



## Viewing Teacher Motivation in the Ghana Education Service through a Postcolonial Lens

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In recent times, quality teaching has become the focus of many education systems including that of Ghana, and yet little attention has been given to teacher motivation that could ensure quality teaching and improved learning outcomes. Drawing on contemporary literature on issues associated with teacher motivation, this conceptual paper critically examines and analyses the context of teacher motivation and professional practice in the Ghana Education Service. It addresses the questions: What are the working conditions that are causing a lack of motivation among teachers in public pre-tertiary schools in Ghana? How can teacher motivation in the Ghanaian context be analyzed using postcolonial theoretical concepts? It concludes with some recommendations that can lead to improvements in teacher conditions and motivation in Ghana.

*Keywords:* Teacher motivation; Ghana Education Service; postcolonial theory; postcolonial lens

Education in contemporary period places greater emphasis on quality teaching. In Ghana, several initiatives for promoting education have excluded the issue of teacher motivation (Agezo, 2010; Osei, 2006). As quality is important and has merits for investing in education, attention needs to be given to teacher motivation to ensure quality teaching. In the context of this paper, quality teaching refers to the use of disciplinary knowledge with positive relationships with students in the classroom that lead to desirable learning outcomes.

The term *teacher motivation* has been defined variously by different scholars. Velez (2007) has perceived teacher motivation as an inspiration or encouragement of teachers to do their best in the classroom. Snowman, Mcown, and Biehler (2008) have conceptualized teacher motivation as located in the forces that bring about the arousal, selection, direction, and continuation of behavior in the teacher. In this paper, we consider teacher motivation as tangible or intangible working conditions that have the potential to influence teachers positively to demonstrate desirable behavior

leading to a high quality professional practice. Desirable behavior includes positive attitudes toward students and teaching, positive perceptions of employer and work conditions and beliefs about self as a valuable professional teacher.

This conceptual paper draws on contemporary literature on issues associated with teacher motivation to problematize issues of teacher motivation in Ghana. Our aim for doing this is not to unduly criticize and attack a system which we were once part of, but to take a theoretical stance and interrogate the current ethos of the Ghana Education Service which, from our outsider perspective, is a replication of colonial ideals and principles. We were selective in the literature we used, and the specific sources we consulted for our critical analysis. The body of literature we selected was mainly made up of relevant studies on teacher motivation and professionalism in Ghana. We consulted various sources of databases such as ERIC and SCORPUS. We made use of secondary sources, conceptual/theoretical papers, anecdotal/opinion papers, including journals and reports.

We used the meta-synthesis approach in our review because we found it useful in helping us integrate, evaluate and interpret findings of multiple qualitative studies. Considering the historical significance of the issue of teacher motivation in Ghana, our review covered research done from 1968 to 2013.

The direction we took for this paper was the postcolonial turn. Literally, the words *colonial*, *pre-colonial* and *postcolonial* pose different meanings. Colonial refers to the period Europe annexed, partitioned and ruled many countries especially in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, South and Central America for mainly economic and religious gains. Pre-colonial, on the other hand, refers to the period preceding the colonial era. Post-colonial also refers to the aftermath of the colonial period and describes how colonial orientations have influenced the behavior of people in former colonies (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2006). Postcolonial theory probes and critiques the general aftermath of colonialism as well as the imperialism that succeeded it (Ashcroft et al., 2006).

There are myriads of views expressed on postcolonial theory. This paper draws on a lens posited by Dirlik (1994), Gupta (2006), and Slemon (1990) which views postcolonial theory as a discourse informed by the epistemological and psychic orientations of colonization. According to Said (2007), the lens generates an examination of how knowledge, beliefs and value systems are used to make meaning for daily life. A postcolonial framing of teacher motivation is socially constructed and examines the complexities of working conditions in which teachers are situated. Framed in postcolonial theoretical perspective, this paper therefore examines the working conditions of teachers at the public pre-tertiary level who are employed directly by the Ghana Education Service on behalf of the Ghana Government. The purpose of this paper is to critically analyze how systems of dominance and oppression threaten effective teacher professionalism and pedagogy. It points out how employer–teacher relations tend to be described almost entirely from the point of view of the employer and not from the point of view of teachers, thereby affecting teachers' motivation and subsequent reduction in their capacity to deliver quality teaching. The questions addressed in this paper are: What are the working conditions that are causing a lack of motivation among teachers in public pre-tertiary schools in Ghana? How can teacher motivation in the Ghanaian context be analyzed using postcolonial theoretical concepts?

In Ghana, the Government undertakes to motivate teachers (will be discussed later) in order to make them enjoy their work and develop appropriate dispositions to deliver quality professional practice needed for quality education in the country, however, a lot needs to be done to achieve this aim. For example, available literature (Agezo, 2010; George & Mensah, 2011; Osei, 2006) has shown that the working conditions

of teachers in Ghana, especially those under the Ghana Education Service, apparently construct them as “slaves” who are serving “a master” (their employer). The burning issues that will be discussed in relation to this situation include authoritarian leadership style, overcrowded class teaching, the lack of adequate teaching resources and perceived low salaries. The discussions in this paper will focus on the historical context of Ghana followed by the conditions that are causing a lack of motivation among teachers in public pre-tertiary schools as well as initiatives put in place to address existing challenges. The next to follow will be an explication of postcolonial theoretical concepts and how they are implicated in teacher motivation in the Ghanaian context. The paper concludes with some future directions for improving the conditions of teachers in order to enhance the quality of teachers' professionalism and teaching in postcolonial Ghana.

### **The Historical Context of Ghana as a Postcolonial Developing Country**

In order to critically analyze and problematize the issue of teacher motivation in public pre-tertiary schools in Ghana, it is important to briefly illustrate and analyze the historical context of Ghana as a postcolonial developing country. A postcolonial framing of Developing in this paper seeks to position Ghana as a nation striving to achieve a notion of development held by the Western world. Like all other former African colonies, Ghana was once under British colonial rule until 1957 when she attained political independence. Prior to this period, the administration of the Gold Coast (now Ghana) was taken over by the British and ruled through a system called *indirect rule* (Boahen, 1975; Onwubiko, 1985). Under this system, although the traditional chiefs continued to rule their people, the British exerted considerable influence over the local affairs of the indigenous people (Ghanaians) through the chiefs and changed the chieftaincy institution to suit their colonial ambition without any regard to the preservation of their norms and traditions. For instance, through series of legislations such as the Native Jurisdiction Ordinance of 1883, Chief's Ordinance of 1904 and Native Administration Ordinance of 1927, the British colonial masters usurped the powers of the chiefs and suppressed the voices of the indigenous people (Boahen, 1975). They also became the final deciders on issues affecting the social lives of the indigenous people including education (Perbi, 2004). Currently, the harm this colonial experience has caused to the traditional leadership system of the country manifests in the way the chieftaincy institution is being run on the culture of absolute submissiveness where “a king must exercise his authority over his subjects to demonstrate how powerful he is” (Agbenyega & Deku, 2011, p. 15).

Although it is common knowledge that the British colonial masters attempted to put in place some infrastructural developments like roads, schools and

harbors, it has been argued that these initiatives actually served the parochial interest of the British colonial masters (Boahen, 1975). Consequently, roads built only led to sources of raw materials like gold, timber and cocoa where they were looted from and carried away via the harbors. Another important issue worth noting about Ghana's colonial past was that the indigenous people worked on their own farm lands as slave servants and supplied raw materials to feed the industries of their masters in Europe (Boahen, 1975; Onwubiko, 1985). Also, the kind of education introduced by the colonial masters basically focused on literacy and numeracy and relegated to the background critical thinking needed for national emancipation (Boahen, 1975; Perbi, 2004). Formal education started as Castle Schools (i.e., schools housed in castles where forts were built for slaves in the colonial era) and the target students were mainly the "mulattoes" (i.e., children born out of relationships between the whites and the indigenous people). The product of these schools served as intermediaries between the colonial masters and the indigenous people for the purposes of interpretations and clerical assignments (Perbi, 2004). These colonial dominance, subjugation and suppression therefore culminated in agitations for Ghana's freedom and brought in its wake the formation of many resistant groups to bring to an end imperial colonial rule. Notable among leaders in these nationalist agitations was Ghana's first President, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah (Boahen, 1975; Perbi, 2004).

#### **Colonial Teaching Context in Ghana**

Despite the general criticism of the kind of education introduced by the British colonial masters in then Gold Coast, now Ghana (see previous discussion), teachers at the time were arguably better motivated. For instance, the then colonial government under Sir Gordon Guggisberg (1919-1927) undertook several initiatives to improve the conditions of service of teachers in public schools with the aim of motivating the teachers to quality professional practice. One of the initiatives was an improvement in the salaries of the teachers. In fact, it was Guggisberg who fixed an appreciable minimum wage of £100-180 a year for teachers (McWilliams & Kwamena-Po, 1975; Ofori-Attah, 2007).

Another important initiative undertaken by Guggisberg to ensure effective performance of teachers was the closure of so-called 150 bush schools which delivered substandard quality education (McWilliams & Kwamena-Po, 1975; Ofori-Attah, 2007). As a follow-up to this initiative, Guggisberg kept roll of all registered trained teachers. Later, the Erzuah Committee, which was formed ahead of the Accelerated Development Plan of 1951, brought forth recommendations aimed at addressing issues relating to unfavorable working conditions of teachers in public schools (McWilliams & Kwamena-Po, 1975; Ofori-Attah, 2007). The Accelerated Development Plan was meant to bring education to the doorstep of

every Ghanaian child. The Committee proposed three important initiatives regarding teachers' salary. The first was that teachers should draw salary scales higher than other professionals with similar or same qualifications, experience and expertise in other fields of national interest. The second proposal was that the quality of teachers' professional practice should be increased significantly prior to the salary increases. The last proposal was that steps should be taken to ensure that teachers co-operated fully in the implementation of the yet-to-come Accelerated Development Plan (McWilliams & Kwabena-Po, 1975; Ofori-Attah, 2007).

In fact, although the colonial era is long gone, traces of some of its harmful legacies are still rife in every facet of national life including education. For example, teachers, especially in public pre-tertiary schools, work in a teaching environment that is characterized by authoritarian leadership style, overcrowded classrooms, and inadequate teaching resources (Agezo, 2010; Osei, 2006). The Accelerated Development Plan and the Universal Basic Education initiative led to massive school expansions without corresponding resources and adequate teachers to manage these schools. Having established the problem this paper seeks to bring to the fore and provided the necessary context, the next section takes a critical look at key issues and analyses them to provide insights into conditions that are causing a lack of motivation among teachers in public pre-tertiary schools in Ghana.

#### **Why are Teachers in Public Pre-Tertiary Schools in Ghana De-motivated in their Professional Practice?**

Teachers in Ghana play a crucial role in the development of the country's educational system yet available research (Osei, 2006; Sarpong, 2002) has indicated that many of them, especially at the public pre-tertiary level, are unmotivated in their professional practice. Various reasons have been assigned to the situation. For instance, it has been argued that although teachers in public pre-tertiary schools in Ghana are the most important potential agents of change in the Ghanaian system of schooling they are unfairly treated as compared to the situation during the colonial period when Ghana experienced unfair treatments from its colonial masters (Osei, 2006). This unfair treatment relates to many teachers teaching large classes of Teacher-Pupil Ratio (TPR) of 1: 70 instead of the stipulated TPR of 1: 24 (Tanaka, 2010). Such classes usually have few pieces of furniture and textbooks for students (Tanaka, 2010). It can be argued from a postcolonial perspective that, teaching in large classrooms without adequate teaching and learning resources predisposes teachers to hardship and stress which is often the situation when a slave works for his or her master. Stressful conditions can result in many teachers being absent from work as a result of sickness (Velez, 2007). In Ghana, the absenteeism rate among teachers in public pre-tertiary schools is estimated to be as high as 27 percent (Mensah, 2011).

Apart from earlier promotion and shorter serving period to qualify for study leave with pay for those teaching in rural areas, there is no other incentive package like hardship allowance for teachers who accept postings to rural areas. It is also argued that teachers who accept postings to rural areas do not receive their salaries on time (Osei, 2006).

In addition, some of the principals have adopted authoritarian management styles constructed on the basis of colonial rationality. This has made them dictators who often do not involve teachers in decision-making. For instance, they often take unilateral decisions and sometimes issue queries to teachers that are recorded on their files without allowing them any opportunity to explain their lapse (Agezo, 2010). At the national level, educational policies are also made without adequate involvement of teachers. An example is the increase of the duration of the senior high program from three to four years; and back to three years without adequate involvement of the teachers (Agezo, 2010). Although teachers at the public pre-tertiary level of education in Ghana are unionized under Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) as a professional association to fight subjugation and represent their voices, constraints of power do not allow the association to effectively achieve this aim.

Furthermore, many of the teachers are currently compelled to take on other jobs like selling of general goods at the market to support themselves and their families because, despite their efforts at contributing significantly to education development in the country what they earn cannot suffice them until another pay time (Mensah, 2011). Taking on other jobs creates absenteeism in the classrooms because the education system in Ghana does not give room for emergency teacher replacement as happens in Australia and other developed nations (Salifu, 2013).

Apart from absenteeism, many of the teachers do not allot adequate time to co-curricular activities, teaching notes preparation and marking (Mensah, 2011; Tawia-Armah, 2010). Many others resign, vacate their post or do not resume post after leave of absence or sponsored study leave (Mensah, 2011). In a draft report to examine teacher attrition in Ghana, a joint research by the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) and the Teachers and Educational Workers Union (TEWU) has revealed that about 10,000 teachers in public pre-tertiary schools in Ghana leave the classroom every year (Mensah, 2011). Another source (Ghana Web, 2013) has documented that, as high as 33,185 teachers in public pre-tertiary schools in Ghana have vacated posts in recent years in search of greener pastures abroad or in other professions because of low pay, promotion issues and other unfavorable working conditions. Given the crucial role teachers play in Ghana's education development, we think the above situation poses a significant threat to the country's effort

at meeting its Education for All (EFA) goals by 2015. This is because, it is a common knowledge that whenever the education sector of a country records a high attrition rate of professional teachers for an extended period of time, the country experiences a sharp decline in educational standards in terms of students' achievements and general discipline (Agezo, 2010; Dolton & Marcenaro-Gutierrez, 2011). Another implication of this attrition situation is that the Government may be compelled to spend huge sums of money to train more professional teachers to fill the vacancies created.

Arguing through a postcolonial lens, one would contend that the working conditions in the Ghana Education Service which sometimes compel teachers to engage in substandard professional practice construct the teachers as *slaves* who are serving a *master* because it appears they are exploited and their working conditions mirror colonial relations. Their voices and perspectives are often neglected even when it comes to crucial matters that concern their professional practice (Alhassan, 2011). Colonial relations where teachers are positioned as inferior to their employers or managers also culminate in delays in responding to teachers' needs. Often, by the time employers take steps to address teacher issues some might have been demotivated and therefore left the profession and those that stay behind might engage in substandard professional practice (Malmberg, 2006; Peisner-Feinberg & Burchinal, 1997).

Like some professionals that are deemed selfless, teachers in public pre-tertiary schools in Ghana are often told their reward is in heaven yet on earth and specifically in Ghana, a number of them remain unhappy because of unfavorable working conditions (Osei, 2006). The teaching profession in Ghana is not often seen as a financially rewarding one by new generational graduates (Claeys, 2011). Most Ghanaian scholars do not prefer the profession because it is generally perceived as a low-paying profession and conditions of service are not attractive (George & Mensah, 2011). Generally, a vast number of people in Ghana who go into teaching do so only when they fail to meet their cherished dreams of pursuing other professions and eventually leave when they succeed those professions (Agezo, 2010). This development in Ghana is not a unique phenomenon. Research (Akiba, Shimizu, & Liang, 2012) has shown that financial constraints on teachers, especially in many parts of Africa, compel many of them to find additional sources of income and the situation creates divided attention and loyalty to teaching and impacts negatively on academic achievement of students.

#### **Teacher Motivation Initiatives in Ghana**

The previous discussion looked at some key issues that have led to the lack of motivation among teachers in public pre-tertiary schools in Ghana. This section examines efforts that have been made by stakeholders to improve the working conditions of the

teachers. The ensuing discussion therefore explicates motivation measures put in place so far by the Government and local communities to ameliorate the existing challenges.

**National Best Teacher Award Scheme (NBTAS).** Over the years, evidence from the Ministry of Education documents has demonstrated Government of Ghana's commitment to enhancing teacher motivation for subsequent improvement in the quality of teacher professional practice (Ofori-Attah, 2007). One of these initiatives is the National Best Teacher Award Scheme (NBTAS), which was instituted in 1995 to acknowledge hard work and dedicated stewardship of teachers (Akyeampong & Asante, 2005; UNESCO, 2011). This award involves professional competitions at four stages: school, district, regional and national levels. The competition for this award starts with a nomination of deserving teachers at the school level by their respective principals to compete at the district level. The overall winner of a district competition represents the district at the regional level. Similarly, the overall winner of a regional competition represents it at the national level (Akyeampong & Asante, 2005).

At the national level, there are usually ten competitors representing the ten regions. Unlike the district and regional competitions that usually have fixed venues at the district or regional capitals, the venue for the national competition determined by the organizers may fall in any of the ten regions but normally in the capital, Accra. A lot of criteria relating to professional competence and commitment are taken into account in the choice of a winner of this prestigious award. Some of which include the quality of lesson notes, teaching and learning materials, the quality of lesson delivery and classroom management techniques; and performance outcomes of students' among others (Akyeampong & Asante, 2005). The prizes at stake for this competition differ in magnitude and quality according to the stage of the competition. For instance, at the school level, winners may receive merit certificates and some small money, usually a hundred Ghana Cedis (about AU\$50) (Akyeampong & Asante, 2005).

At the district level, winners normally receive fridges, roofing sheets, bicycles and tape recorders. At the regional level, winners normally receive prizes ranging from motorcycles to small cars. At the national level, the overall winner of the Best Teacher Award normally receives a beautiful two-bedroom house or money equivalent and a car which is more expensive and luxurious than that received at the regional level. The runner-up normally receives a car and cash prize lesser in value though (Akyeampong & Asante, 2005).

This prestigious award has its own setbacks. The UNESCO synthesis report of 2011 focusing on 2002 presidential report on the National Best Teacher Award Scheme has indicated that teacher selection for this award

is controversial. Many teachers have raised concerns about the selection processes and claimed the award does not extend the Government's appreciation to all teachers who are working hard for the country's educational development (UNESCO, 2011). The Government of Ghana has responded positively by proposing to have a more transparent process of selection and to expand the coverage to include not only teachers but also the schools that facilitate the award winning (UNESCO, 2011). However, up to date, the Government is yet to implement the proposal.

**Teachers' remuneration.** Allowances covering accommodation cost, uniform cost and utility bills included in teachers' salaries also form part of the motivation package for teachers in public pre-tertiary schools in Ghana. Because of this initiative the Government does not provide accommodation, uniform and pay utility bills for teachers. As a result, most of the teachers live in private houses and just a few are privileged to live in government houses and pay rent at the end of the month to the Government. An annual medical allowance of about fifteen Ghana Cedis (about \$8.50 in U.S. dollars), which cannot pay for a single consultation with a doctor, is also due a teacher who produces genuine medical reports. A single consultation with a doctor may cost the equivalent of \$47.50. As of 2011, a graduate professional teacher up to the professional rank of Assistant Director II (the third promotion after recruitment) for instance, takes about eight hundred Ghana Cedis (about \$475) as take-home salary per month depending on the person's added responsibility like principal of a basic school (primary or junior high school).

The other responsibilities that go with such remuneration are: Assistant principal (for both basic and senior high schools), Senior Housemaster/mistress, Housemaster/mistress, Head of Department or Form master/mistress (for only senior high schools). Within the Ghana Education Service one key determinant of a teacher's salary is his or her number of years in a rank, technically called step or incremental jump. A step or incremental jump is a yearly salary increase that teachers get on the first of September each year in order to differentiate them from those on the same rank but juniors in terms of job experience. This means that two teachers could be in the same rank but their salaries could differ depending on who between them was promoted earlier. As stated earlier, the condition of low salaries perhaps compels most teachers to involve in part-time teachings and other engagements like selling of general goods at the market to earn extra income to augment what is received from the state to the detriment of their pupils.

**Study leave with pay.** The study leave with pay concept in Ghana is an opportunity given to teachers to pursue further studies mainly in the Universities and still draw salaries during their periods of absence. The

duration of the leave is normally up to a maximum of four years. The initiative is aimed at enhancing teacher professional development required for quality classroom delivery (Agezo, 2010). As a motivation policy, the Ghana Education Service grants the leave to all of its professional teachers. However, preference is given to those who sacrifice to serve in deprived areas (countryside without access to basic social amenities like electricity, potable water, decent accommodation and good roads) to urban areas (cities or towns). In this sense, it takes teachers who serve in deprived areas a minimum of two years to qualify for study leave with pay as compared to a minimum of five years in the case of teachers who serve in urban areas. Also, priority is given to those who apply for study leave with pay to study in key areas like Mathematics, Science, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and English Language. Teachers who propose to study in other areas like; Ghanaian Language, Social Studies, Management and Accounting studies, Home Economics, Visual Arts directly related to classroom teaching and Educational Administration and Management are also considered on a priority basis.

**Teachers' promotions.** A teacher qualifies to be the Principal of a senior high school only when the person attains the rank of Deputy Director (the third highest rank). The various ranks in the Ghana Education Service from the lowest to the highest are: Superintendent II; Superintendent I; Senior Superintendent II; Senior Superintendent I; Principal Superintendent; Assistant Director II; Assistant Director I; Deputy Director; Director II; and Director I. A teacher with Diploma certificate begins on the rank of Senior Superintendent II while a teacher with a Bachelor's degree begins on the rank of Principal Superintendent. A teacher with Master's degree also begins on the rank of Principal Superintendent. However, the teacher gets two incremental jumps of salary ahead of the colleagues.

Qualification for promotion in the Ghana Education Service depends on a number of conditions. First, the teacher must have a satisfactory work history for a minimum of three consecutive years including period of approved leave for those who accept posting and teach in deprived areas; and five consecutive years including period of approved leave for those who teach in urban areas. Second, the teacher must have a satisfactory appraisal from his or her supervisor who is normally the principal of the school in which a teacher teaches. If a principal is seeking promotion, the person is appraised by the Director of Education of the district or province he or she serves. Third, the teacher must pass an interview. Available literature (Agezo, 2010; Salifu, 2013; Tanaka, 2010), however, has indicated that the promotion initiative has not been effective in achieving its intended purpose of motivating the teachers because it is based on

long service. The teachers rather prefer a system of promotion based on academic qualification (Salifu, 2013).

**Community support for teachers in the Ghana Education Service.** Apart from the Government of Ghana's efforts at ensuring a motivated teaching profession at the public pre-tertiary level in Ghana, it is important to acknowledge also that parents are doing a lot to support teachers at this level. In most parts of Ghana, especially in the rural setting, community support is always mobilized to motivate teachers to accept posting and remain at post to offer quality professional practice. In doing this, parents have been collaborating with teachers in many ways including the formation of Parents/Teachers Associations (PTA's). The essence of these associations is to afford parents and teachers the opportunity to meet periodically to discuss issues bordering on academic work and general welfare of teachers. Through these associations most teachers, especially those in the senior high schools, have been privileged to have decent and secure accommodation as well as means of transport to and from school. This initiative has been possible through the payment of termly PTA dues and special voluntary contributions by parents. Also, through other regular contributions by parents, teachers in some schools get additional income called teacher motivation allowances to supplement their monthly salaries. The money accrued from this contribution is shared at the end of every school term by both teaching and ancillary staff of senior high schools in the ratio of 80% and 20% respectively.

### **How Can Teacher Motivation in the Ghanaian Context be Analyzed Using Postcolonial Theoretical Concepts?**

This section of the paper analyses ethos of the Ghana Education Service based on postcolonial theoretical concepts of identity, agency, power, voice/representation. Our aim for basing the discussion in this section of the paper on the lenses is to further analyze and critique the ethos of the Ghana Education Service which, as shown already, sometimes displays the use of power and dominance with little or no accommodation for teachers' right to bargain for appropriate wages, improved living and working conditions; and absolute representation to make their voice heard. Analyses of these elements are important for unpacking how the teachers perceive themselves as professionals working in the Ghana Education Service, taking into account the conditions that motivate or de-motivate them in their professional practice. It is therefore justifiable to use postcolonial theory through "discursive concepts of identity, agency, power, voice, and representation" (Kumar, 2000, p. 82) as a useful framework for appreciating the powerful effects of colonialism on teacher motivation towards professional practice quality in postcolonial Ghana. Below is a conceptual diagram that

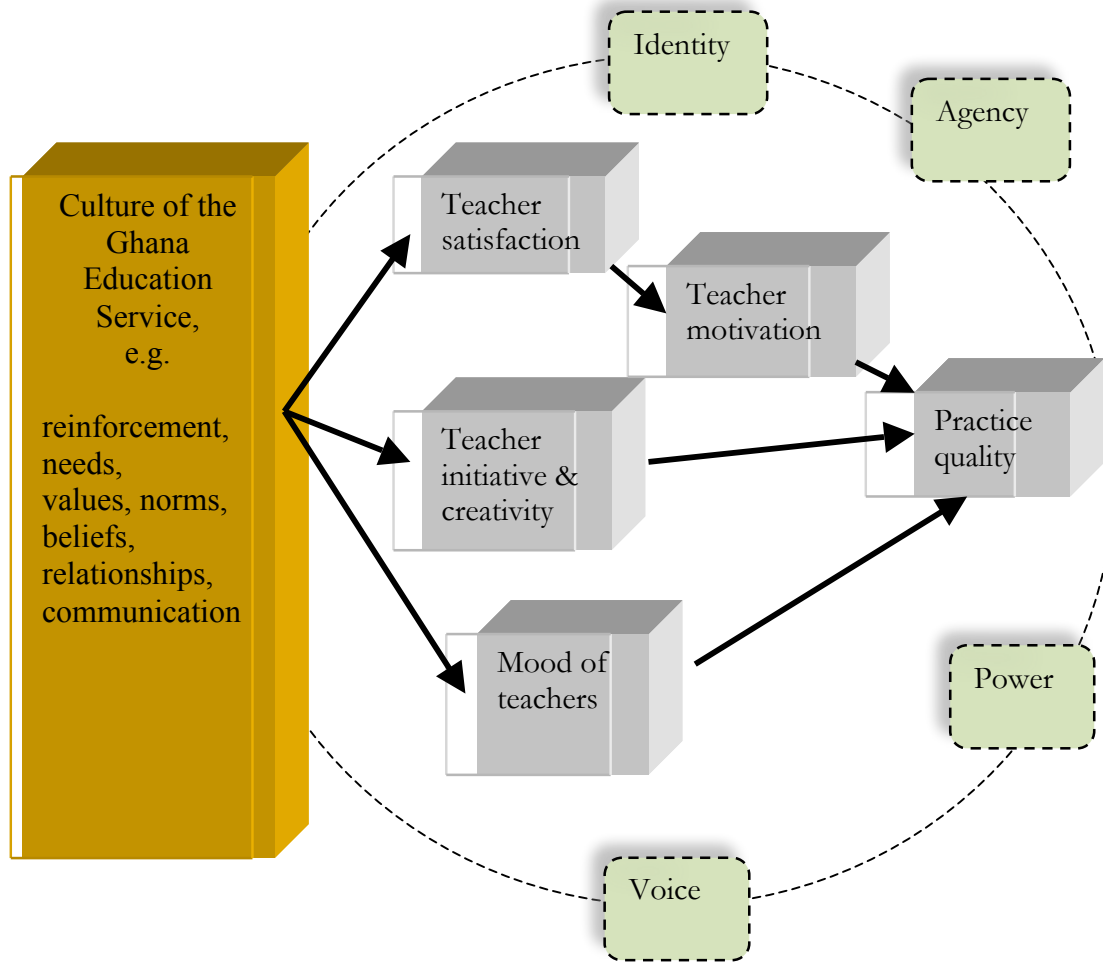


Figure 1. Conceptual diagram.

we have created to illustrate the discussion in this section of the paper.

The conceptual diagram in this paper depicts our analysis of the ethos of the Ghana Education Service. It guides the process of critical examination and analysis of key elements that form the focus of the discussions on teacher motivation in public pre-tertiary schools in Ghana. It rests on the epistemological assumption of the interpretivists' paradigm. The interpretivists have argued that the conscience of human beings and their behaviors are affected by the knowledge of the social world, which exists only in relation to human beings (Creswell, 2003; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). This assumption provides the basis for the use of postcolonial variables such as identity, agency, power and voice/representation (refer to p. 20-27 for explanation), which inform the nature of this conceptual diagram.

In education systems the ethos that is composed of values, beliefs, norms, regulations and nature of relationships and communication patterns determines different levels of practices and subsequently influences

teachers' motivation to practice their profession. In this paper, the ethos of the Ghana Education Service has been critically considered within a postcolonial critique to make sense of the genesis of barriers and facilitators of motivation as this pertains to teachers within the service. It is assumed that there is a close link between the ethos of the Ghana Education Service and teachers' mood, level of satisfaction; and creativity and urge to initiate programs toward improving their professional practice. The mood and satisfaction level of teachers may affect their motivation and subsequently, the quality of professional practice in the Ghana Education Service.

**Teachers' identity in the Ghana Education Service.** Drawing on the conceptual diagram, identity is very fundamental to the life of every individual because it affirms one's existence, location and importance in society. In Kumar's (2000) view, identity is the way an individual is classified in terms of one or a combination of the following backgrounds: race, religion, gender, culture, socio-economic, class, education, skin or color. Identity is not always a predetermined concept; it can be built,

constructed and shaped along experiences and relationships (Kumar, 2000). In this paper teacher identity means professional recognition of teachers as crucial stakeholders in education.

In Ghana, teachers in public pre-tertiary schools should be identified and tagged initiators of their own social worlds with rights to participate in social processes and decisions that affect them in their employment milieu. However, from a postcolonial perspective, this identification has eluded them. The ethos of the Ghana Education Service constructs the teachers as occupying an inferior position of *mere* subordinates who have to be dictated to (Agezo, 2010). In effect, their role as crucial stakeholders in the education system is not recognized by their employer. Loss of professional identity has some serious social repercussions on teacher motivation in Ghana. Sarpong (2002) has reported that in 2001, of the 228 primary and secondary school teachers who died in the Assin area of the Central Region of Ghana, 205 of them or 90 percent resorted to alcoholism and reportedly died out of alcohol-related ailments as a result of frustration. The explanation here is that many *liberal* religious people in Ghana consume alcohol believing that they would be relieved of their anxiety when drunk. The poor among them consume the local gin (akpeteshie) as their preference because it has a very high alcohol concentration and yet it is cheaper to buy. It costs less than one U.S. dollar and may be obtained even on credit and paid for at the end of the month when salaries are received. Research has established that although it is not clear why some people abuse alcohol or become addicted to it but the habit of drinking may be influenced by an environment and situations in life such as stress (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Hunt, 1993; Miller, Zweben, Diclemente, & Rychtarik, 1995). These teachers tend to use their meager salary on drinking alcohol perhaps due to depression, lost hopes, frustrations, self-loss and poor self-concept.

**Teachers' agency in the Ghana Education Service.** As illustrated in the conceptual diagram, voice and identity that originate from ethos of one's workplace contribute to one's agency. Jordão (2008) has defined agency as "the discursive interpolation of different forms of representation (of self and others) and their transformation" (p. 6). In the context of this paper, however, we use the word *agency* to refer to the capacity of teachers to act with intent and participate in making decisions that affect their professional practice. Agency is important because it provides an opportunity for reviving and acknowledging the experiences of the then colonial subjects and applying them to the current circumstances of subordinated individuals like the teachers at the public pre-tertiary level of education in Ghana. Agency is not based on a pre-established plan to obtain pre-determined results but based on an action that is constructed in the discursive process of meaning-making, in the production

and establishment of discourses that define and categorize people, ideas, kinds of knowledge and ways of knowing (Jordão, 2008).

As this paper is theorized through a postcolonial discursive lens, it is important to draw people's attention to a postcolonial understanding of how Ghanaian teachers' agency contributes to their motivation. A postcolonial theorization aligns itself to how these teachers' agency and social capital experiences have been largely isolated by their employer and those designated as supervisors. The isolation may be essentially the direct result of the nature of the ethos of the Ghana Education Service. For example, as indicated earlier, some principals of public pre-tertiary schools in Ghana often take unilateral decisions regardless of how the teachers feel (Agezo, 2010). The agency view of postcolonial theory also creates a new picture about how to bring modifications in the education system of Ghana as a postcolonial society that is still entangled in the legacies of colonial education systems, ideals and practices (Agbenyega & Deku, 2011). In this regard, it is imperative to make a case thereon that in the use of a discursive analysis, the term *postcolonial* is not only of external inclination, but a thing harbored from within, as evidenced in the fact that teachers' agency is viewed only from a particular socio-cultural lens.

Basically, in a colonial system two groups of people emerge. They are: the agent or oppressor and the oppressed, who have no rights to representation or transformation of their agency, voice and thoughts (Viruru, 2005). In a typical postcolonial environment, the oppressed groups are normally subjects considered as deficient, incapacitated and are subdued by the dominant group (Viruru, 2005). The ethos of the Ghana Education Service typifies a postcolonial environment because teachers are situated and working in a system that could be described as autocratic and not well resourced. For example, as noted earlier, the teachers are subjected to large class teaching and are not provided with enough teaching and learning materials as well as up-to-date teaching syllabus that would facilitate classroom delivery. Also, the teachers' salaries do not commensurate with their stewardship (Tanaka, 2010). In this kind of system, teachers become invisible in practice because they are controlled and manipulated by superior authorities. Being manipulated by a superior authority depicts the teachers as objects oppressed by a system that subsumes their agency (Viruru, 2005). When teachers are constructed as inferior in a professional relationship there is a tendency for their professional practice to disintegrate (Bhabba, 1994).

**Teachers' power in the Ghana Education Service.** Our conceptual framework in Figure 1 includes power as an invisible tool used in the Ghana Education Service to control and manage both human and material resources. Power resides in people who have and are able



to use positions, agency, voice and representation to their merit. According to postcolonial interpretations, “hegemonic epistemological orientations, dominant languages and privileged discourses generate power for particular groups of people who are constructed as intellectuals and as an expectation for ways of being” (Cannella & Viruru, 2004, p. 45). In the context of the Ghana Education Service, the use of power gives no room for teachers’ agency, voice and representation, which are essential tools for their motivation, identity and professional practice (Osei, 2006; Sarpong, 2002). Lack of power does not allow the teachers to negotiate for favorable conditions of service. A typical example is the freezing of teachers’ salaries in 2006 for the number of months they had embarked on sit down strike although, according to them, their action became inevitable after several attempts to resolve their grievances amicably with the Government had failed (Mensah, 2011). We see this as internal struggles within the Ghana Education Service between a superior body, that is, the Ghana Education Service on one hand, and teachers on another. This use of power is a manifestation of dominance and may pose a negative impact on teachers’ identity and de-motivate them to quality professional practice.

In a postcolonial environment, the colonizers or dominant group that have power always refer to the colonized and oppressed group as inferior, underdeveloped, unrefined, less capable of thinking and unqualified to present their voices (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2006; Cannella & Viruru, 2004). According to Foucault (1997), the social positions occupied by the dominant and dominated groups are determined by discourses that set limits to who have the power to speak and be listened to; and whose voice the society recognizes. In terms of teacher motivation, a postcolonial theorization attempts to examine and critique issues of dominance that teachers may experience from their employers or conditions of service that may depict teachers as inferior or subordinates thereby affecting their motivation for quality professional practice (Cannella & Viruru, 2004).

In the context of Ghana, positioning the teachers as subordinates may limit their capacity to negotiate for reasonable working conditions. As motivation and the nature of professionalism are closely linked, teachers who may feel oppressed by the Ghanaian education system may tend to develop lackadaisical attitudes to their work (Cannella & Viruru, 2004). On the other hand, if the teachers are recognized as important stakeholders in education who contribute to the success of the school, they could be empowered. Teachers who feel empowered are motivated to serve their schools to their fullest potential (Jordão, 2008). Empowerment of teachers may occur through several means such as giving them voice and representation in key policy decisions that directly affect them. When teachers participate in policy making

process they feel motivated to implement those policies and ensure that such policies become functional with good outcomes (Jordão, 2008).

**Teachers’ representation/voice in the Ghana Education Service.** Other important considerations of postcolonial theory, as indicated in our conceptual diagram in this paper, are representation and voice. These two variables are inextricably linked because representation gives room for teachers’ voices to be heard. In a situation where people have no agency and representation they also have no position to speak in their own voices (Jordão, 2008; Spivak, 1988). Lack of representation in the context of this paper entails the positions imposed on teachers in public pre-tertiary schools in Ghana in which the teachers are considered powerless and lack the capacity to make contributions to matters affecting their working conditions. This tendency to *other* teachers can be described in postcolonial theory as colonizing. Usually, those who are *othered* tend to be oppressed and controlled thus leading to oppressed pedagogical practices (Ahluwalia, 2001; Cannella & Viruru, 2004).

In the context of Ghana Education Service, the only mouth piece of teachers with bargaining mandate is the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT), however, as indicated earlier, constraints of power do not allow it to absolutely represent teachers’ voices (Lambert, 2004). The Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) was formed on 14 July 1962 after secession from the Trades Union Congress of Ghana. As an organization, it functions primarily to ensure better conditions of service for its members who are drawn from public pre-tertiary levels of the education system. The teachers are found in public primary, junior and senior high schools, technical institutes and offices of educational administration units. It is the only Teacher Union with bargaining certificate (A document which gives a person or group in Ghana the legal right to hold salary negotiations on behalf of others with the government) to negotiate directly with the Ghana Government, however, most teachers are embittered, disgruntled and dissatisfied with the performance of the leadership branding them self-seekers who only satisfy their whims and caprices to the neglect of the rest in the umbrella (Alhassan, 2011; Obi, 1999). Research has demonstrated that the leadership of the Ghana National Association of Teachers has mismanaged members’ dues and funds accrued from investments such as Teachers’ hostels built in each of the ten regional capitals, Ghana Government Treasury Bills and Bonds, Insurance companies as well as interest on loans given to members (Alhassan, 2011; Obi, 1999). This development has brought in its wake the creation and formation of splinter groups within the teaching fraternity (Alhassan, 2011). As a result, other teacher groups like the National Association of Graduate Teachers (NAGRAT) and recently formed Concerned Teachers

Association of Ghana (CTAG) have sprung up because of internal disunity within the teaching profession in Ghana (Alhassan, 2011).

The absence of teachers' voices in policies and programs affects pedagogical practices (Lambert, 2004). Policies and programs are mostly imposed on them without any recourse to the valuable contributions they can offer and yet are blamed when such initiatives fail (Agezo, 2010). An instance is the increase of the duration of the senior high program from three to four years and back to three years without adequate involvement of teachers (Agezo, 2010). This manifestation of dominance, which we see as internal struggles within the Ghana Education Service between a superior body, that is, the Ghana Education Service on one hand, and teachers on another, is likely to have an untold negative impact on the latter's level of motivation with obvious consequences on their professional practice.

Different cultural practices in which education occurs play a crucial role in how teachers are constructed and the positions they occupy within the education system. Thus, theorizing motivation in postcolonial terms provides the intellectual space for delving into how the Ghana Education Service and its teachers enact and negotiate tensions, and contradictions regarding voice and representation. This is critically important for understanding the barriers to and facilitators of teacher motivation in this context.

#### **Recommendations**

According to Bennell and Akyeampong (2007), private school teachers in Ghana, particularly those catering for the rich in the society, are usually better motivated than their colleagues in government schools. This is as result of better working and living conditions and more effective management (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007). As discussed, teachers in the Ghana Education Service teach children to become the future generation to contribute to national development, yet it appears the majority are not well-motivated. Based on this scenario, therefore, it is necessary for the Government of Ghana to adopt more rigorous measures to revamp education as one of the most important sectors of the economy. We make the following suggestions: Firstly, there is the need to ensure that teachers in Ghana have strong identity, ample voice and participation in their profession. To achieve this, the teachers or their representatives should be actively involved in education policymaking and supported to deal decisively with student indiscipline. Allowing the teachers to participate in policy formulations could motivate them to implement those policies and ensure that the policies become functional with good outcomes. It could also mean they are recognized. Furthermore, to ensure that they have the needed agency, their physical and material working environment should be improved by reducing class size for effective classroom management, providing adequate

teaching and learning materials to facilitate pedagogical delivery, making available enough furniture to cater for every child, ensuring an opportunity for professional upgrading and paying them salaries that are reasonable enough to guarantee them more decent lives. The above recommendations, if implemented, could enable both the attraction and retention of people of high academic quality into the teaching profession in Ghana.

#### **Conclusion**

This paper has raised many topical issues relating to teacher motivation in the Ghana Education Service. It has identified that postcolonial theory values good and positive teacher-employer relationships and loathes relationships built on slave-master colonial rationalist orientations. Our argument is that if teachers are motivated they may feel responsible and committed to their profession. A high sense of responsibility and professional commitment in turn could improve student learning outcomes.

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