

**ADDRESS BY MR. FELIX NYARKO-PONG AT CONGREGATION,**

**COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, JULY 24, 2015**

*Chancellor of the University,*

*Chairman of the University Council,*

*Vice-Chancellor,*

*Officials of the University,*

*Members of the Advisory Board of the College of Education,*

*Members of Convocation,*

*Graduating students*

*Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,*

*Good Afternoon.*

On behalf of the Advisory Board of the College of Education, University of Ghana, I have great pleasure in welcoming you all warmly to the first graduation ceremony of the College of Education.

It is an honour for me, as Chairman of the Advisory Board, to be asked to double up as the Guest Speaker at today's graduation ceremony of students of the College of Education, who having satisfied the requirements for the various programmes, are being awarded degrees and diplomas, and I am grateful to the University Authorities.

Today is a very special day and a proud moment for many of us here in different ways. It is a happy occasion for the granduants because they are being awarded degrees; it is a proud moment for the parents and guardians because their dreams of giving their wards education has finally come to fruition; and it is an achievement for the University because it has been successful in providing higher education to students who will now step forward in life to build their respective career paths and hopefully even progress to be leaders of their respective communities and the country.

I congratulate all of you graduating students. The degrees and diplomas you receive today is an announcement to the world that you are ready to progress to the next phase of your lives. You are no doubt reflecting on the sacrifices and accomplishments of the recent past and the hope, excitement and responsibility

of the future. It is indeed a moment of excitement and fear with many not too certain about the direction in which you want to go from here.

I can assure you that the good education and training you have received at this great university has empowered you to be independent and confident, with the potential to contribute meaningfully to society. Success will however depend on your own determination and focus.

As you step out and away from the guidance of your teachers and even your parents, you are like a bird about to test your wings. Whether you will be like a sparrow, wandering far from home, its small frame travelling light and flying over high seas, mountains and trees OR become like a chicken, having the security of a parents' home and knowing that there are worlds out there, but content to know them only in dreams OR even become both a sparrow and a chicken (and thus smartly adventurous!) are options open to you.

Whatever your option is there are challenges and competing interests.

First our economy is not growing enough to absorb all of you graduates into the work force. There is an estimated 200k graduates out there from the 81 universities and colleges e.t.c who are unemployed and you will be competing with them. For the vacancies that come up also you may find your skills not

exactly suitable for the available roles, especially as regards the soft skills set. You may therefore be a step ahead if you rather than spending time on social media, continue on your own to develop and improve upon yourselves and on the soft skills. You must also like the sparrow, remember at all times that your opportunities are not limited to your environment (and Ghana), but that we are part of a globalised interconnected world . With a computer or mobile phone and internet access, you can research, continue to learn and stay relevant and ahead of peers.

Some of the most notable people in society today did not even make it as far as you have, in terms of education. Think of the Steve Jobs', the Bill Gates and countless others. They made it by venturing out of their comfort zones, thinking outside the box, researching at all times and not giving up when challenges set in. It is my wish that each one of you will have courage and determination, and that you will own your development and create opportunities for yourselves rather than expecting them. Every class you have sat in, every essay written, and every certification you have earned, has all prepared you to adapt to change and challenges. The important thing is you have already taken the initial steps needed to build a more promising future.

As echoed by the great visionary Nelson Mandela said: “**Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world**”.

As you leave here today, ask yourself, how can I be innovative? Perhaps it is in doing the same old things in a new way, or coming together with friends to start something small and growing it. Perhaps it is in a careful study of what a company is doing and putting together a presentation to the company of how you think you can help them add more value to what they do.

Submitting and making **presentations** will feature a lot in your future; whether it is in presentation of yourself or your work. It is for this reason that I will take the opportunity to encourage the College to include *Presentation & Education* as a key soft skill curricular. I cannot say enough how many times I have seen a brilliant person get passed over either because they did not present themselves or their ideas well. For in many instances, the hard skill will open the door, but what will get your feet into the door and up the stairs, is the soft skills. It is important that you have at your fingertips what you are presenting, who you are presenting to and how best to present it.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, Let me take this opportunity to congratulate the University Authorities and faculty for the good work done on the grandaunts. I am particularly pleased with the Internship programme whereby students are attached to businesses during vacations. My wish is that many faculty members will be also encouraged to do same and attach to businesses now and then. This will help bridge very quickly the industry skills gap and also deepen application of the technical knowledge.

Finally let me congratulate you the graduating students once again and wish you well as you enter the real world. With discipline, humility and a can do attitude, I have no doubt the good Lord will by Grace enable you all to fulfil your worthwhile aspiration, to help in the development of Ghana and humankind.

Mr Vice Chancellor, Chairman of University Council and Provost, I thank you all for the honour and God be with us all.