

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION,  
HONOURABLE MR. ALEX TETTEY-ENYO**

**AT THE OPENING OF THE CONFERENCE BY THE  
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND THE CONSORTIUM FOR  
RESEARCH IN EDUCATIONAL ACCESS, TRANSITIONS AND  
EQUITY (CREATE)  
VENUE:FOREST HOTEL, DODOWA  
APRIL 20, 2009**

Distinguished educational researchers, policy makers and administrators, I am delighted for this opportunity to be among you here today. As some of you may well know, coming to Dodowa is like returning home. I was the Headmaster of the local secondary School for many years. I mean the Ghanatta Secondary School. Some people call this school, the University of the Dangme West District. From its small beginnings as the Gold Coast Peoples College at Adidome in the Volta Region, the founders of the school had big dreams of it becoming a University College for the whole of West Africa! If a University is a place for big ideas and dreams, this conference is indeed performing one of the functions of a university! I wish to thank the organisers of this conference for inviting me to address you. I very much appreciate the efforts of my own officials from the Ministry of Education, and also the esteemed Director and researchers of the Consortium for Research in Educational Access, Transitions and Equity (CREATE) for putting together this conference.

1. I am pleased to formally welcome all of you, especially our international visitors from the UK and South Africa, to Ghana. I hope that you would enjoy your short stay here. I wish to add that I have noted with satisfaction that the list of international experts here includes one Ghanaian in the person of Dr. Kwame Akyeampong, formerly of the Institute of Education, UCC, now with the Centre of International Education of the University of Sussex. Your presence here together with the Director of the Centre, Professor Keith Lewin, gives me much hope that Ghana will avail itself of the best international experience and practice in the area of access to basic education. I am delighted that researchers from Ghana's universities are active participants in the CREATE project. I congratulate you all.

2. Having recently assumed ministerial responsibility for the education sector, I should relish the opportunity to be reminded as often as possible that education after all is about learning and knowledge and its provision to all our people to serve as the bedrock of national development. It is often said that the development of any nation starts from the classrooms. Education in all its forms has been central to Ghana's development from the dawn of our political independence. In 1951 the founding fathers of this nation launched an Accelerated Development Plan for Education to implement a policy of fee-free universal primary education. The additional teachers to cope with the large increase in enrolment were given five weeks of emergency teacher training! Cocoa sheds and all kinds of available spaces were converted into classrooms to accommodate thousands of school children. In spite of the clear inadequacy of resources this was how the pre-independence government of Kwame Nkrumah implemented a policy which the colonial government thought would take 25 years to implement! In 1961 a new Educational Act was promulgated to make 10 years of basic education fee-free and compulsory! To give another example from Ghana's past, in 1964 Ghana's first President, Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah abrogated arrangements for a medical school which the American Government was planning to build for Ghana! The President was advised by a South African medical scientist and a refugee in Ghana, that American medical education was not appropriate for Ghana. So by government fiat, President Kwame Nkrumah appointed three senior Ghanaian doctors professors and charged them with the responsibility to develop a Ghana Medical School with local resources and personnel! This is the story of the Ghana Medical School which has produced more doctors for the United States than for Ghana!
  
3. Of course we are here today because in the modern Ghana of 2009, we have the luxury of painstakingly collecting hard data and analysing problems and issues in Ghana's education sector as indeed in all other areas of national life to enable our planners come out with policy proposals which have scientific evidence to back them. We expect policies based on research of the social, cultural and economic realities in our communities, rural and urban, poor and deprived to have a greater chance to achieve the desired impact. We can all imagine how much better the implementation both of the policy on Capitation Grants, and the School Feeding Programme would have been if the hard and solid research preceded their implementation!

4. Ladies and Gentlemen I believe your experiences at this conference would convince you that policy makers and implementers in education should stay in close touch with our educational researchers at all levels so that the vision and the big dreams have the evidence to show the best way forward to achieve desired results. The Country Analytic Report, CAR, which CREATE produced in 2007 at the completion of the first phase of its research said the following about the research agenda of CREATE which I believe will guide your deliberations here. I quote :

The challenge this report offers is to develop a research agenda to inform policy and practice in ways that will make a difference over the next ten years. This highlights several key dimensions which will be explored through fieldwork, secondary data analysis, and policy dialogue. The agenda includes needs to:

- Illuminate why the growth in enrolment rates has fallen below expectation and explore whether demand as well as supply side constraints are an important part of the explanation.
- Deepen understanding at the community and school level of the characteristics of entry and progression that result in peaks in drop out and repetition in early and later grades which do not seem to be changing very rapidly and which may affect girls and boys differently.
- Establish the extent to which the introduction of capitation and other changes in school financing are having an impact on improved access and whether these will be sufficient to sustain recent gains in enrolment
- Revisit regional and local strategies to improve access and transition to JSS which recognize different contextual constraints in the North, Middle Belt, and the South, and within different communities including migrants and those economically disadvantaged.
- Detail the effects of over age enrolment, especially on girls, and identify more rather than less effective policy and practice that results in learning achievement closer to national norm.

The above are the guiding principles which I believe would guide your deliberations here.

5. The international goals in education goals which all nations are targeting are those of Education For All and the Millennium

Development Goals. While it has not been possible to build enough classrooms to absorb all children, train and recruit enough teachers, supply enough schools materials, books, school furniture among other resources, there must be many gaps in our knowledge of how to implement these policies to make them achieve the desired impact.

6. In the developing country context of Ghana we have little resources left after paying teachers' salaries and supplying the required books to schools. Therefore it is in the area of research and development where Ghana needs most assistance. My government and the Ministry of Education therefore thank the UK Government's Department For International Development (DFID) for funding this project and two other Research Programme Consortia (RPCs) to provide the necessary research data to guide ongoing policy interventions in education which focus largely on basic education. My Ministry will be happy for more support from the DFID and other development partners to continue the laudable efforts of the CREATE and the other Research Consortia. We specially appreciate the international collaboration it brings to enable both the Ministry and the researchers in the universities see the national effort in the context of the experiences elsewhere, and also the training that it provides for the next generation of researchers, lecturers and educational administrators.
7. With these few remarks it is my pleasure and honour to open this Conference on Educational Access in Ghana: Towards Evidence – Based Policy. Ladies and Gentlemen I wish you all successful and useful deliberations.

I thank you ALL.