

GHANA NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS

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THE GHANA NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS' CONTINUED STAND ON THE PRE-TERTIARY EDUCATION BILL-2019

Once again, the Ghana National Association of Teachers, GNAT, wishes to bring to the attention of the public, its continued stand on the Pre-tertiary Education Bill, following its inclusion in the **Order Paper of Friday, 3rd April, 2020**, to be laid before the Parliament of the Republic of Ghana for discussion and subsequent passage.

The attention of the Pre-tertiary Education Unions - GNAT, NAGRAT, TEWU and CCT-Gh was drawn to paragraph 352, pg. 72 of the **Budget Statement and Economic Policy of the Government of Ghana for the 2018 Financial Year**, which was presented to Parliament on Wednesday, 15th November, 2017, which indicated that the Pre-tertiary Education Bill had been reviewed and approved by Cabinet.

Following this, the GNAT, acting on behalf of the Pre-tertiary Education Unions wrote to the Minister of Education, requesting for a copy of the document (see our letter Ref. 0990/VOL.III/41/17, 27th November, 2017, **Request for Education Bill Approved by Cabinet**). Surprisingly, the Minister not only failed to respond to the letter, but refused us the document.

With time, our attention was once again drawn to three Bills which had been laid before Parliament without engagement with, or inputs from the Unions. These were the **Pre-tertiary Education Bill, 2019**, the **Education Regulatory Bill, 2019** and the **Complementary Education Bill, 2019**.

We found this as a breach of ILO/UNESCO Recommendations Concerning the Status of Teachers (1966) which encourages social dialogue between partners

on such national policies and issues, and therefore raised our voice against it. We also drew the attention of the Minister of Education to the spirit and letter of the 2009 Collective Agreement with the Ghana Education Service, particularly the preamble which enjoined the parties not to be both anti-union and anti-management with each other, but endeavour to promote trust, respect and fairness in all our dealings.

We wish to place it on record that the Pre-tertiary Education Unions, had been requesting for the draft of the Education Bills since 2017, but had been ignored. So we were shocked when we learned that the Bills were being forwarded to Parliament without our inputs. Considering the far-reaching implications, the Bills would have on the Education Service as stipulated in Article 190 of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, our teachers and the teaching profession as a whole, once again, we raised our voice in protest.

In our quest for a document which would be accepted by all, and whose implementation would not disadvantage our teachers, we entreated Parliament, humbly, to suspend business on the three Bills, and asked that copies be made available to us for our study, analysis and inputs to make them holistic, when laid. We wrote to Rt. Hon. Speaker of Parliament about this (see our letter, Ref. 1422/VOL.IV/22/19, 9th October, 2019).

On 30th January, 2020, the Parliament Select Committee on Education invited the Unions to a meeting on the Pre-tertiary Education Bill, 2019, on Tuesday, 4th February, 2020, which we honoured and a follow-up meeting on Wednesday, 12th February, 2020 which we again honoured. It was at the 12th February meeting that we were informed that per the Bill, management of education in Ghana would assume the following shape:

- Senior High Schools: Would be managed/run by the Regional Education Directorate (Regional Coordinating Councils).
- Basic Schools: Would be managed/run by the Metropolitan / Municipal / District Assemblies.
- The Technical/Vocational Schools: Would be managed/run by their own Director General, independent of the Ghana Education Service.

By this arrangement therefore:

- The Ghana Education Service would be shorn of its power/mandate, and now become a feeble coordinator.

- The Teaching Profession would be destabilized.
- The Unified Service currently in place would be broken/dismembered.
- The Unified Condition of Service under which teachers operate would be broken.
- Teachers would be manipulated and subjected to the whims and caprices of the Assemblies, and subsequent politicization of the Service.

Indeed, the Bill, if allowed to pass, would destroy the organic profession our founding fathers fought for and attained, even under colonial rule.

In the spirit of unity, harmony and organic solidarity, the Pre-tertiary Education Unions expressed their abhorrence for the arrangement, and rejected it in no uncertain terms. We made it crystal clear, that the **UNIFIED TEACHING PROFESSION, AS IT EXISTS TODAY, IS NON-NEGOTIABLE!**

We conveyed this message to the wider Ghanaian Public, by our press conference, held on 14th February, 2020. In response to our press release, the Ministry insisted that some of the issues we raised did not reflect the provisions of the Bill, and referred us back to the Ministry for engagement on some outstanding matters of concern to us. This assurance notwithstanding, the Ministry went further to emphasize that Government's agenda... will not be derailed by sectional interest, and its commitment to pursuing important reforms towards improving learning outcomes in our institutions... We found these Statements unfortunate; if attempting to consolidate the united front of teachers, save the Ghana Education Service from politicization and our teachers from manipulation would be deemed sectional interest, we leave that to the judgement of the good people of Ghana. Again, what reform could be more important than carrying along Teachers, the drivers of the learning process, rather than the veiled attempt to destroy their front and politicize GES?

The Unions had not exhausted the options yet. Thus we duly attended a day offsite meeting on the Pre-tertiary Education Bill at the City Escape Hotel, Accra on 27th February, 2020 (see GES letter, Ref. GES/DG/245/20/067). Hon. Minister of Education was represented by Dr. Adutwum, Hon. Deputy Minister of Education.

At this meeting, the Pre-tertiary Education Unions, were asked to put their inputs together and submit it to the next meeting for discussion. We were in the process of doing this when the COVID 19 pandemic broke out, and the country went on lockdown.

The inclusion of the Pre-tertiary Education Bill in the Order Paper of Friday, 3rd April, 2020 to be laid before the Parliament of Ghana for discussion and

subsequent passage therefore comes to the Unions as a rude shock and an exercise of bad faith.

We wish to reiterate that our stance is no derailment of Government's agenda, neither is it sectional, for the President of the Republic, His Excellency Nana Darkwa Akufo Addo himself recognizes that we (the **Pre-tertiary Education Unions**) **have concerns over** the Pre-Tertiary Education Bill 2019 (see State of the Nation Address, 2020).

The Ghana National Association of Teachers' continued stand on the Pre-tertiary Education Bill, 2019, therefore is:

- (1) We stand for unity, harmony and organic solidarity on the pre-tertiary education front.
- (2) We would not allow the manipulation of our teachers, and the politicization of the Service by any policy or legislation.
- (3) We would not allow the dismemberment, disintegration and destruction of the teaching profession.
- (4) We remain committed to our Collective and United front, now and in the future.

We hereby call on Parliament to suspend all deliberations on the Bill, until all issues between us (the Pre-tertiary Education Unions) and the Ministry of Education have been resolved, to the satisfaction of us all.

We caution that should Parliament not heed our call, but go ahead with the discussions and eventual passage of the Bills, Leadership of the Unions would not be able to control the actions or inactions of our members, and the Ministry of Education may have itself to blame, in the end. We wish to sound further that our members in all the Regions have already served notice to this effect through their various press conferences, that they would resist the imposition of the Pre-tertiary Education Bill 2019 in no uncertain terms.

God bless our homeland Ghana!

**ISSUED AND SIGNED IN ACCRA
BY THE GHANA NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS**

**THOMAS T. MUSAH
GENERAL SECRETARY**

DATE: SATURDAY, 4TH APRIL, 2020