

GHANA BOARDING SCHOOLS – Breeding HUB of LESSER SAINTS & GREATER SINNERS?

Boarding schools for many years have nurtured great people. They maintained healthy and secure environments where the young people who attended felt protected and safe to a very large extent.

The reasons why some parents might consider sending their children to a boarding school are several. It offers opportunities for children to develop the skill of living independently and interdependently, life skills, access to deep enriching academic opportunities among others could be cited as some of the benefits of attending a boarding school.

However, recent worrying trends and negative events emerging from some of the boarding schools in Ghana are further deepening the post-free SHS concerns and its underlining issues.

So, I ask, **have the boarding provision of some public schools in Ghana become breeding centres of LESSER SAINTS AND GREATER SINNERS?**

Most parents when considering sending their children to boarding schools do have a lot of concerns tripping through their minds. Some of these concerns include;

- *Will my child be able to cope with academic demands?*
- *Will my child be able to resist the peer pressure to take part in inappropriate acts?*
- *Will they be able to manage themselves with minimum help or assistance?*

As much as a boarding environment offers a great enabling environment for learning, it is important to underscore the fact that the benefit can only be optimised when adults in whose hands these vulnerable children have been entrusted understand that they have a duty of care not because it is societally expected but it is the human right of the young people who attend these schools to be protected as stated in the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child** which Ghana as a member state has signed up to.

For the sake of some school leaders and stakeholders who might not be aware of the detail of this convention I think it will be useful to cite a few of the articles to buttress my point.

Article 12 (respect for the views of the child): Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and **to have their views considered and taken seriously.**

Article 19 (protection from violence, abuse and neglect): Governments must do all they can to ensure **that children are protected from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and bad treatment by their parents or anyone else who looks after them.**

Article 24 (health and health services): Every child has the **right to the best possible health.** Governments must provide good quality health care, clean water, nutritious food, and a clean environment and education on health and well-being **so that children can stay healthy.**

Article 28 (right to education): Every child has the right to an education. Primary education must be free and different forms of secondary education must be available to every child. **Discipline in schools must respect children's dignity and their rights.**

Article 42 (knowledge of rights): Governments must actively work to **make sure children and adults know about the Convention**

From these few articles cited above it is clear that most boarding schools in Ghana are clearly in breach of these conventions.

The recent case of a student dying in a boarding school after being denied an opportunity to seek health care while feeling ill is shocking and disgraceful. It is criminal and professional negligence of duty on the part of the school and the supervising authorities.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS:

1. Neogenics Education is calling for an immediate probe into this incident and offer answers to the parents of this poor student. Where necessary heads must roll.
2. All boarding schools in the country must undergo safeguarding audit immediately. Where there are lapses the appropriate measures should be put in place.
3. The national inspectorate board must accelerate their role in the maintaining standards in all schools in Ghana.
4. Educate children in schools of their rights as stated in the UN Convention for children rights

5. Put in place whistle blowing procedure for students to be able to report any forms of abuse going on in any educational institution.

We must put in place these necessary interventions to avoid any legal surprises in the future. In other jurisdictions, such incidences would trigger a legal action with huge financial implications on the institution and the government.

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