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## Effect of Community Factors on Secondary Schools Students Performance in Senior Secondary Examinations in Zamfara State

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### **Abstract:**

*Zamfara State located in the north western geo-political zone of Nigeria, has over the recent years recorded mass failure of students in senior secondary school's examination tagged as SSCE. In 2011 for instance, only 1,940 students out of 39,199 who sat for the national examination (NECO) passed the examination with five credits and above representing 5% passing rate. The situation remained almost the same even in the subsequent years. It is against this backdrop that this study investigated the effect of community variables on students' performance in SSCE in Zamfara State. Community variables in this study refer to the parents and the students as they come from the community. This study adopted ex-post facto design. The population of the study was all the students who graduated from secondary schools in 2017 in Zamfara State. The data were collected using a questionnaire administered separately on students, and their parents with the support of research assistants. The students' questionnaire was tagged as Questionnaire of students' performance in SSCE while the parents questionnaire was tagged as questionnaire of parent's perspective on student's performance in SSCE. The data were analyzed descriptively involving frequency counts and percentages. The study revealed a strong relationship between the students and their parents' attitudes towards learning and student's performance in SSCE. The study found that parents lacked the will to provide the necessary support to their children in all forms to encourage students' learning in schools while the students lacked the will and commitment to work hard and learn. In view the finding, the study recommends that parents should to be sensitized on the importance of their children's education and also the students should be properly guided and counseled on their education by all the relevant bodies and individuals such as the school's guidance and counseling units.*

**Keywords:** Community factors, student performance and examination

### **1. Background**

Sitting for the senior secondary examinations (SSCE) marks school completion among secondary schools' students in Nigeria. Different types of SSCEs are conducted which included among others the West African Examination Council (WAEC), National Examination Council (NECO) and the National Business and Technical Examinations Board (NABTEB). These examinations lead to award of a senior secondary certificate to students and paves way for the students to proceed to tertiary learning institutions. In line with this, Fagbamiye (1998) and Uduh (2009) described examinations as a process and tool for measuring students' performance, determining how much of the objectives of specific tasks a learner has achieved and at the same time judging standard of education in given country.

Zamfara State is one of the states which has over the recent years recorded mass failure of students in SSCEs. There is generally low performance of students in SSCEs. In 2011, out of the 39,199 candidates that sat for the examinations, in Zamfara State, only 1,940 representing 4.9% obtained five credits and above, including Mathematics and English. The State ranked 34<sup>th</sup> among the states in Nigeria in the same year. The situation remains almost the same in the subsequent years. For instance, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (2017), 443 students/candidates passed the 2010 WAEC out of 17,771 students who sat for the exams in Zamfara State representing less than 3%. The percentage of those that passed in 2012 WAEC in Zamfara State was 7.6%, 15.7% in 2013 and 6.7% in 2014 obtained five credits and above in including Mathematics and English (Zamfara State Government, 2015, daily Post, 2014 and WAEC, 2016).

Zamfara is among the states in Nigeria with a very low literacy rate. According to the national literacy survey data of the national Commission for Mass Literacy in 2011, Zamfara State had 33,443 literate male adults and 18,829 literate female adults representing 4% of the total adults 19 years and above in Zamfara State estimated at 1,319,117 (NPC, 2006). Analyzing the data by LGAs, it was observed that Maru and Tsafe LGAs had the lowest literacy rates of 39.7% and 39.8% while Zurmi LGA had an average literacy rate of 59.9% (NBS, 2011). As at 2017, the data from the State Ministry of Education reveal that Zamfara State has a total of 157 senior secondary schools with a population of 64,014 for SS1-3 (Zamfara State Ministry of

Education, 2017). The SS-3 students were 23,598 representing 37% of the total senior secondary school students. The State has four Zonal Education Area in which Gusau zone has the highest number of SS students numbering 33,065 followed by Kauran-Namoda with 12,938 and 10,601 for Talata-Mafara Zone while Anka zone has the least SS students of 7,410. According to the data from the Annual Abstract of Statistics (2012), Zamfara State had only 24 and 75 students in colleges of education in 2010 and 2011 respectively. There were 10,087 teachers registered with the national Teachers Registration Council (TRC) in 2011 which was also on a very lower side compared to 33,810 registered teachers in Abia State had in the same year.

### 1.1. Trend of Mass Failure in SSCE among Students in Zamfara State over the Recent Years

Zamfara State has been faced with mass students' failure in senior secondary schools' examination called SSCE over the recent years. The State had been ranking last or second among the 36 states of the federation in the major categories of SSCE viz WAEC, NECO and NABTEB. This is a very serious issue of concern among all the stake holder groups and individuals. A summary of students' performance in SSCE during the last few years has been investigated and presented in table 2.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2012), only 400 students obtained 5 credits and above out of the 19,025 students who sat for the examination in 2010. This confirms that Aworanti (n.d.) who established a very low performance of Zamfara Students in SSCE over the recent years. According to the finding of Aworanti (n.d.), only 28% of Zamfara State students passed NABTEB examination in 2010 in motor vehicle mechanical works, electrical installation mechanical works, block/brick laying construction and book keeping. This implies that, 172 students passed NABTEB examinations out of the 605 who sat for the examination in 2010 in Zamfara State. There is therefore an urgent need to identify the major causes of the problem and their sources with a view to providing lasting solutions. Several factors are responsible for this problem which includes school and community factors. The focus of this study is mainly on the community factor.

It is against this backdrop that the study aimed at investigating the effect of community variables on the performance of students in senior secondary examinations in Zamfara State, Nigeria. In this study, community variables are referred to as the parents and the students themselves as both come from the community. Each of these plays a significant role in determining performance in SSCE. In achieving this aim to examine the trend of mass failure of students in SSCE examinations in Zamfara State from 2010 to 2016 in Zamfara State. The specific objectives of the study are:

- To explain the role of home or parental support to improving students' performance during the last SSCE in Zamfara State
- To investigate the effect of student's attitude towards learning on their performance during the last SSCE in Zamfara State

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Trend of SSCEs Failure among Students

Examinations According to the WAEC, in the 2009 November/December external examination only 26% of students who sat for the examination obtained credits in Mathematics and English. Similarly, in the same year, 98% of students who sat for NECO failed to clinch credits in English and Mathematics (Adeomola, 2010). In a related development, NECO recorded another mass failure in the November/ December external 2010 examinations in which none of the 25 subjects taken by students had up to 50 per cent pass record (Ebije, 2011). Aworanti (n.d.) noted that results of the 2011 May/June WAEC examination reveal that about one million students among who sat for the examination could not pass as a result of among others lack of knowledge of common pitfalls, coupled with inadequate coverage of the syllabus and non-familiarity with test format. Regarding the NABTEB, for instance in the 2010 June/July examinations, average of 81% of students who sat for the motor vehicle mechanical works and electrical installation examination failed to obtain five credits (Aworanti, n.d.).

Mass failure of students in SSCE in Zamfara State over the recent years is becoming area of a serious concern among stakeholder groups and individuals in which a major proportion of the students failed major subjects such as English, Mathematics and other core subjects in sciences. For instance, there was mass failure of students in WASSCE between 2003 and 2010 with an average of 78.65% of students without at least five credit passes in English Language and Mathematics. Also, Zamfara State ranked 36<sup>th</sup> among the states in the 2017 WAEC results (The Vanguard, 2017). Only 24 out of 186 students who sat for the November/December NECO examination in Zamfara State scored 5 credits and above. There was increasing trend of mass failure of students between 2003 and 2004 with about 80.74% and 81.74% respectively; 72.47% in 2005, 84.44% 2006, 74.46% in 2007, 86.24% in 2008, 74.01% in 2009 and 75.06% in 2010 (Abiodun and Madupe, 2013). According to the Independent (2017), Zamfara state came last in performances just as it recorded last in 2016 and 2017. Only 59 candidates obtained 5 credits and above in the November/December NECO examination representing 25.6% of the total number of candidates who sat for the examination in the year. Similarly, only 12, 607 candidates representing 48.45% made it with 5 Credits and above including English and Mathematics out of the 26, 020 candidates that sat for the examinations in the same type of examination 2017.

### *2.2. Perceived Causes of Students Failure in SSCE*

In understanding the root causes of student's failure in SSCE, the factors are categorized and examine in three major categories of school factors involving the school environment, administration and teachers; home or parents factors involving the parental roles and learners or student's factors dealing with the learning attitudes of students. Schools factors can be the nature and condition of school infrastructure, availability of learning facilities in schools such as the libraries, laboratories, ICT centers etc. The teachers' factors can be related to teachers' qualification skills and experience as well as their level of commitments and dedications to the teaching. The home or parental factors may include the type of support, encouragement and monitoring children receive from their homes or parents on their education.

### *2.3. Effect of Home/Parents Support on Students' Performance in SSCE*

Sociologists have advanced that proper parental care, monitoring and support are very essential to children's educational progress. Confirming this, Aworanti (n.d.) asserts that children who lacked proper parental care at home may develop some negative attitudes can easily divert their attention from studies in school and eventually affect their performance in examinations. Similarly, family background in terms of socio-economic status to a greater extent affects academic performance of children. For instance, a child from a well to do family may have better academic performance than the one from a family with low socio-economic background. This may be as a result of the amount of parental support to their children which helps to improve students' understanding and mastery levels. Abiodun (2013) observed that parents play significant roles towards improving their children's performance in school. Apart from the fact parents pay school fees and other levies, they buy textbooks, uniforms and other materials required by their children. In addition to all these, parents are expected to supervise their children's academic work and provide the required moral support to the children when and where necessary. However, failure of parents to discharge their responsibilities effectively could result in poor or low academic performance of their children in schools.

### *2.4. Effect Learner's/Student's Attitudes on Their Performance in SSCE*

Students have their own share of contribution to their poor or low performance in external or final examinations. Elaborating further on this, Akinboye (1985), Bakare (1994), Aremu & Sokan (2003) discovered in their respective studies that students' factors of poor academic performance were basically poor study habits, psychological adjustment problems, lack of interest in schooling, association with wrong or bad friends and peers in school and low achievement motivation and emotional problems. Other factors still from the students include their inability to meet up with the schooling financial needs, irregular attendance to schools, excessive use of local language in the classroom, lack of interest and joy in teachers', learning disabilities for physically challenged students, low cognitive ability, gender prematurity and medical or health problems.

## **3. Methodology**

### *3.1. Research Design*

This study adopted ex-post facto design. Ex post facto study or after-the-fact research is a type of research design in which the investigations are conducted after the fact has occurred without interference from the researcher. Ex-post facto design was most suitable for this study considering the main aim of the study which was to identify the major causes of students' mass failure in senior secondary schools' examinations in Zamfara State over the recent years.

### *3.2. Area of the Study*

This study was carried out in Zamfara State of Nigeria. Zamfara State is located in northwestern Nigeria between the latitudes and longitudes of 12.1844 and 6.2376 respectively. The State has an estimated population of 3,278,873 according to the 2006 national census. The original and major tribes in the state are basically the Hausas and Fulanis. With its capital city located in Gusau, Zamfara State has –Local Government Areas and – Emirates Councils. The State has 23 junior secondary schools and 157 senior secondary schools supervised and managed by the four zonal education offices located in the towns of Anka, Gusau, Kauran-namoda and Talata-Mafara. With a land size of 38,418 square kilometers

### *3.3. Sample Size and Sampling Technique*

The population of the study was all the students who graduated from the all the senior secondary schools in Zamfara State in 2017 and their parents. According to the 2017 schools' data of the Zamfara State Ministry of Education, there were 157 senior secondary schools.

Multi-stage sampling technique was employed in the selection of the study schools with teachers and students as respondents. The first stage was dividing the study area into four according to the State zonal education areas of Anka, Gusau, Kauran-Namoda and Talata-Mafara zones. The stage involved a selection of seventeen (17) secondary schools from all the zonal areas in which number of schools were systematically allocated to each zone proportionate to its number of senior secondary schools. The second stage involved selection of students who graduated from the selected schools and their parents. The determination of the sample size was guided by the Krejcie and Morgan sample size selection formula in which the

population of every category determined its sample size as presented in table 1. The respondents were selected from every category randomly.

Zonal Education Area	Schools	Students				Parents
	Number of Secondary Schools	Sampled schools (10%)	Population	Sample size	%	Selected
Anka	26	3	2760	64	17	5
Gusau	65	7	12353	155	41	31
Kauran-Namoda	40	4	4581	95	25	7
Talata-Mafara	26	3	3904	64	17	7
Total	157	17	23598	380	100	50

Table 1: Distribution of Sample Size among the Zonal Education Areas  
Source: Researchers' Field Work

Table 1 presents data on the distribution of respondents according to the four zonal education areas of Anka, Gusau, Kauran-Namoda and Talata-Mafara zones and in each of the three categories of respondents viz, students and parents. According to the data in table 1, a total of 17 senior secondary, 380 students, 351 teachers and 50 parents were the respondents of the study spread across the four zonal education areas.

The 17 schools were shared among the four zonal areas proportionate to the existing number of senior secondary schools in each of the zones. Gusau zone was found to be a zone with highest number of senior secondary schools and therefore had the highest sample size of 7 schools followed by Kauran-Namoda zone 4 schools while Anka and Talata-Mafara had the least number of schools and sample size in which 3 schools were selected from each.

A total sample size of 380 was selected among the 23,598 students who graduated during the last academic session of 2016/2017 according to the Zamfara State schools data (2017). The table shows that 155 students selected from Gusau, 95 from Kauran-Namoda and 64 from Anka and Talata-Mafara zones each. Similarly, a total sample size of 351 was selected from the 4070 teachers and shared among the four zonal education offices proportionate to the number of teachers in each zone. 220 teachers from Gusau zone, 51 from Talata-Mafara, 48 from Kauran-Namoda and 32 teachers from Anka zone. Parents were also considered in the selection of the study subjects in which 50 parents were selected to provide their perspective in achieving the objective of the study. 31 parents from Gusau zone, 7 from Kauran-Namoda and Talata-Mafara zones each and five from Anka zone.

The data in table 1 indicate a very discrepancy in teachers' distribution of teachers among the four zonal education areas. For instance, Gusau zone has the highest number of teachers (2553) representing about 63% of the total number of teachers in Zamfara State. It was in line with this that EDOREN (2017) reported uneven distribution of teachers among schools across the LGAs. This results in a very high teacher-students ratio in some zones and LGAs. For instance, Gummi LGA has an average teacher-pupils ratio of 1:34 while Anka LGA has 1:84.

#### 4. Method of Data Collection and Analysis

The data were collected using a set of questionnaires administered separately on students, teachers and parents with the support of research assistants. The students' questionnaire was tagged as Questionnaire of student's performance in SSCE; the teachers questionnaire tagged as Questionnaire of teacher's perspective on student's performance in SSCE; and the parents questionnaire was tagged as questionnaire of parent's perspective on student's performance in SSCE. The study objectives were achieved using basically a descriptive statistic involving frequency counts and percentages; the data were coded and analyzed using a computer-based Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS).

#### 5. Results and Discussion

- Objective 1: To explain the role of home or parental support to improving students' performance during the last SSCE in Zamfara State

To understand and explain the relationship between the parental support to their children's education and students' performance in SSCE, parents were sampled and asked to provide information on their educational background and the type of support they provide to the children in school. Data on this was analyzed and presented in table 7.

Variables	Options	Reponses
Formal education	None	29(58)
	Basic level	6(12)
	Post Basic	9(18)
	Tertiary	6(12)
Parents ambition or plan for their children after school completion	Proceed to higher learning institution	14(28)
	Look for job	19(38)
	Join other businesses	17(34)
School attendance	Less than 25% per session	6(12)
	26-50%	11(22)
	51-75%	16(32)
	76-100%	17(34)
Parents talking to their children on education	Never	13(26)
	Yes, sometimes	28(56)
	Yes, every time	9(18)
Parents visiting their children schools to monitor learning progress	Never	25(50)
	Yes, sometimes	18(36)
	Yes, every time	7(14)
Parents providing financial support to their children education	Never	24(48)
	Yes, sometimes	18(36)
	Yes, every time	8(16)
Parents rewarding their children for any outstanding performance in school	Never	31(62)
	Yes, sometimes	12(24)
	Yes, every time	7(14)

*Table 2: Role of Home or Parental Support to Improving Students' Performance in SSCE in Zamfara State*

Grouping the parents by their type and level of education, table 7 indicates that 58% of the parents did not undergo any formal school, 12% had basic level educational qualification, and 18% had post basic level qualification while another 12% have had formal educational qualification up to tertiary level. Regarding parents' ambitions and wishes or plan for their children after completing secondary schools, the data reveals that 28% wanted their children to proceed with their education to tertiary level, 38% wanted their children to look for work and 34% wanted their children to join other businesses after completing their secondary school. These varied ambitions can play a very significant role in determining the type and level of support that children receive from their parents on their education. While judging the regularity of their children's attendance to school, many parents reported that their children were not regularly attending schools. 12% of the parents reported that their children had less than 25% school attendance per session, 22% estimated 26-50% school attendance for their children, 32% of the parents estimated their children's school attendance between 51-75% while 34% estimated their children's school attendance at 76-100%. To determine if parents show more concern on their children's education and help their children to resolve a lot of their schooling difficulties through talking to the children, 26% of the parents reported that they had never talked to their children their schools' affairs, 56% reported that they had talked to their children time to time,

- Objective 2: To investigate the effect of students' attitude towards learning on their performance during the last SSCE in Zamfara State

Despite the influence of all the external factors on students' learning outcome, individual learner factor plays a significant role to determining how well a student performs in examinations. In view of this, the researchers considered examining students' individual behaviors/attitudes towards learning with a view to determine the relationship between students' performance in SSCE and presented the data in table 9. To achieve this objective, a questionnaire designed for this purpose was administered on students who graduated and sat for any of the SSCEs (WAEC, NECO and NABTEB) last year.

Variables	Options	Reponses
SSCE score	Less than 5 credits	359(94)
	More than 5 credits	21(6)
Perceived cause of success	Irregular schools attendance	71(19)
	Poor reading habit	69(18)
	Lack of teachers' commitment	41(11)
	Lack of qualified teachers	94(25)
	Not reading at home after school hours	77(20)
	Lack of equipped libraries and laboratories in school	28(7)
	Reason for coming to school	Parents' pressure
Ambition or plan after school completion	Friends/peer influence	115(30)
	Self decided	153(41)
	Proceed to higher learning institution	73(19)
School attendance	Look for job	168(44)
	Join other businesses	139(37)
	Less than 25% per session	59(16)
	26-50%	236(62)
Reading at home after school hours	51-75%	82(21)
	76-100%	62(16)
	Never	11(3)
	Yes, sometimes	338(86)
Attending extra lessons	Yes, every time	42(10)
	Never	48(6)
	Yes, sometimes	244(64)
School assignment /home work	Yes, every time	88(23)
	Never	23(6)
	Yes, some time	278(73)
	Yes, every time	79(21)

Table 3: Effect of Students' Attitude towards Learning on Their Performance in SSCE in Zamfara State  
Source: Authors' Field Work

According to the data in table 9, ninety-four (94%) of the students reached out scored less than five credits in their SSCE while 6% scored more than five credits including English and Mathematics. The students gave varied reasons for their inability to pass their SSCE ranging from irregular schools' attendance, poor reading habit, lack of teachers' commitment and dedication, not reading at home after school hours and lack of basic learning facilities in schools such as the libraries, laboratories and ICT rooms. 19% attributed their failure to their irregular schools attendance, 18% reported poor reading habit as a cause for their failure, 11% stated that lack of teachers' commitment and dedication was the main reason why they failed, 25% stated that they failed because they did not have qualified teachers to teach them properly when they were in schools, 20% reported that they were not reading at home after school hours while 7% reported that they failed because their schools lacked basic learning facilities like libraries etc. This finding reveals that majority of students lacked pressure from their parent to go to school implying that their schooling decision lies in their hand they decide to go or not to go.

Finding out from the students on what were their main reasons for going to school and their ambitions after their completion, 29% reported that they went to school due to pressure from their parents, 30% due to friends and peer group influence while 41% went to school on their own without any external influence. 19% reported that they had ambition of proceeding to higher learning institution after their secondary education, 44% reported that they would look job to do after secondary school while 37% stated that they would proceed to school while at the same time working to support their education. This finding indicates that a few of the students had a strong ambition of proceeding to higher learning institutions which may also affects their decision to work hard and perform well in their SSCE.

The respondents were asked to rate their school attendance to determine if their performance in SSCE was related to their school attendance. 16% had an estimated school attendance of less than 20% per session, 62% of the students had an estimated school attendance of 26-50%, 21% of the students had an estimated attendance rate of 51-75% schools attendance while 16% of them reported an estimated school attendance of 76-100% per session. Data on students' reading habit indicate that 3% of the student had never read at home after school hours, 86% reported reading periodically while 10% reported

reading at home every day. 11% of the students had never had extra lesson at home, 64% had extra lessons some times while 23% have had extra lessons after school hours every time. 6% of the students have never done their home assignments, 73% reported doing their schools assignment/home work some times while 21% stated that they had regularly done their school assignment. The findings reveal a significant rate of irregular school attendance, over reliance of many students on lessons they were taught at schools and poor reading among the students. Some of the students were also reluctant in working out their school assignment/home work which was an indicator on their level of seriousness and commitment to learning.

The findings correspond with that of Aremu & Sokan (2003); Salami, (2004); Etsey, (2005); Karande & Kulkarni, (2005); Ong, Chandram, Lim, Chem & Poh, (2010) and Ajayi & Ekundayo, (2010) cited in Abiodun (2013) who noted found out that the students' factors of poor academic performance were poor study habits, psychological adjustment problems, lack of interest in school programme, low retention, association with wrong peers, low achievement motivation and emotional problems. Other studies (have shown that students' lack of financial support, absenteeism, truancy, use of local language in the classroom, lack of interest and joy in teachers' lessons and learning disability cause poor academic performance of students. Other causes include low cognitive ability, gender prematurity, medical problems and inability of students to understand examination questions.

## 6. Summary of Major Findings

- Regarding the role of home or parental support to improving students' performance in SSCE in Zamfara State, the study reveals that parents have a great role to play to support their children's financially and morally to improve their performance in schools. The study reveals that most of the parents have not played the roles effectively. In other words, the students lacked the required parental support financially and morally to succeed in their education. Many parents reported not providing financial support to their children, not visiting their schools and did not care to talk to the children on school matters. This could be attributed to a number of factors which include the fact that majority of the parents lacked formal education therefore did not value formal education itself.
- On the student factor, the study examined students' attitude towards learning and the effect of the attitude on the students learning outcome. Student attitude plays a significant role to determining how well a student performs in examinations. This was examined in terms of student's level of commitment, dedication which depends on the way he perceives education and his ambitions in life. The study found a high degree of reluctance and lack of commitment on the part of the students which had evidently played a significant role in the learning outcome. The rate of truancy among students was found high. A very few students planned to proceed to tertiary level after their secondary coupled with the fact there was no parental pressure on them to learn, the level of reluctance was too high among the students.

## 7. Conclusion

The study investigated mass failure of secondary school student in SSCE in Zamfara State. Zamfara State has over the recent years recorded mass failure of students in SSCEs. There is generally low performance of students in SSCEs which include WAEC, NECO and NABTEB. For instance, in 2011 Zamfara State ranked second to the last among the states in Nigeria in the same year in SSCE performance. In the subsequent year (2012), Zamfara State had just 7.6% students who passed NECO examination with five credits and above. There were varied opinions from individuals on should be blamed on this persistent problem between the teachers and the students. The study established a strong relationship between students and their parents' attitudes towards learning and the students' performance in SSCE. The study found that many parents lacked the will to provide the necessary support to their children in all forms to encourage students' learning in schools. On the part of the students, the study discovered that they lacked commitment towards learning as many of them do not see themselves going beyond secondary school level. The study therefore recommends that School-based management committees (SBMCs) should be actively involved in sensitizing parents on the importance of their children's education. Schools should strengthen the guidance and counseling units to provide the required guidance and counseling services to students with a view to strengthen their level of commitment to learning and equip the students with the necessary information regarding their plans for future and how to succeed in their plans.

## 8. Recommendations

- School-based management committees (SBMCs) should take a lead in sensitizing parents through their termly and annual meetings on the importance of their children's education. Resource persons/experts should be invited to make presentations at the PTA/SBMC general meetings to sensitize parents on their responsibilities towards supporting their children to achieve successful completion of schooling and preparing them for further studies.
- Schools should strengthen the guidance and counseling units to provide the required guidance and counseling services to students with a view to strengthen their level of commitment to learning and equip the students with the necessary information regarding their plans for future and how to succeed in their plans. Students should be made to know comprehensively through school guidance and counseling services, about all the opportunities available for them to succeed in passing their SSCE to proceed with their education to higher level.

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