



PRESS BRIEFING

RE: WAEC's RESPONSE TO THE EDUWATCH 2021 WASSCE GHANA MONITORING REPORT

INTRODUCTION

WAEC's defence to our allegations of widespread questions leakages during the WASSCE 2021 and their attacks to my person as one having an agenda against them is most unfortunate. Notwithstanding, we have never in our wildest imagination believed changing a status quo which benefits some people would be easy. We note that in all our undertaking, we have been guided by the public interest.

WAEC in response to our allegations of leakage in some eleven (11) papers between days and hours to their scheduled time has been as usual, shifting blame to the schools and hiding behind words like 'circulation', 'compromised' and 'foreknowledge' instead of admitting that when questions are in the public domain days or hours before a paper, it is **nothing but a leak**. In any serious jurisdiction, including under the British Standards of Assessments which WAEC aspires to match, many papers of this year's WASSCE should have been re-written due to the massive leakages WAEC is struggling to admit publicly, as a cover up to its system inefficiencies.

On October 20, 2021, Eduwatch presented at a meeting, evidence of the leaks through a live Telegram platform [which we shall repeat to the media here present] where questions bought by Eduwatch monitors and screen shots of questions obtained on WhatsApp platforms were deposited. This platform indicated the dates and times questions were received by Eduwatch. The meeting, which was convened by the Parliamentary Select Committee on Education, was attended by Conference of Heads of Assisted Secondary Schools (CHASS), the Hon. Deputy Minister of Education (Basic) on behalf of the Ministry of Education, the Director-General of Ghana Education Service (GES) and his team, WAEC's leadership and a Chief Superintendent and District Police Commander from the Ghana Police Service. It is therefore very shocking that after presenting the evidence at the meeting, which had earlier (on 15th September 2021) been presented to the Director-General of Criminal Investigations Department (CID), WAEC hypocritically turns round to holds a press conference in Accra pretending to the Ghanaian public that it has no knowledge of the evidence of the leakage in the eleven (11) papers.

Again, this same Telegram platform was presented to the media and stakeholders including representatives from the National Catholic Secretariat, Christian Council of Ghana, Office of the National Chief Imam, UTAG, Vice Chancellors Ghana etc on 4th November 2021 at UPSA. WAEC's consistent denial of leaks is not only tantamount to dishonesty but is responsible for today's elephant in the room. No problem has ever been solved without an honest admission. In the midst of the denials, the onus still lies on the Ministry of Education to reform the assessment system, and not WAEC.



RESPONSE TO DENIAL OF PAPER LEAKAGE

Regarding the subject related issues raised in WAEC's press briefing, we wish to respond as follows;

1. Foods and Nutrition 3

At the meeting organized by the Parliamentary Select Committee on Education, which WAEC's leadership were present, we provided a screen shot evidence with date and time to prove that the Foods and Nutrition (3) paper was leaked unto a WhatsApp platform. It is therefore surprising that they arrived in Accra only to hold a press conference to deny this. For the avoidance of doubt, the evidence of the leak of the actual paper is available on our official Facebook Page @AfricaEduwatch in a 23rd August 2021 post and shall be presented to journalists here present.

2. English Language 2 and Mathematics (Elective) 2

Our Monitoring Team intercepted leaked questions for the two papers about ten (10) and nine (9) hours to the paper. Even though, WAEC continues to evade the issue of leakage, it is very much aware of the evidence, but chooses to call it a circulation. Our team intercepted handwritten questions for Elective Mathematics 2 paper at 11:46 PM, the night before the paper's schedule. The leak contained eleven (11) out of the fifteen (15) questions that appeared in the actual exams, for which one Gideon Darko, alleged to be behind the Jerusalem Telegram Questions Marketing Platform was arrested. Strangely, WAEC maintains that the Elective Mathematics 2 questions did not leak. If when eleven (11) out of fifteen (15) questions in an exam is found on social media about nine (9) hours to the paper is not a leak, what then is a leak; and why then was Jerusalem arrested?

3. Physics 2

WAEC continues to trivialize leakages to the detriment of our assessment system. The excuse that Physics 2 was rescheduled because WAEC picked up 'signals that the paper was compromised' is another failed attempt to cover up for systemic inefficiencies. The paper did leak at 4:53 AM on 'Grandmasters VIP Telegram' Page. We were however surprised that papers that leaked overnight for up to nine (9) hours before their schedule time were not rescheduled.

4. Biology 3 (Practical-Alternative A)

On the Biology 3, we repeat, the paper leaked five days before the scheduled time for writing and WAEC cannot as usual, shift any blame to the schools.



5. Mathematics (Core) 2, Economics 2 and Integrated Science 2

While WAEC purports that its checks indicated questions posted on WhatsApp and Telegram Platforms were fake, our team intercepted genuine leaks to these questions about nine (9) hours before for Mathematics 2 [on Grandmasters VIP page] and Integrated Science 2 [on Correct WhatsApp group], and over one hour for Economics 2 [Legit WASSCE Telegram Platform]. We have since reported the issue to the CID.

6. Chemistry 1, Mathematics (Core) 1 & Integrated Science 1

WAEC's rules strictly forbids invigilators and students from carrying phones into the examination hall. The rationale behind this restriction is obvious, as there could be persons on standby waiting to solve and re-transmit answers into the exam hall, as was the case in many schools monitored. For WAEC to admit that these three papers were only circulated from shots taken from the exam hall goes to affirm our allegation that, under WAEC's supervision, some students and invigilators had phones in examination halls for the wrong reasons. Notwithstanding, questions for papers scheduled to be written at 1pm or 3pm were leaked on various social media platforms before the scheduled time.

SUMMARY ON LEAKS

The case may be that WAEC genuinely may not have been aware of some of the reported leaks because we were both on different Telegram platforms. However, this also exposes WAEC's lack of capacity to mount wide surveillance on the Telegram Questions Market. For WAEC's information, Eduwatch was on thirty (30) of such platforms for over two months; the more reason why WAEC should be collaborating with Eduwatch than being impulsively dismissive and zealously attacking our Executive Director at any given opportunity.

WAEC'S CONFLICTING GOVERNANCE ARCHITECTURE

The current arrangement where WAEC has a Council comprising representatives of WAEC member states who regulate WAEC is not only colonial but flies in the face of the principle of checks and balances in modern-day governance. This is because, key members of this Governing Council have vested interest in the result of WAEC's assessment, a situation likely to restrict their ability to strictly regulate WAEC. For example, the GES Director-General is a Vice Chair of WAEC's Council. This same personality has an objective of ensuring GES achieves the highest WASSCE pass rate, a Key Performance Indicator determined by WAEC. While the professionalism of the good Professor is never in doubt, to what extent does this arrangement guarantee that every GES Director-General will have the audacity to demand accountability from WAEC when WAEC is the body judging their performance? This, coupled with countless instances



where the GES has either defended WAEC or remained silent in the face of widespread leaks at WASSCE, including the 2020 and 2021 editions, raises issues of potential Conflict of Interest.

THE URGENT CASE FOR REGULATING WAEC AND OTHER ASSESSMENT BODIES

The state of WASSCE today confirms that WAEC cannot keep regulating itself. It is clear WAEC enjoys and would relish to continue enjoying the 50-year comfort of operating as a judge in their own court, that is not in the public's interest and blurs public accountability. The WAEC colonial governance architecture is best described as a walking contradiction, especially when candidates feel unfairly treated by WAEC or when assessment standards fall short. In advanced jurisdictions, there is a regulator of the assessment sector that sets and enforces standards. It also operates an office of complaints for receiving public grievances about the conduct of examinations by the assessment body; this is international best practice.

Unfortunately, under the current self-regulatory regime of WAEC, candidates whose results are unduly withheld, cancelled or who feel unfairly treated in the administration of an exam have no option than to appeal to the same alleged abuser-WAEC. How can the cockroach expect justice in the court of the hen? This arrangement, which obviously predates democracy has outlived its essence, and is the cause of the several court cases against WAEC which sometimes prolong to the detriment of candidates. Sadly, citizens without the resources to afford litigating with WAEC end up enduring such unfair treatments.

Again, the Ministry of Education is the only body that can decide to end this circus of a contradictive governance arrangement, NOT WAEC. After two years of advocating this issue, the Ministry of Education is yet to formally pronounce on this matter. We call on the Honourable Minister to make public the Ministry's position on the issue of regulating WAEC.

WAEC CANNOT ESCAPE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ACTS AND OMISSIONS OF ITS OWN CONTRACTED EXTERNAL SUPERVISORS

It is sad WAEC attempts to delink itself from the misdeeds of some of its own contracted officers known as external supervisors. Whether or not External Supervisors are staff of WAEC is tangential and inconsequential to the subject matter of discourse. The fact remains that, WAEC's contracted external supervisors were compromised in many schools, and as indicated in paragraph 2 of WAEC's own statement of 15th September 2021, and WAEC must be vicariously liable.



MONITORED SCHOOLS NOT ON WAEC'S LIST

WAEC seeks clarity through a press conference on how Kikam Technical and other schools were seen in the appendix of the report as monitored, even though they were not on their list of WASSCE Schools. If they genuinely needed clarification, they could have responded when Eduwatch submitted the draft report to them for their inputs, a week before the launch. The following clarifications are however made for the public's information:

Kikam Technical, located in the Ellembelle District was monitored for NABPTEx. If WAEC took time to read our report, they would have realized that we made findings on not only WASSCE, but also four (4) NABTEx papers - English and Social Studies (1&2). Once supposed leaked questions are intercepted online, we confirm from schools to determine whether they are genuine leaks or not.

The Ghana Muslim Mission SHS in Beposo (Sekyeré Central) erroneously repeated itself in the appendix of the report as Beposoman Muslims SHS. This has since been corrected.

On the issue of Insaaniyya SHS, Kasoa, that school made our sample 50 based on several tip offs on examination malpractice received during our 2020 monitoring exercise. However, after recognizance visit, the Central Regional Monitoring Team realized the school could not survive after the COVID-19 break and had collapsed, forcing students to sit for the WASSCE in a nearby school. The Monitoring Team later replaced Insaaniyya with Apam SHS in the same region. So, we monitored Apam in the main report but failed to make the changes in the appendix.

EDUWATCH ADVOCACY YIELDING RESULTS

WAEC mentions as a way forward that, it has considered removing the human element involved in its questions paper production value chain and is introducing serialization to curb examination fraud. These significant decisions are among others, the result of Eduwatch's front line advocacy on the existence of an under-reported problem and the publishing of various policy papers recommending technology solutions to WAEC and the Ministry of Education. While we are happy our advocacy is yielding dividend, WAEC must rise above its pettiness and muster the courage to congratulate Eduwatch for assisting WAEC appreciate and solve its own self-denied challenges. If WAEC will not appreciate Eduwatch, they must not attack us.

OUR POSITION ON SERIALIZATION

We acknowledge the proposals by the Honourable Minister of Education for WAEC to serialize questions to curb malpractices. This simply means, for a particular paper, there will be for example, ten (10) different sets of questions written by students in a particular examination room.



This proposal will make it difficult for students to easily buy leaks since one would be unsure which set of questions would land on their desks, while buying and learning all ten (10) sets may prove a daunting task. It will also reduce copying, as one is not likely to answer the same question as the one sitting close to them in the examination hall. While we welcome the serialization proposal as a short-term measure to curb examinational malpractices in schools, we note that it is not a long-term solution to the leakage on Telegram platforms.

CALL FOR EXTERNAL INVESTIGATIONS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The first step in blocking the perineal leak is identifying its source. It is on the back of this that we are requesting for an external investigation to ascertain the actual source of leakage in this year's WASSCE. This external investigation will not only give a clue about the actual source of leaks for remedial purposes but will also provide a basis for certain staff and contractors of WAEC to be sanctioned for their actions or inactions that may have led to the massive leaks. It goes without saying that, if there is no accountability, there cannot be responsibility, WAEC must be held responsible for the leaks.

CONCLUSION

We conclude by indicating that eleven (11) out of twenty (20) papers monitored during WASSCE 2021 were leaked and sold on Telegram and WhatsApp platforms from five days to one hour to the scheduled time for writing the said papers. If WAEC still insists there were no leakages as alleged, we strongly advise them to lodge a formal complaint to the Police to investigate Eduwatch for deceiving the Police CID with fake evidence, rather than going about on a public relations expedition to cover up for glaring systemic inefficiencies.

We commend the Ministry of Education for the political will to reform Ghana's external assessment system and commit to keep supporting the Ministry and WAEC in pursuit of a credible, relevant and accountable external assessment sector in Ghana.

We call on the Minister of Education to consultatively develop a road map and strategy for reforming the external assessment sector, leading to comprehensive reforms which we believe, will also pave the way for our West African neighbours to emulate. This should include the revision of the WAEC Act (Act 719) to strengthen its accountability to Ghana's education sector.

Thank you for your attention.

ACCRA, 9TH NOVEMBER 2021.