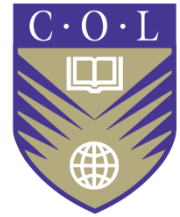


Educating Teachers; Advancing Democracy



*Ghana
University of Education Winneba*

Congregation 2006

*Remarks by
Sir John Daniel, President of the Commonwealth of Learning
on receiving the degree of Doctor of Science honoris causa*

Chairman; Vice-Chancellor; Minister; Members of Parliament; High Commissioner of Ghana to Canada and members of the Diplomatic Corps; Academic Colleagues from across Ghana; Graduates of the University of Education Winneba; Guests; Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is a singular privilege to respond on behalf of my fellow honorary graduates. We all thank the University for the honours conferred upon us at this wonderful ceremony.

You must all have noticed that your honorary graduates have accomplished themselves in fields that are essential to education in general and to the education of teachers in particular.

Professor Jerome Sian Djangmah has distinguished himself in the field of Science, he has helped to build the credibility of examination systems and he has contributed to the development of a West African educational community.

Professor Samuel Adjepong is also a scientist whose academic leadership has helped to establish and fund universities in Ghana. His influence has spread Africa wide, through his guidance to the African Virtual University, and Commonwealth wide through his role in the Association of Commonwealth Universities.

Professor Leslie Irwin's career includes awards for excellence in teaching and a deep commitment to multiculturalism and diversity. He has acted on his belief that books are essential to education by helping to make them available in Africa.

My own contribution, as you have heard, has been to promote the role of technology in expanding education, and particularly the role of open and distance learning.

We are all touched that the University of Education Winneba has elected to recognise our lives' work at this Congregation at the same time as it awards degrees to a new generation of Ghanaian educators. I am sure that my fellow honorary doctors will allow me to reflect personally on this honour.

Sixty years ago in 1946 my father was appointed as the foundation principal of a new teachers' training college in the UK, Cooper's Hill. Its buildings looked down on the River Thames and the meadow of Runnymede where the Magna Carta was signed in 1215, establishing a major milestone in the advancement of democracy.

My mother was also a teacher who, for 25 years, was the headmistress of a small village school. I come from a family of teachers and educators.

My late father and mother would both have been very proud to see me receive this honour in Ghana from this University. As it begins to celebrate 50 years of independence, Ghana's democracy is a model for Africa. The University of Education Winneba is Ghana's leading source of trained teachers. Educating teachers and advancing democracy go hand in hand.

I wish success and fulfilment to the graduating class as they begin, resume or continue their teaching careers. There is no more important profession for national development. Sadly, in recent years the status of the profession has slipped in many countries of the world as they have sought short cuts to development and struggled to maintain a balance between expanding access to education and upholding its quality.

But an upswing in the status of teachers is already beginning. New, well trained professional teachers like this graduating class will powerfully boost the reputation of the profession. A country that values its future has no alternative but to esteem its teachers.

I thank the University for memorable days that I have spent in Ghana. I trust that my two public lectures, in Accra and here in Winneba, on the Role of Open and Distance Learning in Breaking Barriers to National Development, have been useful. In this context I was greatly encouraged by the Minister's statement, a few minutes ago, that Ghana will now develop a national policy on Open and Distance Learning. The Commonwealth of Learning is there to help you.

As a citizen of Canada and the head of a Commonwealth intergovernmental body based in Canada, the only such Commonwealth agency not based in the UK, it is a great pleasure to have Ghana's High Commissioner to Canada with us today. I thank her for her support.

Finally, having had the great privilege of serving for over a decade as Vice-Chancellor of the UK Open University, I am delighted that the University of Education Winneba is collaborating with it on teacher education in sub-Saharan Africa. There is also another Open University innovation that might find some resonance here in Africa. The academic dress that you are wearing was originally designed to keep monks warm in cold monasteries in Europe, not for congregations on warm days in Africa. Obviously both gowns and hoods are essential for upholding dignity and tradition, but the Open University at least decided to dispense with hats!

On behalf of those who have been honoured with me I thank the University again for its generosity. We congratulate today's graduates on their achievement and wish them well in their vital work of developing the people who are the future of this nation.