

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR RELATIONS, HON. IGNATIUS BAFFOUR AWUAH (MP), AT THE LAUNCH OF NVTI 48TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION HELD AT THE BRITISH COUNCIL HALL, ACCRA ON THURSDAY, 15TH FEBRUARY, 2018 AT 10:00 AM

Mr. Chairman;

The Executive Director, National Vocational Training Institute;

Heads of Departments and Agencies;

Social Partners;

Development Partners;

Distinguished Invited Guests;

The Media;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

I am extremely delighted for the honour done me to deliver the keynote address at the launch of National Vocational Training Institute (NVTI) 48th Anniversary Celebration. And I consider this invitation a great privilege.

Mr. Chairman;

Permit me to congratulate the Management and Staff of NVTI for their commitment to making this institution a symbol of excellence. "AYEKOO".

Mr. Chairman,

The theme chosen for this celebration - "Promoting TVET to Provide Solutions to Ghana's Unemployment Challenge: The Role of NVTI" is not only relevant but also fit-for-the occasion. I say this because, unemployment is the most critical challenge of our national development today and the role of NVTI acting as lead skills solutions to Government's employment agenda cannot be overemphasized. Without a doubt, the urgency to create jobs for the teeming youth has become paramount considering the fact that, about 60% of our population is under 35 years. You would all agree with me that, unemployment especially among the youth has almost become a national security issue. Thus,

interventions towards addressing this phenomenon are crucial and a paramount preoccupation to government.

Mr. Chairman;

To have allowed unemployment to permeate every sector of the economy as a result of our lip service to Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), is unfortunate. Indeed, TVET has proven to be of great potential in accelerating a country's growth and development. While global evidence to this effect is not far-fetched, the Germany experience readily comes across as one grand example of success. Contrary to the so-called "Grammar School" education, TVET is basically designed to equip trainees with Entrepreneurial and Vocational skills. The idea is to increase the chances of trainees gaining employment or establishing their own businesses after training. Sadly, the greatest challenges facing TVET in Ghana is the low patronage and prestige it enjoys from the public. What is more embarrassing is that, as a people, our awkward and penchant desire for a wide range of foreign products which were hitherto alien and we originally produced. As

a country therefore, we have failed in our efforts to leverage on the benefits of TVET. It is not surprising then that, we import basic items such as matches, toilet roll and even toothpick. This is not funny, but unacceptable.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

We have attained a middle income status as a country. There is therefore the urgent need for a significant level of technocratic skilled workforce without which we cannot develop our country further. A skilled workforce is required to build and maintain our roads, bridges, railways, markets, health and educational facilities and run our transportation, energy and Oil/Gas industry. Besides, we need competent skilled workforce to compete globally.

Mr. Chairman;

I wish to state without hesitation that, the role of NVTI in promoting TVET to provide solutions to Ghana's unemployment challenge cannot be disputed. It is fair to acknowledge that,

despite the inadequate support to NVTI, your contribution to the growth of the informal economy is enormous. The masons, carpenters, steel benders, mechanics, electricians, technicians we come across can attest to this. The NVTI we all know, even though it is currently ill-resourced and staff are compelled to rely heavily on obsolete equipment for teaching and learning, NVTI has struggled over the years and till date, it remains the most relevant TVET institution.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

I think in all sincerity that, now is the time than ever, to rethink TVET so as to adequately equip the institution and identify sustainable ways of financing NVTI operations. It is indeed against this backdrop and recognition that, it has been extremely difficult for NVTI to pursue its mandate in accordance with the establishment that Government has decided to introduce reforms of the entire TVET system.

Ironically, trades like dressmaking, hairdressing, baking, carpentry, auto mechanics, etc which are considered the preserve of the less intelligent and poor will be elevated to more preferred vocations since they can provide ready jobs and sustainable incomes. Additionally, these vocations and trades which are considered as the preserve of people from the lower ranks of society will soon become a thing of the past.

Paradoxically, even though it has become a commonplace for University graduates to spend 2-6 years after their education, looking for non-existent employment and our universities continue to churn out graduates that cannot be absorbed by the labour market, there is increasing demand for skilled workers in many of our small-to-medium scale industries which are not being met. This epitomizes the fact that, TVET in Ghana needs urgent rebranding for people to come to terms with its importance to socio-economic development.

Mr. Chairman;

Indeed, I am very passionate about the welfare of artisans because, this group of people has been neglected for far too long in our part of the country if not the continent as a whole. Fascinatingly, it is this same group of people that shape the skills set of the country's scarce human resources yet we pay little or no attention to their needs. The onus therefore lies on us to put TVET and in particular, the role of NVTI at the centre of our national discourse in order to accelerate the creation of the much-needed jobs for the benefit of all Ghanaians and generations yet unborn.

Mr. Chairman, My Distinguished Audience, Ladies and Gentlemen;

My final word to the Executive Director, Management and Staff of NVTI is that, the 50th Anniversary Celebration should be seen as the stepping stone for initiating complete transformation of TVET in Ghana. After 48 years of NVTI's existence, it can no longer be

business as usual. We must all roll our sleeves and work to reform TVET in the country. In this vein, my Ministry will give NVTI the necessary support it requires to contribute its quota towards nation building.

We owe it a duty to bequeath to the next generation, a Ghana that we can all be proud of, a Ghana that has enough decent jobs for its growing population, a Ghana that gives opportunities to its citizens, and a Ghana that is truly the shining star of Africa and beyond.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Invited Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen;

Having said this, it is now my singular honour and pleasure to declare the 48th Anniversary Celebration of the National Vocational Training Institute duly launched.

I thank you all for your attention.

GOD BLESS US ALL.