

**AN APPRAISAL OF CANDIDATES' ACHIEVEMENT IN
THE WEST AFRICAN SENIOR SCHOOLCERTIFICATE
EXAMINATION (WASSCE) AMONG WAEC MEMBER
COUNTRIES**

BY

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ABSTRACT

The West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) is the international examination conducted by the West African Examinations Council. It is presently written by candidates in four of the member countries. The examination therefore provides data for the comparison of students' achievement in the sub-region. This paper takes a look at the trend in entries and performance of candidates in some selected subjects in the WASSCE. The implications of the trend as they relate to access and quality of education in the sub-region are discussed. Policy issues for educational advancement in the sub-region are highlighted and recommendations for improved performance made.

1. **INTRODUCTION**

Education is an instrument for national development. This is because it is the instrument used in developing the citizens who in turn contribute to the development of the nation. According to Afolabi (2010), the quality of a nation's education determines the quality of the products of its education system and by extension the quality and quantity, pace and level of its development. This is probably why every nation tends to invest more in getting their populace educated. However, the integrity of the entire educational system depends, to a large extent, on the quality of its assessment practices.

Assessment is a major tool employed in the process of appraising candidates' achievement; it plays a major role in the educational process or development. It helps to ascertain the extent to which the educational policy is successful and could also be a sort of quality control for checking the educational policy vis-à-vis the curriculum. Educational assessment is therefore the totality of the processes involved in making valid judgments about what behavioral characteristics and changes a learner has acquired through the process of teaching and learning.

Examination (internal or external) is a frequently used assessment tool which provides indices of students' achievement. Gronlund (1971), described evaluation as systematic processes of determining the extent to which instructional objectives are achieved by students. Therefore, the success or failure of an educational practice could be decided to a large extent by the degree of students' achievements. This paper therefore takes a look at the trend of candidates' performance at the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) among the WAEC member countries, implications for the noticeable trend and recommendations made for improved performance

2. TREND OF CANDIDATES' ENTRY FOR THE MAY/JUNE WASSCE

Figures I to IV illustrate the trends of entries in WASSCE in four of the WAEC member countries for the subjects between 2006 and 2010. However, Ghana did not present candidates for the examination in 2010.

Figure I: Candidates' Entries in Ghana

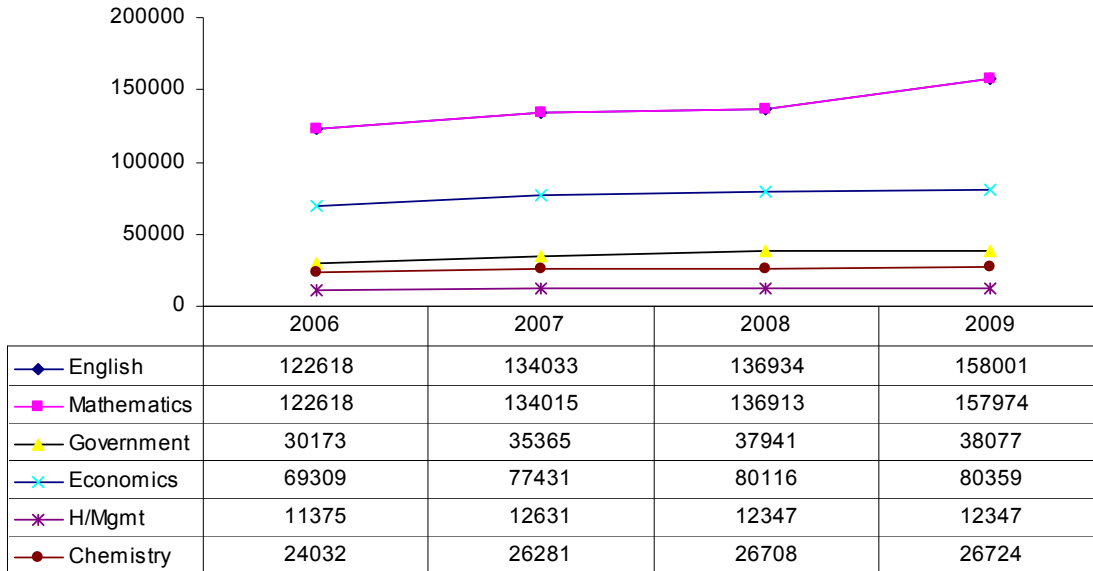


Figure I shows that there was an upward trend in English Language, Mathematics, Government, Economics and Chemistry during the period under consideration. While for Home Management, there was an upward trend till 2007. The trend shows a considerable increase in the entries for all the subjects except Home Management.

Figure II: Candidates' Entries in Nigeria

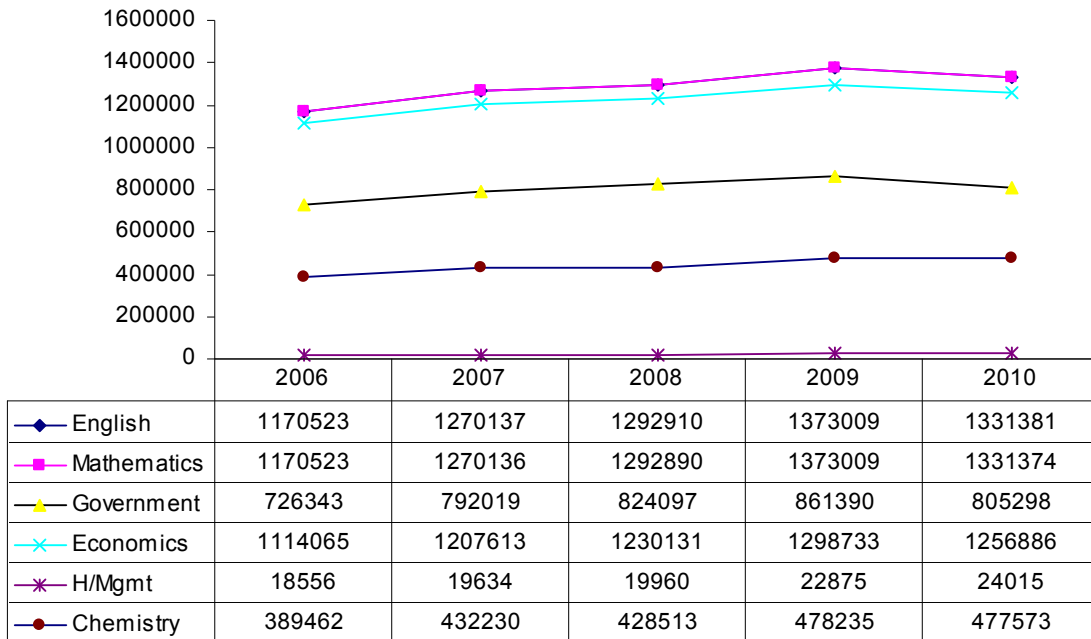


Figure II shows an increase in entries for the examination up to the year 2009 in English Language, Mathematics, Government and Economics. While there was a steady increase in entries for the years under review in Home Management. On the other hand the trend in the entries in Chemistry was not steady.

Figure III: Candidates' Entries in The Gambia

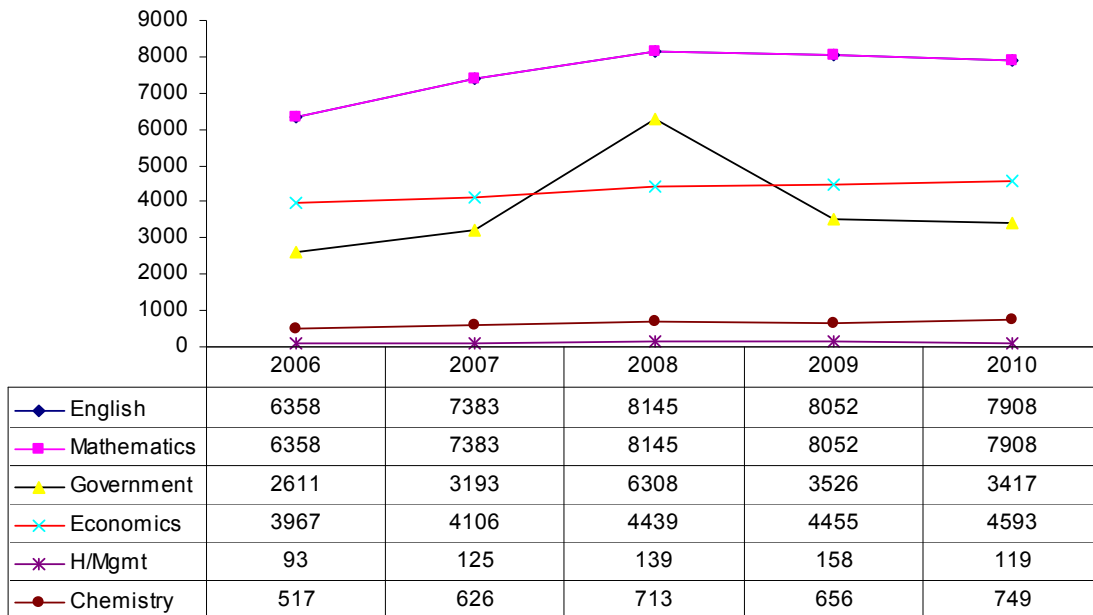


Figure III indicates that there was an upward trend in candidates' entries in The Gambia for English Language and Mathematics from 2006 to 2009. However, the entries dropped in 2010. The trend for Economics was upward for the period, while those of Government, Home Management and Chemistry were not steady.

Figure IV: Candidates' Entries in Sierra-Leone

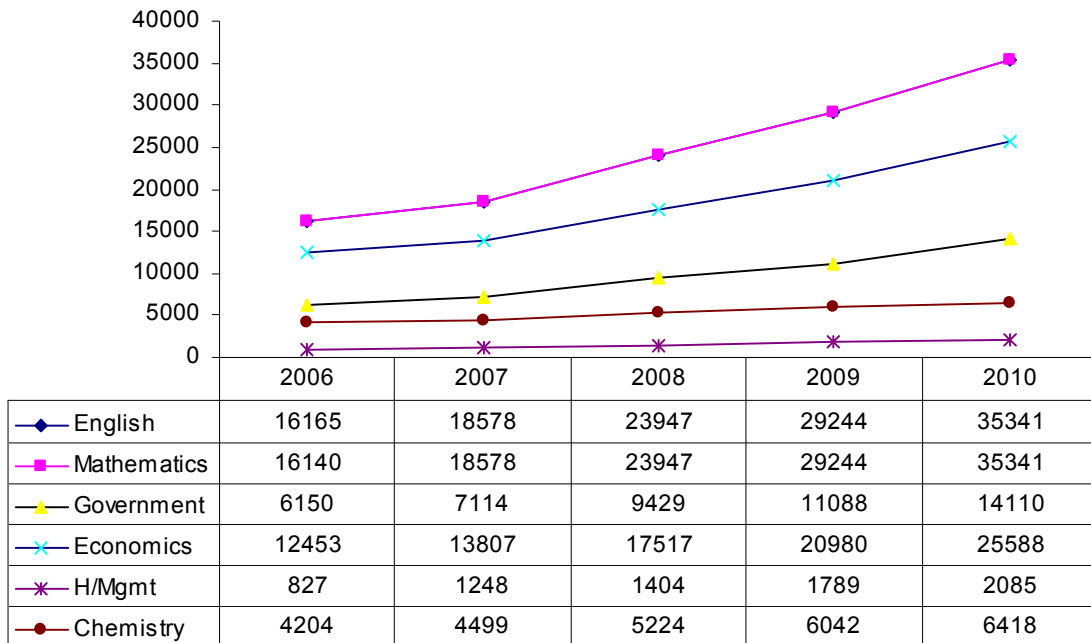


Figure IV shows a positive trend in entries for all the subjects under review in Sierra Leone

3. TRENDS OF CANDIDATES' PERFORMANCE IN MAY/JUNE WASSCE

Figures V to X illustrate the trend of candidates' performance in May/June WASSCE in WAEC member countries using the percentage of candidates that had credit and above in the selected subjects. However Ghana did not present candidates for the examination in 2010.

Trends of Candidates' Performance in May /June 2006 to 2010 WASSCE in English Language

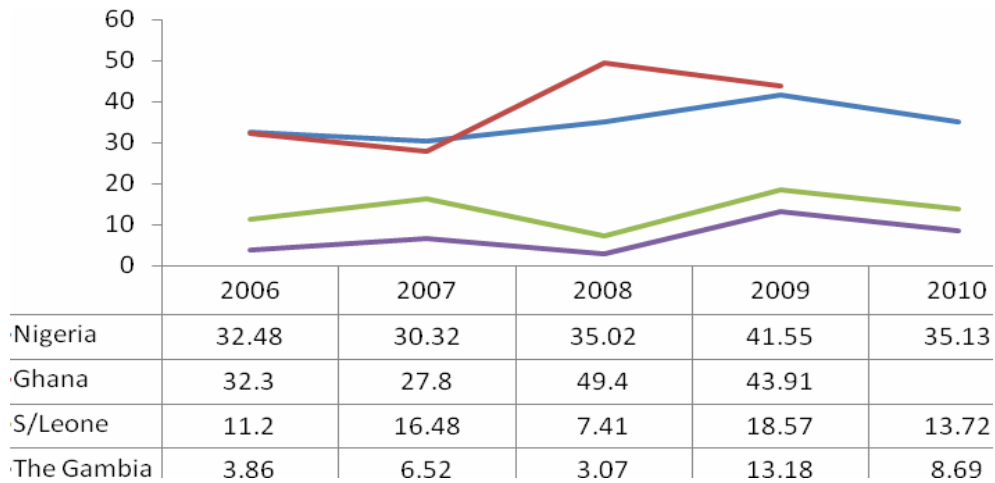


Figure V shows that less than 50% of the candidates who sat the examination in each year in all the countries had credit and above (A1 – C6) in English Language. The percentage of candidates who had credit in the subject ranged from 3.07 to 49.3. There was a downward trend in performance in all the countries. The Gambia had the least percentage of candidates who had credit and above in each year. On the other hand, Nigeria had the highest percentage of candidates who had credit and above in 2006, 2007 and 2010 while Ghana had the highest percentage in 2008 and 2009.

Trends of Candidates' Performance in May /June 2006 to 2010 WASSCE in Mathematics

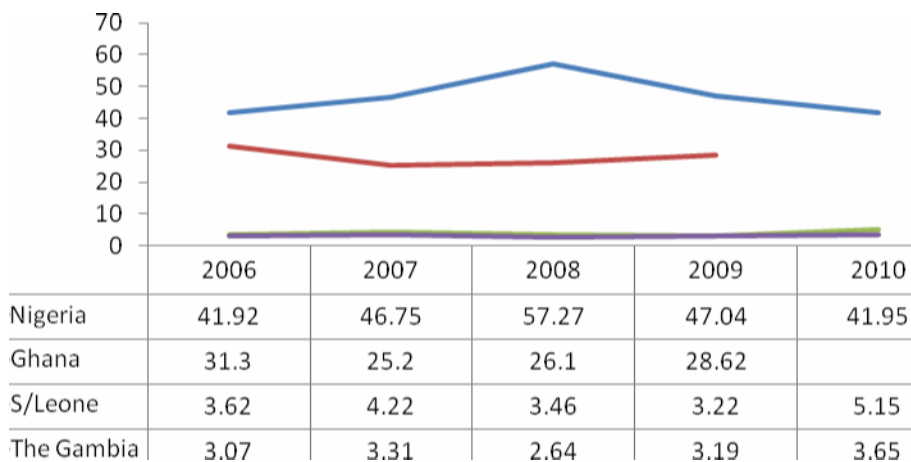


Figure VI shows that less than 58% of the candidates had credit and above (A1 – C6) in Mathematics in all the countries during the period under consideration. In addition, the trend of performance was unsteady in all the countries.

Trends of Candidates’ Performance in May/June 2006 to 2010 WASSCE in Government

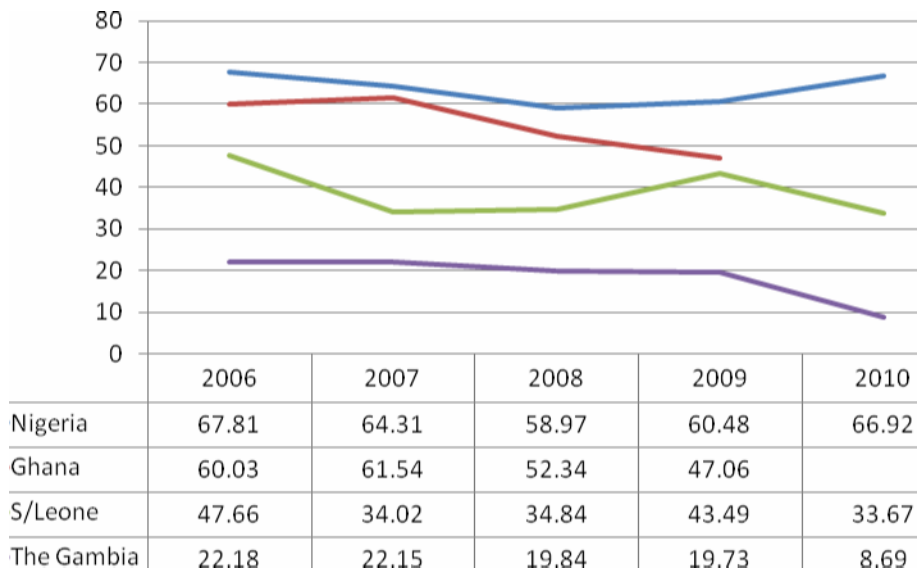


Figure VII shows that less than 68% of the candidates had credit and above (A1 – C6) in Government in all the countries during the period under consideration. The trend of candidates’ performance from 2008 was downward in all the other countries except Sierra Leone where the trend in candidates’ performance was unsteady.

Trends of Candidates' Performance in May /June 2006 to 2010 WASSCE in Economics

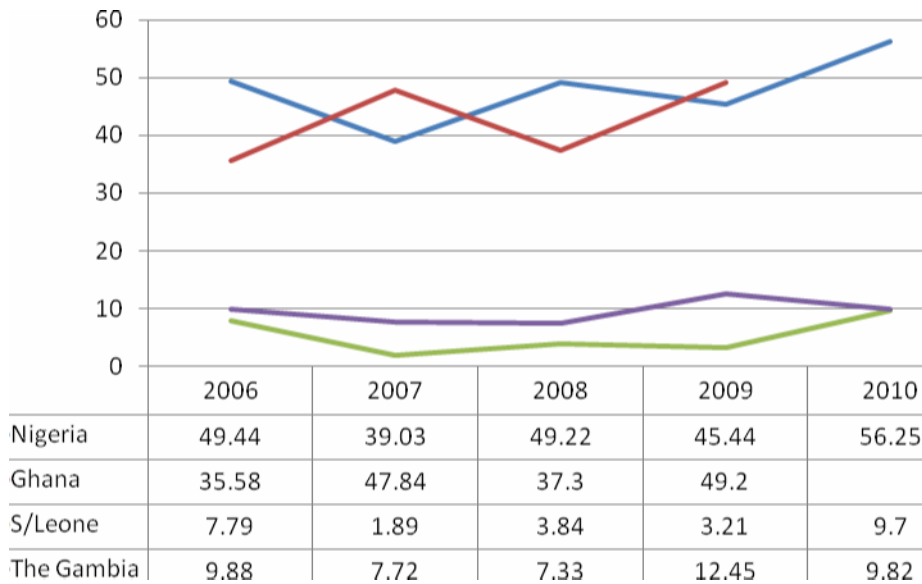


Figure VIII shows that less than 57% of the candidates had credit and above (A1 – C6) in Economics in all the countries during the period under consideration. The trend of performance fluctuated in all the countries throughout the period.

Trends of Candidates' Performance in May /June 2006 to 2010 WASSCE in Chemistry

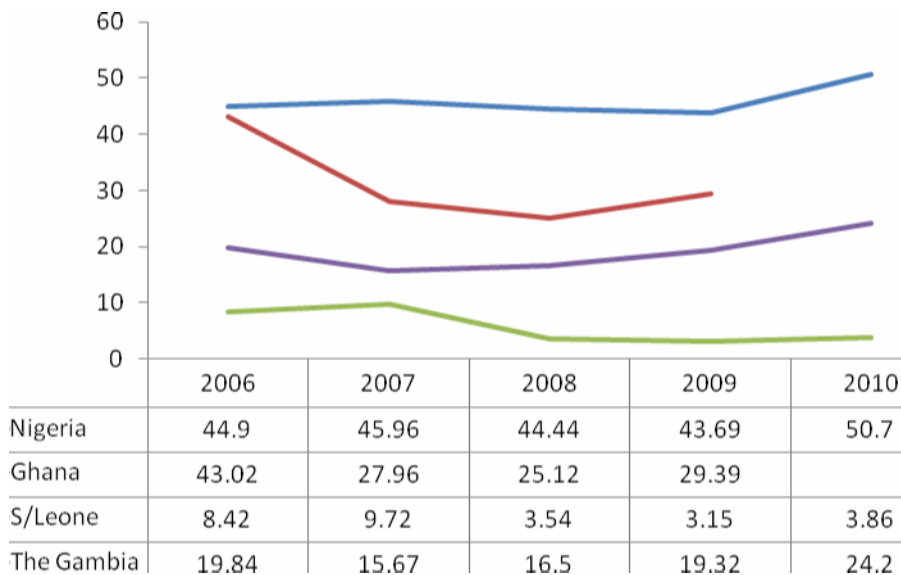


Figure IX shows that in Nigeria candidates' performance at the credit level was consistently the highest for the period under review in Chemistry. On the other hand, Sierra-Leone had the least percentage of candidates who had credit and above throughout the years under consideration.

Trends of Candidates' Performance in May/June 2006 to 2010 WASSCE in Home Management

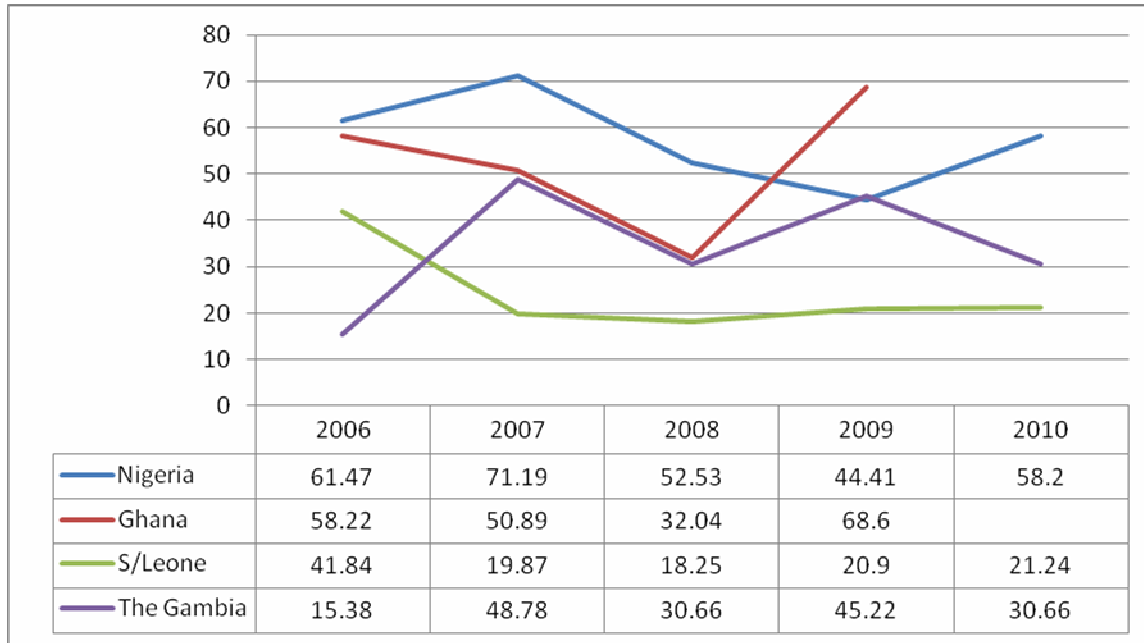


Figure X reveals that the percentage of candidates who had credit and above range in Home Management for the period under review was highest in Nigeria except for the year 2009 where Ghana had the highest percentage of candidates' performance in the subject. On the other hand, except for 2006, Sierra-Leone had the least percentage of candidates who had credit and above in the subject.

It could generally be observed that performance of candidates in WASSCE in the sub region in the subjects and for the period reviewed was not quite impressive except in Government where most of the candidates in Nigeria had credits and above. Performance of candidates in English Language and Mathematics in WSSCE in the sub-region was low. This calls for concern as these are core subjects for admission into tertiary institutions.

4. CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION

This paper has looked at the trend in entries and performance of candidates in some subjects in the WASSCE among the four member countries of WAEC. It was observed generally that performance was not impressive especially in the core subjects (English Language and Mathematics) that are requirements for tertiary education. It is therefore recommended that policies and strategies to improve candidates' performance in WASSCE should be put in place by the Governments of the various countries so that access to and quality of education in the sub-region could be sustained. This might possibly improve the overall development of each country.

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