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MEDIA RELEASE

Statement issued by the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) in response to the 2021 State of the Nation's Address on Education

The President, H.E. Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo, on Tuesday, 9th March 2021, delivered the State of the Nation's Address (SoNA) in parliament. Given the critical role of Education to Ghana's development, the sector featured prominently in the President's address, touching on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), expansion of enrolment into tertiary institutions, computers for teachers and student loans.

Through this statement, the Centre for Social Justice shares its reflections on the above education focus areas noted in the SoNA as follows.

TVET

The CSJ acknowledges the contribution of a well-managed TVET ecosystem to national development. TVET is critical in providing a skilled workforce for the country and giving citizens, particularly the youth, the opportunity to live a dignified life and contribute to society by creating employment for them.

In the last four years, some progress has been made in the sector, including creating the TVET Commission, which brings all TVET institutions under the Ministry of Education, putting an end to a chaotic system where 9 ministries supervised TVET institutions. Modest progress was also made in the rollout of the Competency-Based Training (CBT) model, which emphasizes hands-on teaching methods and stronger linkages with industry, including harnessing industry input in curriculum development.

Despite these gains, the sector continues to face serious challenges, including:

- Inadequate funding for TVET institutions
- Poorly equipped workshops

- Teacher demotivation
- Poor societal perception of TVET graduates makes it unattractive to students
- Lack of gainful employment for TVET graduates

For TVET to flourish, the government needs to take deliberate steps to improve TVET instructors training, establish and ensure access to continuous professional development to enhance quality and adherence to industry standards.

Unlike general education, TVET is designed to train students with specific skills for industry. Therefore, it is critical that the institutions are adequately equipped with the tools needed to ensure a seamless transition from training to the world of work.

Technical Universities must live up to their name by ensuring that a minimum of 60% of their course offerings is TVET related.

The CSJ takes the view that the first step in making TVET acceptable to all and sundry must be a mind shift for the acceptance of TVET as a choice and not an option for failed students who cannot pursue grammar education, with a clear focus on employment after completion of training, while prioritizing skills with higher industry demand.

The CSJ further calls upon the government to elevate its touted commitments to TVET beyond the provision of classrooms to an extensive focus on well-equipped workshops to enable students to hone their practical skills.

We also propose that a percentage of the government's vocational and technical contracts be awarded to TVET institutions to enable trainees to undertake full-scale industrial production while generating revenue for the institutions.

2. Distribution of Computers to Teachers

The President announced the distribution of over two hundred thousand laptops to teachers. This is laudable to the extent that it will improve teacher efficiency. However, a mixed approach of in person and virtual instruction has become a reality of life due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We call upon the government not to limit the comprehensive overhaul of the infrastructure needed for effective in-person and virtual teaching and learning to the distribution of laptops to teachers. Other components like reliable internet access, revised instructional materials and student laptops all need to be comprehensively accounted for, to achieve a tangible impact and ensure that students from underprivileged backgrounds have equal opportunity to achieve their full potential.

3. University Students' Loans

The CSJ finds the government's decision to remove the guarantor requirement for accessing student loans to be inadequate. The key issues are undoubtedly lack of adequate funding, inadequate loan amounts and poor recovery of loans from beneficiaries. With the students' loan scheme currently struggling to serve less than 10% of the tertiary student population, it is very important to discuss ways of mobilizing extra

funds to increase access to students' loans for ALL Tertiary Students who need it. In addition to removing guarantors, the government should consider increasing the loan amount as the current average of GHC 2500 per student per academic year is woefully inadequate to cover tertiary education costs. More can also be done by the Students' Loan Trust Fund to significantly improve the recovery of loans from beneficiaries.

-ENDS-

Issued by the Education and Social Transformation Team, Center for Social Justice

For more information or interview opportunities, please contact:

Mr. Nii Armah Addy
Fellow, Education and Social Transformation Team
Center for Social Justice
0244268074

Dr. Sodzi Sodzi-Tettey
Lead Founder
Center for Social Justice
020 630 1109

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