

Baseline Survey

on the Status, challenges, and Opportunities Facing Private Schools in Ghana

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GHANA NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION OF
PRIVATE SCHOOLS

The Welfare of the child is Supreme



Acknowledgements

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Abbreviations and acronyms

BECE	Basic Education Certificate Examination
CSOs	Civil Society organisations
COVID-19	Coronavirus
FCUBE	Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education
FSHS	Free Senior High School
GNAPS	Ghana National Association of Private Schools
GNACOPS	Ghana National Council of Private Schools
HND	Higher National Diploma
ICT	Information Communication Technology
JHS	Junior High School
GK	Kinder Garten
LFPSs	Low Fess Private Schools
MMDAs	Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies
NaCCA	National Council for Curriculum Assessment
NASSIA	National Schools Inspectorate Authority
NDC	National Democratic Congress
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NTC	National Teaching Council
PA	Parents' Association
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SHS	Senior High School
TLM	Teaching and Learning Material
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations International Children and Education Fund
WAEC	West African Examination Council
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Executive summary

Globally, private schools remain an essential part of the educational landscape, offering unique learning environments and personalised educational approaches. Yet these schools face challenges, including increasing competition from the public and private sectors. In Ghana, private schools lack adequate finances, space, and teaching resources and find it difficult to retain quality teachers. Despite these challenges, opportunities include demand for private school education due to the perception of poor quality in public schools and low fees in private schools, even in rural areas. This baseline survey was to ascertain these localised challenges faced by GNAPS members and the opportunities they can leverage. We employed a cross-sectional online survey of 1063 GNAPS member schools across the 16 regions of Ghana. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics. We use graphs for data presentation to allow for an easy appreciation of the issues as the information is presented more simply and clearly. The results show that private schools are a major source of employment and remain a critical part of pre-tertiary education in Ghana, providing access to communities in all locations. Primarily owned by individuals and close family relatives, school fees remain the primary funding source, and many are struggling to make profits and still grappling with many challenges, including inadequate infrastructure and an unfavourable regulatory environment. Consequently, operators are unable to meet the demand for their service. In addition,

most private schools are connected to the national electricity grid, but many still lack WASH facilities. Most schools also lack school boards. Late payment of fees by parents makes it difficult for these schools to meet their recurrent expenditures, making it challenging to retain qualified teachers. Yet private school operators have the opportunity to collaborate with CSOs and NGOs. As an association, GNAPS has the potential to engage regulatory bodies and advocate for fair treatment since most people across locations continue to demand private education. We recommend that the government explores a public-private partnership (PPP) arrangement with private school operators at the basic level, particularly those located in rural areas and are willing, to meet the educational needs of the poor and marginalised groups. This will go a long way to helping Ghana achieve SDG 4. We also recommend that school operators take steps to set up school boards as they are critical for the growth and long-term development of schools. Given the growing market for private schools, we recommend that private school operators invite private investors and banks to put up the needed infrastructure on their school lands and arrange long-term payment plans that allow the schools to take over the buildings once they complete payments. This will solve the infrastructure deficit and enable more students to be admitted. Finally, GNAPS members need to show more commitment to the association for its sustainability and ability to do effective advocacy.

1. Background to the Baseline Survey

1.1. Introduction

Education is vital for the transformation of any society. The Sustainable Development Goal 4 of the United Nations seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. According to the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs¹, even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the world was off-track to achieve its education targets. The pandemic made the situation more precarious by causing learning losses in 4 in 5 children. Accordingly, by 2030, 84 million children and youth will be out of school without additional measures, 300 million students will lack basic numeracy/literacy skills, and only 1 in 6 countries will achieve universal education completion targets. While primary and secondary school completion rates are rising, progress is slow and uneven as low- and lower-middle-income countries face a nearly \$100 billion annual financing gap to reach their education targets.

In the view of UNICEF, even though about 71 percent of children complete primary education in Ghana, completion rates decline steeply for lower and upper secondary education, with only 47 percent completing lower secondary and 35 percent completing upper secondary, with significant disparities within social class and geography². The report identifies that rural and poor children have completion rates below the national average at all levels. In contrast, urban and more affluent children have completion rates above the national average. While 71 percent of children from the wealthiest quintile complete upper secondary education, only 9 percent of children from the poorest quintile do

so. Despite Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) in Ghana since 1961, a significant minority of the population still do not or have not availed of formal education even at compulsory ages.

Even though the government has invested heavily in public education over the years, the supply of school infrastructure remains inadequate, particularly at the pre-tertiary level. Private schools have contributed significantly over the years to fill this gap. According to the World Bank (Abdul-Hamid, Baum, De Brular, Lusk-Stover, & Tettey, 2017), private sector engagement in education (non-profit, for-profit, and faith-based organisations) has grown significantly worldwide. In Ghana, the Government through Parliament recently passed the Pre-Tertiary Education Bill, 2019, which provides for persons to establish, manage and operate a private primary and secondary education even though private education, especially at the pre-tertiary level, dates back to pre-independence when faith-based schools were established to supplement government efforts. Private schools have contributed to access and improved the quality of education in Ghana, even in the rural areas where low-fee private schools (LFPSs) typically operate.

LFPSs are usually independently operated and funded, with tuition costs varying according to the area, neighbourhood, and the perceived quality of the service, which is based mainly on infrastructure and teachers (Brion, 2020). LFPSs are seen as a way of reaching more children with better quality education while also benefiting from the private sector's ability to reduce costs (Ashley et al., 2014).

¹<https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4#overview>

²https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/ghana_fact_sheets_digital.pdf

In Ghana, these are usually operated by faith-based organisations or family businesses. The assumption that private schools are better resourced and perform better than public schools, based on the general BECE performance and superior classroom infrastructure of a few elite/Grade A private schools, has resulted in them often not being prioritised for interventions by public authorities. Meanwhile, a large number of private schools are low-fee private schools. It has been established that, in general, public schools tend to have better infrastructure than the majority of existing private schools.³ This situation makes it difficult for private schools, especially LFPS, to operate in rural areas and when shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic and economic downturns occur.

The President of Ghana National Association of Private Schools (GNAPS), at its 8th biennial national delegates conference in 2022 expressed worry about an “almost 100% concentration on public schools” by the government and the sector's regulators to the “neglect of private schools, especially, Low Fee Private Schools (LFPSs)” in Ghana and warned that 80% of LFPS risked collapsing due to the current economic crises and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴ Yet, it is not clear what the status of these

pre-tertiary private schools is nor what challenges and opportunities private schools face in Ghana. Such information is necessary for future initiatives, policy advocacy, and strategic planning efforts aimed at enhancing the quality and effectiveness of private education in the country. In this direction, this baseline research, commissioned by GNAPS, is an appropriate step for sustainable private participation in pre-tertiary education in Ghana.

GNAPS was formed in 1973 as a non-political and non-sectarian body comprising the largest umbrella body of private school owners at the pre-tertiary level in Ghana to promote and protect the economic and social interest of owners of private schools in the development and management of effective, quality schools at all levels of education⁵. For GNAPS, their first responsibility is to partner with the Government of Ghana to provide education structures and to carry part of the burden of Education management and funding for the government. The association's objective is to enhance children's quality of learning through the effective and efficient delivery of the curriculum.

³https://www.idpfoundation.org/learn_impact/policy-brief-on-rethinking-basic-education-in-ghana-key-issues-for-stakeholder-action/

⁴<https://gnaps.org/harsh-economic-situation-collapsing-low-fee-private-schools-in-ghana-gnaps-president/>

⁵<https://gnaps.org/about-us/>

1.2 Challenges Facing Private Schools in Ghana

Globally, private schools remain an essential part of the educational landscape, offering unique learning environments and personalised educational approaches. Yet these schools face their own set of challenges, including increasing competition from the public sector (Salifu, 2022) and among private schools, economic downturn, affordability, and financial accessibility, adapting to 21st century learning, addressing diversity and inclusion, meeting individual learning needs, and navigating external standards and accountability. Some challenges faced by private schools in Ghana, particularly LFPs (Brion, 2020; Brion & Cordeiro, 2020) include lack of adequate finances, space, teaching resources, and difficulty retaining quality teachers. Inadequate finances often result from late payment of fees by parents, making it difficult for school management to pay teachers on time. Often, LFPs rely on borrowing for infrastructural development, resulting in paying high interest rates, which worsens their already precarious financial situations. At the secondary level, state funding for public senior high schools, particularly through the Free Senior High School (FSHS) Policy, has led to falling enrolment for LFP secondary schools that cannot recruit qualified teachers. The falling enrollment also means that the revenue coming in persistently reduces (Salifu, 2022).

Private school operators in Ghana are also alleging unfair school placement as a challenge. Media reports show these operators express concern, calling on the Ghana Education Service to reconsider the practice. For example, in September 2023, the general supervisor of Holywell International School in Agona Swedru complained bitterly about the situation, which he said had led to parents withdrawing their children when they get to JHS 2 to register them for the BECE in a public JHS. The Ministry of Education has introduced a 30% equity quota favouring BECE candidates who sit the BECE as

public school students. This means that if a secondary school has 100 slots for admission, 30 out of the 100 will be reserved for public school students, while the remaining 70 will be based on competition between the remaining public and private JHS students who applied for consideration. The Ghana National Council of Private Schools (GNACOPS) has stated that more pre-tertiary private schools in the country are collapsing because of this policy introduced by the government. GNAPS, on their part, has appealed to the Government to abolish the practice, labelling it as both unjust and corrupt. The former President and opposition NDC presidential candidate in February 2024 promised to scrap the policy and include private schools in the Free Senior High Policy if he becomes President. He gave the assurance when addressing GNAPS during their Annual Week celebration launch in Accra (<https://www.modernghana.com/news/1295953/john-mahama-vows-to-overhaul-education-policies.html>).

The Ghana News Agency has also reported concerns raised by GNAPS bordering on exorbitant charges slapped on LFPs by regulatory agencies. The Northern Region President of GNAPS, in June 2023, raised the issue during the GNAPS week celebration, stating that state institutions such as the National Schools Inspectorate Authority (NaSIA), the National Teaching Council (NTC), the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA), WAEC and Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies charge excessive charges, which charges she said were affecting quality education delivery to children in LFPs.

Following the above, it is essential to consolidate the challenges faced by private schools across various regions. The information will be necessary for GNAPS to formulate tailored policies for its members and engage the government in shaping national policy on private school education at the pre-tertiary level.

⁶<https://www.modernghana.com/news/1261125/private-basic-schools-cry-foul-over-unfair-school.html>

⁷<https://ghanaeducation.org/bece-unfair-school-placement-will-be-applied-in-2023-2024-against-private-schools/>

⁸<https://ghcampus.com/reports/gnaps-urges-govt-to-eliminate-30-priority-placement-system-in-senior-high-schools/>

⁹<https://gna.org.gh/2023/06/gnaps-raises-concerns-over-exorbitant-charges-slapped-on-low-cost-private-schools/>

1.3. Opportunities for Private Schools in Ghana

The above challenges notwithstanding, pre-tertiary private schools have opportunities to leverage. Demand for LFPSs in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) (Rolleston & Adefeso-Olateju, 2014) and Ghana (Akyeampong & Rolleston, 2013) is high partly due to the perception of poor quality in public schools and low fees in private schools even, in rural areas. A recent publication (Adu Boahen, 2022) has shown a substantial gain in private school attendance in numeracy and literacy, with a little over 60% of the total learning gap in numeracy and literacy in English.

Aside from this, since LFPSs are accessible, some argue that governments in developing countries can explore public-private partnerships in basic schools to meet the educational needs of the poor and marginalised groups. Rwanda, for example, granted subsidies for disadvantaged children in private schools in the past, without which private education would be outside the reach of children from such deprived backgrounds –(Akyeampong, 2009). Thus, apart from the demand for LFPSs, there is an opportunity for PPP in pre-tertiary education. PPP in pre-tertiary education presents itself as an opportunity in Ghana, given the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) requirement (Aziabah, 2017). Even though this might be more challenging for secondary education due to the relatively small private participation, it is more practical for the basic education level, where private participation is relatively high. Other opportunities include the growing number of private schools, which presents an opportunity for a more potent force that can negotiate with policymakers, the fact that they are more efficient and effective in managing their resources, and the growing high graduate unemployment in the country. However, some opportunities may be context-specific and localised. This baseline survey will be necessary to ascertain these localised opportunities that GNAPS members in their various locations can leverage. Such views will also present an opportunity for cross-learning among members.



2. Research Framework

2.1. Research Design and Approach

The research used a cross-sectional online survey of 1063 GNAPS member schools across the 16 regions of Ghana. We employed a participatory approach by first aligning our understanding of the survey assignment to that of the GNAPS lead person. We also held a deliberative meeting online with regional representatives (mostly GNAPS regional secretaries) to discuss the rationale and

2.2. Sampling and Sample Size Determination

Given that this is baseline research and GNAPS did not have a comprehensive list of member schools to allow for random sampling procedures, we employed a non-random sampling approach. All regional representatives were tasked to encourage at least 50 private school operators to respond to the online survey but were to encourage as many operators as possible to respond. Thus, a minimum of 800 responses were anticipated. However, one thousand and sixty-three (1,063) schools across the sixteen regions of Ghana responded by the end of data collection. Most were from the Greater Accra region, with the least coming from the Western North region. Table 1 presents the distribution of the sample by region.

Table 1: Distribution of sample by regions

Region	Freq.	Percent
Greater Accra	143	13.45
Ahafo	18	1.69
Ashanti	117	11.00
Bono East	121	11.38
Bono	86	8.09
Central	61	5.73
Eastern	102	9.59
North East	38	3.57
Northern	56	5.27
OTI	45	4.23
Savannah	22	2.07
Upper West	55	5.17
Upper East	49	4.61
Volta	79	7.43
Western	54	5.08
Western North	17	1.59
Total	1063	100.00

2.3. Data Collection



Data collection was done through an online survey. The link to the online questionnaire was sent to regional representatives, who, in turn, shared it with GNAPS members in the various regions. The consultant monitored responses online and updated the regional representatives on a daily basis. Apart from the online questionnaire, regional representatives were tasked to compile comprehensive lists of all private schools within their regions. The exercise lasted between June 10 2024 and August 5 2024. The online data was downloaded in Microsoft Excel format and transferred to STATA software for management and analysis.

2.4. Data Analysis



Data was analysed using descriptive statistics. Generally, variables were presented using various graphical methods and frequency distribution. Using graphs allowed a straightforward appreciation of the issues as the information is presented more simply and clearly. Frequency tables were used in a few instances to facilitate easy understanding.

2.5. Quality Control



The recruitment of enumerators usually has significant implications on the quality of data to be collected. We recruited regional GNAPS secretaries as supervisors of the online survey since they are private school operators and appreciate the issues affecting their business.

To ensure that quality data is collected, the research team, working closely with the National GNAPS president, monitored the online survey responses daily for consistency. Regional representatives regularly reported directly to the consultant through the data collection process. The online platform enhanced the quality of the data because the data could be reviewed either instantly or shortly after the end of the day's collection. The consultant could view the data collected for completeness and appropriateness even when the collection is ongoing.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Ownership and operational nature of private schools

An important factor influencing business performance is ownership. Even though it is generally argued that private businesses perform better than public or state businesses, even for privately owned businesses, those with multiple owners are less able to implement actions that drive business growth than full ownership (Yang & Meyer, 2019). In this baseline study, we found that the majority (78%) of GNAPS schools were owned by the family (i.e. individuals, married couples or close relatives) followed by those owned by the Church. Other forms of ownership include partnerships (4%), NGO or charity organisations (2%) and communities. Figure 1 presents information on the ownership type.

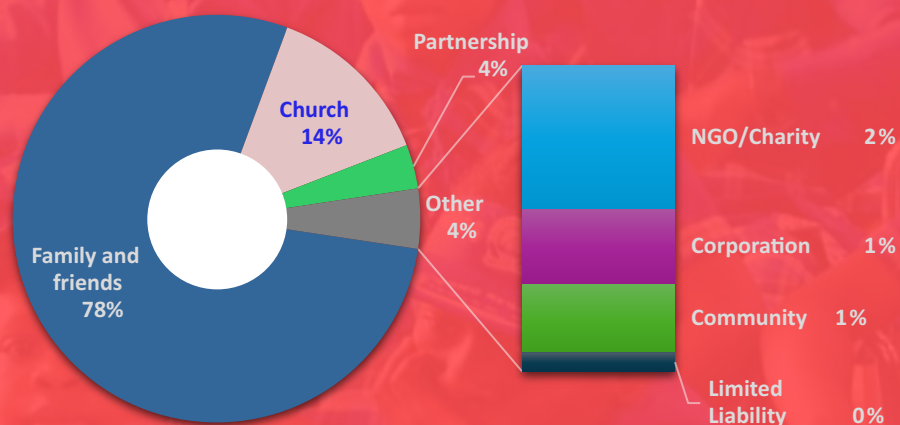


Figure 1: Ownership type

Naturally, most proprietors (97%) are also their schools' chief executive officers (CEOs). Regarding the gender of individual proprietors, the results show private school ownership is male-dominated (68%) even though a good number of females (32%) are also in the business. In terms of their educational background, most proprietors are first degree holders (392 or 39.72%), followed by those who hold diplomas (246 or 24.92%), senior high school certificates (138 or 13.98%) and master's degrees (109 or 11.04%) in that order. A few proprietors are PhD holders (53 or 5.37%) or without formal education (6 or 0.61%). This implies that most proprietors ((81.05%) of private schools have tertiary level qualifications (diploma, first degree, Master or PhD) and are well placed to manage the schools they have started. Figure 2 presents information on the characteristics of proprietors of private schools.

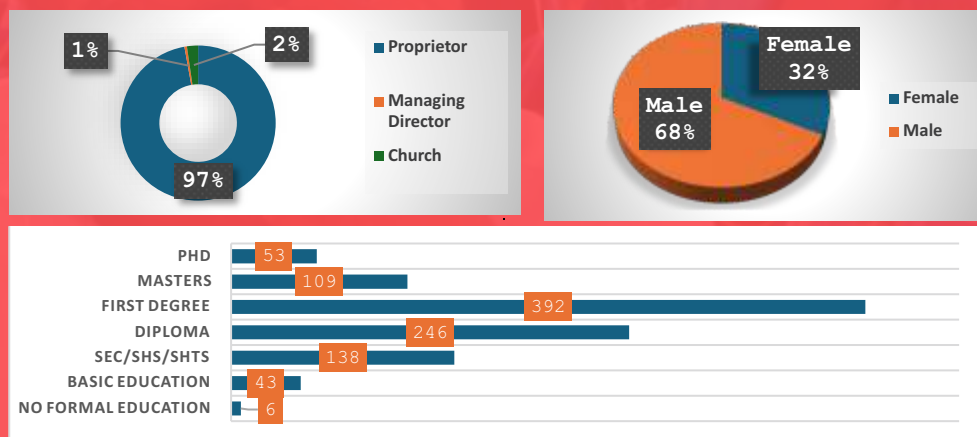


Figure 2: Proprietor characteristics

In terms of the operational nature of schools (see Figure 3), the study found that most (56%) operated as day schools, while others (43%) operated a mix of both day and boarding, with just a few operating as boarding only (1%). This observation is in line with the fact that public basic education in Ghana is operated as day, rather than boarding.

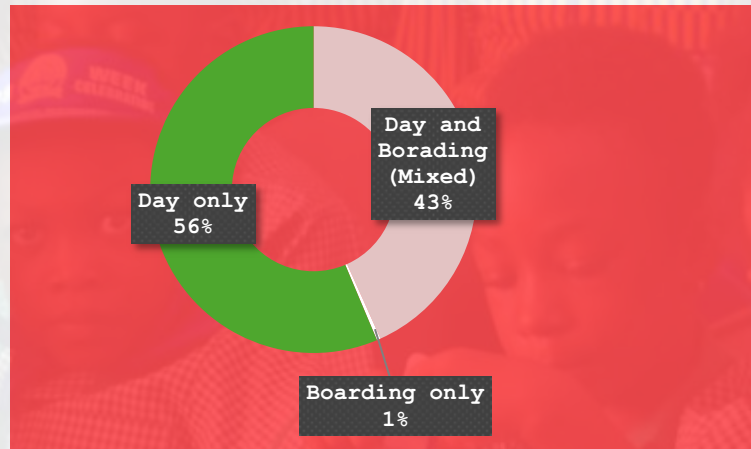


Figure 3: Operational nature of private schools (in percentages)

As presented in Figure 4, the majority of schools operated by GNAPS are at the basic level, supporting the choice of day school. From Figure 4, we notice that up to 54 percent of the schools begin from pre-school through to Junior high School while up to 31 percent start from pre-school through to primary school. The remaining 15 percent are either primary to JHS (6%) without pre-school, pre-school only (3%), primary only (2%). Those operating JHS only and SHS only are rather very negligible.

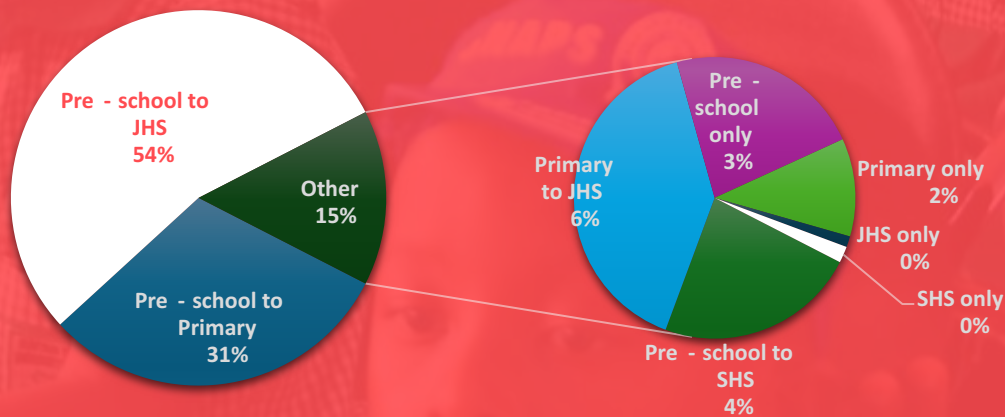


Figure 4: School Level (percent)

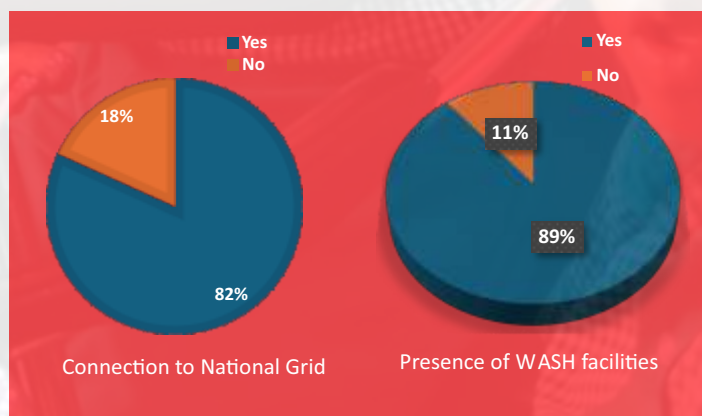


Figure 5: Connection to the national electricity grid and presence of WASH facilities (frequency)

Figure 5 presents information on schools connected to the national electricity grid and the availability of water sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities. On average, 82 percent of the schools are connected to the national electricity Grid, while the remaining 18 percent are not connected. In terms of the presence of WASH facilities in the school, the results show that 89 percent of schools have WASH facilities while 11 percent do not. This means that students in 1 out of 10 schools, on average, will normally resort to the bush in order to attend to nature's call. The absence of WASH facilities will pose a serious challenge for adolescent girls who may be menstruating and need a convenient environment to attend to their hygiene.

All private schools are expected to register with the Registrar General Department. We observed that the clear majority complied with this norm while a few, at the time of data collection, did not register. Out of the 1,057 who responded to the question, 961 (or 91.18%) had registered with the Registrar General Department, while only 96 (9.08%) did not register (see Figure 6). The leadership of GNAPS in the various regions should encourage their members to comply with this requirement to avoid possible penalties in the future.

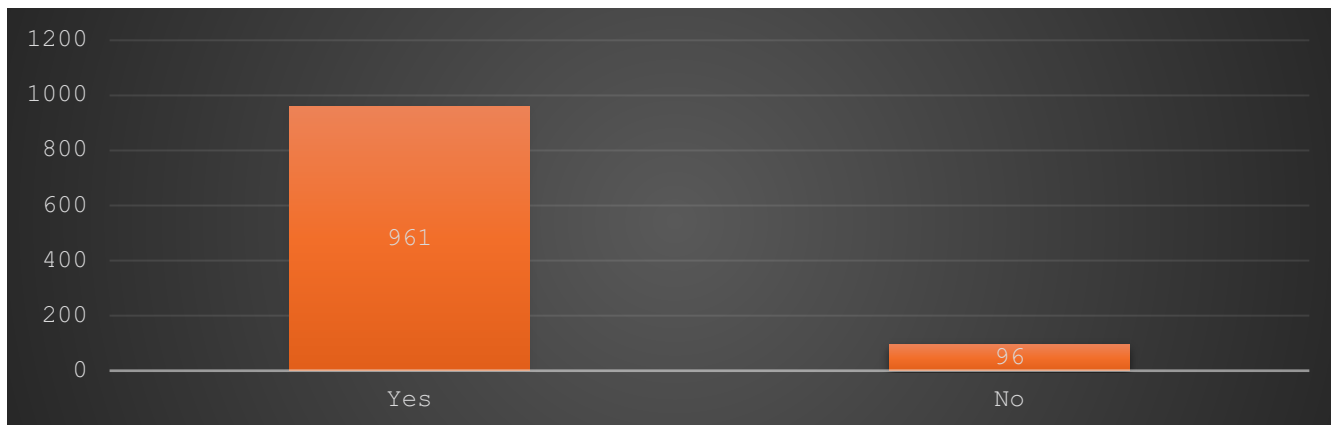


Figure 6: Registration status of schools

School location is an essential determinant of access and enrollment (Ekaette, Ameh, & Owan, 2020; Fentiman, Hall, & Bundy, 1999; Filmer, 2007) which ultimately affects revenue. Traditionally, private schools are located in urban centres where the population is above the 5000 threshold used in Ghana. However, in some cases, private schools may be located in rural areas (with population less than 5000), where the aim is to provide access to quality education. In this survey (see Figure 7) we found that about 42.56 percent of GNAPS schools are located in the urban areas while 57.44 percent are in the rural areas. The fact that more than 50 percent of GNAPS schools are located in the rural areas is an indication that the private sector can complement basic education, not just in urban centres where the possibility of increased revenue is high, but even in deprived locations.

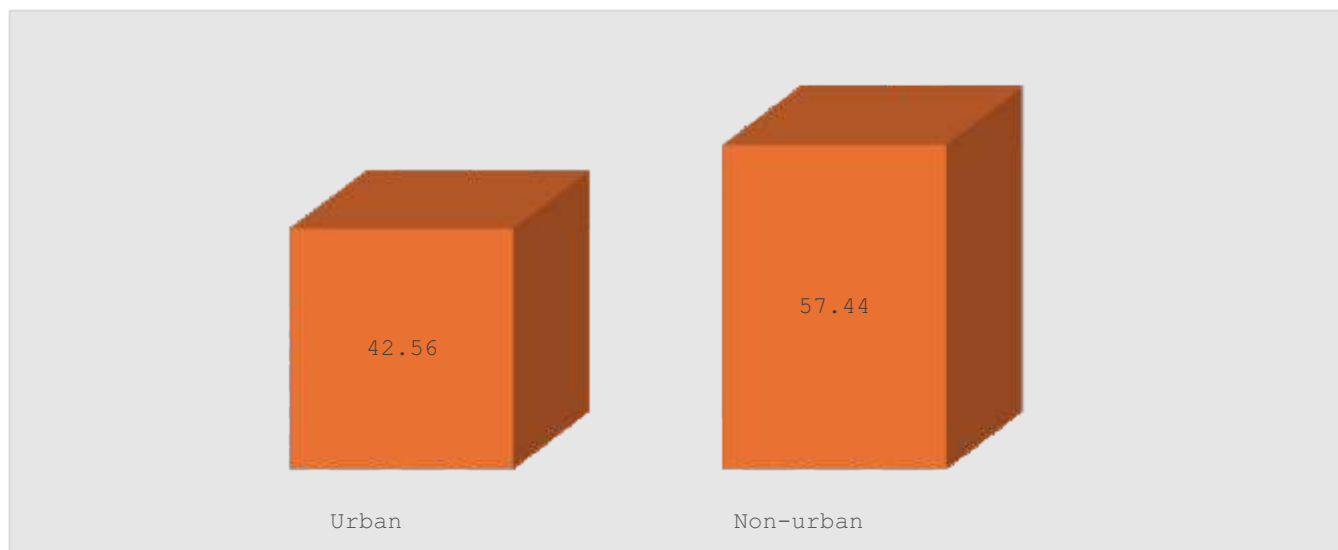


Figure 7: School location (in percentages)

Similar to the location characteristics, the target sector of these schools reveal the deliberate targeting of those in the informal sector. Less than a quarter (22%) of the private schools owners indicated that they target only the formal sector workers only as their customer base. The remaining 78 percent either target only the informal sector (30%) or both formal and informal sector workers (47.95%) as potential customers. The details are presented in Figure 8.

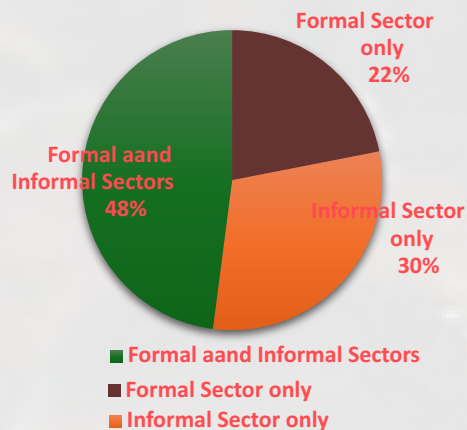


Figure 8: Target market of school owners

Despite being located largely in rural and peri-urban areas, most owners operate with the aim of breaking even. As presented in Figure 9, the clear majority (66%) charge fees to cover their operational costs, while the remaining either do not charge fees at all (6%) or do so but do not aim to cover their operational costs (28%).

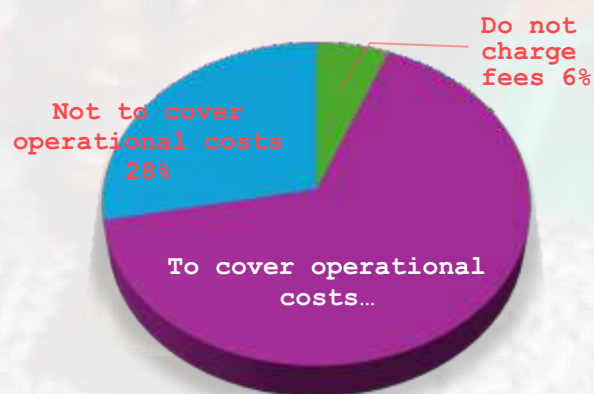


Figure 9: Fees and Profit Motive



3.2. Students' Enrollment and Staff Information

The results in Table 2 show that the student enrollment trend for the nursery, KG and primary levels has been increasing over the years, while that of the Junior and Senior High schools has witnessed a dip between 2022 and 2024 academic years. This situation can be attributed to the recent disruptions in the global economy due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the rising cost of living in Ghana driven by high inflation and oil prices. When considering the levels, however, we noticed that, on average, the year-on-year enrolment is higher for SHS, followed by primary, nursery, JHS, and KG, indicating a high demand for private senior schools. This is likely due to the fewer private secondary schools available, and parents and their wards may not be like the public senior high schools where they are placed after BECE. In terms of sex, the results show girls' enrollment is slightly higher at the lower levels (Nursery to primary) but lower at the junior and senior high levels due to what is referred to as the pro-male bias phenomenon in school enrollment and progression (Iddrisu, Danquah, & Quartey, 2017).

Table 2: Average enrollment per level by sex

Level	2019		2020		2021		2022		2023		2024	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Nursery	41	43	39	42	40	43	42	45	42	45	45	47
KG	28	29	28	29	28	30	30	31	30	32	31	32
Primary	70	76	69	74	70	73	70	74	70	74	72	77
JHS	33	37	34	37	33	36	32	35	30	34	30	32
SHS	66	85	82	96	82	89	68	86	68	77	68	73

The survey also sought to find out the teaching staff strength of the schools. On the average (see Table 3), private schools employ more male teachers (20 on average) compared to female teachers (11 on average) for all the levels except for the KG. Particularly for higher levels like the JHS and the SHS, the results show a clear preference for male teachers over female teachers. At the lower levels, it is believed that women can better care for much younger children, including cleaning them. On the other hand, junior and senior high school students tend to exhibit more complex behaviour as they enter early adolescence, probably requiring more strict guidance from male teachers. Specifically, the average number of male and female teachers across all levels is two males and two females for nursery, one male and two females for KG, four males and three females for primary, five males and one female for JHS, and eight males and three females for SHS respectively.

Table 3: Average number of teachers by sex (all categories)

Level	Male Teachers	Female teachers	Total
Nursery	2	2	4
KG	1	2	3
Primary	4	3	7
JHS	5	1	6
SHS	8	3	11
Total	20	11	31

The Ghana Education Service requires that teachers obtain the National Teaching Council (NTC) licence to qualify them to teach at the basic and secondary levels. We wanted to know if teachers in private schools adhere to this requirement. The results in Table 4 show that 20 teachers, on average (with more males than females), had temporary NTC licences.

Table 4: Average number of teachers with Temporary and Full NTC licenses by sex

Level	Male Teachers	Female teachers	Total
Temporary licence			
Nursery	1	1	2
KG	1	2	3
Primary	2	2	4
JHS	2	1	3
SHS	7	2	9
Total	13	7	20
Full licence			
Nursery	1	1	2
KG	1	1	2
Primary	2	1	3
JHS	2	1	3
SHS	6	3	9
Total	12	8	20

3.3. School Management and Infrastructure

Effective management of schools (private or public) is tasking and requires the school to have adequate infrastructure and qualified managers. Table 5 presents basic information regarding management and infrastructure decisions by schools. In all, about 97 percent of the sampled schools reported they had a head teacher, about 98 percent organised in-service training for their staff, and just about 55 percent reporting the school infrastructure was adequate (which means up to 45% of schools still have problems with infrastructure).

Table 5: Basic management information of schools

Variable	Frequency	Percent
The school has a headteacher	912	97.64
The school organises in-service training for teachers	971	98.19
The School infrastructure is adequate	577	55.43

As presented in Figure 10, the data from this survey reveal that most headteachers were bachelor's degree holders, followed by HND/diploma holders and senior high school leavers. A few of them had their master's or PhD degrees. A few head teachers also completed junior high school or had no formal education. The fact that most head teachers had an HND or diploma, with some even having a PhD, implies that the quality of education in GNAPS schools is of a good standard. However, steps should be taken by GNAPS executives to ensure that where the head teacher's education is below the Teachers Cert A, at the minimum, steps should be taken by the school to employ qualified teachers. Although there are few, it is not acceptable that head teachers of schools (even if the person is the proprietor) have no formal education.

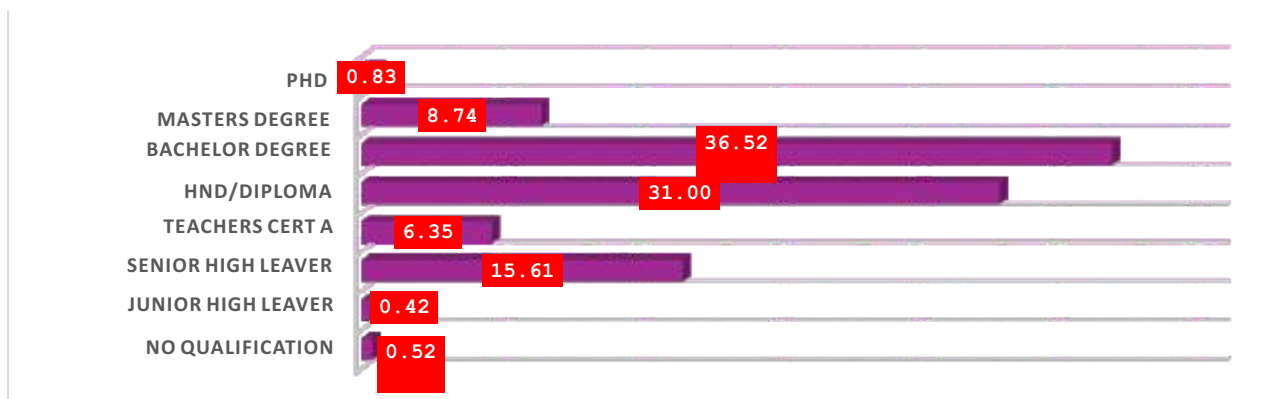
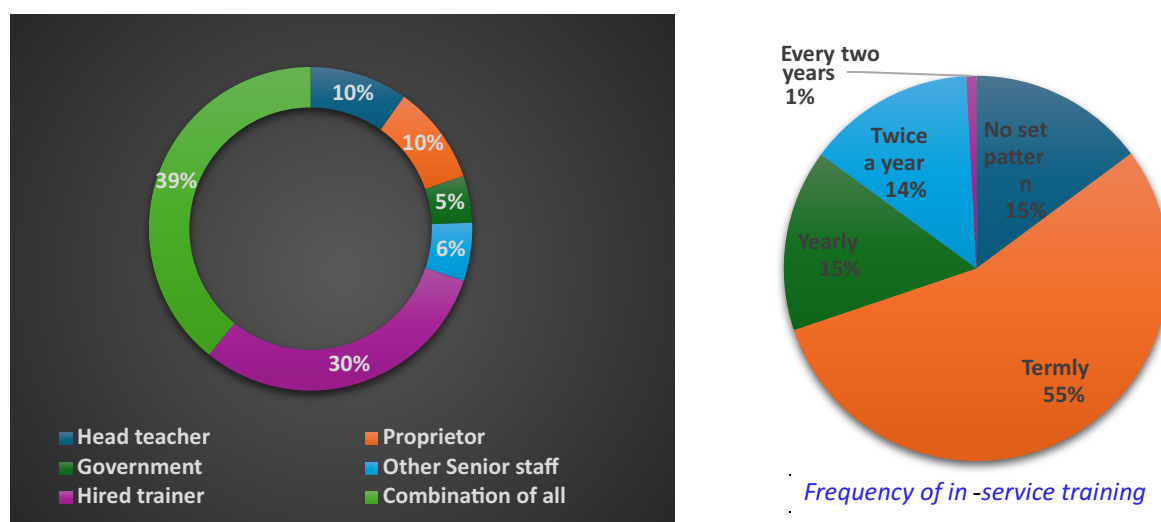


Figure 10: Educational qualifications of head teachers

In-service training for teachers improves their management skills and job performance (Dilshad, Kanwal, & Nausheen, 2019; Ellyana, 2020). Figure 11 presents information about the source of in-service training, the frequency of training and the perceived usefulness of the training.



Source of in-service trainer

Frequency of in-service training

Figure 11: Information on in-service training provided by schools

As presented in Figure 10, in-service training is provided using a combination of approaches (39%) or a hired trainer (30%) from outside the school. Aside from these, the proprietor (10%) or the head teacher (10%) provides training. Other senior staff (6%) or the government (5%) sometimes provide in-service training. Regarding frequency, most schools (55%) provide in-service training every term. Otherwise, it is organised yearly (15%) or twice a year (14%), with others reporting no set pattern (15%). Nearly all proprietors (99.2%) found the in-service training useful.

In general, private schools still have critical infrastructure gaps to fill in many areas, including classrooms, administration blocks and toilets. The information in Table 6 and Figure 12 speaks to the details of the specific infrastructure issue. On average 13 pre-school classrooms were completed, while 5 and 2 classrooms were either uncompleted or unnecessary, respectively. On average, 19 primary school classrooms were completed, while 7 and 2 primary classrooms were uncompleted or not required, respectively. Regarding classrooms for JHS, 6 were completed on average, while 3 and 1 classrooms were either uncompleted or not needed. Similarly, 2 SHS classrooms were completed on average while 2 each were either uncompleted or not needed.

The situation for other facilities is not different. If one were to walk into one of the sampled school premises, one could find 3 completed administrative blocks and 4 uncompleted ones; 3 completed staff common rooms and 5 uncompleted ones; 3 completed ICT rooms and 2 uncompleted ones; 6 completed boys' toilets 3 uncompleted ones; and finally 9 completed girls' toilets and 3 uncompleted ones. The uncompleted structures represent the infrastructure deficit that these schools are grappling with.

Table 6: Infrastructure deficit

Infrastructure	Completed	Uncompleted	Not needed
Classrooms			
Pre-school	13	5	2
Primary	19	7	2
JHS	6	3	1
SHS	2	2	2
Administrative block	3	4	2
Staff common room	3	5	2
ICT room	3	2	1
Boy's toilet	6	3	2
Girl's toilet	9	3	2

The positive thing is that most schools were located on their premises (84%), with a few located on premises either granted for free (5%), leased for an extended period (6%) or a short period (4%) or on rented premises (see Figure 12 for details). Owning their premises ensures the future existence of the school without the need to move location.

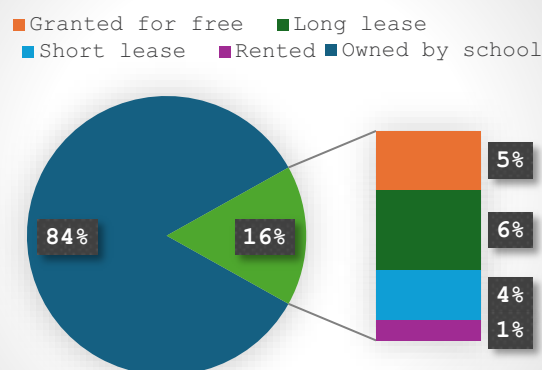


Figure 12: Ownership of school land

3.4. School boards and parents' associations

According to Guernsey (2003), the role of school boards in most private schools is primarily to formulate policy and give direction to the school. School boards are, therefore, critical to a healthy private school, particularly its long-term operations (Guernsey, 2003). As such, private school operators who plan to stay in the business long-term require a school board. Surprisingly, results from this survey suggest that more than 50 percent (51%) of the schools included in the study did not have school boards. Out of the remaining 49 percent of schools with boards of directors, meetings are organised primarily once a term (26% of the 49%) or twice a term (19% of the 49%).

Some schools still need a schedule for their school boards, as such boards meet only as and when necessary (see Figure 13).

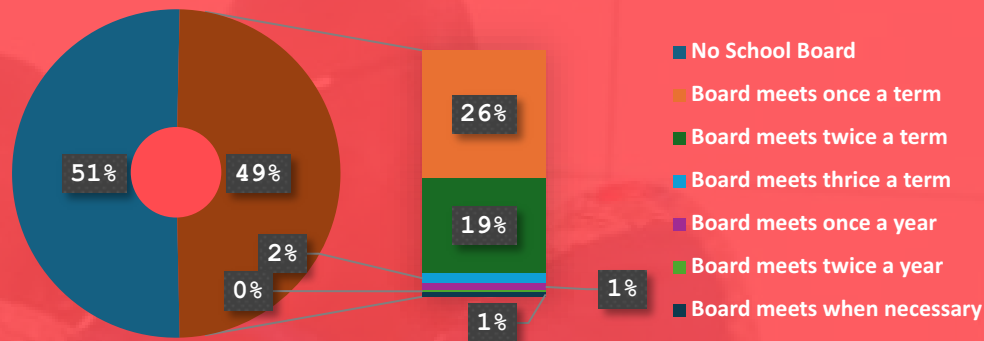


Figure 13: Existence and frequency of school board meetings

Like school boards, parents teachers associations (PTA) are critical in supporting and understanding the operations of schools. As presented in Figure 14, most PTAs support their schools with developmental projects and ideas on improving the discipline and performance of students. Regarding this, our survey reveal the clear majority (97%) of private schools in our sample had PTAs, with only 3 percent of the schools not having PAs. PTA meetings are mostly organised twice a year (45%) or once a year (26%). Yet others meet once or twice a term or as and when necessary.

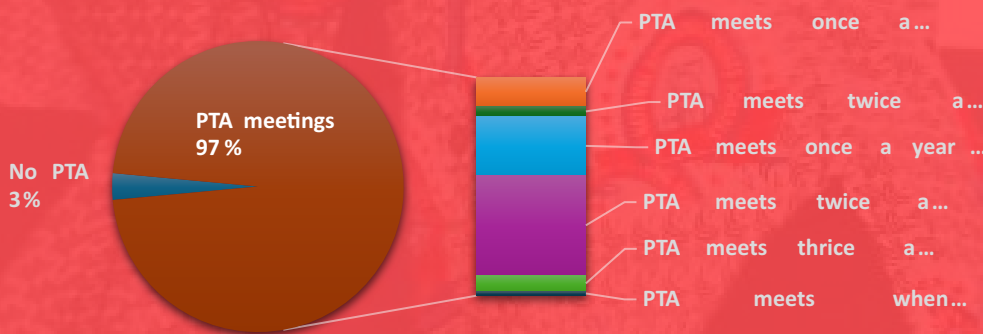


Figure 14: Existence and frequency of PTA meetings

3.5. Funding and Financial Position

Private schools are usually funded from school fees paid by parents. However, in some jurisdictions in the past, public funds have been used to fund private schools. Critics of such practice identify that such schools eventually become and behave more like public schools in proportion to their dependence on the public purse, and that, there is no compelling moral necessity to use public funds to support private schools. In addition, there is the concern that, in general, and on average, such private schools are less efficient and effective in fostering valued and measurable student outcomes than public schools (Paquette, 2005). In line with evidence from the literature, results presented in Figure 15 show that private schools get their revenue (or funding) through charging school fees (93%) or feeding fees (7%). For those schools that had their previous year's school accounts audited, the majority reported that they did not make profits. Their financial position indicated a breakeven (47%) or loss (32%). Less than a quarter (22%) reported having made profits. Most schools, particularly those located in rural and peri-urban areas, may not be able to charge fees high enough to cover their operational costs and give them profits. Doing so could result in low enrolment since low-income households are primarily located in such areas.

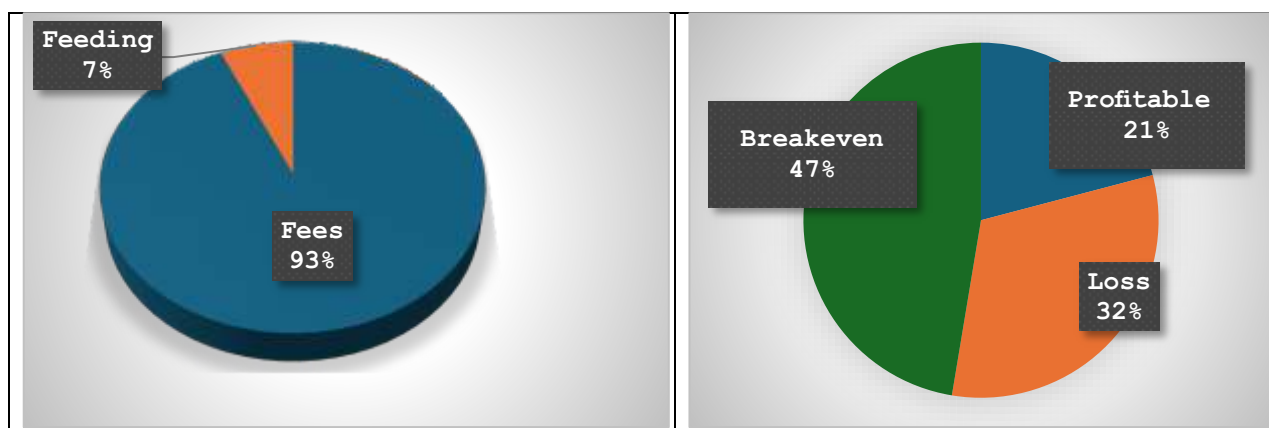


Figure 15: Source of funding and financial position

When considering the major source of revenue (fees), we noticed a wide variation in fees charged across all levels. As presented in Table 7, we found that at the preschool level, an average of GHS 291.32 is charged per term, with some schools charging as low as GHS 25.00 and others as high as GHS 560.00 (+/- 162.6 std. dev.). Across levels, the average fees are lowest at the preschool but highest at the JHS (where the variation is also highest).

Table 7: Average fees per term by level

Fees per term	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Pre-School	22	219.32	162.6	25	560
Lower Primary	24	231.25	161.79	25	560
Upper Primary	24	234.167	161.04	25	560
JHS	19	269.74	187.28	0	650

3.6. Challenges facing private schools

Private schools in Ghana face many challenges, some related to the school environment (internal) and others outside the school environment (external). Table 8 presents views from operators who responded to the survey questionnaire. Eight internal and seven external challenges were given, and operators were asked to rank them as major, minor or no challenge. Considering internal challenges, school operators identified late payment of fees by parents (76.91%) as a top major challenge, followed by difficulty paying to retain qualified teachers (60.10%) and withdrawal of students by parents (44.70%). These challenges are partly due to the current economic challenges in the country and partly because most private schools are operating in rural locations where incomes are generally low.

Table 8: C challenges faced by private schools

C challenges	Major		Minor		Not a challenge	
	Freq	Percent	Freq	Percent	Freq	Percent
Internal challenges						
Competition from public schools	324	32.53	313	31.43	359	36.04
Competition from other private schools	294	29.40	474	47.40	232	23.20
Falling enrollment levels	434	43.27	351	35	218	21.73
Late payment of school fees	766	76.91	169	16.97	61	6.12
Withdrawal of students by parents	451	44.70	420	41.63	138	13.68
Withdrawal of JHS 2 students by parents	330	43.31	191	25.07	241	31.63
Inadequate staff	201	21.09	391	41.03	361	37.88
Difficulty paying qualified teachers	583	60.10	227	23.40	160	16.49
External challenges (demands from state authorities)						
Ghana Education Service	141	14.16	415	41.67	440	44.18
National Schools Inspectorate Authority (NASIA)	460	45.50	329	32.54	222	21.96
National Teaching Council (NTC)	378	38.49	353	35.95	251	25.56
West African Examination Council (WAEC)	164	18.79	288	32.99	421	48.22
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA)	239	24.51	355	36.41	381	39.08
Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (MMDAs)	311	31.73	347	35.41	322	32.86
High charges from regulatory authorities	593	62.75	205	21.69	147	15.56

In terms of external challenges, private school operators rated the following as major challenges: high charges from regulatory authorities (62.75%), demands from state authorities such as the National Schools Inspectorate Authority (45.5%) and the National Teaching Council (38.49%). Private school operators, however, were of the view that demands from state authorities like the Ghana Education Service (48.22%) and the West African Examination Council (44.18%) were relatively easy. In general, private school operators do not consider the current regulatory environment to be favourable to their operations, as presented in Figure 16.

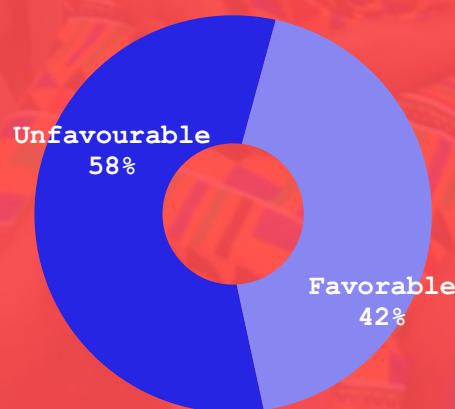


Figure 16: Perceptions about the current regulatory environment

3.7. Opportunities available to private schools

The above challenges notwithstanding, there are some opportunities private schools can explore to improve their situation. For example, school operators were asked if they had ever received any support from any source. The results (see Figure 17) show that a good proportion (38%) ever received some form of support, even though the majority (62%) never received any support. The support came mainly from civil society organisations and non-governmental organisations. The fact that some support comes to private schools means that more schools can benefit from such support with the right contacts and networks. In terms of the nature of support, 28 percent out of the 38 percent got non-financial support, while the remaining 10 percent received financial support. The non-financial support was in the form of teaching and learning materials (TLM) (21%), training in management (10%) and training in finances (2%).

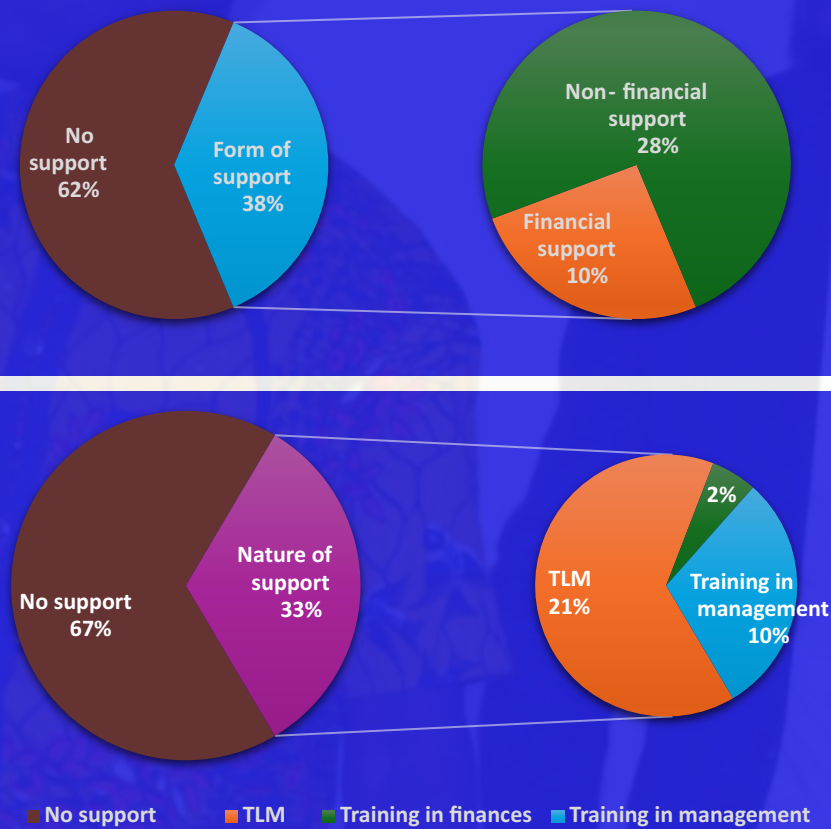


Figure 17: Support received by private schools

Another opportunity available to private schools is the unmet demand from potential customers. The survey results (see Figure 18) show an existing demand gap of 29 percent. Responding to whether or not school operators were able to admit all applicants to their schools in the previous academic year, 71 percent indicated they are currently able to admit all applicants to their schools while 29 percent said no (unmet demand). Lack of space was the main reason cited for the inability to admit (see Figure 18). This means that private schools can look at credit financing options to make up for the infrastructure deficit and allow them to take advantage of the demand gap.

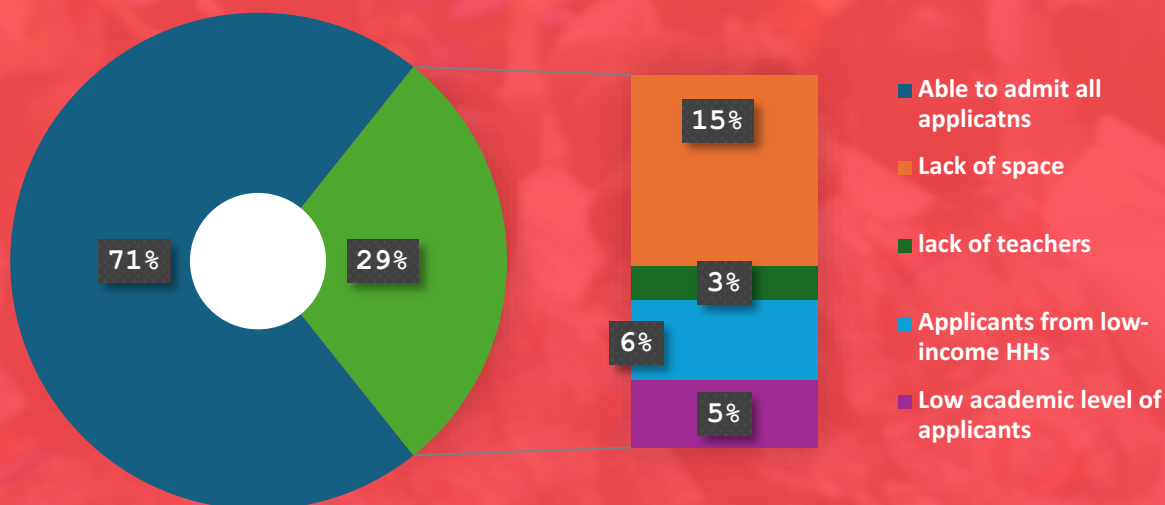


Figure 18: Reasons for inability to admit all applicants

Belonging to an association such as GNAPS is an opportunity for private schools to forge a united front, speak with one voice, demand fairness in the policy space and create group networks that benefit members. Responding to the kind of support GNAPS can offer its members, 36 percent indicated the need for GNAPS to advocate for a favourable policy environment. Others believe members can benefit from GNAPS through training (29%) and financial support (31%). Details are presented in Figure 19.

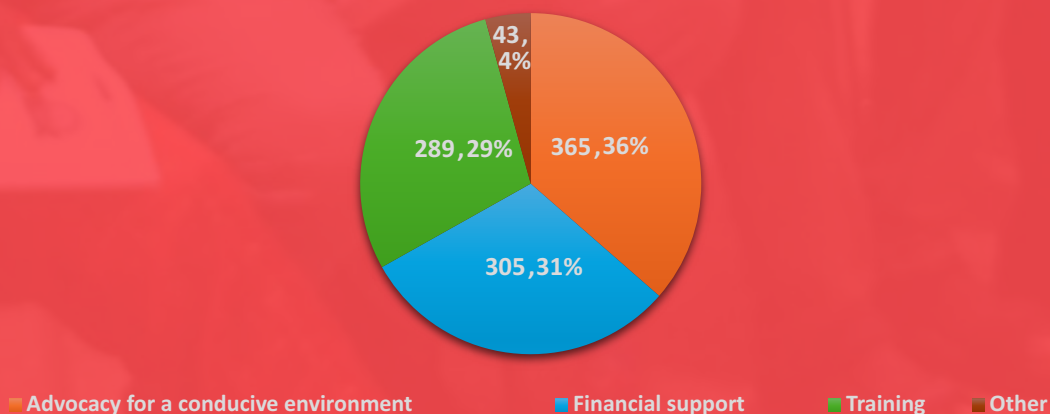


Figure 19: Support expected from GNAPS as an association

4. Summary, conclusions and recommendations

4.1. Summary

GNAPS commissioned this research to provide data on the status, challenges, and opportunities facing private schools in Ghana. The findings are expected to serve as a foundation for future initiatives, policy advocacy, and strategic planning efforts to enhance the quality and effectiveness of private education in the country.

Globally, private schools remain an essential part of the educational landscape, offering unique learning environments and personalised educational approaches. Yet these schools face their challenges, including increasing competition from the public sector and among private schools.

In Ghana, private schools lack adequate finances, space, and teaching resources and find it difficult to retain quality teachers. These challenges, notwithstanding, opportunities include demand for private school education due to the perception of poor quality in public schools and low fees in private schools even in rural areas. The growing number of private schools presents an opportunity for a stronger force that can negotiate with policymakers, the fact that they are more efficient and effective in managing their resources, and the growing high graduate unemployment in the country. However, some challenges and opportunities may be context-specific and localised. This baseline survey was to ascertain these localised challenges faced by GNAPS members and the opportunities they can leverage.

We employed a cross-sectional online survey of 1063 GNAPS member schools across the 16 regions of Ghana. We used a participatory approach by first aligning our understanding of the survey assignment to that of the GNAPS lead person. We also held a deliberative meeting online with regional representatives (mostly GNAPS regional secretaries) to discuss the rationale and objectives of the study. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics.



Generally, variables were presented using various graphical methods and frequency distribution. The use of graphs allows for an easy appreciation of the issues as the information is presented in a simpler and clearer manner.

Results show that the majority of private schools are owned by individuals and close family relatives, who are mostly male and mostly hold a first degree or diploma (with some as PhD holders). Day school is the primary mode of operation, but there are instances where a mixture of day and boarding is used. Generally, most schools did not make profits in the previous financial year. Challenges such as inadequate infrastructure and unfavourable regulatory environment continue to affect their operations. However, private schools can leverage the unmet demand for their service and use innovative ways of raising funds including credit facilities, to meet market demand. Most private schools start from pre-school to primary, but some go all the way to SHS or JHS. There are few instances where only JHS or SHS are operated. Many schools are in urban areas, connected to the national electricity grid, with WASH facilities present (even though some still lack WASH facilities). Most schools target both formal and informal sector households and charge fees for profit. The average enrolment for Nursery, KG and JHS is 30 per class for the period under study, with boys' enrolment being slightly high.

That of the primary and SHS is 70, but with a slight decline from 2022 to date. Most schools employ more female teachers at the Nursery and more male teachers at higher levels.

Most teachers either have a temporary or full NTC licence. School infrastructure remain a challenge as up to 45 percent cite inadequate infrastructure. In-service training take place in most schools and are handled either by the headteacher or an external person hired for the purpose. Surprisingly close to 51 percent do not have school boards and for those that have school boards meetings are mostly held once a year. School fees remain the main source of funding and less than a quarter are reported positive financial turnover in the previous financial year.

Internal challenges include late payment of fees by parents, difficulty paying to retain qualified teachers and withdrawal of students by parents. External challenges include high charges from regulatory authorities and demands from state authorities such as the National Schools Inspectorate Authority and the National Teaching Council. The opportunities identified by private school operators include support from CSOs and NGOs and the unmet demand for private education.

4.2. Conclusion

The study concludes that private schools are a significant source of employment and remain a critical part of pre-tertiary education in Ghana, providing access to communities in all locations. Primarily owned by individuals and close family relatives, school fees remain the primary funding source, and many are struggling to make profits and still grappling with many challenges, including inadequate infrastructure and an unfavourable regulatory environment. Consequently, operators are unable to meet the demand for their service.

Most private schools are connected to the national electricity grid, but many still lack WASH facilities. Most schools also lack school boards. Late payment of fees by parents makes it difficult for these schools to meet their recurrent expenditures, making it challenging to retain qualified teachers. Yet private school operators have the opportunity to collaborate with CSOs

and NGOs. As an association, GNAPS has the potential to engage regulatory bodies and advocate for fair treatment since most people across locations continue to demand private education.

4.3. Recommendations

Since our results show private schools are located even in rural areas across the country and are therefore accessible, we recommend that the government explore a public-private partnership (PPP) arrangement with private school operators at the basic level, particularly those located in rural areas and are willing, to meet the educational needs of the poor and marginalised groups. This PPP arrangement can be a fee subsidy for poor students who enrol in private schools in rural areas, particularly those nearest to such communities. This will go a long way to helping Ghana achieve SDG 4.

Secondly, our results show that most private schools do not have school boards. We recommend that steps be taken to set up these boards. School boards are critical for the growth and long-term development of schools. Indeed, they are a requirement for the running of businesses in Ghana and should be taken seriously.

Infrastructure deficit remains a challenge for many private schools. Given the growing market for private schools, we recommend that private school operators invite private investors and banks to put up the needed infrastructure on their school lands and arrange long-term payment plans that allow the schools to take over the buildings once they complete payments. This will solve the infrastructure deficit and enable more students to be admitted.

GNAPS members need to show commitment to the association. Our findings indicate that members expect GNAPS to do more in advocacy, among others. However, our observation during the data collection revealed a certain inertia among most members. For example, many regional secretaries cited the lack of cooperation from their members as the reason for delays in getting the required responses and even basic information about school ownership and location to compile regional lists.

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