

La Sapienza Open School of Excellence, Ghana:

Education beyond the barriers

Every day, we hear the cry of people; among these the subtle, often inaudible but painful cry of hundreds, even thousands of children to go to school. They may be roaming the streets, located in outskirts or barred in some ways from accessing education; yet, the desire to go to school and learn is never lost. Like all other children, they have huge talents that need to be developed, aspirations that need inspiration, dreams that need to be nurtured; and they look forward to each of us for the opportunity to be reborn.



It is quite worrying that in this day and age, many children of school-going age do not have access to basic formal education. Well, this the case of many children in the Nkwanta North District of Ghana. In some cases, there is no school where these children live and those who cannot trek several miles to other communities for school are automatically denied access to education. There are also situations in which children are unable to attend school because they have nobody to take responsibility for their education. Besides, the desire of some parents, especially foster parents to engage their children in farming and other activities to supplement family incomes make it difficult for them to allow these children to attend school full time. Consequently, many children who find themselves in these situations have given up their hope of ever going to school. However, with the establishment of La Sapienza Open school of excellence, their hopes have bounced back alive and stronger. The challenge however is how to mobilize enough funds to support this laudable humanitarian initiative.

La Sapienza open school of excellence is an educational initiative of the Franciscan Capuchin Friars, Ghana Mission. Established in November, 2021, the school seeks to provide comprehensive, quality basic education to children of school going age who by no fault of



theirs are unable to access formal education. The curriculum incorporates a blended learning approach with emphasis on acquiring literacy, numeracy and life skills. In addition to the usual subjects taught in schools, the curriculum includes “Integral Optimism” – a specific subject designed to foster Heart-Mind well-being of the children. Another specialty of the initiative is that it uses Open Educational Resources that are

predominantly audiovisuals. It was designed to be fully online so that learners can access their learning materials and interact with them anywhere, anytime. Unfortunately, this requires the procurement and installation of costly digital infrastructure, which the Capuchin Friars are unable to meet. Learners are therefore still obliged to converge physically in order to access learning contents.

With initial support from the Commonwealth of Learning (CoL), twenty-four (24) children from three different villages were enrolled into the program and are progressing steadily. However, the enrolment has not increased, albeit, there are still many children willing to benefit from the

intervention. This is because enrolling more children has huge financial implication in terms of cost of implementation. Our ability to sustain the program, expand it for more children to benefit fully and procure the needed digital infrastructure to make it fully online is critical to achieving our overall goal of assisting children of school-going age but who are currently out of school to access basic education in a more flexible way.

