

VALEDICTORY SPEECH

(By Mr. **Gabla John** at the 16th graduation ceremony of the Presbyterian College of Education)



The Moderator of the General Assembly, PCG (Rt. Rev. Dr Abraham Nana Opape Kwakye), Council Chairperson, Presbyterian College of Education, Akropong – Akuapem (Dr Esther Offei Aboagye), The Vice-Chancellor, University of Education, Winneba (Prof. Stephen J. Mitchual), The Principal, Presbyterian College of Education, Akropong – Akuapem (Rev. Dr Nicholas Apreh Siaw), The Guest Speaker (Prof. W. K. Aborampah), Faculty of Education, KNUST, Members of the College Governing Council, Distinguished faculty, Proud parents, Honoured guests, My fellow graduands, Ladies and Gentlemen.

A boy once believed that he was not good enough. His life had been nothing but a mystery, even to himself. His BECE and WASSCE results fell short of his expectations, leading him to doubt his abilities and potential. What hadn't realized then was that his academic struggles were not a reflection of his capabilities, but rather a result of the challenging circumstances he faced. He was in the Senior High School alongside two of his sisters, with a single mother shouldering the entire burden of their education without any external support. To contribute to his education expenses, he often had to run away from school to play instruments in churches, earning whatever little he could to pay for books and other expenses, and this affected his academic performance so badly. However, upon gaining admission into a college after staying home for three years due to lack of funds, he decided to experiment on himself. With newfound support from his mother, sisters and church administrator, he wondered what the outcome would be if he could fully focus on his studies. Ladies and gentlemen, standing before you today as the valedictorian of the 2023 graduating class of the first tertiary institution in Ghana, Presbyterian College of Education, Akropong–Akuapem, with a mix of emotions - joy, gratitude, and anticipation is that boy, now a young man, and the results of the "experiment".

This experience has taught me a crucial lesson: First, it highlights the immense impact that a supportive environment can have on a student's success. Second, it demonstrates that past performance does not define future potential. And lastly, it underscores the resilience of the human spirit when allowed to flourish.

Looking at my fellow graduates today, I know many of you can relate to this interesting story of mine. I know some of you faced significant challenges that affected your academic performance. I have seen brilliant minds struggle simply because they lacked the necessary support to stay comfortably on campus and focus on learning. Let us ponder over this, how many more success stories could we be celebrating today if every student had their basic needs met? How many CGPAs may have been different? How many dreams may have soared higher? This is not about making excuses. It's about recognizing that success in education is not just about intelligence or hard work. It's also about having the necessary support in order to thrive. Some of our classmates achieved amazing things despite facing incredible odds. Imagine what they could have done with just a little more support.

To the future educators and parents in this room, remember that your support is not just helpful. It's essential. I plead with you to recognize the profound impact you have on young minds. I believe that by providing both physical and emotional support, we can create an atmosphere where students can focus on their studies and unlock their true potential. Your encouragement, understanding, and guidance can be the difference between students who believe they are "not good enough" and those who realize they are capable of achieving greatness. In the words of Malcom, "Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today", I am of a true conviction that while it is safe to say that no one knows what tomorrow holds, having an education under your belt will open the door to more opportunities. So, what you do today in terms of education will surely prepare you for what is yet to come. Education in this sense, is not just any kind of education but quality education. In view of this, I urge us all to commit to building a future where every student has the support they need to truly shine. Because I know certainly that when we invest in students, we invest in a brighter future for all of us.

As I reflect on our time here, I can't help but recall a funny memory that I believe many of us can relate to. Those times at level 100, we used to sit 18 at a table, and getting enough food was always a challenge. One Wednesday, I was so hungry and ran to the dining hall for lunch. After sharing the food, guess what I ended up with? One tiny slice of yam. But you know what? That day taught me something important. It is not always about getting more. It's about being grateful for what you have and making the best of it.

To my fellow graduates, when we first arrived at the college four years ago, we were filled with a mixture of excitement and apprehension. Over the years, we have grown, learned, and transformed in ways we could never have imagined. I believe, graduation is not just the end of a chapter; it is the beginning of a new adventure. We stand at the threshold of an exciting and challenging journey. The path ahead may seem intimidating, but remember the resilience and determination that brought you here today. I urge you all to challenge the status quo and strive for greatness. Because one day I would love to sit at the comfort of my home with my future wife and kids, and watch some of you on the television, and I will gladly tell them that I was in the same hall or school or class with this person. As for me, I am going to strive so hard to get to the top, and you will tell your future wife or husband that you were once in tyeame school or class or hall with this guy. Above all, don't forget the God factor. Because I believe that standing here as the valedictorian is simply the doing of the Lord and somethings we did in the house of God. I quite remember when the Principal of the college, Rev. Dr. Nicholas Appreh-Siaw visited one of our Sunday services. After ministering the word of God, he led a fund raising in aid of purchasing instruments for the college chaplaincy. He asked some students to sow a seed of thousand Ghana cedis. The only money I had was the exact amount in my investment account. I had to empty the account and send the money to his office. After submitting the money, I knelt in his office and he prayed for me. One of his pronouncements was that "yoy will be celebrated". And here I am today as the valedictorian of the 2023 graduating class.

In the words of Nelson Mandela, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world". As educators, I believe we have been given the power to bring massive change to the development of mother Ghana and the world at large. Dare to be teachers who make a

difference. Let us not be content with simply following the traditional methods of teaching, but strive to be innovative educators who inspire curiosity, critical thinking, and a love for learning in our students.

On behalf of the 2023 graduating class, I would like to take a moment to express heartfelt gratitude to the following individuals for their immense contribution towards this success story. To the Moderator of the General Assembly, as well as the immediate past moderator, we appreciate everything you have done and still doing behind the scenes that has brought us thus far. To the College Governing Council, the Principal and the College Management, your visionary leadership and unwavering support has made this possible. To our tutors, your dedication and wisdom have been instrumental in shaping us into the educators we are today. To the non-teaching staff, your behind-the-scenes efforts have not gone unnoticed and are deeply appreciated. And to our parents and guardians, especially my mother (Miss Domey Comfort), sisters (Doris and Gifty Gabla), and Mr. Nutefe-Elloh Jean Michelle, your sacrifices and encouragement have been the bedrock of what we are witnessing today. To my colleagues especially Kumi Alexander, Sakyibea Esinam Juliet, Dzotepe Joshua, Ansah Dorcas Adomaa, Amankwata Sarah Mamle, Dankwa Priscilla, Agyei Ampofo Ephraim, Odame Amfo Gabriel, Larbi Solomon, Somuah George, etc. God bless you so much for your sacrifices and contribution towards this success story.

In conclusion, graduates, we entered these gates as students, but we are leaving as transformative educators. As we close this chapter, let's open the next with enthusiasm, the spirit of innovation, the power of perseverance, and the strength of our community, knowing that our calling as educators is noble and vital.

Long Live Ghana! Long Live PCE! Long Live ADIKANFO 2023!

Thank You.