

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY PROF. D. A. OHENE ADU, DEAN - FACULTY OF ART,
COLLEGE OF ART AND SOCIAL SCIENCES, KNUST AT THE FIRST SPEECH AND
PRIZE GIVING DAY OF PRESBYTERIAN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL, BEREKUM ON
THE THEME “*EDUCATING THE YOUTH FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: THE
ROLE AND CHALLENGES OF LESS ENDOWED SCHOOLS*” ON SATURDAY, 6TH
NOVEMBER, 2010 AT 9.00AM ON THE SCHOOL’S PREMISES**

Chairman

Chairman and Members of the Board of Governors

Headmaster and Staff

Nananom

Parents and Teachers

Distinguished Invited Guests

Old Students

Students

Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me prelude my short speech by first conveying the sincere apologies of Professor Kwasi Kwafu Adarkwa, immediate past Vice-Chancellor of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) who was invited as the Guest Speaker to today’s function. Even though Professor Adarkwa accepted the invitation when it was delivered to him a couple of months ago, he has had to lead a delegation to the United States of America on official University assignment. He, therefore, asked me to step in for him and as a staunch Presbyterian and a stakeholder in the nation’s education system, I wholeheartedly accepted the assignment. Please accept Professor Adarkwa’s best wishes for a successful programme and once again, his sincere apologies for his inability to join you in person for today’s historic function of the Presbyterian Senior High School, Berekum.

Mr. Chairman, I would also want to commend the Chairman and Members of the Board of Governors, the Headmaster, Teachers, Parents, Old Students, Staff and Students of this School for the maintenance of very nice and clean school environment. I have been impressed with the level of cleanliness of your School’s surroundings. Secondly, please accept my congratulations for the various academic successes achieved thus far. As an educationist myself, I am fully aware of the

various challenges you are confronted with on a daily basis in your attempt to train the nation's youth into responsible adulthood. I would also like to give special commendations to all the teachers of this school. Being a teacher myself, I know that a teacher must necessarily and at all times be patient, must inspire, must develop talent, kindle interest and help in moulding the character of the students you teach. My fellow dear teachers, I salute you all for the wonderful job you are doing for Presbyterian Senior High School, Berekum in particular and mother Ghana as a whole.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, as we may be aware, Speech and Prize Giving Days have over the years been organised in our various schools to provide a platform through which the internal activities of institutions are brought to the public's notice. The occasion further serve as a stock taking process whereby various reports such as that of the Headmaster and School Prefect are read to shed light on not only the activities of the School, but areas the School has fallen short or need assistance. Various speakers are also invited to such programmes to speak on varied topics of interest. Deserving staff and students and affiliates of the School are also sometimes recognised for their invaluable contribution to the success of the institution. In fact, such occasions are really joyous occasions and I know yours would not be a departure from this norm.

Mr. Chairman, there is little doubt today about the fact that our nation's quest to develop and remain truly independent basically depends on educating the youth. The quality of the human resource base of every country is undoubtedly one of the most valued and important resources through which that country can accelerate development and achieve competitive advantage in this global world of ours that is characterised by competition, information communication technology and high level research, among others. Education fine tunes students' creativity, their level of insight, and their analytical skills to issues and situations. Education generally acquaints students with unique ideas and stimulates their curiosity. This provides students with unique opportunities for personal enrichment and better future careers.

However, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, the above notwithstanding, we cannot convincingly say that all is well with our educational sector; perhaps, as a true reflection of the general economic order of the nation as a developing economy. Interestingly and happily, it is a fact that problems in

our educational sector has and continue to enjoy a lot of public discourse as a result of the Ghanaian public's interest in education as well as the government's commitment to ameliorate these educational bottlenecks which is manifested in the level of commitment and budgetary support to the sector are all good signs that, Ghana indeed, takes education serious and sees it as a means for national development.

Nonetheless, the education sector is still plagued with problems of infrastructure in terms of library facilities, classrooms, hostels, means of transportation and books as well as teachers in terms of their quality or level of training and development and adequate number of teachers in our less endowed and rural schools. Other problems include large class sizes, cost sharing or shifting, accessibility, attrition rate or drop out rates on the part of students, and lack of adequate parental involvement. The rest include frequent industrial actions by staff, teachers and students, poor conditions of service of staff, syllabi content, duration of senior high school education, student riot behaviour and several problems that have combined to denigrate the quality of our education system in an attempt to educate the youth for national development.

The above problems become even more complicated and multifarious when it comes to our less endowed schools. Specific problems of inadequate and run down infrastructure such as classrooms, teachers' bungalows, dormitories or hostels have over the years not allowed less endowed schools to put up their best. Other problems such as inadequate staff members, problems of library facilities and poorly stocked libraries have also contributed to the above state of affairs. Additional problems of inability of students to pay their school fees as a result of poor income levels, lack of exposure, relatively poor numeracy and language skills by students, and inadequate textbooks in our less endowed schools cannot be downplayed in assessing the challenges of our less endowed schools in their attempt to educate the youth for national development.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, the above problems that plague our less endowed schools and by a wider stretch our entire educational sector does not in my opinion, in any way preclude such schools from performing their roles in properly educating the country's youth for national development. Less endowed schools have in so many occasions provided the

sole opportunity for some youth to attain education. Such schools must, therefore, continue to provide the needed avenue for the training of the country's youth for national development. What I will suggest is that all stakeholders such as the government, parents and guardians, old students or alumni, headmasters, teachers, staff and students play their individual and collective roles well in order to provide sustainable solutions to the myriad of problems that confront our less endowed schools.

In conclusion, it is evidently clear that, problems of education relate to funding, teacher quality and quantity, poor student academic performance, equal educational opportunity, and the curriculum in relation to labour force needs and global competition. New problems, such as teacher shortages, overcrowded and unsafe schools and unequal access join other perennial issues in education such as gender bias. The above notwithstanding, we not loose sight of the fact that, education still remains of the panacea for national development. As Dr. Norman Vincent Peale (1898-1993), an American author and Christian preacher once said, "*empty pockets never held anyone back. Only empty heads and empty hearts can do that*". Let us collectively help our less endowed schools in their attempt to educate the country's youth for national development.

Thanks for your audience and happy 1st Speech and Prize Giving Day.