

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY PROF. W. O. ELLIS, VICE-CHANCELLOR OF
KNUST AT THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF ST. JOHN'S
GRAMMAR SCHOOL ON SATURDAY, 17TH MAY, 2014 ON THE THEME
*"60 YEARS OF HARD WORK: A PLATFORM FOR GREATER HEIGHT"***

Chairman

Chairman and Members of the Management Board

Distinguished Invited Guests

Teaching and Non-Teaching Staff

Students

Parents and Guardians

Members of the Media

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

I bring you warm fraternal greetings from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) Kumasi and to say that I am very happy to join you in celebrating the joy of this occasion of our School's 60th anniversary. In fact, to say that I am happy to be here would surely be an understatement. Truly speaking, my coming back here to this campus brings a lot of fond memories and nostalgia, considering the times we had way back in the late 1970s when I was here for my Ordinary Level ("O" Level) Certificate programme. This goes to confirm that, God has plans for each and every one of us here. Sixty years in the life of an institution is no mean achievement and, thus, I want to say Congratulations and happy anniversary to St. John's Grammar School.

Chairman, I have been most impressed with the level of progress the School has attained in all its spheres especially adding on to the School's infrastructure. I would, therefore, want to commend all past and the present administration of the School for their foresight, dedication and hard work which have contributed in making the School what it is today. There is no doubt about the fact that St. John's Grammar School over the years, has carved an enviable niche for itself as a centre of excellence in academics at the secondary school level. The School's exploits in sports throughout the country can also not be glossed over. I congratulate all stakeholders of the School for their effort in nurturing the School to its present enviable stature. Many are the mighty men and women in the Ghanaian society today who trace their formation to this School and we must all join to celebrate their achievements, successes and be inspired by their vision.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I would want to touch briefly on the theme for the 60th anniversary celebrations which is "***60 years of hard work: A Platform for Greater Height***". Sixty years ago when the vision for this School was hatched by the late John Hayford Mensah, alias Kodwo Wangara who was the founder of this School, things I suspect were not rosy. A lot of us gathered here can only imagine the state of the Gold Coast economy at that time since most of us here were not yet born by then; the state of infrastructure, social amenities, the colonial leadership and the independence struggle that sent a lot of people into exile and several other factors that militated against entrepreneurship and industry. Despite all these, the founding fathers persevered and worked really hard against obvious obstacles and laid a solid foundation for this School.

Fortunately for us today, we can all be proud that we are associated in one way or the other with St. John's Grammar School in view of its exploits, numerous awards and laurels in academic and all its spheres of life. In all these, I hope we are not losing sight of the fact that, it took some people's vision, perseverance, determination and above all, hard work to take the School to where it is today. The question one needs to ask is, what is the next level of development or stature expected by all for the School? In this direction, what would be our individual and collective responsibilities? With the advent of technology, especially the internet and the social media comes along new challenges and opportunities. With the solid foundation already established, there is the need to focus on quality and relevance taking advantage of these emerging technologies.

Quality is not static; it changes with the times, thus, it is progressive and its achievement is through a process. In our context, it encompasses several factors ranging from content, teaching environment, student to staff ratio, class size, mode of delivery and the quality of the deliverer, to mention a few. In this day and age, due to the limited time required to prepare students for the final examinations, focus is more on teaching students to pass examinations more than having a better understanding and grasp of the subject matter. Educational institutions are expected to provide holistic education which touches on the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of the individual with the overall objective of producing better adults for society. However, this is not the case in most of our institutions.

In looking at quality and the future, we may also consider student/staff ratios and class sizes as already mentioned. In recent times, we have had situations of increases in student numbers without corresponding increase in the number of teaching staff. This situation impacts on effective contact hours, effective supervision and teaching which tend to affect the overall quality of our output. In this direction, we need a new breed of teachers who are skilled or trained in handling relatively large class sizes, are computer literate, abreast with trends of the modern times and have the welfare of students at heart, demonstrate commitment and dedication to quality output.

Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, the future is linked to technology and St. John Grammar cannot be left out. The platform is set for greater heights; our seniors have built the foundation and the time for the take-off is now. Some secondary schools in Ghana now use LCD projectors, smart boards and slide shares as platforms to enhance delivery in the classroom. Thus, the mode of delivery is changing and this has the benefit of making the work of the teacher, more efficient. With the use of technology, Teachers can collaborate to share ideas and resources online by communicating with other subject teachers across the divide in real time, refine their lesson notes and by so doing, are able to provide students with the best. This way, Teachers can even develop their lesson notes into proper peer reviewed textbooks and avoid or reduce the incidence of selling pamphlets and lesson notes to students. Students can also be assisted to develop valuable research skills through the availability of information that relates to their courses of study. This way, the adoption and application of educational

technologies can be properly harnessed to significantly improve student achievement, so long as such tools are integrated thoughtfully into teaching and learning.

In all these, the fundamentals cannot be ignored and that is the culture of reading. As Teachers, we still need to encourage our students to read widely and become exposed. I remember during our days, students in the first and second years were made to have a feel of all the subjects on offer so students could make an informed choice as to the subject areas of specialisation in the 3rd year. In our attempt to provide education that is relevant for our times and the future, students must be given the opportunity to study as many core courses as possible in an attempt to broaden their horizon and perspectives in life.

Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, I would want to add that, a lot of Secondary Schools in Ghana today are obviously not our co-equals. It is, therefore, my hope that we would be the best or among the best. We should shun mediocrity and contentment and be inspired by the vision of our fore fathers and achieve greater heights for the School and for ourselves. If St. John's Grammar School can maintain this feat into the future, then the role of all stakeholders especially the Old Students is critical. As Old Students, we need to give back to the institution that has made us who we are today. We can give back our resources, energies, our ideas and prayers.

Now a word to all my dear students gathered here. I hope by now you know that, your mere passes can no longer guarantee you your dream programmes at the tertiary level.

You, therefore, have to study hard and pass really very well before you can be guaranteed your dream programmes at the tertiary level. As the School motto indicates, *Virtute et Industria* (Virtue and Industry), let us be inspired by virtue in all that we do and let us work hard to achieve desired results in our attempt to build upon the foundation that has been laid for us. Congratulations! St John's Grammar School. I wish you all the best and God bless you all.

Thank you.