



Policy Dimensions

1. Vision for Tertiary Education

Sierra Leone does not have a recently updated vision for the tertiary education sector. However, there are several smaller components, including the new Education Sector Plan as well as the 2010 TVET policy that contain elements of a vision for the sector.

Status

Emerging

2. Regulatory Framework

There exist separate legislation for the universities, polytechnics and TVET institutions. Most of the regulation is somewhat outdated, and there are gaps in the regulation of private tertiary education providers.

Emerging

3. Governance of System and Institutions

There is little alignment between the different types of institutions. While institutions have high levels of autonomy on academic and staffing matters, they have less autonomy on their governance structures.

Emerging

4. Financing

This policy dimension has not been scored because of a lack of data, particularly on the polytechnic and the TVET sector.

5. Quality Assurance

There is no independent quality assurance agency for tertiary education in Sierra Leone. The main regulatory bodies, the Tertiary Education Commission and the National Council for Technical and Vocational Training have some emerging quality assurance practices to build on. There is no systematic data collection on tertiary education, such as a TEMIS.

Latent

6. Relevance for Social and Economic Needs

There are some initiatives to strengthen the relevance of the TVET sector. For universities and polytechnics, such policies are missing.

Emerging



Foreword

Expectations for tertiary education are rising to help youth finding well-paying jobs, firms improve productivity and the country to improve its competitiveness. However, it is questionable whether the universities, polytechnics and TVET institutes in Sierra Leone can deliver on their promise. If the gap between expectations and reality continues to rise, the risk is that social tensions remain high and that the labor market remains in a low skills equilibrium. While there have been openings for policy action and emerging plans to reform the system, these have not translated to results, improvements in the system or to a dynamic and sustainable reform. At present, there is no shared vision of how to improve standards, to make the necessary investments, or to improve the relevance of the degree programs.

Using an internationally agreed benchmark, this report hopes to identify policy areas that need attention. It also provides an extensive overview of the regulations in place, and the initiatives that have been undertaken in the last few decades. The report does not give detailed recommendations on what should be done. Rather, it aims to stimulate a dialogue between the government, stakeholders and donor partners about what kind of reforms are desired.

Introduction

SABER-Tertiary Education is a diagnostic tool to assess how education systems perform and to identify priorities for reforms at the national level. It is part of the World Bank's Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER), which aims to benchmark education systems at the country level.

SABER-TE focuses on six areas of tertiary education policy (see Box). The general idea is that a strong policy environment is a prerequisite to better performing tertiary education institutions, including universities, polytechnics, and technical and vocational institutes. The diagnostic tool aims to help countries assess best practices, and to diagnose which policies need urgent attention. For some policy dimensions, countries are scored on specific "policy levers" to help make concrete recommendations for improvement.

Each of the six policy dimensions can contribute to the outcomes of tertiary education systems, although they work together in a holistic way. By matter of illustration, a vision without an effective governance structure is just a collection of ideas that will not be implemented; a well-designed governance structure without a vision could be a meaningless bureaucracy.

Six policy dimensions of successful tertiary education systems (World Bank, 2016):

1. A strong vision for tertiary education
2. A clear regulatory framework
3. Modern governance and university autonomy
4. Financing that promotes performance and equity
5. Independent quality assurance
6. Relevance to the country's social and economic needs

The World Bank has identified best practices in each of these dimensions in a review of the world's most effective tertiary education systems (World Bank 2016). The overview of best practice indicators can be found in the Appendix. Countries are scored and then benchmarked on these policy dimensions with four different scores:

1. **Latent:** this topic has received too little attention;
2. **Emerging:** there are some instances of good practice;
3. **Established:** there is systemic good practice; and

4. **Advanced:** the country follows international best practice and is an example for others.

SABER uses an extensive questionnaire to collect data on the policy environment for tertiary education. The questionnaire is populated through an analysis of the most recent versions of relevant legislation, policy documents and reports on the sector. The SABER team also carried out fieldwork in Sierra Leone between 27 January 8 February, 2017 with visits to several universities, government agencies, and other stakeholders. After data collection is complete, the policy dimensions are scored on a rubric. Both the answers to the questionnaire and the rubric scores are available upon request from the SABER website (<http://saber.worldbank.org>).

This report proceeds as follows. First, we will describe the context of the tertiary education system in Sierra Leone. We will then proceed with a summary of the considerations when scoring the six policy dimensions. Finally, we will conclude with a few general observations about tertiary education in the country.

Context: Recent Developments in Tertiary Education in Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone has a long history in providing tertiary education to its citizens, but multiple historic events have had significant negative impacts on the developments of its tertiary education institutions (TEIs). Since independence in 1961, the country has suffered multiple military coups and a bloody 10-year civil war (between 1992 and 2002). The turbulent political events have not only affected the infrastructure of tertiary education institutions in the country, but also effectively “brought the education sector to a standstill” (GoSL 2007).

The tertiary education system has undergone significant transformations since the civil war. The enrollment of students in public TEIs alone has increased by more than 50 percent between 2007 and 2011, from 19,692 to 31,103 students (World Bank 2013). There is enormous growth potential in the sector as 75 percent of the population is below the age of 35, and 33.1 percent of the population of Sierra Leone is between the ages of 15–34 years. To address the increased demand, different types of TEIs have entered the growing market. The sector has also seen multiple promising reforms to its education and tertiary education system, ranging from the establishment of emerging quality assurance functions to the opening of new public universities. However, to develop the tertiary education system in Sierra Leone more clarity in the regulatory framework and better implementation procedures will be needed, as will be shown below.

The tertiary education system in Sierra Leone comprises universities and other types of tertiary education institutions. Other institutions include teacher training colleges (producing teachers for primary and junior secondary schools), polytechnics, and TVET institutes. The regulatory framework pertaining to universities and polytechnic institute is more comprehensive and further developed than the regulations concerning TVET institutes. All polytechnics are public; they were created and regulated by the Polytechnic Act of 2001. According to TVET experts in the sector, most technical and vocational institutes are privately owned. The regulatory framework around these institutions is unclear, and there is lack of legislation governing privately-owned TVET institutions. New TVET institutes are required to register with the Ministry of Science and Technology, but the registration process is marred by corruption, therefore making it fairly easy for substandard institutes to begin operations within the country. These institutes are also missing any quality assurance apparatus. According to the Sierra Leone TVET Sector Situation Analysis, the Education Act of 2004 mandated the creation of the National Council for Technical and Vocational Education (NCTVE) to regulate TVET programs across Sierra Leone. Unfortunately, this body is

yet to be created leading to the perpetuation of TVET institutes that are fragmented and unregulated in terms of quality of facilities, teaching, and programs (Islamic Development Bank 2015, 31).

The regulation of teachers' colleges is split between the regulatory frameworks for universities and polytechnic institutes. Some teacher colleges are part of universities and therefore fall under the Universities Act of 2005, while others have been converted into polytechnic institutes and are covered under the regulation of the Polytechnic Act of 2001. A small number of teacher colleges are stand-alone, and it is unclear how they are regulated. As far as quality assurance is concerned, the National Council for Technical, Vocational and Other Awards (NCTVA) awards teacher certificates (for teaching junior secondary and lower levels) and for institutions at the polytechnic level (Lamin, Massaley, and Yamba 2012, 18).

For SABER TE, the discrepancy in regulation in Sierra Leone makes the scoring of the policy landscape for TVET institutes, both public and private, difficult. It was impossible, also, to score the section on financing because of a lack of reliable data on this policy area. As far as possible, this report will score the university, polytechnic and vocational sectors separately, when there are substantial differences between these sectors.

Policy Dimension 1: Vision for Tertiary Education

Emerging ●●○○

For SABER-TE, the question to be answered here is whether the country has a vision and a plan for the tertiary education sector. It also asks to what extent this vision is “alive” and what actions are being taken to implement the vision. The SABER-TE diagnostic tool operationalizes this into two distinct best practice indicators, one evaluating the presence of a recent vision or strategy for tertiary education and another evaluating to what extent this vision was created with input from key stakeholders. ***The assessment of the SABER-TE team is that the vision for tertiary education is emerging.***

Sierra Leone does not have a stated vision or strategic plan for its tertiary education system (World Bank 2013). A foundation for setting a vision for the system was established through the 2004 Education Act, which highlights the purposes of tertiary education. The *Education Sector Plan “Learning to Succeed” 2014–2018* asks the government to “[d]evelop a higher education strategy to consolidate the policies for addressing equitable growth, and quality and relevance improvements in a coherent framework” (GoSL 2013c, 30).

The 2014–2018 Education Sector Plan also outlines a few key headlines for a vision. For instance, it argues for improved equitable access to higher education institutions, by increasing the enrollments in private higher education. It plans to create an additional public university by upgrading existing institutions. It also suggests making better use of financial support (grants and loans) and technology within the tertiary education sector in the country.

For TVET institutions, including polytechnics, a broad vision exists, but several leaders in the sector question whether the outlined strategy will be implemented. The government adopted a TVET policy in 2010 that aims to raise the profile of the TVET sector (GoSL 2010). The strategy claims that TVET should play a more important role in national development. The strategy also asks the government to enforce existing legislation, and to review the different types of legislation regulating the sector. The TVET plan

also demands the strengthening of skills training of the National Youth Council. In terms of funding, the plan suggests the creation of a 1 percent tax on the private sector to fund skills training.

While key stakeholders were involved in the process of drafting these documents, there seems to be little trust in the capacity of the government to implement the existing vision. The stakeholders also feel that an overall vision for tertiary education is lacking.

Policy Dimension 2: Regulatory Framework

Emerging ●●○○

SABER-TE measures whether the tertiary education system is based on an appropriate regulatory framework that supports the work of tertiary education providers for the benefit of the students and the public. This policy dimension encompasses seven distinct best practice indicators that aim to understand the reach of the regulatory framework—what types of higher education provision are supported and the extent to which buffer bodies are supported—as well as its foundation in key principles. ***The assessment of the SABER-TE team is that the regulatory environment is emerging.***

Several distinct laws govern the tertiary education framework. The Universities Act of 2005 (Parliament of Sierra Leone 2005) outlines provisions on the establishment of public and private universities and stipulates the required leadership structure of institutions. Though more limited, the 2001 Polytechnics Act (Parliament of Sierra Leone 2001c) mandates that the leadership structure for polytechnics includes an academic board as well as council is responsible for administrative functions. The chairman of the council is appointed by the country's president at the recommendation of the education minister.

The year 2001 saw the adoption of the Tertiary Education Commission Act (Parliament of Sierra Leone 2001a), which designates the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) as the main regulatory body for universities and the National Council for Technical, Vocational and other Awards Act (Parliament of Sierra Leone 2001b). The activities of TEC were revised in 2006, with the introduction of the Tertiary Education Commission Regulations (Parliament of Sierra Leone 2006). This revision made TEC responsible for the accreditation of private universities (World Bank 2013). NCTVA is tasked with the responsibility to monitor and regulate non-university institutions. TEC and NCTVA are the two ***buffer bodies*** operating in Sierra Leone. The legal framework stipulates that both TEC and NCTVA are monitored by the Parliament of Sierra Leone, and are required to submit an annual report to it as well.

Besides the coverage of regulation, the SABER-TE also measures whether the regulatory framework embeds key principles relevant to tertiary education. The relevant tertiary education regulations include references to the importance of both equity and quality of tertiary education provision in the country.

Distance education has received significant attention, especially in relation to lower levels of education. While the provision of distance and online education is allowed, the country does not regulate the entry of distance education providers and nor does it monitor their activity. It is important to note that many teacher training programs are offered online. While the 2004 Education Act mentions distance education, it does not provide any regulatory details with regards to it. In practice, this means that both universities and non-universities have autonomy in developing their distance education programs. Expert voices have suggested that Sierra Leone should establish an Open Universities program, using the model of similar institutions in Africa (Alghali et al. 2005).

Universities

The entry of new public universities is determined by an act of law and not simply under the purview of the TEC. This represents an improvement in the legislative framework, because the prior legislating regulating universities - the University of Sierra Leone Act of 1972 - allowed for the operation of only one public university (Alghali et al. 2012). TEC now has the responsibility to accredit and monitor the activities of all public universities (TEC n.d.). Currently, as stipulated by the 2005 Universities Act, the country has two public universities, the University of Sierra Leone and Njala University (World Bank 2013). These institutions are then further monitored by TEC.

The entry of a new private university is allowed under the advisement of TEC (Parliament of Sierra Leone 2005). Both public and private universities are regulated by Universities Act of 2005. TEC is responsible for the accreditation and monitoring of public and private institutions. However, in practice, after the initial accreditation, universities can simply pay fees to keep their status with the TEC (World Bank 2013, 20).

Polytechnics

The NCTVA is responsible for regulating the entry of polytechnics (Parliament of Sierra Leone 2001b). Some polytechnics are affiliated with public universities and therefore follow the same regulation as public universities. Even though NCTVA is legally responsible for monitoring the activity of polytechnics, in practice this function is not met because of the institution's weak capacities to carry out its mandate (World Bank 2013, 2) as well as the growing demand for its services (Carton and Kingombe 2012, 21).

TVET Institutes

The current regulatory framework does not include clear provisions regarding the entry and monitoring of TVET institutes (GoSL 2010). Similar to polytechnics, NCTVA is also responsible for monitoring TVET institutes (GoSL 2004). The regulatory framework, however, does not provide details on relevant procedures, as the NCTVA Act of 2001 does not include provisions on these institutions. The establishment of NCTVE will hopefully address this regulatory gap.

Policy Dimension 3: Governance of System and Institutions

Emerging ●●○○

On Governance, SABER-TE asks whether the tertiary education system has adequate structures, policies, and processes that enable TEIs to operate efficiently and effectively. At the central level, the tool asks whether the main tertiary education authority has adequate staff and resources to implement reforms and to guide, support, and monitor TEIs. This dimension comprises two distinct policy levers: (1) articulation and (2) institutional autonomy. **The assessment of the SABER-TE team is that the governance dimension of tertiary education is emerging.** This score does not include TVET institutions as the limited data does not allow for any meaningful analysis.

Policy Lever: Articulation

The first policy lever included in this dimension evaluates the support provided by the legislative framework for diversification imperatives, and its ability to enable the coexistence and collaboration of institutions with different missions as well as strengthen their mission and facilitate student mobility within the system. **On this policy lever, Sierra Leone is scored as latent.**

Although Sierra Leone has a differentiated tertiary education system, the ties between the different components in the system are lax or nonexistent. As such, there are no incentives to strengthen the unique mission of different institutions, no governance structure to facilitate collaboration between institutions, and transfer of students between institutions is not facilitated. While there is no designated structure to facilitate collaboration between the tertiary and other education sectors, the leadership of TEC includes a representative from the Conference of Principals of Secondary Schools. It is worth noting that the regulatory framework distinguishes between the functions of universities and non-universities. The *2004 Education Act* states that the aim of TVET is to contribute toward the progressive development of the country. Additionally, the act also clearly distinguishes between the types of degrees awarded by universities and non-universities.

Policy Lever: Institutional Autonomy

Tertiary education institutions require autonomy to fulfill their missions. This policy lever aims to understand how different types of institutional autonomy is manifested at the system level. The types of autonomy included in the SABER-TE tool are the ability to negotiate performance standards, academic autonomy, staffing autonomy, governance autonomy, and financial autonomy, or the freedom to diversify funding sources. This lever assesses the presence of autonomy for both public and private institutions. ***On this policy lever, Sierra Leone is scored as established.*** The scores on this section are primarily based on the stated provisions of the national laws governing universities and polytechnic institutes indicating that the formal autonomy of universities and polytechnics in Sierra Leone is captured in this section. Because of a lack of verified information, the TVET sector is not scored on this policy lever. The formal regulation of institutional autonomy is necessary to not only protect TEIs from unnecessary intervention, but also to hold governments accountable for informal breaches in autonomy. The lack of regulation for a tertiary education sector cannot be assumed to automatically provide full autonomy to that sector.

The first best practice indicator in this policy lever aims to understand whether universities and non-universities are able to negotiate performance targets with government stakeholders. This does not happen in Sierra Leone as no performance targets have been established. In addition, both public and private universities (Parliament of Sierra Leone 2005) and non-universities have the financial autonomy to diversify their funding. All subsequent best practice indicators included in the lever are discussed separately in the sections below to better highlight the few differences between the autonomy regime in universities and polytechnics.

Universities

The leading source of information for institutional autonomy for both public and private universities in Sierra Leone is the Universities Act of 2005. The act was enacted to grant academic and administrative autonomy to institutions (GoSL 2007).

The Universities Act of 2005 grants both public and private universities a high degree of academic autonomy. The Senate of each university has the power to regulate and oversee instruction and teaching as well as examination at their institutions, thus ensuring the autonomy to design curriculum. Faculty boards' recommendations regarding teaching and evaluation decisions are also considered. The university senate is legally empowered to establish new courses and alter existing courses, determine the academic structures at the institutional level, grant degrees and certificates, and determine the admission criteria for students. According to the same legal framework, faculty is responsible to determine the number of students allocated to each department. Additionally, universities are able to pursue the research of their choice. In practice, however, little research is conducted at universities. Similarly, even though universities

have the autonomy to evaluate the quality of their programs, internal quality assurance processes are not always implemented (World Bank 2013, 21).

National regulations under the 2005 Universities Act offer generous staff autonomy to public and of private universities in Sierra Leone. Universities have the power to hire, promote, fire academic staff, and create new academic positions. The university Court, the highest administrative body within a university, has the authority to set the salaries of academic staff. Regulations exist regarding conditions that need to be met before firing an academic and non-academic staff member. The 2005 Universities Act states that “good cause” may prompt the suspension or firing of a staff member and also stipulates procedures for terminating a contract (Parliament of Sierra Leone 2005, 45–46). Formal documentation at the level of institutions often include provisions for hiring, contract renewal, and the promotion of academic staff, which specify that academic promotion needs to be based on criteria such as the experience, qualifications, and the quality of the research portfolio of academic staff (World Bank 2013, 23–24).

In contrast, the governance autonomy of public and private universities is limited. Chancellors of both public and private universities are appointed by the country’s president, and many upper-managerial positions are appointed by the chancellor under the advisement of the minister. The 2005 Universities Act also outlines the process by which universities select leadership. However, universities lack the authority to terminate the selected members.

Polytechnics

Polytechnic and TVET institutes in Sierra Leone have similar levels of autonomy as compared to universities. However, the legal framework regarding autonomy provisions for public polytechnics is clearer in comparison to public and private TVIs institutions. This section will exclusively discuss autonomy issues connected to polytechnics.

Polytechnics in Sierra Leone are governed by a Council, which acts as an administrative body. The 2001 Polytechnic Act regulates the composition and function of the Council. The Council meets similar functions as the university Senate. Polytechnics lack the autonomy to grant certificates and diplomas to graduates, and are required to do it through NCTVA (Parliament of Sierra Leone 2001b, 6). NCTVA awards certificates and diplomas for polytechnic institute graduates by holding qualifying exams. Polytechnics, however, do have the academic autonomy to determine the content of instruction, approve new programs and remove existing programs, make decisions regarding student admission, and evaluate programs and teaching methodologies (World Bank 2013, 18–22). Staffing autonomy for polytechnics is similarly regulated by the 2001 Polytechnics Act. The act empowers the Council of a polytechnic institute to hire, promote, and fire its academic and non-academic staff. The Council also has the autonomy to create new academic and non-academic positions. The chairman of a polytechnic institute is appointed by the country’s president, following the recommendation of the minister. The principal, who is the head of the Council, is similarly appointed by the minister. In fact, institutions have little control over their leadership structure, and also lack the authority to terminate the tenure of institutional leaders (World Bank 2013, 18–23).

Policy Dimension 4: Financing

SABER-TE measures whether public financing is used to steer tertiary education toward envisioned system-wide goals. The dimension is comprised of three distinct policy levers: (1) coverage of resource allocation, (2) mechanism of resource allocation (such as funding formulas), and (3) resource utilization for equity. **An overall score cannot be calculated on this dimension, because significant information is missing for both polytechnic and TVET institutes.**

Policy Lever: Coverage of Resource Allocation

This policy lever aims to map what types of expenditure (recurrent, capital, and research) are supported through public funding allocations for both public and private TEIs. **On this policy lever, Sierra Leone is scored as emerging.** This score pertains to universities only, because not enough information is publicly available on the funding of polytechnic and TVET institutes.

In Sierra Leone, the recurrent expenditures of public universities and polytechnics are covered by public funding. The 2005 Universities Act stipulates that the national government will allocate public funds to universities. The 2001 Polytechnics Act makes a similar specification. Most public funding is allocated toward salary payments for staff. In recent year, the proportion of funding directed toward staff salaries has increased due to strikes by academics demanding higher pay (World Bank 2013, 49). In 2014, Sierra Leone allocated 0.82 of its GDP to tertiary education, a figure comparable to other countries in the region (UNESCO Institute of Statistics n.d.). Although this information is unclear, it seems that private TEIs receive negligible or no amount of public funds. Additionally, no research funding is allocated to either public or private TEIs. According to the *Situational Analysis Study of Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Sierra Leone* (Islamic Development Bank 2015), government-supported TVET institutes also receive public funding. The funding is solely allocated toward recurrent expenditure. On-the-ground research suggest that the infrastructure of many TVET institutes suffers greatly from a lack of allocating capital funds from public sources. The 2014 National Policy for TVET states that there are significant discrepancies in the amount of public money allocated to different public TVET institutions (GoSL 2010), thus indicating a lack of transparency and consistency in funding allocations.

Policy Lever: Mechanism of Resource Allocation

This policy lever aims to map the process through which public funds are allocated to TEIs. The lever evaluates the transparency with which funding is allocated and the criteria used for this process. **On this policy lever, Sierra Leone is scored as latent.** The score in this section pertains to the university subsector only, because publicly available information regarding the non-university sector is scarce.

Public funding is allocated to public universities in Sierra Leone using a block grant system, based on historic allocations (World Bank 2013, 50). The funding allocation mechanism does not include a publicly available formula or performance-based funding to determine allocation levels.

Policy Lever: Resource Utilization for Equity

Under *Resource Utilization*, SABER-TE aims to understand the extent to which public funding is used to advance equity goals. **On this policy lever, Sierra Leone is scored as latent.** The scoring on this lever includes universities, polytechnics, and TVET institutes.

Multiple policy documents suggest that access and equity issues are a national priority in Sierra Leone. The 2013 Education Sector Plan states that an increase in “equitable access” to technical and higher education institutions should be a national strategic goal for the country (GoSL 2013b, 6). The *National Policy for Technical and Vocational Education and Training 2014* argues for the increase of female participation in TVET. This reflects the fact students from low-income backgrounds, rural areas, and female students lack access to tertiary education (Guerrero 2014). The country offers grants in forms of aid or scholarships to students. Female students in STEM disciplines, as well as students with disabilities, are the main beneficiaries of this scheme (Japan International Cooperation Agency 2012, 42). However, prompted by a lack of transparency, suspicion persists about the fairness of the process through which scholarships are allocated (World Bank 2013, 57). No other financial aid schemes or cost-sharing

mechanisms are available to students. Furthermore, no incentives are provided for TEIs to meet equity goals.

Policy Dimension 5: Quality Assurance

Latent ●○○○

This policy dimension maps the state of quality assurance. Two policy levers are included as part of this dimension: (1) accreditation and institutional quality standards and (2) the Tertiary Education Management Information System (TEMIS). **Using the SABER-TE tool, Sierra Leone is scored as latent.**

Policy Lever: Accreditation and Institutional Quality Assurance Standards

This policy lever evaluates the key actors involved in the quality assurance process, their independence, the jurisdiction of their activity, as well as the process through which quality assurance is implemented. ***On this policy lever, Sierra Leone is scored as emerging.***

The Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) and the National Council for Technical, Vocational, and Other Awards (NCTVA) function as the two main institutional accreditation agencies in Sierra Leone. TEC is primarily responsible for accrediting universities, and NCTVA is responsible for accrediting non-university institutions (World Bank 2013, 20). However, the precise jurisdiction of NCTVA is legally unclear. It seems that in practice, both public and private TVET institutes are accredited by NCTVA (World Bank 2013, 20). The 2001 NCTVA Act, however, stipulates that only polytechnics are covered by its jurisdiction (Islamic Development Bank 2015). In practice, TEC is also responsible for the accreditation of TVET institutes. Most recently, the TEC website has been updated to include the list of private TEIs under its jurisdiction. This list includes multiple TVET institutes, both public and private (Tertiary Education Commission n.d.).

At the same time, the portfolio of responsibilities of NCTVA and TEC are quite expansive, and their activity is hampered by limited qualified human and financial resources (World Bank 2013, 2). TEC has the responsibility to ensure the funding and the financial management of TEIs, supervise the student recruitment process, fundraise, and ensure quality assurance responsibilities. In addition to providing accreditation services, NCTVA is responsible for providing examinations for multiple certificates offered, including teacher's certificates and technical diplomas, international diploma validation services, and also of ensuring the relevance of standards of competencies (Parliament of Sierra Leone 2001b). Various reports suggest that the accreditation and quality assurance functions of TEC and NCTVA are in effect not met (World Bank 2013). The consequences of failing to meet accreditation standards set by TEC and NCTVA are not directly specified in national regulations. Statements from experts in the field suggest that TEIs are at risk of closure in this scenario. These experts also state that TEC and NCTVA rarely check on institutions after initial accreditation has been awarded.

Neither TEC nor NCTVA is fully independent from TEIs or the government. Key positions in both structures are occupied by representatives of the ministry and of major TEIs. At the same time, the structure of TEC includes other relevant stakeholders such as representatives of the Science and Technology Council and the National President of the Conference of Principals of Secondary Schools (Parliament of Sierra Leone 2001a). However, during quality assurance processes stakeholders such as students and employers are given less opportunity for involvement (World Bank 2013, 16). The lax external quality assurance processes in Sierra Leone are accompanied by the fact that neither TEC nor NCTVA has developed Institutional Quality Assurance Standards or Program Quality Assurance Standards to apply in their evaluation processes.

Expert voices suggest that improvement of the quality assurance system is crucial to enable the tertiary education system to better contribute towards the sustainable development of the country (Jackson 2005). Particular concerns persist about the quality of TVET education (GoSL 2007, 62). Lack of accreditation is viewed as a significant challenge for the TVET sector (GoSL 2010). The *Education Sector Implementation Plan for the Years 2014–2016: Making Learning Real* suggests that the government of Sierra Leone is aware of some of these issues and intends to address them. The document sets a goal of revising licensing procedures for the TVET system and better enforcing quality standards (GoSL 2013b, 41).

Policy Lever: Tertiary Education Management Information System (TEMIS)

A Tertiary Education Management Information System (TEMIS) is a management tool used to track data on tertiary education within a country. It can be used to disseminate information to the public and plan budgetary allocations, or to evaluate the effectiveness of policy reforms. This policy lever aims at measuring the extent to which formal procedures for systematic data collection that advance system-wide goals in the form of a TEMIS are present. ***Sierra Leone does not currently have a TEMIS and, as such, is evaluated as latent on this policy lever*** (GoSL 2013a, XXXVI).

Policy Dimension 6: Relevance for Social and Economic Needs

Emerging ●●○○

This policy dimension, the last included in the SABER-TE tool, aims to understand if research and development activities that respond to local conditions, resources, and needs as well as an institutional orientation toward social development are supported through tertiary education. It includes three distinct policy levers: (1) economic development, (2) fostering Research Development and Innovation (RDI), and (3) fostering social and cultural development and environmental protection and sustainability. **The assessment of the SABER-TE team is that the state of this policy dimension in Sierra Leone is emerging.**

Policy Lever: Economic Development

This policy lever aims to understand the extent to which there is a system-wide or sector-specific policy mandate to strengthen the role of tertiary education to enhance economic development in Sierra Leone. ***On this policy lever, Sierra Leone is scored as emerging.***

Policy documents in Sierra Leone highlight the contribution of TEIs toward the economic growth and national development of the country (Lamin, Massallay, and Yamba 2012). The most recent National Policy for TVET further highlighting the role of the sector in economic development. It suggests that the overall consolidation of the sector is necessary to ensure the improvement of the national economy (GoSL 2010). However, no specific programs or actions designed to promote a stronger connection between TEIs and economic development are currently in place.

Policy Lever: Fostering RDI

This policy lever evaluates the support provided to RDI activities through the presence of a system-wide or sector-specific policy mandate to strengthen RDI activity within tertiary education, as well as the presence of financial incentives or specific programs. As no policy mandate or program exists to strengthen RDI activities at TEIs, ***on this policy lever, Sierra Leone is scored as latent.***

Policy Lever: Fostering Social and Cultural Development and Environmental Protection and Sustainability

The purpose of this policy lever is to gauge the degree to which policies and programs exist to ensure that tertiary education contributes toward social and cultural development as well as environmental protection and sustainability. ***On this policy lever, Sierra Leone is rated as emergent.***

The grant-in-aid program currently in place in Sierra Leone represents the sole actionable mandate aimed at fostering social and cultural development by widening participation and social inclusion. However, other relevant policies for this dimension with reference to the education sector as a whole do exist. Issues associated with gender integration and educational attainment for women have received a wide attention in multiple national policy documents, including the *Sierra Leone Education Sector Plan: A Road Map to a Better Future 2007–2015* and the report *National Gender Strategic Plan (NGSP 2010–2013)* (Lamin, Massallay, and Yamba 2012). However, there is no policy mandate or program in place in Sierra Leone to support contributions of the tertiary education system towards environmental protection.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The tertiary education system in Sierra Leone has significant potential. The sector has been growing, and demand for tertiary education exceeds supply. In recent years, various reports have proposed strategies and policies to strengthen the sector. The government could make use of these suggestions to develop a fully-fledged vision for the sector, taking into the account the specific needs of universities, polytechnics, and TVET institutions.

Beyond the vision, regulation needs urgent attention, particularly for the TVET sector. As discussed in this report, many new private institutions are being created without proper supervision from any regulatory body. It is essential to better enforce existing legislation, which requires additional human resources within the ministry and regulatory bodies. It also requires creation of the NCTVE, which remains an unmet basic requirement of the 2004 Education Act. Another issue that should be high on the agenda is the drafting of governing legislation regarding technical and vocational education, which would allow for better supervision of that sector, including teacher colleges.

Quality assurance procedures have recently been developed under the Tertiary Education Commission. As stated in earlier reports by the World Bank, these activities should be strengthened. The TEC should be made more independent in its operation and also cover cross-border institutions. The TEC data systems should also be strengthened. Perhaps lessons could be learned from initiatives to collect data from primary and secondary education, where the EMIS seems stronger.

Finally, public financing for the sector could be better utilized. The government has undertaken some effort towards performance-based funding. These efforts should be strengthened, because public skepticism surrounding funding allocation exists. Leaders in the sector point out, however, that overall funding is too low, and that institutions are struggling to raise enough money from students and families. The strike at Njala University, which lasted for most of the 2016-2017 academic year is also indicative of problems within the funding system and has created a sense of urgency for reform. In conclusion, the tertiary education sector in Sierra Leone requires urgent attention from both the government and development partners.

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Acronyms

GoSL	Government of Sierra Leone
NCTVE	National Council for Technical and Vocational Education
NCVA	National Council for Technical, Vocational and Other Awards
RDI	Research Development and Innovation
SABER	Systems Approach for Better Education Results
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
TE	Tertiary Education
TEC	Tertiary Education Commission
TEI	Tertiary Education Institution
TEMIS	Tertiary Education Management Information System
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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Appendix: Best Practice Indicators included in SABER-TE

1. Vision			
1.1		1.2	
The country/state has a fully developed vision/strategic plan for tertiary education that serves as a guide for steering the system		The creation of the tertiary education vision/strategic plan is relevant and representative, and includes input from key stakeholders and considers key societal factors	
2. Regulatory Environment			
2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4
The country has an explicitly stated tertiary education law for steering the system towards optimal performance.	The regulatory framework includes provisions to adequately regulate the market entry and operation of public tertiary education providers.	The regulatory framework includes provisions to adequately regulate the market entry and operation of private tertiary education providers.	The regulatory framework includes provisions to adequately regulate the market entry and operation of non-university institutions.
2.5	2.6	2.7	
The regulatory framework includes provisions to adequately regulate the distance and online education.	The regulatory framework includes provisions to adequately regulate the independent agencies and buffer bodies.	The regulatory framework embeds key guiding principles.	
3. Governance			
3.1	3.2	3.3	3.4
The regulatory framework establishes distinct functions for university and non-university institutions in contributing to system-wide goals.	The regulatory framework provides incentives to strengthen the unique mission of different institutions.	The tertiary system has an enabling governance structure that facilitates collaboration between institutions.	The tertiary system has an enabling governance structure that facilitates student transfer across institutions.

3.5	3.6	3.7	3.8
The tertiary system has an enabling governance structure that facilitates collaboration and/or communication with other educational sectors (e.g. secondary education).	Public TEIs are able to negotiate at least some performance targets with stakeholders, such as the government or tertiary education agencies (TEAs).	The governance framework for public TEIs supports their academic autonomy.	The governance framework for public TEIs supports their staffing autonomy.
3.9	3.10	3.11	3.12
The regulatory framework for public TEIs supports their governance autonomy.	The governance framework grants public TEIs significant freedom to diversify their sources of funding.	Private TEIs are able to negotiate at least some performance targets with stakeholders, such as the government or TEAs.	The governance framework for private TEIs supports their academic autonomy.
3.13	3.14	3.15	
The governance framework for private TEIs supports their staffing autonomy.	The regulatory framework for private TEIs supports their governance autonomy.	Private TEIs enjoy significant freedom to diversify their sources of funding.	
4. Financing			
4.1	4.2	4.3	4.4
Public funds are allocated to accredited public and private TEIs.	Public funds allocated to public TEIs cover recurrent expenditure and capital expenditure.	Public funds allocated to public TEIs cover research expenditure.	Public funds are allocated to private TEIs to cover research expenditure.
4.5	4.6	4.7	4.8
Public funds are allocated to TEIs through a stable and transparent process and using a block grant budget system.	There is a publicly known or publicly accessible formula for the allocation of public funds for TEIs, which specifies the amounts disbursed as fixed and variable funding.	The stakeholders that contribute to determining the different parts of the funding allocation mechanism are clearly identified.	Performance-based funding is used as part of the funding allocation mechanism.

4.9	4.10	4.11	4.12
There is a mechanism which involves data collection for monitoring the progress of institutions toward performance targets.	There is at least one competitive line of funding accessible to TEIs aimed at promoting innovation or to address national priorities.	There are public programs in place to provide financial aid to students from disadvantaged backgrounds with the goal of advancing equity goals in access and retention.	The financial cost-sharing mechanisms available effectively serve the needs of targeted beneficiaries.
4.13	4.14		
The outcomes of financial aid programs for students are adequately monitored.	There are financial incentives to reward institutions that meet equity goals.		
5. Quality Assurance			
5.1	5.2	5.3	5.4
There is at least one institutional accreditation agency (IAA) or quality assurance agency (QAA) that oversees the quality of individual institutions in the country.	The IAA(s) or QAA(s) is/are independent agency/agencies from government.	The IAA(s) or QAA(s) is/are independent agency/agencies from TEIs.	The IAA(s)'s or QAA(s)'s jurisdiction is nationwide.
5.5	5.6	5.7	5.8
The IAA(s)'s or QAA(s)'s jurisdiction includes both public and private TEIs.	The IAA(s)'s or QAA(s)'s jurisdiction includes both university and non-university institutions.	The IAA(s)'s or QAA(s)'s jurisdiction includes full time, part time, on-site and online programs.	The IAA(s) or QAA(s) has/have developed Institutional Quality Standards (IQAs) to apply in its/their evaluations.
5.9	5.10	5.11	5.12
The IAA(s) or QAA(s) has/have developed Program Quality Standards (PQAs) to apply in its/their evaluations.	The IAA(s) or QAA(s) provides incentives for TEIs to create Management Information Systems (MIS) through IQAs or PQAs.	The IAA(s) or QAA(s) involve TEI stakeholders, including students, as part of their activities.	There are practical consequences for programs/TEIs that do not meet the evaluation/accreditation standards.

5.13	5.14	5.15	5.16
There is at least one national or regional TEMIS in operation.	The TEMIS collects data on student enrollment, retention/dropout rates, graduation rates, and student transfer rates.	The TEMIS collects data on tuition levels, financial aid, grants, scholarships, and student loans.	The TEMIS collects data on students' academic readiness.
5.17	5.18	5.19	5.20
The TEMIS collects data on graduated outcomes.	The TEMIS collects data on institutional contributions to local economic, social or cultural development.	The TEMIS collects data on institutional RDI indicators.	The TEMIS collects data on faculty related indicators.
5.21			
The TEMIS is used extensively for system evaluation and reform.			
6. Relevance for Social and Economic Needs			
6.1	6.2	6.3	6.4
There is a system wide or sector-specific policy mandate to strengthen the role of tertiary education to enhance economic development.	There is a system-wide or sector-specific policy mandate to strengthen RDI activity in tertiary education.	There are financial incentives to foster RDI activity across different tertiary sub-systems.	There are programs and/or incentives to enhance the capacity of local and regional actors to contribute to RDI activities in tertiary institutions.
6.5	6.6		
There is a system-wide policy mandate or decree to strengthen the role of tertiary education in fostering social and cultural development.	There is a system-wide policy mandate or decree to strengthen the role of tertiary education in fostering environmental protection and sustainability.		

The **Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER)** initiative collects data on the policies and institutions of education systems around the world and benchmarks them against practices associated with student learning. SABER aims to give all parties with a stake in educational results—from students, administrators, teachers, and parents to policymakers and business people—an accessible, detailed, objective snapshot of how well the policies of their country's education system are oriented toward ensuring that all children and youth learn.

This report focuses specifically on policies in the **Tertiary Education** sector. It analyzes tertiary education in Sierra Leone on six policy dimensions: (1) the strength of the government's vision, (2) the regulatory environment, (3) governance of the sector, (4) the use of innovative financing arrangements, (5) quality assurance, and (6) relevance to the labor market and the broader socio-economic development of the country.

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