliberated on the potential for shaping the destinies of the world's nations, a group of rebels in Sierra Leone were plotting how to seize power through large scale destruction. The rebel war, as this act of rebellion came to be known, was to negatively impact the nation's psyche and severely devastate the lives and livelihoods of the people.

The education infrastructure bore the brunt of this insurgency resulting in widespread damage to its resources both human and material. It was during the course of the war that a new system of education, the 6-3-3-4 system of education was introduced replacing the 7-5-2-4- system.

1.2 Introduction of the 6-3-3-4 System of Education

The 6-3-3-4 system of education was introduced in 1993 against the backdrop of previous educational reform measures in 1970 (*White Paper on Education Policy*), in 1976, (Education Review – All Our Future) in 1979, (Education Sector Review (GOSL and IDA).

The 6-3-3-4- system was informed by the 1988 Report of the Task Force on External Examinations for Secondary Schools in Sierra Leone, and the Report of the World Conference on Education for All (the Inter-Agency Commission, 1990). In 1991, The Report of the Advisory Committee on the Management of Schools (Mondeh-Fewry Report) which was published in 1991, made “revolutionary recommendations” on the running of schools. As one of the signatories to the Joint Conference Declaration, Sierra Leone made a commitment to basic education by establishing the National Commission for Basic Education in 1994.

The socio-economic malaise which characterized the twenty-year period preceding the introduction of the 6-3-3-4 system of education and its adverse effects on curricular and managerial aspects of schools dictated a new path to education.

The rebel war which had broken out in 1991, with thousands of young people as its protagonists underscored the need for system reform in education. Parallels are clearly discernible between the period preceding the introduction of the 6-3-3-4 system and the current period which provide the context for the work of the Gbamanja Commission of Inquiry. The fact that the 6-3-3-4 system of education is part of the Commission's remit is no coincidence because the circumstances preceding the introduction of the 6-3-3-4 and those subsequent to it have striking similarities.

The new system of education addressed issues and needs that were critical: the need for increased access to basic education, prioritization of adult and non-formal education to address the high rate of illiteracy, emphasis on technical and vocational education, emphasis on special needs education and the education of girls and women. Increased access to, and diversification of education appeared to have been the overriding concern. Issues of quality, retention, completion and learning achievement seemed to have received less attention.

1.3 Shortcomings of the 6-3-3-4 System

A consensus seems to have been built around the view that the 6-3-3-4 system has been somewhat dysfunctional. Its seeming dysfunctionality is evidenced by low quality of teaching and learning resulting in poor pupils' performance in examinations, high incidence of teacher attrition, and a high school dropout rate. Following are specific examples of system dysfunctionality:

- low pupils' performance;
- high rate of drop-out from school;
- alarming increase in school girl pregnancy;
- non functional technical and vocational curricula;
- widespread indiscipline in school;
- pervasive acts of corruption and graft;
- commonplace unethical behaviour of teachers;
- inefficient school administration;

- poor home/school-community relations;
- inefficient management of schools;
- uncondusive learning environment;
- unavailability of the prerequisites for meaningful technical and vocational education and practicals for science subjects.

From the beginning the introduction of the 6-3-3-4 was problematic. It was introduced during the rebel war ostensibly to address the contradictions of its antecedents but apparently in reaction to the decisions of the governments in Nigeria and Ghana to transform their education system. Obviously Sierra Leone was ill prepared for the transition because resources were unavailable as the war efforts consumed a disproportionate amount of the national budget which itself was constrained due to reduced productivity as a result of the war. The prevailing socio-economic situation was unfavourable to accommodate the 6-3-3-4 innovation. Besides, there was wide-spread displacement of the population including pupils, parents and teachers. Educational institutions and teaching and learning materials were either destroyed or looted. Overall, schools and other educational institutions bore the brunt of the rebel onslaught.

1.4 The 6-3-3-4: Concept and Design

Anecdotal and empirical evidence support the view that the 6-3-3-4 system was good in its concept and design but its implementation, given the prevailing circumstances at the time, was problematic. The time lapse between the introduction of the system (1993) and the publication of the *New Education Policy* (1995) indicated a glaring lack of planning prior to the introduction of the system. The proverbial cart, the system, was placed before the horse, the Policy. The introduction of the system was therefore not informed by policy. The Policy when published addressed a number of themes including:

1.5. *Universal access to basic education*

“Every person – child, youth and adult – shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs”. (Article 1 of the Jomtien Declaration)

The system sought to *widen* access to basic education for all – children, youth and adults. This was in conformity with both the provisions of the *World Declaration on Education For All*, and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). But, given the situation of resource inadequacy provision was not envisaged for the exponential growth in enrolment of which universal access was a consequence.

1.6 *Recognition of diversity of learning needs*

The 6-3-3-4 system was characterized by curricular diversity in recognition of the inherent diversity of learning needs. A key feature of its provision was its multiple paths to learning opportunities which the technical and vocational paths indicated. Technical and vocational provision recognised the need for middle level skilled manpower which is indispensable for stimulating economic growth.

Like the other aspects of the system this provision was not efficiently implemented. In addition to the problem of resource inadequacy, given the capital and recurrent cost of Technical Vocational Education, negative attitudes to Technical Vocational Education frustrated the process of implementation. First, is the white collar job mentality and lack of respect for the dignity in labour. Parents and pupils opt for Technical Vocational Education as a last resort. Second, lack of parity of esteem between academic and Technical Vocational subjects. While some pupils were required to pursue the academic route with 5 WASSCE passes, others were allowed to proceed to tech voc with 4 passes. The latter were seen as less able. This affected the general public perception of tech voc education.

Technical Vocational schools are generally characterized by poorly trained and qualified teachers, lack of equipment and materials, inappropriate learning and training environments and a generally negative perception of technical and vocational schools. The proliferation even mushrooming of tech voc schools and centres, many of low quality, in response to the learning needs of early school leavers and dropouts has reinforced the negative perception. Tech Voc education is generally perceived as an inferior option. According to one secondary school principal, “pupils feel insulted if you attempt to enrol them for a technical/vocational programme”. They would rather leave and swell the ranks of unemployed school leavers in street corners and roundabouts.

In the absence of out-of-school programmes for continuing education many of the school leavers either relapse into illiteracy or use the little education which they have towards undesirable ends. The policy to give “top priority to adult and non-formal education as a complement to formal education” has not been matched by relevant and quality programmes. Most of what goes on in the name of adult and non-formal education leaves a lot to be desired.

1.6 Continuous Assessment

The 6-3-3-4 system was designed with continuous assessment as its centrepiece. Assessing pupils’ learning requires special skills and competencies which many teachers have not acquired. The need to assess the affective and psychomotor domains of learning has compounded the problem of inadequate expertise.

An effective continuous assessment system requires both technical competence and technological support. Data-bases of students’ progress are an essential need. But with rampant computer illiteracy in schools and a lack of technical expertise of teachers the chaos that passes for continuous assessment is not unexpected.

Evidence obtained in respect of continuous assessment indicated not only incompetence in its administration but acts of dishonesty, corruption and fraud. Grades were given to pupils which they had not earned. Some submissions to the Commission spoke of the school being a market place where grades can be bought either in cash or in kind.

1.7 Guidance and Counselling

Another neglected aspect of the 6-3-3-4 system is Guidance and Counselling. The curricula of teacher training institutions include the component of Guidance and Counselling as an area of specialization. This has resulted in a corps of guidance counsellors with expertise in social guidance but without a smattering in career guidance. Many pupils seem at a loss in deciding on their career paths. The non-preference or even derision for technical and vocational subjects by pupils is related to the lack of adequate career guidance.

Guidance counsellors have complained about the lack of time and space to guide and counsel pupils given the reduced instructional time which the double shift system has occasioned. Besides, heads of schools have assigned guidance counsellors to teach subjects for which schools have been unable to recruit suitably qualified teachers. Guidance counselling especially career guidance has been a missing link in schools. The high incidence of indiscipline in school and out of school could be explained in part by the lack of effective guidance counselling services.

1.8 Special Needs Education

The schools for the blind and deaf are well known institutions serving special needs learners. Those serving learners with physical disabilities are less well known but striving to serve those in need. Learners with mental retardation are among the unreached and unserved. Much is not known about this category of learners with special needs. *The New Education Policy* of 1995 proposed “a databank for the disabled and special needs” as a source of information for reorganization and establishing of institutions throughout the country. This proposal is yet to see action.

1.9 National Languages

A national language is among the nine core subjects offered at Junior Secondary School (JSS). The introduction of national languages aimed at forging national unity by facilitating communication among Sierra Leoneans. It would appear that the aim

has not had the desired effect because tuition and use of the languages have been regionalized. Students in the South and East tend to offer Mende: those in the North, Themne and those in the Western Area, Krio. Although Krio is widely spoken in many parts of the country its variants have seriously affected written and spoken English in schools. A majority of primary and secondary school pupils are unable to communicate clearly in speaking and writing. English language is the official medium of communication, and all examinations, including the BECE and WASSCE are written in English language. Numerous data exist indicating that learners even at the university level lack proficiency in spoken and written English.

There is a need therefore to re-visit the issue of national languages. This should include the need to establish a national language institute whose remit would include language policy development. A language policy should be a prerequisite for a national adult literacy programme.

The Institute of Sierra Leonean Languages (TISLL) a Christian faith-based organisation and the Bible Society of Sierra Leone have both made great strides in developing orthographies for a number of Sierra Leonean Languages and translating the Bible. Arabic is taught in Muslim faith based schools and is widely used in daily religious exercises in Muslim schools. French is still taught in schools but performance in it in the WASSCE remains dismal.

1.10 Girl Child Policy and Programme

Although the Girl Child Policy and Programme has accelerated access to basic education for girl children in the targeted regions of North and East, retention has not been matched by access. The high rate of girls who drop out of school during and after JSS 3, and the increasing incidence of school girl pregnancy are creating a crisis which should be urgently addressed. The increasing number of teenage mothers and fathers is a potential social problem with implications and ramifications for youth unemployment and increasing levels of poverty given increased dependency burden.

1.11 Teaching Service Commission

Fourteen years after its establishment was proposed a Teaching Service Commission is yet to be established. The proposal for a Sierra Leone National

Service Commission also awaits action. When established it would significantly contribute to teacher discipline and output.

1.12 Policy Implementation

A lot has been written and said about renewing the education system. But a gulf appears to exist between intention and action. Policy proposals without commitment, will (political will) and resources would be mere wishful thinking. It is hoped therefore that the proposals which are contained in this report in the form of recommendations would not suffer the fate of those which have been made previously. Political will translated into provision of resources for implementation and the commitment of the implementers would be the answer to the problem of poor performance.

This section has attempted to review the status of a number of proposals in the *New Education Policy*. Many of the proposals have remained on paper without any attempt to implement them. Both the will and resources for implementation should be urgently mobilised.

SECTION TWO

2.1 Post-Conflict Education Reform Proposals

The introduction of the 6-3-3-4 System of Education in 1993, and the *New Education Policy* in 1995 saw the country in the throes of a civil conflict. This conflict would explain, in part, why the 6-3-3-4 system was problematic; a number of aspects of the Policy were not implemented.

Following the end of the conflict there has been calls to action to get the education system to deliver at a high level of quality. Action plans such as the Education For All (EFA) Action Plan, and those related to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have provided benchmarks for implementation.

This section briefly examines key issues and proposals contained in the

- National Recovery Strategy Sierra Leone 2002 – 2003
- The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2004
- Second Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRSP II) 2008 – 2012
- Education Sector Plan
- Present Challenges, Future Opportunities 2007 Education in Sierra Leone:

In 2002, the National Recovery Strategy stated that:

Quality issues are also an additional major concern. These include inadequate teacher training opportunities, overcrowding, particularly in classes 1 and 2; an inadequate supply of teaching and learning materials; a demotivated teaching force due to delays in the payment of salaries, and unavailability of teachers...

Non-Formal Education

This sector is largely unregulated. Consequently, provision for children, youths and adults out of school is poor in quality. There is no structural link with the formal system and the absence of equivalency means that routes of access and exit are unsystematised.

The need for an integrated system which accords parity of esteem to both the formal and non-formal sectors was called for.

2.1 The National Recovery Strategy Sierra Leone 2002-2003

This document details the achievements and constraints in the social sector including education. The policy of free primary education which was introduced in 2000 has accelerated access to primary education as evidenced by the increase in enrolment. Increase in primary school enrolment has however resulted in decline of quality. Overcrowded classrooms, poorly trained and qualified teachers, proliferation of sub standard primary and secondary schools are some of the problems which have persisted in the education sector.

2.1.2 The Out-of-School Children of Sierra Leone

The primary-aged out-of-school study (UNICEF Sierra Leone, 2008) identified critical problems in the out-of-school sector including untimely pregnancy of young girls, early marriage and a large out-of-school population (ca. 300,000). Non-formal education is in urgent need of reactivation to serve the out-of-school population and significantly reduce the illiteracy rate.

2.1.3 The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP II)

In his introduction to the Second Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRSP II), the Head of State made reference to “the significant problems in the health and education sector”. These have largely contributed to Sierra Leone’s low ranking in the UN Human Development Index. Strategic responses to address this situation would include

Improving access to education and raising the completion, especially for primary and junior secondary schools; improving the quality of education through extensive training programmes for teachers; providing adequate teaching and learning materials; improving the conditions of service for teachers especially in remote areas; providing early childhood care for more children; and encouraging the girl child to attend and complete school.

(Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma)

The PRSP II outlines the challenges with which the education sector is grappling.

These include:

- Weak management and delivery systems
- Overcrowded classrooms
- Shortage of teaching and learning materials
- Poor internal efficiency of the education system

These challenges are the centrepieces of the **vicious cycle of poor performance**.

2.1.4 Education in Sierra Leone: Present Challenges and Future Opportunities

The World Bank publication on Education in Sierra Leone (The World Bank, 2007)

Presents detailed analyses of the challenges of education and proposals on the strategic priorities to address the challenges. What are the challenges?

- lack of complete access to **quality** universal primary education
- low retention of pupils
- high drop-out rate
- large out-of-school primary age population
- poor pedagogy
- poor learning achievement
- inadequate resources (human, material and financial)

The existence of an enabling policy and legal environment and strong government commitment to education are the opportunities that are likely to facilitate the process of addressing the challenges.

SECTION THREE

3.1 Design and Method of the Investigation

The nature and purpose of the visits investigation largely dictated a hybrid of quantitative and qualitative method to address the key question of poor performance of pupils in the BECE and WASSCE in 2008. A descriptive design was adopted without losing sight of the need for correlation given the causal nature of the central problem which the investigation sought to address.

3.1.2 Data Collection Instruments

Ten data collection instruments were designed to obtain information from a largely heterogeneous group of respondents which included:

- School administrators (Headteachers and Principals of Secondary Schools)
- Secondary school teachers
- Secondary school pupils
- Parents and community members
- Local authorities
- Faith leaders
- Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports officials including the Honourable Minister
- Civil Society representative
- Members of Boards of Governors
- Officials of the Universities (University of Sierra Leone and Njala University).
- Officials of the West African Examinations Councils
- Officials of Teachers' Colleges and Polytechnics
- Students of Polytechnics

3.1.3 Data Collection Methods

The following data collection methods were used:

- Survey (Questionnaire)
- In-depth interviews during public hearings
- Focus Group Discussions
- Content analysis of relevant documentation

- Observation of teachers(in teaching-learning situations)
- Study Visits to Ghana, Kenya and Nigeria
- Structural and systems analyses

3.1.4 Sampling Procedures and Techniques

The heterogeneity of the populations necessitated use of various probability and non probability sampling methods including Simple Random Sampling, Stratified Random Sampling and Purposive Sampling.

The sampling of schools for the investigation consisted of four sub-samples namely: Junior Secondary Schools (JSS) Senior Secondary Schools (SSS), technical and Vocational Institutions. (Tech/Voc) and Polytechnics/Teacher Training Colleges/ Universities.

According to the roster of schools available to the Commission, the total number of schools, Tec/Voc and Polytechnics/Colleges in the various districts is indicated in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Number of Schools by District.

No.	District	No. of schools in Population				
		JSS	SSS	Tech/Voc	Ptec/Col	Total
1	Kailahun	22	11	7	1	41
2	Kenema	19	12	5	1	37
3	Kono	17	11	0	0	28
	Sub-Total	58	34	12	2	106
4	Bombali	26	10	4	2	42
5	Kambia	14	5	0	0	19
6	Koinadugu	12	4	0	0	16
7	Port Loko	25	8	2	1	36
8	Tonkolili	24	8	2	0	34
	Sub-Total	101	35	8	3	147
9	Bo	33	26	14	1	74
10	Bonthe	7	3	2	0	12
11	Moyamba	16	13	2	0	31
12	Pujehun	7	3	1	0	11
	Sub-Total	63	45	19	1	128
13	Western Rural	8	14	2	2	26
14	Western Urban	65	32	8	2	107
	Sub-Total	73	46	10	4	133
	Grand Total	295	160	49	10	514

There are 295 JSS, 160 SSS, 49 Tech/Voc and 10 Polytechnics/Colleges making a total of 514 educational institutions. Sixty percent of these institutions were selected from each of the various levels to make up the sample for the investigation. The number of institutions selected from the different levels in each District is shown below:

Table 2: Number of Schools Selected by District.

No.	District	No. of schools in Sample				
		JSS	SSS	Tech/Voc	Ptec/Col	Total
1	Kailahun	13	7	4	1	25
2	Kenema	11	7	3	1	22
3	Kono	10	7	0	0	17
	Sub-Total	34	21	7	2	64
4	Bombali	16	6	2	1	25
5	Kambia	8	3	0	0	11
6	Koinadugu	7	2	0	0	9
7	Port Loko	15	5	1	1	22
8	Tonkolili	14	5	1	0	20
	Sub-Total	60	21	4	2	87
9	Bo	20	16	8	1	45
10	Bonthe	4	2	1	1	7
11	Moyamba	10	8	1	0	19
12	Pujehun	4	2	1	0	7
	Sub-Total	38	28	11	2	79
13	Western Rural	5	8	1	1	15
14	Western Urban	39	19	5	1	64
	Sub-Total	44	27	6	2	79
	Grand Total	176	97	28	8	309

A total of 309 schools were randomly selected using a random number generator instrument. One hundred and seventy-six (176) JSS, 97 SSS, 28 Tec/Voc and 8 Polytechnics/Colleges were also selected.

3.1.5 Data Analysis

Computer-aided analysis of quantitative data was the main analytical method used to analyse the mass of quantitative data. Qualitative data were categorised to derived patterns and trends. Triangulation and inter-coder agreement (Silverman, 2002: 122) largely informed the analysis of qualitative data.

3.1.6 Procedures and Processes

The work of the Commission was done through the following procedures and processes:

1. Regular and special meetings of the Commission between January and December 2009. During these meetings the Commission designed the investigation, determined the procedures and the instruments for data collection.

Document analysis, questionnaire survey, interviews, Focus Groups Discussions (FGDs), classroom observation, and analysis of oral and written testimonies and submissions were the methods of data collection. These yielded a mass of quantitative and qualitative data which were appropriately analyzed.

2. Visits were made by members of the Commission to:

(i)	Kono District	-	Eastern Province
(ii)	Tonkolili District	-	Northern Province
(iii)	Bombali District	-	Northern Province
(iv)	Koinadugu District	-	Northern Province
(v)	Port Loko District	-	Northern Province
(vi)	Kenema District	-	Eastern Province
(vii)	Bo District	-	Southern Province
(viii)	Pujehun District	-	Southern Province
(ix)	Moyamba District	-	Southern Province
(x)	Kambia District	-	Northern Province
(xi)	Kailahun District	-	Eastern Province
(xii)	Bonthe District (Mainland)	-	Southern Province

3. Overseas study visits were made to Ghana, Nigeria and Kenya to study the education systems and their effects on the performance of pupils.
4. Solicitation of feedback to the preliminary findings and their validation.
5. Writing and editing of the Report.
6. Presentation of the report to H.E. The President

SECTION FOUR

4.1 Nature and Extent of Poor Performance

There was an alarmingly high failure rate in the 2008 WASSCE examination. More than forty percent of the candidates failed with F9; the worst failed grade.

Table 3 indicates twenty-six subjects across the subject clusters with an F9 grade.

Table 3: List of F9 Failed Subjects

Subjects In Which Candidates Failed	Percentage Of Failure
Biology	88.15
Chemistry	87.64
Mathematics (Core)	86.54
Further Mathematics	86.54
Geography	85.08
Physics	75.92
Health Science	75.40
Technical Drawing	75.40
Agricultural Science	75.27
Economics	72.61
Commerce	70.24
Visual Art	68.00
Business Management	67.77
English Language	62.14
Clerical Office Duties	61.52
Typewriting	60.00
Clothing and Textiles	59.14
Christian Religious Knowledge	58.25
Financial Accounting	56.07
Islamic Studies	53.11
Principles of Cost Accounting	52.97
Shorthand	50.00
French	41.40
Home Management	40.81
Government	40.26
Literature-in-English	

Source: West African Examinations Council

Table 4: indicates the failure rate by subject cluster.

Table 4: Failure Rate by Subject Cluster.

(a) Business Subjects	Percentage
Business Management	67.77
Clerical Office Duties	61.52
Commerce	70.24
Principles of Cost Accounting	52.97
Financial Accounting	56.07
Shorthand	50.00
Typewriting	60.00

(b) General Subjects	Percentage
Economics	72.61
Geography	85.08
Government	40.26
Christian Religious Knowledge	58.25
Literature-in-English	?

(c) Mathematics Subjects	Percentage
Further Mathematics	86.54
Mathematics (Core)	86.54

(d) Languages Subjects	Percentage
English Language	62.14
French	41.40

(e) Sciences Subjects	Percentage
Health Science	75.40
Biology	85.15
Physics	75.92
Chemistry	87.64
Agricultural Science	75.27

(f) Technical and Vocational Subjects	Percentage
Visual Art	68.00
Technical Drawing	75.40

Although the rate of failure is across subject clusters it is more alarming in Mathematics and the Sciences. The consequences of this are grave as Sierra Leone's technological development will be seriously imperilled without a technological human resource base. Implementation of policies in Science and Technology will also be constrained.

The situation of poor performance in 2008 was not different from that of the preceding years.

A pattern of poor performance seemed apparent.

Gender Dimension of Poor Performance

The gender dimension of poor performance is indicated by subjects in Table 5 tables:

Table: 5 Business Subjects

SUBJECTS	MALE			FEMALE		TOTAL
	NO. SAT.	NO. & % PASS A¹-C⁶	NO. SAT	NO. & % PASS A¹-C⁶	NO. SAT	NO. & % PASS A¹-C⁶
Business Management	4562	747 (16.37)	3203	225 (7.02)	7765	972 (12.52)
Clerical Office Duties	10	1 (10.00)	43	5 (11.63)	53	6 (11.32)
Commerce	2437	419 (17.19)	1563	97 (6.21)	4000	516 (12.90)
Financial Accounting	5265	650 (12.35)	3697	289 (7.82)	8962	939 (10.48)
Principle of Cost Accounting	4406	12.55 (28.48)	2923	598 (20.48)	73.29	18.53 (25.78)
Shorthand	0	0 (0.00)	4	0 (0.00)	4	0 (0.00)
Typewriting	1	0 (0.00)	9	3 (33.33)	10	3 (30.00)

Source: West African Examinations Council

With the exception of Clerical Office Duties and Typewriting, male candidates performed better than their female counterparts. This seemingly positive picture could be construed as negative in its stereotypical reinforcement with respect to Clerical Office Duties and Typewriting being girls'/women's vocation. Modern organizations and offices demand multi skilled personnel for optimal utilization of scarce resources and effective and efficient functioning. In Sierra Leone today, there should be no men's work and women's work. Typewriting is a necessary skill for managers of both sexes. What the results do indicate is that girls and women (in the future) are being trained to serve in lesser (subordinate) roles. This appears to detract from the strident efforts towards girls' and women's empowerment on the one hand and gender equality on the other hand. In the long run the self concept of girls and women will be negatively affected by vocational role stereotyping.

Table: 6: Arts Subjects

SUBJECTS	MALE		FEMALE		TOTAL	
	NO. SAT.	NO. & % PASS A ¹ -C ⁶	NO. SAT	NO. & % PASS A ¹ -C ⁶	NO. SAT	NO. & % PASS A ¹ -C ⁶
Christian Religious Knowledge	3519	649 (18.44)	1541	237 (15.38)	5060	886 (3.84)
Economics	11483	514 (4.48)	5974	156 (2.61)	17457	670 (3.84)
Geography	5874	167 (2.84)	1678	61 (3.64)	752	228 (3.02)
Government	7158	2799 (39.10)	2236	476 (21.29)	9394	3275 (34.86)
History	8066	3217 (39.88)	2563	749 (29.22)	10629	3966 (37.31)
Islamic Studies	1383	278 (20.10)	291	59 (20.27)	1674	337 (20.13)
Literature-in-English	10916	1141 (10.45)	5606	421 (7.51)	16522	1562 (9.45)

Source: West African Examinations Council

According to Table 6, male candidates performed better than female candidates in all the subjects with the exception of Islamic Studies where their performance is almost on a par and Geography where female candidates performed better than male candidates.

Table 7: Language Subjects

SUBJECTS	MALE		FEMALE		TOTAL	
	NO. SAT.	NO. & % PASS A ¹ -C ⁶	NO. SAT	NO. & % PASS A ¹ -C ⁶	NO. SAT	NO. & % PASS A ¹ -C ⁶
English Language	16470	1180 (7.16)	7429	592 (7.97)	23899	1772 (7.41)
Arabic	13	5 (38.46)	0	0 (0.00)	13	5 (38.46)
French	129	59 (45.74)	56	20 (35.71)	185	79 (42.70)

In Table 7 the performance in English Language is almost on a par with female candidates performing slightly better. The male candidates however, performed better than the female candidates in French. No female candidate entered for Arabic.

The crisis of poor performance is starkly in evidence in English Language. Out of the 23,899 candidates who took the examination only 1,772 passed in the A1 to C6 categories. Twenty-two thousand, one hundred and twenty seven (22,127) candidates failed the examination. It is instructive to note that the failure rate for male candidates is almost the same for female candidates. The reasons for the mass failure have partly been identified by the Chief Examiners in their reports.

In science and Mathematics the situation of mass failure is also apparent as indicated in Table 8.

Table 8: Poor Performance in Science and Mathematical Subjects

SUBJECTS		MALE		FEMALE		TOTAL	
	NO. SAT.	NO. & % PASS A ¹ -C ⁶	NO. SAT	NO. & % PASS A ¹ -C ⁶	NO. SAT	NO. & % PASS A ¹ -C ⁶	
Further Mathematics	1963	166 (8.46)	470	23 (4.89)	2433	189 (7.77)	
Mathematics (Core)	1644	734 (4.46)	7426	92 (1.24)	23870	826 (3.46)	
Agricultural Science	15796	1720 (10.89)	5453	216 (3.96)	21249	1936 (9.11)	
Biology	12869	253 (1.97)	5909	208 (3.52)	18778	4.61 (2.46)	
Chemistry	3800	90 (2.37)	1394	94 (6.74)	5194	184 (3.54)	
Health Science	3499	151 (4.32)	1518	100 (6.59)	5017	251 (5.00)	
Science (Core)	1071	626 (58.40)	269	166 (61.71)	1341	792 (59.06)	
Physical Health Education	888	390 (43.92)	181	65 (35.91)	1069	455 (42.56)	

Source: West African Examination Council

Out of the eight subjects in the Science and Mathematics clusters, performance is dismal in all subjects except Science (Core) with pass rates of 58.40 percent for the male candidates and 59.06 percent for the female candidates. Table 8 indicates a relatively better performance in Physical Health Education although the adverse comments of the Chief Examiners apply.

“The most common weaknesses was that the candidates were unable to read and understand the questions properly before attempting them. They were not able to follow simple instructions given to them...

Some candidates misinterpreted the questions while some did not understand the questions at all”.

Source: West African Examination Council

With the pervasive poverty of performance in Mathematics and Science-related subjects expectation of good performance overall would obviously be low given the pre-requisite competence of Mathematics and Science for performance in Technical and Vocational subjects. Table? indicates worse performance for both male and female candidates in all the subjects with two exceptions namely, Applied Electricity and Woodwork for the male candidates. Participation of female students in technical and vocational subjects is either very low or non existent. Where they have participated their performance has, in general, been alarmingly poor. The implication is that the domain of “technical and vocational” would be a male preserve. Table 9 illustrates this potential constraint for a gender sensitive development.

Table 9: Poor Performance in Technical and Vocational Subjects:

SUBJECTS	MALE		FEMALE		TOTAL	
	NO. SAT	NO. & % PASS A ¹ -C ⁶	NO. SAT	NO. & % PASS A ¹ -C ⁶	NO. SAT	NO. & % PASS A ¹ -C ⁶
Applied Electricity (Alt.A)	33	32 (96.97)	0	0 (0.00)	33	32 (96.97)
Building Construction	13	2 (15.38)	1	0 (0.00)	14	2 (14.29)
Electronics	20	7 (35.00)	2	0 (0.00)	377	97 (31.82)
Engineering Science	369	97 (26.29)	8	0 (0.00)	377	97 (25.73)
Metal Work	29	22 (75.86)	0	0 (0.00)	29	22 (75.86)
Technical Drawing	179	35 (19.55)	3	0 (0.00)	182	35 (19.23)
Woodwork	35	29 (82.86)	0	0 (0.00)	35	29 (82.86)
Clothing and Textiles	6	1 (16.67)	253	66 (26.09)	259	67 (25.87)
Foods and Nutrition	26	2 (7.69)	463	221 (47.73)	489	223 (45.60)
Home Management	13	10 (7.52)	1259	244 (19.38)	13292	254 (18.25)
Management-in-Living	167	6 (3.59)	707	112 (15.84)	874	118 (13.50)
Visual Art	1	0 (0.00)	24	0 (0.000)	25	0 (0.00)

Source: West African Examinations Council

The situation of poor performance in individual subjects, subject clusters and gender is also reflected in poor performance by region. This is indicated in Table 10.

Table 10: Poor Performance in English Language and Mathematics by Region

SUBJECTS		MALE		FEMALE		TOTAL	
	NO. SAT.	NO. & % PASS	NO. SAT	NO. & % PASS	NO. SAT	NO. & % PASS	
Eastern Region	2486	13 (0.52)	7668	0 (0.00)	3254	13 (0.40)	
Northern Region	3255	27 (0.83)	965	0 (0.00)	4220	27 (0.64)	
Southern Region	2674	23 (0.86)	1120	6 (0.54)	3794	29 (0.76)	
Western Region	8087	101 (1.25)	4592	36 (0.78)	12679	137 (1.08)	
Total	16502	164 (0.99)	7445	42 (0.56)	23947	206 (0.86)	

The crisis of poor performance is a national one. Poor performance in the Western region, in particular, belies the assumption that a high concentration of qualified teachers and schools result in good performance of students.

4.2 Patterns and Trends in Poor Performance

A comparative analysis of results for three years (2006-2008) indicates a consistent pattern of poor performance although performance in some subjects indicate upward, downward and fluctuating trends.

4.2.1 Comparative Analysis of Performance over the Years (2006-2008)

Table11: Poor Performance with an Indication of Relative Improvement

SUBJECTS	CUMULATIVE % PASS IN GRADES A1-C6		
	2006	2007	2008
Christian Religious Knowledge	10.69	16.47	17.57
Further Mathematics	2.87	3.75	7.79

Table12: Poor Performance with an Indication of Decline

SUBJECTS	CUMULATIVE % PASS IN GRADES A1-C6		
	2006	2007	2008
Biology	11.25	9.92	2.46
Geography	16.17	3.65	3.03
Business Management	44.39	37.48	12.54
Health Science	9.92	9.83	5.03

Table 13: Fluctuating Trend in Performance (2006-2008)

SUBJECTS	CUMULATIVE % PASS IN GRADES A1-C6		
	2006	2007	2008
English Language	11.20	16.57	7.44
Mathematics	3.62	4.22	3.47
Economics	7.79	1.89	3.85
Literature-in-English	5.62	15.67	9.49
History	45.15	49.24	37.47
Agricultural Science	11.45	5.33	9.13
Government	47.66	34.02	35.02
Commerce	78.69	7.62	12.92
Financial Accounting	10.58	15.18	10.50
Chemistry	8.42	9.72	3.55
Physics	10.46	7.14	9.71
Principles of Cost Accounting	5.41	27.72	25.32

Source: West African Examinations Council

SECTION FIVE

5.1 REASONS FOR POOR PERFORMANCE

The Chief Examiners' have, in their reports, identified the reasons for performance as far as the candidates are concerned. Some of the reasons have alluded to school-related factors and others have implications for home-related factors. This section examines the reasons for poor performance according to the Terms of Reference. The extent to which the following have contributed is discussed.

School Environment

Home Environment

The Curriculum

Teachers' and their Attitudes and Methodologies

Teachers' Motivation

Pupils' Preparedness

Class Sizes

The two shift System

Tertiary Institutions

Proprietors

Head Teachers and Principals

The Ministry of Education Officials

Social Factors

5.1.1 School Environment

The problem of poor performance is the consequence of a complexity of factors relating to the school, the community in which the schools are located and the home from which the pupils come. To adequately understand the reasons for poor performance the interrelatedness of its causes should be equally understood.

The school environment consists of the physical environment i.e. the physical conditions and facilities for learning. Besides, there are the social conditions which are developed and sustained by the nature of the interaction between the pupils and the teachers.

Schools throughout the country bore the brunt of the decade-long rebel war. There was wide-spread destruction of school buildings and learning materials. This consequently affected the quality of teaching and learning environment which was reported to have “reached the lowest levels seen in the world” (UNICEF, 2008, World Bank 2007, GOSL, 2005). In spite of the rehabilitation efforts by the Government and its partners many schools are in a poor state of disrepair with broken furniture. Misuse and theft of school property is commonplace. Unsecured and unguarded premises make it easy for community members in schools’ neighbourhood to cart away school property.

Extra large class sizes, in some cases over 80 pupils in class, makes teaching and learning an exercise in futility. What goes on for teaching in such environments is dictation of the teacher’s notes which are poorly copied by the pupils. With poor writing and spelling abilities many pupils are unable to benefit from the teacher’s monologue. Teacher-dominated classes have become the rule rather than the exception.

Extra large classes have become a feature of many schools in urban areas generally and in particular in the Western Area. Irregular admission of pupils who have failed the National Primary School Certificate (NPSE) examination are admitted into JSS1, and of those who have failed the BECE are admitted into SS1.

Irregular movement from one secondary school to another without the required Documentation including transfer certificates is a common phenomenon throughout the country. The Commission was informed of cases of parents bribing school teachers and administrators to admit their children and wards into classes above their cognitive level of attainment.

Irregularly admitted pupils are the majority of the BECE casualties. Those who irregularly proceed to secondary school fail to make the grade at the WASSCE. The Chief Examiners' Reports are replete with cases of candidates who

<p>“displayed poor command of the English Language”; Did not “understand the requirements of the questions”; “Were not adequately prepared for the examination”.</p>
--

Prominent among candidates' weaknesses was their “in ability to read and write English” Candidates who have spent six years in school and have progressed normally would hardly be found wanting in such lapses.

5.1.1.1 The Two Shift System

Submissions to the Commission were overwhelming and unanimous in their expression of dissatisfaction with the two-shift system. Calls were made for its phasing out. Many asserted that “the weather is not conducive to effective learning in the afternoon”. Others informed the Commission that “teachers who teach in both morning and afternoon shifts are sooner burnt out”. Pupils who attend school in the afternoon are tired by the time they start school given their involvement in domestic chores at home or in petty street trading. The sight of school children, especially girls, hawking “cold water” and other commodities is familiar to many observers who walk the streets of Freetown.

The two shift system is reported to have led to explosion in school populations, overuse and misuse of school resources, and increasing incidence of indiscipline. With lack of commitment on the part of teachers some of whom had not been paid for up to six months, worn out pupils and very high humidity within the concrete walled classrooms, a recipe for disorder is on offer.

5.1.1.2 Inadequate Teaching and Learning Materials

The Commission observed that many schools do not have Libraries. Some schools with libraries are unable to manage them professionally due to the absence of qualified fulltime Librarians.

The Commission was informed that the Government has provided books and other learning materials through the Textbook Task Force and that some of these were on sale along street pavements.

In the absence of books teachers have resorted to the use of pamphlets which they produce and sell to earn an income. The Commission head the following comments with respect to pamphlets:

“pamphlets are poor substitutes for teaching materials”.
“pamphlets are plagiarised material”.
“pamphlets contribute largely to poor students’ performance”.

Specific instances of teachers penalizing pupils who fail to purchase their pamphlets and of those who give extra marks to “reward” pupils who purchase their pamphlets were cited. The worst reports in connection with pamphlets were received about teachers who included continuous assessment questions in the pamphlets and guidelines on how to do them. This unethical act was contrived to “induce” every pupil to purchase the pamphlet thus increasing the teacher’s income.

An analysis of selected pamphlets indicate that their contents are plagiarized material and their cost is not commensurate with the poor quality of the material. Their authors are apparently violation of intellectual property rights. Calls were made for the banning of pamphlets in schools.

5.1.2 Home Environment

The child’s first school is the home. It is here that the first lessons are learned, attitudes developed and values internalized. The home and the school are closely linked; the home is expected to reinforce what is learnt in school and the school undertakes a process of unlearning in cases where, what the home “teaches” is contrary to what the child is expected to learn at school. Co-partnership between the home and the school is therefore a critical need. The home environment in Sierra Leone is generally a non-literate one. Majority of

parents and guardians are unable to read and write in any language. It follows therefore that their illiteracy would render them incapable of taking an interest in what their children do in school. The effect of non-literate home environments is largely negative as the school cannot benefit from parental support. In their investigation of the role of the home in poor performance a consensus seemed to have emerged with respect to a major role played by the home. The investigation found that single parent or guardian families/households are increasing and that the number of children who live with both parents is declining as figure 1 indicates Figure 1 exemplifies the emerging pattern of living.

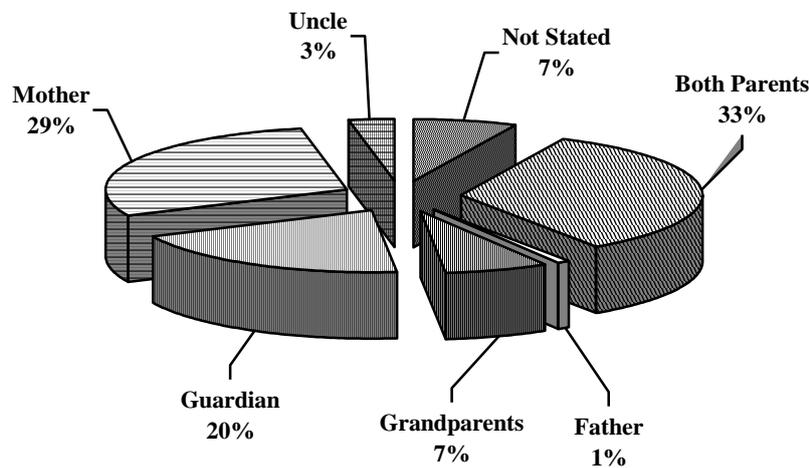


Figure 1: Emerging Pattern of Students' Living

What the figure indicates is that the normal pattern of family living is changing. This is not surprising given the pervasive social change that is taking place with the number of one parent families increasing. The widespread displacement which was as a consequence of the rebel war and increase in the number of orphans are causes of the unfolding social change.

The Commission found a high level of illiteracy and poverty in homes. The correlation between poverty and illiteracy has long been established by, for example, surveys on poverty and Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS).

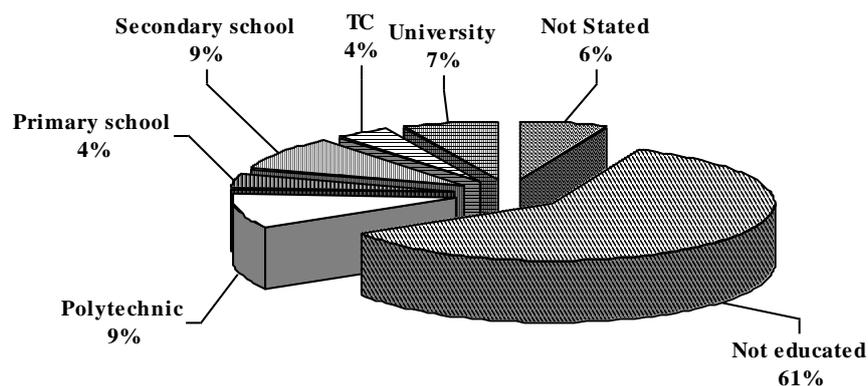


Figure 2: Father's Educational Level

"Not educated" should be taken to mean not literate

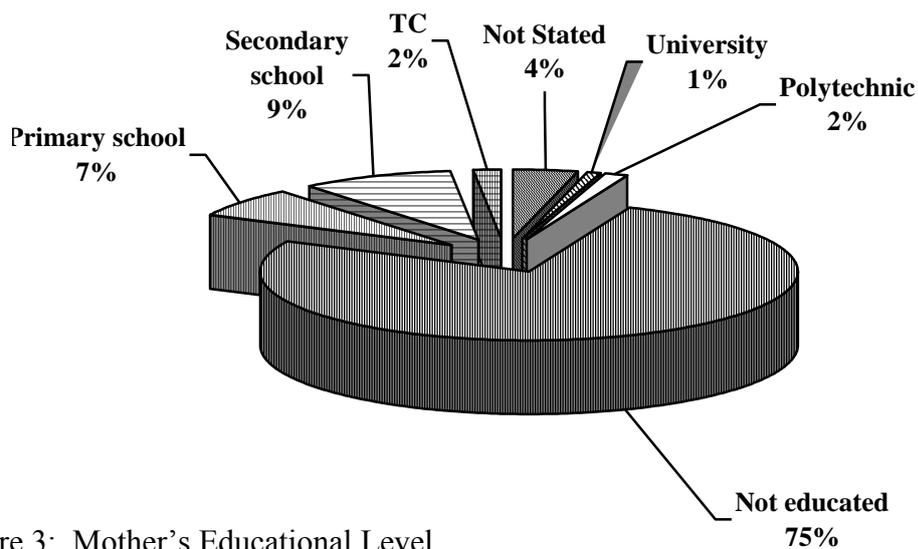


Figure 3: Mother's Educational Level

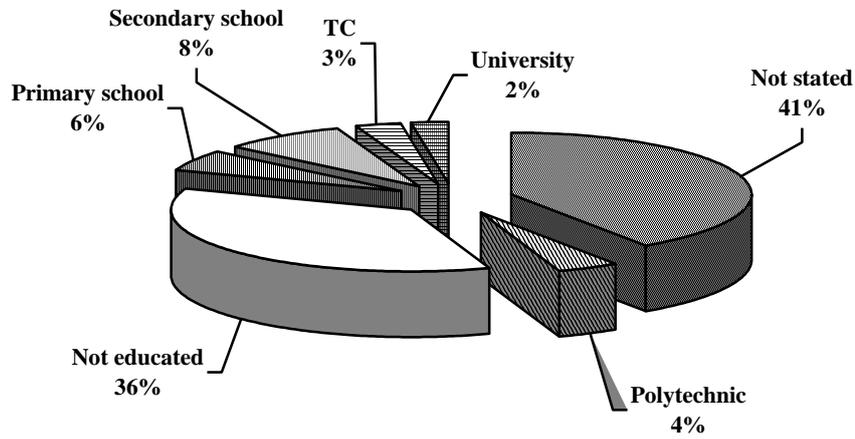


Figure 4: Guardians Educational Level

Conditions for study at home are generally poor with poor lighting, overcrowding besides a lack of support by non-literate parents and guardians.

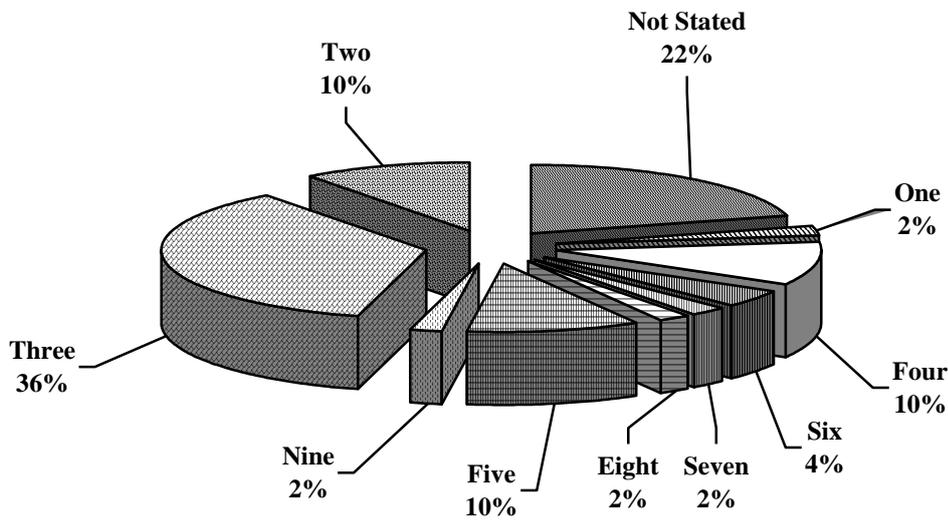


Figure 5: Number of persons Sleeping in Same Room

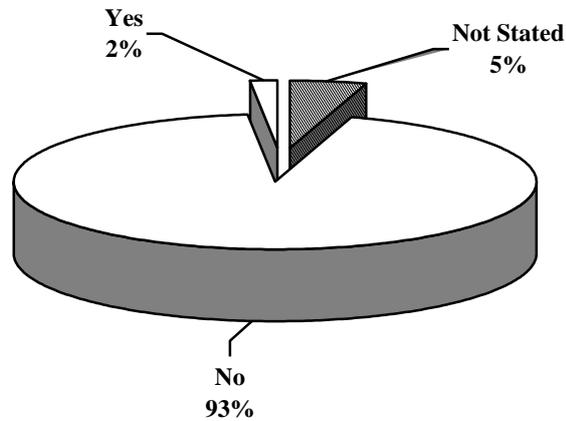


Figure 6: Have Steady Electricity at Home

The Commission is of the view that in the majority of cases, home environments are not supportive of children's learning. Supportive home environments are those in which

- children receive support from their parents, towards their learning'
- children emulate the examples of adults learning;
- parents are motivated to support their children's learning;
- parents help children with their homework;
- the family is engaged in cooperative learning endeavours;
- parents and children discuss a range of self and family development issues

5.1.3 The Curriculum

The curriculum is, what is taught and learned in the context of all the activities organized to enable learning to take place. One of the key features of the 6-3-3-4 system of education when it was introduced in 1993 was the curriculum. The system became synonymous with the curriculum –

Following are the objectives of education based on the 6-3-3-4 system:

- to provide a broad-based education;
- to increase access to basic education for girls through development of incentives;
- to improve the quality and relevance of education;

- to expand technical and vocational education;
 - to increase opportunities for the acquisition of literacy, numeracy, technical and vocational skills within the formal and non-formal sectors;
 - to provide equity in education through measures of quality assurance
 - to develop in children relevant skills, attitudes and values for responsible citizenship.
- (Sierra Leone Government, 1995: 2-3)

The new system and by implication its curriculum was thought to be innovative. The submissions to the Commission indicated that, the feeling of optimism which greeted the introduction of the new system was soon replaced by disappointment. The system has been blamed for all that has gone wrong in education. What went wrong? First, the system itself was introduced without adequate preparation and much thought to the provision of resources that were needed for effective delivery. Equipment and materials for vocational subjects have either been inadequate or unavailable. Second was the perception of technical and vocational education as a low status option. Historically, academic education had been highly valued and given top priority in Sierra Leone.

The 6-3-3-4 Curriculum is comprehensive in its coverage and demanding in its delivery.

In their reports the Chief examiners have identified “inadequate coverage of the syllabus” as one of the reasons for poor performance besides lack of learning resources including textbooks. Teachers lack of knowledge of the content of the curriculum rendered them ineffective in preparing the candidates for the examination.

The following figures indicate the extent of lack of resources for teaching and learning.

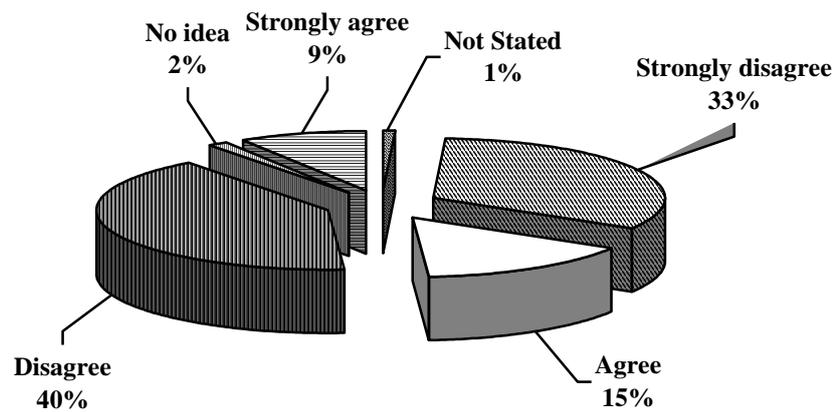


Figure 7: All Subjects Textbooks Available

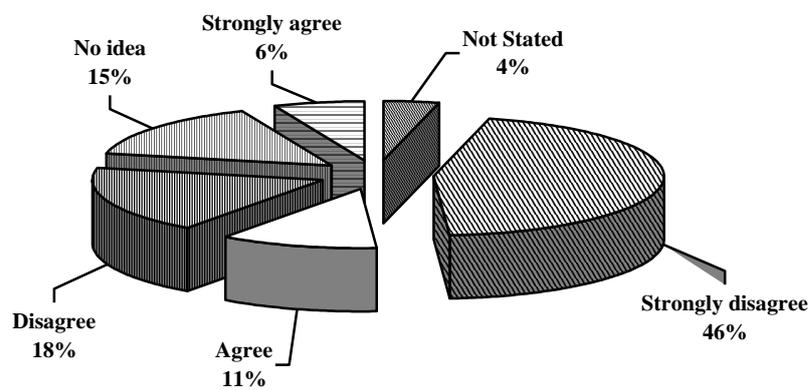


Figure 8: Availability of Equipment for Biology Practicals

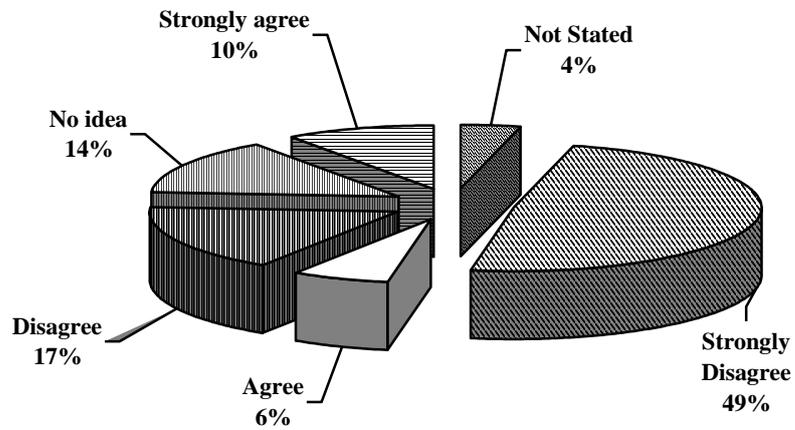


Figure 9: Availability of Equipment for Home Economics Practicals

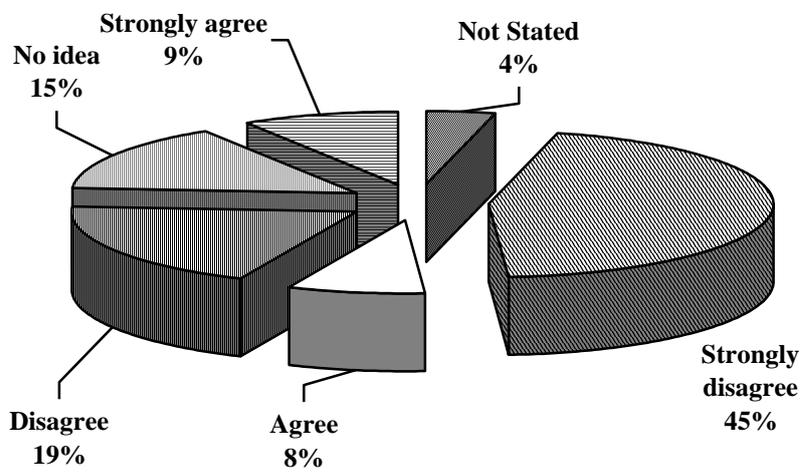


Figure 10: Availability of Equipment for Physics Practicals

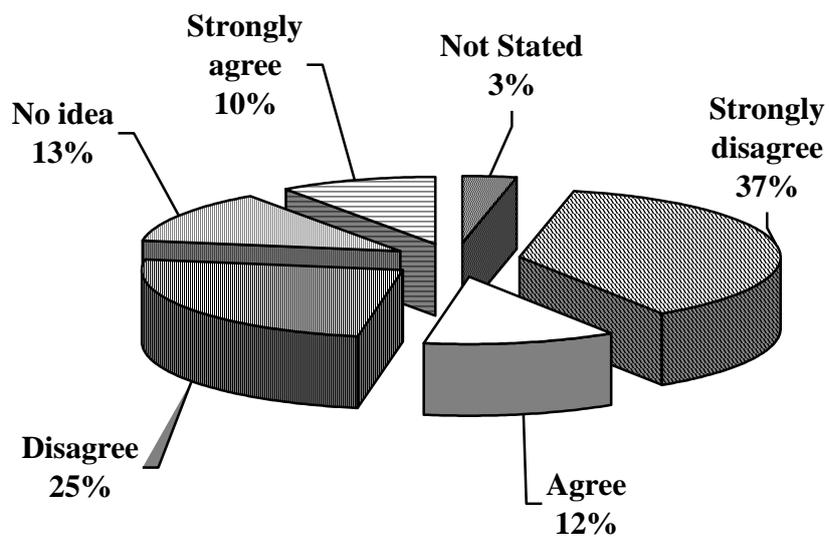


Figure 11: Availability of Equipment for Teaching Introduction Technology

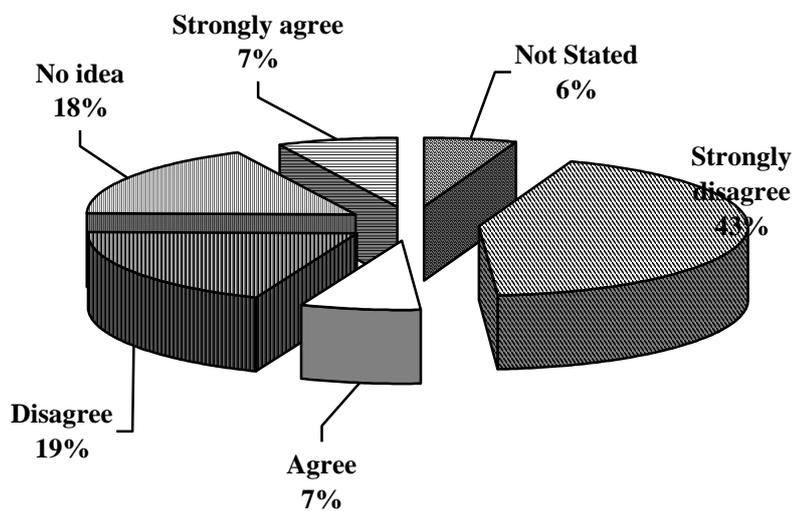


Figure 12: Availability Equipment for Chemistry Practicals

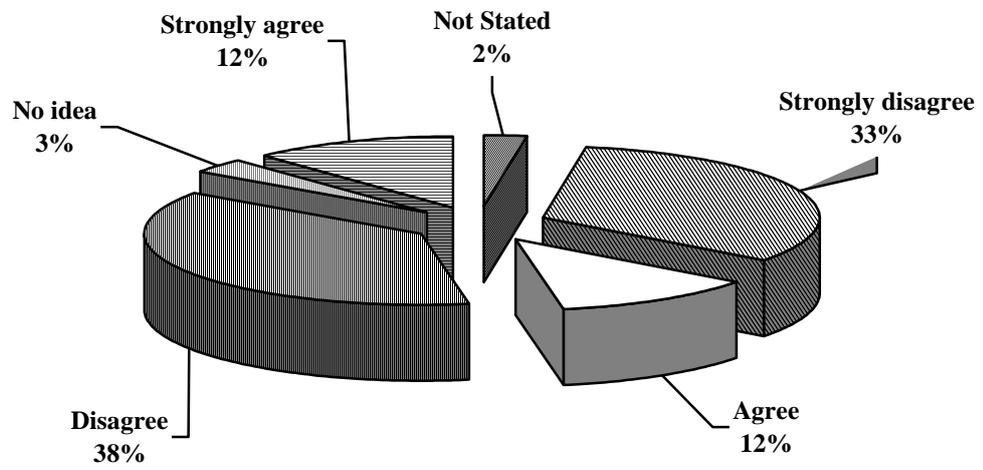


Figure 13: Enough Teaching and Learning Materials Available in School

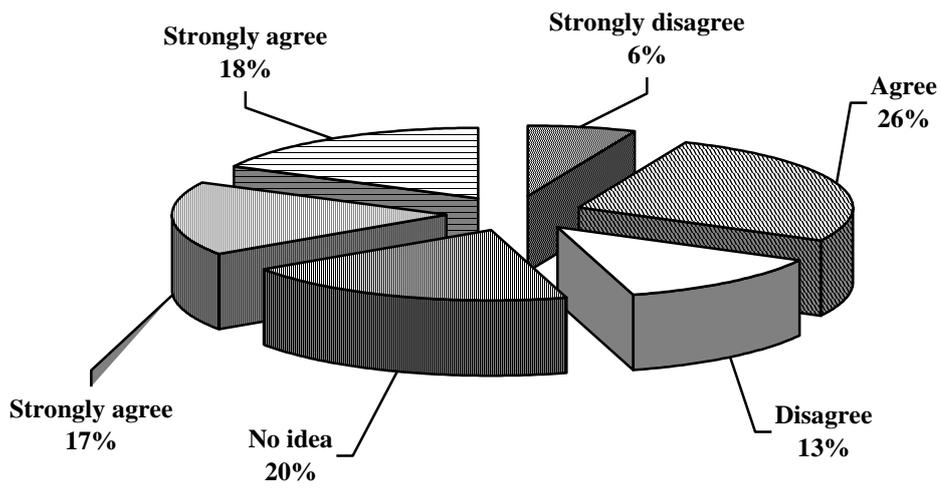


Figure 14: Have WASSCE Syllabus

5.1.4 Teachers and Their Attitudes and Methodologies

An education system is as effective as its teachers. Teachers determine the level of efficiency of an education system and are responsible for its functioning or dysfunctioning.

The 6-3-3-4 education system was designed to hinge on four critical elements namely, development of new curricula, new examinations, a language policy, a Teaching Service Commission and a new financial management system (Sierra Leone Government, 1995: xiii). Conceptually, these were inextricably bound but operationally their functionality left a lot to be desired. The proposed Teaching Service Commission was not established resulting in a missing link.

In the process of the Commission's investigation teachers were severely criticised for various unprofessional behaviours. Most of the comments by Chief Examiners were directed at teachers. They suggested, for example that "teachers must put emphasis on the subject matter and teach their candidates how to answer essay questions".

The problem of teachers has a number of casual factors including the following:

- inadequate training;
- poor remuneration and conditions of service;
- low motivation and self esteem;
- generally poor work environment characterized by overcrowded classrooms;
- poverty.

These factors have resulted in high attrition as teachers leave for so-called greener pastures. Teacher exodus from the education system represents a huge waste of resources.

The survey responses on teachers' attitudes and methodologies indicate the extent of the problem of teachers.

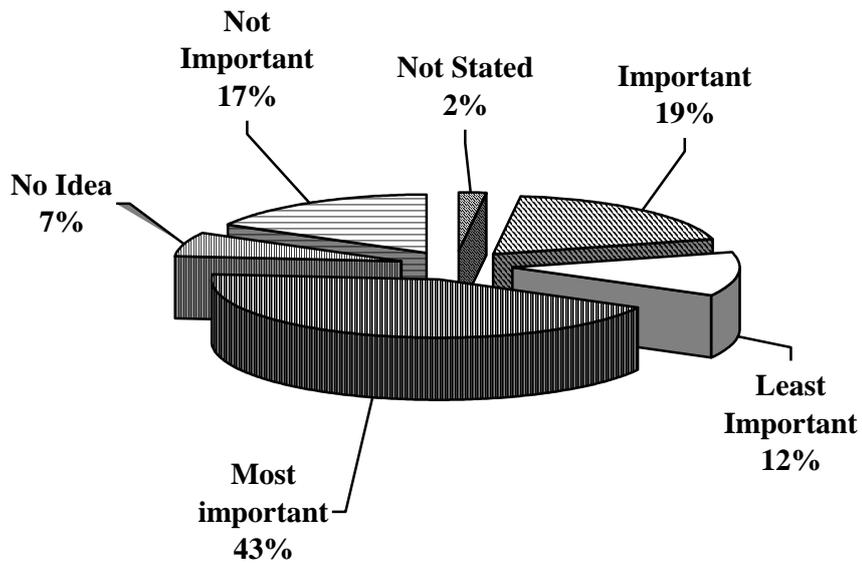


Figure 15: Teachers' Negative Attitudes to Work

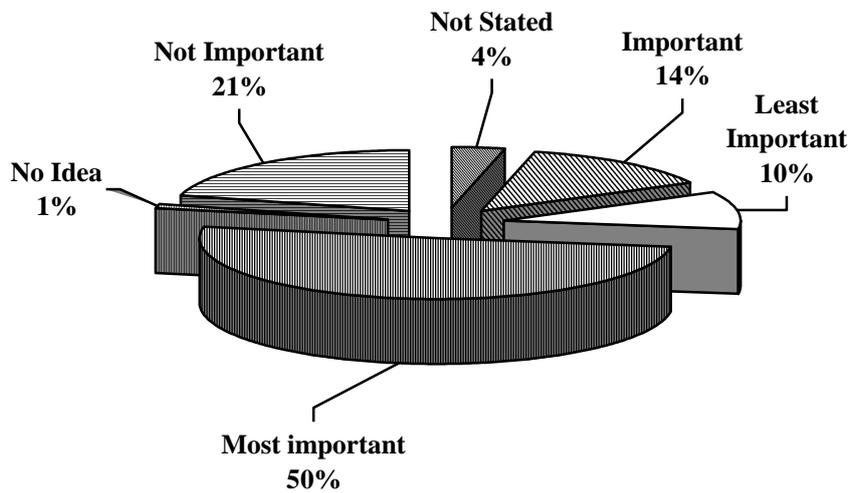


Figure 16: Poor Teaching

Poor Teaching

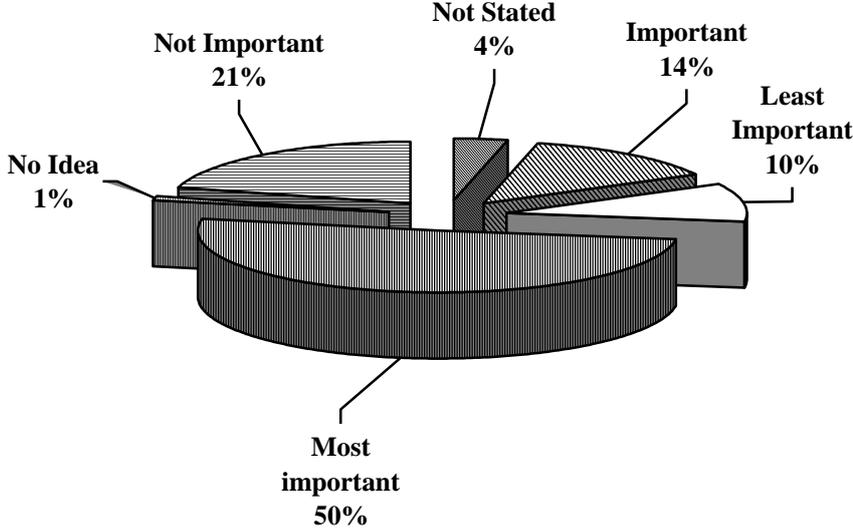


Figure 16: Lack of Effective Teaching

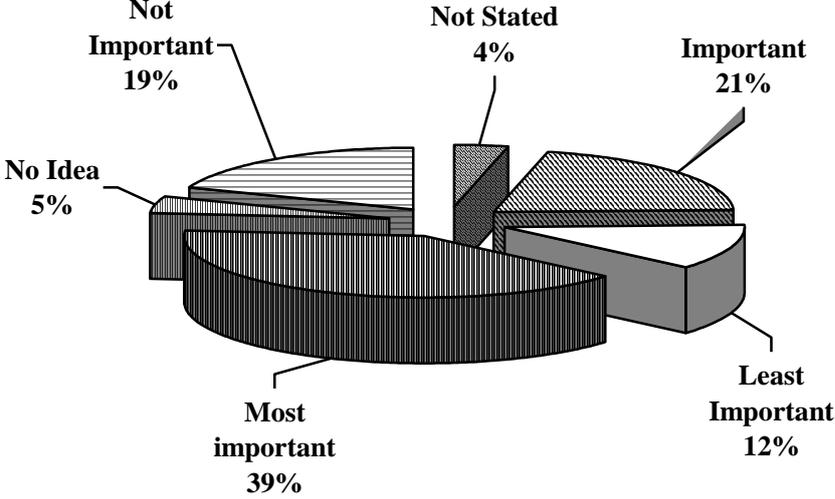


Figure 7: Incompetent Teachers

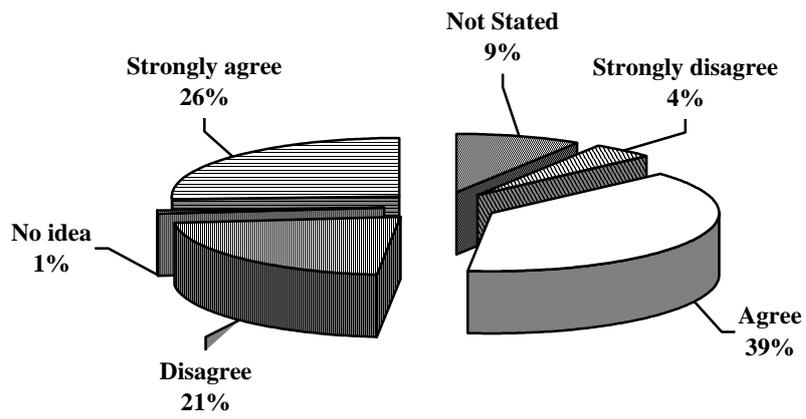


Figure 18: Teachers Returns Marks of Homework/Assignment

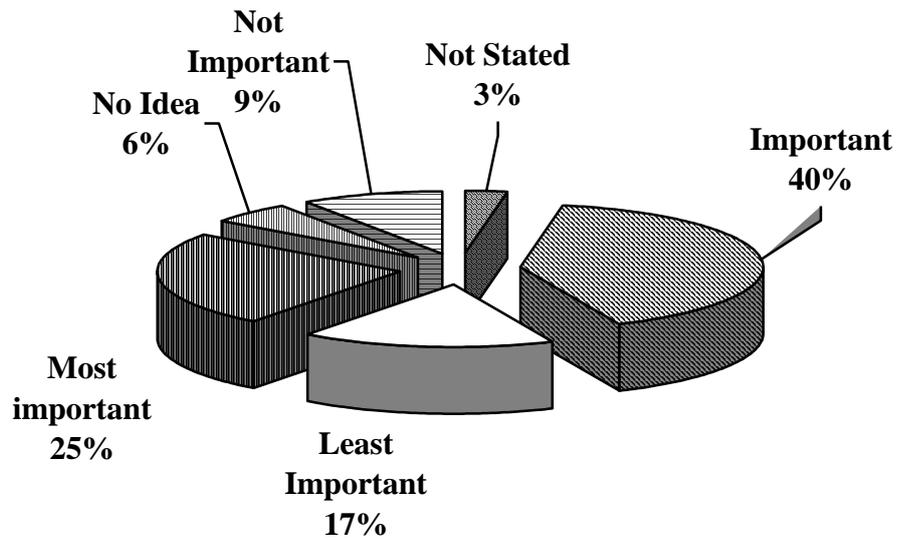


Figure 19: Unethical Teacher Behaviour

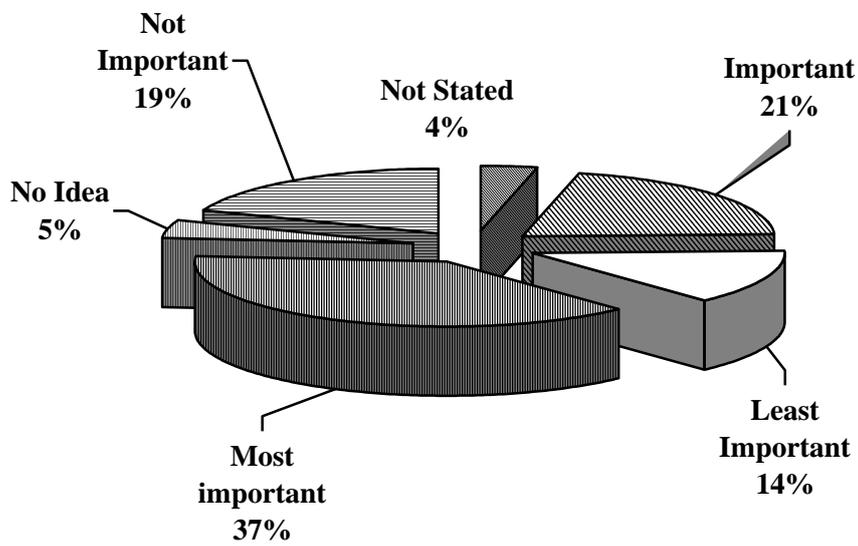


Figure 20: Dishonest Teachers

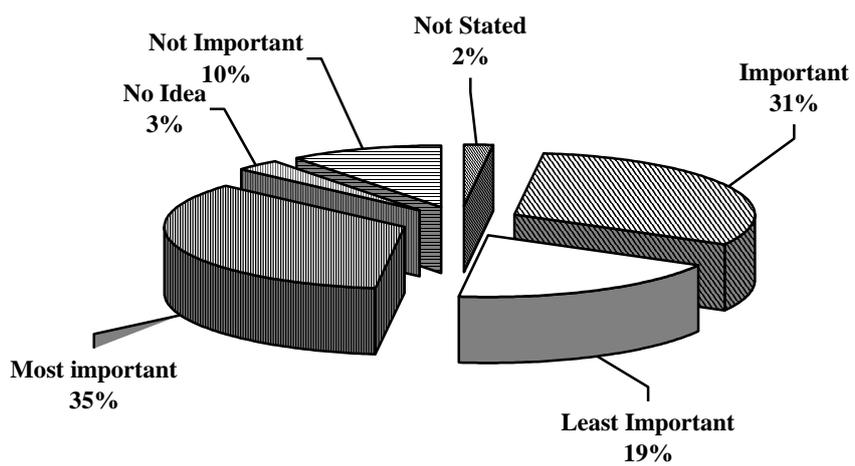


Figure 21: Unprofessional Conduct by Teachers

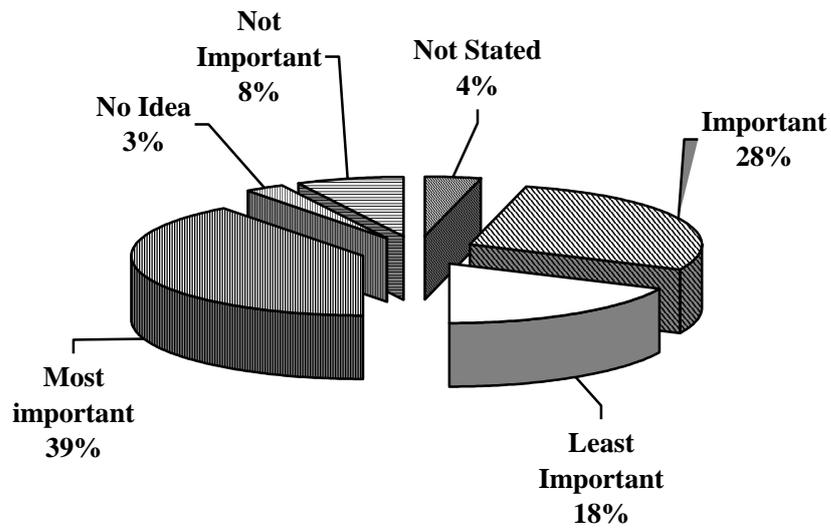


Figure 22: Teachers in Corrupt Practices

Bribery and Corruption in Promotion of Students

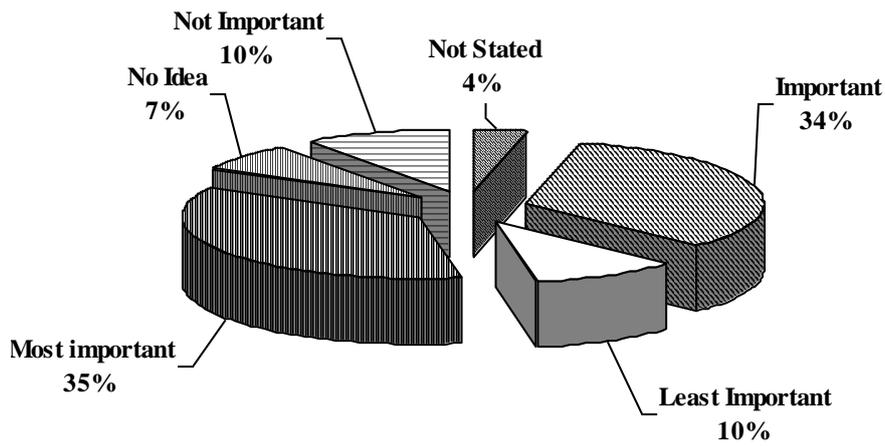


Figure 23: Bribery and Corruption in Promotion of Students

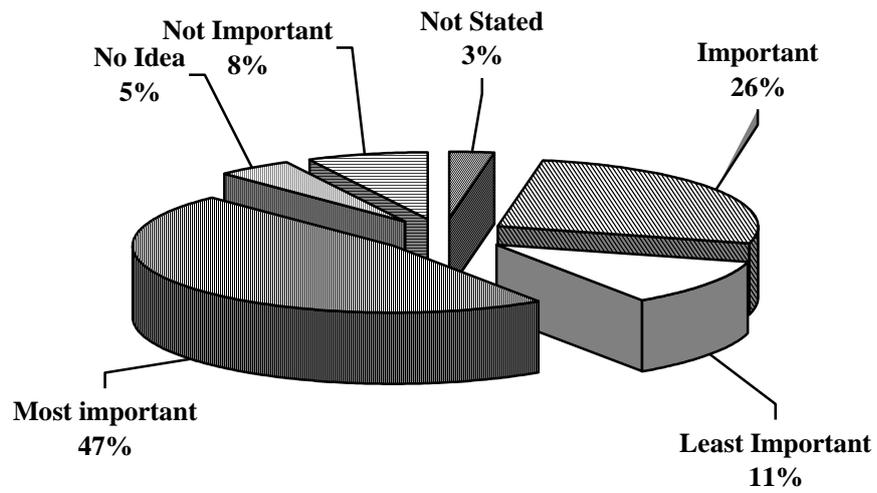


Figure 24: Unfairness in Assessing Students

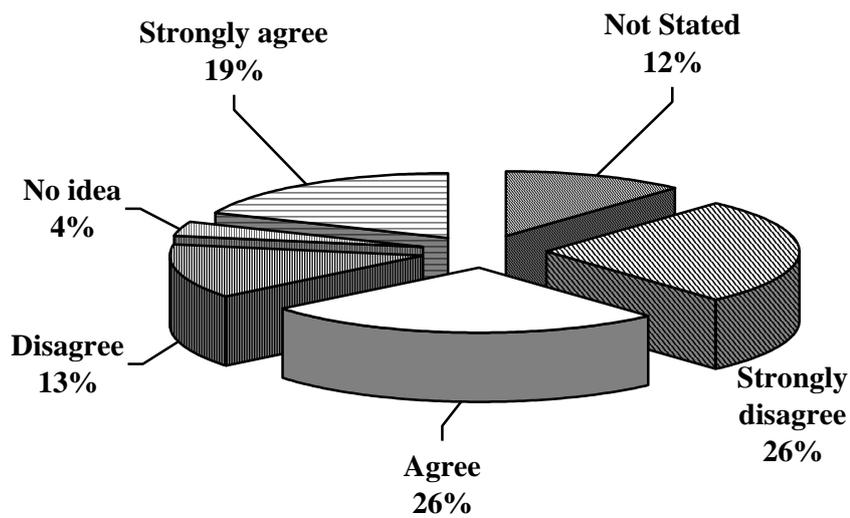


Figure 25: Teachers send Students on Errands out of School

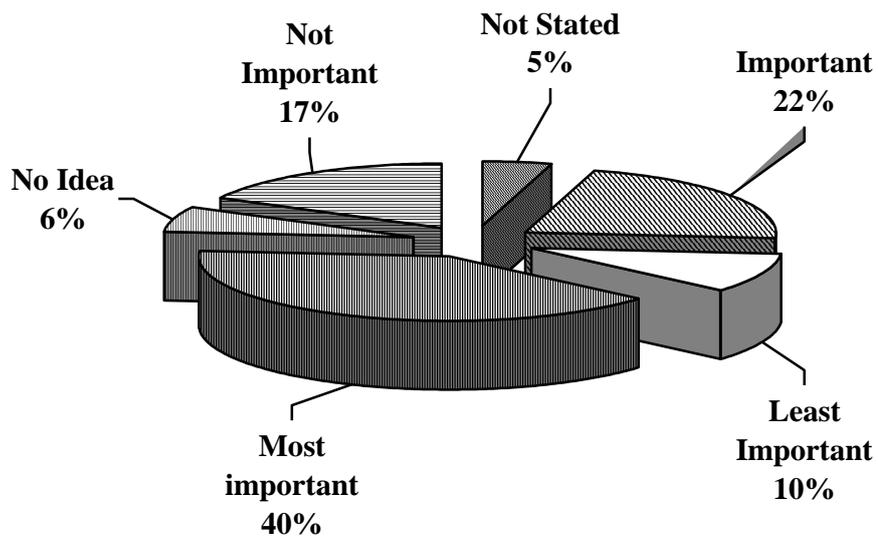


Figure 26: Sexual Harassment of Female Students

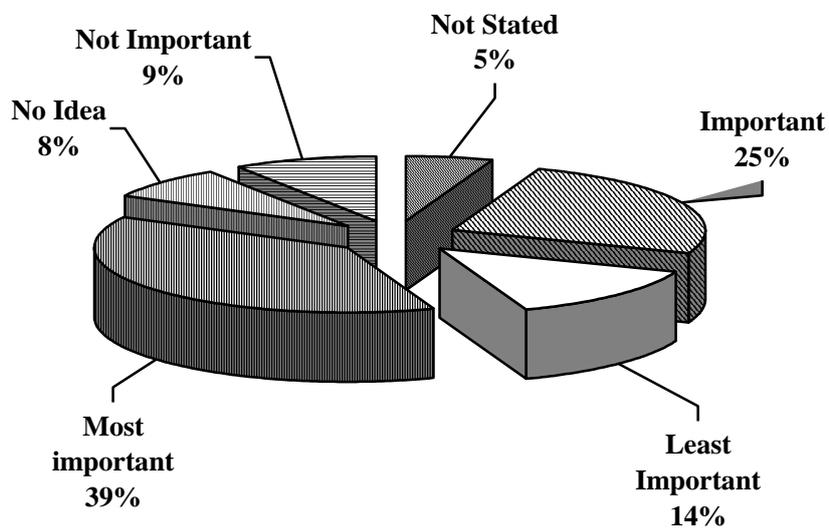


Figure 27: Low Teachers Motivation and Commitment

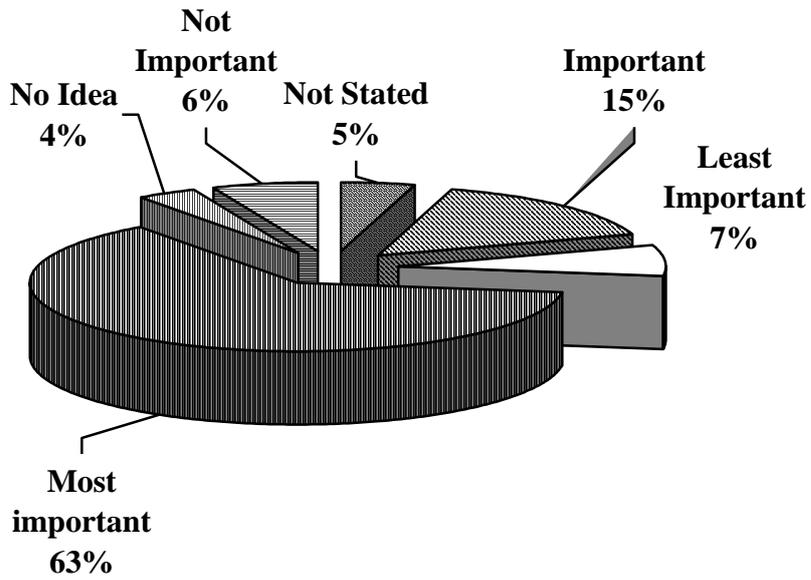


Figure 28: Poor Teacher Salary

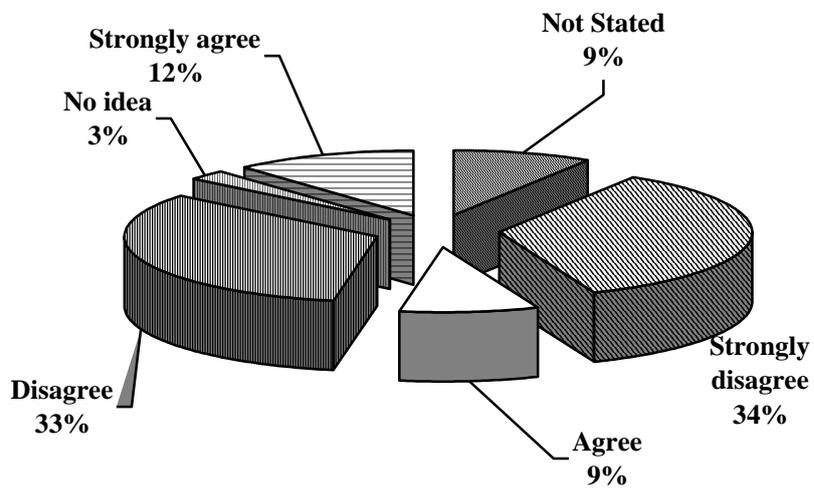


Figure 29: Absence from School

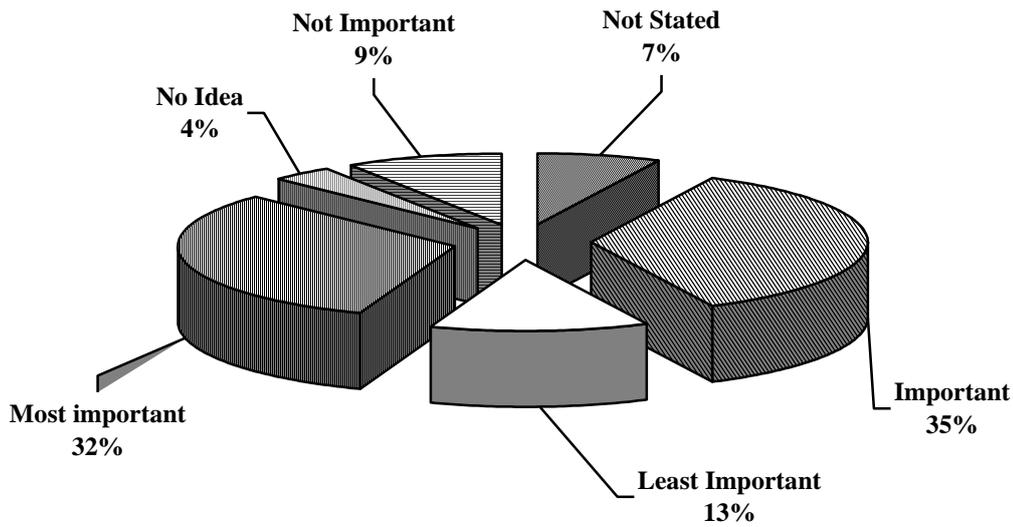


Figure 30: Teacher Attrition

5.1.5 Pupils' Preparedness

From the External Examiners' comments pupils were illprepared for the examinations. This is indicated by their poor written communication skills, and poor in-depth knowledge of the subject matter. They recommended that, "Principals should ensure that their candidates receive adequate tuition from qualified and experienced teachers to enable them perform well".

Illpreparedness is also attributed to inadequate coverage of the syllabus.

They also recommended that, pupils "should be familiar with the current syllabus and make an effort to purchase the prescribed texts, read them and stay in school to obtain tuition from teachers".

Pupils' illpreparedness should be seen from three perspectives; first from the perspective of the engagement of the pupils by the teachers in worthwhile learning endeavours. Second, from the perspective of the pupils' engagement with study materials and completion of assigned work. Third, from the perspective of pupils engagement in social forms of learning.

The investigation found a number of reasons for pupils' illpreparedness as indicated by the survey responses.

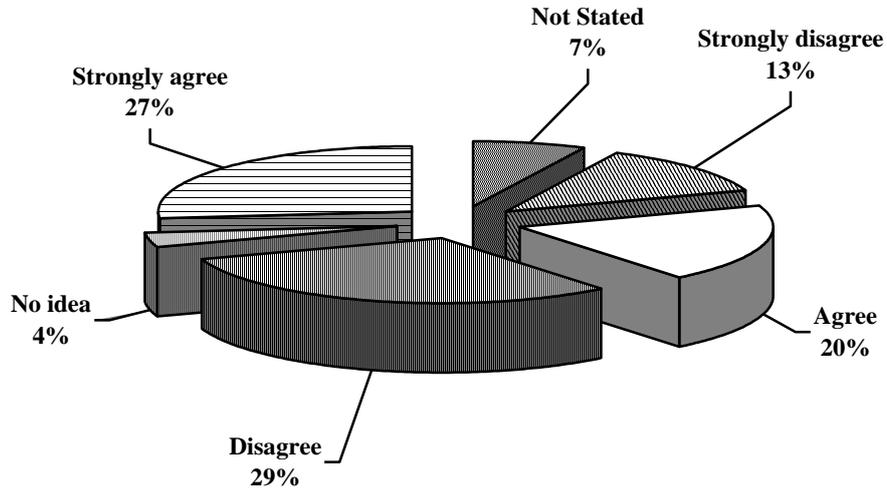


Figure 31: School Activities take too much School time

Loss of instructional time to other school activities has become a serious cause for concern. A significant proportion of the 40 weeks school duration is lost as indicated in Table 14.

Table 14: How Whole School Instructional Time is Lost

When time is Lost	Cause/Nature of Time Lost	Amount of Time Lost
Start of school year	Pupils' and Teachers' Absenteeism	Up to 10 days
During the school term	Protracted daily assemblies	Up to equivalent of 4 weeks (16 hours)
Assembly -Class transition Daily start of lessons (Mornings and afternoons)	Non instructional cleaning of classrooms and other preparatory activities	Up to 2 weeks (8 hours)
Pupils' and Teachers' Absenteeism and lateness	Non class attendance	Up to 6 weeks
Truancy (afternoon shift)	Pupils abandon school and classes around 2.30 p.m.	2 hours daily (80 hours)
School celebrations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundation Day • Prize-Giving and Speech Day • Annual Inter-House sports • Annual Inter-school sports 	Rehearsals and preparatory activities - do - - do - - do -	Up to 2 weeks (8 hours)
End of Term activities BECE examinations		20 hours 2 (weeks)
WASSCE examinations	Schools closed down for the exams So that furniture and teachers can be used - do -	Up to 4 weeks

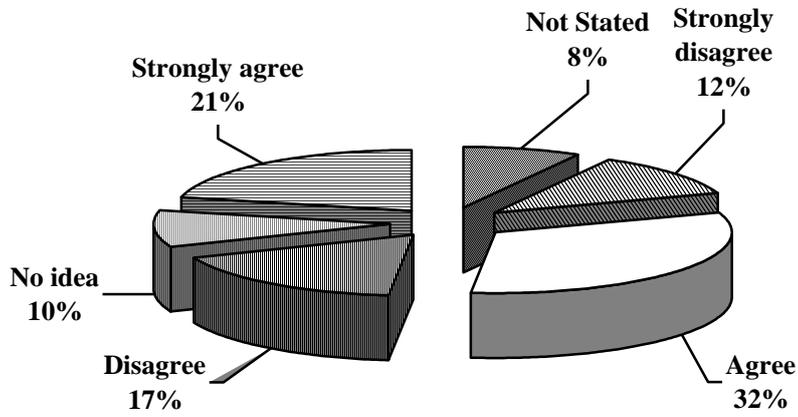


Figure 31: Prize/Thanksgiving Activities and Celebrations

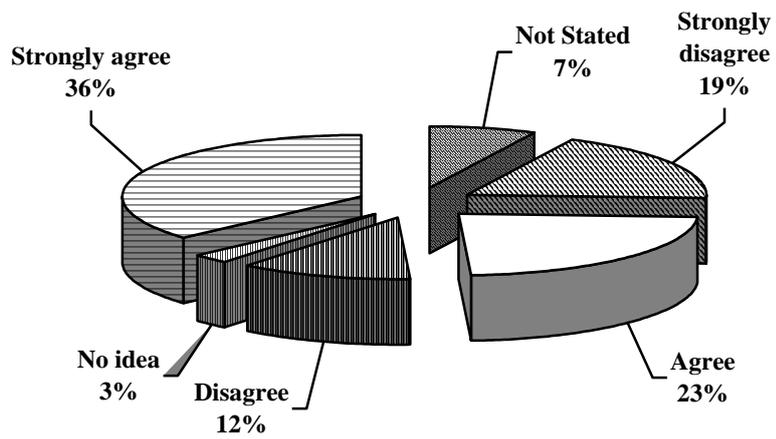


Figure 32: School Social Activities not Beneficial to Students

Table 15: How Pupils Lose Instruction Time

When Time is Lost	Cause/Nature of Time Lost
Absenteeism	Participation in Traditional Activities /Practices
Irregular and Unpunctual School attendance	Illness due to pregnancy domestic chores and involvement in petty trading activities
Irregular promotion	

Source: Findings of Exploratory Study (unpublished) on Instructional Time Loss (Ekundayo Thompson, 2004)

It is a widely held view that pupils do not spend enough time with their work. For some respondents the majority of the pupils are not serious. Their time is given to entertainment and sensual pleasures. The increasing and alarming incidence of pregnancy among school girls seem to support this view. The following figures indicate lack of pupils engagement with school work.

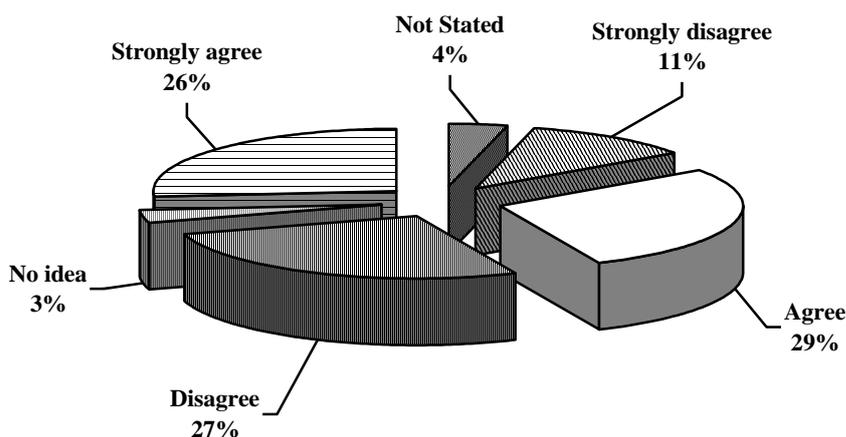


Figure 33: Spend Enough Time in School Work

The home environment for many is not conducive for serious study as Figure 34 indicates.

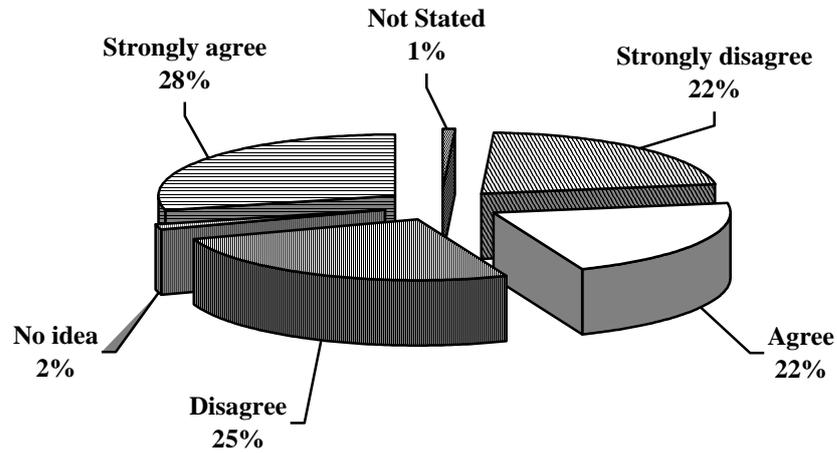


Figure 34: Conducive Studying Environment at Home

The unconducive nature of the home environment has already been discussed. Lack of adequate engagements with books and other learning material is a major reason for poor performance as figures 35 and 36 indicate.

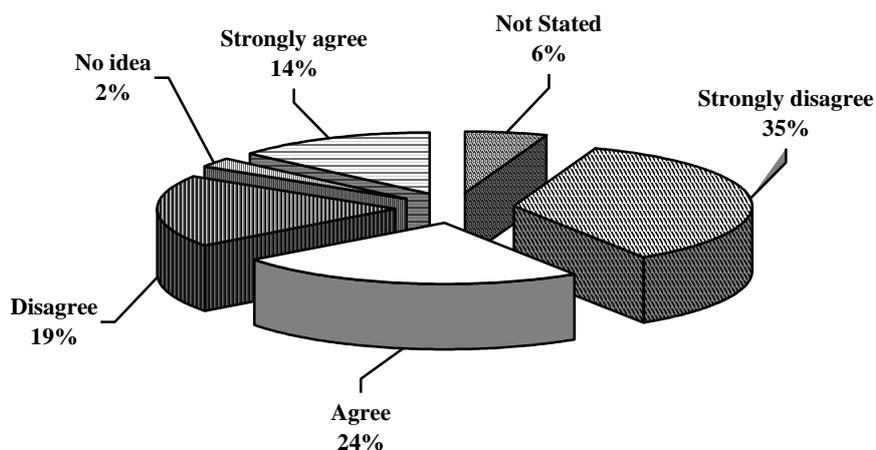


Figure 35: Study in School Library when Teacher is Absent

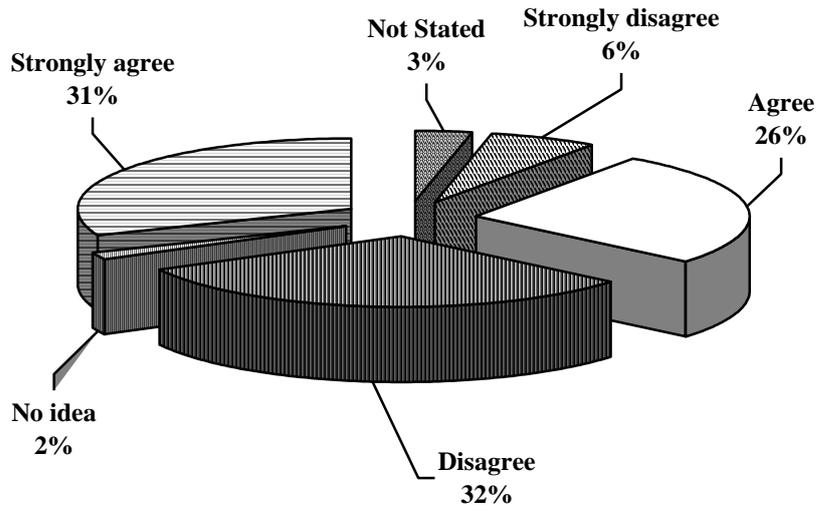


Figure 36: Spend Quality Time on Studies at Home

The Commission found that Libraries did not exist in many schools and a majority of pupils do not have access to reading materials at home.

The seriousness of the problem of lack of engagement to learning becomes apparent when the teacher factor is considered as figure 37 indicates.

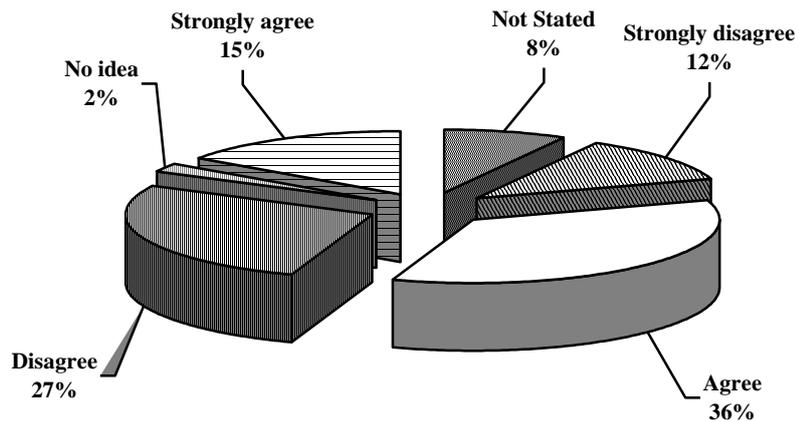


Figure 37: Teacher Teaches Practical Classes Well

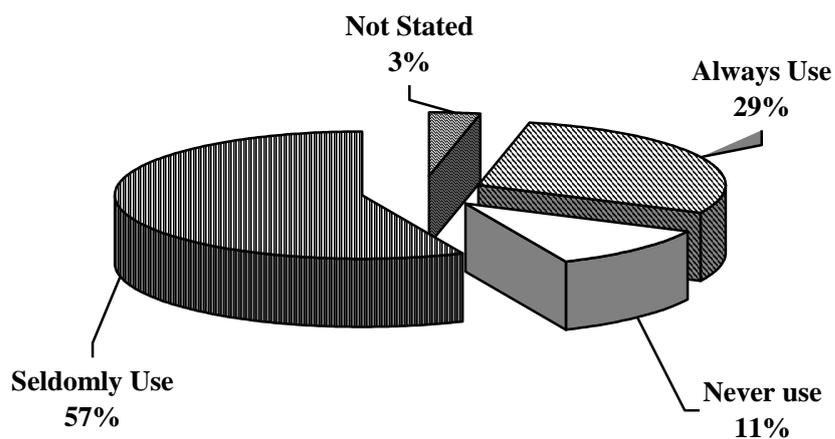


Figure 38: Practicals

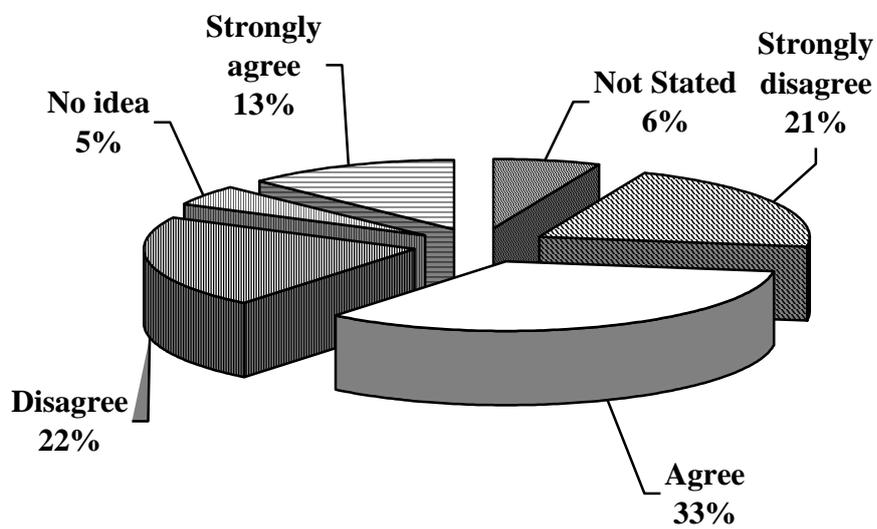


Figure 39: Have Practicals Classes in Science Subjects and Related Subjects

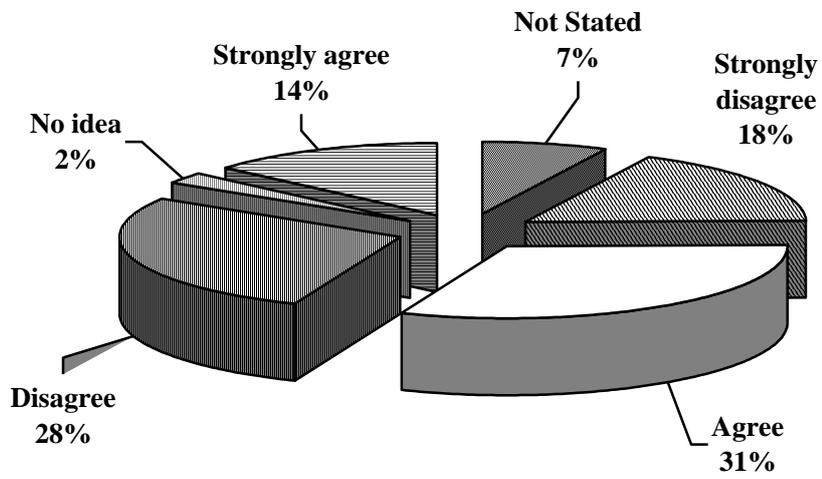


Figure 40: Understand Practicals Classes Well

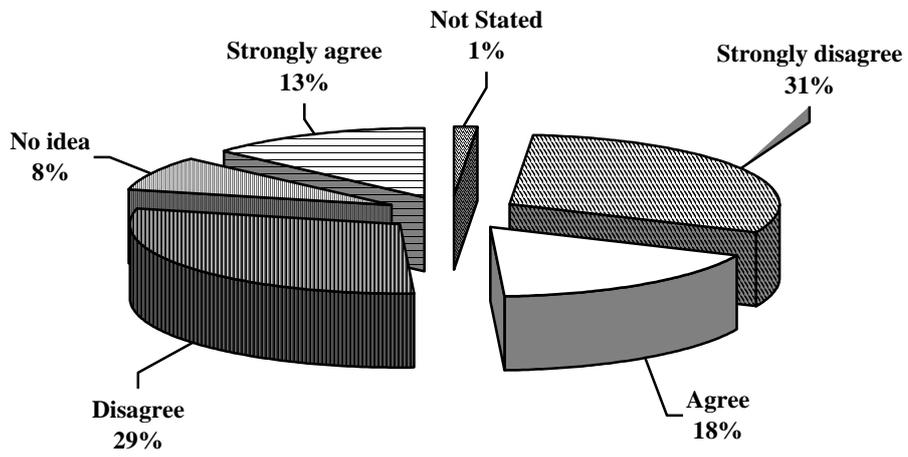


Figure 41: Self Performing of Experiment in Laboratory

5.1.6 Teacher Motivation

Teaching is labour intensive and intellectually demanding. The presence of the teacher will be needed inspite of the new modes of education delivery informed by Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs).

Teachers, account for a large proportion of the budgetary allocation to education. Failure to maximise their inputs into the education system will result in wastage of scarce resources. Improving teacher effectiveness is therefore a strategic means of effectively utilizing resources allocated to education due to their large numbers,.

The problems of education in Sierra Leone are first and foremost the problems of teachers. Motivating teacher towards optimal utilization of their knowledge and skills is a sure way pf resolving the problems in education.

Education reform and innovation measures at both the international and national levels have largely ignored the critical role of teachers. Talk about quality education have not been accompanied by efforts to motivate teachers.

Submissions to the Commission emphasized the problem of poor public perception of teachers which is due to their material poverty, increasing incidence of unethical behaviours and professional misconduct. Teachers are therefore not highly regarded because teaching has become a Cinderella profession. The mass exodus of teachers, especially secondary school teachers, is a consequence of negative public perception. It is against this background of negative public perception, poverty and stigmatization that motivation of teachers becomes a critical need.

Motivating teachers to do their best and sustaining their efforts is a challenge that effective educational administrators must address. A highly motivated teaching force is likely to contribute to achieving the objectives of quality education.

The Commission heard of various ways in which teachers can be motivated including the following:

- revised salary scales and conditions of service of teachers;
- recognition of the work of exemplary teachers through an annual ‘Teacher of the Year’ award scheme (award by the state);
- provision of housing and associated facilities for teachers especially those in remote and far-flung areas;
- continuing capacity development programmes specifically designed for teachers in service;
- teacher exchange visits.

These forms of motivation will contribute to attracting and keeping the best in teaching, restore lost esteem and social status.

5.1.7 Classes Sizes

Rural-urban migration is a consequence of social change processes in developing countries. But for those that have been affected by conflict, armed conflict in particular, population movement from the rural to urban areas has been accelerated. In Sierra Leone, the rebel war and the nature and pattern of its combat forced thousands of people out of their normal places of abode. Some left for fear of the rebel onslaught for what they thought were safe areas in other parts of the country. The Western Urban received a large proportion of the migrants many of who have now become permanent residents. The population of the Western Urban is close to a million (772,873) (Statistics Sierra Leone, 2004). Existing informal settlements have grown bigger and new ones have emerged. The pressure of the growing population is felt on social service provision including education. Overcrowding is a natural consequence of this rapid growth.

Large (over 50 pupils) and extra large classes (50 to 100 pupils) exist in many schools in Freetown and its environs. Large class sizes are among the causes of uncondusive learning environments and pressure on the physical and material

resources of schools has become unbearable. School resources are adequate, teachers are unable to cope and wear and tear is extensive. The Commission observed broken pieces of furniture strewn in a number of school premises. With poor management of resources, absence of maintenance culture, and destructive tendencies exhibited by some pupils, school facilities soon become inadequate or in a poor state of disrepair. Large class sizes are constraints to good pedagogy. Even the most committed teachers will be constrained to teach effectively in a class of over fifty pupils. The official teacher-pupil ratio has become unrealistic given the demand for access to primary and junior secondary schools.

Figure 42 indicates respondents' view on overcrowding and by extension oversized classes.

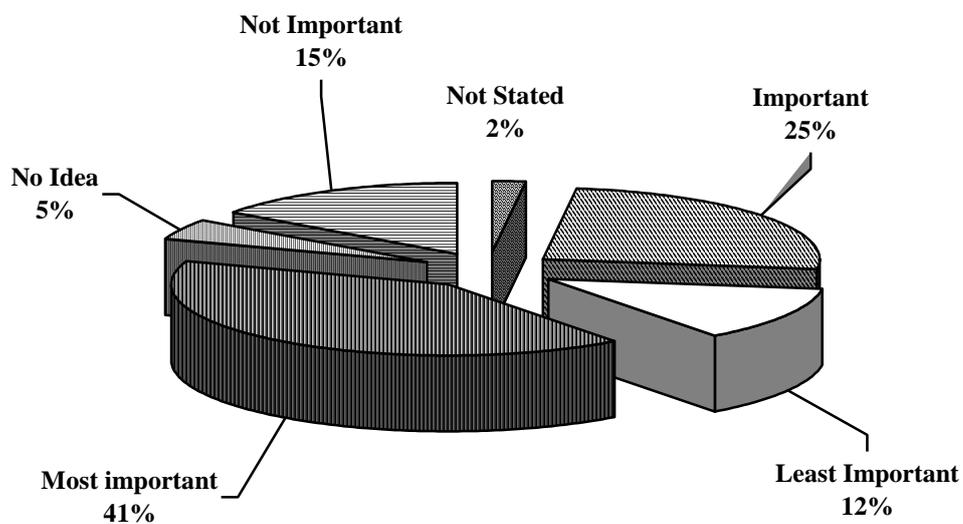


Figure 42: Overcrowding in School

5.1.8 Two Shift System

The two shift system was introduced as a temporary measure to make provision for the increasing number of secondary school students. Rapid rural-urban migration had created the need for more school places. This need was addressed by the two shift system and its accompanying dual administration occasioning duplication of positions.

The two shift system has reduced the instructional time, created problems of indiscipline, imposed pressure on school resources including teachers many of whom teach in both shifts, and have largely contributed to poor performance.

Figure 43 indicates the responses with regard to the importance of the two shift system to poor performance.

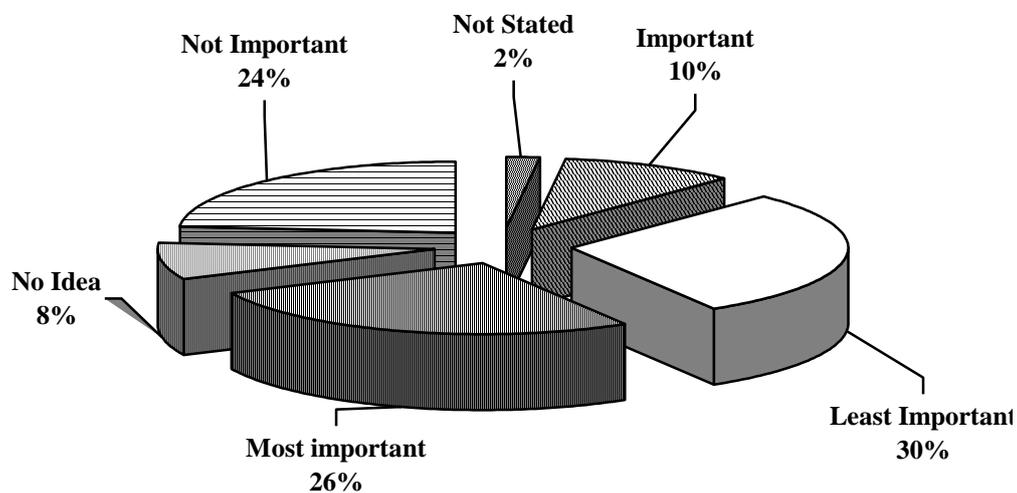


Figure 43: Two Shift System

The Two shift system has largely contributed to the reduction of instructional time. The first periods of both morning and afternoon shifts are lost due to the late arrival of both teachers and pupils. The morning shift is expected to begin at 8.30 a.m .but in reality it begins in earnest a couple of hours later and end of 12.30 p.m .to make room for the p.m. shift pupils at 1,00 p.m. It is common knowledge that very little learning takes place in the afternoon for the following reasons:

- Teachers and pupils report late for school due to transportation and other problems. Traffic congestion in Freetown has become a serious problem for both motorists and pedestrians.
- The weather condition is generally unbearable in the afternoons due to extremely high humidity. The global warming phenomenon has made living and working in concrete structures extremely difficult because of rising temperatures. No classroom in Sierra Leone is temperature controlled.
- Many pupils who attend the p.m. shift are normally involved in domestic chores in the morning and are tired by the time they get to school.
- The practice of a.m. shift teachers reserving their energies for private lessons in the afternoon is known to many. In the mornings they merely go through the motions whilst waiting for the afternoons to begin real work in private lessons which a.m. shift pupils are expected to attend.
- Private lesson fees range between Le5,000.00 and Le10,000.00 per subject **per month**. This obviously increases the cost burden on parents many of whom are forced to pay given the desire for their children to learn and pass their examinations. Some private lessons have up to 100 participants. At Le5,000.00 per month per subject (minimum of 5) the organizers earn about Le4,000,000.00 per month and Le48,000,000 a year. Some lesson organizers operate a double-shift thus increasing their income. Students who attend school in the afternoon attend lessons in the mornings and those in the morning shift attend lessons in the afternoons. Organizers of double shift lessons earn around Le100,000,000.00 a year tax free. The motivation for organizing and participating in lessons is therefore very high. The following Issue Investigation illustrates the problem of inequity and unethical behaviours which are some of the effects of private lessons

Issue Investigation

Mr. Kpandebu teaches English Language at the St. Pauli Junior Secondary School (a.m. shift) in Trench Town. In the afternoon he works at the Kpandebu Syndicate which offers extra tuition to students who are preparing for the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE).

Mr. Kpandebu is one of the markers of the West African Examinations Council. This puts him in a vantage position to teach according to the prescription of the syllabus. His experience in marking BECE papers over the years gives him insider knowledge of what to emphasise and his familiarity with the Chief Examiners' Reports stands him in good stead to seriously consider their comments and suggestions and act on their recommendations.

Students who attend the Kpandebu Syndicate have done well in the BECE. This track record of good performance serves as an attraction for other students to participate. In time the number of students at the Syndicate grew to 150.

At school Mr. Kpandebu does not teach effectively reserving his energies for the syndicate in the afternoon. He tells students who do not attend his syndicate to register as he will be doing more work on the English Language syllabus during the private lessons sessions. Students respond positively and register. For the extra lessons their parents have to pay an additional Le40,000.00 (Le5,000 x 8 subjects) per month.

The problems which pupils face in the afternoon shifts have resulted in growing absenteeism because many prefer to attend lessons instead of going to school. Absenteeism has become a serious problem in schools with a two-shift system and a major cause for poor performance.

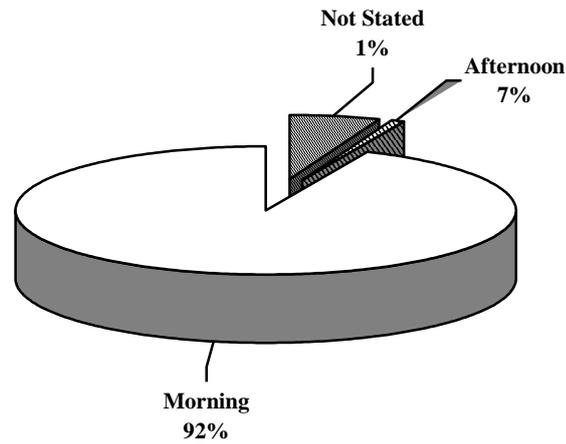


Figure 44: Shift Attending School

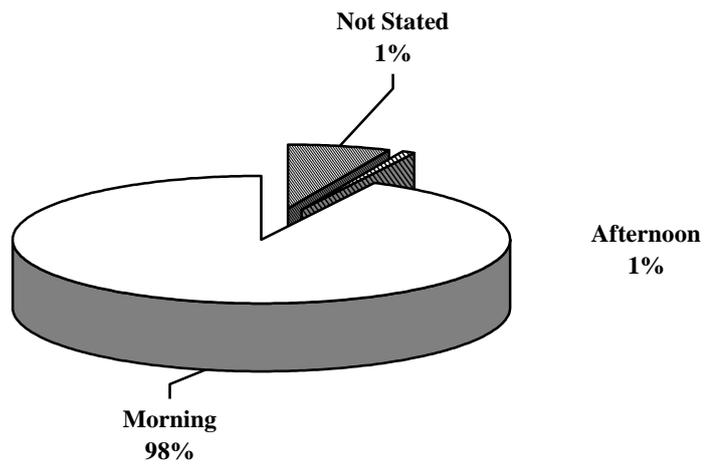


Figure 45: Best School Time

5.1.9 Tertiary Institutions

The legal framework for tertiary education in Sierra Leone consists of the following legal instruments:

The Education Act, 2004

The Tertiary Education Commission Act, 2001

The Polytechnics Act, 2001

The National Council for Technical, Vocational and other Academic Awards Act, 2001

The Universities Act, 2005

The Tertiary Education Commission Act defines “tertiary education institution” as

- (a) a university, or university college;
- (b) a polytechnic; or
- (c) a post secondary school institution at the prescribed level.

Tertiary education institutions include

The University of Sierra Leone

Njala University

The Milton Margai College of Education and Technology

The Northern Polytechnic

The Eastern Polytechnic

The Port Loko Teachers’ College

The Freetown Teachers’ College

All tertiary education institutions are involved in the training of teachers at various academic levels as table 16 Indicates:

Table 16: Levels of Training of Teachers by Tertiary Education Institutions

Tertiary Institution	Level of Training	Qualifications
University of Sierra Leone	Postgraduate	Diploma in Education
Njala University	Certificate Undergraduate	BA Ed., BSc. Ed.
	Certificate Undergraduate	HTC, TC
MMCET	Certificate Undergraduate	Bed. HTC
Northern Polytechnic	Certificate Undergraduate	BEd, HTC
Eastern Polytechnic	Certificate	BEd, HTC
Port Loko Teachers' College	Certificate	HTC, TC
Freetown Teachers' College		HTC, TC

Most of the tertiary institutions offer a three-year integrated training to prepare teacher for work at the primary, junior secondary and senior secondary levels.

Teachers with the HTC (Primary) qualification are expected to work at the primary school level but in practice many of them teach in secondary schools.

The number of trained teachers produced by the tertiary institutions is inadequate to meet the rapid increase of primary and secondary school population. Statistics indicate that 7,695 teachers were produced by all the tertiary institutions over five years (2002 – 2006) as table 17 indicates:

Table 17: Number of Teachers Trained by Tertiary Education Institution

Qualifications	Male Teachers	Female Teachers	Total
Teachers Certificate	1615	1201	2816
Higher Teachers' Certificate (Primary)	823	431	1254
Higher Teachers' Certificate (Secondary)	1480	504	1984
BEd.Primary	86	08	94
BEd (JSS/SSS)	608	20	628
BSc. Ed	530	70	600
	5,388	2,307	7,695

Source: Field Survey, 2007

Tertiary education institutions are inadequately supervised and monitored by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC). The TEC Act does not make provision for tertiary education institutions to be supervised and monitored by it. This means that tertiary education institutions do not fully comply with TEC regulations. New courses are introduced without TEC approval and a number of institutions exceed their mandate.

Minimum entry requirements for admission to tertiary education institutions are breached by the provision of alternative routes of access. The ACCESS route which provide entry access courses received wide condemnation for providing a back door entry route to tertiary institutions.

Tertiary education institutions seem to be at liberty in determining their entry qualifications because the Polytechnics Act Section 13 (5) (a) provides for institutions to determine minimum matriculation requirements. This provision is contrary to the mandate of the Tertiary Education Commission “to ensure parity of esteem” (GOSL. 2007: 8).

A UNESCO – Commissioned Review and Rationalisation of the Institutional Structures and Staffing of Teacher Training Institutions found that

All the institutions suffer almost equally from non-existent or poor state of the facilities that are considered crucial to the proper management of an educational institution. Only the Goderich Campus of MMCET (Milton Margai College of Education and Technology) has the crucial facility of an internal service. The state of the library, medical service and telecommunications is poor on all campuses; Lecture halls and Laboratories are inadequate on all campuses. {...}Electricity is poor or nil on all the campuses except EP (Eastern Polytechnic) during the rainy season when the supply of hydroelectric power to the Kenema campus is fairly decent. This state of affairs points to a very difficult and austere campus environment that is not conducive for learning. It must be noted that the poor state of the facilities at these institutions is very much a reflection of the general lousy state of the facilities in Sierra Leone...” (GOSL, 2007: 19).

5.1.10 Proprietors

The Education Act defines “proprietor” as the person or body of persons (including any Board of Governors) responsible for the management of the school either directly or through a manager appointed on that behalf”. (p.3)

The role of proprietors in the management of education has changed over the years. With legal control of education assigned to the Ministry of Education, proprietors seem to have very little to do with policy formulation. The word “proprietors” is more applicable to private schools where “ownership” and “control” are relevant.

With respect to control and supervision of education the *Education Act* provides that,

The Minister shall have the control and supervision of the education system and may, after due inquiry, initiated by him, take steps he considers appropriate to restrain any action or intended action by a local authority or a proprietor, if he considers that such action is likely to impede the progress of education. (p.16)

Historically, faith groups have established and managed schools throughout the country and have constructed and maintained school buildings alongside places of worship. Some acted as “employing authorities” and managers of schools and post-school institutions.

In their submissions to the Commission faith groups bemoaned their loss of authority in managing schools. Some even complained of being marginalized by the Ministry of Education in the appointment of school heads, one of the functions which they considered as their prerogative. Secondary schools are managed by Boards of Governors (BOGs) and primary schools by School Management Committees (SMCs). Although proprietors make nominations for membership including a ‘traditional right’ to nominate the chair, Boards of Governors are appointed by the Minister without any special consideration for the “rights” of proprietors in the appointment of the chair of the Board. The apparent loss of authority by proprietors has resulted in what many observers described as a hands-off approach to the management of schools. They cited their “marginalization” as the primary cause for poor performance and indiscipline in schools and called for restitution of “their” right to schools and colleges. The debate which accompanied the process of granting the Sierra Leone Grammar School private school status testify to the strong feelings of “proprietors”. Who seemed to have adopted a “wait and see” attitude as standards plummet and calls for their schools to be returned to them gather momentum. The rapid increase in the number of private schools would seem to indicate a desire for private ownership and control of schools.

It is argued that private ownership and control would in the long run result in quality delivery of education. This argument is based partly on the assumption that pupils in private schools learn more given the availability of more instructional time. This is illustrated by The World Bank (2007: 70) in its analysis of instructional time in public and private schools as Table ? indicates.

Table ? : Instructional Time in Private, Government-owned and Government Assisted Schools (Hours per year)

	Primary	Private	Secondary	Private
School system	Government-owned and assisted		Government-owned and assisted	
Single shift	933	1050	933	1067
Double shift	700	n.a.	800	n.a.

Source: The World Bank, 2007 (p.70)

5.1.11 School Heads

Heads of secondary schools are appointed by Boards of Governors (proprietors) in accordance with established and policy procedures. Recommendations for appointment of principals by Boards of Governors should normally be approved by the Minister of Education.

Heads of schools are first and foremost teachers. It is their status as teachers which qualify them to be heads. But the majority of Headteachers and principals are not qualified them to be heads. The majority of Headteachers and principals are not qualified to be heads because they are not qualified administrators. They have neither done a course in school

management/educational administration nor have they been oriented in it. Consequently, many lack critical management skills. Knowledge and skills in the rubrics of educational management/administration are important in managing today's educational institutions.

Once appointed headteachers and principals enjoy tenure until retirement; some continue beyond the age of retirement. The Commission found some principals who have been heads for over thirty years and a good number of them have neither been on annual leave nor on study leave. The Commission was also informed about instances of poor leadership demonstrated by some principals; their poor relationship with staff has in many cases resulted in conflicts and acts of indiscipline. Cases of principals who have either been dismissed or transferred as a result of poor leadership and/acts of mismanagement were cited.

A strong development which the Commission learnt about was the attention given to regional, district, ethnic, old boy/girl considerations in appointing principals. The Commission heard of preference given to "son/daughter of the soil" in matters of appointment. The Commission was also informed of conflictual situations arising from an apparent "struggle for power" between principals and proprietors (owners) in some schools. Some proprietors (owners) have set up offices in their schools to "closely) monitor the activities of principals. Others have assumed functions including employment of teachers without consultation or reference to the principals.

Undoubtedly, poor leadership and conflicts in schools have polarized staff, eroded discipline and contributed to poor performance.

Figure 15 indicates respondents' views on the impact of weak school administration to The problem of poor performance.

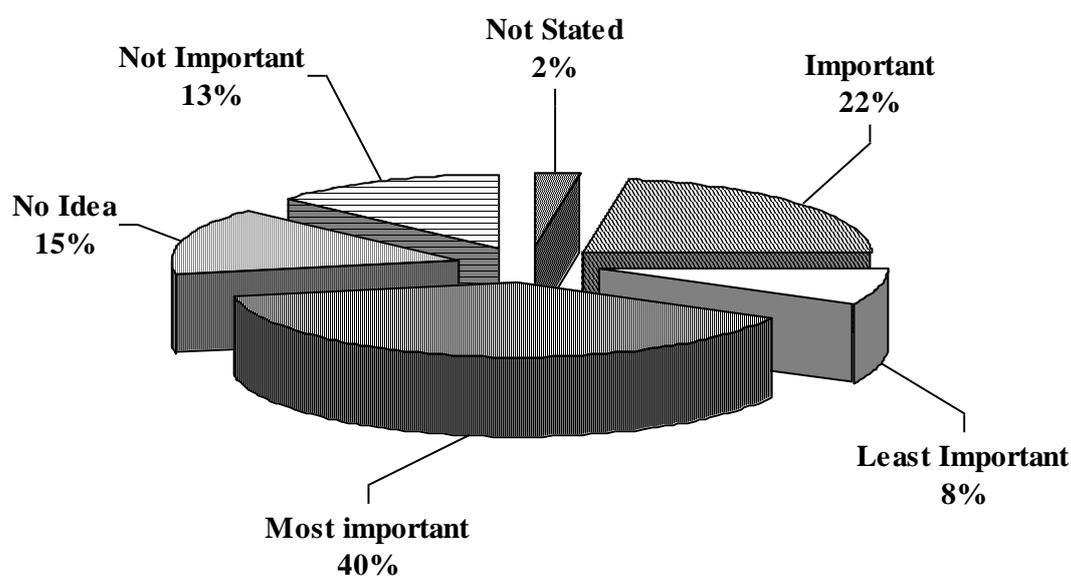


Figure 15: Impact of Weak School Administration

It should be noted that “Most important” and “important” constitute 69 percent of the responses indicating the seriousness of the impact of poor administration.

Some school heads, principals in particular, were accused of irregular admission of pupils who have not passed the National Primary School Examination (NPSE), and of aiding and abetting corrupt practices including levying of extra charges on parents. Admission of pupils from other schools without the necessary documentation was severely criticised.

Schools heads were also blamed for poor performance in the BECE and WASSCE because they have failed to supervise and guide their teacher. Many were said to lack the competence for supervision and curricular guidance. Appointment of heads of schools should be given the serious it deserves because good leadership is a determinant of good governance.

“The best should be appointed/promoted to head schools. The old boy/girl culture or son/daughter of the soil preference is a hindrance to good administration”.

Focus Group Discussant in Moyamba

Recommendations were repeatedly made with respect to **contracting** and **rotating** principals of schools but principals were forceful in their rejection of such recommendations arguing that some schools will never do well because “poor performing” pupils constitute the majority of their school population.

5.1.12 The Ministry of Education

Control of education is legally vested in the Minister of Education who is head of the Ministry of Education which is mandated by the *Education Act*, to perform.

all work necessary or incidental to the control of education by the Minister and the exercise of any powers or the carrying out of any duties that may be specifically conferred on it...

Education Act 2004 (p.16)

The Minister, and by implication, the Ministry of Education has wide legal powers to provide and deliver education. In the execution of his functions the Minister is advised by a Board, (the Board of Education) on organisational, financial, and legal matters pertaining to schools.

The Commission received submission criticizing the Ministry of Education and blaming it for all that has gone wrong in education.

The Minister and by implication the Ministry has wide legal powers to provided and deliver education. In the execution of his functions the Minister is advised by a Board on organisational, financial, and legal matters pertaining to schools.

The Commissioner received submission criticizing the Ministry of Education and blaming it for all that has gone wrong in education.

The Ministry of Education is grossly understaffed with low capacity. It is incapable of monitoring and supervising teachers.

“Late payment and non-payment of teachers’ salaries have seriously demotivated teachers. Some teachers are not paid for up to two or three years. “Schools are asked to pay salaries when they employ teachers in September”. (School head in Magburaka) Heads of school said that,

The Commission was informed of the inability of the Ministry to do school inspection a chronic due to lack means of transportation. “School inspection is non existent and where it is done it is unprofessionally and poorly done”. (Teacher in Pujehun)

The employment of “community teachers” was severely criticized because community para teachers lack qualifications and training. The Commission was informed that majority of the community teachers in the Koinadugu District were JSS and SSS leavers who did not even pass the BECE and WASSCE.

(Focus Group Discussants in Kabala)

Poor performance in the Koinadugu District was attributed to poor pedagogy by Untrained and unqualified para community teachers.

5.1.12.1 Ceiling on Employment of Teachers

This issue was one which had currency throughout the investigation. Interviewees and Focus Group Discussants were at a loss to understand how the Government could accept such a condition from the Bretton Woods Institutions at a time when the world was advocating for Universal Quality Education For All (UQUEFA). The Commission was informed of the tremendous difficulties in obtaining approval for new teachers. The effect was that schools were understaffed and had to resort to employing untrained, unqualified and unsuccessful BECE and WASSCE candidates.

The Ministry was requested to get its act together in regulating internal mobility of teachers and to do an annual appraisal of teachers. Calls were also made for the establishment of a teaching service commission that would assume the functions pertaining to teacher management.

It was recommended that “high performing” principals should be recruited by the Ministry of Education to serve as inspectors, monitors, and supervisors throughout the country. It was further recommended that the Ministry should consider contracting the services of exemplary retired heads of schools to act as inspectors in far flung and remote areas that are hard to reach by the Ministry of Education inspectors.

The Commission received submissions on internal inefficiency of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. This was explained in terms of understaffing and inadequate technical expertise for what was described as a “highly technical task”.

Evidence of internal inefficiency was specific on low performance, poor management practices in particular, management of teacher records which was largely done manually in the records section. The Commission was informed that the practice of manual management of teacher records was open to malpractices.

The Final Consultation Report of the Institutional Appraisal of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (March, 2008) identified a number of institutional weaknesses which needed to be addressed. The recommendations included a review of the staffing requirements for the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports in line with the functions and responsibilities of the various units”.

The criticisms which were levelled against the Ministry of Education were a consequence of unmet public expectations of good management in the education system. A number of the critics (mainly teachers and educational administrators) had “bitter” experiences of poor management and had “suffered” in the process.

The importance of good education management for effective implementation of the goals of education cannot be overemphasized. Effective implementation implies effective management and accountability (The World Bank, 2000 as cited in 2007).

5.1. Social Factors

It has already been stated that the causes of poor performance do not constitute a simple causality. They are interrelated and complex; therefore addressing them in any meaningful and sustainable way would require diligent identification and analysis of their ramifications. From this process would emerge the viciousness of the cycle of poor performance. Figures 16 a, b and c indicate the contribution of negative social factors to poor pupils’ performance. The figures represent survey respondents’ perceptions.

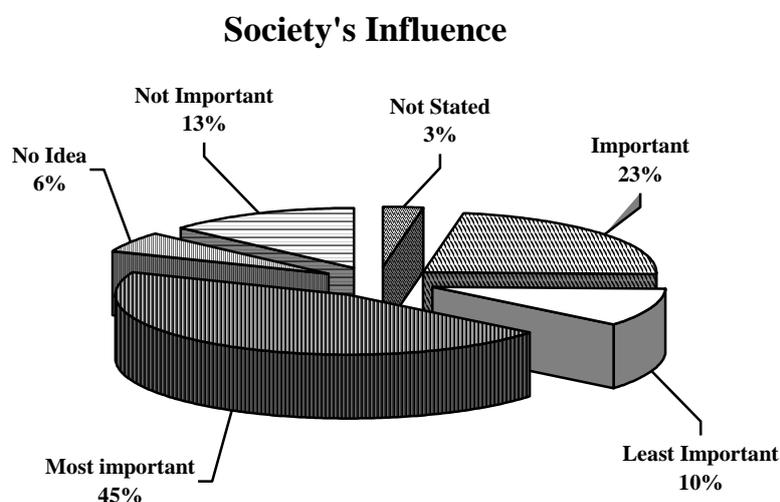


Figure 16a: Importance of Negative Social Factors to Poor Performance (Society’s Influence)

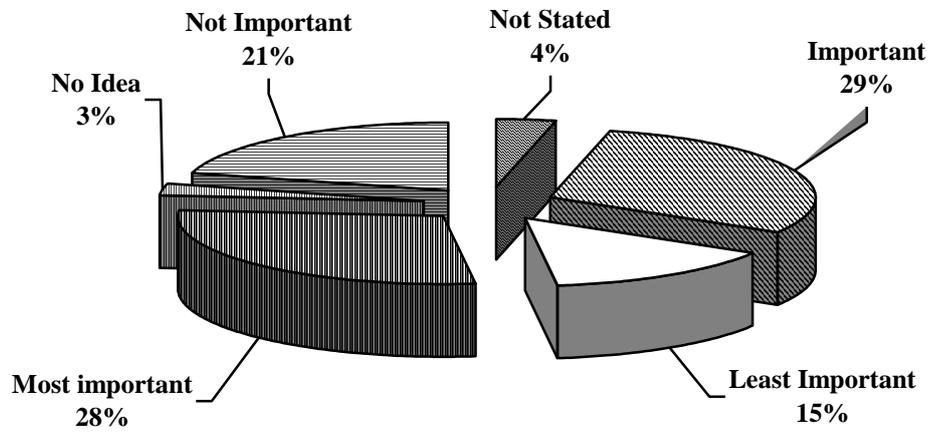


Figure 16b: Parents Interference in Teachers' Work

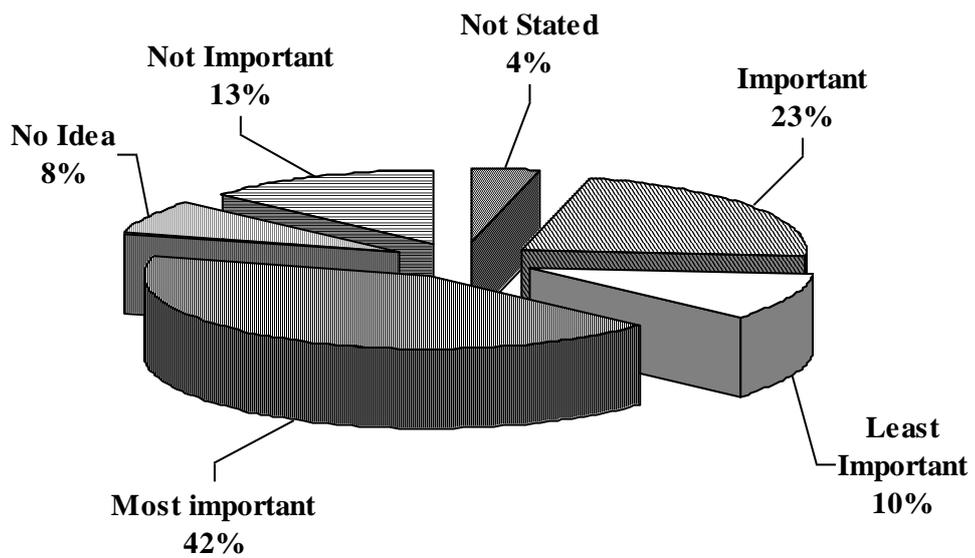


Figure 16c: Influential Parents' Interference in School Affairs

5.1.13 The Vicious Cycle of Poor Performance

The enterprise of education is the concern of all. Everybody is a participant albeit adequately or inadequately informed. Informed participation however, is a prerequisite for effective delivery of the goods and services of education.

Societal influence plays a critical role in education. It contributes towards its quality provision and may detract from it in a number of ways. “Society” in this context is taken to mean, the community of people. It is the people who desire good quality education by voting for it. It is also the people who benefit from good quality education. Society is therefore morally obliged to contribute positively to the effectiveness of the education enterprise.

Some of the negative effects of the rebel war are still being felt in the homes and institutions of learning. Foremost among these is violence which is fast developing into a culture. Reported cases of domestic violence and violence against girls and women are increasing. School-based violence has become a cause for grave concern. Specific incidences of violence involving pupils at Mile 91, Sierra Leone Muslim Congress Secondary School, St. Edwards Secondary School, violence on University campuses, Fourah Bay College in particular, and violence in sports were cited, as factors which contribute to poor performance, in the submissions to the Commission.

The decision to admit ex-combatants into schools without a programme of re-orientation was cited as a major cause of violence. Figure 17 indicates the perceptions of respondents with regards to the role of ex-combatants in violence in schools.

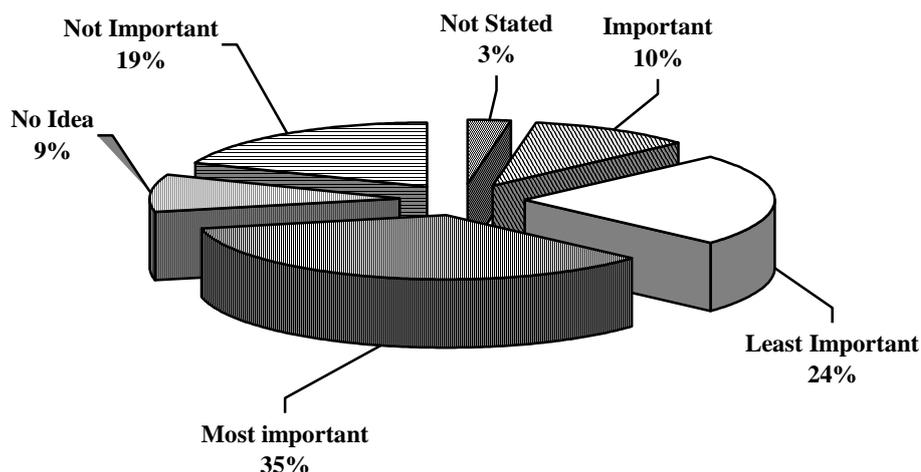


Figure 17: The Impact of Ex-combatants in School Violence

5.1.14 Role of the Home

The Commission received submissions on the role of the home towards poor performance. The home environment has already been examined in a preceding section of this report and its role in the early education of the child emphasized. Unconducive home environments have become a feature of social life and social living.

The Commission heard of instances where families watch pornographic films including explicit sexual activities and orgy of sexual promiscuity and violence on television. Possession of digital video equipment and cheap phonographic films has made familiarity with sexual promiscuity a pass time indulgence. The alarmingly high incidence of school girl pregnancy is partly attributed to this unsavoury social development.

The Commission was told that video centres which are mushrooming and are generally unregulated have not only contributed to the high incidence teenage pregnancy but have also contributed to absenteeism and dropout from school. The Commission heard of instances of JSS and SSS pupils frequenting video centres during school hours. Undoubtedly, the shift system has made it possible for pupils to spend their “idle time” before and after school in video centres.

Figure 17 represents respondents' perceptions of the influence of films on poor performance.

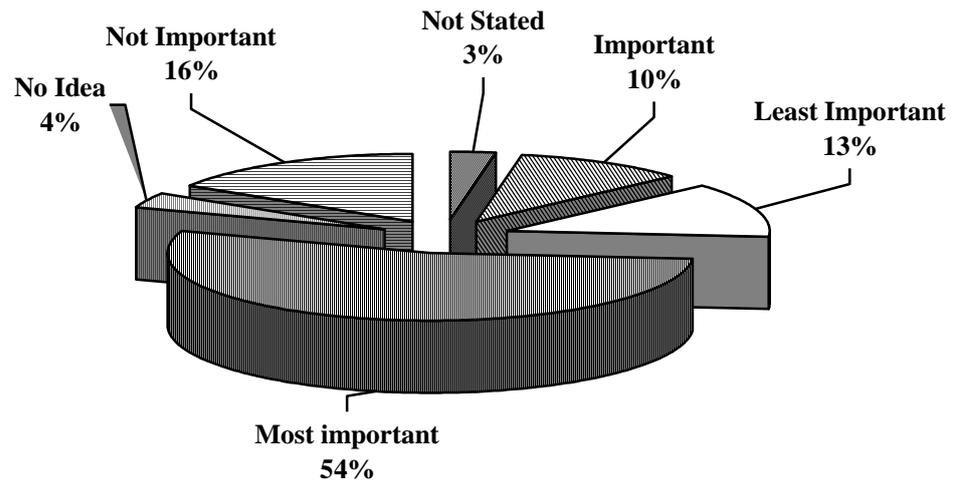


Figure 17: Influence of Films

The unrestricted and unregulated sale of pornographic materials, many on public display on street pavements has been a source of serious concern for parents. The Commission was informed about the sharing of explicit sexual material by pupils in class through their mobile phones. Pupils who presumably are unable to buy the required textbooks and learning materials are said to be in possession of very expensive mobile phones which have a disruptive effect on the processes of teaching and learning. During the investigation the Commission was asked about the Film Censorship Board and other mechanisms to maintain the moral order of society. In the submissions a consensus seemed to have emerged on the view that pupils' overindulgence in entertainment, sensual and sexual activities is a key factor for poor performance. This renders them incapable of concentrating on school work and study at home.

It would seem that poor parental background including very low levels of morality has contribute to the problem of immoral behaviour. Figure 18 indicates the importance of parental background on pupils' performance.

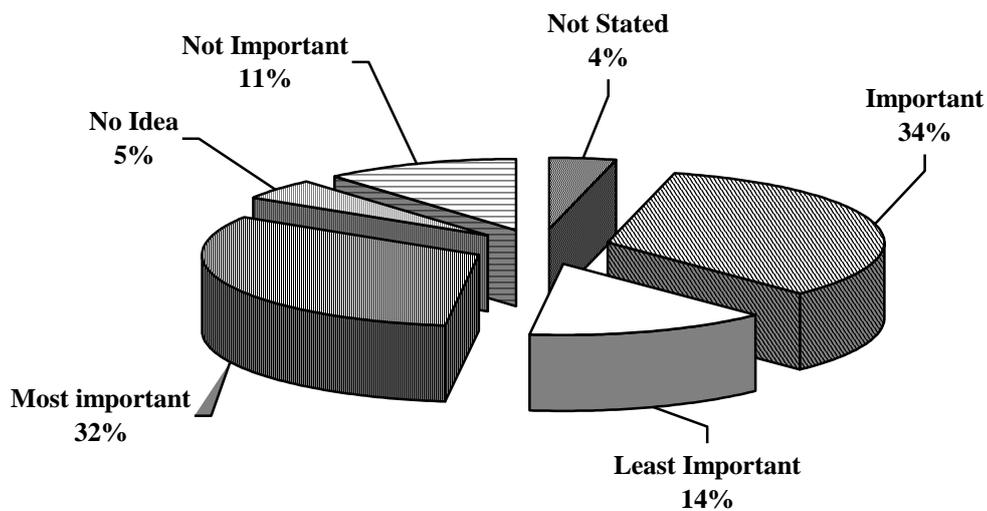


Figure 18: Importance of Parental Background on Pupils Performance

Lack of parental control is closely associated with poor parental background.

5.1.14.1 Lack of Parental Control

Lack of parental control on children was another cause for concern expressed by many of those who attended the Commission's public hearings in various parts of the country. Demographic and social change factors were cited as causes of what were described as "social malaise" and "societal decadence". According to the submissions parents, especially "teenage parents" seem to have lost control over their children. Teenage parents were said to be incapable of performing parental roles due to their "immaturity, and irresponsibility".

5.1.14.2 Role of Religious Leaders

The seemingly passive role of religious leaders was questioned at a time when social vices are increasing many wondered why “unimaginable” things were happening in society when the population of Sierra Leone is predominantly religious. It was suggested that religious leaders need to do more to rein in corrupt, and immoral acts at home, in school, and society in general.

5.1.14.3 School Girl Pregnancy

The worrying and alarming phenomenon of school girl pregnancy and its consequences on dropout was a recurring issue in all the focus group discussions and public hearing sessions. Aside from the related issue of sexual promiscuity concern was raised about society’s/community’s complicity in the issue of girls’ pregnancy. Unethical behaviour of some teachers was identified as the primary cause as figures 18 and 19 indicate.

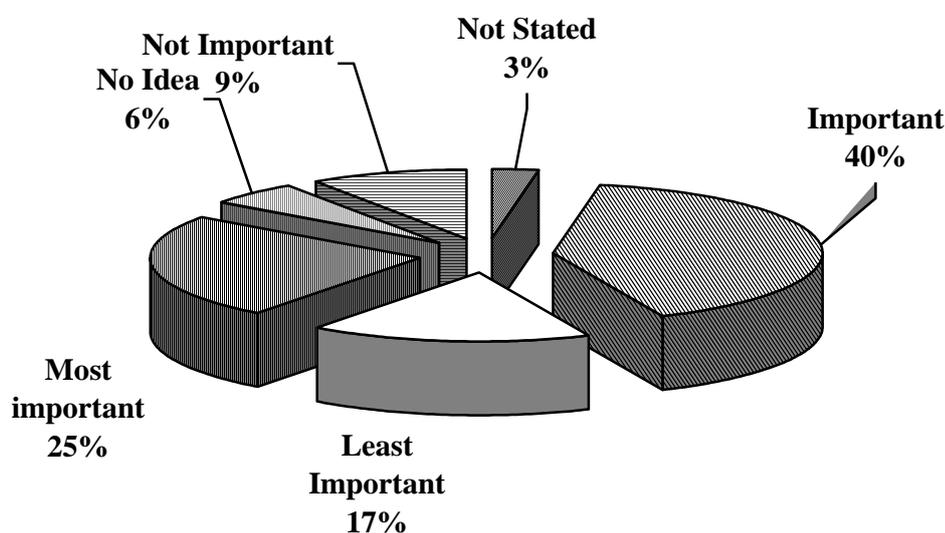


Figure 18: Unethical Teacher Behaviour

Unprofessional Conduct by Teachers

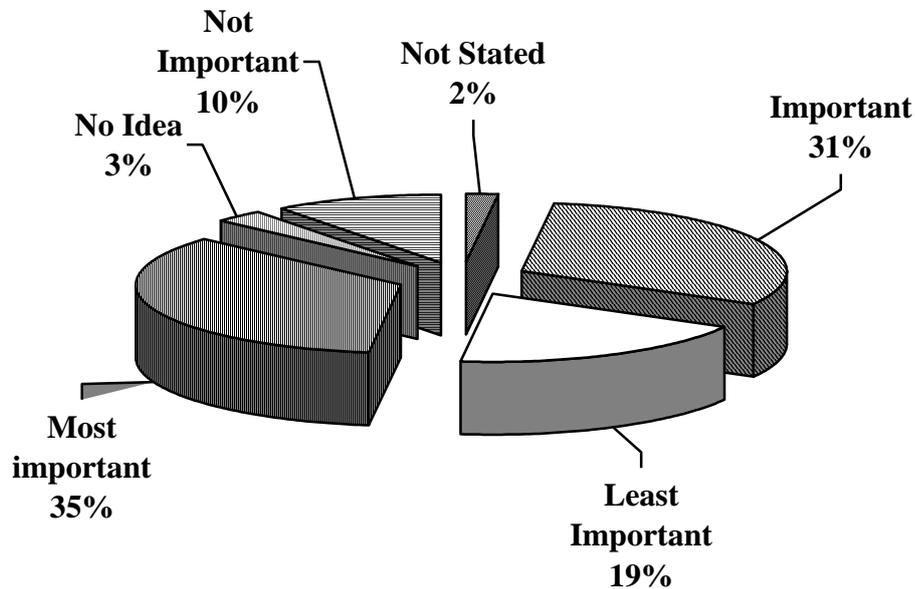


Figure 19: Unprofessional Conduct by Teachers

When interviewees and Focus Group Discussants were asked what the law enforcement agencies did in cases of sexual misconduct in which teachers and school administrators were involved, a member of the Police in one of the district public hearings said that they were constrained. She said that when police action was initiated family and community members would appeal for “non police intervention” as the matter would be settled in a “family/community way”. This means no legal/criminal action would be taken against the accused/perpetrators. At the end of the day the affected girls drop out of school and are married early. The Commission was informed about a case involving a head teacher who had made a class 4 girl and a class 5 girl pregnant almost at the same time. The Commission does not have any information of action taken against him.

5.1.14.4 Role of Traditional Leaders

The Commission was informed about action by some traditional leaders to stem the rise of sexual immorality and unethical behaviours in areas within jurisdiction. Such action included bye-laws clauses against improper relationships between teachers and female pupils. The Commission considered this a step in the right direction which should be emulated by other traditional leaders.

5.1.14.5 Traditional Cultural Practices

The much talked about issue of “Harmful Traditional Practices” and their effects on poor performance did not feature prominently in the submissions received by the Commission. However, there was tacit reference to the timing of initiation ceremonies and how these have affected attendance, contributed to absenteeism and eventual dropout and early marriage of girls. Calls were made for the effective implementation of the provision of the *Child Rights Act, 2007*, and consideration of alternative rites of passage for girls below the age of 18.

6.0 Impact of the 6-3-3-4 System On The Poor Performance of the Pupils

There had been much speculation about the 6-3-3-4 system of education as the primary cause for poor performance. While it was widely recognized that the system had not been effectively implemented and had been characterized by dysfunction its “good intentions” were acclaimed. Consensus seemed to have emerged from the investigation that it was the implementation and not the concept, (the system design) that was problematic. Figures 18 a. b .c. d and e indicate the respondents’ views on the system. It was necessary to triangulate the responses given the emotions which the discussions on the 6-3-3-4 system generated. Responses on what needed to be done were also elicited as indicated in the figures.

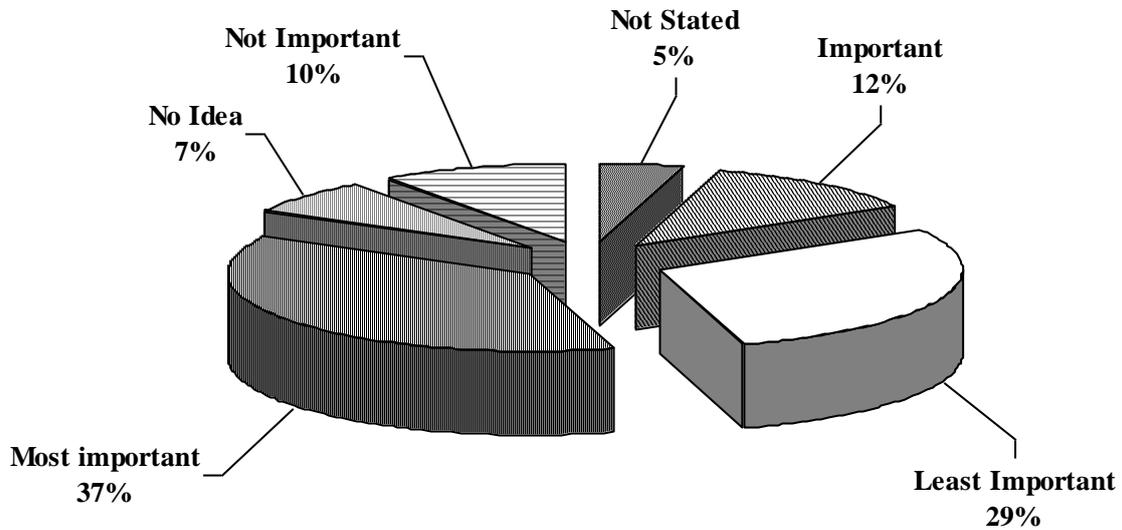


Figure 18: Contribution of the 6-3-3-4 System to Poor performance

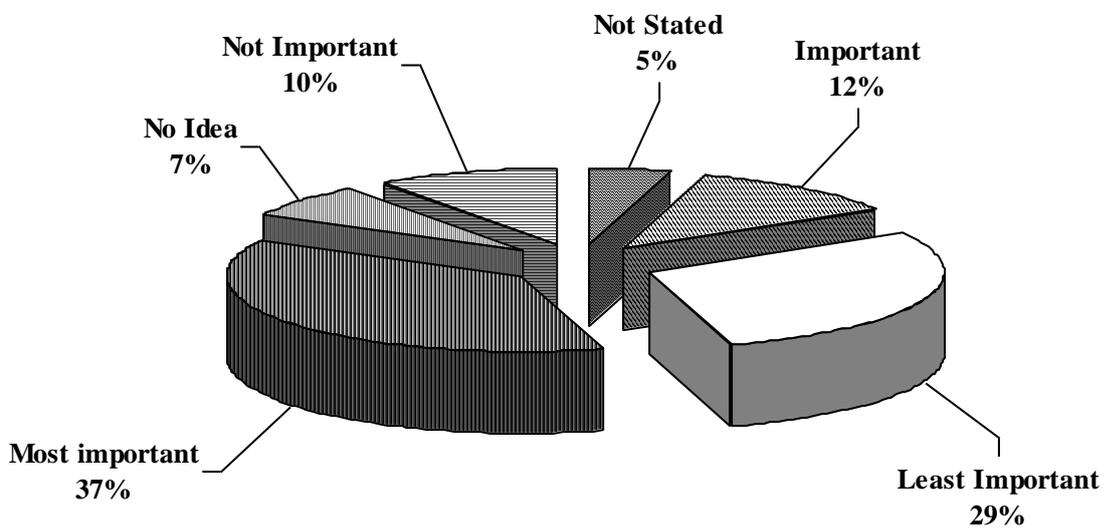


Figure 18b: Proposal to Abolish the 6-3-3-4 System

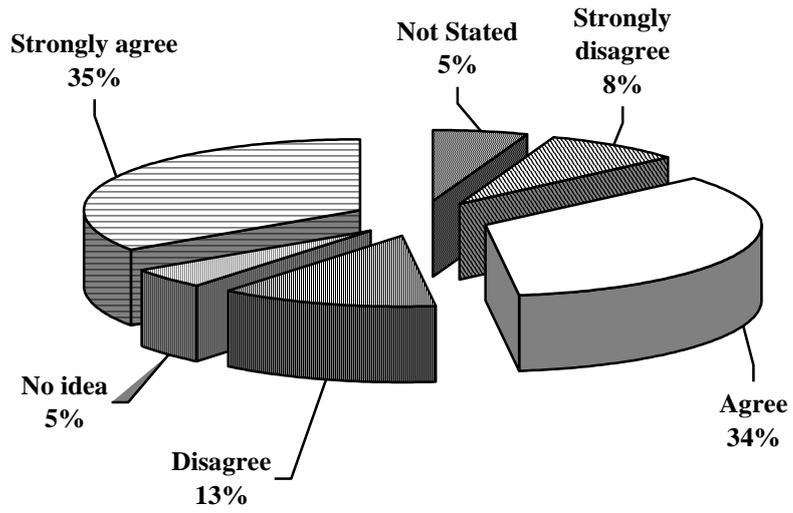


Figure 18c: Proposal to Modify the 6-3-3-4 System

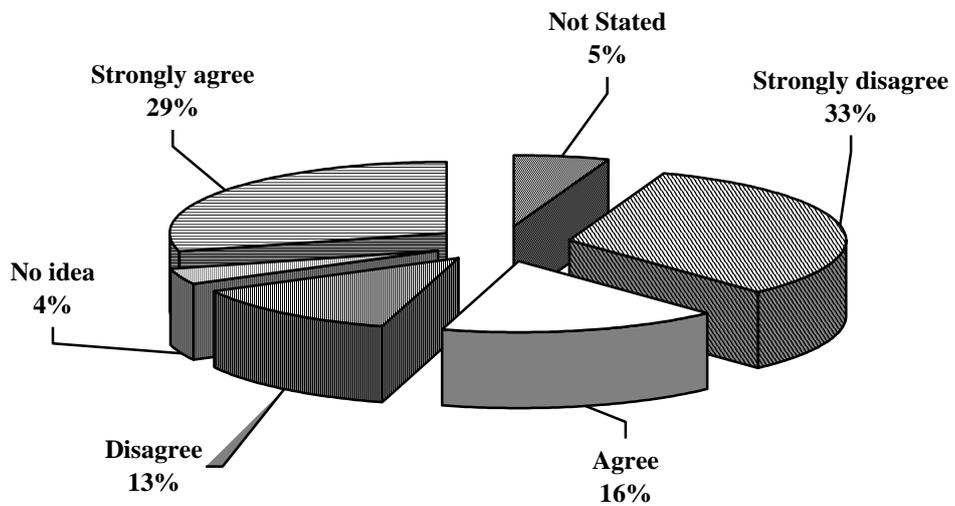


Figure 18d: Proposal to Replace the 6-3-3-4 System

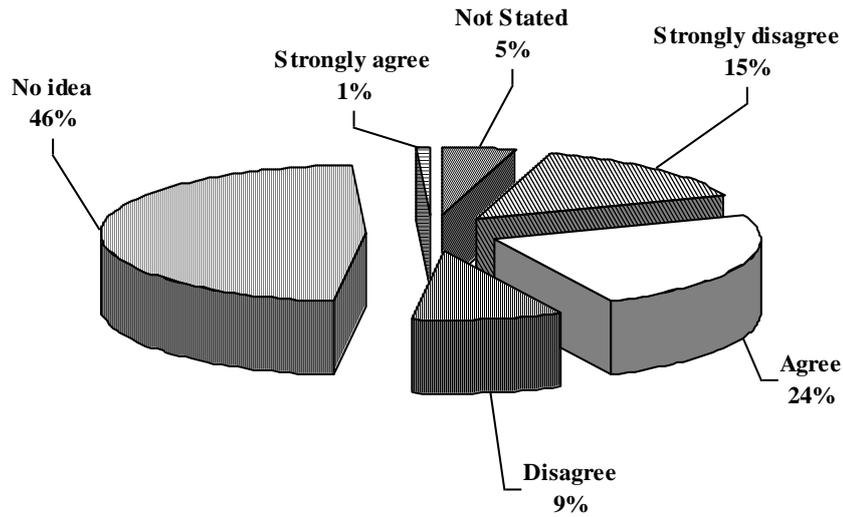


Figure 18c: Proposal to Retain the 6-3-3-4 System

The general view was that, the system was hurriedly implemented without much thought given to neither resource provision nor to the factor of the teacher. The contexts and circumstances of its introduction in 1993, largely contributed to its poor implementation. Section one has already examined the 6-3-3-4 system and the factors that seemingly constrained its successful implementation. A review of its key provisions and the status of their implementation have also been made.

7.0 INDISCIPLINE IN SCHOOLS IN SIERRA LEONE

Discipline and Indiscipline: Clarifying the Concepts

Educationists do not all agree on what discipline is or how to maintain it, but they all do agree that it is essential if learning in school is to be effective. Children need to be disciplined if they are to profit from formal education in school and informal education out of school. Discipline helps to prepare children for the challenging tasks of living in a complex world. It is the practise of training people to obey rules and orders and punishing them if they do not. In the educational context, discipline generally describes strategies for the elimination of disruptive or antisocial behaviour. It also implies procedures and rules which lead a child to self-manage his/her behaviour patterns in order to maintain socially accepted norms. Indiscipline is the act of not being disciplined.

The issue of discipline has over the years constituted a major problem in schools and in tertiary institutions

Closely related to indiscipline is delinquency. Indiscipline is reflected in delinquency; almost the same patterns of behaviour are exhibited by disciplined and delinquent individuals. Delinquency is a behaviour pattern that is associated with breaking of rules or laws enacted by constituted authority. Delinquency is seen in the behaviour of young boys and girls as they break parental rules; teachers' authority and societal laws. Delinquency may arise from psychological problems such as conflicts, frustrations, inhibitions, unmet needs and worries. It could also be a consequence of poverty, inequality and scarcity of social amenities such as inadequate housing, feed and other basic needs. Indiscipline is noticeable and mostly observed amongst adolescents, the group of individuals in our schools and universities.

7.1 Cases of indiscipline in schools

Over the years a number of cases of indiscipline have been reported in our schools and colleges. Acts of indiscipline of social change processes are on the rise.

In a study by Thomas (1973), the following disciplinary breaches in one of the schools in the Eastern part of Freetown were identified:

- (i) Assault on teachers
- (ii) Fighting in and out of school
- (iii) Stealing
- (iv) Smoking
- (v) Gambling
- (vi) Drinking (even when in school uniform)
- (vii) Distribution of pornographic literature
- (viii) Criminal acts outside school
- (ix) Drug use and abuse
- (x) Persistent incitement to violence
- (xi) Sexual harassment amongst students resulting in pregnancies

Other acts of indiscipline reported in other schools included violent attacks by pupils on other pupils and even teachers and law enforcing agents, vandalism to school property, breaches of school rules, chronic misbehaviour in classroom, time wasting in lessons, challenges to the authority of teachers, disruption of pupils who are anxious to work, lying, disobedience, rudeness, truancy, untidiness in school work, dress habits, late coming to school and lessons.

Adolescents in schools use and push drugs thus contributing to drug addiction. Other forms border on criminality; these include serious indiscipline crimes, violent behaviours such as campus riots which are almost common occurrences on university campuses. Given the link between indiscipline and delinquency there is a need for it to be addressed if pupils and students should turn out to be good citizens and future leaders.

The home, has an equally important role as the school and society in general in maintaining discipline by creating conditions for disciplined behaviours and punishing those who are in breach of the rules.

7.2 Role of school

Schools have largely contributed to what has become a culture of indiscipline because

- teachers and other school authorities have failed discipline their students;
- there is lack of understanding of children and the dynamics underlying their behaviour;
- lack of understanding of the purpose of discipline;
- many teachers judge discipline in terms of classroom orderliness rather than student growth;
- poor personality and incompetence on the part of the teachers;
- lack of good teachers' and students' relationship;
- teachers' dress code (not good example for students);
- teachers' absenteeism, lateness to school and absence from class during school hours;
- poor classroom management;
- untrained and unqualified teachers' poor pedagogy;
- indiscipline amongst teachers e.g. smoking and drinking in school;
- overcrowded classrooms;
- poor light and ventilation;
- inappropriate desks, seats and equipment;
- unfriendliness of school;
- suspension and expulsion from school;
- peer pressure at school;
- unprotected and unfenced school premises.

Many of the above listed factors are either sources of fatigue and irritation, or 'push out' factors from school.

7.3 Role of the home

The home holds a special place in the life of a child; the family's role cannot therefore, be underestimated. With current situation of indiscipline in school, home and society at large, we cannot agree more with Farrant who claimed that indiscipline in the family and in society is a growing problem whose effects are reflected in the schools. Some of these are summarized below:

- many parents do not show interest in their children and their education;
- many do not understand their roles in the lives of their children, hence have literally transferred or handed over their roles and responsibilities to the school. Parents - Teachers' Associations do not seem to accomplish the goals for which they were established;
- family problems, such as divorce, separation and single parenthood (broken homes), may produce maladjusted children. Parents are expected to set good examples for their children; this has not really been the case;
- over permissiveness and over protectiveness at home;
- films and television programmes shown at home sometimes create the impression that violence is the way to get what one wants.

7.4 The Role of the Society

It has been affirmed that the causes of indiscipline in schools are also found in society's changing standards, the maladjustment caused by broken homes and stress within the traditional family system, and eroding of the traditional societal system where everyone is the other person's keeper and the custodian of all the children. The feeling of anonymity felt by children in very large schools (the school society), and the growing resentment among pupils that conventional schooling no longer leads to assured employment. There are many play stations' set up all over the country. Cinema houses, video centres, night clubs which encourage young girls especially to attend their 'Ladies night' even during school days. Cyber cafes are opened to children at anytime of the day or night (our children visit them for everything but educational). Films shown at home and on public media are not censored, hence children watch all kinds of films even those rated X, (which are not healthy for the development of their minds). The society has failed children, and there is need to regain the lost confidence, and get down to impacting their lives positively.

The Role of children

The attitudes of children towards their education seems to be patterned after those of their parents and society .

- children do not understand the value of education, it is obviously not most children's priority;

- they are preoccupied with too many activities (social activities and entertainment) which most often generate acts of indiscipline;
- they are almost always involved in acts of immorality which result in teenage pregnancies
- they spend school time in play stations, video centres, gambling and drug Spots, and internet cafes;
- most cannot manage time properly;
- the problem of absenteeism from school and classes;
- truancy;
- children's dress code; they are subject to peer pressure;
- most children determine how their lives run, they do what they like to do; parents have no control over them;
- many children react to authority through violence or rebellion;
- children bribe teachers for marks – this was openly disclosed by a student in one of the public hearings; other students confirmed the claim, and none of the teachers present challenged her. Some teachers' incessant requests for money from pupils have earned them notoriety and pseudonyms such as “money chuku”, “micro credit”

7.6. The Role of Government

Government has been slow in many implementation policies and enforcing laws. Implementation of the EFA (Education For All) National Action Plan (2004) Education Sector Plan (2007), and the reviewed New National Education Policy of (2007) is awaited. *Penalties for failure to send children to school, for example, lie dormant in the Education Act.*

SECTION SIX

SUMMARY OF THE REASONS FOR POOR PERFORMANCE AND CONCLUSION

This actions explains the meaning of ‘poor performance’ and provides evidence of its attribution from the Chief examiners’ Reports and the results of the field investigation.

6.1 . Poor Performance: Its Meaning and Ramification

“Poor Performance” refers to candidates’ inability to attain the level of proficiency that was demanded by the examination. Evidence of poor performance is provided in the reports of Chief Examiners for both BECE and WASSCE. Overall comments on poor performance and subject-specific weaknesses were made by the examiners. While some of these comments are produced verbatim for emphases, others are either summarised or paraphrased and are accompanied by the commission’s analyses.

The Basic Education Certificate Examination is a national examination taken by all students after three years of junior secondary schooling. The West African Secondary School Certificate Examination is an international examination taken by students who passed the BECE and have spent another three years in secondary school. The WASSCE examination is based on a syllabus which appears to be more demanding than the syllabus for the General Certificate Examination (GCE) which was a feature of the erstwhile 7-5-2-4 system which the 6-3-3-4 system replaced.

It should be noted that there were examples of good performance by few candidates in a number of subjects/papers but the majority performed poorly to the extent that a crisis of poor students’ performance emerged necessitating an investigation of the reasons. In the reports the examiners suggested remedies for improved performance.

Students in the Junior Secondary School (JSS) are entered as candidates for the BECE after three years of instruction in four subject clusters namely, Core, Optional Core, Vocational. Table 1 page? the subject clusters gives an indication of.

6.12 Trend in Poor Performance

A consistent trend in poor performance of candidates in the BECE and WASSCE had been observed since 2003. Members of the public, parents, employers and teachers themselves had expressed disappointment with the results and had looked back with nostalgia at the days when schools generally performed well and even competed with each other for the top rankings. Chief Examiners' had decried the trend of poor performance and had made suggestions in their reports to remedy the situation. It would appear that the Chief Examiners comments and suggestions were annual recitals which did not receive any action from teachers and school authorities. The Commission found that neither the Ministry of Education, nor the schools took any action. In fact many schools and teachers had neither seen the reports nor read their contents. How else would the following comments be made repeatedly:

“The overall performance of the candidates was worse than the previous year’s. More than 80% of the candidates scored less than one-third of the 120 marks”.

This is a subject specific comment.

“The Chief Examiners could not identify any area that a good number of candidates had shown significant improvement although few outstanding candidates did score high marks”.

“An Analysis of the general weaknesses of candidates will differ only in minor details from the analysis of the weakness of the candidates in the May/June 2007 examination and the November 2007 examinations”.

In this sub section we present summaries of the results for the BECE and WASSCE to indicate the extent of poor performance.

Table?: Subjects in which at least twenty-five percent of the candidates obtained Grades A1 – C6 in the May/June 2008 WASSCE

Principles of Cost Accounting (25.28%)	Typewriting (30.00%)
Government (34.86%)	History (37.31%)
Arabic (38.46%)	French (42.70%)
Physical Education (42.56%)	Science (59.06%)
Electronics (31.82%)	Applied Electricity (96.97%)
Metalwork (75.86%)	Engineering Science (25.73%)
Clothing & Textiles (25.87%)	Woodwork (82.86%)
Foods & Nutrition (45.60%)	

Source: West African Examinations Council

The Table indicates performance across subject clusters including Business subjects (Principles of Cost Accounting; Typewriting) General subjects (Government); Languages (French);? Sciences (Science, Physical Health Education); Technical and Vocational subjects (Electronics, Applied Electricity, Engineering Science, Metal Work, Woodwork, Clothing and Textile, Foods and Nutrition).

With the exceptions of Metalwork (75.86%), Science (59.06%), Applied Electricity (96.97%) and Woodwork (82.86%) candidates scored less than 50 percent in the other eleven subjects.

Table?: Subjects in which less than twenty-five percent (25%) of the candidates performed well.

Business Management (12.52%)	Clerical Office Duties (11.32%)
Commerce (12.90%)	Financial Accounting (10.48%)
Christian Religious Knowledge (17.51%)	Economics (3.84%)
Geography (3.02%)	Islamic Studies (20.13%)
Literature-in-English (9.45%)	English Language (7.41%)
Further Mathematics (7.77%)	Mathematics (Core) (3.46%)
Agricultural Science (9.11%)	Biology (2.46%)
Chemistry (3.54%)	Health Science (5.00%)
Physics (9.68%)	Building Construction (14.29%)
Technical Drawing (19.23%)	Home Management (18.25%)
Management-in-Living (13.50%)	

Source: West African Examinations Council

Table ? : BECE Subject Clusters

Cluster	Subjects
Core	Integrated Science 2 Language Arts 2 Mathematics 2 Social Studies 2
Optional Core	Agricultural Science 2 Religious and Moral Education 2 Physical and Health Education 2 Mende 2 Kathemne 2 Krio 2 Hulimba 2 French 2
Vocational	Business Studies 2 Basic Electronics 2 Home Economics 2 Introductory Technology 2 Performing Arts 2
Non Vocational	Arabic

(Source: West African Examinations Council)

The Chief Examiners' Reports (The West African Examinations Council, 2008) indicated a "downward trend of candidates' performance" due largely to:

- (i) Candidates' inability to communicate well in English Language resulting
- (ii) in their inability to understand the requirements of the questions;
- (iii) Limited knowledge in all areas of the syllabus;
- (iv) Inability to draw graphs, reason logically and calculate well in Mathematics and Mathematically related subjects (Basic Electronics and Integrated Science).

6.1.3 Chief Examiners' Recommendations

The Chief Examiners made the following recommendations:

- (i) Schools/teachers should encourage candidates to improve on the use of English Language;
- (ii) Teachers should teach candidates question-answering skills;
- (iii) Candidates should use the recommended textbooks;
- (iv) Schools should make adequate provision for teachers to cover the practical components of subjects.

The recommendations assume

- (i) Teachers' commitment to students' learning to use English Language and their ability to use the Language themselves.

Both empirical and anecdotal evidence testify to the poor use of the English Language by many teachers. In school and in class many teachers are reported to communicate in Krio. The problem is compounded by candidates' poor knowledge of Krio which has adversely influence their spoken and written English.. It is recommended that "more work and time must be extended in teaching lexis and structure of the English Language". The widespread use of Krio and its poor variants, by expressions such as "fes fo mi kam di buk" (Bring di buk for mi) is a primary cause for teachers' and students' inability to use English Language at a reasonably high level of proficiency.

Principals and Headteachers have bemoaned the inability of prospective teachers to write good letters of application. Employers in the public and private sectors have wondered at the lack of letter writing skills by applicants.

Proper use of English Language appears to be a general problem in Sierra Leone. Both print and electronic media seem to have contributed to the problem of poor use of English by incorrect pronunciations and wrong use of words. Inability to spell correctly, inability to use logical thinking skills, misinterpretation of terms (scientific terms) and inability to distinguish them from their everyday synonyms e.g. ‘population’, ‘energy’ ‘work’. The examiners recommended that “teachers should endeavour to give drills on spellings”.

Following is a tabulation of external examiners’ comments on candidates’ weakness and inability by subjects.

Table?: Reasons for Poor Performance in Integrated Science

Subject	Poor Performance	External Examiners’ Comments/ Recommendations
Integrated Science	<p>Weakness in spellings and calculations Failure to follow instructions</p> <p>Misinterpretation of scientific terms</p> <p>Poor application of theoretical concepts</p>	<p>“Teachers should ensure that candidates are taught question-answering skills”.</p> <p>Teachers should endeavour to clearly bring out the scientific meaning of terms.</p> <p>Teachers should endeavour to teach concepts and draw examples from everyday activities that are familiar to candidates.</p> <p>Candidates should be taught to follow the instructions required by a question.</p>

The general lack of ability for critical thinking, application and analysis is contrasted with the ability for recall of knowledge. This is indicated by candidates relatively good performance in “questions requiring definitions, stating of concepts and naming or examples.

Students lack of higher order cognitive skills is a consequence of rote learning which has characterised teaching and learning processes. Lack of critical and problem solving skills (analysis, application, synthesis and evaluation), renders students incapable of thinking for themselves. The ‘copy cat’ culture which pervades many aspects of academic and social life of pupils is a consequence.

Pupils’ incapacity for application and analysis could be attributed to the teachers’ methods of teaching which is a consequence of their own training; they teach as they have been taught.

Table?: Reasons for Poor Performance in Mathematics

Subject	Reasons for Poor Performance	External Comments/ Recommendations
Mathematics	<p>“Every year we encounter poor results with about eighty percent of candidates scoring zeros”.</p> <p>Misinterpretation of scientific terms.</p> <p>Teachers fail to cover the syllabus. Some avoid certain aspects such as construction, trigonometry.</p>	<p>“Some of the teachers do not teach pupils properly”.</p> <p>Both WAEC and the Ministry of Education should avert this problem by organizing seminars and in-service training.</p> <p>Proper supervision in schools regarding what is taught and the method of teaching.</p> <p>Seminars and programmes for teachers of Mathematics should be organised.</p> <p>The problem of teaching Mathematics should be investigated.</p> <p>Teacher training institutions should teach trainees how to teach Maths properly.</p>

The External Examiners noted that, incidence of examination malpractices were discovered in some schools. The examiners concluded that candidates cored high marks because they were assisted.

Table?: Performance in Agricultural Science

Subject	Reasons for Poor Performance	External Examiners' Comments/ Recommendations
Agricultural Science	<p>The overall performance of candidates took a downward trend.</p> <p>As the number of candidates increases the performance tend to decrease.</p> <p>Candidates were unable to add or subtract properly.</p> <p>Candidates could not express themselves in simple and straight forward English.</p> <p>Candidates' inability to understand and answer the questions set.</p> <p>Poor in-depth knowledge of basic agriculture.</p> <p>Lack of use of recommended textbooks have greatly affected candidates' performance.</p> <p>Failure of schools to provide teaching and learning materials (charts, consumables, tools).</p> <p>Insufficient number of practical teaching periods.</p> <p>Inability to complete the syllabus</p> <p>Candidates unable to spell basic agricultural terminologies</p> <p>Candidates failure to read and interpret simple sentences in English</p> <p>Lack of ability to transfer knowledge from Mathematics and Integrated Science to Agricultural Science.</p>	<p>Poor transfer of knowledge from Mathematics to Agricultural Science</p> <p>.</p> <p>.</p> <p>The recommended textbooks should be made available and pupils encouraged to read them.</p> <p>Teachers should demonstrate all experiments in the syllabus.</p> <p>Pupils should be drilled in spellings</p>

From the reports of the Chief Examiners the reasons for poor performance can be categorized as:

- (i) Poor intellectual disposition of the candidates evidenced by
 - incapacity to comprehend what is taught;
- (ii) Lack of inability to read; /loss of the culture of reading
- (iii) Poor pedagogy evidenced by:
 - too much abstract teaching;
 - inadequate instructional time;
 - poor teaching methods mainly teacher centred;
 - inadequate/non completion of the syllabus;
 - overdependence on teachers' notes (pamphlets)
- (iv) Lack of/unavailability of the prescribed textbooks;
- (v) Use of wrong books;
- (vi) Lack of/unavailability of equipment and materials;
- (vii) Lack of serious treatment of subjects;
- (viii) Lack of mastery of the fundamental rudiments of subjects;
- (ix) Inadequate preparation for the examination;
- (x) Lack of study skills and time for study.

“Wrong and incomplete tuition have affected the candidates”.

BECE Chief Examiner, 2008

6.1.4 Poor Performance in the 2008 West African Senior School Certificate Examination.

Students in the Senior Secondary School are entered as candidates for the WASSCE after three years of instruction in six subject clusters as indicated in Table ?.

Table 2: WASSCE Subject Clusters

Subject cluster	Subjects in cluster
Business	Business Management 2 Clerical office duties Commerce 2 Principles of Cost Accounting 2 Financial Accounting 2 Shorthand 2 Typewriting 2
General	Christian Religious Knowledge 2 Islamic Studies Economics 2 Geography 1 ^B Government 2 History 2 Literature-in-English 2 Literature-in-English 3
Languages	English Language 2 French 2
Mathematics	Mathematics (Core) 2 Further Mathematics 2
Sciences	Agricultural Science 1 Agricultural Science 2 Biology 1 Biology 2 Chemistry 1 Chemistry 2 Health Science 1 Health Science 2 Science Core 1 ^B Science Core 2 Physics 1 Physics 2 Physical Health Education 1 Physical Health Education 2
Technical and Vocational	Engineering Science 2 Technical Drawing 1 Technical Drawing 2 Woodwork 1 Woodwork 2 Woodwork 3 Applied Electricity 1 Applied Electricity 2 Metal Work 1 Metal Work 2 Electronics 1 Electronics 2 Building Construction 1 Building Construction 2 Home Management 1 Home Management 2 Management-in-Living 2 Management-in-Living 3 Clothing and Textile 1 Clothing and Textile 2 Foods and Nutrition 2 Visual Art 1 Visual Art 2 Visual Art 3

The Chief Examiners reports were unanimous in their conclusion that “candidates’ overall performance continued to decline”.

Attention was again called to the following:

- (i) Candidates inability to understand and use English. This, they said, was a “major obstacle to their producing in appropriate responses”.
- (ii) Inadequate knowledge of practical work in the Sciences and Technical subjects as demonstrated by their inability to use tools well and properly present their experiments. Poor spelling, poor diagrams and labelling were reported.
- (iii) Candidates failure “to adhere to the rubrics”.
- (iv) In general there was inadequate preparation for the examination.
- (v) Candidates’ dependence on ‘pamphlets’ and teachers’ notes.
- (vi) Lack of ownership and reading of prescribed textbooks.
- (vii) Lack of adequate coverage of the subject syllabuses.

To improve on candidates’ performance the examiners suggested the following:

- Efforts should be made to cover all topics in the respective syllabuses;
- Candidates should depend less on ‘pamphlets’ and on teachers’ notes;
- Candidates should **own** and **read** the prescribed textbooks;
- More work should be done by candidates to prepare themselves for the examination;
- Candidates should be involved in more activities to improve on English, such as use of Libraries and reading of textbooks.

“Candidates need to read questions well to know what is required of them. They have set pattern of wrong answers, which is an indication of poor teaching ...”

**WASSCE May/June 2008 Chief Examiners’ Report
on Business Management**

Chief Examiners' Reports (2003-2008) had repeatedly called attention to the reasons why candidates performed poorly in the BECE and WASSCE, and had made recommendations on what should be done to improve on candidates' performance. Some of the comments and suggestions have been presented in the preceding section.

- **Poor communication**

The Examiners observed very poor communication resulting in very poor performance. The level of expression of the candidates in English was poor; they could not articulate their answers correctly;

The language of the examination is English. In general candidates used the English Language poorly. This problem manifested itself in all the subjects with the exceptions of French and Arabic. Following are specific comments on candidates' poor performance:

- The general standard of English used by the candidates continued to deteriorate; "Most candidates did not even write simple English"
The team of examiners observed a decline in the performance of candidates who took the examination when compared to previous years;
- A good number of candidates could not comprehend exactly what the questions demanded of them;
- Incoherent and illogical presentation of materials;
- Inconsistency; English constructions and expressions were generally poor;
- Many of the sentences had Krio expressions;
- Some candidates performed far below expectations. Their answers were marred by many grammatical errors. This largely hampered their performance.
- Some candidates could hardly explain anything sensibly.

- **Inadequate coverage of syllabuses**

Failure to study the syllabus for a prescribed period;

- Lack of in-depth-knowledge of the syllabuses;
- Lack of thorough and total grasp of topics in the syllabus;
- Candidates are not familiar with the current syllabus; Lack of reading of the prescribed textbooks

- **Inability to apply knowledge**

Candidates continued to find it difficult to apply knowledge;

- Presentation of irrelevant material was common among candidates;
- Poor in-depth knowledge of the subject matter also affected the performance of candidates.

The External Examiners suggested the following remedies to improve on candidates' performance:

- (i) Pupils must be encouraged to speak English in school;
- (ii) Teachers must put emphasis on the subject matter and teach their candidates how to answer essay questions;
- (iii) Principals should ensure that candidates receive adequate tuition **from qualified and experienced teachers;**
- (iv) Teachers should help students to learn how to spell.

SECTION SEVEN

7.1. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1. Modification of the 6-3-3-4 System

This section presents a rationale for amending the structure of the 6-3-3-4 in the light of developments seventeen years after its introduction. It does so in the conviction that systems are dynamic and their continued relevance and effectiveness in attaining their objectives should be periodically reviewed. The proposal for modifying the structure of the 6-3-3-4 is also informed by the constraints, mainly resource constraints, which have attended its implementation. To this end the Commission offers the following proposals for restructuring the 6-3-3-4 system of education.

7.1.1 Compulsory Early Childhood Education

Poor performance of pupils in the BECE and WASSCE is a consequence of inadequate preparation in the early years and inability to complete the prescribed courses of study in the later years. A majority of pupils who start school at age 6 do not have any literacy or numeracy skills. For those who come from home environments which are generally unstimulating, their preparedness for school would require more time providing the “basics”. Time is therefore lost in classes one and two in the process of grappling with the basics. These problems undoubtedly constrain learning achievement in later years and may stifle the progress of those who have had a head start in schooling. Early Childhood Education (ECE) is therefore a prerequisite for primary schooling. Provision of ECE should not be left to families, communities and institutions whose qualifications may be inadequate for a professionally demanding undertaking.

The rationale for Early Childhood Education is based on sound scientific and commonsensical arguments. Scientifically, the first six years of life are of utmost importance because

- The child’s growth and development are significantly influenced by the experiences during this period;
- Age 0-6 years constitute the period during which growth and development is accelerated;
- According to research findings brain development is accelerated in the early years (Rima, 1997; Mustard, 1998; O’ Donne, 1999, Stephens, 1999).

According to the evidence, by the second year of a child's life the brain of the child is 70 percent of an adult's brain. By age six it is about 90 percent in terms of weight and size. Age 0-6 is the period when children's learning is accelerated and their ability to acquire certain knowledge, skills and attitudes is enhanced.

Environmental influences have the greatest impact during this time. It follows therefore that attention should be paid to caring, nurturing and stimulating the child. The child's physical and psychological growth is dependent on the nature and quality of care and nutrition during this critical period. For children with special learning needs the proposal for ECE becomes more compelling.

Recommendation: Against this background the Commission proposes a compulsory Early Childhood Education from age 3 to 6 for every child in Sierra Leone to be implemented within three years. Early childhood Education shall be the base of the new 3 + 6 + 3 + 4 + 4 education system, the first nine years of which should be compulsory for all children.

Participation in Early Childhood Education (ECE) will greatly increased participation in primary schooling and enhance pupil's performance.

The Commission is aware of the additional cost which the state would incur.

Recommendation: It is therefore recommended that:

- a policy of cost-sharing be considered, and
- an ECE wing be attached to all existing primary schools,
- all newly built ones should make provision for an ECE wing.
- all teacher training institutions should include ECE in their curricula and,
- each teacher trainee offers a compulsory module in ECE.

Teachers who are already in service should be trained in ECE in a comprehensive nationwide in-service teacher training programme.

A number of advantages are foreseen in the recommendation to attach ECE wings to primary schools including provision of support and care by primary school children to their ECE siblings.

7.1.2 Primary Education

Primary education shall continue as organised currently. It shall be free and compulsory for all six year old children. Provision for children with special learning needs will be made in terms of facilities both physical and instructional. Special needs education shall be included in the curricula of all teacher training institutions, and teacher trainees shall be encouraged to specialise in special needs education.

The primary school curriculum should emphasise the following critical learning areas:

- Communication skills: These should include Writing, Reading, Listening and Speaking
- Numeracy skills
- Scientific and Environmental skills
- Social skills
- Manipulative skills
- Religious Education skills
- Physical Education skills

Non-critical learning areas could include:

- Life saving skills such as road safety, and swimming. Regional and geographical needs may dictate the life saving skills that will be considered for inclusion in the curriculum.

The method of teaching at the primary school shall be child-centred and training of teachers at both pre – and in-service levels will strongly emphasise child centred methodology. Attention shall be paid to developing the thinking and problem-solving skills of pupils.

Regulations in respect of primary to secondary school transition will be enforced. The National Primary School Examination (NPSE) shall be the basis for admission to Junior Secondary School. It should be made an offence to admit pupils who have not passed the NPSE, as this practice falsifies the Net Enrolment Ratio (NER).

7.1.3 Junior Secondary School (JSS)

The current duration of three years is recommended for continuation terminating with the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE).

Recommendation: The timing of the BECE examination should be reviewed. The examination should be scheduled earlier to reduce the time lost for non examinees many of whom have to stay away from school to make room for the examinees. It is common

knowledge that many schools cease to function during the BECE. Early scheduling of the examination therefore would mean early release of the results thus minimising the time lost during the long wait for the results especially for those who would be transiting to senior secondary schools or to other paths to learning outside the mainstream formal system.

Recommendation: Unsuccessful BECE candidates should not be allowed to proceed to JSS 1. Irregular admission of unsuccessful candidates should be discouraged and those who aid irregular admission should be sanctioned.

7.1.4 Senior Secondary School (SSS)

The current duration of three years is inadequate as more time is needed to complete the syllabus. Non completion of the WASSCE syllabus was reported to be the main cause of poor performance besides incompetence demonstrated by many secondary school teachers.

Recommendation: The duration of senior secondary school should be extended by one year. Students preparing for the WASSCE would therefore spend four years instead of three in school.

This recommendation takes into account the time lost to numerous non-academic functions and ceremonial activities which characterise the school calendar during the second term when the WASSCE is normally scheduled. With four years in the SSS and three years of early childhood education the maximum time each pupil would be expected to stay in school is sixteen years. This is adequate time to prepare students not only for examinations but also for life. The 3 + 6 + 3 + 4 + 4 system of education is illustrated below:

STRUCTURE OF THE 3+6+3+4+4 EDUCATION SYSTEM

7.1.5 Out of School Provision

The structure provides for out-of-school learning opportunities for those who would need such opportunities. Pupils who are unable to pass the national Primary School Examination (NPSE) should be cancelled into the Community Education Centre “A” where they would be “drilled” in basic literacy and numeracy and enabled to acquire the basics. Based on the results of their assessment they would move up to community Education Centre “B” which will solidify the literacy and numeracy foundation and after opportunities for skills training.

Provision has been made for re-entry into the mainstream formal school system i.e. to J.S.S. should be the entry requirements be fulfilled. Otherwise Community Education Centre “B” participants move up the non- formal ladder techvoc institutes as beyond.

The National out –of School testing agency is recommended to determine the competencies of out-of school participants as their equivalency in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor attainment. Out-of-school testing agency should be provided for in the out-of-school section of the proposed re-established Institute of Education.

Various routes of entry and re-entry have been provided for given the critical need to retain learners in learning sustain environment. Provision for entry to apprenticeship and employment has also been made.

7.2 The Establishment of a Teaching Service Commission

The Commission recommends the establishment of the Sierra Leone Teaching Service Commission (SLTSC). This recommendation has already been considered and elaborated by the Technical Committee on the Establishment of a Teaching Service Commission.

7.3 Review Salaries and Conditions of Service for Teachers

Review of Salaries and Conditions of Service for teachers

Should be negotiated by the Teaching Service Commission.

7.4 Performance Contract for Principals of Secondary Schools Appointments of Principals of Secondary Schools should be based on performance contracts.

7.5 Parents' Education

A nation-wide parents' education programme should be designed and implemented. It should have a strong literacy component to reduce the high rate of adult illiteracy.

7.6 Teacher of the year Award

'Teacher of the year Award' Scheme for exemplary teachers should be instituted. This should be an annual award by the Head of State. Criteria for selecting the Teacher of the Year should be determined by a Teacher of the Year Committee in consultation with the Sierra Leone Teaching Service Commission.

7.7 Phasing out of the shift system. The shift system should be phased out by 2015. School should begins at 8.30 a.m. and end at 2.30 p.m. with a 30 minutes lunch break. If implemented this recommendation would increase the instructional time.

7.8 Management training for all-heads of school and educational institutions.

All heads of schools and education institution should be trained in educational; administration, and management. All pre-service teacher training programmes should include a Compulsory component (module) in educational administration and management.

7.9 Dress Code for Pupils

A policy on dress code for pupils should be formulated, implemented enforced and enforced.

7.10 Code of Conduct for Pupils

A national code of conduct for all primary and secondary school pupils should be developed, implemented and enforced.

7.11 School Transportation/Bus Service

A school transportation/School Bus Service should be provided out by the relevant Ministry of Government. This would enable pupils to get to school on time. Private service providers should be encouraged to consider providing a decent transport service for pupils.

7.12 Dress Code for Teachers and School Administrators

A Code of Conduct for Teachers and School administrators should include a dress code. This should be developed by the Sierra Leone Teaching Service Commission.

7.13 Staffing of the Ministry of Education

The Ministry of Education should be re-structured in accordance with proposals for re-structuring and adequately staffed. All vacant positions should be filled.

The Recommendations on ‘Institutional Appraisal of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports’ (Government of Sierra Leone, 2008), should be considered for implementation.

7.14 Timing of the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE)

The Timing of the BECE should be re-considered with the view to increasing instructional time.

7.15 Rationalization of Co-Curricular and Extra Curricular Activities

Co-curricular, extra-curricular and ceremonial activities should be rationalized with the view of reducing time wastage and increasing instructional time. The need for biennial or triennial celebrations should be considered.

Professional

A head of the Ministry should be appointed.

7.16 Implementation and Enforcement of Education Policies and Legal Provisions

Policies and legislations on education should be implemented and enforced. Information on education policies and legislations should be documented in a reader-friendly format including translations in national languages and widely disseminated. The active participation of the media should be enlisted.

7.17 Use of Official and National Languages

The Official Language, English, should be the medium of communication in schools. The National Languages may be used by pupils and teachers for inter-personal communication. Foreign Languages especially those which are taught should also be used.

7.18 Implementation of the Recommendations of Commissions of Inquiry

Once accepted the recommendations of Commissions set up to investigate critical issues in education should be implemented in a timely manner. The Commission recommends the implementation of the Commission of Inquiry on Indiscipline in Schools.

7.19 Re-Establishment of the Institute of Education

The Commission recommends the re-establishment of the Institute of Education with responsibilities for curriculum development, teacher development, and educational research. A technical Committee to deliberate on the” re-establishment of a semi-autonomous Institute of Education should be established within three months.

7.20 Strict Adherence to Entry and Matriculation Requirements by the Universities and Other Tertiary Education Institutions

Admission of students to the Universities and other tertiary education institutions should be on the bases of approved entry/matriculation requirements.

The Commission recommends termination of all ACCESS programmes by Universities and Other Tertiary Education Institutions. Access programmes have provided back door entry to Universities and other tertiary education institutions.

7.21 Harmonization of Entry/Matriculation requirements for Tertiary Education

The Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) should, as a matter of urgency, issue guidelines on harmonizing entry/matriculation requirements for tertiary education. Sanctions/penalties for breach of entry/matriculation requirements should be considered.

7.22 Adherence to Curricular/Programme Mandates

Tertiary Education Institutions should adhere to their original mandates in respect of the courses and programme they offer. The TEC should ensure that unnecessary duplication of course/programme offerings is avoided. Availability of resources should be the basis for course/programme offerings.

7.23 Amendment of Legislations on Education

Implementation of the proposals and recommendations contained in this report and those in development of education in general would require amendments to the following legislations on education:

The Education Act, 2004

The Universities Act, 2005

The Tertiary Education Commission Act, 2001

The Polytechnics Act, 2001

The National Council for Technical, Vocational and Other
Academic Awards Act, 2001

The Local Government Act, 2004

The recommendations to establish the Sierra Leone Teaching Service Commission and re-establishment of the Institute of Education would require new pieces of legislation.

7.24 Reduction of the Number of Subjects for BECE and WASSCE

It is recommended that the examinable subjects for BECE and WAASCE be reduced from 9 to 7 in conformity with current practice in the other West African countries

7.25 Chief Examiners' Reports

Principals of Secondary Schools should be required to submit to the Ministry of Education and the Sierra Leone Teaching Service Commission annual reports on actions taken to consider and implement the recommendations of the Chief Examiners for both the BECE and WASSCE. Annual appraisals of Principals and Schools should take this into account. The performance contract of Principals should include this requirement.

7.26 Pupil-Teacher Ratio

Policies on school populations and pupil-teacher ratio should be reviewed and strictly implemented urgently; action should be taken to reduce the population of overcrowded schools.

7.27 Irregular Admission of Failed Pupils

The practice of irregular admission of pupils who fail the NPSE and promotion of pupils who fail the BECE should be criminalised. The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) should develop a list of corrupt practices in schools with accompanying sanctions/penalties.

7.28 Ceiling on Teacher Recruitment

The Teaching Service Commission should, as a matter of urgency, initiate discussions on teacher ceiling. A data base on teachers in Sierra Leone would be useful in the discussions.

7.29 Guidance Counselling

School Guidance Counselling should include career guidance for JSS 3 and SSS pupils. Guidance Counsellors should be employed specifically for Guidance Counselling and should not be re-deployed to teach subjects for which they have no pedagogical preparation.

7.30 The draft policy on technical and Vocational Education should be considered for adoption and implementation by the Ministry of Education

7.31 Adoption of Policy on Technical and Vocational Education

The draft policy guidelines on Early Childhood Education should be basis for operationalizing the recommendation on the early Childhood component of the amended system of education.

7.32 Regulation of Entertainment Centres

The law relating to the opening and running of places of entertainment should be enforced. Video centres in the vicinity of schools should be closed down because they contribute to problems of absenteeism, dropout and indiscipline.

Legal requirements for organizing entertainment activities should be strictly enforced. Pupils should not be granted permission to organize entertainment activities at night due to their anti-social effects and consequences. The Film Censorship Act should be reviewed and strictly enforced.

7.1.32 Adoption of Policy on Early Childhood Education

5.1.12 The Ministry of Education

Control of education is legally vested in the Minister of Education who is head of the Ministry of Education which is mandated by the Education Act, to perform.

All work necessary or incidental to the control of education by the Minister and the exercise of any powers or the carrying out of any duties that may be specifically conferred on it...

(Education Act 2004 p.16)

The Minister and by implication the Ministry has wide legal powers to provided and deliver education. In the execution of his functions the Minister is advised by a Board on organisational, financial, and legal matters pertaining to schools.

The Commissioner received submission criticizing the Ministry of Education and blaming it for all that has gone wrong in education.

The Ministry of Education is grossly understaffed with low capacity. It is incapable of monitoring and supervising teachers

