

Navigating the Nuances: Unlocking the Francophone West Africa Student Pipeline

Understand → Partner → Empower



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Who in this room currently
recruits or advises students
from Francophone
systems?”



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Why Francophone West Africa Matters:

Fastest-growing youth population.

Under-representation in global recruitment despite strong talent.

The gap between potential and opportunity.

“What’s one word that comes to mind when you hear *Francophone education*?”



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Understanding the Landscape:

National Francophone Education System

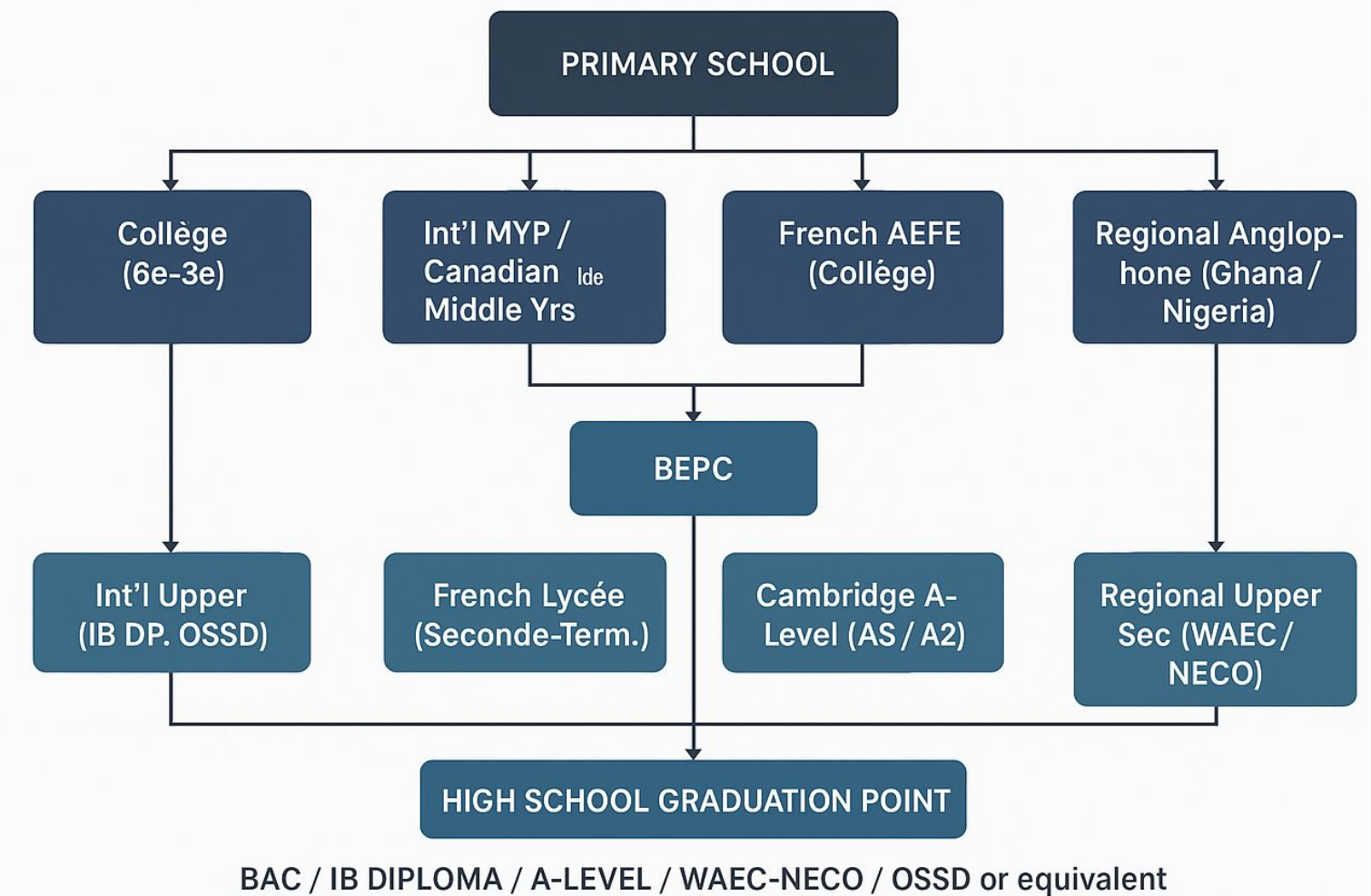
Transition to International Curricula After Primary

Transition to International Curricula After BEPC

Regional English-speaking Curricula (WAEC, NECO, etc.)

Canadian-Endorsed Curricula

Student Pathways in Francophone African Secondary Education



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Understanding the Landscape:

National Francophone Education System

Entry Point:

- **Certificat d'Études Primaires (CEP)** or equivalent.
- **Lower Secondary (Collège)** → typically 4 years (6e to 3e), ends with the **BEPC / O-Level equivalent** (Brevet d'Études du Premier Cycle).
- **Upper Secondary (Lycée)** → typically 3 years (Seconde, Première, Terminale), leading to the **Baccalauréat (BAC)**.

Koffi Mensah

National Curriculum Primary & Collège
(6e–3e) → BEPC → Lycée (Science track)
→ Bac Série D

French (main),
Minimal English Solid science/math
foundation; familiar with French academic
writing; strong exam discipline



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Understanding the Landscape:

Transition to International Curricula After Primary

Transition to International Curricula After BEPC

Motivation and rationale:

- This allows students to secure an international diploma while benefiting from the foundational national system in earlier years.
- It's a popular choice for families that cannot afford full international schooling from primary but can invest for the final 2–3 years to prepare for global university applications.

Awa D

AEFE / French International

AEFE school → Diplôme National du Brevet →
Bac Général ES

French (main), English (subject)

Essay-style reasoning; humanities focus;
familiarity with French higher education
standards

Fatou Bamba

IB Diploma

French lower secondary → IB Middle Years → IB
Diploma (Humanities)

English & French (bilingual)

Critical thinking; essay writing; research skills
(Extended Essay); excellent English



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Understanding the Landscape:

Regional English-speaking Curricula (WAEC, NECO, etc.)

Key Certifications:

- **WAEC** (West African Examinations Council)
- **NECO** (National Examinations Council – Nigeria)

Canadian-Endorsed Curricula

Features:

- Strong emphasis on continuous assessment.
- English-medium instruction.
- University pathways to Canada and other anglophone countries.

Tassigan B

Francophone primary → Canadian secondary
(distance/private) → Ontario Secondary School
Diploma (OSSD)

English (main later), French (early)
Continuous assessment experience; strong English;
adaptable to North American systems

Less familiar with standardized exams; universities
may request SAT/TOEFL

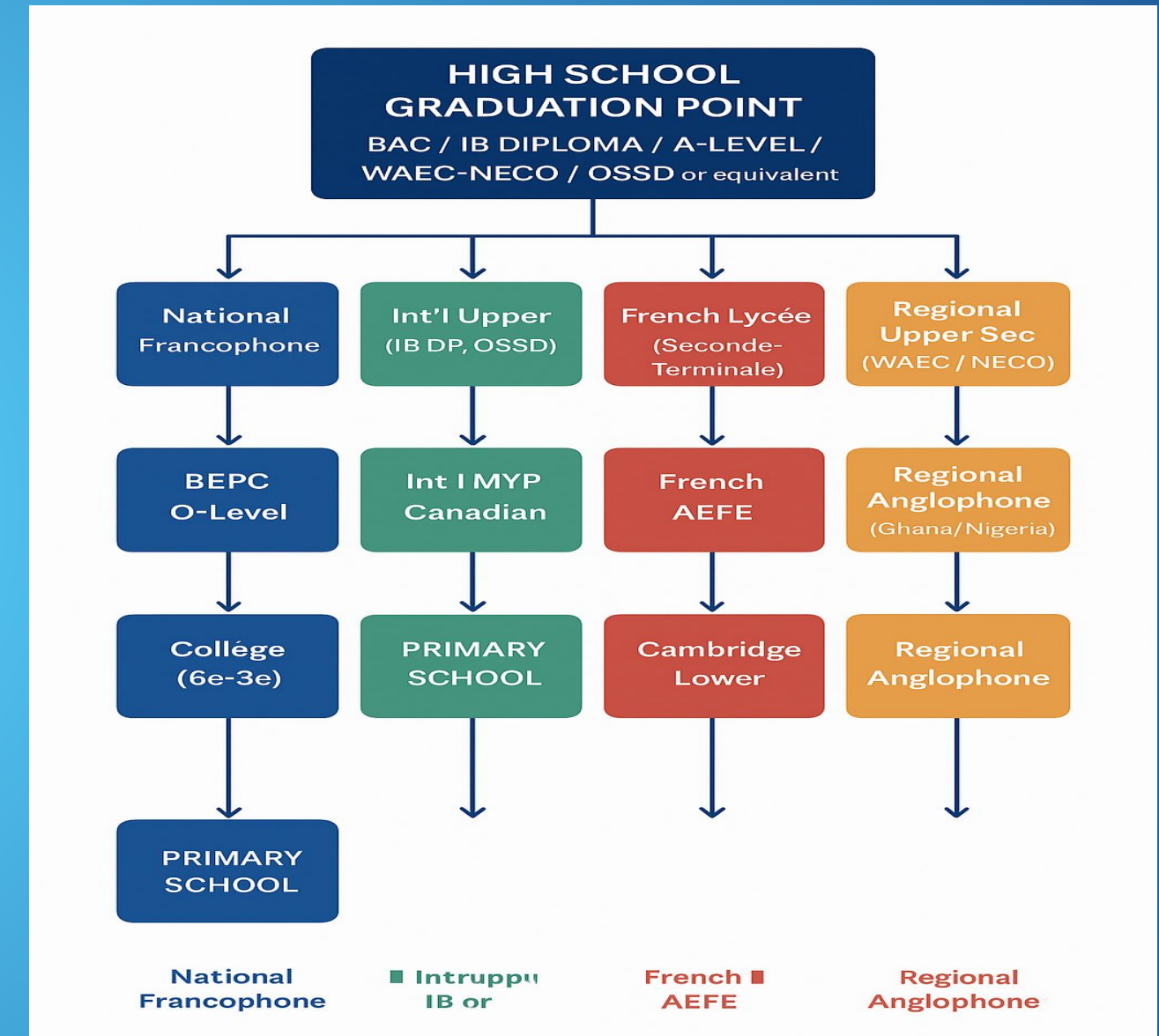


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Understanding the Landscape:

Key Trends

- **Diversification of secondary pathways** is accelerating, especially among middle- and upper-income families.
- The **Baccalauréat** remains dominant, but **alternative credentials** (IB, A-Level, WAEC, OSSD) are increasingly used to **access international higher education**.
- Students transitioning mid-stream (post-primary or post-BEPC) require **targeted academic and language support**, especially when moving from francophone to anglophone systems.



Understanding the Landscape:

Practical Hurdles you could expect

Grading scale differences: National Baccalauréat results are typically on a **/20 scale**, with 10/20 as the pass.

Lack of standardized GPA conversion across systems makes quick comparisons difficult.

Limited clarity on grade inflation: some private schools (especially Cambridge or Canadian-affiliated) may have more generous grading than national system.

Non-Academic Factors and Documentation Gaps

- Some schools may lack **detailed transcripts**, course descriptions, or **predicted grades (not a common practice)**, especially for students from public national systems.
- **Incomplete documentation** (e.g. missing BEPC certificate, no official translation, or absence of school profile) delays processing.
- **Limited access to extracurricular activities or references** in some contexts can make holistic assessment harder.



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Understanding the Landscape:

Practical Hurdles you could expect

- **Academic calendars** in Francophone Africa differ from those in the Northern Hemisphere:
 - Baccalauréat results often come out in **July–August**, leaving little time for September intakes.
- Some international schools also **issue results late** (e.g. WAEC results in August).
- This affects **visa timelines**, scholarship deadlines, and enrollment confirmation dates.

Non-Academic Factors and Documentation Gaps

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Understanding the Landscape:

Parents and Tutors

- Limited English proficiency often rely on translators
- Aspiration vs affordability
 - Often dream of popular renown universities
 - Feel confused with rankings
 - Many have not schooled abroad themselves
 - In some cases are not literate and rely on a tutor (home English teacher) to explain and advice
 - Do not master financial planning for university courses

Schools

- Some schools may lack **detailed transcripts**, course descriptions, or **predicted grades (not a common practice)**, especially for students from public national systems.
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How do we building effective partnerships

Partnering with International and Bilingual Schools

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- Participate in existing career fairs and virtual events organized by AEFE networks, Cambridge schools, or IB schools.
- Offer targeted workshops on scholarships, application strategies, and program portfolios.
- Create early engagement programs (e.g., summer schools, virtual lectures)

The British School of Lome and the International School of Ouagadougou experience



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How do we building effective partnerships

The British School of Lome and the International School of Ouagadougou experience



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How do we building effective partnerships

Collaborate with CBOs, Youth Hubs & Language Centers

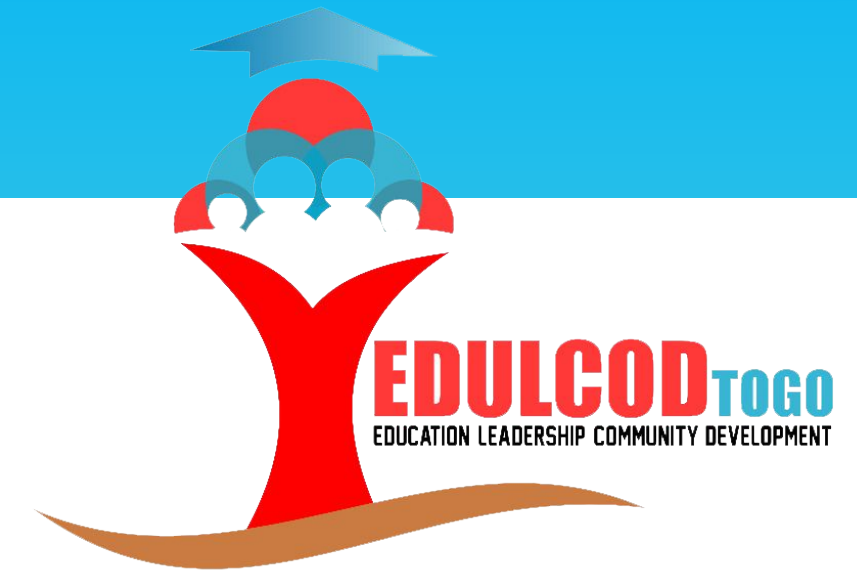
In many Francophone countries, **Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)** and **private academies** fill the gap left by the absence of formal career counsellors.

Universities could:

- Identify and **train CBO staff** as *university liaisons* or *student advisors*.
- Offer “**Pathways to International Universities**” **info sessions** in partnership with English centers and youth innovation hubs.
- Sponsor **public speaking or leadership competitions** that align with university recruitment objectives.



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Collaborate with CBOs

The EDULCOD experience in Togo



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EDULCOD-Togo



EDULCOD-Togo (Education, Leadership and Community Development in Togo) is a registered community-based organization in Togo (Registration No.: 0621/MATDCL-SG-DLPAP-DOCA) committed to empowering high-achieving, low-income students and underserved communities. Through education, leadership development, and community-driven initiatives, we strive to unlock potential and create lasting change. Our programs focus on **counseling and career guidance, girls' empowerment, and Technology and Innovation**, to equip individuals with the skills, knowledge, and opportunities they need to thrive and contribute meaningfully to their communities.

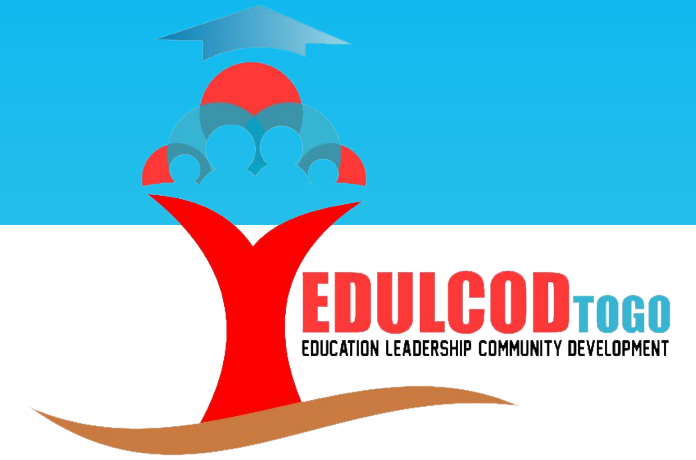


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WHAT DO WE DO ?



Counseling and career Guidance



- ❑ Support High Achieving Low-Income students to get admission to universities, International Programs and Institutes outside Togo on full scholarship.
- ❑ Most of our scholars are the first Togolese to join the programs or the universities internationally .



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University Application Boot-Camps



- ❑ We organize University applications Boot-camps to reach the most disadvantaged communities where brilliant students lack the information about opportunities available.
- ❑ This year we have launched the mobile counseling initiative to create more access in Togo especially in remote places.



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Technology and Innovation

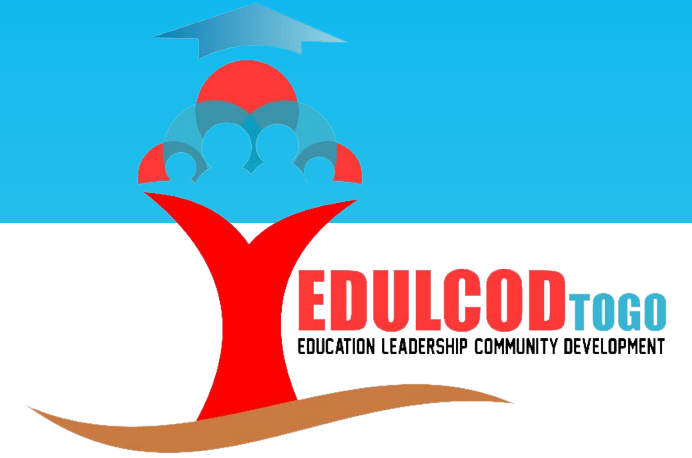


- ❑ Empowering young learners to be competitive at the international job market and opportunities.
- ❑ Many of the HALI students we are working with have hardly or never touched the computer. It's important to give them an intensive training through our STEM Academy.



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Intensive English Language program

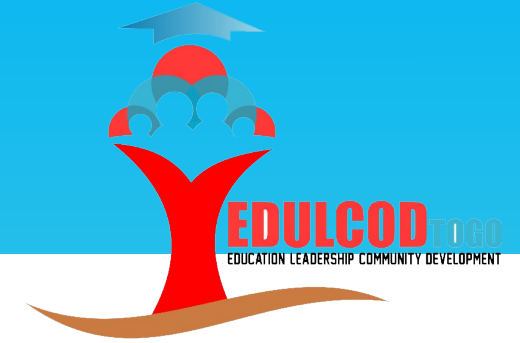


Empowering young learners to be ready for university applications and International tests (TOEFL, IELTS, DET, etc.)



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Girls Empowerment Program



We believe every child deserves access to quality and equal education.

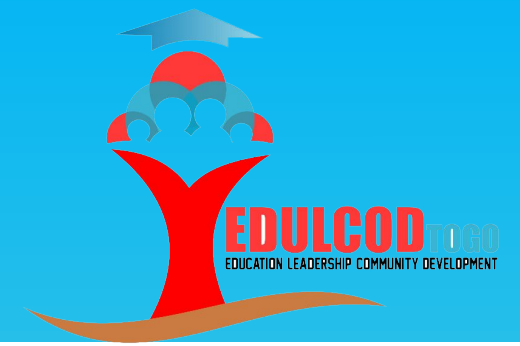
Our girls' empowerment program takes into account girls from underserved communities, orphans and disabled children.

Through this program, around 500 girls have been empowered and 10 got admission to University outside Togo on full scholarship.



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Our Students' destinations

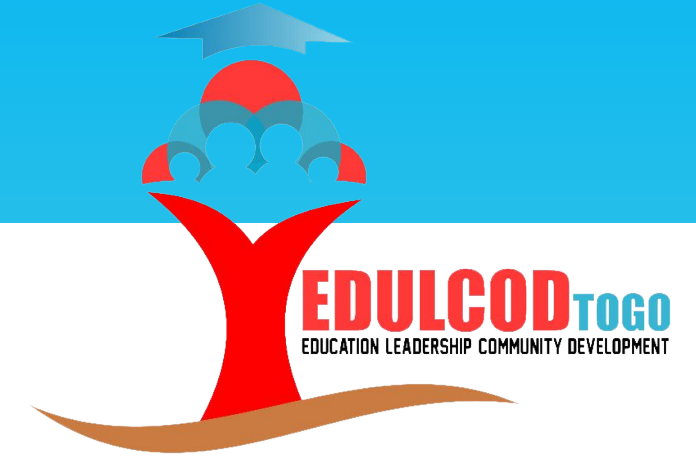


- **USA** (Princeton University, Pomona College, Vanderbilt University, University of Cleveland, etc.)
- **Africa** (Ashesi University, USIU Africa, Stellenbosch University, etc.)
- **Canada** (UBC, University of Chicoutimi, etc.)
- **India** (Ashoka University, etc.)
- **South Korea** (SUNI Korea, etc.)
- **Germany, Hong Kong,**



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Our Challenges

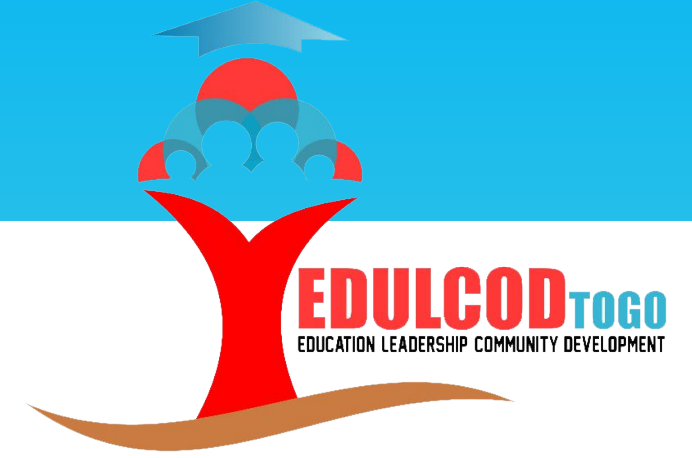


- ❑ Lack of resources (Tests Books, laptops, tables, chairs, etc)
- ❑ Lack of financial resources to run our activities and reach the underserved communities
- ❑ Misunderstanding of some parents regarding the university application process
- ❑ Lack of funding for students to afford the tests' costs.



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Opportunities



- ★ Our Scholars are high achievers;
- ★ They can learn and adapt quickly;
- ★ They bring a diversity of cultures and languages;
- ★ They can learn in different contexts easily;



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Contact us



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IACAC Scholar 2017

Counselor of the Year Award 2023

We Rise Together Award for Students Advocacy 2020

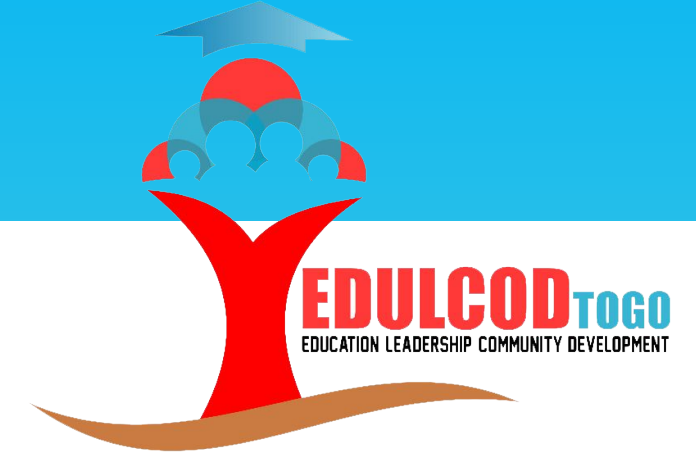


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How do we building effective partnerships

Collaborate with CBOs, the EDULCOD experience



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Understanding the Landscape:

What Recruiters Should Look For

- Evaluate school reputation and track record with international admissions.
- Seek recommendations from trusted education consultants in the region.
- **Consider contextual admissions:** strong performance in a lower-resourced environment can signal exceptional potential.
- Build partnerships with trusted feeder schools to reduce variability over time.



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Understanding the Landscape:

Humanize the Application Process

Remember that most Francophone applicants are used to **paper-based, centralized systems**.

To attract them:

- Offer **simple, step-by-step bilingual guides** for application submission.
- Provide **responsive WhatsApp or email support** in both French and English.
- Allow **conditional offers** pending final BAC results or English scores.
- Share **examples of successful Francophone alumni** to build trust.

 *Impact:* Reduces attrition and helps first-time applicants stay engaged.



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"Francophone African students should be considered for scholarships and academic opportunities based on the full scope of their academic journey—the language of instruction, local learning context, and demonstrated skills—rather than judged solely by the label of their credential.



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Identifying and Evaluating Talent

Name	Pathway	Academic Trajectory	Languages of Instruction	Typical Strengths	Potential Challenges for University Admissions
Koffi Mensah	National Curriculum	Primary & Collège (6e–3e) → BEPC → Lycée (Science track) → Bac Série D	French (main), minimal English	Solid science/math foundation; familiar with French academic writing; strong exam discipline	Limited English exposure; less experience with continuous assessment; no standardized international tests
Awa Diabaté	AEFE / French International	AEFE school → Diplôme National du Brevet → Bac Général ES	French (main), English (subject)	Essay-style reasoning; humanities focus; familiarity with French higher education standards	Adapting to Anglo-Saxon academic styles; may need English proficiency proof
Aïcha Traoré	Canadian	Francophone primary → Canadian secondary (distance/private) → Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD)	English (main later), French (early)	Continuous assessment experience; strong English; adaptable to North American systems	Less familiar with standardized exams; universities may request SAT/TOEFL

