

GNAT LETTER ON CPD IS WORRYING

I have read carefully a letter written by the General Secretary of Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) Mr Thomas Musah to the Director General of Ghana Education Service (GES) captioned **“Protest Against Continuous Professional Development by National Teaching Council Accredited Service Providers”**.

Much as I tried to understand the frustration of Mr. Thomas Musah, which stemmed from the fact that some teachers have chosen to protest against charging of fees for CPD, I find it hard to agree with how he has opted to exercise his trade union rights in dealing with the issues. As an astute leader of the largest teacher union in Ghana I expected him to be bold enough to explain matters well to members rather than turning his frustrations on the GES. Some of my areas of disagreement are in the following:

1. He makes it appear as if NTC has no mandate to accredit CPD providers.
2. He makes it appear as if NTC has no right to collaborate with the employer in the provision of CPD.
3. He makes it appear as if the employer, GES, is not bearing the cost of the CPD.
4. He makes it appear as if as employees they do not have direct dealings with the regulator of our profession, the National Teaching Council (NTC), hence directing his letter to only the employer and not even copying the regulator.

It is universally accepted that teachers’ continuous professional development is very critical in maintaining the sharpness of educators in the delivery of quality education. The Sustainable Development Goal 4 emphasizes the need for lifelong learning. It is therefore gratifying that Mr. Thomas Musah acknowledges the necessity for CPD for teachers. His apparent worry is why NTC is leading operationalization of CPD. To him, as per the letter, NTC does not have that mandate but rather usurping the mandate of the GES. This position of GNAT is not correct because;

Section 60 of the Education Regulatory Bodies Act entrusts a lot of responsibilities on NTC with respect to teacher training and development. Indeed,

- ❖ Section 60 (g) of Act 1023 states that the NTC “shall accredit in collaboration with relevant agencies, institutions offering teacher education and development programmes”.
- ❖ Section 60 (i) states among others that the NTC shall “establish standards for teacher education”.
- ❖ Section 60 (k) says the NTC “shall develop and promote continuing professional development of teachers”.
- ❖ Section 60 (a) (ii) says that the NTC “shall advise the Minister on matters of education, development and employment of teachers”.

Therefore, I personally do not see where NTC has faulted in its mandate of accrediting CPD providers and their programmes. I also do not see why it is wrong to collaborate with GES and their appropriate structures in implementing CPD programmes for teachers. As far as I know, NTC officially wrote to the Director General of GES on the on-going CPD programmes to solicit the support of GES appropriate structures. It is important for GNAT to note that the various agencies

within the Ministry of Education do not work in **silos** but collaborate for effective and efficient education delivery.

In the GNAT letter, Mr. Musah made it look as if by asking teachers to pay for the CPD programmes, the employer is violating section 9 (d) of the Labour Act 2003 (Act 651) which enjoins the employer to develop their human resource by way of training and retraining. **This is shocking because GNAT knows full well that the employer bears the cost of the CPD programmes.** Indeed, GNAT in the company of NAGRAT and CCT, as part of negotiation of their collective bargaining agreement (CBA) negotiated **an amount as** Continuous Professional Development Allowance for teachers. This allowance is purposely for the training and development of the GES human resources, apart from study leave with pay, granted a number of teachers for further studies. I therefore expected GNAT to rather explain to teachers the rationale for the CPD allowance they negotiated instead of venting their frustration on NTC and GES. Last year in November, the CPD allowance was paid, and teachers are expected to apply the money to their professional development.

I rather agree that NTC and GES should regulate the fees being charged by the service providers of CPD and to clearly state which CPDs are mandatory or recommended.

Reading the GNAT letter, it was clear that GNAT was complaining about the role of NTC as a regulator, and the CPD providers accredited by the regulator vis a vis their collaboration with the employer, especially Regional and District Directors of Education. It is therefore a surprise why GNAT did not direct their letter to the regulator or even copy them. In the past, the teacher unions have directly engaged NTC on teacher issues where they deem appropriate and I do not think this matter falls outside the appropriate matters to engage NTC.

GNAT alluded to an attempt to subvert the collective agreement between GES and the Unions. Mr Musah goes on to threaten “GES and whoever are concerned” to have themselves to blame if they ignored GNAT’s plea and went ahead with their scheme. I personally have not seen any attempt to subvert the collective agreement in the process of CPD implementation. I rather see a fulfilment of the collective agreement which made provision for the payment of CPD allowance to teachers. I am further worried that GNAT could not mention NTC in this context but indirectly refer to them as “whoever are concerned”. I wonder if all is well between NTC and GNAT as the insinuation from the mighty GNAT is worrying.

From where I sit, I have seen the teacher unions collaborating with NTC in implementing the teacher professionalization as prescribed by law and policies. Presently, GNAT has registered and has been accredited by NTC as a service provider of CPD. Early this year NTC collaborated with GNAT to train hundreds of teachers across the country. During preparation of the CPD framework for teachers, Mr. Musah personally represented GNAT and made very critical inputs into the framework which is being operationalised by NTC. GNAT and the other teacher unions have worked at every stage with NTC on this teacher professionalization process. Therefore, if there are challenges in some aspects of the implementation, it is important the stakeholders have conversation on how to deal with such challenges in the interest of teachers and learners. Teachers

play a pivotal role in education delivery. Without quality teachers, the nation should just forget about quality education.

It is therefore critical that the representative of teachers (unions) and the appropriate agencies within the Ministry of Education dialogue consistently in the best interest of teachers, learners and quality education. From where I sit I know NTC is ever ready to dialogue with our revered teacher unions on any matter of relevance.

My General Secretary, please cool it and dialogue.

Dennis OSEI-OWUSU

PRO of NTC

(A GNAT member)

PS: This is not NTC's official response to the GNAT letter.