Professionals without a Profession? The Paradox of Contradiction about Teaching as a Profession in Ghana

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Abstract

Today almost every worker claims to be a professional and their occupation a profession. To teachers the question of professionalism is very important; it influences the quality of education they provide for children as well as the quality of their lives as teachers. Yet, how professionalism is defined and what constitute a profession have been sites of academic and ideological struggle between union leaders, bureaucrats and academics played out in a variety of settings. This paper reports on a study that investigated teachers' conception of professionalism and profession. It examined teachers' views of themselves as professionals and of teaching as a profession. The research adopted a descriptive survey approach. Evidence was gathered through administering questionnaire to teachers who had undergone pre-service professional training at bachelor's degree level, taught for at least three years and were upgrading their professional qualification to master's degree level. It was found that while teachers saw themselves as professionals, they did not think that teaching in Ghana qualified as a full-fledged profession. This apparent 'paradox of contradiction' is vital knowledge for understanding individual actions by teachers and their attitude to collective actions by teacher organisations such as the Ghana National Association of Teachers and the National Association of Graduate Teachers.

Keywords: profession, professional, professionalization, professionalism, teaching.

1. Introduction

Discussions on teachers and their social status in any country often tend to include the vexed question of whether or not teaching is a profession. This appears to be so because the type of work one does and its perceived standing in relation to other occupations is a critical variable that determines a person's status (Ainley et al., 1995). Also, one facet of the professionalization process in teaching has been "the pressure by teachers and their unions and associations for better pay, conditions of service, working environments and promotion prospects" comparable to other professions (Dove, 1986, p. 108).

Over the years scholars and academic writers have used different theoretical orientations and positions to address the debate about whether or not teaching is a profession; the meaning of professionalism and the extent to which this is attained in teaching; and the process of professionalization (Etzioni, 1969; Hargreaves, 2000; Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996; Hoyle & John, 1995; Jackson, 1968; Langford, 1978; Larson, 1977; Lortie, 1975; Macdonald, 1995). Most of the writings (e.g. Etzioni, 1969; Macdonald, 1995) applied a 'trait' theory evident in the sociological literature and relied heavily on the delineation of the characteristics which were held to constitute a profession – understood in the sense of the established professions such as law and medicine. According to this view, the extent to which an occupation such as teaching matched the catalogue of traits determines the degree to which it was professionalised (Malin, 2000). For some educationalists and educational researchers, if teaching is matched against the attributes associated with professionalism – for example, esoteric knowledge base, high degree of autonomy and strong technical culture, it can be said to be partially-professionalized (Etzioni, 1969; Jackson, 1968; Lortie, 1975), de-professionalized (Apple, 1982), or becoming more professionalized but in ways "different from the mythical professionalism of forty years ago" (McCulouch et al, 2000, p. 110).

Over a decade ago Sachs (2003) sought to unleash new perspectives to the current orthodoxy of 'old' and 'new' forms of teacher professionalism (Troman, 1996). She most appropriately makes the case that:

> New times, different challenges combined with conditions of uncertainty and ambiguity, require alternative ways of thinking about and engaging in the work of teaching. Furthermore, new strategies for membership and mobilization for change are also required. An old professionalism does not provide the intellectual or moral leadership of a profession such as teaching in circumstances where being proactive, tactical and strategic are imperative. Under the current policy agendas, an alternative type of teacher professionalism needs to emerge and gain acceptance both inside and outside of the profession

(Sachs, 2003, p. 12).

Sachs christens this type of professionalism 'transformative professionalism' and outlines its elements as learning, participation, collaboration, cooperation and activism (Sachs, 2003, pp. 31-34). She argues that transformative professionalism possesses the capacity and capability to serve as a buffer against the deprofessionalising impact of 'managerial professionalism' which is currently developing and informing education policy documents in Australia and other countries.

According to Clarke and Newman (1997) professionalism operates both as an occupational and organizational strategy. As an occupational strategy, it defines entry and negotiates the power and rewards due to expertise; and as an organizational strategy, it shapes the patterns of power, place and relationships around which organisations are coordinated. Today almost every worker claims to be a professional and their occupation a profession. Thus, how professionalism is defined and what constitutes a profession "have been sites of academic and ideological struggle between union leaders, bureaucrats and academics played out in a variety of settings" (Sachs, 2003, p. 25). In this climate of ideological wrestling and restlessness it is perhaps needless to ask whether the teaching occupation in a low-income nation like Ghana could be described as a profession and its practitioners as professionals. For even in developed countries like the USA, UK and Australia, concern has been expressed that teacher education reforms are being driven by competing and contradictory agendas of professionalisation, deregulation and overregulation (Cochran-Smith, 2001); there has been a gradual erosion of the teaching professional since the introduction of the National Curriculum (Goodson, 1997); "the concept of a 'professional' remains deeply contested in our society" (Furlong et al, 2000, p. 4); and "debates still circulate about whether or not teaching is a profession" (Sachs, 2001, p. 149).

Moreover, Marsh (2004) cautions us to reflect on the meaning of applying some of the criteria ascribed to traditional professions, such as law and medicine, to teaching. Such application with circumspection is indeed necessary and timely because of the changes taking place in the teaching field in terms of government accountability standards, the extent of diversity that today's students bring to the classroom, and the mix of professional knowledge and skills required for meeting the increasingly complex range of learning and personal needs of students and other stakeholders in education (Education and Training Committee, 2005). In brief, the nature of teachers' work, the services they provide, and their clients are in many respects too different from those of lawyers and medical doctors to warrant any objective comparison.

This paper reports on a study that investigated teachers' conception of professionalism and profession. The study examined teachers' views of themselves as professionals and of teaching as a profession. The paper is organised into four parts. Following this introduction, the paper takes a look at the concept of a profession and professionalism. This section ends with the problem investigated and its justification. Next, the paper describes the method employed to conduct the study. The findings from the study are then presented and discussed, after which conclusions are drawn and recommendations made.

2. The Concept of a Profession

In general, a profession is represented as having a strong technical culture with specialised body of knowledge gained through an extended period of advanced training. Professionals have shared standards of practice; a high degree of autonomy in taking decisions relating to their practice; and a service ethic that commits them to provide skilled service, over which they wield a firm monopoly, to clients in return for a stipulated fee (Hargreaves, 2000; Hoyle & John, 1995). According to Furlong et al (2000), the three concepts of knowledge, autonomy and responsibility are interlinked and vital to a conventional idea of professionalism. They explain:

> It is because professionals face complex and unpredictable situations that they need a specialized body of knowledge; if they are to apply that knowledge, it is argued that they need the autonomy to make their own judgements. Given that they have autonomy, it is essential that they act with responsibility – collectively they need to develop appropriate professional values (p. 5).

Some have argued that teachers lack a technical vocabulary and a body of knowledge about their practice which is outside the reach of the lay person (Jackson, 1968; Lortie, 1975). However, others have demonstrated that teachers possess a distinctive knowledge base that informs what they do – knowledge that is "expressed in articulated understandings, skills and judgements which are professional in character" (Reynolds, 1989, p. lx). Brown and McIntyre (1992) term it craft knowledge; Clandinin and Connelly (1995) call it personal practical knowledge; and Shulman (1987) describes it as pedagogical content knowledge. Putnam and Borko (1997) prefer to call it knowledge and beliefs, emphasising that teachers' knowledge and beliefs about learning, teaching

and subject matter are critically important determinants of the pedagogical strategies and techniques they employ in the classroom. The empirical basis for the claim that "teachers possess a cogent body of knowledge that they apply in classrooms, working with students [and that] enables them to make judgements about student learning and their own performance as teachers" (Sachs, 2003, p. 9) is growing stronger and stronger. If people outside education do not know this, it may be because "teachers and others involved in education" have not embraced the challenge to "make the knowledge base of teaching an essential part of the professional project. Once this is achieved the knowledge base may become a central resource of the profession, and will remain so as long as the profession can maintain its exclusive right to it" (ibid.).

Autonomy in professional practice means that practitioners "should be sufficiently free from bureaucratic and political constraints to act on judgements made in the best interests (as they see them) of the clients" (Hoyle & John, 1995, p. 77). For Larson (1977) this is what distinguishes professional practice from proletarian work. Autonomy is required to be exercised within the limits of shared standards of practice (Hargreaves, 2000) which govern the behaviour of members in relation to one another and the outside community among whom they practise. Furthermore, the right and freedom to practise is extended only to those whose professional competence has been proven through success in a prescribed professional examination following the completion of the accredited specialised training.

It is expected that the freedom which autonomy allows the professional would be exercised responsibly. Responsibility enjoins the practitioner to commit voluntarily to principles of good practice, including respect for and compliance with accountability requirements so that in the long run the client's interests are better served (Hoyle & John, 1995).

Lastly, a profession is accorded a legal status and backing, and normally has an organization that links members together, protects their interests and regulates their activities among non-members who seek their service (Langford, 1978). Most prominent of the issues which engage the attention of a professional organization is the perennial search for improvement in the professional status through an improvement in the conditions of service of the members. The status of a profession in the public view not only affects the perception of the members but is also crucial for the efficient performance of their duties (Antwi, 1992).

No doubt, Sachs (2003) would call the above attributes dimensions of 'old' teacher professionalism. Even so, where does the teaching occupation in Ghana measure up to, especially from the perspective of teachers themselves? How do teachers feel they measure up individually to the attributes of a teaching professional? A search through the literature revealed a relative paucity of investigation into these issues. This makes a study that focuses on teachers' view of their own professionalism and of their profession very necessary. This is because to teachers the question of professionalism is very important; it influences the quality of education they provide for children as well as the quality of their lives as teachers.

3. The Method

At the beginning of an 8-week sandwich semester, a questionnaire was distributed to 247 teachers who were pursuing a Master of Education programme in University of Cape Coast, and 230 completed responses were received. All the teachers either had a Bachelor of Education degree, or a non-education Bachelor's degree plus a Postgraduate Diploma in Education. They were teaching in basic schools (primary and junior high), senior high schools, and colleges of education which train teachers for basic schools. Their teaching experience ranged from three years to 35 years.

The questionnaire was intended to gauge the teachers' views on what it meant to be a 'professional,' especially within the context of teaching. It had 10 statements, each expressing an attribute of a professional, and respondents were asked to check whether each statement was true or not true of them (see Table 1). In the sixth week of the semester, the same group of students submitted an assignment on the topic *Teaching in Ghana*, which they had worked on in small groups of 8-10 members from the beginning of the semester. After submitting the assignment, it was discussed in class and a questionnaire similar to the first one, which had 10 statements expressing attributes of a profession, was distributed to the students. They were asked to check whether each statement was true or not true of teaching in Ghana (see Table 2).This time all 247 students completed and returned the questionnaire. The data from the questionnaire were analyzed descriptively and presented in simple frequencies and percentages. The data gathered from the class discussion were analyzed thematically.

The information gathered from the teachers through the two separate questionnaires and the views they expressed in the class discussion provided a substantial amount of data which were further extended by similar

sentiments expressed by teachers in an earlier study conducted by the author. Together, the data reported in this paper provide enlightened insight into the teachers' views on the attributes of a profession, how they see this reflected in the teaching occupation in Ghana, and their own degree of professionalism.

4. The Findings

4.1 Teachers' View of Themselves as Professionals

As seen in Table 1, at least one-half of the teachers believed that they measured up to all the attributes of a teaching professional listed. In particular, 78% or more of the teachers indicated meeting seven of the ten attributes of a teaching professional investigated in the study, 90% or more indicated satisfying five of the attributes and about 50% indicated meeting two of the attributes. Only 30 (13%) indicated meeting one of the attributes, that is, "*Though I have personal control over what I do as a teacher, I am also open to criticism of my performance*," with an overwhelming majority (86.9%) indicating that they did not measure up to this attribute of a professional. Thus, the overall evidence suggests that the teachers saw themselves as professionals.

Table 1: Teachers' View of Themselves as Professionals (N=230)

Characteristics of a Professional	True of Me N (%)	Not true of Me N(%)
As a teacher I render a unique, definite and essential service, which only qualified teachers can render.	180 (78.3)	50 (21.7)
As a teacher I rely mostly on intellectual skills and techniques in the performance of my work.	120 (52.2)	110 (47.8)
My training as a teacher was a specialised one which took a long period.	228 (99.1)	2 (0.9)
As a teacher I enjoy a considerable degree of autonomy and decision-making power in carrying out my work.	208 (90.4)	22 (9.6)
As a teacher I am required to accept personal responsibility for my actions and decisions and, in general, for my performance.	220 (95.6)	10 (4.4)
What I am supposed to do as a teacher is more important to me than the financial rewards I receive.	115 (50.0)	115 (50.0)
Though I have personal control over what I do as a teacher, I am also open to criticism of my performance.	30 (13.1)	200 (86.9)
What I do as a teacher is governed by a code of conduct that sets out the acceptable standards of conduct for all teachers.	227 (98.7)	3 (1.3)
I possess up to date knowledge on issues pertaining to teaching.	198 (86.1)	32 (13.9)
I believe that I have a responsibility to get involved in the activities of my professional organization (e.g. GNAT, NAGRAT)	225 (97.8)	5 (2.2)

4.2 Teachers' View of Teaching as a Profession

As has already been outlined, the emphasis here was on discovering teachers' view on the attributes of a profession and how these apply to teaching in Ghana. The responses are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Teachers' View of Teaching as a Profession (N=247)

Characteristics of a Profession	True of Teaching N (%)	Not True of Teaching N (%)
A profession renders a unique, definite and essential service, with only people with requisite qualification in the particular profession rendering that service.	63 (25.5)	184 (74.5)
A profession relies mostly on intellectual skills and techniques in the performance of its service.	87 (35.2)	160 (64.8)
A profession entails a long period of specialized training.	221 (89.5)	26 (10.5)
Both individual members of the profession and the professional group enjoy a considerable degree of autonomy and decision-making power.	34 (13.8)	213 (86.2)
A profession requires its members to accept personal responsibility for their actions and decisions and, in general, for their performance.	184 (74.5)	63 (25.5)
A profession emphasizes the services rendered by its practitioners more than their financial rewards.	36 (14.6)	191 (85.4)
A profession is self-governing; it is responsible for policing its own ranks and for setting standards of admission and exclusion for the profession.	14 (5.7)	233 (94.3)
A profession has a code of conduct that sets out the acceptable standards of conduct for its members.	235 (95.1)	12 (4.9)
Members of a profession possess up to date knowledge on issues in their area of specialization.	110 (44.5)	137 (55.5)
All members of a profession have a responsibility to get involved in the activities of their professional organization.	102 (41.3)	145 8.7)

Of the 10 characteristics of a profession listed, only three were regarded by majority of respondents as applicable to teaching in Ghana. These are:

- *A profession entails a long period of specialised training* (89.5%).
- *A profession requires its members to accept personal responsibility for their actions and decisions and, in general, for their performance* (74.5%).
- *A profession has a code of conduct that sets out the acceptable standards of conduct for its members* (95.1%).

Two characteristics were seen to be applicable to teaching in Ghana by only about 40% of the teachers. These were:

- *Members of a profession possess up to date knowledge on issues in their area of specialisation* and
- *All members of a profession have a responsibility to get involved in the activities of their professional organisation*.

The characteristics of a profession considered by respondents as least applicable to teaching in Ghana were:

- *Both individual members of the profession and the professional group enjoy a considerable degree of autonomy and decision-making power* (13.8%).
- *A profession is self-governing; it is responsible for policing its own ranks and for setting standards of admission and exclusion for the profession* (5.7%).
- *A profession emphasises the services rendered by its practitioners more than their financial rewards* (14.6%).

Putting the two sets of data (characteristics of a professional and characteristics of a profession) together, it can be concluded that, in general, teachers saw themselves as professionals, but they did not think that the teaching occupation in Ghana in which they were working qualified as a full-fledged profession.

5. Discussion

5.1 Areas of Contradiction

The study reveals several areas of apparent inconsistency in the teachers' responses to the attributes of a professional as applied to them and the characteristics of a profession as applied to teaching in Ghana. These are discussed below.

5.1.1 People Who Teach in Ghana

While majority (78.3%) of the teachers considered themselves as professionals who "render a unique, definite and essential service, which only qualified teachers can render," only about a quarter (25.5%) were of the view that teaching in Ghana had that attribute. From the class discussion, the teachers expressed no doubt that teaching is a profession that renders a unique, definite and essential service, but they did not agree that only people with requisite qualification in teaching rendered that service. This is because in Ghana there are people with various levels of education, including those with no professional qualification, practising as teachers (Cobbold, 2010). As Antwi (1992, pp. 132,133) rightly points out, among all formal academic-based professions in the country, teaching is the only one in which "non-professionals or those without the requisite professional qualifications and training are allowed to teach." Over the period 1997-2002, an average of 21% and 13% of primary and junior high school teachers respectively remained untrained (Akyeampong, 2003), and Quansah's (2003) national study found 24,000 of such teachers in classrooms. Antwi (1992, p. 133) deplores this situation, as he compares it with that of other professions, blaming the education authorities: "No one has yet heard of an unqualified or untrained lawyer, doctor, engineer or architect being employed by the State to practise a profession. The Ghana Education Service permits non-professional teachers to teach at all levels of pre-university education." As a matter of interest, it is a common idea in Ghana that one does not need any special training to become a teacher. Majority of the in-service teachers in Cobbold's (2010) study who indicated the intention of not returning to teaching after completing their courses in the university, cited lack of public respect for teachers resulting from the notion that "anybody can teach," as a reason.

> People out there, society itself is not actually taking us seriously. They think anybody at all can teach. And we still have many 'pupil' teachers with us; we have allowed many of them into our fold. So they think it is a job that anybody at all can do (Cobbold, 2010, p. 197).

5.1.2 Professional Autonomy and Responsibility

In the area of professional autonomy and responsibility, the teachers believed that they enjoyed a considerable degree of autonomy and decision-making power in carrying out their work (90.4%) and accepted personal responsibility for their actions and decisions and, in general, for their performance (95.6%), because teaching requires its members to act this way (74.5%). However, they did not think that as a professional group, teaching enjoys a tolerable degree of autonomy and decision-making power (13.8%).

It is worth noting that the elements of deskilling, deregulation, overregulation and increased accountability that threaten to erode the autonomy of the teaching professional worldwide are no less prevalent in the Ghanaian teaching environment. Curricula for pre-tertiary institutions are centrally developed with little involvement of the classroom teacher and patterned in a way that least recognises the teacher's professional expertise in lesson planning, implementation and evaluation. To be sure, teaching syllabuses for basic and senior high schools are so detailed as to indicate not only the scope and sequence of content and objectives but also the pedagogical techniques that should be employed to address requisite learning. A format is provided for the writing of daily lesson plans; this must be followed 'faithfully' and every lesson plan must be vetted by the head teacher.

On the one hand, these 'teacher-friendly' curriculum materials may serve a useful guide to the large number of untrained teachers in the system. On the other hand, the image of the teacher the materials portray is one of a technician and not a reflective practitioner (Schon, 1983, 1987); thus, playing down the professional knowledge and skills of those who are trained. Does this also not suggest lack of faith in the ability of the pre-service preparation programme to produce professionals capable of making independent judgements? This is what one of the teachers in this study seemed to be concerned with during the class discussion: *"The syllabus has everything, so some teachers just copy it as their lesson plan. If we are not allowed do things ourselves, then why were we trained?"* This lack or erosion of professional autonomy was also expressed by teachers in Cobbold's (2010) study in which a participant explained that one cannot go to the hospital and expect illiterates to "*tell the nurses and doctors what to do and what not to do. But in the teaching field you will be in your classroom and somebody will walk in and ask you, 'why did you cane my child?' [He speaks] as if he knows when to cane a*

child and when not to cane a child" (p. 197).

Adentwi (2002) also makes the important observation that even in school reforms the initiative as well as the inputs comes from government officials, business leaders and civil society groups rather than from teachers. As a case, he cites the lack of teacher involvement in the decision making and planning of the 1987 education reform and the FCUBE programmes, and finds unacceptable the justification for investing such important educational decisions in people other than teachers who were to be the frontline implementers of the programmes:

> The argument is that the taxpayers and their representatives "reasonably" claim a large share in decision making because they foot the bill and provide the clients. The doctor and the lawyer also provide services that are paid for by their clients yet they don't allow the clients or public to prescribe drugs or write the clauses in a contract. In these two professions, when the client interferes with the decisions of the practising doctor or lawyer, the relationship ends (Adentwi, 2002, p. 219).

With all good intentions as an academic and teacher educator, Adentwi is by no means inciting teachers to put their pen, chalk and markers down or sever relationship with their students, community members or government in the event of their marginalisation in educational decision making, or interference with their work. His point, I gather, is to draw attention to the gradual erosion or non-recognition of Ghanaian teachers' ability and freedom to act in professionally responsible ways in their work.

Another area where teachers thought their professional group had little or no professional control was its gate-keeping function. Only 14 teachers (5.7%) indicated that the teaching profession in Ghana "is self-governing; it is responsible for policing its own ranks and for setting standards of admission and exclusion for the profession." It is worth noting that teachers in Ghana belong to two main professional associations – the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) and the National Association of Graduate Teachers (NAGRAT). The two organisations have a mandate to raise the status of the teaching profession, to improve teaching methods as well as the academic and professional preparation of teachers so that they can better serve the interest of the youth (Cobbold, 2010). Delivering this mandate involves, among other things, the ability of the associations to control entry into, and exit from, the teaching profession. This gate-keeping function is needed to ensure institutional power over resources, which include entry into the profession, allocation of promotional positions within the profession, and allocation of grades as a measure of performance (Sachs, 2003). Surprisingly, GNAT and NAGRAT have no power over the recruitment, training and certification of teachers and, therefore, cannot control the quality and quantity of those who practise as teachers. These matters are left to the needs and policies of government. Non-graduate basic school teachers become automatic members of the profession and of GNAT on successful completion of their college training without having to go through any further process of credentialing and licensing, and GNAT starts deducting monthly dues from the salaries of such teachers once payment commences. The story is no different from the graduate teachers' association. Individual graduates seeking teaching appointments deal directly with the Ghana Education Service, sometimes with the help of the heads of the institutions where the teachers want placement, without any involvement by NAGRAT.

The inability of Ghanaian teachers' organisations to control requirements for entry into the profession has led to the phenomenon of eased entry (Lortie, 1975), where large numbers of non-professional teachers find their way into the system. Akyeampong and Stephens (2002) report that majority of entrants to teachers' colleges have weak academic background; they come with entry grades with which it would have been difficult to gain admission into tertiary level institutions such as the university or polytechnic. In particular, candidates have "weak subject knowledge base in the two most fundamental school subject areas, English and mathematics" (p. 264). Whether or not the college training is able to effect a positive improvement in trainees' subject content knowledge remains an issue to be explored. But clearly, such pre-professional academic background would not be accepted as the minimum for entry into training as a lawyer or medical doctor. This is a serious indictment on the autonomy, effectiveness, and status of the teaching profession in Ghana.

5.1.3 Motivation to Teach

Another area of the apparent contradiction in responses is the emphasis professionals and professions place on pecuniary motives as against altruistic and intrinsic motivations. The questionnaire item, *What I am supposed to do as a teacher is more important to me than the financial rewards I receive*, recorded 50% 'true of me' responses from teachers. However, only 36 teachers (14.6%) were of the view that the teaching profession in Ghana "emphasises the services rendered by its practitioners more than their financial rewards." This means the majority of teachers saw their professional group as being more concerned with monetary rewards than the satisfaction that comes from work well done, contrary to the service ethic orientation of professions. The frequent strike actions by teacher organisations in Ghana to press home their demand for increases in salaries and

allowances seem to confirm this view.

5.1.4 Professional Knowledge

Another contradictory finding of the study relates to professional knowledge. While 86.1% of teachers indicated that the statement *I possess up to date knowledge on issues pertaining to teaching* was true of them, just a little over half of this number (44.5%) believed that in Ghana members of the teaching profession possess up to date knowledge on issues in their area of specialisation. This apparent contradiction is not surprising to the Ghanaian observer, because as indicated earlier, there are many untrained teachers in the system. Moreover, there is no structured approach to professional development in the Ghana Education Service. Indeed, there is no minimum requirement for teachers to engage in professional development, completion of professional development activities is not required for teacher promotion or recertification, and there are no strong demands for teachers to continuously update their knowledge and skills. In such a climate, the motivation to seek new knowledge in one's area of specialisation is likely to be minimal.

5.1.5 Professional Participation

Finally, with respect to professional participation, the statement *I believe that I have a responsibility to get involved in the activities of my professional organisation (e.g. GNAT, NAGRAT)*, was true of 97.8% of teachers. When the same statement was applied to teaching in Ghana in the item, *All members of a profession have a responsibility to get involved in the activities of their professional organisation*, only 41.4% thought the statement was true of teaching in Ghana. Cobbold (2010) notes that though teachers in Ghana work for the same employer, few teachers are keen to take part in activities of their professional organisations. He explains that there is no solidarity or unified voice among teachers in respect of professional matters, and that there have been instances where one group of teachers (e.g. basic school teachers) have been on strike in demand for certain benefits while other teachers in the same group were found in the classroom. Even among the same group of teachers there is sometimes lack of solidarity, in that teachers in one district may go on strike while others in another district go to school.

5.2 Areas of Consistency

Despite the contradictions, there were few areas where the teachers' view of themselves as professionals matched their view of teaching as a profession.

5.2.1 Duration and Nature of Training

Many of the teachers (89.5%) agreed that to become a teacher in Ghana one needed a long period of specialized training, and an overwhelming majority (99.1%) confirmed that they had undergone such prolonged specialized professional training. It is important to state that pre-service professional training of teachers in Ghana follows both the concurrent and consecutive models. Some teachers follow the concurrent route by taking subject matter courses and professional courses at the same time. This is the case for the 3-year Diploma in Basic Education (DBE) programme in the colleges of education, and the 4-year Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) programmes in the universities. As a matter of fact, some teachers complete the DBE before enrolling for the B.Ed programme, thus taking 5 to 7 years to obtain an education degree. Teachers, who take the consecutive route, first complete 4 years of subject matter studies in their specialised subjects, teach for some years before enrolling for the two-sandwich semester Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) programme to qualify as professional teachers. The teachers who participated in this study would have either taken a concurrent or consecutive pre-service programme and would no doubt consider their training as long and specialized enough to qualify them as professionals.

5.2.2   Acceptance of Personal Responsibility

The requirement for professionals to accept personal responsibility for their actions, decisions and performance, was regarded as true of majority (95.6%) of teachers. As to whether the teaching profession in Ghana required the same of its members, the positive responses reduced to 74.5%. Occasional interference in teachers' work by some parents and public officers as noted by Adentwi (2002) and Cobbold (2010) might explain why some teachers felt their profession was not fully in charge when it came to requiring its members to accept personal responsibility for their actions, decisions and performance.

5.2.3 Existence of Code of Ethics and Conduct

A significant majority (98.7%) of the teachers indicated that their professional behaviour and practice were governed by a code of conduct that sets out the acceptable standards of conduct for all teachers, and a similar

proportion (95%) agreed that the teaching profession in Ghana had a code of conduct that sets out the acceptable standards of conduct for its members. Perhaps, a perceived laxity in enforcing the code of ethics and conduct explains why 5% of the teachers did not think such a tool of discipline and regulation existed in the profession. According to Adentwi (2002), teachers who violate the code of ethics are often protected instead of being sanctioned. "With the exception of clear incompetence, gross negligence or serious sexual offences, teachers are hardly fired" for other professional misconduct (pp. 220-221). Of course professional organizations exist to protect their members from arbitrary dismissal and against victimization. But if this degenerates into pampering then professional integrity is compromised.

6   Conclusion and Recommendation

In their individual capacities, many of the Ghanaian teachers whose views are reported in this study saw themselves as professionals. As one of them proudly proclaimed during class discussion,

> I believe I am a professional; I have been trained at two levels – in the teacher training college and the university. And now, I am being trained again. I know what I am capable of doing, though the system may not allow me to do them. Yes, I can say teaching may not be seen as a full profession in Ghana, but I am a professional teacher.

This acknowledgement of professionalism needs to be positively interpreted for it points to teachers refusing to accept the professional inferiority that sections of the Ghanaian populace often ascribed to teachers. But the question still remains as to what type of professionalism the teachers claim to have – 'restricted' professionalism with emphasis on performance of curriculum roles or more substantial, 'extended' professionalism with a sharp focus on 'shared' or 'collaborative' practice.

As a group, however, the teachers did not see themselves as belonging to a profession, for they did not believe that their occupation qualified as a full profession. Thus, we have a case of "professionals without a profession." This apparent 'paradox of contradiction' is vital knowledge for understanding individual actions by teachers and their attitude to collective actions by teacher organizations such as the Ghana National Association of Teachers and the National Association of Graduate Teachers. It seems more likely that individual teachers would commit to the ideals and principles of their work and accept responsibility for individual professional actions in light of their self-awareness of their status as professionals. But it appears more unlikely that teachers would engage in collective and collaborative professional practices which research has found to be so critical for the success of any educational reform.

It is recommended that teachers in Ghana pursue an aggressive and rigorous agenda to fully professionalize their occupation. They should use rhetoric and persuasion to 'sell' the quality of their service, develop strong organizational solidarity, and take control of training of teachers, their entry into the profession and their professional practice. This would require raising the requirements for these dimensions of the profession and effectively implementing them. It is hoped that if these things are done, notion of teaching will be refined, the professional status of teaching will be raised and teachers' view of themselves as professionals will match their view of their profession.

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