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PRESS RELEASE: MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND GHANA EDUCATION SERVICE PLAYING THE OSTRICH

Accra, Ghana, April 5, 2016—VIAM Africa is shocked and disappointed on the stance of the Ministry of Education (MoE) and Ghana Education Service (GES) regarding the Natural Science Textbook controversy. The Ministry's latest press release smacks of an institution that is playing the ostrich and do not want to hear no evil or see no evil. The facts of the issue are as follows:

1. The issue with the function of the human head as a load carrier in the textbook titled "Natural Science for Primary Schools – Pupil's Book 1" written and published by Albert Joseph Quarm broke on social media and have been running for about two weeks now.
2. Following widespread public condemnations, the GES on the 1st of April 2016, responded through its Public Relations Officer (PRO), Rev. Jonathan Bettey, that there was nothing wrong with the textbook. In fact, in an interview with Pulse.com.gh, the PRO quizzed: "So what do you use your head for? Haven't you carried anything on your head before?"
3. On the same day of April 1, the author of the book granted an interview on citifmonline.com and vehemently defended the contents in the book. Subsequently, he boasted on a Facebook comment that "there is nothing wrong with the book, as all my books have been vetted and approved by Curriculum Research and Development Division of Ghana Education Service under the Ministry of Education".
4. VIAM Africa on the 4th April, 2016 in a press release blamed the MoE and GES for lapses in the current textbook evaluation process and urged them to, inter alia, withdraw the controversial textbook from the market and improve the textbook approval system.
5. Hours later, the MoE released a press statement in an apparent response to our concerns and claimed that the said textbook is not an approved textbook for schools under Ghana Education Service.

VIAM Africa holds the view that the chronology of event exposes the ineptitude of the managers of our educational system. How the two state institutions in charge of our educational system would have two opposing views in reference to the same textbook beats our imagination. It further indicates institutions that are either uncoordinated or are just oblivious of the facts on the ground. This is reminiscent of a similar incidence on 29 January 2016, in which the GES beat a retreat to [accept blame for error-ridden integrated science textbooks](#) meant for Junior High Schools across the country, after accusing its donor partners for the errors.

In the present case, if indeed, the controversial “the head is used for carrying load” textbook is not an approved textbook from the Ministry, then, the monitoring and supervisory departments of both institutions are not up to task. VIAM Africa maintains that the said textbook is used by teachers and pupils in the Basic Schools, for which reason the GES vehemently defended its content last week. We are of the view that, institutions of state must take responsibility for their actions and inactions and must be humble to admit culpability when required.

VIAM Africa finds the MoE’s advice to heads of schools and parents not to patronize the said textbook most unfortunate. If we would blame the Food and Drugs Authority for the sale of unwholesome food in the Ghanaian market, then the MOE and GES must equally stop being irresponsible and get the said books out of the Ghanaian Market. We urge the MoE and GES to resource their Monitoring and Supervisory departments to help weed out all the ‘unapproved’ textbooks from the system.

Signed

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