

OFFICE OF THE VICE-CHANCELLOR



76TH SPEECH AND PRIZE GIVING DAY CELEBRATION AT HOLY CHILD SCHOOL

THEME:

“MOULDING OUR FUTURE HUMAN RESOURCE: BEAUTY, BRAINS AND EXCELLENCE”

ADDRESS BY:

**PROFESSOR NANA ABA APPIAH AMFO
VICE - CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF GHANA**

SATURDAY, JUNE 25, 2022

HOLY CHILD SCHOOL

Our Honourable Chair, Dr. Mabel Banson

Venerable Most Rev. Charles Gabriel Palmer Buckle

Specially Invited Guests

Madam Headmistress, Mrs. Linda Appiah, and Staff

Cherished sponsors,

Past Students

Hopsa 97 year group

Dear Students,

Distinguished Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning,

Lady Chair, It's an exciting time for me to be back again at Holy Child School to deliver the guest speech on this auspicious occasion. Nine years ago, in March 2013, when my year group (Hopsa 88) started this tradition of having a year group host speech

and prize giving day on their 25th anniversary after leaving school, I was privileged to give the keynote speech on the theme ***Moulding our Future Human Resource: Beauty, Brains and Excellence***. It is absolutely no doubt that over the years, Holy Child School has demonstrated that it has it all – the beauty, the brains and the excellence. Kudos to us all.

Lady Chair, I would like to thank the 1997 year group for considering me for this honorable task. Indeed, Esi, Pascaline and Nana Akua would give me no peace until I consented. I am grateful to the Headmistress, Mrs. Linda Appiah, for assenting and for her kind invitation which I accepted with pleasure. Thank you all for the confidence reposed in me for this task.

Lady Chair, ladies and gentlemen, I really can't believe that it's 39 years since I first stepped foot here to begin my secondary education. Talking about it makes me feel as old as a dinosaur but I don't even feel that old. Hopefully, I don't look that old too. Since then, I have come back in different forms – as a past student, as part of career counselling teams and as a parent. Today, I came back with three of my Hopsan daughters – Elsie Hopsa 2016, Maame Araba Hopsa 2018, Efua Benyiwa Hopsa 2020. My husband Frank also taught here many many years ago, for his

national service. And so this school, in more ways than one, is special to my family.

Lady Chair, I still remember my days within the walls of this prestigious institution decades ago and being here today only brings back nostalgic memories of my days as a student- the good, the not-so-good, the fond and cherished days, the friendships (some of which have lasted a lifetime), as well as the virtues that our teachers instilled in us during our days here. Today, I can look back on all those years and remain grateful to God for using the people I met here, the challenges, and circumstances to positively impact my life and make me not only an achiever in my work as a female Ghanaian academic, but also a well-rounded family woman and christian.

Before I go on with my speech, Let me congratulate the Hopsa '97-year group on the celebration of their 25th anniversary and the successful completion and commissioning of their legacy project which involved the refurbishment of the Archbishop Amissah House. Beautifully done! May the Good Lord replenish you in many diverse ways.

Lady Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen, Now, let me turn to the theme of today's celebration, ***'Building resilience and inspiring creativity in the girl child through exemplary leadership.'***

Resilience has become a global theme, considering what we have been through in the past two years – the global COVID-19 pandemic, economic downturns, natural and manmade disasters, wars and the threat of such. If one would expect success as an individual, community or nation, then resilience is key. Resilience is the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; the ability of being tough. Why does the girl-child need this? Society has certain expectations of us as women. Women are carers – we are often the primary caregivers at home. We take care of our husbands, our children, other children, our parents, aunties and uncles, etc. And this is a full time job! We are expected to do all these graciously, and add on top the demand of our professions. At work, no one will give you consideration as a result of all your other domestic commitments. You are expected to work twice as hard! Why? Because society in many cases think of men when they think leadership. Often, for there to be a consideration of a woman, you have to convince everyone over and over again, beyond all reasonable doubt that you are up to the task (even over qualified for the job).

That requires resilience and creativity. You will have difficult moments at home and at work. You can't afford to give up. You need to learn through your challenges and let them make you stronger rather than break you. You have to find creative ways of managing all of these responsibilities. It includes making use of technology. Invest in household gadgets; there's nothing wrong with that. Get help – either paid or from family and friends, there's nothing wrong. Understand that you simply cannot do everything by yourself and still excel. If you want to remain mediocre, you can go about things that same old way, but excellence requires resilience and creativity.

Lady Chair, the good news is that, if you are coming from this School then, you have too many examples to follow. There are lots of successful professional women that this School has produced. Many of whom have efficiently combined this with raising amazing families:

Joyce Bamford-Addo – first female speaker of the Ghanaian parliament

Anna Bossman – former CHIRAJ Boss and Ghana's Ambassador to France

Kokui Serlomey – Media personality (one of my favourite morning show co-host)

Sandra Thompson – Company Secretary, Bank of Ghana

You can add me to the list, if you wish. And right here, among the 1997 year group, I can go on and on. You, our Lady Chair. Dr. Vera Fiador, Mrs. Esi Asante-Antwi, Ms. Pascaline Songsore.

Looking back, I can confidently say that my journey to becoming the first female Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ghana after 7 long decades has not been a walk in the park. It has been characterised by several highs and lows, and there have been days when I almost felt like giving up. When I first set out to take on a job as a lecturer at the Department of Linguistics, University of Ghana in 2001, I did not immediately have dreams of becoming a Vice-Chancellor and the first female at that. Over the years, I must have been readied for that role by the challenges and obstacles that I encountered and the fact that I was resilient through these, didn't give up but found support and creative ways to manoeuvre.

Lady Chair, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, Significantly, I had exemplars, mentors to look up to. While pursuing my

undergraduate degree in French and Linguistics, I encountered Professor Florence Abena Dolphyne. She gave me hope as I looked up to her as an accomplished woman, and was certain that I could also become an accomplished lecturer. At the time, she was the only female lecturer in the Department (the other one Prof. Akosua Anyidoho was apparently then on study leave). She became the first female Pro Vice-Chancellor when I was in my final year, and it was instructive that I became the second after her. The University as a whole had very few female lecturers and I was really inspired by her zeal. I always deemed it a privilege to have her as my lecturer and mentor.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Over the course of our lives, we are often inspired by people in proximity or persons who are distant. Sometimes, we watch someone from far off and never have the chance to communicate with them or ever meet them in person, yet we are full of admiration for them and look up to them in our resolve to attain laurels. At other times, we are constantly motivated by someone we know personally because of their potential and commitment. We often end up choosing such people as role models or mentors and try to follow in their steps because

they inspire us. Today, I stand tall and proud because I met some wonderful people like Professor Dolphyne and had the support and encouragement of my parents, family and close friends too.

Being a female academic in the Ghanaian setting has certainly not been easy since academia is generally considered a male dominated field. I have had to spend long sleepless nights studying, writing, researching, preparing to teach, and quite often, I had to do all these in combination with caring for my family and tackling household chores. Indeed, I have had to build resilience and be creative so I could set and maintain standards, face challenges head on and make a constant effort to redefine the narrative in favour of women.

I have come to realize that one cannot become an exemplary leader overnight. Becoming a leader requires that you distinguish yourself from other people by sowing seeds of hard work, dedication, and commitment to attain productivity. It encompasses building friendships and sometimes making enemies because you have chosen to do the right thing, and that is to be

expected. It means being ready to accept responsibility and making sure that you always do the right thing.

Today, some of you will be privileged to receive awards for your hard work and effort over the course of the academic year. I trust that all of you have studied hard and these prizes are well-deserved, and I would like to congratulate you and admonish you to continue to give your best so that you will continually excel in life. To the majority of you, who will not receive prizes, don't be discouraged. You can still make it in life. Set targets for yourselves and work hard to achieve them. Don't get discouraged if at first you don't succeed, as the nursery rhyme goes, "try try try again". But try to do things differently and look out for good examples to follow.

I challenge all you young ladies to rise to the occasion, take up a challenge, learn additional skills from your mainstream studies, learn a language, attain laurels. God has created you with so many inherent qualities and abilities that you need to tap into and make use of. I admonish you to stay motivated so you can carve a niche of your own, regardless of the odd circumstances that life may

bring your way. I also pray that you will encounter success and good fortunes as you walk the paths of life.

Look closely, there are several opportunities around you and there are some more coming your way, make use of them. The times may be hard, and the circumstances may not be in your favour for a while, but the tables will turn and when they do, I am positive that they will favour you. Rise up, be inspired, keep hope alive, reach within, and make use of your creativity and remain resilient always.

I wish you all well, let's meet at the top.

Lady Chair, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for your attention.

Professor Nana Aba Appiah Amfo

76th Speech and Prize Giving Day

Holy Child School

June 25, 2022