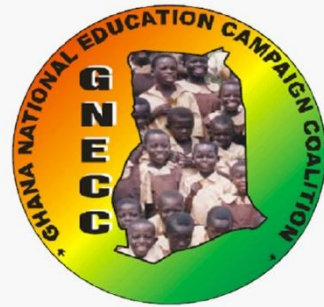




# BECE OBSERVATION REPORT

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## Executive Summary

The Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) conducted by the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) in Ghana is a significant assessment in the country's educational system which serves as a crucial point of transition for students from junior high school to senior high school. The BECE is designed to evaluate the academic progress and readiness of students to move to the next level of education.

As part of the Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition's (GNECC) commitment to improving the education system, GNECC undertook an observation study of the 2023 BECE. This exercise served as an independent assessment of the examination process, procedures, and outcomes to generate insights that will serve as evidence for GNECC's advocacy efforts with other stakeholders in strengthening future examinations to make it better.

A total of 600,714 candidates registered for the 2023 BECE. Out of this number, 300,323 were males while 300,391 were females. 2137 examination centers were used for the exams and 21,027 Invigilators were engaged for the 2023 BECE. (<https://www.waecgh.org/article/3347/press-briefing-on-the-conduct-of-2023-examinations-bece-wassce-general-and-advanced-business-certificate-examinations>)

According to the study, 92% of the test centers received their supplies on schedule, with only 8% experiencing delays because of logistics issues.

Again, examination administration saw clear instructions and strict rule enforcement (92% of centers). Few isolated malpractice cases were noted in Ahafo, Upper West, and Western regions.

Furthermore, examination rooms were designed to prevent copying and adequately lit and ventilated.

Also, external observers were permitted in 86% of centers; reasons for refusal included concerns about answer sharing, disruptions, lack of authorization, and accreditation.

The study further established that all examination centers were consistent in collecting and securing answer scripts.

Overall, the BECE examination conduct at the centers visited was rated 52% excellent, 45% good, 2% satisfactory.

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# I. Introduction

## I.1 Background

The Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition (GNECC) is a network of civil society organizations, professional groupings, educational/research institutions, and other practitioners interested in promoting quality lifelong education for all. As part of its commitment to improving the education system, GNECC undertook an observation exercise to observe the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) organized by the West African Examinations Council (WAEC). 12 regions in Ghana which covered the Northern Middle and Southern belts were randomly selected for the exercise in 64 examination centers. The observation commenced from August 7 through to August 11, 2023.

## I.2 Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this study were the following:

- **Promote Accountability:** The data exercise seeks to foster transparency and accountability in the BECE by providing an independent assessment of the examination process, procedures, and outcomes.
- **Assess Examination Integrity:** GNECC aims to evaluate the integrity of the BECE, ensuring that it is conducted fairly, free from any form of malpractice or irregularities, and adhering strictly to WAEC's guidelines.
- **Monitor Inclusivity:** By observing the examination process, GNECC intends to assess the inclusivity of the BECE, ensuring that it accommodates the diverse needs of all students, including those with disabilities and from marginalized communities.
- **Inform Evidence-Based Advocacy:** The data exercise will generate valuable data and insights that will serve as evidence for GNECC's advocacy efforts in collaborating with policymakers

## I.3. The observation process

The observation process started with desk reviews, and development of the questionnaire based on the findings from the desk reviews. The team selected questions that best fit into the objectives of the observation exercise and added some additional questions. The developed questionnaire was shared with the GNECC National secretariat for their input. The finalized questionnaire was deployed on KoboCollect and then pretested by the team to ascertain its variability. Prior to data collection, the MEAL specialist trained the enumerators who mainly comprised of (12) GNECC regional coordinators and team members. The MEAL specialist then analyzed the data and wrote the report while soliciting comments/input from the national secretariat.

# 2. Methodology

## 2.1. Survey design

The study took the form of observations made by observers during the examination process and some one-on-one interactions with pupils to know their own views about the examination process. The study largely employed quantitative questions with a few qualitative questions which was programmed on KoboCollect.

## 2.2. Sample frame and sample size

The sampling frame for the observation exercise included 12 regions in Ghana namely: Central, Western, Volta, Oti, Bono East, Upper West, Eastern, Western North, Ashanti, Ahafo, Greater Accra and Bono region. In all, 64 examination centers were randomly visited within the 12 regions for this observation exercise. 7 examination papers namely: French, Building Design and Technology, Mathematics, Integrated Science, Social Studies, ICT and English Language were monitored.

## 2.3. Data analysis and reporting

The data was analyzed using Excel Pivot Tables, an advanced data analysis tool within MS Excel. The analyzed data was crosschecked for consistency and presented in the form of graphs and charts where appropriate. For ease of understanding, important sections and/or elements of the analyzed data were explained in brief narratives. After all the above, a draft report was produced and subjected to careful review by GNECC Management.



Map 1: Distribution of examination centers visited in the regions

## 2.4. Limitation

This survey did not happen without limitations. The key limitation to the exercise was the unavailability of accreditation for the observers. Because of this challenge, a few examination centers refused some observers access to the examination room.

# 3. Observation Findings:

## 3.1 Pre-Exam Preparation:

To understand the Pre-exams preparation stage during the BECE, few questions regarding the timeliness and the security measures in place were asked. Feedbacks shown that most (92%) of the examination centers visited received the necessary examination materials on time. For the 8% who didn't receive on time, the delay was due to Logistics and Transportation Issues. It was also observed that examination papers were securely stored before the exam.



## 3.2 Examination Administration:

In most of the examination centers visited (92%), it was observed that examination instructions were read out clearly to the students. Also, the invigilators strictly enforced the examination rules and regulations in all the examination centers visited. There were few instances of malpractice observed during the exam in 5 of the examination centers in Ahafo Region (1), Upper West Region (1) and Western Region (3).





### 3.3 Examination Environment:

In all the examination centers visited, it was observed that the examination rooms were arranged to prevent students from copying except at Adeiso Presby SHS-B which is in the Eastern Region. One other positive observation was that the examination rooms for all the centers visited were lit and well ventilated.



### 3.4 Student Experience:

To further understand the experience of students, a few students were randomly asked their views about the allocated time for the exams and if the questions had enough clarity and fair. Responses from 98% of the examination centers visited recorded that there were no issues with the clarity and fairness of the questions. The only issue about the clarity of the question identified in Coneli Conelius Center in Capecoast, was in the fante paper where a student said a fante word in the question was wrongly spelt. In most of the centers visited (89%), randomly selected students affirmed that they had enough time to complete the exam.

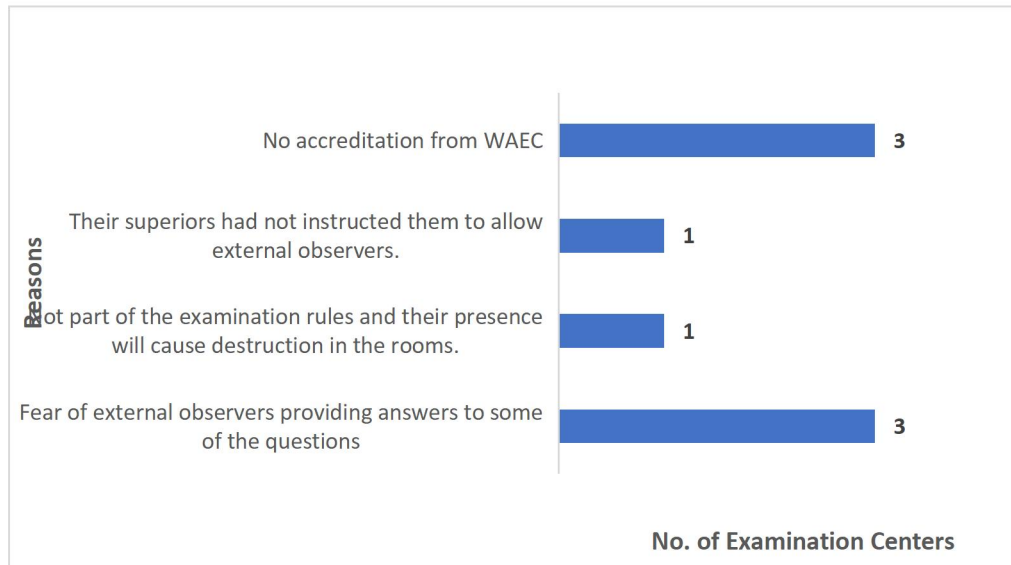


### 3.5 Exam Monitoring:

It was observed in 86% of the centers visited, that external observers were allowed to move freely around the examination room. 14% of the centers who refused external observers gave the following reasons as stated below:

- The fear of external observers providing answers to some of the questions
- Not part of the examination rules and their presence will cause destruction in the rooms.
- Their superiors had not instructed them to allow external observers.
- No accreditation from WAEC





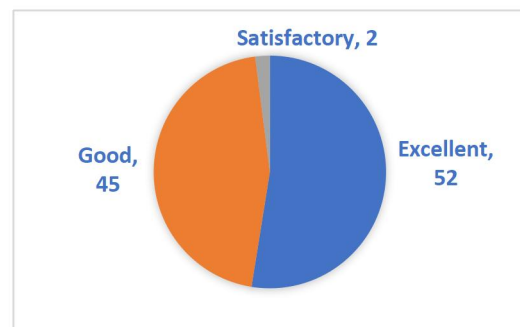
Graph 1. A graph showing reasons why some observers were disallowed from entering some examination centers

### 3.6 Post-Exam Procedures:

All of examination centers visited reported that the answer scripts were collected and handled securely after the exam and there was a proper process for collecting and organizing the exam papers after the exam.

### 3.7 Overall Assessment:

52% of the examination centers visited were rated excellent, 45% were rated good and 2% were rated satisfactory considering the general conduct of the examination as observed by the observers.



Graph 2: General conduct of the BECE

### 3.8 Additional Observation (Encouraging)

The BECE performance, based on the observation findings, was exemplary. The examination process was consistently described as "good" to "excellent" based on the following.

- The exams commenced and concluded punctually, with special accommodations provided for special needs children, ensuring they had an extra 30 minutes to complete their paper.
- Professionalism was a hallmark, with invigilators managing the exams seamlessly and students showing cooperation.
- Attendance was commendable with a 100% turnout in most centers visited.
- The environment was ideal for examination - serene, conducive, and protected from external intrusions.

- In most centers visited, there were systems in place to monitor observers, ensuring those without IDs maintained distance.
- Notably, there were stringent measures against examination malpractice, highlighted by the caution given to students who inadvertently removed index numbers and the strict enforcement of rules by both internal and external invigilators.
- Materials for the examination were provided, and there was an evident commitment to upholding the exam's integrity.

### 3.9 Additional Observation (Loopholes)

Despite the many good things observed, there were a few loopholes which are worth sharing for WAEC to work on:

- **Logistical Delays:** There was an insufficient number of cars for distributing exam papers, causing significant delays in paper distribution.
- **Invigilator Concerns:** The remuneration for invigilators was perceived as inadequate, leading to hesitancy in their willingness to work, coupled with payment delays.
- **Facility Issues:** Some exam centers lacked proper toilet and washroom facilities. An unexpected malfunction in the toilet facilities in one of the centers caused minor disruptions, though it was resolved in 20 minutes.
- **Student Accessibility:** A student with multiple disabilities did not receive the necessary accommodations, such as an audio device, despite WAEC being informed of her condition.
- **Examination Materials Discrepancy:** Some students received incorrect papers, a mismatch between their registered subjects and what was provided.

## 4. Recommendations

Below are a few recommendations, WAEC can work toward mitigating the identified loopholes, enhancing the overall BECE experience, and ensuring a fair, transparent, and accessible examination process for all students:

- i. **Logistical Improvement:**
  - Increase the number of vehicles allocated for distributing exam papers to ensure timely and efficient distribution across all centers.
  - Establish a robust communication system to promptly address any unexpected logistical challenges.
- ii. **Invigilator Welfare:**
  - Review and adjust the remuneration for invigilators to reflect the importance of their role, ensuring adequate compensation.
  - Ensure timely payment of invigilators to alleviate financial concerns and encourage active participation.



iii. Facility Enhancement:

- Conduct thorough facility assessments before selecting examination centers to ensure the availability of proper toilet and washroom facilities.
- Implement a contingency plan for addressing unexpected facility malfunctions to minimize disruptions.

iv. Inclusive Accommodations:

- Develop a comprehensive protocol for accommodating students with disabilities, including the provision of necessary devices, such as audio tools.
- Ensure effective communication between schools, examination centers, and WAEC to address specific student needs.

v. Examination Materials Management:

- Strengthen the process of verifying and distributing examination materials to ensure accurate matching with students' registered subjects.
- Implement regular training for examination officials on procedures to prevent mismatches in examination papers.

## 5. Conclusion

The BECE observation exercise conducted by GNECC provided a comprehensive assessment of the examination process, from pre-exam preparation to post-exam procedures. The findings reflect a generally positive outcome, with most examination centers demonstrating a commitment to integrity, fairness, and adherence to guidelines. The data collected through this exercise not only promotes accountability and transparency in the education system but also supports evidence-based advocacy for improved examination processes. The results will enable GNECC to collaborate effectively with policymakers and stakeholders to enhance the quality of education across Ghana and contribute to the overarching goal of improved budgeting, planning, and management of financial resources for education.