

ADDRESS DELIVERED BY THE HON. MINISTER OF EDUCATION, DR. MATTHEW OPOKU PREMPEH AT A MEETING WITH HEADS OF SELECTED PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS, ANGLICAN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL, KUMASI, ON WEDNESDAY 15TH FEBRUARY, 2017

The Chief Director of the Ministry of Education

Director General of the Ghana Education Service

Directors of Education

Heads of Selected Senior High Schools

Our Friends from the Media

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me join the Chief Director in welcoming you to this meeting, and thank you for accepting the invitation to attend. I appreciate this unique opportunity to have a close dialogue with you, front-line Managers of our Senior High Schools, both public and private.

I am grateful for the platform created and impressed about the high level of participation.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

This meeting is my first major engagement with sector stakeholders since I assumed office. I chose to be with you because I recognize the critical role you play in achieving quality secondary education delivery in our country.

The purpose of this meeting is to deliberate on how to improve performance of students in the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE), and discuss ways in which teachers and students can be supported to maximize available resources to prepare students adequately for the WASSCE 2017 and beyond.

This meeting is also an opportunity to discuss and emphasise our role and responsibilities in the whole education enterprise.

CASE FOR ACTION

Ladies and Gentlemen,

An examination of the performance of our schools at WASSCE since 2006 shows a worrying trend. Over the past fifteen years, the percentage of students obtaining A1-C6 in six subjects in SHS, the minimum qualification for entry into tertiary institutions, has average from a low of 10.6% in 2007 to a high of 31.2% in 2012. This means that a large proportion of our students annually do not qualify for tertiary education.

From the perspective of Government and parents the investments in a child's education should result in a minimum outcome in terms of performance, that would enable him to move forward into tertiary education or exit into the world of work, with appropriate minimum acceptable qualification.

This has gone on for a very long time and we need to do something about it urgently.

In the past the Ministry and Minister had been blamed for poor WASSCE performance while Heads of Schools have not answered any questions or accounted for poor outcomes.

Moving forward the Ministry will institute mechanisms to demand accountability from heads of schools for their performance.

We have identified various causes for this state of affairs, the major ones being:

- Lack of proper supervision / management
- Lack of adequate preparation of students for exams
- Lack of teacher preparations.

The Chief Examiner's report has also identified the following causes:

- Poor appreciation of the English language by students
- Students inability to apply concepts
- Lack of understanding of word problems in mathematics
- Inadequate coverage of syllabus
- Poor biological drawing and labeling
- Poor preparation of students for exams, etc.

Meeting with Heads of Schools

In keeping with our commitment to improve performance, the Ministry programmed to engaging with heads of schools from both public and private schools to dialogue and devise strategies to improve on performance. We intend to use this platform to discuss measures aimed at supporting you in preparing your students for WASSCE 2017 and beyond.

At this seminar, we have invited schools where less than 50% of their candidates have failed over the past five years to qualify for tertiary education.

Role of School Head in the Preparation of Students for WASSCE

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The head of school has direct responsibility for ensuring improvement in the performance of their schools and in preparing students to sit for WASSCE. Regrettably, our interactions with senior high school heads reveal that some of them do not fully appreciate their responsibility towards performance of their students. They see annual failure of their students in WASSCE as given. Many of us here have superintended consistently over poor performance of our schools and have not initiated any measures for improvement.

Records from WAEC indicate that many private senior high schools consistently record very high failure rates in WASSCE. Some of these private schools do not have qualified teachers to teach and prepare the students adequately for WASSCE.

This situation will not be allowed to continue.

Supply of Teaching and Learning Resources

In addition to the discussions, the Ministry of Education will support each of the schools with resources in preparing students for WASSCE 2017. These are:

- WASSCE Past Questions

We will distribute electronic copies of WASSCE past questions and their solutions to each of the schools here. This is to guide the teachers of your schools in their preparation of the students.

- Mathematics and Science Teaching and Learning Modules on Difficult Topics and Concepts will also be distributed

The Ministry will supply each school with an electronic copy of manual on effective teaching of topics and concepts in mathematics and science that are identified to be

difficult. The manual is the outcome of a survey on difficult topics and concepts in mathematics and science carried out by GES under the Secondary Education Improvement Project. The topics and concepts constitute those that teachers tend to skip because they lack the capacity to effectively teach them, and students have difficulty learning.

We will also distribution of Digital DVD on Students Preparation for WASSCE.

The Ministry has developed a digital DVD on covering presentations on common errors students commit in WASSCE and how they can prepare effectively to write the exams. Each school will be presented with a copy of this DVD.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is our hope that with the provision of support and management orientation that you are going to receive, heads and their teachers will be able to guide their students to improve on their performance in WASSCE 2017.

I will like to emphasis that the Ministry of Education cannot accept the practice of heads who superintend over consistent poor performance.

In the public schools, school heads must justify their continued stay as school heads with the performance of their students. The private schools must also justify their continued operation with the performance of their student in WASSCE. Any school head that superintend over failure rate of 90% and above cannot be allowed to continue operations without accounting to the GES.

The purpose of this engagement is to signal our preparedness to support you while at the same time demanding improved performance and accountability from you.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The education of the citizenry remains a critical agenda of Government. Of deepest concern is the education of young people at the Secondary Education level. Senior High School Education provides the basis for pursuing courses at the tertiary level and graduates from these institutions form a critical mass of the human capital of our nation. In the light of this, the issue of quality education delivery in our Senior High Schools should be a matter of concern to us all.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To highlight areas where candidates perform poorly, subject specialists and examiners of the West African Examinations Council have been invited to do presentations on the core subject areas and causes of failures in WASSCE, from WAEC's perspectives.

I expect that you will take notes of these areas and work on them appropriately.

I encourage you to share experiences from Heads of Senior High Schools, who have deployed various strategies to record growth in the performance of their students.

Furthermore, there will be presentations on factors which should engage teachers' attention as they prepare candidates in the two crucial areas of Mathematics and Science.

It is the expectation of the Ministry of Education that this meeting will galvanize Heads of schools to deploy new strategies to register remarkable improvements in the performance of their students in the 2017 WASSCE and beyond which is worthy of emulation.

After this meeting, the Chief Examiners' reports for the various subjects should serve as useful reference materials that all teachers should be encouraged to read, in order to pay attention to the difficult concepts and areas affecting students' performance. In addition, all the good practices that will be shared should motivate you when you go

back to put into practice measures that will help students study harder for their examination.

Government recognizes that quality secondary school education cannot be achieved in a vacuum. It takes every stakeholder, including the school head, teachers and students of the school to make the wheel turn. Government has therefore, placed the teachers' welfare and motivation at the centre of our educational programme delivery.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The following are some of the areas that government will be focusing on:

(i) Affordable Housing Scheme for Teachers

As regards the provision of affordable housing scheme for teachers, the Ministry will open a dialogue with Teacher Unions to fashion out affordable housing schemes as a way of boosting the morale of teachers to give of their best to enhance the standard of education in this country as emphasized earlier by his Excellency the President of the Republic of Ghana.

(ii) Prompt Payment of Salaries and Allowances

We have also programmed to ensure that teachers' promotions are done promptly to ensure credible progression and to boost the morale of teachers to give of their best. Government will ensure that salaries and allowances are paid on time. The practice whereby teachers' promotions and salaries delay will be a thing of the past. Government is initiating the necessary steps to ensure that all outstanding allowances and salary arrears are paid by Government in the course of the year.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your collective experience and knowledge of education service delivery at the classroom represents an asset that Government could tap into to improve education. Accordingly,

I hope to dialogue with CHASS and all other professional bodies and associations, in order to ensure that policies initiated by the Ministry have the input of important stakeholders. For instance, your views on causes of poor performance of our students in the West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (WASSCE) and how to improve on performance remains a priority. Your views are always welcome by the Ministry.

CONCLUSION

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

The aforementioned measures proposed by the Ministry are meant to improve performance in Senior High Schools to enable the Education Sector make giant strides.

I wish to emphasise that the Ministry expects each of you to take full responsibility for the performance of your students. We at the Ministry of Education and GES remain committed to support your efforts with renewed policy initiatives and measures enumerated in the NPP Manifesto, key of which is to make secondary education free.

It is our hope that you will support a successful implementation of this policy.

I thank you for your attention.