



# BPI QUARTERLY BRIEFS

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## Muslims Call for a Strengthened Partnership in the Management of Government-Assisted Mission Schools

The Hon. Minister of Education recently announced (as reported by the Daily Graphic on May 17, 2017) government consideration of returning mission schools to the religious bodies who founded them. The announcement was greeted with mixed feelings with several stakeholders opposing the idea and vehemently criticizing it.



*Some of the participants at the conference*

The Baraka Policy Institute, being a Think tank in education decided to organize a national stakeholder consultative conference on the matter for the Muslim Community, which can be affected by such government decision.

The conference brought together various key stakeholders across the country. Among them includes; Islamic Education Unit, Federation of Islamic Senior High Schools, Office of National Chief Imam, Office of Ahlul Sunna Wal Jamma, Muslim Chiefs & Opinion Leaders, Federation of



*Some of the participants at the conference*

Muslim Women Association of Ghana, Ghana Muslim Students Association, Coalition of Muslims Organisation in Ghana, Federation of Muslims Council, Ghana Society for Islamic Education & Reformation, Muslim Caucus in Parliament, Ghana Muslim Mission, Office of the Shia Imam, and many others as well as some Educational Experts.

The conference which was under the theme, “The Government Suggestion to Return Schools to Religious Bodies-



*Alhaji Rahim Gbadamosi, delivering his address during the conference*

Implication for Muslim Education in Ghana”, was chaired by Dr Gamel Nasser Adam, BPI board member and Senior Lecturer, University of Ghana, Legon.



*Sheikh Armiyawo Shaibu, delivering his address during the conference*

Keynote addresses were delivered by education experts; Alhaji Rahim Gbadamosi, former Director-General of Ghana Education Service and Sheikh Armiyawo Shaibu, former Greater Accra Regional Manager of Islamic Education Unit.

Participants deliberated intensively on the subject matter and finally came out with a communique.

**Below is the full communique;**

***COMMUNIQUE ISSUED BY THE NATIONAL MUSLIM STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIVE CONFERENCE ON GOVERNMENT SUGGESTION TO RETURN THE MANAGEMENT AND SUPERVISION OF MISSION SCHOOLS TO RELIGIOUS BODIES***

We Representatives of a cross-section of Muslim organizations drawn from all over the country met in Accra on 10th June, 2017 to deliberate on Government’s suggestion to return mission schools to religious bodies.

Papers were presented by renowned experts in the field of education management, especially its history and how it relates to the subject matter under discussion. Presentations and interventions were also made by prominent educationists and other stakeholders in this field.

After an exhaustive discussion of the matter, the Conference,

**RECALLING** that the Republic of Ghana has been a secular and religiously pluralistic country since its creation;

**AFIRMING** the vital need for religious harmony in our country which has received worldwide acclaim as a model of religious tolerance;

**RECOGNISING** that religious bodies have played a complementary role in Ghana’s educational system;

**AWARE** that following the enactment of the Education Act of 1961 the Republic of Ghana brought all educational institutions under the control and authority of the Ghana Education Service;

**AWARE** that past and current arrangements between Government and Religious Bodies grant substantial autonomy to these bodies in the management and supervision of mission schools;

**CONCERNED** that the complementary role religious bodies play in Ghana’s educational system should promote national cohesion and unity;

**RECALLING** a recent suggestion by the Honourable Minister of Education carried in the Daily Graphic of May 17, 2017 to return the supervision and management of mission schools to the missions,

## Arrived at the following positions:

1. We have taken note of the argument in favour of the return of mission schools to religious bodies, especially with regard to what is seen as a deterioration in the moral fabric of society, especially among Ghanaian youth. The argument that a solution to this problem is for mission schools to be returned to religious bodies is misplaced. Tackling the problem of moral decadence has to take into account not necessarily our educational institutions, but other probably more important agencies of socialization and acculturation such as the family, the media, especially television, some internet platforms, society at large, and even religious bodies. Each of these has contributed to the present state of affairs, and there is the need for a holistic approach to the problem.
2. The immediate post-independence political leadership in Ghana had good reason for placing mission schools under the direction of the state. Our national development goals as well as global challenges require that our educational system should create intellectually and spiritually well-balanced individuals with the requisite skills, knowledge, aptitude and values for both self-actualization and for national development. National development goals in the context of global challenges do not necessarily coincide with the agenda of religious bodies.
3. State control over the education system has over the years ensured a common national purpose, taking into account our cultural, religious and ethnic diversity. This has largely accounted for the enduring national cohesion that Ghana has enjoyed over the decades. It has created and sustained the relevant antibodies that have warded off the familiar cancerous bigotry and ensured national unity in an otherwise turbulent sub region.
4. It is important to point out that in the decades that government has been in charge of our schools, including the mission schools, national resources have been pumped into the development of these schools irrespective of their religious orientations, alumni of various religious persuasions have also made considerable financial and other contributions towards the development of these schools including the mission schools. Wherein lies the justice or wisdom in disregarding all these healthy developments that inure so positively to national unity and cohesion?
5. We appreciate the role that religious bodies have played over the years in providing education to the Ghanaian citizenry. We equally recognize the fact that the present status quo of government control over mission schools is the right formula for our complex religious and ethnic chemistry. We should not proffer solutions where there are no problems.
6. In light of the above, it is our considered position that the suggestion or demand to return mission schools to religious bodies is completely misplaced and untenable.
7. The Government should as a matter of urgency commence public consultations and discussions on the current partnership arrangements between the Government and

Religious Bodies on the involvement of religious bodies in the management and supervision of mission schools with the view to streamlining or reviewing the current arrangements.

8. Finally, it is also our considered position that any review of the current partnership arrangements should respect and safeguard the

religious rights (including the rights to religious and cultural identity) of all Ghanaian citizens regardless of religious persuasion, and in particular, should consider the introduction and implementation of targeted interventions to address the peculiar needs of historically marginalized or deprived mission schools.

# Returning of Government-Assisted Mission Schools to Religious Bodies in Ghana

## - My Candid Opinion

By HARUNA ZAGOON-SAYEED (EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BPI)

The recent announcement by the Minister of Education that the government is considering handing over Mission Schools to the Religious Bodies in the country has been received with mixed feelings. While some religious groups are hailing the idea, others including some educational experts have not been very much enthused about the whole concept of relegating fully the critical pre-tertiary educational management and supervision to the religious bodies. There is no point to belabour the fact that our religious bodies especially the churches have played and still play a significant role in the enhancement of holistic education in the country. Our religious bodies have established schools, helped in moulding Ghanaians with moral training in schools, and have partnered government to provide quality education for Ghanaian children

over the years. Today, most of the best schools in the country especially at the second cycle level were first established by the religious missions and later taken over by government.

Indeed, since these mission schools became government-assisted, there has been partnership between government and the religious bodies in the area of management, supervision, and particularly in the area of moral training. This productive relationship between government and the mission schools brought about the establishment of the religious educational units which were expected to operate within the armpit of the Ghana Education Service which is statutorily mandated with pre-tertiary educational management and supervision in the country. There was a good relationship between the GES and the educational units in the area of management and supervision until the past decade when the relationship between the units and GES started deteriorating. The GES has clashed with the educational units in the area of control especially the posting and transfer of teachers. Sometimes teachers are transferred from one mission school to the other without the consent of the regional manager of the particular unit. This has



*Students of Anisa Senior High School*

created some tension between the GES and the educational units.

Moreover, the religious bodies have complained for a very long time that the dose of religious education in our pre-tertiary educational curriculum is inadequate and that there is the need to do more of the pastoral contents on the curriculum. For instance, during the 1987 educational reforms, the Catholic Secretariat in a letter to the Ghana Education Service/ Ministry of Education had complained that the content of the basic education did not have enough religious studies in it; and that deficiency would adversely affect the moral and spiritual training of the pupils. Educationists have always appreciated moral training as necessary compliments for acquiring excellence in education but have also insisted that teaching morals through extra-curricular activities is more effective rather than making moral education an academic activity.



**DR MATTHEW OPOKU-PREMPEH, HON.  
MINISTER OF EDUCATION**

In all this, I am of the candid opinion that there is the need to strengthen the already existing partnership between the GES and the religious bodies in the area of management, supervision and moral training in our pre-tertiary schools as the 2016 election manifesto of the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) suggests. The NPP manifesto states: “We will build an effective partnership with religious bodies, civic organisations and the private sector in the delivery of quality education. This partnership will also include the areas of management, supervision and the training of teachers in their units”. Additionally, the manifesto states that: “The NPP will strengthen the participation of Missions in the Mission-founded schools. We believe this will ensure the return of discipline and moral upbringing to our schools”. I like the way the manifesto places emphasis on partnership and the strengthening of that relationship between government and the Missions regarding the provision of holistic education.

However, what is stated in the NPP 2016 election manifesto does not imply a wholesale return of mission schools to the religious bodies. I will go for strengthened and well-outlined complimentary roles between the government through the Ghana Education Service and the religious bodies in the area of provision of holistic education for Ghanaian children without tilting the absolute control of schools to the religious bodies. Article 25(1) of the 1992 Constitution of the republic makes it imperative for government to provide education to all Ghanaians and that responsibility cannot be delegated to civic



**HARUNA ZAGOON-SAYEED (EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BPI)**

society groups. Public mandated agencies in education such as the GES must be at the forefront of our educational pursuit as

a country, whiles civic organizations such as the religious bodies come on board in supporting roles, not the other way round.

I am hundred percent in favour of the government giving the religious bodies adequate space in our educational system to inculcate moral training, discipline and more importantly, the fear of God into our children, but I hold the strong conviction that this can be done without surrendering that constitutional responsibility to a third party. We should guard against any arrangement that will threaten our national cohesion, limit the already limited educational access to the underprivileged in our society, and render the mandated institutions such as the Ghana Education Service ineffective. This will be a great disaster for our country.

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