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Ghana

Note1: To meet UNESCO publishing standards, some editing of papers has been required.

Note2: Authors are responsible for the choice and the presentation of the facts contained in signed articles and for the opinions expressed therein, which are not necessarily those of UNESCO and do not commit the Organization.

Ghana

**Speech of Hon. Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas,
Deputy Minister of Education of Ghana**

Mr. President,
Honourable Ministers,
Excellencies,
Director-General of UNESCO,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

My delegation and I wish to extend to you the warm greetings of the Government and people of Ghana, and to join the previous speakers in congratulating you, Mr. President, on your election to chair the World Conference on Higher Education. Judging by the fair and able manner in which you have conducted the business of this meeting so far, we are confident that the deliberations of this conference will achieve great success.

Before the early decades of this century, nationals of Ghana received their training at the tertiary level in overseas universities. The first university in Ghana was established in 1948 to train middle and high-level manpower to take over the reins of Government in anticipation of the attainment of political independence.

During more than two decades of higher education up to the early 1970s, Ghana's system enjoyed a reputation for providing good quality graduates as evidenced by the number of well qualified Ghanaian professionals found all over the world. Higher education delivery had been totally dependent on Government for funding. Consequently the tertiary system was adversely affected by the national economic crisis, leading to lack of equipment and essential teaching materials, low morale among staff, and falling academic standards due to inadequate funding.

In the 1980s, it became necessary to engage in comprehensive education reforms from basic to higher levels of education. The tertiary level education reforms were designed to achieve the following goals:

- establish an integrated and co-ordinated tertiary education system comprising all post secondary pre-service training institutions under the general supervision, direction and control of the Ministry of Education;
- ensure that tertiary education is co-ordinated with all other sub-sectors of the education system and overall national development and education policies and priorities;
- make tertiary education more cost-effective and able to provide quality education for increasing number of students through increased efficiency in the utilization of space, resources and personnel;
- increasing funding for tertiary education by increasing the capacity of tertiary institutions for income generation and encouraging greater financial support from the private sector;
- provide for greater access to tertiary education for qualified people, and significantly increase the proportion of female students;
- restructure enrolment and output of tertiary institutions to achieve an appropriate balance in the provision of skills in science, technology, social science, humanities and arts in relation to nationals needs;
- ensure an overall balance between the supply of trained personnel from the tertiary institutions and labour market demand, and
- improve the internal administration of all tertiary institutions.

1. Increasing Access to Tertiary Education

A major policy in the tertiary education reform is to make it possible for all students who satisfy the requirements for admission into tertiary institutions to gain access to the institutions. This requires that the number of tertiary institutions should be increased in proportion to the expansion of second-cycle institutions. Modest success has been achieved with regard to access to tertiary education.

Before 1992 there were only three institutions of higher learning in Ghana with total enrolment of 14,500. Only the universities were considered as institutions of higher learning.

It was decided by the Government to upgrade some selected polytechnics and technical institutions which before had been operating as secondary level institutions to tertiary institutions. Six such polytechnics were upgraded in 1993 when the reforms began. By 1994 total enrolment in all tertiary institutions, increased by more than 100% to 30,000. The total enrolment during the 1997/98 academic year showed a further increase of about 33% over the 1994 figure to 40,000. These large increases in student enrolment have naturally brought in its wake increased financial burdens and other problems for the Government.

2. Funding of Tertiary Education

The funding of tertiary education has posed tremendous difficulties for the Government. Historically tertiary education had been entirely free for students. Tuition was free. In addition students were given free boarding and lodging plus allowances to defray incidental expenses. All the funds were provided by the Government.

With the rapid expansion in student enrolment it has become impossible for the Government to continue to fund tertiary education all by itself. A series of debates and workshops was, therefore, organized to find other sources for funding tertiary education. A thorough national dialogue has resulted in a national consensus that tertiary education can only be funded on a sustainable basis through cost sharing amongst the Government, the direct beneficiaries (that is, students and their parents), the private sector and income generation by the institutions.

3. Equity

The Government has been aware of and sensitive to the plight of students who might not be able to take advantage of tertiary education in spite of the fact that they qualify to enter tertiary institutions. The Government has, therefore, put in place a loan scheme for students. The scheme is operated by a para-statal non-banking institution: the Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT). Under the scheme students pay a small percentage of the interest of the loan whilst the Government pays the balance. This scheme is currently under review to restructure it to be sustainable and also more responsible to the genuinely needy students.

There has not been any appreciable increase in female enrolment in tertiary institutions. Over the past five years, the increase has been less than 3% despite institutional arrangements to grant special concessions to females during the admission exercise. The problem lies with the gender-mix output from second-cycle institutions. Under the old education programme, the number of girls who continued up to the Advanced Level Certificate (a pre-requisite for entry to tertiary institutions), was very small, less than 20%.

However, with the introduction of the new education reforms at the pre-tertiary level, the percentage of girls in the Senior Secondary Schools has greatly improved. It is now estimated that the ratio is about 2 to 3 in favour of the boys. It is envisaged that by the year 2002 the ratio will even up. This would improve female participation in education at the tertiary level.

4. Achieving an Appropriate Balance in Output of Students in Science and the Humanities.

Presently, students studying Science and Science based subjects form about 25% of total enrolment in tertiary institutions. The policy of the Government is to achieve a 3 to 2 ratio in favour of Science and Science-based programmes.

Here again, the Science and non-Science student mix at the second-cycle institution has greatly improved. The ratio is about 1 to 1. It is hoped that this improvement will be reflected in the enrolment of students in tertiary institutions.

Conclusion

The Government of Ghana has zealously pursued the objectives set out in the education reform programme both at the pre-tertiary and tertiary levels. Some measure of success has been achieved in improving gender-mix at the tertiary level as well as increasing the number of students studying the sciences.

One area that caused the Government some concern is the desire to make tertiary education accessible and at the same time cost-effective to all students who qualify. This entails restructuring the funding of tertiary education in a manner that would reduce the burden on the Government. This can only be achieved by encouraging the Private Sector to support tertiary education and to request the direct beneficiaries of education to make contributions. The Government is vigorously pursuing this line of action.

The ability of our country to compete and face the challenges of the new millennium undoubtedly depends on the quality of tertiary education. In an increasingly scientific and technological world, no country can afford to ignore the importance of quality and technology-based education. Thus, our policies shall continue to focus on quality and relevance as we make our tertiary institutions responsive to the challenges of the times.

Finally, Mr. President, for us in the developing world, UNESCO has over the years been a great source of inspiration in nation-building. It is in this vein that I wish to publicly acknowledge the support given to Ghana by UNESCO, particularly, under the wise and able leadership of its current Director-General, Dr. Federico Mayor, in our efforts to broaden the base of our educational system and restructure our tertiary institutions.

I thank you all for your kind attention.