

**ADDRESS BY DAASEBRE PROF. (EMERITUS) OTI BOATENG,  
OMANHENE OF NEW JUABEN TRADITIONAL AREA AND  
CHANCELLOR, ALL NATIONS UNIVERSITY, AS CHAIRMAN OF THE  
2ND GNPC NANA SIR OFORI ATTA I NATIONAL ENERGY QUIZ MEDIA  
LAUNCH AT THE BRITISH COUNCIL, ACCRA, ON 11 JUNE 2019**

Ministers of State, Nananom and Nene of the Eastern Regional House of Chiefs, Representatives of Oil, Gas and Power Generation Sectors, Esteemed Traditional Rulers, Media Representatives, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I welcome with sincere thanks and inspiration, the singular honour of inviting me as Chairman for this momentous occasion. I wish to extend my profound appreciation and utmost respect to my colleague Paramount Chiefs of the Eastern Regional House of Chiefs for their moral support. I accept this honour with humility.

We are assembled here today for the Media Launch of the 2nd GNPC Nana Sir Ofori Atta I National Energy Quiz competition aimed at equipping students with adequate knowledge in the Oil and Gas as well as Power Generation sectors. The event is also to improve their knowledge on culture and current affairs.

A name when institutionalized by the unparalleled exploits of pace-setting leaders becomes iconic symbols of inspiration and trademarks of history that institutions and people are always endeavoring to identify with. Such leaders do not only inspire us to achieve greater heights in life, but also set the standards of societal conscience and give us hope that we can rise above our comfort zones. They are the bridges between our past and future and the signpost of our common humanity. Such is the exploits of Nana Sir Ofori Atta in the historical, cultural and political evolution of Ghana as a nation state.

Nana Sir Ofori Atta, who reigned as Okyenhene for 31 years from 1912 to 1943, remains a giant brand and standard bearer of Chieftaincy leadership, a wellspring of knowledge and an icon in the political history and culture of Ghana. It is such a brand of our leadership history that we are humbly borrowing as a shared inspirational foundation of this innovative Senior High School (SHS) Quiz Competition.

If I am to briefly recall some of the most important exploits associated with the name and personality being observed today to redefine new contours of inspiration for the SHS Quiz Competition and education as a whole, you will

appreciate and applaud the foresight of Nananom, Nene and others who made this significant decision.

Nana Sir Ofori Atta had an unwavering faith in education as a tool for progress. Barely four years into his reign in 1916, he inspired the formation of the Abuakwa Scholars' Union with the principal aim of educating the people. He fervently believed in education and was the patron spirit for the education of his people.

On his 56th birthday on October 11, 1937 (that is, almost 82 years ago and exactly 5 months to the Chair's birthday), Nana Ofori Atta himself laid the foundation stone to establish the Abuakwa State College at an estimated cost of £10,000 (GHC68,000 in current terms), provided wholly from Okyeman revenues, thus becoming the father and founder of the College.

In Nana Ofori Atta, I discovered a companion of common shared values of education. He inspired the quest for Afrocentric education, and believed that any education which alienates people from their identity, history and culture undoubtedly becomes an ideological tool rather than a true and honest education.

Nana Ofori Atta shared the view that Africans must be allowed to hold on to their culture, which was expressed by Governor Guggisberg in 1920 as follows: "One of the greatest mistakes of the education in the past has been that it has taught the African to become a European instead of remaining an African. This is entirely wrong and the government recognizes it. In the future, our education will aim at making the African remain an African, and taking interest in his own country".

The Guggisberg position largely inspired the colonial government's white paper on education released in 1925. The white paper stated that "education should be adapted to the mentality, aptitudes, occupations and traditions of the various peoples, conserving as far as possible all sound and healthy elements in the fabric of their social life." The committee that drafted this policy included Lord Lugard, the pioneer of the indirect rule system in Africa.

The lessons brought forth in the foregoing exposition remains abundantly germane in contemporary times. Our post-independence experience in education remains a major challenge, in the quest to preserve the African identity and culture in an educational system that is largely Eurocentric in content and substance. It is important to rethink the content and substance of our education with this historical inspiration to ensure that we educate Ghanaians to be more Ghanaians than foreigners and to respect our values and institutions of culture- that is, unquestionably, the threshold of civilization

advocated by Nana Sir Ofori Atta. In the words of an iconic British Philosopher, Edmund Burke in his concept of cultural relativism; **“neither entirely nor all at once departs from antiquity, for a people will never look forward to posterity who never look backwards to their ancestors”**.

Nana Ofori Atta remained an ardent advocate of the culture of his ancestors, without ignoring aspects of other people's culture with the potential to enhance the progress of his own. He was prepared to support adaptations that were consistent with his conception of modernization of Akyem Abuakwa and the Gold Coast in general. He therefore did not object to a Basel Mission regulation of 1927 mandating a two-thirds share of a deceased Christian husband's estate to be given to his wife and children (thus providing a useful replica for PNDC Law 111).

Aided by the Scholars's Union and a deep-rooted political will, Nana Ofori Atta I succeeded where his predecessors failed, by introducing some pragmatic, practical and innovative measures that made the indigenous concept of land ownership beneficial for the larger community.

Nana Ofori Atta identified himself not only with the affairs of his own state but also with the various activities across the Gold Coast. He was firmly opposed to foreign cultural norms that threatened to de-Africanise his people and make them intellectual “carbon-copies” and second-rated citizens of other races, a subservient humanity lacking confidence, originality and critical thinking to compete globally.

In 1934, he led 15 paramount chiefs to present a memorandum to Governor Shenton Thomas which stressed the importance of giving Gold Coast children education that took a number of fields into account including creativity, critical thinking and objectivity. This is the missing tripod of our educational system to date- that is, the basic contours of 21<sup>st</sup> century holistic education.

He also played an engaging role in the repatriation of Asantehene Nana Prempeh I from Seychelles island in 1924 which was climaxed with his memorable visit to Kumasi thereafter. It is no wonder that Nana Ofori Atta I was deservedly described by Jonnie Rubes of the Spectator Daily and others as “the Gold Coast man”. It also came as no surprise when the current Asantehene, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, paid a historic visit to Kyebi in August 2018 with Asanteman to grace the Diamond Jubilee celebration of Nana Sir Ofori Atta's demise and to deepen the relationship between Asanteman and Okyeman.

In a powerful memorandum on education to the Presbyterian Synod meeting at Kyebi on July 11, 1941, Nana Ofori Atta emphatically stated: “I do and shall always emphasise that education should be regarded as one of the foremost duties of the chiefs towards the community; and any chief who fails or neglects his duty can hardly be deemed worthy of his trust”.

Although Nana Sir Ofori Atta contributed so much to education in the twentieth century, the question is not so much what he has contributed, but more importantly what the quiz event will derive from being associated with the name.

He represents one of the glittering diamonds of the historicity of Chieftaincy leadership in Ghana. He earned great respect for the institution of Chieftaincy in Ghana as a whole. This offers a portrait of his authority, captivating personality, and great charisma in the cultural leadership landscape of Ghana.

The name Nana Sir Ofori Atta, wherever it is mentioned or found in Ghana and elsewhere, is a reference point to the personality whose exploits and traditional authority in Ghana we are celebrating today to redefine the Senior High School Quiz Competition along the enviable national traits of academic excellence and leadership.

It is with such shared inspiration that the New Juaben Traditional Council equally instituted an annual Akwantukese Quiz competition during Daasebre’s Silver Jubilee Celebration in 2017 which runs through all levels of education from the Basic Schools to the Universities. A perpetual seed of holistic education was planted to signify this new watershed of educational quest in New Juaben and Ghana as a whole. The current GNPC National Energy Quiz Competition at the SHS Level is considered as a useful supplement and a concept that could be embraced and expanded as the footprint of GNPC’s legacy in Ghana’s education.

By associating with the name Nana Ofori Atta I, the Quiz Event is now being challenged not only to become a symbol of national excellence in academic and knowledge contributions but also to inculcate his visionary leadership qualities which embody strong values, clear insight, motivating relationships and innovative action to perpetually inspire generations of faculty and students.

Thank You

