

Report

on Youth Constituency in Private Schools

JANUARY TO APRIL 2025



**GHANA NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION OF
PRIVATE SCHOOLS**

The Welfare of the child is Supreme



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents	i
Table of Figures	ii
Executive Summary	iii
Introduction	1
Background	1
Methodology.....	3
Introduction	3
Sampling and Methods of Data Collection	3
Fieldwork	4
Quality Control	4
Data Entry and Validation	4
Data Analysis	5
Summary.....	5
Results/Discussion	6
Why Respondents Attend(ed) Private Schools	7
Youth Needs and Aspirations	11
Educational Outcomes and Transition Pathways (for only Respondents Who completed JHS)	14
Youth Engagement and Voice	20
Inclusivity and Equity	23
Youth-led Activities	24
Impact of the Sector on Youth Development	24
Youth Engagement and Mobilization	28
Engaging Youth Through Alumni Networks	30
Contribution of Alumni to the Running of their Alma Marta	36
Technology and Communication	35
Partnerships and Collaboration	36
Recommendations	44
Conclusion	46
References	47

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	4
Table 2	7
Table 3	9
Table 4	11
Table 5	12
Table 6	14
Table 7	14
Table 8	14
Table 9	15
Table 10	15
Table 11	15
Table 12	16
Table 13	16
Table 14	18
Table 15	19
Table 16	20
Table 17	20
Table 18	21
Table 19	21
Table 20	24
Table 21	25
Table 22	26
Table 23	28
Table 24	29
Table 25	29
Table 26	30
Table 27	30
Table 28	33
Table 29	34
Table 30	35

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	24
Figure 2	25

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The importance of youth voice in school management and policy decision-making cannot be overemphasized. Infusing their voices has beneficial outcomes for their self-development. Research findings show that even when youth are consulted, the approach is often tokenistic, and participation is differentiated by geography, with youth from Global North being prioritized.

The purpose of this study is to identify and gather data on the contribution of transitioning students and alumni of Low-Fee Private Schools (LFPS) towards advocacy, mentorship, and resource mobilization for their alma maters.

Its specific objectives are:

- Examining how schools communicate and maintain engagements with their alumni and explore strategies for fostering long-term relationships with alumni to inspire current students and drive innovative growth of LFPS;
- Finding out if schools have strategies aimed at encouraging student and alumni involvement in school development.
- Analyze how youth-led activities can support students' social emotional learning and lead to improved learning outcomes; and
- Identify channels, platforms, or technologies used by alumni for mobilization and regrouping after leaving school.

FINDINGS

Educational Outcomes and Transition Pathways

It is clear from the findings that respondents choose private basic education over public mainly because of the quality of education

they hope to receive there. Besides, discipline

in private schools was a determining factor for students and parents who patronized private basic schools.

The study found that even though 98 percent of the alumni of private basic schools got placement, under 42 percent had their first-choice schools. This was attributed to their inability to make the grade for their first-choice schools and the 30% priority placement system.

Alumni had challenges with transitioning from basic education to secondary education due to mainly financial difficulties. This resulted in some female students being married off and some males engaging in fraudulent activities to construct their livelihoods.

When it comes to challenges, the dominant challenge experienced by respondents in their schools was lack of infrastructure. Library, computer and science laboratories play a vital role in learning. However, most alumni indicated that these were lacking in their basic schools.

Youth voice

Despite the desirable outcome of youth voices in education service delivery, there are currently no channels for the youth to voice their views, opinions and perspectives on national educational discourse. At the school level, their views about the running of the school are channeled through their prefects, and meetings with the school authorities.

Role of Alumni Networks

Alumni are organising themselves into year groups more for their networking and socialisation purposes and less for support to their alma mater. The school authorities are usually not on WhatsApp platforms formed by their former students.

Policy and System-Level Implications

Respondents indicated that there are currently no national level policies which encourage the youth to contribute their views to education policy formulation and delivery as well as policies which support activities spearheaded by young people.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Educational Outcomes and Transition Pathways

In order to overcome transitional challenges as a result of financial difficulties, the study recommends that instead of spreading government resources thinly on all public secondary school students, scholarships could be given to verified needy students in both private and public SHS.

Improved funding to LFPS would help overcome infrastructure and other challenges experienced by these schools. The funding could come from alumni of private schools who have benefitted from low-fee education. Additionally, since private schools play complimentary roles state schools, government should consider supporting their efforts by providing funding for infrastructure development of LFPS.

Youth voice

It is recommended that explores digitised ways of amplifying youth voices in the formulation of education policy and running of schools. In particular, government, CSOs, private schools and GES could use social media networks for incorporating youth

voices on education and other aspects of their development.

Role of Alumni Networks

Schools should lead the process of bringing their alumni together and establishing alumni associations. Aside forming year group WhatsApp platforms, schools can constitute a general platform for all past students. Beyond that, schools must take the initial steps of assisting alumni to form their leadership structures, and continually encourage the associations to remain active. Organising homecomings remain one of the most feasible ways of mobilising alumni to support their former schools.

Policy and System-Level Implications

- IDPF can support GNAPS to organise alumni and students of LFPS to engage in greater advocacy for inclusion in education policy formulation;
- IDPF and GNAPS can engage in joint research to provide evidence that supports advocacy for government to support youth-led activities;
- With the support of IDPF, GNAPS could build the capacity of its member schools to appreciate and encourage the contribution of students and alumni towards education service delivery; and
- Through GNAPS-IDPF partnership, GNAPS can train and support schools to build student leadership structures within schools to promote their inclusion in decision-making

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Student voice is critical to youth development. A number of studies have highlighted the importance of student voice and autonomy in school climate (Way et al., 2007) and adolescent identity development (Cook-Sather, 2020; Steinberg, 2017; Renick & Reich, 2024). Infusing students' voices into schools and expanding opportunities for autonomy can have beneficial outcomes including a sense of being empowered, valued, and recognized, which can increase their sense of mattering (Cook-Sather, 2020; Lac & Mansfield, 2018). Additionally, educational policies remain adult-centric.

Despite efforts to incorporate youth voices and engagements in policy, there are still challenges. One major challenge is the tokenistic approach to youth inclusion in some spaces, where young people's inputs are sought but not genuinely considered or integrated into final decisions and policies. Another obstacle is the lack of access for all young people, as participation of youth from the Global North is still prioritized over Global South countries, based on factors such as geography, socioeconomic status, education, and access to technology and resources (Insight Report, March 2024).

The importance of youth or student voices notwithstanding, youth voices in education in Africa are marginalized. Even though education is focused on youth, youth voices are marginalized within the news media's coverage of education in South Africa (Malila, 2014). In Ghana, not much evidence exists of the extent to which the views of young people are solicited in education policy formulation and service delivery.

The current study, therefore, aims to identify and gather data on youth leadership and alumni of LFPS within the Greater Accra Region. This research initiative aims to harness the contributions of in-school and out-of-school young leaders toward advocacy, mentorship, and resource mobilization for their alma maters. The study will play a pivotal role in conducting a tracer study and providing actionable insights for establishing a sustainable youth network on education.

Its specific objectives are:

- i. Examining how schools communicate and maintain engagements with their alumni and exploring strategies for fostering long-term relationships with alumni to inspire current students and drive innovative growth of LFPS;
- ii. Finding out if schools have strategies aimed at encouraging student and alumni involvement in school development;
- iii. Analyzing how youth-led activities can support students' social emotional learning and lead to improved learning outcomes; and
- iv. Identifying channels, platforms, or technologies used by alumni for mobilization and regrouping after leaving school.



1.2 SCOPE OF WORK

The Consultant performed the following tasks:

a. Pre-Data Collection:

- i. Developed and pre-tested data collection instruments for approval of GNAPS and IDPF;
- ii. Recruited and trained Research Assistants for data collection;
- iii. Conducted Tracer studies to identify alumni; and
- iv. Sampled, for data collection, respondents namely students, especially transitioning groups (final year JHS students) and alumni aged between 15 and 24 years, proprietors and managers of LFPS within the Greater Accra Region.

b. Data Collection:

Gathered data on student and alumni demographics, leadership structures, forms of formal or informal assistance they offer their schools, the desire for alumni-student and peer-to-peer support as well as the impact of such cooperation on learner outcomes. The following data collection methodologies were adopted:

- i. Surveys and focus group discussions with alumni, transitioning students and teachers of LFPS; and
- ii. In depth interviews with managers and proprietors of LFPS as well as GNAPS leadership.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

This section of the report highlights the methodology employed to sample, collect data, and analyses the data for the study. It details the sampling for the different categories of respondents, various methods of data collection and the methods of data analysis.

2.1 SAMPLING AND METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

The consultants with the facilitation of GNAPS purposively sampled 12 Low-Fee Private Schools in Greater Accra Region (see list attached in Appendix 2). Having contacted management of the sampled schools, the researcher collected phone numbers of alumni which were available in the schools. Where a selected school had an alumni association or a WhatsApp platform for alumni, the researcher contacted leadership of the association or administrators of the platforms for lists of membership of such associations or platforms.

The study adopted a multi-method approach to data collection namely focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, and a survey. We conducted a survey of one hundred and twenty (120) alumni, 12 respondents from each school. A linked Google form was posted on the WhatsApp groups of the alumni for them to respond to, and the first 12 responses received from each school was used for the analysis. Where responses received from a particular school's platform were not up to 12, the researchers printed hard copies of the questionnaires and conducted telephone or in-person interviews with alumni whose telephone contacts could be obtained from their former's schools. The questionnaires had both open-ended and close-ended questions. We deliberately left out skip patterns in the Google form to enable us cross check the correctness of information provided by respondents.

Also, the study conducted focus group discussions with transitioning students. The study employed an interview guide that focused on the same themes as contained in the alumni questionnaire. Each group had between 5 to 10 transitioning students who were either prefects of the selected schools, or JHS 3 students. Participation was purely voluntary and only after consent by the students and authorities of the selected schools. Each discussion lasted between 45 minutes and one hour.

The study had in-depth interviews with managers and proprietors of the selected LFPS. The same interview guide was used for the managers and proprietors. This was important as the information provided by them was triangulated to ensure completeness. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. The questions bothered on alumni activities, challenges they encountered, the effectiveness of the basic school curricular, integration of youth leadership and their voices into education policy, and ways of improving same in the running of schools as well as policy and decision-making processes involving the youth.

As teachers play a vital role in training the youth, the study conducted one focus group discussion in each of the schools. As much as possible, the study ensured gender representation in each of the groups. The discussion followed the same themes as that of the managers and proprietors. Each group had 5 to 10 participants and the discussion lasted about one hour.

The last category of respondents were national level leaders of GNAPS. Since the leaders were dispersed, we designed a google form and sent to them. We had a total of 9 submissions. Apart from the themes that the other stakeholders discussed, the GNAPS guide also included questions on the space within the structure for inclusion of youth voices, the motivation, benefits and constraints of including youth voices within the structure and constitution of GNAPS, and the connectors of youth voice from GNAPS to schools.

2.2 FIELDWORK

The actual fieldwork lasted 21 days. We had two teams each led by a supervisor to collect the data in the study area. Each team completed in-depth interviews and focus group discussion in each school before moving to the next. The survey with the alumni took unduly long because they delayed in responding to the Google form link sent to them.

Table 1: Respondents to the study

Category of Respondents	Method of data collection	Sampling Technique	Number
Proprietors/proprietresses	In-depth interview	Purposive	11
Heads	In-depth interview	Purposive	12
Teachers	Focus group discussion	Purposive	12
Alumni	Survey	Accidental	120
Transitioning student	Focus group discussion	Purposive	12
GNAPS Leaders	In depth Interviews	Purposive	6

2.0 QUALITY CONTROL

The following measures were taken to ensure high level of quality control of the survey and control non-sampling errors:

- Constituting a well-qualified and motivated team of field assistants;
- Recruitment of qualified field personnel with experience in similar sample surveys;
- Intensive training of field personnel, involving explanation of survey concepts, definitions and instruments; the sampling design, mock interviews and simulation exercises; and
- Team of consultants reviewed completed questionnaires as they come in.

2.1 DATA ENTRY AND VALIDATION

The objective of this stage was to capture and analyze the data from the field survey. The primary data was screened to ensure accuracy, consistency and reliability. Responses from the Google Form was downloaded to Google Sheet and to Microsoft Excel. It was then imported into SPSS where data validation was conducted. This was then merged with the data from the hard copy questionnaires.

2.2 DATA ANALYSIS

Data Analysis used thematic analysis. All open-ended responses were extracted and coding manual was developed. The open-ended responses were then coded and data entry done. Frequencies were generated and formed the basis for calculating descriptive statistical values like means, percentages, ratios, rates, standard deviations and variances. Cross tabulations of variables and regressions were done to show relationships. All qualitative interviews were recorded and transcribed. Analysis was done based on the themes of the study.

SUMMARY

The study employed a multi-method approach to gather the necessary data from alumni, transitioning students, teachers, heads, proprietors of the selected schools, and leadership of the GNAPS. The multi-method approach helped the study to gather the data necessary to answer the various questions in the terms of reference. Additionally, the study got the opportunity to triangulate data from the various stakeholders.



3.0 RESULTS/DISCUSSION

INTRODUCTION

This section presents the findings of the research. Since the study used both quantitative and qualitative methods to collect the data from the different categories of respondents, the results of the quantitative data usually precede that of the qualitative data for the sections that follow.

3.1 SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF SCHOOL CHILDREN

The percentage distribution of the sex of respondents in Table 2 shows 48.7% male and 51.3% female. The identity of persons whom respondents stayed with while in school shows that 62.1% stayed with both parents, 5.8% stayed with their father, 19.4% stayed with their mother, and 12.6% stayed with other relatives. The fact that majority of respondents had the benefit of being raised by both parents is worth noting since single parenting has the potential of breeding wayward children. In terms of respondents' father's level of education, 6.7% received no formal education, 3.4% had primary education, 14.6% attended JHS, 30.3% attended SHS, and 44.9% had tertiary education. For mother's level of education, 15.6% had no formal education, 10% had primary education, 27.8% attended JHS, 25.6% attended SHS, and 21.1% had tertiary education.

With reference to father's occupation, 24% were businessmen, 10% were artisans, 16% were entrepreneurs/self-employed, 10% were teachers, 13% were drivers, 6% each were engineers and farmers, 1% each was a doctor and a radio presenter, 2% each were police/security, seafarers, workshop managers and accountants, and 5% were pastors. For mother's occupation, 59% were businesswomen, 23% were entrepreneurs/self-employed, 9% were teachers, 2% were secretaries, while 1% fell under the following categories: artisan, engineer, farmer, pastor, accountant, and unemployed.

The data on the level of education of respondents has a minimum threshold of JHS completion according to the design of the study. The data shows that 5.2% had basic education, 34% attended a Senior High School, and 60.8% had tertiary education.

The survey also captured the number of siblings of respondents, showing that 11.2% had one sibling, 23.6% had 2 siblings, 21.3% had 3 siblings, 20.2% had 4 siblings, 10.1% had 5 siblings, 5.6% had 6 siblings, 4.5% had 7 siblings, 2.2% had 8 siblings, and 1.1% indicated having 9 siblings.

In terms of the region of origin of the respondents, 39.6% hailed from Greater Accra, 11.7% hailed from Eastern, 20.7% hailed from Volta, 12.6% were from Central, 6.3% were in Ashanti, 3.6% were from Upper West, 2.7% were from Oti, 0.9% each were from the following regions: Brong Ahafo, Upper East, and Northern regions.

For the current occupation of respondents, 1.8% were awaiting admission and national service, representing 55.9%, 0.9% was "schooling, unemployed" and "working, awaiting admission",

6.3% were schooling and working, 5.4% were unemployed, and 26.1% were working. About 1% did not respond to this question.

Students of Glorious Pearl School and Prima Academy are predominantly of middle-income parentage. The schools are located in peri-urban centers. Though majority of parents are able to afford the fees charged and provide basic necessities for them, few are unable to do so. Many parents are also unable to afford other essential learning equipment like laptops and items required for co-curricular activities. According to the Proprietor of Glorious Pearl School, this negatively impacts such students' academic work. The Proprietor had this to say:

... From Grade 4 to Form 3 we promote having ... your personal laptop to enhance teaching and learning ... So, some for students who are not able to have that, or whose parents are not able to provide that, it's difficult to follow along the lesson despite ... the supports that the school and teachers provide for such students. Then also, there is the issue of fee sacking which, as a school we don't like, so we provide reminders at the end of every month to say that you need to pay your fees by so and so dates, otherwise, the students can't come to school. So, for some parents as soon as they receive that reminder, their children will not show up for a couple of days. Then it means that whatever work is going on in the class, the student is missing out on it (In depth Interview, February 2025).

On the other hand, Ibadullahi School, the Lord's Star International School and Celestial International Stem School cater for the education needs of children who are predominantly of low-income parentage.

3.2 WHY RESPONDENTS ATTEND(ED) PRIVATE SCHOOLS

A number of reasons were given by respondents for their preference of private as against public schools. Table 2 below presents reasons why alumni attended private schools and not public. The dominant reason for preference of private schools is to benefit from quality education (58.6%). The second dominant reason is the discipline that is assured in private schools compared to public schools. About one in ten of the responses attributed their preference of the school environment as the reason for attending private schools. Other reasons given were proximity to the private school (3.3%), friends/neighbors attended that school (1.3%%), among others.

Table 2: Reasons for attending private school and not public

Reasons	Frequency	Percent
To benefit from quality education	89	58.6
It was the school closest/only school	5	3.3
My friends/neighbors attended that school	2	1.3
I liked the school environment	16	10.5
The school had discipline	34	22.4
Other, specify	6	3.9
Total	152	100

Qualitative data gathered from school proprietors, heads, teachers and students confirmed the survey results. Respondents indicated that they attend private schools because of the facilities available in those schools compared to public schools. As one respondent indicated:

There are adequate facilities [in private schools] like we having our laptops, enough chairs in the school. But then when you go to the public schools, they don't have those adequate facilities. Even when you just enter into a [public school] class, they're about, let's say, 75 students in the classroom. But then with the private schools, even if we are many, we are divided into different classrooms (Focus Group Discussant, February 2025).

What alumni across the schools said regarding the pull factor of facilities, was corroborated by teachers of Glorious Pearls School. At a focus group discussion (FGD), a teacher said: "Facilities in terms of ICT tools, laboratories and other things [attracts learners to private schools]. When you go to the government schools, most of them don't have these facilities to assist their learners".

Aside access to facilities, discipline is another reason for patronage of private schools. According to a respondent, "... discipline is key. When I compare myself to other schools, I realized that Glorious Pearl has trained me well in terms of talking, how to sit etc." For the Proprietor of the School, the quality of care that the school extends to students and the small class sizes are reasons why parents enrolled their children in the school. According to him, some public schools have more than 100 children in a class, and such large classes discourage parents from enrolling their children in the public schools. Besides, he believes some parents want to be associated with the values of the school. Similarly, students who attend Good Shepherd School and Lord Our Savior School mentioned small class size, quality tuition, discipline and level of care extended to learners as reasons for parents' decision to bring their children to those schools. According to them, the teachers are approachable and treat them like their own children. The students indicated that the teachers listen to them and solve problems for them. In the words of one student: "... mostly in the government school, they don't have time for the kids. But in private schools, they have time for each and every student to help them understand whatever they teach and, they work according to their academic plans".

Similar reasons were given by teachers of Ibadullahi School. A focus group discussant at the school has this to say:

I think it is due to the attention that teachers of the private schools give to learners. In the government schools, the population is very massive in each classroom. So, the teacher will not have the time and focus to identify key problems in the class. In the private schools, we have fewer numbers, we are able to identify each learner and their learning abilities. We can easily spot students with learning disabilities. With the government schools too, control is difficult there because they are too many but in the private school,

we are able to control their movement. So, we are able to do things according what the teachers want, but the government schools, the students do things according to what they want. Some parents consider private schools over public schools because, private schools do not easily go on strike. However, in government schools the teachers go on strike and students stop schooling until the teachers return. Here, even when we have meetings, learning goes on (FG Discussant, February 2025).

Aside establishing the pull factors for attendance of private schools in general, the study was also interested in determining reasons why parents chose the particular private schools which their children attended. As evidenced in the responses contained in Table 3 below, good academic performance was not even cited by the alumni as a reason for their patronage of the schools they attended.

Table 3: Why did you attend your previous school?

Reasons	Frequency	Percent
The school fees low	15	10.5
It was the school closest/only school	7	4.9
The number in a class was low	10	7.0
I liked the school environment	27	18.9
The school had discipline	79	55.2
Other, specify	5	3.5
Total	143	100.0

Key among reasons for attending specific private schools was good discipline and serene environment. Majority of the responses (55.2%) given by alumni for liking their specific schools pertained to the good discipline. Alumni liked their specific schools as a result of the school environment as it accounted for almost one in five of responses (18.9%). Other reasons why alumni liked their schools were low school fees (10.5%), low class size (7%) and proximity/closeness to the school (4.9%).

Focus group discussions and in-depth interviews revealed that, there were other considerations like enhancement of spiritual life and building of confidence. As one student indicated, “[In this school] we are guided with scriptures” Another student had this to say:

What I can say about Glorious Pearl is that, they don't only provide us with academic performance but Glorious Pearl has taught me a lot of things. First and foremost, when I came here, I wasn't able to speak English, but with the help of the teachers, especially my favorite teacher, Sir Edward, he helped me very, very well. I'm not only good in academics, but now I can even pray on my own. Glorious Pearl has made me have confidence based on spiritual things, physical things and emotional things (GP Discussion, February 2025).

Similarly, a student said: “What I like in Glorious Pearl is that they like advising us. They use their period to advise us. When they are teaching, they even pause the lesson and advise us about life and everything else”. Discipline was a key consideration in the choice of a private school, and was often equated with speaking of English. As this student of Glorious Pearl School stated in comparing her school to other schools:



Okay, so as we went to play football games. When we went, they [students of other schools] were all speaking Twi and like they were not well behaved...They were behaving like their teachers don't teach them how to behave outside. But with Glorious Pearl children, they were all speaking English. Nobody spoke Twi because you know that in our school, if you speak Twi, you kneel down, or you take a dictionary and look for that word you spoke in the dictionary ... So, I saw the difference between my school and the other schools because they [students of other schools] were behaving unmannered (GP Discussion, February 2025).

Like their counterparts whose children are in other Schools, parents bring their children to the Lord's Star International School to benefit from the quality education which the school offers and owing to the school's proximity to their houses. According to the Director of the School, academic excellence, discipline and the school's core values are the pull factors for parents seeking admission for their children. Many parents discover the school through referrals by other parents.

Also, Celestial International Stem School was the favorite of parents because of its discipline and enviable academic laurels. Teachers of the School indicated that students usually perform well in the BECE and excel in academic competitions. In the words of one discussant: A past student of the school went to St. Augustine's and emerged the overall winner of The Sharks Quiz and was given \$40,000 as prize. Another won an ICT competition and proceeded to the US for further studies. Besides, the School once produced an overall WASSCE Best National Student award (GP Discussion, February 2025).



The Proprietor of Prima Academy summarized the reasons why students prefer her School as follows:



... The environment, the kind of teachers we have. We are more like a family, and then we bring to bear lots of technology. So, we have things like the Tech Club, the other things with the kids like this programming, coding and other activities that we have that you will not find in the public schools. So, we leverage that a lot. Just last year on Friday, we started an online education. So, weekends, we do give them work online, just to bring them up to speed.

So just last Friday, we had something called the gadget space. We allowed them to bring their gadgets in; we taught them some ethics. We taught them how to manage their gadgets. With parents also we introduced them to this system called Family link. So, you can link the child's phone to the parents' phone so that the parents can also monitor what the kids are doing. We did that also with the parents so that they are worried about how their phones are used by their kids for assignments. Some are worried as to how we want the children to use their gadgets (In depth interview, February, 2025).

One school where religious considerations determine patronage of the school is Ibadullahi. Parents who want Islamic education for their children patronize that School. According to a teacher of the school, “The community is an Islamic community and this school is the only private school that can be deemed to be an Islamic school”. Aside religious considerations, the low tuition fees charged also make Ibadullahi an attractive option for many parents.

3.3 YOUTH NEEDS AND ASPIRATIONS

The study also set out to determine key needs and aspirations of the youth in the affordable non-state education sector, and the challenges learners face in accessing opportunities for education, skills development, and employment.

3.3.1 Challenges Faced in the JHS Attended

Table 4 below shows the challenges that alumni faced in the JHS they attended. Alumni did not have science and computer laboratories (18.1%) to do their experiments and hands-on training respectively. This made understanding some concepts difficult. Similarly, alumni had challenges with grasping some subjects like mathematics in the JHS (12.5%). For some alumni, their ability to focus was hampered by distractions from the school, the community within which the school was located, long commuting distance, learning nine subjects at a time and their own lack of seriousness. Teachers are a major pillar to learners. However, inadequate teachers, use of untrained, part-time teachers, and frequently changing teachers were challenges identified by alumni which affected their learning. Challenge with teachers constituted 11.1 percent of the responses. Other learning challenges included inadequate furniture (11.1%), lack of library (6.9%), lack of/inadequate practical sessions (4.2%), and peer pressure.

Table 4: What learning challenges did you face in the JHS you attended?

Challenges faced	Frequency	Percent
Financial constraints	4	5.6
Inadequate furniture	8	11.1
No science/ICTlab	13	18.1
Lack of /part-time teachers	8	11.1
Inconducive classrooms	3	4.2
Inability to focus	11	15.3
Lack of TLMs	2	2.8
Difficulty in learning Mathematics	9	12.5
Lack of library	5	6.9
Inability to complete syllabus	2	2.8
Inadequate practical sessions	3	4.2
Peer pressure	4	5.6
Total responses	72	100.0

N=63

As regards infrastructure challenges, the absence of science laboratory (29%) was mentioned by alumni. ICT laboratory (15.9%) was another challenge mentioned by alumni in the survey. Despite the critical role libraries play in supporting learning, absence of library constituted 18.8 percent of the infrastructure challenges (See Table 5 below). More than one in ten respondents (11.6%) mentioned inadequate classrooms leading to overcrowding of the existing classrooms. Other respondents (2.9%) indicated that they had poorly equipped laboratories and libraries

Table 5: What infrastructure challenges did you face in the JHS you attended?

Infrastructure challenges	Frequency	Percent
ICT lab	11	15.9
Science lab	20	29.0
Inadequate classrooms	8	11.6
No Canteen/Cafeteria	3	4.3
Poor ventilation in classrooms	3	4.3
No washrooms	5	7.2
No library	13	18.8
Building was defective	2	2.9
No Assembly Hall	1	1.4
No classroom doors	1	1.4
Poorly equipped labs and library	2	2.9
Total	69	100.0

In the focus group discussions, students were asked to enumerate the challenges they encounter in school. The students identified inadequate infrastructure and facilities as a leading challenge. Students of Grace Avenue School complained about lack of a laboratory, computer lab and library: All our teaching has been theory, theory, theory. Since we don't have the facilities, we can't do our practical so, like, we don't have a science laboratory, so we can't do our science experiments. We don't also have a computer lab to do practice on our computers

And also, we are not having libraries which is very bad, because libraries, and the books in the libraries help us to improve our academics, it boosts our confidence level in speaking English. It helps us in our vocabulary and so on. [Focus Group Discussion, February, 2025].

Similarly, those who attend Lord Our Saviour School complained of lack of School bus, poorly ventilated classrooms and inadequate ICT facilities. In the words of one student: "You have to sit like sometimes three people to a computer, sometimes four people to a computer, sometimes five people to a computer. And it makes learning so difficult". Similarly, the major challenge to teaching and learning for students of Good Shepherd School was lack of a Science and ICT Laboratories.

Teachers and managers of the schools identified similar challenges that their learners enumerated. The Director of the Lord's Star International School mentioned lack of a science laboratory, lack of a workshop for skills training, inadequate library and ICT training facilities as major challenges facing the school. On the other hand, students of the school were more concerned about the lack of a school bus to transport them to and from School. A Focus Group discussion held with teachers of Ibadullahi School revealed various challenges which students of low socio-economic backgrounds encounter. First, children pick up certain bad habits from their homes and immediate environment.

When they enroll into the school, they find it difficult abandoning their environmentally-acquired habits and adjusting to school rules particularly those related to cleanliness and punctuality to School. Many also find it difficult sitting down to learn because they are used to idling around streets. According to teachers of the Lord's Star International School, as the students enter teenage, peer influence draws them into various vices. While some of the boys use social media to engage in scamming, the girls engage in illicit sexual activities which lead to pregnancies.

On the other hand, teachers of Celestial International Stem School lamented about students' inability to settle their school fees, parents' inability to take care of their children in school and lack of some teaching and learning aids in school as challenges facing students. According to them, children who are unable to settle their fees are often chased away from School so that they miss some lessons. This affects their academic performance.

3.3.2 Overcoming challenges

Alumni shared their views about how the challenges faced in the schools they attended can be overcome. Results of their proposed solutions are depicted in Table 7 below. Key to the solutions was financial support for needy students (20.8%). This solution was captured succinctly in this statement: "Government funding and support can help overcome many of these challenges by:

1. Providing resources for infrastructure development and maintenance;
2. Supporting programs that promote attendance and extracurricular activities; and
3. Providing financial support to low-income families who are not able to provide basic learning materials forwards".

Similarly, about 19 percent of the responses proposed improving and or providing infrastructure for the schools such as the science laboratories, ICT laboratories, libraries etc. Some also proposed that government supplies free teaching and learning materials for teachers to have easy access to promote learning and teaching (12.5%). Providing digital resources like multimedia resources, digital libraries, social media, etc. was mentioned by 8.3 percent of the respondents. Other ways of overcoming the challenges were training and or employing professional teachers (5.6%), developing and carrying out more extracurricular activities (2.8%), maintaining good communication between the management of the schools and the students and the alumni (2.8%), putting in place counseling and guidance facilities for students with learning disabilities, family challenges and those who are unable to focus in class, provision of furniture (4.2%).

Table 6: Ways of overcoming educational challenges

Proposed solutions	Frequencies	Percent
Financial support	15	20.8
Improving/providing infrastructure	14	19.4
Training/employing professional teachers	4	5.6
Develop more extracurricular activities	2	2.8
Supply free TLMs to schools	9	12.5
Provide digital resources	6	8.3
Paying teachers well	1	1.4
Provision of furniture	3	4.2
Motivation of students	1	1.4
Good communication	2	2.8
Providing lockers in schools	1	1.4
Guidance and counselling	3	4.2
Performance appraisal of teachers	1	1.4
Involve learners in decision-making	1	1.4
Structure weeks in a term according to topics to be studied	1	1.4
Develop a study routine	3	4.2
Seeking parents' views	3	4.2
Getting a job	2	2.8
Total	72	100.0

3.4 EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES AND TRANSITION PATHWAYS

Educational outcome refers to the results or achievements of students in their learning process. Alumni were asked whether they got the BECE grades they expected. About 58.3 percent of the respondents answered in the affirmative.

Table 7: Did you get the BECE grades you expected?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	60	58.3
No	43	41.7
Total	103	100

However, 98 percent got placement in senior high schools and TVETs schools. Under half of all those who got placement (41.8%) had their first-choice schools.

Table 8: Were you placed in a SHS/TVET School?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	97	98
No	2	2
Total	99	100

For those who did not progress from the JHS to SHS level, the study sought reasons why they dropped out of school. As evidenced in Table 10 below, financial constraints and failure to make good grades accounted for students dropping out of schools.

Table 9: If you did not progress to SHS/technical/vocational school/tertiary level, what accounted for that?

Reasons	Frequency	Percent
Financial constraint	5	41.7
Did not make the grade	5	41.7
Desire to work first	2	16.7
Total	12	100

Even though 98 percent got placement, only about 41.8 percent got their first-choice school. Majority of them (58.2%) did not get their first choice.

Table 10: If you got placement, were you placed in your first choice SHS?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	41	41.8
No	57	58.2
Total	98	100

One in four of the respondents (25.2%) got their second-choice school while one in ten of the respondents (10.8%) got their third-choice schools. About 8.1 percent had their fourth choice of schools. Almost one in ten (9.9%) of the respondents did not get any of their choice of schools. (Table 12 below).

Table 11: If you weren't placed in your first-choice school, which of your choices did you get?

Choice of school placed	Frequency	Percent
2nd Choice	28	25.2
3rd Choice	12	10.8
4th Choice	9	8.1
Wasn't placed in any of my choices	11	9.9
NA	51	45.9
Total	111	100

The respondents were asked the reasons for their inability to get their first-choice schools. Table 12 below presents the results of the question. Majority of the respondents (53.8%) did not get the required grades for their first-choice schools. About 11.5 percent indicated that their first-choice schools were competitive while 9.6 percent cited the 30 percent priority placement system as the reason. Other reasons had to do with the courses that the respondents selected (7.7%), problems with the computer placement system (3.8%), and bad grades (1.9%). About 11.5 percent of the respondents could not tell why they did not get their first-choice schools.

Table 12: If you weren't placed in your first choice, what accounted for it?

Reasons for lack 1 st Choice selection	Frequency	Percent
Bad grades	1	1.9
School was competitive	6	11.5
Due to the course, I selected	4	7.7
Did not get the required grade	28	53.8
Government quota system for public schools	5	9.6
Machine error	2	3.8
Can't tell/Don'tknow	6	11.5
Total	52	100.0

3.4.1 Transitioning Challenges

Respondents encountered a number of challenges in progressing from JHS to senior high school. In all, 37 of the respondents reported encountering challenges. About 39.5 percent of the 37 respondents encountered financial challenges. Respondents could not get money to purchase all the items on their prospectus, and for feeding and accommodation. Another challenge encountered was getting placement or admission (13.2%) and adjusting to the new environment (10.5%) in SHS or tertiary institution. Most of the respondents were leaving their homes for the first time to unfamiliar environments. Others mentioned lack of knowledge and guidance in school course selection and lack of career guidance.

Table 13: What challenges did you encounter in progressing from JHS to SHS or tertiary level?

Challenges encountered in transitioning	Frequency	Percent
Financial constraints	15	39.5
Did not get my desired school	2	5.3
Did not get my desired program	1	2.6
Different teaching approach	1	2.6
Admission/placement challenges	5	13.2
Adjusting to new environment	4	10.5
Increased workload	1	2.6
Introduction to new courses	1	2.6
Pressure/stress	2	5.3
Peer influence	1	2.6
Lack of knowledge and guidance	5	13.2
	38	100.0

Number:38

The Proprietor of Glorious Pearl indicated that students face a number of challenges when transitioning from JHS to second cycle institutions, not least among such challenges was failure of parents to support such students financially and materially. According to him, some parents even marry off their female learners soon as they complete JHS. As he stated:

We have a few students who were from Muslims backgrounds, they got married off. As a school, we intervened in a few situations...

there was a particular one ... A great girl, fantastic in class, good, she had potential and she got married off. But there was also another one, we were able to convince the parents to make her go to secondary school... The school helped her with application, admission etc. (In depth interview, February 2025).

Similarly, many students who complete JHS at the Lord's Star International School and Celestial International Stem School are faced with financial challenges. Teachers of the two Schools said some students are unable to afford school fees or other educational expenses that come with second cycle education and are forced into the streets to hawk while others are lured into engaging in fraudulent ways of making quick money especially scamming, betting and prostitution. For instance, in 2023, a brilliant student of the Lord's Star International School completed successfully and was admitted into Methodist Day Senior High School. However, his inability to bear the cost of fees and other expenses denied him a place in the school. Instead, he joined a football academy. The Director of the Lord's Star International School confirmed the teachers' assertions, indicating that 98% of children who complete the school and proceed to SHS make good grades at the WASSCE. However, owing to their poor economic circumstances, they are unable to proceed to the tertiary level. Focus group discussants at Celestial International Stem School equally identified financial challenges as a major obstacle to students' progression from the basic to tertiary levels. In the words of one discussant:

For the 2021 batch of BECE graduates, out of a total of 25 students, only 5 progressed to the university. The rest obtained admissions but owing to lack of finance, could not go. Karim was an excellent French student who completed Sandema SHS and passed [WASSCE] but is currently selling yogurt because he couldn't get money for the university (FG Discussion, February 2025).

For teachers at Ibadullahi School, parents' refusal to allow their children to attend boarding schools at the SHS level is a major challenge. The teachers said variously:

... Some parents also feel that if their kids go to the boarding school, they may learn rowdy behavior. Out of fear, most parents here do not want their children to leave their sight (Discussant 1).

..... Parents have seen certain behaviors, such as smoking, when the students return from boarding school which they hitherto were not exhibiting. It is because of issues like these some parents don't want their kids to go to boarding school (Discussant 2).

... Some parents go as far as stopping their kids from progressing to SHS because they feel that the school system is corrupted. Some of the parents also marry off their children at very young ages (Discussant 3).

That aside, lack of parental attention and care for children transitioning from JHS to SHS is a major challenge which teachers at Ibadullahi identified. They noted: Most of the men here are in polygamous marriages with many children. So, they don't have time for their children. There are some of the children who do not sleep at home. So, when they complete JHS, they can even go and sleep with their friends and the parents may not even be aware (Discussant 1).

Also, the quest to leave home early. Adolescents need privacy and after completing JHS, some of them are no longer comfortable sharing a room with their parents and younger siblings. They start making small money and immediately leave to go and live alone because of the privacy they don't have with their parents (Discussant 2).

For the Director of the Lord's Star International School, the 30% Priority Placement System is the biggest challenge that students who complete private JHS face since many are unable to get their First-Choice schools after sitting the BECE. Alumni of Most Holy Heart School corroborated the challenge of discriminatory SHS placement in favor of public-school children. Teachers of Celestial International Stem School added that most students completing JHS often do not know which programs of study to offer at the SHS level. Some end up selecting the wrong programs, or being compelled by their parents to select programs that do not support the children's career progression.

3.4.2 Ways of facilitating transitions from basic education to second and third cycle levels

the respondents gave recommendations to overcome the transition challenges from JHS to SHS levels. The dominant recommendation was for the 30% priority placement system to be revoked to ensure fairness in admission or placement. Almost one in three of the recommendations (31.7%) were tailored to addressing this concern. Another recommendation was to ensure good grades from the BECE (19.5%). Guidance and counselling in the selection of schools and courses was recommended by 12.2 percent of the respondents. Another 12.2 percent recommended an improved computer placement system to address errors in the placement system. Other recommendations were expanding access to quality education (7.3%), improving funding to junior high schools (4.9%), recruitment of committed teachers who will be stable and deliver their best (2.4%), writing entrance examinations into JHS (2.4%).

Table 14: How can challenges in school placement be overcome?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Expand access to quality schools	3	7.3
Fairness in admission or placement/doaway with quota system	13	31.7
Getting good grades	8	19.5
Improved funding	2	4.9
Guidance and counselling in school and course selection	5	12.2
Recruiting committed teachers	1	2.4
Improved computer placement system	5	12.2
Upgrade the school curricula	1	2.4
Writing entrance examination	1	2.4
Don't know/Can't tell	2	4.9
Total	41	100

However, when it comes to recommendations for gaining admission into tertiary institutions, 35.7 percent of the respondents mentioned getting good grades while 19 percent mentioned guidance and counselling. About 7 percent each recommended instituting a scholarship for brilliant but needy students and ensuring fairness in admission processes. Almost one in ten (9.5%) of the respondents recommended reducing the school fees of the universities to help especially the poor students access university education (See Table 15).

Table 15: How can challenges to gaining admission into tertiary institutions be overcome?

Ways of overcoming challenges	Frequency	
Getting good grades	15	
Guidance and counselling	8	
Scholarship for brilliant/needystudents	3	
Fairness in admission or placement	3	7.1
Reduce school fees	4	
Expand access to quality schools	1	2.4
Entrance exams should be conducted	2	4.8
Pre-tertiaryclasses	1	2.4
Bring down cut off points	1	2.4
Capacity development of teachers	1	
Don't know/Can'ttell	3	
Total	42	100

It emerged from the qualitative data gathered that some of the schools play a facilitating role to smoothen the transition of their students to second and third cycle levels. A focus group discussant had this to say:

Before they leave, we make sure we have a forum with them. We and the alumni talk to them about life after JHS. We try as much as possible to teach them skills. We have taught them how to make liquid soap. With this, they make liquid soap and sell to raise money. We also taught them to pursue their dreams. Some of them have an interest in hairstyling, others have an interest in fashion, and others. There's a program that has been happening called Zongozation where they go and learn coding, computer hardware, they do have a lot of things there. We encourage them to take up these programs while they are at home during the break between their BECE and the time they go to SHS. We encourage them to take up skills that will help them in the future. We also help them with school selection. Because we know them and their Abilities, we are able to liaise with the students and their parents to select schools based on the students' strengths. Some of the students are well-suited for vocational education while others may be good for the technical. We are able to also guide them on the subjects to select (FGD, February 2025).

Focus group discussants at The Lord's Star International School recommended that as a means of overcoming transitional challenges, schools should institute needy student funds to support JHS leavers who have financial challenges. The Director made a similar recommendation but placed on the shoulders of alumni, the onus of establishing the needy education fund. The teachers also proposed workshops and seminars on career counselling, training on skills acquisition and effective communication between schools and their transitioning students.

3.5 YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND VOICE

3.5.1 Youth voice in education

Harnessing the views of the youth is pivotal as it leads to deeper insight in national policy formulation and education service delivery. Respondents were, therefore, asked if there were platforms or mechanisms in place in their schools for them to voice out their opinions and experiences. About 69.1 percent answered in the affirmative while 30.9 percent indicated that there were no such platforms.

Table 16: Are there platforms or mechanisms in place in school for you to voice your opinions and experiences?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	65	69.1
No	29	30.9
Total	94	100

The channels that existed for the students to express their views on the running of the schools were through the prefects (32.6%), through meetings with the school authorities (28.3%), open forums (18.8%), social media handles of the school (13.8%), and others (6.5%). These channels pertained to school level communication.

Table 17: What channels of communication exist in your former JHS for students to express their views on the running of the school?

	Frequency	Percent
Prefects/SRC leadership structure	45	32.6
Open forums	26	18.8
Meetings with school authorities	39	28.3
Social media handles of the school	19	13.8
Other	9	6.5
Total	138	100.0

At the national level, the dominant channel of communication for the youth to express their views on national education issues was through social media activities (31.2%). Students also channeled their views through their national student leadership (19.3%), national education forums (16.3%), and consultation of the youth in policy making (9.4%). Other channels were through civil society engagements with the youth (8.4%), and mainstream media programming (4.5%) (See Table 18 below).

Table 18: What channels of communication exist in the country for the youth to express their views on national education issues?

Channels of communication	Frequency	Percent
National student leadership/NUGS	39	19.3
Regional SRC structure	16	7.9
National education forums	33	16.3
Consultation of youth in policy making	19	9.4
Civil society engagements with youth	17	8.4
Social media activities	63	31.2
Mainstream media programming	9	4.5
Other	6	3.0
Total	202	100.0

The respondents were asked to mention some of the ways in which school authorities captured their views towards running of the JHS they attended. The Table below displays the results of the question. It reveals that open forums was the most popular way (18.8%), followed by SRC meetings (15.6%), class meetings with teachers (14.1%) in which teachers solicit students views pertaining to different aspects of running the school. Some students channel their views through their parents (12.5%) who voice it at PTA meetings. Some schools also conduct surveys (9.4%) to solicit views of students towards the running of the school and their views are usually anonymous. Some schools also used suggestion boxes (10.9%) to solicit views of students while other schools ask students to write their concerns on paper (6.3%). To ensure anonymity, some schools ask the students to write with their left hands so that the views cannot easily be traced to them.

Table 19: How can youth perspectives be systematically captured and integrated into policy and decision-making

	Frequency	Percent
National Education Forum	7	13.0
Regional SRC meetings	8	14.8
School forums	14	25.9
Youth Advisory Bodies/representation in decision-making	6	11.1
Through alumni	1	1.9
Survey	3	5.6
Suggestion box	2	3.7
Media/social media	13	24.1
Total	54	100.0

For focus group discussants at both The Lord's Star International School and Celestial International Stem School, the views of the youth are not solicited in discussions related to education policy since there are no avenues for the youth to air their views. Similarly, students felt they have a lot to contribute to national discourse on education. However, they complained of being side-lined in the decision-making processes. Contrary to the views of students, school management opined that their students are consulted on ways of running the institutions. The Headmaster of Glorious Pearl School indicated that the school consults student leaders in decision-making processes. In his own words:

... Sometimes we would say the school is thinking of doing so and so, what do you think as a student about that? Or we are currently going to have this event. What do you think? Who do you think will be a good player among your colleagues? And then they often bring up good suggestions. Then we also give them roles to carry out (In depth interview, February 2025).

If they get opportunities to air their views, some students of Grace Avenue School would propose that Career Technology be made an elective for JHS students since, in their view, the subject has no relevance for certain professions. Another student suggested the establishment of a national revolving fund to cater for the school fees and other educational expenses of needy students who attend private schools. Parents of such students could borrow from the fund to cater for their wards' education and pay back later. As a means of encouraging skills acquisitions to make school graduates employable, some students also proposed the institution of a day dedicated to skills training and talent-exhibition by students, while others called for government's support for private schools to set up computer laboratories to train the youth in ICT.

Focus group discussants at The Lord's Star International School said students of the school are involved in the decision-making processes of the school. Though the School has no SRC, it has prefects who are elected by students themselves. The Director of the School indicated that the school prefects constitute student parliament which meets school management twice a term to discuss challenges facing students and ways of resolving them. However, the students do not play any direct roles in the running of the school. Like what pertains in The Lord's Star, Celestial School also has a student leadership structure consisting of Class Prefects and School Prefects. According to teachers of the School, Prefects are chosen democratically through the ballot box, with elections supervised by the Electoral Commission. After elections, the students are given orientation on how to perform their roles. However, the School does not have specific platforms or mechanisms for obtaining views of their learners in decision-making.

Similarly, teachers at Ibadullahi School indicated that the school has an NCCE club which meets once every two weeks. They also organize student forums once or twice every month during which students ventilate their concerns regarding the running of the school. Besides, they often group the students according to sex and ask them about the problems they encounter. The staff then meet to deliberate on concerns raised by the students and find ways of addressing such concerns.

Prima Academy also organizes student forums twice a term during which all learners air their views on ways of running the institution. According to the Proprietor, she also holds forums with learners during which each speaks his/her mind. She indicated that learners are trained to be courageous in airing their views, drawing inspiration from the slogan of the school: “Prima, arise and shine. Prima, Bold like a lion. Once, you just tell them, 'Let the lion in you come out', they will just speak their mind. They are not intimidated in any way if they speak their mind, even to teachers or to their colleagues”.

Focus group discussants at The Lord's Star International School noted that currently, there are no avenues for youth participation in national education policy formulation and stressed the need for government to open up for youth ideas on education issues. They stressed the need for the establishment of radio stations which target young people for them to constantly air their views on issues of national concern, especially education. That aside, they proposed that when there is a crucial decision to be taken on education, the Ministry of Education (MoE) should organize youth conferences in all regions of the country to solicit inputs from the youth who are beneficiaries of such policies. The discussants stressed the need to capture the views of marginalized youth since, currently, no avenues exist for seeking their perspectives on national development. According to the discussants, websites and WhatsApp platforms could be created specifically for targeted marginalized groups. Teachers of Celestial School proposed the setting up of Student Representative Councils for pre-tertiary institutions at both the school and national levels to provide voices to learners in national dialogue.

Also, as a means of mobilizing youth voices for educational development, the Director of The Lord's Star International School recommended the formation of pre-tertiary national alumni association which could become a School Alumni Parliament tasked with amplifying youth voices in education. According to him, marginalized groups could be given permanent positions on the national alumni association to ensure that their views are reflected in policy formulation.

3.6 INCLUSIVITY AND EQUITY

It emerged from the study that majority of the schools do not cater for the needs of special learners. However, teachers of Ibadullahi indicated that they provide support for special needs children and even assist them financially. One teacher had this to say:

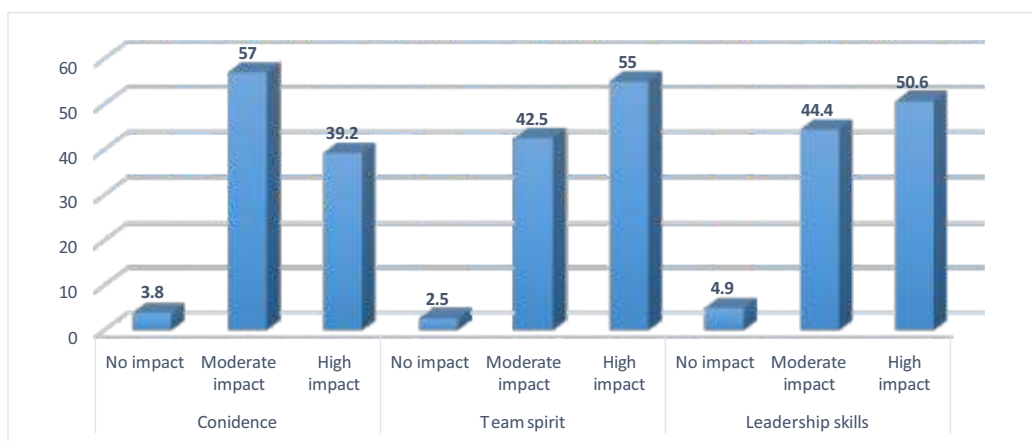
If it's about cleaning, we exclude asthmatic patients. They are limited to few chores. With dyslexic children, we try to engage them more with phonics. We have different types of learners, so we are able to involve every group. Before we take any decision that affects the children, we ask them whether they are fine with the decision. Some of us teachers' pay school fees for some students that cannot afford. Some parents also help pay fees for kids of other parents (FGD, February 2025).

By way of encouraging inclusivity and equity for disadvantaged children, teachers encourage students with disability and other marginalized groups to take up leadership roles in the school. According to the teachers, authorities of the school even appoint some special needs children as prefects. Prima Academy also pays attention and offers support to minority groups and disadvantaged children. The Proprietor of the School noted: “... When it comes to the minority, the Muslims, we do hold Jumma on Fridays for the Muslims We also have a few cases where breadwinners die. We try to help children of such people”.

3.7 YOUTH-LED ACTIVITIES

Youth-led activities have beneficial outcomes for the youth. Not only does it foster a sense of agency in them, it also helps them in responsible decision-making which ultimately leads to improved academic performance. The study wanted to know if there were youth-led activities in the basic schools of the respondents. An overwhelming majority (74.4%) indicated that they had youth-led activities in their alma mater. Respondents were asked to rate the impact of youth-led activities on their confidence, teamwork spirit and leadership skills. Results of the question are depicted in Figure 1 below. Youth-led activities had high impact on teamwork spirit (55%), compared to leadership skills and confidence which had 50.6 percent and 39.2 percent respectively recording high impact. When it comes to youth-led activities having moderate impact, confidence had the highest with 57 percent as against leadership skills with 44.4 percent and teamwork spirit (42.5%). About 4.9 percent rated youth-led activities as not having impacted leadership skills compared 3.8 percent for confidence and 2.5 percent teamwork spirit.

Figure 1: Impact of you-led activities on confidence, teamwork spirit, and leadership skills



The study further asked if respondents believed youth-led activities improved learning outcomes. An overwhelming majority (98.1%) responded in the affirmative. The skills that respondents developed through youth-led activities were communication skills (48.1%), problem-solving skills (35.1%), and empathy (16.6%).

3.8 IMPACT OF THE SECTOR ON YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

3.8.1 Impact of skills training in schools

The study also sought to know the impact of the education sector on development of the youth in terms of skills and academic attainment. The respondents were, therefore, asked if they believe that basic education adequately equipped them with technical and vocational skills for future education or career. About 83.3 percent answered in the affirmative.

Table 20: Do you believe basic education has adequately equipped you or is equipping you technical/vocational skills for your future education or career?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	85	83.3
No	17	16.7
Total	102	100

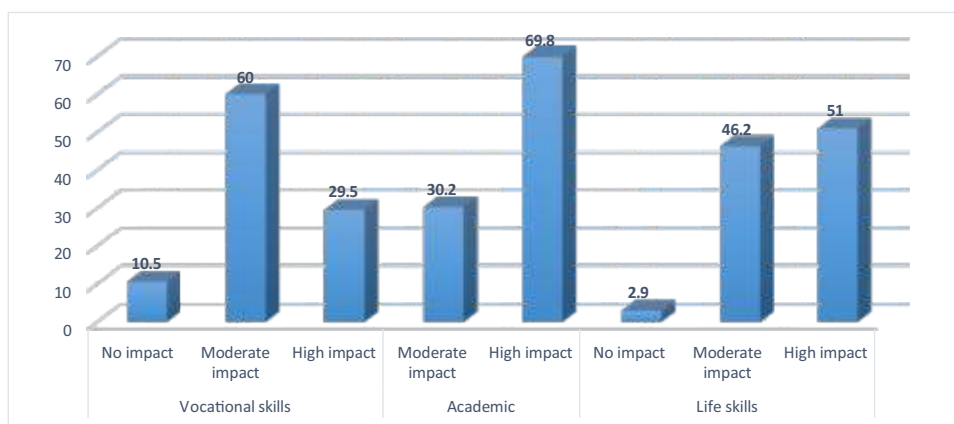
However, a greater percentage (90.5%) answered in the affirmative to the questions “Do you believe basic education has adequately equipped you academically for your future education or career?” This means that more respondents believe that their basic education is equipping them more with academic than technical/vocational skills.

Table 21: Do you believe basic education has adequately equipped you academically for your future education or career?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	95	90.5
No	10	9.5
Total	105	100

The same pattern is mirrored in Figure 2 below when respondents were asked to rate the impact of basic education on vocational skills, academic performance and life skills. Respondents rated basic education as having high impact on academic performance (69.8%), compared to vocational skills (29.5%) and life skills (51%). Basic education is having highest moderate impact on vocational skills compared to life skills (46.2%) and academic performance. One in ten of the respondents (10.5%) opined that basic education has no impact on vocational skills while 2.9 percent opined that basic education has no impact on life skills.

Figure2: Impact of basic education on vocational and life skills and academic performance



All schools surveyed engage in the training of students to acquire some skills. The Headmaster of Glorious Pearl School indicated that they train children in both hard and soft skills. With regards to hard skills training, the school prioritizes vocational and technical skills. The students are taken through practical lessons in painting, drawing, graphic design and similar skills. The headmaster elaborates on this:

For instance, when the school is being painted, most [students] come around. So, we use that as an opportunity [to teach them painting]. Whenever there's any work going on in the school, we call them [students] to come and see ... Then we offer special events ... Their Saturday classes are dedicated to life skills. So, we have Mathematics and English in the morning. Then we learn how to cook, ... how to set a table... how to dine formally. And we also teach them soft skills: formal appearance, ... how to talk ... how to wash, how to iron, taking care of your plants etc. (In depth Interview, February 2025).

Through Creative Art lessons, students at The Lord's Star International School also learn painting, making of beads and craft items. According to teachers of the school who were engaged in a focus group discussion, the students also learn art forms such as music, dance and drama. The Director of the School said art exhibitions are done to showcase students' skills. Parents and members of the public purchase some of the items displayed during such exhibitions. From such skills training, some of the students graduate into renowned artistes. Similarly, students of Celestial School are trained in drawing, painting, cooking and robotics among others. They organize talent shows to the extent that the school once participated in and performed well in a national Junior Art competition. Through robotics and science practical's, students are able to manufacture toy cars, produce bio-gas and other items.

In terms of sports, teachers at Celestial School said their students are trained to play football, judo, taekwondo and engage in athletics. The school also encourages the formation of clubs and societies with the leading ones being Safety Club and Constitution Club. Akin to what pertains in other private schools, students who attend The Lord Our Saviour School mentioned cooking, baking, painting, drawing, sewing and acting as skills they learnt in school. On the other hand, learners in Good Shepherd School acquire skills in choreography, music and dance as well as cooking. At Ibadullahi, teachers indicated that they train students to prepare food, sew and weave, engage in plumbing, auto mechanics and electrical engineering.

Prima Academy has some of the most innovative skills training activities. The Proprietor of the provides some examples:

... We do a lot of hands-on activities for practical's right from the pre-school level to the JHS. And we bring to bear innovation, technology, to make it very exciting. So that's one, it's more practical, they love it. Come Friday, we have something called the Red Chocolate Day. So, the kids put on red to school. However, we give education on chocolate. So, for last year, they just watched videos on how to process chocolate. For this year we have the raw cocoa itself. And we want to see if we can produce our own chocolate. So today they are going to crack the cocoa pods, dry it. Maybe by Wednesday, it's dried up. We'll just find a way of roasting it. So, they will know about the process (In depth Interview, February, 2025).

The proprietor of Good Shepherd School also had this to say:

When you come to the science section. You're learning how to fix bulbs, wires. If there's some damage on your devices, you know how to solve the problem; like your switch is burnt, how you replace it. And when it comes to the career technology, we are learning pastry-making, how to cook, by your own self and also team work (In

3.8.2 Extent to which basic school curricular prepares youth for future

The study further sought to establish whether the skills that students acquired in school aligns with market demands. As Table 23 indicates, majority gave a answered in the affirmative.

Table 22: Would you say the skills you acquired in basic school align with market demands?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	71	71.7
No	28	28.3
Total	99	100

At focus group discussions with students, they indicated that the current curricular helps in building their confidence. As one indicated, “If you are not confident, I'm not sure you would move forward”. Others also indicated that the current curricular involves critical thinking with which “we are able to think outside the box and raise points that help solve some problems”. Generally, the students believe the current curricular is leading them to achieve their future aspirations. In the words of one such student:

I think it's leading me to what I want to be in future, because as it stands now, I want to be an engineer... then engineering comes with, like, computer and those stuffs ... So, from here, I'm learning how to use the computer more. First, I didn't know anything about computer, but now, if you give me, I'll know how to do something. I know how to use it, and how to do a lot of things. And even if I'm not able to become an engineer, I know how to create a website.... So, I can use that as a source of business. So, I can maybe, create websites for business companies, schools for money (FGD, February 2025).

Teachers at The Lord's Star International School were also of the view that the new curriculum is effective in training the youth. They indicated that the curriculum is learner-centered and promotes hands-on training. Besides, the curriculum develops students holistically and is not exams-focused. Discussants also indicated that the diversity of subjects studied at the JHS level opens students' minds to varied professions. According to them, Entrepreneurship, which is studied under Career Technology, is useful for introducing the youth to starting their own businesses and becoming self-employed.

Though some students of Lord Our Saviour School believed that the JHS training was adequately equipping them to attain their future aspirations, others held a contrary view. At a focus group discussion with students of the school, some discussants felt the training given them at the school lacked some essential practical activities. One student opined:

I feel like it [JHS education] is not equipping us because when we take the Asians, for example, the children are doing practical. Here, we are mostly focused on the theory. We don't do the practical's every day. We write notes, but we don't work with our hands. Like you go to the engineering class [in Asia], you see the children learn how to fix phones, trying to make earpieces. I feel like [basic education] is not equipping us because when they give us the notes, we don't do practical's (FGD, February 2025).

Similarly, teachers of Celestial School International were of the view that the number of subjects studied at the basic level are too many, and that from JHS1, learners should focus on their areas of interest rather than seeking to be jacks of all trade. The teachers also felt that the mode of assessment at the BECE level is not appropriate since it disadvantages learners who do not have writing skills. They were of the view that oral modes of assessment should have been introduced to cater for learners with writing deficiencies. A respondent at The Lord's Star International School recommended that entrepreneurship should be studied in every subject. The Director of the School, on the other hand, suggested that private school facilitators be trained and supplied with the requisite resources to enable them deliver the new curriculum to the best of their abilities.

On the other hand, teachers at Ibadullahi School applauded the new curriculum as it entails doing a lot of practical work compared to the old curriculum. They also indicated that the new curriculum is learner-centered. One teacher said, “Before now, the teachers or facilitators did majority of the work [in the classroom], but now the learners are involved more”.

3.8.3 Students' participation in extracurricular activities

Extracurricular activities offer students opportunities to explore their interests, develop skills and engage in a variety of experiences beyond the classroom. The study sought to know the extracurricular activities that were available in schools. The Table 24 below depicts results of the question, "Which extracurricular activities were available during your basic education?" Sports was available in most schools as it was mentioned 78 times, Arts (music, singing, dance, drama) was mentioned 57 times, Clubs/Societies (Debating society, Science Club, Literary Club etc.) was mentioned 53 times, and culture was mentioned 16 times.

Table 23: Which extracurricular activities were available during your basic education?

	Frequency	Percent
Sports	78	38.2
Arts (music, singing, dance, drama)	57	27.9
Clubs/societies (Debating society, Science Club, Literary Club etc.)	53	26.0
Culture	16	7.8
Total	204	100.0

However, availability of these extracurricular activities is one thing, participation in them is the other. Respondents were, therefore, asked which of the activities they participated in at their alma mater. About 58 out of the 111 respondents participated in sports, 43 participated in clubs/societies, 28 participated in culture, 19 participated in volunteerism/community service and 8 participated in other extracurricular activities.

3.9 YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND MOBILIZATION

The study wanted to understand the models of youth engagement which is most effective for equipping the youth with leadership and advocacy skills. Most of the respondents felt that mentorship was the most effective. In their view, training workshop may be effective only if is not a one-off activity. Peer networks could also be good but should be used with caution since students could learn both positive and negative attributes from their peers.

3.9.1 Mentorship

The statement below from the Proprietor of Prima Academy underscores the superior nature of mentorship in equipping the youth leadership with advocacy skills.

All must come into play. But I think mentorship beats them all. You know, these kids, they know what they want. But at the same time, they are confused about many things. And so, if we are able to mentor them, not controlling them; listening to them based on our experiences, we can guide them. They really need help especially when parents are just too busy these days. From my experience, when the kids get to JHS, they think they are older and then they leave them on their own. And for me, that is when they need parental guidance more than anything. And here is the case where the parents are also struggling for their daily bread. And so if there can be some mentorship, it would help. In my school for instance, the students are shared to us and we meet them each week and listen to them and just try to direct them (In depth interview, February 2025).

3.9.2 Civic Engagement

Civic engagement provides opportunities for youth to participate in school and community life. The study sought to know the civic engagement opportunities that the various basic schools offered their learners. Community service was a civic engagement opportunity (43.9%) and environmental projects (41.7%) were the leading civic engagement opportunities offered in schools as evidenced in Table 26.

Table 24: What civic engagement opportunities does your school offer?

	Frequency	Percent
Community service	58	43.9
Political discussions	9	6.8
Environmental projects	55	41.7
Other	10	7.6
Total	132	100.0

Most of the schools like Glorious Pearls and Ibadullahi, provide an opportunity for students to elect their leaders after a period of campaigning. This helps them to learn about democracy first-hand. It helps to develop a critical mind and alert them to problems that confront the school and hence propose solutions in the process of campaigning. The students participated in clean-up exercises within the school and in the communities where the schools are located.

When asked to rate the effectiveness of their basic schools in developing their civic engagement skills, almost one in four of the respondents (24.5%) rated their schools as very effective, while 39.2 percent rated their schools as effective. About 28.4 percent were neutral. Only about 7.9 percent rated their schools as ineffective in developing their civic engagement skills. In the words of one of the alumni:

One school project that significantly impacted my personal development was a community service project where our class had to plan and execute a fundraiser to support a local food bank.

This project impacted my personal development in several ways:

- 1. Leadership skills: I was chosen as a team leader, which helped me develop my leadership skills, including communication, delegation, and problem-solving.*
- 2. Time management: The project required us to work on a tight deadline, teaching me the importance of time management, prioritization, and meeting goals.*

This is one project that has helped develop the skills of the participant in many ways, including leadership and time management skills. This is an effective way of developing civic engagement skills that would have been difficult to achieve in a classroom.

Table 25: Rate the effectiveness of your basic school in developing your civic engagement skills on a scale of 0-5.

	Frequency	Percent
1	2	2
2	6	5.9
3	29	28.4
4	40	39.2
5	25	24.5
Total	102	100

The majority of alumni (61%) will very readily recommend their alma mater to others based on its role in shaping their aspirations and civic engagement. Another 31 percent will readily recommend their schools while 8 percent would not recommend their alma maters to others based on the roles in shaping aspirations and civic engagement.

Table 26: How readily will you recommend your school to others based on its role in shaping aspirations and civic engagement?

	Frequency	Percent
Very readily	61	61
Readily	31	31
Not readily	7	7
Not readily at all	1	1
Total	100	100

Respondents were also asked to rate their satisfaction with the support provided by their schools in achieving academic/career aspirations. This was rated highly, considering that 39 percent of respondents each rated it as very satisfied and satisfied. Eighteen percent of respondents were neutral while 4 percent were not satisfied.

Table 27: Rate your satisfaction with the support provided by your school in achieving your academic / career aspirations on a scale of 0-5.

	Frequency	Percent
2	4	4
3	18	18
4	39	39
5	39	39
Total	100	100

3.10 ENGAGING YOUTH THROUGH ALUMNI NETWORKS

This section of the report delves into the activities of alumni in their various alma maters. It presents the quantitative and qualitative results based on the surveys, in depth interviews and focus group discussions held.

3.10.1 Presence of alumni associations

Respondents were asked the question, “Do you have an alumni association in your former school?” An overwhelming majority (79.6%) responded in the affirmative while 20.4 percent said no.

The study established that almost all schools have alumni associations of some sort. At Glorious Pearl School, there is no formally constituted alumni association. However, the Proprietor indicated that the school was working towards formally inaugurating one in the coming days. He believes that 65% to 70% of the old students are interested in forming an association. According to him, the school keeps records and contacts of old students to be abreast of their progress through secondary, tertiary levels and beyond. Even in the absence of a structured association, the alumni assist the school by coming back to teach the students and share experiences with them. The Proprietor was of the view that many alumni shy away from joining the association for fear that they will be asked to pay monies for the development of the school. According to him:

One way that we want to sustain it [the Association] is by looking at more community-based events with our alumni, perhaps seminars, workshops, or even a day with alumni ... and [alumni] coming to teach certain sessions in school. We already do guest teaching in school, so we have alumni coming to do guest teaching. We're also looking at having mentorship for alumni ... and then also having alumni conduct things like career day, especially those that are already working. We think that with that, it is going to strengthen the bond between old students and current students (In depth interview, February 2025).

The learners at Grace Avenue believe their alumni can contribute to the development of their school by returning to the school to teach, share experiences with students and supporting BECE candidates psychologically to prepare them for the exams. The Lord's Star International School has two alumni associations. The first was started by the alumni themselves in 2010, with the school itself starting its own some years later. While the one engineered by the alumni has a total of 91 members, that which is the school's brain child has a total membership of 150. Teachers and alumni of the school described the two associations as "Somehow Active". Aside organizing a get-together six years ago to fraternize, the associations do not engage in any activities or offer any support to the school. According to the Director of the School, the alumni associations have interim executives and the school was making efforts to assist them elect substantive leaders.

On the other hand, Celestial International Stem School has an alumni association which is more than three years old, with more than 100 members, as compared to Glorious Pearls School which has in excess of 120 members of the alumni association. Like alumni of other schools which form part of this study, the Celestial School and Glorious Pearls School alumni were dormant and hardly carried out any activities. As at the time of the research, individual past students sometimes offered support to Celestial School rather than doing so under the ambit of the alumni association. Discussants at a focus group mentioned Jeff Basing, an alumnus who runs a Corporate Leadership Institute, as an example of a past student who periodically supports the school by training its teachers. Initially, engineered by the students themselves, the association was active and used to even make donations to the school. However, it collapsed after a while and was resuscitated by the school. Unfortunately, the School could not make it as vibrant as it used to be. Authorities of Glorious Pearls were also making efforts to strengthen their alumni association. A respondent at a focus group discussion said: "We are trying hard to formalize the role of alumni in the school. So, we are trying to set [executive] positions in place so that when it comes out officially, the identities [of the leaders] should be known by each alumnus".

Contrary to what pertains in majority of the schools studied, Text Education Institute and Prima Academy do not have alumni associations. In the absence of such associations, individual past students visit the schools to make donations to teachers and students, hold mentorship sessions and other programs for the students. According to the Proprietor of Prima Academy, the School has an arrangement with graduating JHS students whereby they return to the school to encourage BECE candidates in the days leading to the examination. She explained:



... The various year groups have their platforms but we [school authorities] are not on those platforms ... if somebody's having wedding, they go there. There is that networking ongoing. But as a school, we haven't brought them together. The last time they came for graduation, they mentioned homecoming and we said, we are ready. We told them anytime they are ready; they can come and we will have that conversation" (In depth interview, February, 2025).

The Proprietor of Text Education Institute also revealed that some alumni mobilized resources to build a basketball court for the school while others offered to pay fees of students who owed the school. Similarly, though past students of Most Holy High School do not have a formalized association, almost 30 of them have formed a WhatsApp platform. An alumnus of the school said:



"... occasionally we have chats on the platform. It's not something that is formal. It's just some kind of platform that we just ask of each other. If there is any announcement, then we post it there ... Let's say events like weddings. Right now, we are now marking 10 years [of the establishment of the school]. So, it's just recently we insisted that we have to try and get some kind of initiative for the school (FGI, February, 2025).

In responding to the question "Do you belong to your basic school alumni association?" 60 respondents, representing 69.6%, responded with yes, as against 28, representing 30.4%, who responded, no.

To gauge how active the alumni are, respondents were asked, "How active is your basic school alumni association?". Twelve, representing 12.2%, rated their associations as "very active", 51 respondents, representing 52% responded with "active", 25 alumni representing 25.5% felt the association was "not active", and 10 respondents representing 10.2% rated their associations as "not at all active."

As to the frequency of alumni engagement with their alumni network, 24.2% have never engaged with their alumni network, while 12.6% rarely engaged with such networks. A further 33.7% only sometimes engaged with their alumni network as against 29.5% who were actively engaged with their networks, and 22.1% and 7.4% who had "often" and "very often" engaged with alumni networks.

When asked to mention activities which they participated in through their alumni networks, 12.2% mentioned "networking events", 20.4% indicated "mentoring programs", 44.9% identified social gatherings while 9.2% indicated professional development and workshops. Respondents who participated in activities other than those listed above were 13.3%. Respondents were also asked to rate the influence of their peers on your career decisions on a scale of 0-5. The findings showed quite a high degree of peer influence on the career choices of students. As many as 31.3% gave a 3-point rating to such influence, with 20.8% assigning a 4-point rating and 13.5% giving the maximum 5 scale rating to peer influence. Only 6.3% indicated 0 (no influence); 9.4% indicated 1 (very low influence) and 18.8% indicated 2 (low influence of peers in their career decisions). We also asked the question: "Do you believe peer influence is beneficial in professional growth?" The responses showed a strong support of peer influence on professional growth. While 85% believed that peer influence is beneficial, 12% felt it was not, and 3% was not sure.

The study further tried establishing the forms of peer influence respondents had experienced. The results are indicated below:

- Advice - 23.9%;
- Collaboration - 20.8%;
- Competition - 17.8%; and
- Motivation - 37.6%.

3.10.1 Contribution of alumni to the running of their alma mater

The study sought to know the contribution of alumni in running their former schools. The question posed was, “Have you, as an alumnus, played any role in supporting students in your former basic school or assisted in the running of the school?”. While 55.6% responded with yes, 44.4% responded with no. The findings as contained in Table 31 confirms the results of the qualitative data which showed that alumni return to their former schools to offer advice, motivation and teaching services to students, especially those in the final years.

Table 28: What roles have you played in supporting students in your former basic school or assisted in the running of the school?

	Frequency	Percent
Teaching	8	15.7
Advice	14	27.5
Motivation	8	15.7
Mentorship	5	9.8
Donation	8	15.7
Helped to train cadet	1	2
Trained students in music	1	2
Participate in decision-making	1	2
Prefect ship	5	9.8
Total	51	100

However, some also donate textbooks and notebooks, awards, cash, and past questions to the schools, while some help to train cadets, handle music lessons with students and participate in decision-making of the school.

An alumnus responded with the statement below:

As an alumnus, I have played the following roles:

1. *Mentorship: I have mentored students, shared my experiences, and provided guidance on academic and career choices.*
2. *Career talks: I have delivered career talks, inspiring students to pursue their passions, and sharing insights into various professions.*
3. *Academic support: I have assisted students with academic projects, providing resources, and helping with research.*

3.10.1 Challenges that alumni associations encounter

The biggest challenge of alumni networks is the unavailability of its members to attend meetings and participate in school activities (46.7%) due to distance and busy schedules. Some of the members travel out of the country, while others have busy schedules from their livelihood activities which makes participation in alumni activities difficult if not impossible. Another challenge experienced by alumni is the difficulty in locating members of the alumni (13.3%). Some students change their mobile phone numbers after completing school or may not have any telephone contact that the school mates are aware of. Another challenge is lack of coordination (11.1%) among the alumni on the one hand, and the school management on the other.

Table 29: What challenges confront alumni networks in their attempt to organize themselves and support their alma mater?

	Frequency	Percent
Financial constraints	4	8.9
Unavailability for activities	21	46.7
Difficulty locating members	6	13.3
Difficulty coordinating the group	5	11.1
Lack of communication	4	8.9
Lack of interest	2	4.4
Low involvement of past students	3	6.7
Total	45	100.0

In the qualitative interviews, teachers who are alumni of The Lord's Star International School echoed challenges obtained from the survey. First, old students are scattered across the country and beyond. Therefore, there is difficulty bringing them together at a designated place for in-person activities. Many also have busy schedules which do not permit them to participate while others complain of financial challenges in paying dues and bearing the cost of alumni activities.

3.10.1 Recommendations for improving alumni associations

Alumni proffered recommendations that could help improve alumni associations. Results of their suggestions or recommendations are in the Table 33 below. Almost a third of the responses (31.7%) suggested leveraging social media to connect with members who are spread across the country and beyond. They believe that this will bridge the challenges with unavailability due to busy schedules, especially for online engagements. Similarly, 13.7 percent of the responses suggested regular meetings to keep all members up-to-date on alumni activities. Commitment of alumni to work together is an imperative and constituted 15.7 percent of the responses. Getting good leaders, organizing events for alumni, and fund raising each constituted 7.8 percent of the responses.

Table 30: What suggestions do you have for improving alumni networks to better engage youth?

	Frequency	Percent
Getting good, committed leaders	4	7.8
Regular meetings	7	13.7
Organizing events for alumni	4	7.8
Fund raising	4	7.8
Leveraging social media to connect	16	31.4
Making time for alumni activities	2	3.9
Strengthen mentorship programs	3	5.9
Commitment to work together	8	15.7
Recognize alumni achievements	1	2.0
Helping members in need	1	2.0
Respect all views	1	2.0
Total	51	100.0

As a means of re-invigorating the activities of alumni associations, teachers and alumni of The Lord's Star International School recommended that schools must play active roles in establishing and supporting such associations to grow. For instance, schools need to take the initial steps of organizing meetings and appointing interim leaders to manage the associations until they grow and reach the stage of being on their own. In this regard, each year group could be supported to elect its leaders and operate under the general school alumni association. The Headmaster of Glorious Pearls believes that workshops followed by mentorships are the best ways through which alumni networks could assist students to progress. Discussants at Celestial International Stem School suggested that schools organize homecoming events and other activities for their alumni as a means of attracting old students back to their Alma Mater. They also suggested that schools could automatically add all graduating students to their alumni platforms and organize pre-SHS classes for BECE graduates as a means of keeping a bond between graduating students and the schools they attended.

3.11 TECHNOLOGY AND COMMUNICATION

The study also sought to identify channels, platforms, or technologies used by alumni for mobilization and regrouping after leaving school. Respondents were therefore asked to give their preferred method of communication with alumni networks. The majority (52.1%) preferred social media, 17.9 percent preferred in-person meetings, 17.1 percent preferred phone calls, and 10.7 percent preferred emails. Other preferred methods constituted 2.1 percent.

All respondents believed that digital tools were an effective means of articulating youth voices in education. The features the youth would like to see in digital tools to better support youth voices are improved accessibility (40.7%), more interactive features (39.5%), and better privacy (19.8%). Respondents were asked, "What is your preferred social media platform for communicating with the alumni network?" An overwhelming majority (87%) preferred WhatsApp, while 7.6% preferred Facebook, 4.3% preferred Instagram, and 1.1% responded with "other". Asked what the effective communication platforms are for engaging youth in the affordable non-state education sector is, teachers of Celestial School indicated WhatsApp, Facebook, radio and TV as channels of communication. Similarly, teachers of The Lord's Star International School mentioned WhatsApp, Telegram, and SMS blast as the most effective means of connecting with the youth.

Prima Academy's Proprietor proposed ways of using technology to enhance youth participation in running of our schools. She said:



I think there's a need for us to have some engagements with all these children. And then some training sessions. So let me give you an example. When AI came, you realize we use AI in our classrooms, and everything. We realize that these kids are already using AI. And so, what do you need to do? You need to bring your teachers up to speed. So, the head of the department is into IT. He has to take the kids through ethics of using AI. See, so the education must be then how to teach them to use it wisely. It's very important. We are using it the wrong way (In depth interview, February 2025).

3.12 PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

Asked whether his School engages in any partnerships to support in training students, the Headmaster of Glorious Pearl School responded in the negative. According to him, GNAPS is the only body that the school belongs to. Unlike Glorious Pearl School, The Lord's Star International School has various partners which support in the training of its children. Kingsel Education Complex organizes professional development conferences for students of the school while Africa Dyslexia Organization trains teachers and students on how to handle children with disabilities. The school also had partnership with an NGO from New Zealand called Rata which supported the children's education. Similarly, Celestial School also has a number of partners which support in developing the learners of the school. The notable ones are Fan Milk Ghana Limited, Indomie, Bell Beverages, Bic Pen, Unilever Ghana Limited and Cowbell Milk. These organizations sponsor school events and train children on leadership skills and environmental care.

3.13 POLICY AND SYSTEM-LEVEL IMPLICATIONS OF YOUTH-LED ACTIVITIES

3.13.1 Ways of enhancing youth-led activities

The study sought to establish whether there are national level policies which encourage the youth to contribute their views to education policy formulation and delivery as well as policies which support activities spearheaded by young people. Majority of the national leadership of GNAPS who were interviewed indicated that such policies do not exist. Asked how GNAPS could partner relevant organizations like IDPF to amplify youth voices and enhance youth led activities, GNAPS leadership proposed the following:

- IDPF can support GNAPS to organize alumni and students of low fee private schools to engage in greater advocacy for inclusion in education policy formulation;
- IDPF and GNAPS can engage in joint research to provide evidence that supports advocacy for government to support youth-led activities;
- With the support of IDPF, GNAPS could build the capacity of its member schools to appreciate and encourage the contribution of students and alumni towards education service delivery; and
- Through GNAPS-IDPF partnership, GNAPS can train and support schools to build student leadership structures within schools to promote their inclusion in decision-making.

3.13.2 Inclusivity and Equity

As a means of attaining greater inclusivity and equity for disadvantaged learners in decision-making processes pertaining to education, GNAPS leaders indicated that inclusivity and fairness can be attained by creating awareness among learners and staff of private schools on the need to value the views and encourage the voices of people living with disabilities. Respondents also indicated the need to train teachers and parents on how to care for and protect disabled children, encourage and inspire them to attain their potential. They further stated that schools must have policies on inclusivity and equity and make deliberate efforts to implement such policies to encourage participation of all in decision-making. Such policies must make room for a quota of student leadership positions to be allocated to physically challenged children, female learners and children from low-income households. Disadvantaged children must also be trained to be confident and communicate their views on issues of educational development.

In order to ensure that youth voices are represented and heard on educational policy, respondents recommended partnerships between GNAPS and youth-led organizations. A national executive member argued for the organization of capacity-building programs for the youth, and creation of favorable environment for the youth to share their views without fear or favor. Respondents argued for targeted workshops for identifiable youth groups like year groups, alumni and peer support groups to brainstorm on ways of developing education in schools and the country as a whole. Besides, GNAPS could mobilize in-school and out-of-school youth to engage in advocacy that gets their voices heard.

3.13.3 Youth Engagement and Mobilization

The study was also interested in determining the most effective strategies for engaging the youth, both current and past learners, within the affordable non-state education sector. National leadership of GNAPS opined that prior to any engagement with the youth, their confidence level ought to be boosted. As part of the confidence-building process learners must be equipped with critical thinking skills while they are in school. Also, mentorship programs should be organized to offer the youth within the affordable non-state sector opportunities to express their views. In order to open up channels of communication for students, respondents asked schools to encourage learners to form clubs and associations, and to mobilize student leadership like school prefects and student representative councils (SRCs).

Affordable non-state schools were also encouraged to organize peer-to-peer dialogue sessions and have civic education clubs that offer opportunities for constant discourse on national educational development. As a means of identifying alumni of schools to facilitate constructive dialogue, affordable non-state schools were advised to build databases of all past learners to constantly be in touch with them and solicit their opinions on issues whenever the need arose. Respondents suggested that schools organize alumni at various levels – school level, regional and national levels – and the use of online modes of engagements to ensure that majority of past students are involved in discussions related to education.

The research further wanted to find out how GNAPS can identify and mobilize youth leaders to represent their peers and foster participation in advocacy or community-driven initiatives.

Leadership of the Association suggested that GNAPS encourages its member schools to champion the formation of debating clubs in schools to identify potential youth leaders and strengthen student leadership. When potential leaders are identified, the Association could lead the way in organizing competitions in schools, mentorship and leadership training programs for students to build their leadership and advocacy skills. GNAPS can also assist and encourage the formation of **private student alumni associations** from district through regional to national levels.

When asked whether there is space within the structures and constitution of GNAPS for youth voices to be articulated, two executive members responded in the affirmative while two answered in the negative. Those who felt the Association's constitution provides voice for the youth could, however, not provide details of specific constitutional provisions which young people could take advantage of to be heard.

When asked whether there currently exists any motivation for capturing youth voices, all but one respondent answered in the affirmative, though they could not precisely point at any evidence of such motivation. Respondents identified the following benefits of capturing youth voices:

- When their voices are heard, they feel valued to give back to society;
- Soliciting the perceptions of the youth will make GNAPS more relevant and effective;
- Youth engagement leads to better representation, improved decision-making and youth empowerment;
- Diversity of voices comes with richer insight into ways in which the youth is trained;
- Youth participation is part of the learner-centered approaches to training them; and
- The youth will feel part of the training process and will be cooperative in school governance.

The study then sought the views of GNAPS leadership on changes that must take place if the Association is interested in youth voices. The following views were expressed:

- There should be youth representation on the National Executive Committee of GNAPS;
- District executives of the Association must visit schools to engage the youth in dialogue sessions;
- GNAPS Constitution must be revised to cater for youth interests;
- There must be a paradigm shift in the way youth voices are handled; and
- GNAPS must create youth forums and social media platforms to engage the youth to freely share their perspectives on education issues.

However, respondents felt that engaging the youth in dialogue requires significant time and resources since the youth lack the experience and skills required for such engagement. They also felt that no structures currently exist in many schools for youth participation, and that there could be bureaucracy in decision-making if the youth is consulted in every decision-making process. Asked to mention the most accessible and effective platforms (digital, community-based, or organizational) available for facilitating sustained youth engagement, respondents mentioned social media group online forums and virtual event spaces as digital avenues for interaction. They also referred to school clubs and collaboration with student unions as interpersonal and community-based means of such engagements.

3.13.4 Youth Needs and Aspirations

The study again sought to establish key needs and aspirations of the youth in the affordable non- state education sector. Standing Committee members who responded to the online questionnaire indicated that the youth aspire to pass BECE and get placed in Category A senior high schools. In attaining this aspiration, the youth need the following support:

- Access to supportive infrastructure for learning;
- Financial support to purchase learning materials;
- Career guidance and mentorship;
- Quality and affordable education;
- Basic facilities and learning materials; and
- Good sanitation and WASH facilities.

We posed the question, “How do the needs and aspirations of the youth vary across demographic groups, especially for males and females?” One respondent felt that not much difference exists in aspirations between the varied demographic strata. However, majority of the respondents felt such differences exist. They were of the view that low-income youth, particularly females, have low academic aspirations due to societal expectations and limited resources, while males from affluent homes have higher academic aspirations due to their access to more resources. One respondent was, however, of the view that both males and females from rural areas have low career aspirations due to lack of information, while those in the urban areas, particularly females, have higher career aspirations due to increasing access to education. Asked to mention challenges that the youth face in accessing opportunities for education, skills development, and employment, respondents referred to the following:

- Inadequate career guidance;
- Limited access to internships and apprenticeship;
- Limited job opportunities;
- Poverty and inequalities;
- Low awareness of career opportunities;
- Poor access to internet;
- Inadequate resources to pay fees and learning materials;
- Inadequate skills development opportunities;
- Inadequate skills for employment opportunities;
- Lack of entrepreneurial skills to set up businesses; and
- Lack of capital for self-employment.

Again, the research was interested in establishing ways in which GNAPS can design programs that reflect the diverse voices and priorities of the youth in the education sector. Leadership of the Association had the following answers:

- Conduct research led by the youth to know their concerns and priorities as well as the type of programs that reflect their interests;
- Organize capacity-building and mentorship programs;
- Solicit funding to organise youth engagement programs; and
- Build structures for youth participation in running of schools.

3.13.5 Program Design and Delivery

Respondents enumerated some models of engagement which they consider most effective for equipping the youth with leadership and advocacy skills. These are training and mentorship programs, community engagements and dialogue with peer networks. The study then sought the views of leadership on how GNAPS can ensure that funded programs are inclusive of marginalized groups such as girls, youth with disabilities and those from underserved communities. According to them, program designs must capture the needs of marginalized groups. One respondent was of the view that GNAPS must be intentional in seeking specific funding for the disadvantaged. He/she indicated that when funds are available, a percentage of it must be devoted to taking care of the needs of disadvantaged children. When asked to identify the resources, partnerships, or capacity-building measures needed to support GNAPS's effective engagement with the youth, respondents indicated that the Association needs technological support, especially the deployment of digital tools to aid its interaction with the youth. They also said GNAPS needs to partner tertiary educational institutions, private business organizations and government agencies to provide mentorship programs for learners. Furthermore, respondents said the Association needs a vehicle to facilitate mobilization of the youth, and funding support to establish youth associations for students and alumni. GNAPS leadership and membership also need financial as well as technical support in building their capacities on how to handle the concerns of young people.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Educational outcomes and transition pathways

One of the biggest obstacles which hampers the chances of private basic school students from getting Category A schools is the 30% priority placement system introduced by the Ministry of Education. This system is discriminatory and affects the private schools negatively. There is therefore an urgent need to abolish it as soon as possible as it is already affecting retention of JHS students at some private basic schools. GNAPS should play a lead role with alumni and transitioning students playing advocacy roles.

One of the major transitional challenges experienced by alumni of private basic schools is inadequate resources to continue to SHS or TVET schools. Some could not even get enough funds to purchase the items on their prospectus. The study, therefore, recommends that instead of spreading government resources thinly to cover all public secondary school students to the exclusion of private school students, scholarships could be given to verified needy students in both private and public SHS's.

Improved funding to private basic schools would help overcome infrastructure and other challenges experienced by private schools. The funding could come from alumni of private schools who have benefitted from low-fee education. Additionally, since private schools play complimentary roles in providing quality education to Ghanaian children, government should consider supporting their efforts by providing funding for such infrastructure development.

4.2 Youth voices

Despite the desirable outcome of youth voices in education, there are currently no channels for the youth to voice their views, opinions and perspectives on national educational discourse. At the school level, their views about the running of the school are channeled through their prefects, and meetings with the school authorities. It is recommended that government applies digital tools, especially social media channels for soliciting youth opinions in education policies. Also, when crucial national educational policy discussions are being held, the MoE must consciously seek ways soliciting youth views. Dialogue sessions could be held for the youth on regional basis. Besides, youth parliament sessions should be activated in schools to motivate learners to contribute to national discourse. Other ways of amplifying youth voices are:

- i. Actively engaging students as partners to create systems for infusing student voices throughout school improvement activities;
- ii. Developing school-wide student evaluations of building culture; classroom climate; student/teacher relationships; educational effectiveness;
- iii. Infusing students as full members of school committees focused on curricular areas, school improvement, etc.;
- iv. Developing regular, sustained, and unfettered opportunities for frank conversations between students and adults about school improvement.

4.3 Alumni Associations

Alumni associations, where they exist, are organized in year groups, and school authorities are not part of those groups. It is recommended that school authorities have a consolidated platform involving all year groups with elected leaders. Year groups can still maintain Social Platforms for their in-house networking and socialization.

Once a platform is organized, school authorities, with the support of leaders of the alumni, must drive the agenda for intervention by listing in order of priority, all their needs for consideration by the alumni and other public-spirited organizations.

4.4 Policy and System-Level Implications

- IDPF can support GNAPS to organize alumni and students of LFPS to engage in greater advocacy for inclusion in education policy formulation;
- IDPF and GNAPS can engage in joint research to provide evidence that supports advocacy for government to support youth-led activities;
- With the support of IDPF, GNAPS could build the capacity of its member schools to appreciate and encourage the contribution of students and alumni towards education service delivery; and
- Through GNAPS-IDPF partnership, GNAPS can train and support schools to build student leadership structures within schools to promote their inclusion in decision-making.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to identify and gather data on the contribution of transitioning students and alumni of Low-Fee Private Schools towards advocacy, mentorship, and resource mobilization for their alma maters. The researchers engaged stakeholders in the private basic education space including transitioning students, alumni, heads and proprietors, teachers and GNAPS leaders. The main findings are that students and parents choose private over public schools because of quality education and discipline. Also, transitional challenges from JHS to secondary schools result from financial constraints and government's 30% priority placement system which prevents private basic school leavers from getting category A schools. Some of the private basic schools lack critical infrastructure like libraries and laboratories which are necessary for implementation of the new curriculum.

There are no channels for the youth to voice their perspectives on national educational discourse. Even though school leadership express willingness to support initiatives that amplify youth voices, some respondents are of the view that management of schools are reluctant in amplifying youth voices and allowing students to play greater roles in the running of schools. There is an urgent need for school leadership to priorities the formation of alumni associations, and leverage their networks to support their advocacy and mentorship initiatives.

These findings have far-reaching policy relevance for private schools. Stakeholders in the private education space like GNAPS, alumni, transitioning students, school management, and teachers can leverage on this report for advocacy and mentorship initiatives. For a start, GNAPS must tease out of this report, aspects of the findings which require urgent stakeholder attention and issue policy briefs on them.

A major shortcoming of this study is that it is limited in scope, since it covered only 12 schools within the Greater Accra Region. Therefore, findings of the study cannot be generalized. The researcher proposes a more comprehensive study that samples schools from across the country to take care of varied regional and cultural dynamics which could influence results of the study.

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