



Promoting Excellence in Knowledge

GHANA ACADEMY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

2021 FOUNDER'S WEEK CELEBRATION

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

EMERITUS PROFESSOR SAMUEL KOFI SEFA-DEDEH

NOVEMBER 23, 2021

GHANA ACADEMY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS BY EMERITUS PROFESSOR SAMUEL KOFI SEFA-DEDEH NOVEMBER 23, 2021

Salutations

Chairperson, Professor Justice Henrietta Mensa-Bonsu

Past Presidents of the Academy,

Vice Presidents,

Council

Distinguished Fellows of the Academy

The Executive Secretary and Staff of the Academy

Friends and families of New Fellows to be inducted into the Fellowship of GAAS

Members of the Press

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Good evening and welcome to the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences and to the celebration of the 2021 Founder's Week.

Acknowledgement and Appreciation

Madam Chairperson

On January 14, 2021, Prof Justice Henrietta Mensa-Bonsu, the immediate past President handed over the leadership of the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences (GAAS) to a new Council. As President of the academy and Chairman of Council my acceptance speech was titled "Leading the charge for increased relevance in a changing society". Thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic the past eleven months has

seen the Academy adjust to new ways with its challenges. It has been my privilege to serve as the 20th President of the academy. On behalf of the Fellows of the academy, I wish to acknowledge all the past Presidents and other Officers of the academy for their leadership and contributions in making the Ghana Academy what it is today.

I acknowledge the current members of Council of the Academy for their leadership, diligence, support, and cooperation in the steering of the affairs of the Academy these past eleven months.

Our Distinguished Fellows of the Academy have stayed the course, despite the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, you have participated in our planned activities and contributed immensely to the work of our committees. We will continue to count on your full participation in the coming years. Thank you for your Fellowship.

To the hardworking staff at the Secretariat, on behalf of Council and Fellows I thank and appreciate you and your work.

Appreciation of Newly Inducted Fellows

My warm congratulations to all the distinguished scholars who will be inducted into the Fellowship of the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences today. Through this act, you are continuing your journey of thought-leadership, and excellence. The Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences is the cradle of multi-disciplinary knowledge, and your membership has come to further enrich the academy. You are now walking in the path other Ghanaian citizens, who demonstrated excellence in their fields of study or vocation, have walked. You are warmly welcomed to take your rightful place and contribute to make the academy relevant to our society.

Madam Chairperson,

The Founder's Week

Today we celebrate another important milestone, the Founder's Week. This year the activities comprise:

- Induction of New Fellows, which for the first time was preceded with an orientation programme. We expect the orientation to be a regular feature for new Fellows before their Induction.
- The Presidential Address.
- A symposium on the theme, “The Ghana Constitution: Fitness for Purpose in the 21st Century”
- The Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Lecture to be delivered by Prof J.R. A. Ayee FGA on Friday.

Madam Chairperson, the academy has selected speakers to treat different aspects of the theme of the symposium. I defer to them to lead in the critical analysis and discussion on the subject matter.

I consider that:

- a. The Constitution must be a masterpiece document for ensuring a sustainable, equitable and prosperous society.
- b. Our collective decision couched in a constitution, to create a sustainable, equitable and prosperous society must be recognized. We should find a way to develop entrenched provisions in the Constitution through a national dialogue and consensus on agreed areas of development to ensure that society benefits from progressive, strategic plans and implementation, irrespective of who wins a mandate to lead and govern the nation. The principles, core values and the policy direction must have a national character and guaranteed improvements in these sectors without the shunting or variation by political actors.

I am looking forward to an exciting time at this year’s symposium.

Now to my substantive Address.

Madam Chairperson,

“The theme of my address is “**Anchoring codes to increase the effectiveness of a Learned Society.**”

Technology, the Pandemic and Change.

The Covid-19 pandemic has taught the world many things, especially in communications, adjustment, and acceptance of new ways of doing things. Today, many of us have increased our technological savviness within a very short time. From “lockdown”, wearing of face masks, social distancing, virtual meetings, working from home, and many applications of digital technology including interesting applications of QR Codes from which I draw some lessons for the Academy.

The story of the QR code begins with one of the important developments in the field of packaging, especially food packaging, i.e., the discovery and application of the bar-code. Many are familiar with what happens at the checkout counter of modern retail shops. The customer selects items to be purchased. Each item has a bar-code which is a unique identification system, providing price and other information. The bar-code is a machine -readable code, comprising a combination of numbers and a pattern of lines of varying widths (Figure 1). The bar-code revolutionized product identification, retailing and stock control. A code is defined as “*A set of rules or a system of communication, often with randomly assigned numbers and letters given specific meanings*”¹

¹ <https://www.yourdictionary.com/code>. (Accessed, November 21, 2021)



Figure 1. Examples of bar codes

The barcode holds information horizontally and has been found to be a useful tool but has limited data capacity. The solution to this limited data capacity was the development of a quick response (QR) code which holds information both horizontally and vertically. Thus, the QR code, a two-dimensional barcode, in the shape of a square, was born. When these new square barcodes were printed with other text next to them, the scanning machines could not pick the information. The square bar code was found to be impractical. To turn this impractical square barcode into one that scanning machines could read, three squares, having a specific ratio of black-to-white areas were embedded (Figure 2). The anchoring of the three squares made what was impractical, practical, with immense global impact.

Today the QR code is used for a myriad of purposes²:

- Advertising
- E-payments
- Joining WiFi networks without having to enter passwords
- Providing information about exhibits in a museum.

² <https://www.tech.gov.sg/media/technews/2020-09-24-the-qr-code-is-everywhere-but-where-did-it-come-from>
(Accessed November 21, 2021)

In my local church the QR Code has been introduced for registration to enable one to have a “Safe Pass” entry to the church building and find an assigned seat, as part of implementing Covid-19 protocols.

Like the QR code, the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences must anchor its codes for increased effectiveness and impact.



Figure 2. A QR Code showing the three anchoring squares³

Anchoring codes to increase effectiveness of the GAAS: Some reflections.

Just as anchoring three squares into the QR-code made it an effective tool, the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences must also anchor its codes for effectiveness and impact. Whilst keeping the core principles for the establishment of the Ghana

³ <https://www.tech.gov.sg/media/technews/2020-09-24-the-qr-code-is-everywhere-but-where-did-it-come-from>

Academy and recognizing the changing environments around us, the academy risks becoming an impractical, silent influencer, which it should not be.

Madam Chairperson,

I propose that the GAAS has at least three critical pillars to anchor on its code. These are People, Processes, and Partnerships.

People, Processes and Partnerships

People

People are assets an organization like GAAS possess and they must be harnessed effectively to achieve the agreed vision and mission. It comprises the Fellows of the Academy, the Staff appointed to the Secretariat to support the work of the Academy and the network of people associated with the Fellows and Staff.

A former President of the Academy, Dr Letitia E. Obeng, in her golden jubilee book wrote that “*Fellows are drawn from Ghanaian citizens, most eminent in academic and intellectual excellence, and dedicated to the achievement of the best interest of society and the country*”⁴. The academy stands the risk of leaving out potential Fellows in the several emerging disciplines because of the peer nomination process used. The need for a more diverse profile of Fellows to enrich the discipline-composition of Fellows is urgently needed. In doing this a conscious effort must be made to nominate younger qualified candidates into the Academy. For example, in the first 10 years of the Ghana Academy, (1959-1969), only 5.25% of the Fellows of the Academy were above 60 years old compared to a current figure of 48.5%.

The Fellows, by their experience, have a rich network of professional colleagues. These could further improve the ‘people’ asset of the Academy.

By its structure, the staff at the Secretariat play critical and valuable roles for the success of the Academy. It is crucial therefore to ensure that they have the skillset and resources needed to execute their support roles efficiently

⁴ Dr Letitia E. Obeng. 2009. The Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences: a historical perspective.

Processes

The GAAS of 1959, when the Academy was founded, and that of 2021 are totally different with respect to the size, profile of Fellows, activities, infrastructure, and internal processes. The tools and strategies that worked in 1959 and other past years, will not be adequate for 2021. This demands that clear, workable, enabling processes must be put in place to create an environment that allows for the delivery of GAAS objectives by both Fellows and Staff. Performance and accountability must drive the processes to enhance the work at GAAS. In doing these it is important to take advantage of opportunities social media and other platforms provide for promoting GAAS' core agenda and visibility. These platforms are for information sharing and will contribute immensely to the attainment of the GAAS mission of the promotion of the study, extension and dissemination of knowledge.

Partnerships

The need for strong and dependable partners for the work of the Academy cannot be overemphasized. The support of government, national and international organizations will enrich and provide needed support for the Academy. Actions taken to ensure the building of strong partnerships must be encouraged and GAAS should be more proactive with both national and international entities. At the local level GAAS must show interest in the work of its mother ministry, the Ministry of Education, and provide relevant inputs to guide policy. The GAAS-Parliament twinning program and the School Lectures series must be reactivated. In addition, public and private sector institutions continue to be critical partners for GAAS. At the international level participation in the work of the Royal Society, Commonwealth Science Academies, Inter Academy Partnership (IAP), the International Science Council (ISC), the Annual Meeting of African Science Academies (AMASA) and the Network of African Science Academies (NASAC) (AMASA) is beneficial.

Anchoring People Processes and Partnerships

Work done by previous Councils of the academy have set the stage for this anchoring to be done. I am referring specifically to

- a. The mandate review, prepared under the Presidency of Prof. Akilagpa Sawyer and
- b. The Strategic Plan, developed under the Presidency of Prof. Justice Henrietta Mensah-Bonsu.

These two documents contain the basic ingredients in recommendation to anchor People, Processes and Partnerships in the Academy. The time is right for the academy to fully implement the proposals in these initiatives. It will be important for the Fellows and staff of the academy to discuss the proposals, review what has been done and develop an implementation schedule. I would like to comment on the Chapters of the Academy, Information Communications Technology (ICT), some recent initiatives as part of such implementation.

The GAAS Chapters.

We had an opportunity yesterday at the first orientation for new Fellows to hear from the Chairpersons of the Chapters. There are currently eight Chapters in the Academy.

- Education
- Health and Sanitation
- Political, Constitutional and Legal Affairs
- Food and Agriculture
- Language, Culture, and the Arts
- Natural Resource, Energy and Environment
- Social and Economic Affairs
- Science, Technology and Engineering

They were set up with two broad remits⁵ :

- i. concern themselves with the “pure and fundamental aspects of their fields of study” and “pursue, encourage and disseminate knowledge”.
- ii. distil relevant information and policy implications of GAAS lectures, symposia, etc., as well as special studies, and make such information and analysis available to Government, Parliament and other agencies, development partners, and to the wider public.

⁵ GAAS Mandate Review Report to Council, 2015

All Fellows belong to at least two chapters and non-Fellow(s) may be co-opted to facilitate the work of a Chapter, as necessary. It should be recognized that the Chapter could serve as one of the critical nerve centers for GAAS outreach and public discourse. In addition, the presence of non-Fellows provides an opportunity to identify modern-day achievers for nomination as Fellows. It is important that in doing this, targeted scouting for younger Fellows, especially women be considered..

The Mandate Review Report suggested the formation of “Lead Groups” to spearhead the scientific and policy-related work of the Academy, and to organize or facilitate disciplinary and trans-disciplinary studies of selected issues, including funded research projects. In addition to maintaining structured links with appropriate agencies, the Lead Groups are to organize the GAAS National Dialogue Series, as a national platform for high-level consultation on matters of special importance. The time to set up the Lead Groups is now.

ICT in GAAS

Without a well-functioning ICT support system, anchoring codes to increase the effectiveness of the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences will be a mirage. ICT is the common strand that will drive the anchoring of codes. It is therefore imperative that ICT infrastructure, including a robust internet, at the academy is greatly improved to allow the staff of the secretariat to deliver on the jobs assigned.

Some New Initiatives, Exploration for Funding Support

a. COCOBOD-GAAS Collaboration.

Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) is collaborating with some Fellows of the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences (GAAS), led by Prof. Ladé Wosornu, FGA, to conduct research into components of cocoa which can aid in the treatment of some life- threatening diseases globally. The research forms part of COCOBOD’s programme to increase the usage for cocoa beyond the confectionery and cosmetic industries, and thereby expand the global market for cocoa.

This is an example of collaboration between industry and the science community to enable the conduct of research and development (R&D) to drive innovation. Such collaboration is important to finding solutions to challenges which hamper our progress towards industrialization and the expansion of Ghana's economy.

b. Education Technology and Policy Hackathon

In collaboration with Coral Reef Innovation Lab (CRIL), the Academy participated in a programme with a theme: Transforming the Future of Education. CRIL focuses on the development of technology infrastructure for knowledge dissemination in the education sector. Through the CRIL-GAAS partnership, the Ghana Education Technologies Information Session and Policy Dialogue as held on Wednesday 13th October 2021.

c. Expression of Interest in the setting up of a Science and Technology Centre in Ghana.

As part of GAAS' international cooperation, GAAS responded to a request for an "Expression of Interest (EOI)" in the setting up of a Science and Technology Center in Ghana. This EOI has been submitted to the Inter-Academy Partnership (IAP) for consideration.

Under this, GAAS proposes the establishment of a multidimensional and multi-functional Science and Technology Centre. This will provide opportunities for a wide range of audience (urban/rural); students from primary, Junior and Senior Secondary Schools and their teachers, university students, young scientists, parents and the general public to participate to create inclusive education according to the UN-SDG ⁶. They are expected to experience science and technological applications through hands-on projects, exhibitions, teaching and learning to promote science-literacy, appreciation and applications. We are waiting for the outcome of the evaluation.

⁶ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals> (Accessed August 27, 2021)

d. *Concept Note to the Carnegie Corporation of New York.*

A Concept Note with the Theme ‘Enhancing GAAS’ knowledge brokering through digital infrastructure and skills to influence policy effectiveness in Ghana., has been submitted to the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

The following strategic objectives were set:

- a. Deepen the Academy’s involvement in the discourse of important national issues.
- b. Prioritize communication as an enabler in the value chain of GAAS.
- c. Make the GAAS reference library services more attractive and relevant to researchers and students (digitization)
- d. Upgrade the ICT department to make it fit for purpose
- e. Develop a positive and high-performance culture at the GAAS Secretariat.

The Concept Note is being evaluated.

e. *Hiring of additional staff to enhance the work at the Secretariat*

Ten additional staff are in the process of being hired. They will fill critical areas of need for the work of the academy. It includes Research Officers and a Communications Officer. We trust that their arrival will strengthen the Secretariat to support the Academy.

Recognitions

In response to a call to Fellows it emerged that some in 2021 received several awards and recognitions. This shows the depth and breadth of intellectual leadership in the Academy.

1. Prof Kofi Anyidoho-elected to a Corresponding Fellowship of the Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE).

2. Prof Laud Ato Quayson-appointed Chair of the Department of English at Stanford University, the first person of color to take up this position in the history of the Department established in 1885.
3. Prof Aba Bentil Andam-was re-elected as a member of the Commission 13 (C13) of the International Union of Pure and Applied Physics (IUPAP).
4. Prof Felix Ameka- was elected Fellow of Academia Europaea
5. Prof Akosua Adomako Ampofo
 - a. Appointed Chair of the “Africa Multiple” Cluster of Excellence Advisory Board, University of Bayreuth
 - b. The Advisory Councils of The World Economic Forum's Partnering for Racial Justice in Business.
 - c. The North Rhine-Westphalian Academy of International Affairs
6. Nana Dr S.K.B. Asante received:
 - a. Award from the National Peace Council.
 - b. Millennium Excellence Award in the category of “Traditional Rule and Development Personality”
7. Prof Gladys Amponsah received an award from West African College of Surgeons “in recognition of her selfless service and contributions to the growth and upliftment of West African College of Surgeons”.
8. Prof Franklin Obeng-Odoom received:
 - a. Joan Robinson Prize: European Association for Evolutionary Political Economy for best book in evolutionary political economy.
 - b. International Studies Association Deborah Gerner Innovative Teaching Award ‘for effective ... pedagogy that engages students with issues of war, peace, identity, sovereignty, security, and sustainability—economic, environmental, or ethical—as they are evolving in the 21st Century.
9. Prof John Collins received the Vodaphone Ghana Music Award’s, ‘Titan’ contribution to the music industry category.

10. Emerita Prof Isabella Akyinbah Quakyi, was honoured as one of seven women in science who have changed the world for the better.
11. Prof George T Odamtten-given a Meritorious Award in July 2021 by the College of Basic & Applied Sciences, University of Ghana.
12. Prof Kwasi Kwafu Adarkwa appointed:
 - a. Chairman, Governing Council of the Institute of Local Government Studies of Ghana.
 - b. Chairman of Governing Board of the Land Use and Spatial Planning Authority of Ghana
 - c. Chairman, Governing Council of Agogo Presbyterian Women's College of Education.
13. Prof. Jonathan Ayertey-re-appointed Chairman of Council, University of Environment Sustainable Development (UESD), Somanya
14. Prof Alfred Oteng-Yeboah
 - a. was recipient of the coveted John Phillip's Memorial Gold Medal of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) for his contributions at the global level on various aspects of Conservation..
 - b. is Commissioner of the Ghana National Commission on UNESCO and chairs the Natural Science Committee.

Congratulations to these Fellows who have made the Academy proud through their achievements.

Concluding Thoughts

Like the QR-code, anchoring the codes, People, Processes and Partnerships, to increase the effectiveness of the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences is important. These three critical anchors will make a significant impact in the

work of the GAAS. When these are optimally managed, the vision of GAAS, “to be Ghana’s foremost merit-based learned society committed to national development and the advancement of the world” will be attained.

GAAS needs you, Fellows, to be active participants.

GAAS needs you, Staff of the Secretariat, to deliver on your service.

GAAS needs our Partners to strengthen collaborations and increase impact

With the right processes in place, Ghana’s foremost Merit-based institution, GAAS, will make the nation proud by our outputs.

Thank you.