



STRATEGIC PLAN

September 2023 – 2026

Our Roadmap for the Next Three Years



Think Education, July 2023

This document presents Think Education's Strategic Plan and Theory of Change for September 2023 - September 2026.

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Think Education - Strategic Plan 2023–2026

Our Roadmap for the Next Three Years

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Executive Summary

Think Education's Strategic Plan for 2023-2026 reflects our unwavering commitment to improving access to quality education by empowering low-cost private schools (LCPS) through strengthened school management, administrative, and operational systems. This comprehensive strategic plan serves as a roadmap for our efforts over the next three years, guiding us towards the holistic development, empowerment, and transformation of low-cost private schools into centres of excellence where all children have equal opportunities to access quality education and thrive.

Aligned with our vision, this strategic plan is a robust framework and focus for all Think Education's programs and operations during the next three years. Our strategy revolves around six key focus areas:

- Support partner schools to leverage technology in school management and administration practices
- Support partner schools to improve sustainability and accountability
- Build capacity and professional development within LCPS through communities of practice, continuous professional development for staff and school leaders
- Strengthen the technical and institutional capacity of Think Education
- Strengthen business development efforts and maintaining a sustainable financial model
- Strengthen governance and alignment with legal requirements

We understand that our impact is magnified through strategic partnerships and engagement. We will actively engage with low-cost private schools, school leaders, administrators, teachers, government agencies, civil society organizations, and children and youth to foster a comprehensive ecosystem that supports quality education provision in low-cost private schools. By building strong relationships with low-cost private schools and the different stakeholders, forging alliances with government agencies, civil society, and community organizations, and involving children and youth in decision-making processes, we will collectively work towards sustainable and empowered low-cost private schools that provide inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all children.

As we embark on this transformative journey, Think Education remains committed to leveraging our strengths, building on our achievements, and deepening our impact. Together with our partners, we will create a brighter future where all children have access to quality education, fostering a generation of individuals who are able to contribute meaningfully to the future of Ghana and beyond.

Our Vision

We envision a future where every child has equal opportunities to access quality education and thrive, by empowering low-cost private schools to become centers of excellence and fostering a transformative educational ecosystem in Ghana.

Our Mission

Our mission is to strengthen low-cost private schools in low-income communities across Ghana by providing comprehensive support in school management, administration, and operations. We are committed to empowering these schools to become centres of excellence, ensuring every child has access to quality education and the opportunity to reach their full potential

Our Values

Innovation: We embrace innovative approaches to drive meaningful change and achieve better results.

Collaboration: We actively engage in co-designing and codeveloping appropriate solutions with our low-cost private school partners, fostering sustainability and ownership of interventions.

Community: We seek to build networks and partnerships, fostering a sense of collective problem-solving.

Commitment: We approach everything with unwavering dedication, being fully committed to our vision, mission, culture, and success.

Lifelong Learning: We possess a genuine curiosity and desire to learn. We continuously seek opportunities to stretch ourselves, acquire knowledge from others, and share our own expertise.

Accountability: We hold ourselves to high standards of performance and impact.

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Think Education works towards achieving the 2023 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Specifically, SDG Goal 4 (Quality Education) and Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities).



SDG 4: Quality Education

Target 4.1

By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, **equitable and quality primary and secondary education** leading to relevant and Goal-4 effective learning outcomes.

Target 4.A

Build and upgrade **education facilities** that are **child, disability and gender sensitive** and **provide safe, nonviolent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all**.



SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities

Target 10.3

Ensure **equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome**, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and **promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard**

Think Education supports the World Bank's assertion that "**providing quality education requires building systems** that deliver a complex service, day after day, in thousands of locations, over the course of many hours, to millions of students. **When schools are managed well, learning happens**".



The World Bank's vision is for all children and youth to be learning and acquiring the skills they need to be productive, fulfilled, and involved citizens and workers. Our focus is on helping teachers at all levels become more effective in facilitating learning, improving technology for learning, strengthening management of schools and systems, while ensuring learners of all ages—from preschool to adulthood—are equipped for success

World Bank Education Overview, 2019

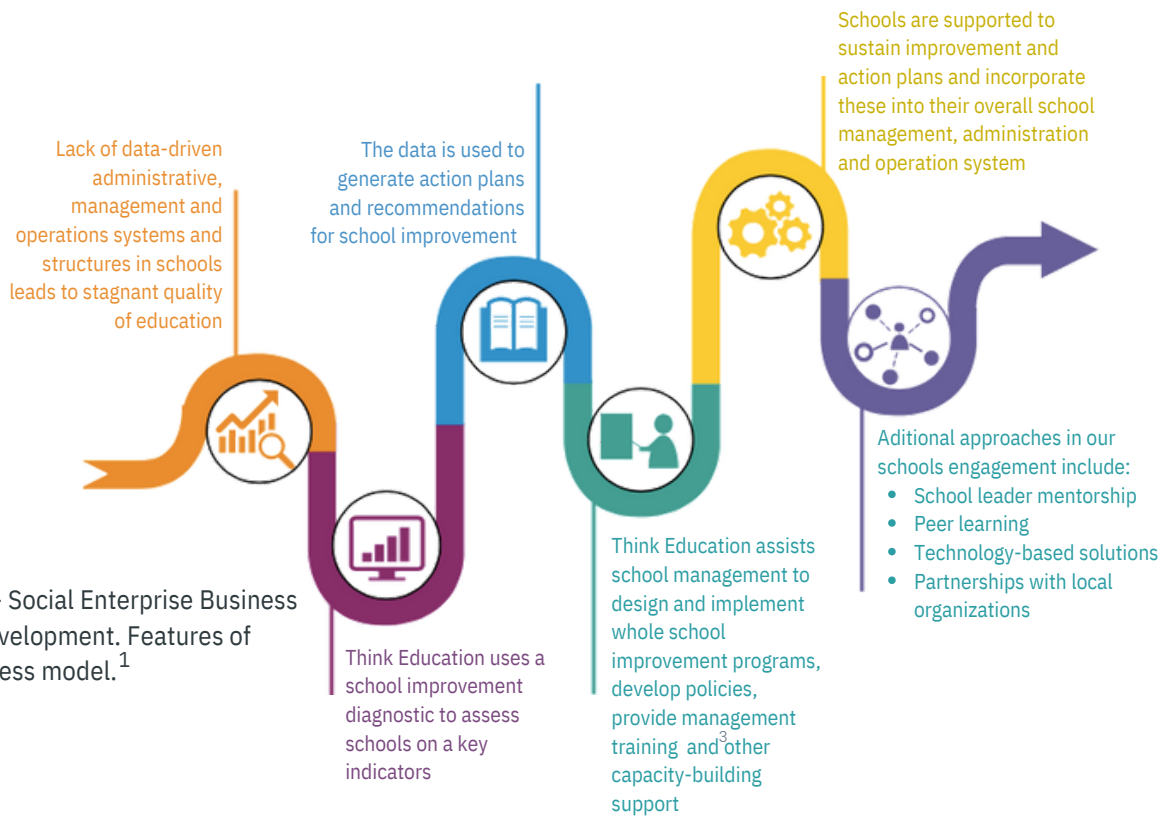


About Think Education & Our Model

Low-cost private schools in low-income communities often lack the resources and support necessary to provide quality education to their students. Think Education is committed to empowering low-cost private schools across Ghana. Our goal is to enable these schools to provide a quality education that enables students to thrive. We achieve this through holistic school improvement and advisory programs that provide schools with the tools they need to improve their school's management, administration and operations.

Our programs are designed to be flexible and responsive to the needs of our partner schools. We engage with school leaders to identify key priorities and areas for development. We then co-design context-specific solutions with the schools, drawing on our expertise in school administration and management. Once solutions have been implemented, we monitor and evaluate progress to ensure that the schools are achieving their desired outcomes.

We follow a data-driven approach to identify areas of improvement and co-design context-based solutions with the schools.



Adapted from:
Reaching the Last Mile - Social Enterprise Business Models for Inclusive Development. Features of school evaluation business model.¹

¹ Tinsley, Elaine A.; Agapitova, Natalia. *Reaching the last mile: social enterprise business models for inclusive development*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group

Our model involves assessing the current situation in schools across key areas: **finance management, staff recruitment and development, parent and community engagement, and student outcomes**. Based on the data collected, we provide recommendations and co-design action plans with school leaders. Our engagement with partner schools' result in developing customized policies, whole-school improvement plans, training and capacity-building programs with school management, administration and teachers, and fostering a network of peers committed to learning, sharing and collaborating with one another.

We monitor progress at specific intervals to ensure that the action plans are implemented effectively, leading to sustainable improvements in the quality of education provided to improve student outcomes.

Our programs are centered around four main areas.

NETWORKING AND COLLABORATION

We foster a community of collaboration and knowledge-sharing among schools, enabling them to learn from one another's experiences and best practices

ADVISORY SUPPORT

We offer ongoing advisory support to schools, assisting them in developing effective operational systems, financial management, and governance structures.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

We use regular assessments to track the progress and impact of our programs with our partner schools and identify areas of improvement.

CAPACITY BUILDING

We offer targeted capacity-building and professional development programs for school leaders and administrators, including workshops, mentoring, and training. Through these initiatives, we improve their knowledge and practices in various school management, administration and operational functions.

What's the Landscape of Low-Cost Private Schools in Ghana?

According to the Ghana Education Sector Annual Review, during the 2017/2018 academic year, out of 75,740 Schools, 34,123 were privately owned (45.1%). These privately-owned educational institutions are educating over 8 million students and employing more than 400,000 persons across Ghana. Out of the 34,123 private schools, about 80% provide basic education to school-going children, and more than half of the private basic education providers serve children from low-income communities. Within this context, private school market share has been growing steadily throughout Ghana in response to gaps in access and quality of public schools. Between 2009 and 2015, private school enrollment as a share of total educational enrollment grew from 18% to 25%.²

Low-cost private schools (LCPS) have increasingly become a viable alternative in many developing countries, including Ghana, that cannot meet the demand for quality primary education. These schools provide a schooling option for working class and marginalized families that desire a higher quality education for their children but cannot afford medium and higher-cost private education.

In Ghana, their numbers have grown steadily because although many parents desire some level of quality education, they cannot access public schools for reasons like them being located out of reach or being overcrowded. Available state-owned public schools are inadequate to enroll all children of school-going age. Therefore, proprietors/owners of LCPS in Ghana – who are largely local social entrepreneurs who have established and run a school within their communities in response to local education needs - are vital contributors to the education of an important cohort of the population.³

A report prepared for the International Finance Corporation (IFC) in 2010, however, indicated how most private schools in Ghana were limited in their ability to provide quality education services due to their lack of access to appropriate advisory services to help them improve on their operations.⁴ The situation is even more critical for low-fee private schools that are often located in and serve lower-middle-income and low-income populations. These schools are unable to receive needed advisory services enjoyed by the well-resourced middle and upper-income schools.

² Ministry of Education. *Education Sector Progress Report (ESPR)*. 2018.

³ IDP Foundation. *ToR for Post COVID-19 Impact Assessment of Low Fee Private Schools*. July 2020

⁴ CDC Consult Limited. *Final Ghana Country Report: Market Research Project on Low-Income Private Schools*. Prepared for the International Finance Corporation (IFC). 2010

The main causes of issues impacting the quality of education provided by low-cost private schools are:⁵

- Existing policy and regulatory frameworks for LCPSs are weak, and those that are in place cater primarily to the public sector.
- Many proprietors lack adequate knowledge and skills in school leadership and management, particularly those related to planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation.
- Most proprietors of LCPSs are unable to hire enough qualified teachers due to issues of cost and available supply.
- Many LCPSs do not have the knowledge and capacity to mobilize sufficient resources to run their schools adequately, resulting in a heavy reliance on tuition paid by learners.
- Weak and inadequate data on LCPSs, including information on the share of private schools that are considered low-cost, the location of LCPSs, and the number of children they serve, making it difficult for education stakeholders to integrate the needs of LCPSs into their strategic plans.
- Like public schools in Ghana, LCPSs in Ghana are confronted with issues related to safety, security, and child protection.
- Inadequate integration of LCPSs into the mainstream government system and inadequate government support for LCPSs despite their critical role in educating children in Ghana.
- LCPSs lack the critical physical and digital infrastructure (e.g., WASH infrastructure, libraries, classrooms) to support learning.

⁵ USAID. *Leveraging Low-Cost Private Schools In Northern Ghana: Exploring Private Sector Partnerships To Support Education For All*. November 2021.

Critical change levers that could enhance the quality of education at LCPSs in Ghana include:⁶

- Strengthening and building the capacity of school leadership and management for better management of the LCPSs to improve the school environment and enhance learning outcomes.
- Revising the regulatory framework for overseeing private schools so that it can respond to the needs of LCPSs and support them in delivering quality education to Ghanaian children.
- Identify and promote models to increase financial inclusion to ensure access to capital for development and sustainability of LCPSs.
- Strengthening the capacity of teachers in LCPSs by training unqualified teachers and providing continuous professional development (CPD).
- Developing platforms to increase accountability of LCPS proprietors and schools' operations to parents and the government.
- Developing data and information management systems to foster informed decision-making in support of the LCPS sector.
- Creating a safe, secure, and friendly school environment for all.
- Leverage partnerships with development partners and civil society organizations to strengthen the capacities of LCPSs to deliver improved learning outcomes.

⁶ USAID. *Leveraging Low-Cost Private Schools In Northern Ghana: Exploring Private Sector Partnerships To Support Education For All*. November 2021.

Activities to Date

January 2021 - August 2023



School-Specific Training and Capacity Building

Our school-specific training is customized and targeted programs by Think Education to address the unique needs and challenges faced by individual low-cost private schools. In the past, we have designed interventions to address high turnover and a simplified, integrated financial system.

Workshops and Communities of Practice

Think Education has conducted workshops to provide capacity-building and training for school leaders and administrators, in areas such as financial management, record-keeping and effective school-community relations.



Knowledge Resources

Think Education has developed and shared various resources such as a comprehensive guide to Covid-19 school reopening and quarterly manuals on effective school management, administration and operational practices

Leadership Immersion Program

An experiential learning program where university students serve as junior consultants, working closely with Think Education's partner low-cost private schools to identify and address management, administrative, and operational challenges. Students conduct needs assessments, co-design innovative interventions, and implement action plans to support improvements in these schools.



Better Schools Project

A 12-month initiative to develop efficient processes in staff and teacher recruitment, records management and bookkeeping and parent engagement in partnership with select low-cost private schools.



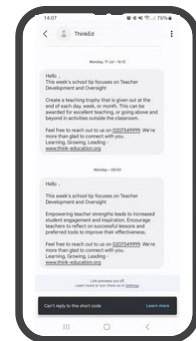
Record-Keeping and Management Activity

Think Education is currently running this project, whose objective is to assist school leaders in implementing an efficient digital system for record-keeping and management. The goal is to improve the ability of partner schools to maintain accurate records and data, ultimately leading to improved school operations and decision-making.



Weekly Tips on School Management and Administration

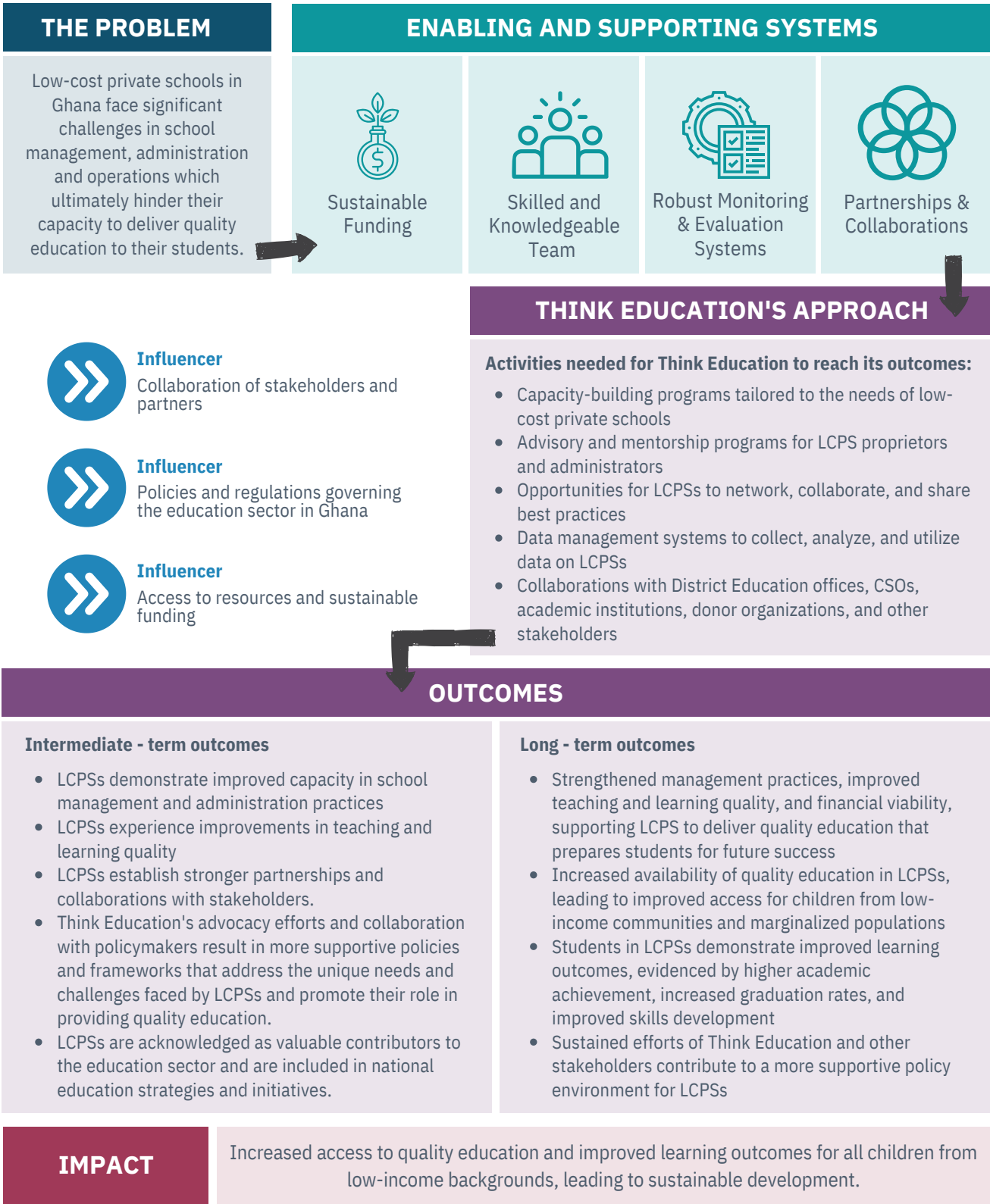
Think Education sends out short and practical pieces of guidance each week aimed at helping school leaders and administrators improve their effectiveness in managing their schools' operations, financial matters, staff, and other administrative tasks.



To date, Think Education's programs and initiatives have impacted over 600 educators and 5,500 schoolchildren.

Over the next three years, Think Education is committed to doubling its impact among educators and schoolchildren in low-cost private schools.

Think Education's Theory of Change



What Are The Goals Think Education Has Set

Programmatic Priorities

Goal Area 1

Support partner schools to **leverage technology** in school management and administration practices

Goal Area 2

Support partner schools to **improve sustainability and accountability**

Goal Area 3

Build capacity and professional development within LCPS through communities of practice, continuous professional development for staff and school leaders

Operational Priorities

Goal Area 4

Strengthen the technical and institutional capacity of Think Education

Goal Area 5

Strengthen business development efforts and maintaining a **sustainable financial model**

Goal Area 6

Strengthen **governance and alignment with legal requirements**

Goal Area 1

Support partner schools to leverage technology in school management and administration practices

Many low-cost private schools (LCPS) lack access to modern technologies that could enhance their efficiency and effectiveness in school management and administration. By leveraging technology, these schools can improve record-keeping, student performance tracking, human resource administration, and financial management.



Photo Credit: Skizaa Education

Milestones by 2026

- 20 partner schools have successfully implemented a school management system, improving their administrative efficiency and decision-making.
- Digital school fee collection is operational in 20 partner schools.
- Collaborations with technology providers, resulting in tailored and sustainable technology solutions for 20 partner schools.

Indicative Activities

To support partner schools to **leverage technology in school management and administration practices**, Think Education will undertake the following activities:

- **Implement a school management system:** Think Education will work with partner schools to implement a comprehensive school management system to facilitate efficient record-keeping, enabling schools to streamline their administrative processes and make data-driven decisions.
- **Digitalising the school fee collection process:** In partnering with an Edtech provider, Think Education will support schools in adopting digital school fee collection methods. This will improve fee management efficiency, enhance financial transparency, and reduce administrative burdens for both schools and parents.
- **Collaborate with technology providers:** Think Education will collaborate with other education technology providers and partners to identify and implement sustainable and accessible solutions for schools.

Goal Area 2

Support partner schools to improve sustainability and accountability

To ensure the sustainability of low-cost private schools, it is essential to address various aspects of their operations. Think Education will support schools to strengthen their governance, align their schools with policies and government initiatives, foster parent-community engagement, and develop financial sustainability plans.



Milestones by 2026

- 10 partner schools have developed sustainability plans, enabling them to diversify revenue streams and maintain financial stability.
- Community engagement initiatives have been successfully implemented in 10 partner schools, strengthening ties between the school and its stakeholders.
- Staff in 10 partner schools have undergone training to improve their schools' sustainability and accountability practices.

Indicative Activities

To support partner schools in improving **sustainability and accountability**, Think Education will undertake the following activities:

- **Sustainability planning:** Think Education will collaborate with partners and technical experts to offer training programs on financial management and sustainability planning for school administrators, enhancing their financial literacy and management skills.
- **Strengthening parent-community engagement:** Partner schools will be supported in facilitating strong and meaningful relationships with parents and the local community.
- **Governance systems establishment:** Think Education will support schools in establishing systems that promote effective decision-making and accountability within the school management structure.

Goal Area 3

Capacity building and professional development: communities of practice, continuous professional development for staff and school leaders

Building the capacity of school staff and leaders is crucial for sustainable educational improvement. Think Education will support schools in building leadership and staff capacities, continuous professional development opportunities and knowledge-sharing platforms to promote staff's growth and enhance teaching and leadership competencies.



Milestones by 2026

- 150 school leaders and staff have participated in relevant training sessions and workshops, enhancing their leadership and teaching competencies.
- 4 communities of practice have been established, facilitating knowledge-sharing and peer learning among school leaders and administrators.
- CPD framework and adaptable SOPs are in place and used by 10 schools to guide school practices.
- 5 partner schools have participated in school mentorship program

Indicative Activities

To support partner schools in building **leadership and staff capacities and professional development**, Think Education will undertake the following activities:

- **Training and workshops:** Think Education will offer training sessions and workshops to enhance the skills of school staff and leaders.
- **Establish communities of practice:** Think Education will facilitate the creation of communities of practice to enable knowledge-sharing and peer learning among school leaders and administrators.
- **CPD framework:** Think Education will develop an adaptable and low-resource Continuous Professional Development (CPD) framework to be used by schools.
- **Develop adaptable SOPs:** Think Education will develop flexible and resource-efficient Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that schools can adopt to guide their school management, administrative, and operational practices.
- **Mentoring and coaching:** Think Education will strengthen its school mentorship program for school leaders and staff to learn from successful educational practices in other settings.

Goal Area 4

Strengthening technical and institutional capacity of Think Education

As Think Education recognizes the importance of building a strong foundation within the organization itself with the right people, systems, and processes to support its growth and achieve its goals. Strengthening technical and institutional capacity will enable Think Education to seize strategic opportunities, ensure sustainability, and achieve impact within the education sector.



Milestones by 2026

- All organizational policies have been reviewed and updated, ensuring alignment with best practices and the organization's mission.
- All Think Education staff have access to outlined annual professional and capacity development opportunities.
- A clear program evaluation and learning system is in place, enabling evidence-based decision-making and continuous improvement of programs.

Indicative Activities

To strengthen our **technical and institutional capacity**, Think Education will undertake the following activities:

- **Capacity building:** Think Education will prioritise building the capacity of its team members, which may include providing professional development opportunities, training, and mentorship programs to enhance staff skills and expertise.
- **Organizational policy review and update:** Think Education will regularly review its policies to ensure they align with best practices and support its mission and goals.
- **Program evaluation and learning:** Think Education will strengthen our approach to program evaluation and learning. This will involve regularly assessing the effectiveness of our programs and using the findings to make data-driven decisions and improve future initiatives.

Goal Area 5

Strengthening business development efforts and maintaining a sustainable financial model

Think Education will augment its financial efforts and create a more stable and sustainable revenue stream. This will include generating revenue through research, consulting, and offering implementation services to organizations and institutions willing to invest in educational improvements, particularly in the low-cost private school sector.



Milestones by 2026

- Tangible evidence of payment by low-cost private schools for Think Education's services showcasing the value and impact of its initiatives.
- Think Education has two secured revenue-generating partnerships providing research, consulting, and/or implementation services.
- The grant pipeline is continuously updated, and Think Education has successfully secured \$50,000 in grants to support its projects and initiatives.

Indicative Activities

To strengthen our **business development** efforts and maintain a **sustainable financial model**, Think Education will undertake the following activities:

- **Develop a compelling pricing framework and payment options** that align with the schools' needs and realities, ensuring affordability and accessibility.
- **Rollout of business development interns:** Think Education will recruit students studying courses related to finance and/or entrepreneurship to be engaged in actively identifying business development opportunities with organizations and institutions interested in investing in educational improvements.
- **Maintain an updated grant pipeline:** Think Education will maintain a pipeline of potential grant opportunities to support its initiatives and projects.
- **Identify and schedule meetings with potential partners:** Think Education will proactively identify potential partners and schedule meetings to explore collaboration opportunities.

Goal Area 6

Strengthening governance, alignment with regulatory requirements and national education policies

Think Education will prioritize strengthening its governance structures and practices, and compliance with legal requirements ensuring that it operates with transparency, accountability, and strategic focus. Think Education will also actively align its initiatives with national education policies to position itself as a valued partner in supporting the broader national education agenda.



Milestones by 2026

- Think Education has recruited an advisory board, developed a comprehensive board handbook, and held at least 3 board meetings each year.
- Think Education is fully compliant and has set up an internal system to ensure continuous compliance with all legal requirements, including registration, reporting, and financial transparency.
- A collaborative relationship has been established with district education offices and private school desk officers, enabling the alignment of Think Education's initiatives with national education policies and district-level priorities.

Indicative Activities

To **strengthen our technical and institutional capacity**, Think Education will undertake the following activities:

- **Setup of an advisory board:** Think Education will recruit an advisory board consisting of individuals with diverse expertise and experiences relevant to Think Education's mission and goals.
- **Internal compliance checklist:** Implement an internal compliance checklist and system to serve as a guide to regularly review and assess Think Education's compliance with all relevant legal and regulatory requirements.
- Engage and collaborate with district education offices and private school desk officers to understand and align Think Education's initiatives and interventions with national education policies and district-level priorities, and earmarked performance indicators.

Working With Our Partners and Stakeholders

We recognize that our mission to improve quality education provision in low-cost private schools (LCPS) relies heavily on our strong and collaborative partnerships with our various stakeholders. As we move forward with our strategic plan, we are committed to initiating and deepening our engagement through various strategies

Partner Low-Cost Private Schools

Think Education will actively collaborate with low-cost private schools, recognizing them as key stakeholders in our mission to improve education access to quality education. Through a participatory approach, Think Education will engage school leaders, proprietors, and administrators to identify areas of improvement and co-design context-specific solutions. Regular communication channels, networking events, and communities of practice will provide the platform to facilitate ongoing knowledge-sharing, experience exchange, and support among partner schools.

Government Agencies (including District Education Offices/District Private School Desk Officers):

Think Education recognizes the significance of collaborating with government agencies to maximize the impact of its initiatives. Through regular communication and advocacy efforts, Think Education will seek to align its programs with national education policies and frameworks. Engaging District Education Offices and Private School Desk Officers will facilitate collaboration on capacity-building initiatives and developing a supportive policy environment for low-cost private schools.

Associations of Private Schools (Ghana National Association of Private Schools, Ghana National Council of Private Schools)

Think Education will actively engage with associations of private schools to create avenues for collaboration and knowledge sharing. We will participate in conferences, workshops and other initiatives and contribute expertise while benefiting from the collective wisdom of the broader private school community. Building strong relationships with these associations will enhance Think Education's reach and impact, enabling us to work collaboratively towards common goals.

Government Agencies (including District Education Offices/District Private School Desk Officers):

Think Education recognizes the value of partnering with civil society organizations and NGOs to leverage resources and expertise. By actively seeking opportunities for collaboration, joint research, and advocacy efforts, Think Education will amplify its impact and extend its reach. These partnerships will enable Think Education to tap into additional funding opportunities, expand its capacity-building programs, and advocate for quality education provision across diverse contexts.

