

*Full Length Research Paper*

# **Towards a Core Competency Framework for Teacher Education and Development in Ghana: A 3-Paradigm Process Approach**

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## **Abstract**

**A missing area of focus in teacher education and development in Ghana is helping the individual teacher trainee to know himself/herself and his/her roles as a teacher. Teacher productivity in terms of students' positive learning outcomes is, to a large extent, dependent on teachers' thorough understanding and appreciation of his/her professional identity. Rubrics that describe the identity of an ideal professional teacher are virtually the same as those which gauge teacher competence. Extant literature on teacher education is replete with competing models and paradigms on competency-based teacher preparation and development. This paper reviews perspectives on teacher competence, the issue of teacher identity, and proposes a conceptualized alternative to a core competency framework for teacher education and development. Four core rubrics of teacher competence and their respective indicators are thoroughly discussed. On the basis of these four rubrics, the paper highlights a 3-paradigm process for deriving realistic, attainable, relevant and competency-based curriculum goals and content. Best practices which sustain teacher competence such as Continuous Professional Development (CPD), mentorship, and learning are discussed. The paper concludes among other issues that the training and retraining of teachers should be sustained in all educational institutions so as to maintain the desired teacher competency.**

**Key Words: Ghana, Teacher Education, Core Competence, Curriculum, Knowledge**

## **Introduction**

Contemporary theory of Economic growth places much emphasis on the role of human capital in the overall framework of socio-economic development. The relationship between education and Economic development has been given prominence in the development literature over the years. Education is considered as a crucial input into the development process (Gyimah-Brempong, 2010). It is partly in view of this crucial role education plays that it was considered as the second Millennium Development Goal (MDG) by the United Nations (UN). The school curriculum is the vehicle that transports the educational aims and goals of any given country. It communicates what we choose to remember about our past, what we believe about the present, and what we hope for the future (Pinar, 2004). In a nutshell, curriculum goals reflect the needs and aspirations of a given people.

There is a growing consensus among researchers and teacher educators that one of the most important factors in the determination of students' performance is the competence of the teacher. In the opinion of Oyebamiji (2002), teachers are one of the most refined human species who skillfully identify, develop and nurture the potentials of productive citizens for the creation of wealth, pleasure and services so as to sustain the quality of life. Properly trained teachers play an important role in the complete wellbeing of a nation. Qualified, competent and effective teachers are among those who can make a difference to teaching, learning and the quality of a nation's workforce; hence the importance of teacher education (Adegoke, 2015). Consequently, if the national goal of providing relevant education to all categories of students is to be achieved, then it becomes necessary for the government of Ghana to train and retain high-quality teachers at all levels of the education sector. Moreover, the successful implementation of any curriculum, irrespective of the level, whether basic, secondary or tertiary level of

education, will largely depend on the quality and competence of the teachers. Teacher quality is therefore crucial and has been globally accepted to be significantly associated with the quality of education in general and students' learning outcomes in particular (Pandey, 2011). The popularity and productivity of schools and colleges, particularly in Ghana, largely depend on the quality of their teachers. The mad rush of parents to such schools to seek placement for their wards is often influenced by the perceived quality of the teachers and instruction.

Globally, teachers' roles are changing under the influence of access to information and use of communication technologies, drive for accountability parallel to decentralization of education systems, and increasing diversity of student population. Implications of these influences for a change in teacher preparation are discussed with a view to establishing the competencies teachers need in order to meet the challenges related to the cultural, social, and value implications of teaching (Garm & Karlsen, 2004; Ostinelli 2009, Van Tartwijk, Brok, Veldman & Wubbels, 2009).

Researchers in teacher education (Darling-Hammond & Bransford 2005; Hammerness 2006; Korthagen, Kessels, Koster, Langerwarf, & Wubbels 2001; Niemi & Jakku-Sihoven, 2006) have identified gaps between theory and practice as the core problem for teacher education. The apparent lack of congruence between school-based practice and the academic content in teacher education programmes partly explains why graduating teachers are not adequately prepared to meet the needs of different learner groups in the various classes. Lunenberg and Korthagen (2009), and Mason (2009) have encouraged the need for teacher education curriculum designers to develop an appropriate response to this problem. Corroborating these assertions, Anamuah-Mensah (2011) observes that in Ghana there is a disjuncture between theory as taught in teacher education institutions and practice in the field that deprive teacher education of its mission.

Again, teachers in Ghana, just like other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, serve as "recipients" of education reform and construction rather than being key players in them. In a number of cases, their involvement is restricted to being participants at so-called 'stakeholders' conferences or workshops where policies and programmes prepared without their participation are presented to them for their reaction and implementation (Mansaray, 2011).

In addition, teacher development programmes in Ghana incorporate the following five elements in their curriculum: subject knowledge, knowledge of students, foundation courses, methods of teaching and immersion in field-based experience or practicum (Asare & Nti, 2014; Anamuah-Mensah, 2011). These elements are sketchy and incomprehensive to the extent that teachers produced from such curricular might not be competent or competitive in this era of globalisation (Yidana, 2014).

In spite of several reforms to teacher education, there are concerns in Ghana about how institutions are preparing future generations of teachers to face the

challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Bukari, 2015). These concerns are based on the fact that many teachers lack adequate skills when they come out of training (Agbenyega & Deku, 2011; Kuyini & Desai, 2008). Here again, it might be plausible to argue that the content and structure of the teacher education curriculum, particularly the aspect that relates to equipping teacher trainees with the requisite life-long professional skills is deficient. Alternatively it could be that the skills the teacher trainees acquired are not relevant to contemporary needs of classroom instructions in Ghana.

In the Ghanaian educational terrain, most teachers do not seem motivated to participate in professional development activities (Amoah, 2011), the reason being that what is learnt either does not have immediate impact on their teaching or might have been redundant to their work (Kankam, 2005). Another concern raised by teachers is the inability of planners of professional development programmes to effectively plan and implement a process effective enough to support continuous teacher change (Akyeampong, 2004).

Teaching is a moral activity in which teachers have to consider the ethical complexity of teaching and the moral impact they have on their students (Carr, 2011; Lovat, Dally, & Toomey, 2011). Teachers by their professional training are supposed to be role models and exemplars in all aspects of their conduct. However, in Ghana a day hardly passes without reports in the daily newspapers imputing acts of impropriety and malfeasance to so-called professional teachers. For example, Boye (2016) reports of a teacher who forged a voters' identity card in order to access somebody's pension allowance. Anku (2017) gives a comprehensive account of how teachers' immoral behaviour contributes to students' failure in Mathematics. Ampadu-Nyarko (2017) reports on how the Headmaster of a school attempted to rape his assistant. Rich (2017) narrates a story involving a teacher who was caught red-handed stealing from somebody's farm. Adams (2017) presents a case involving a teacher who sexually abused a Class 5 female pupil. All these acts are inconsistent with the values of the teaching profession in Ghana. It might therefore be plausible to argue that such acts reflect deficiencies in the values of teacher education in Ghana. It is equally reasonable to assert that less emphasis is placed on values education as compared to knowledge and skills development.

Many view reflective practice as the hallmark of professional competence for teachers (Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004) and it has become a central part of teacher education programmes in many countries across the globe (Marcos, Miguel & Tillema, 2009). However in Ghana, reflective practice is given little attention in teacher education programmes and research (Akyeampong, 2001; Amoah, 2011; Amakyi & Ampah-Mensah, 2014). Irrespective of subject area, reflective practice is a cardinal rubric of teachers' professional capacity. In Ghana, it appears there is an acute shortage of literature, research and intellectual discourse that relate to reflective practice in teacher education.

Further to these deficiencies, another missing area of attention in teacher education and development in Ghana is helping the individual teacher trainee to know himself/herself and his/her roles as a teacher (Anamuah-Mensah, 2011; Yidana, 2014). The approach to pre-service and in-service teacher preparation seems heavily focused on equipping teachers with the so called “knowledge base” in their individual subjects, and the ‘appropriate’ methods and techniques for communicating this knowledge to students. Little attention is paid to the formation of core beliefs, values and identity of a professional teacher. The apparent lack of explicit strategies in the teacher education curriculum that enable teacher trainees to form positive images about their professional identities, is a problem that is not peculiar to Ghana but other countries in Sub-Sahara Africa (Yidana & Lawal, 2015). In Ghana, as indicated earlier, teacher education emphasizes techniques rather than the inner self. Therefore teachers may teach without the inner self showing up. Until the inner self is developed, teaching becomes deprived of passion and commitment and may only be a routine, mechanically controlled by techniques of teaching (Anamuah-Mensah, 2011). Good teaching requires the development of teacher identity. It is teacher identity, shaped by student-centred discourse and socio-cultural discourse that should inform the choice of pedagogy (Marsh, 2002). The propositions contained in this paradigm are therefore designed not only to partly fill gaps in knowledge but to plug the loopholes inherent in the prevailing teacher education curriculum in Ghana.

This paper, therefore, takes a look at the concept of teacher identity, reviews perspectives on teacher competence, and discusses teachers’ professional competency benchmarks or indicators. These benchmarks include professional knowledge, professional values, professional skills and professional reflective practice. On the basis of these competency benchmarks, a 3-paradigm process approach/model for deriving curriculum goals and content is presented and discussed. Implications of this paradigm for teacher education curriculum are also discussed. Finally, in order to sustain teachers’ professional competence the paper proposes continuous professional development, mentorship, and the establishment of professional learning communities as strategies that are worth considering.

### *The Issue of Teacher Identity*

An important component of learning to become a teacher is the development of a professional identity (Friesen & Besley, 2013). The focus on teacher identity has become a topical issue in teacher education due to the shifting beliefs about the role of the teacher, (Chong, 2011; Korthagen, 2004). Teachers’ professional identity is also seen as a core process in the development of an effective teacher (Alsup, 2006). Lasky (2005) claims that “teachers’ professional identity is how teachers define themselves to themselves and to others. An understanding of ‘teacher identity’ and the factors that influence it is critical both for designing appropriate teacher education programmes and

for the effective implementation of education policies generally (Mansaray, 2011). To further buttress these assertions, Anamuah-Mensah (2011) is of the view that knowing one’s self is as critical to teacher development as knowing your subject, your students and your pedagogy. He also suggests that good teaching requires the development of teacher identity. The relevance of the concept of teachers’ professional identity emanates from its relationship to professional knowledge and action, and in the assumption that who we think we are influences what we do (Watson, 2006).

Research in teacher education suggests that the development of a professional identity promotes a teacher’s educational philosophy (Mockler, 2011), decision-making (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004), well-being, and effectiveness (Sammons et al., 2007). Again, researching the concept of teacher identity can lead researchers to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that influence a teacher’s decisions and attitude towards teaching (William, 2007). For Beauchamp and Thomas (2009), they acknowledge the importance of teachers’ professional identity as “a frame or analytical lens through which to examine aspects of teaching”.

The components which describe teacher professionalism, namely professional knowledge, values, skills and reflective practice, are virtually the same rubrics which describe teachers’ professional identity (Yidana, 2014). These rubrics can therefore serve as a framework for teacher education curriculum as well as bench marks, to describe the ideal teacher and to gauge teacher competence. Sharing similar perspectives, Olsen (2008) posits that teacher identity is a pedagogical tool that can be used by teacher educators and professional development specialists to make visible various holistic, situated framings of teacher development in practice.

### *Perspectives on Teacher Competence*

Competence is one of the most contested concepts in the literature on teachers and teacher education, having provoked much debate since it first appeared in the late 1960’s (Libman & Zuzovsky, 2006). Historically, competence models were developed from a behavioral and positivist perspective to identify core behaviours and skills needed in a wide range of occupations (Bogo, Mishna & Regehr, 2011). This concept was first conceived of as a set of “discrete” “theory free”, practical skills (Harris, 1997). By implication, a competent teacher could be identified based on observable events in the teachers’ performance, and teacher preparation would therefore need to focus on novice teachers’ learning competences such as classroom management and teaching methods (Huizen, Oers & Wubbels, 2005). Critics argue that behaviorists’ competence-based notions of teaching and teacher education neglect other important aspects of teacher expertise, namely; knowledge and understanding, values moral sensibilities, and professional identity (Pantic, Wubbels & Mainhard, 2011). Teacher competence can therefore be conceptualized as including knowledge and understanding, a sense of how to deal

with values, moral issues, beliefs and identity, and behavioural skills. In general, competence refers to a set of knowledge, skills and attitudes or values that are evident in the behaviour of professionals as they perform in the domains associated with their profession (Epstein & Hundert, 2002). For Weinert (2001), competence should be considered as the cognitive capabilities and skills which individuals have or with which they can learn to solve certain problems, in addition to capabilities concerning motivation, volition and social willingness permitting one to successfully and responsibly apply solutions to problems in variable situations.

The various perspectives on *competence* appear to equally ignore the influence of reflective practice on teacher quality and effectiveness. This paper, therefore, conceptualizes teacher competence as the effective application of aspects of teachers' professional knowledge, values, skills and reflective practice to maximize students' learning outcomes in the classroom situation.

## **Teachers' Professional Competency Benchmarks**

### *Professional Knowledge*

Professional knowledge in this context transcends the mere mastery of the content of a specific subject. Researchers (Shulman, 1986; 1987 & Lawal, 2006, 2011) distinguish between teachers' subject-specific content knowledge, subject-specific pedagogical content knowledge and psychological-pedagogic knowledge. Content knowledge is conceptualized as a deep understanding of the content to be taught (Baumert et al, 2010), pedagogical content knowledge is considered as the knowledge necessary to make this content accessible to students (Hill, Rowan, & Ball, 2005; Krauss et al, 2008), while psychological-pedagogical knowledge is perceived as the generic, cross-curricular knowledge needed to create and optimize teaching and learning situations (Voss, Kunter, & Baumert, 2011). Mishra and Koehler (2006) have also espoused what they term as technological pedagogical content knowledge. This is defined as teachers' knowledge about the latest technologies used in the classroom to promote effective teaching and learning. Moreover, a teacher should be in a position to approach the subject being taught with specific questions, such as which social norms are connected to the subject, what is its relation to social issues and its value in everyday life (Kennedy, 1990). The teacher should as well be knowledgeable in the current developments and trends in his subject area (Lawal, 2006; 2011; Yidana, 2014). The knowledge of these core domains is as important for the teacher as knowledge of their interrelationships.

### *Professional Values*

Values are often conceptualized as aspirations or driving forces, not openly articulated, which effectively shape people's lives and determine where they will direct

energies and what they hold to be of importance. They are the guideposts of our lives, and they direct us to aspire to who we want to be. In the context of the teaching profession, values can be defined as the ideals or beliefs that the profession holds as desirable or undesirable. Some of the values which the teaching profession holds desirable include moral uprightness (Fritz & Wolfgang, 2010), total commitment to the teaching of one's subject area (Elliot & Crosswell, 2012), demonstrating positive attitudes towards one's teaching subject (Bhalla, 2002), demonstrating affection and enthusiasm towards students (Carlise & Phillips, 1984), emotional stability (Zembylas, 2003) and intellectual honesty (Kennedy, 2011). Teachers' participation in professional development programmes (Komba & Nkumbi, 2008), maintaining a collaborative working relationship with colleagues (Killough, 2011), establishing good rapport with parents (Eugenia, 1991), and demonstrating a belief in one's ability to influence students' academic achievement (Bandura, 1997), are desirable values in the teaching profession which promote quality teaching and learning as well as the overall teacher competence. Competent teachers reflect on their teaching and exemplify virtues they seek to impart to students, including life-long learning, tolerance and open-mindedness, as well as intellectual capacities as careful reasoning, logical reasoning and analytical thinking and problem-solving (Darling-Hammond, 2006).

### *Professional Skills*

Professional skills are the prescribed techniques, strategies and approaches that are often used by teachers to facilitate and promote effective teaching and learning in their respective subject areas. Teachers' professional skills as a domain of their identity comprise the skills of instructional planning, skills of instructional implementation and skills of assessing students' learning (Lawal, 2006). The skills of assessing students' learning needs, preparation of lesson plans and schemes of work, selecting and sequencing any given content and improvising instructional material are part of the instructional planning processes (Yidana, 2017). Skills of effective communication, class management, pacing of verbal interactions, ensuring active student participation and the logical delivery of content, cumulatively facilitate instructional implementation (Yidana, 2017). With respect to the skills of assessing students' learning, the teacher ought to appreciably demonstrate the skills of alternating low-order questions with high-order questions during instructional sessions, skills of constructing essay-type and multiple-choice test items, skills of harmonizing evaluation questions with instructional objectives and the skills of promptly giving formative feedback to students on class exercises. To a large extent, these three categories of professional skills could improve teacher competence. The identity of a teacher is partly derived from the uniqueness of his or her skills that are used to perform assigned roles (Yidana, 2014).

### *Professional Reflective Practice*

Reflective practice involves reviewing and analyzing one's experiences for the purpose of learning from that experience. It is a professional development technique which enables individual practitioners to become more skillful and effective (Osterman, 1990). Reflective practice is now a key competency strategy adopted in initial teacher training programmes (Richardson, 1990). Reflective practice enables teachers to make well-informed instructional decisions which ultimately improve teaching and learning. Larrivee and Cooper (2006) are of the view that reflective practice can free teachers from routine instructional practices. They argue that when teachers teach in a routine fashion, they follow the designated textbooks or teach a lesson in the same way it was taught in the past without any effort to change or innovate. However, this mechanical way of teaching, according to McKay (2002), results in ineffective lessons and teachers become slaves to routine. McKay is of the opinion that reflective practice can influence an improvement in the overall teaching practices of teachers. Perhaps it is on account of these benefits that Lawal (2006; 2011) recommends that ideally, teachers should reflect on the indicators of each of the three rubrics of teachers' professional identity/capacity (*professionalknowledge, values and skills*). The preceding discourse on teachers' reflective practice has shown that it is an integral aspect teachers' competency.

### **A 3-Paradigm Process Approach: From Theory via Praxis to Practice**

Curriculum theorizing has to do with philosophizing, conjecturing and understanding the complexities of

curricular issues, techniques, paradigms and developments at its frontiers. The nature and essence of teacher education demands that curriculum theorizing should be of direct and practical relevance to classroom teachers. Good practice is based on theory, and ushers in the concept of 'praxiology'. Praxiology is derived from the Greek word 'praxis', meaning 'a doing' or 'an action'. Praxiology is the key to competence in education and other purposeful education at all levels (Adegoke, 2015). The core competency indicators as discussed in each of the four rubrics (*professional knowledge, values, skills and reflective practice*) are the ideal competency benchmarks as espoused by Lawal (2006; 2011). They are theoretical constructs and constitute the first step of the 3-paradigm process approach. From the theoretical point of view, these competency indicators describe who an ideal teacher is. However, the extent to which these indicators could be implemented or realized is yet another problem. Consequently, a comprehensive battery of indicators, carved out from each of the four rubrics is subjected to scrutiny by teacher educators, teachers, curriculum experts and other relevant stakeholders of teacher education. The consensus reached among these stakeholders in respect of the possibility of implementing such core competency indicators constitutes the second stage of the 3- paradigm process approach. As indicated in Figure 1, they are referred to as the *perceived professional capacity indicators*, which are the components of the core achievable, executable or realizable competency indicators of the teacher. At this last stage of the model, curriculum aims, goals, objectives and content of teacher education could then be fashioned out from these achievable and realizable capacity indicators.

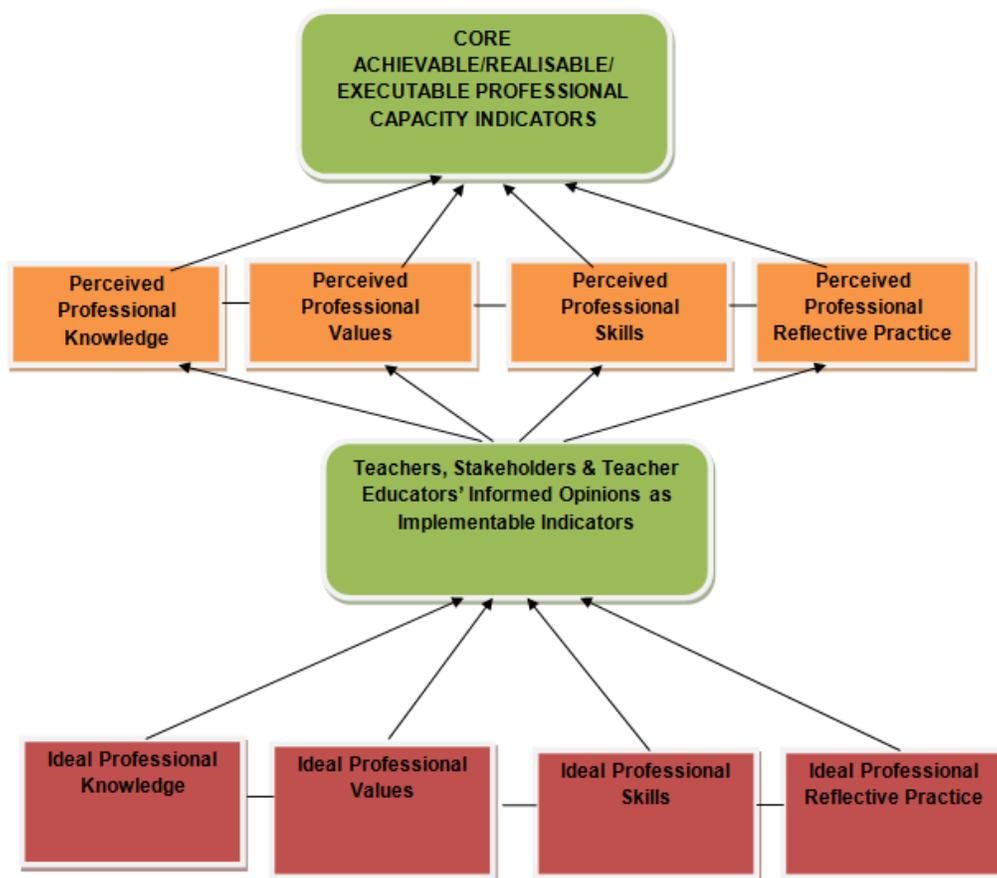


Figure 1:Yidana – Lawal (2015): A 3-Paradigm Process Approach to Teacher Education Curriculum Content

Each of the four rectangular boxes at the lower part of Figure 1 is considered as an *ideal professional capacity indicator*. Theoretically, they are perceived as indicators of an ideal professional teacher. One important aspect of this paradigm is that the equal sized rectangular boxes suggest that all the rubrics and their respective indicators are equally important in the training of competent teachers. By implication, this paradigm frowns on placing undue emphasis on some few rubrics to the neglect of others. Immediately above these four rectangular boxes is a single rectangular box which contains the relevant stakeholders of teacher education and development. At this stage, a process of validation in respect of the extent to which these core competency indicators are implementable, takes place. Those that are validated are then referred to as *perceived capacity indicators* and considered as the *core achievable professional capacity indicators*. Again, the validation process ensures the relevance of the curriculum content as well as its achievability.

### Implications for Teacher Education Curriculum Goals and Content

The most visible implication associated with this model is the need to adopt expert consensus-building approach to the derivation of teacher education curriculum content and goals. Carefully selected stakeholders like teacher

educators, policy makers, teacher education researchers, both locally and internationally could be consulted to build consensus on relevant indicators of each of the core rubrics of teacher competency. Afterwards, implementable, attainable and realistic curriculum goals and content could be fashioned out of such indicators.

Technological content knowledge should be integrated into the teacher education curriculum. Teacher education institutions should stimulate the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in the teaching and learning process. Global trends in teacher education curriculum suggest the inclusion of Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPCK) as part of teacher preparation programmes. This further suggests the need for teacher educators themselves to be abreast with the nitty-gritty of this paradigm.

Substantial evidence points to the fact that the teachers' ability to reflect on his / her instructional practice ultimately affects students' learning outcomes (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Dewey (2010) is of the view that reflective practice involves that of suspending judgement or action until such time that more information is gathered and examined. The idea is to engage in a process of active inquiry or action research in an effort to generate new information to support or dispute existing thoughts or practices. These assertions in respect of teachers' reflective practice imply that the goals and content of teacher education curriculum should foster in teacher

trainees, habits self-directed studies or action research. Teachers are “expert knowers” about their students and classrooms. Based on a careful and critical examination of their own professional practices, they are capable of generating knowledge that could enhance teaching and learning.

In line with this paradigm, any teacher education curriculum which is desirous of rolling out realistic, relevant and achievable curriculum goals and content should incorporate all the indicators of teachers’ professional capacity as indicated in the model and subject them to all the processes suggested in the paradigm. Which set of professional values are worthy of possession and practice by our teachers? Issues of the affective domain such as values are not explicitly taught, but inculcated. Teacher education instructional programmes should be structured in such a way that teacher educators could always involve their teacher trainees in classroom activities such as games, discussions, brainstorming, role-playing and cooperative learning. These techniques could inculcate desirable values such as positive attitude, commitment, honesty, cooperation, respect and love. How then can we sustain teacher competence so as to continually maximise students’ learning outcomes? Undoubtedly, this can be achieved through the continuous professional development of the teacher.

#### *Continuous Professional Development*

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is a time-tested strategy for sustaining the competencies of teachers. Gall and Renchler (1985) hit the nail on its head when they describe professional development as “efforts to improve teachers’ capacity to function as effective professionals by having them learn new knowledge, attitudes and skills” (p.6). However, scholars have criticized this perspective on grounds that it appears to be compensating teachers for deficiencies in skills or knowledge and viewing them as empty vessels “to be filled” (Garmston, 1991, p. 64). Other scholars consider CPD as a “professional growth” paradigm that characterizes development as more self-directed arising from the learner’s interests and needs (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Other researchers perceive CPD as an “educational change” paradigm which is focused on bringing about change (Fullan, Hill & Crevola, 2006; Warren-Little, 2001). On their part, Joyce and Showers (2002), McLaughlin and Zarrow (2001) consider CPD within a “problem solving” paradigm which links development to making improvements in order to address identified issues such as student achievement needs. In the opinion of Darling-Hammond (2003), CPD is not training, but a process of continued intellectual, experiential and attitudinal growth of teachers.

In whichever way we look at teachers’ CPD, the bottom line is that it aims at sustaining the professional competencies of teachers. It does not necessarily arise on account of the need to address deficiencies, but occasioned by the growing recognition of education as a

dynamic and professional field (Guskey, 2000). In addition, since the school curriculum is not static and subject to reforms and innovations, there is always a corresponding need to continuously update the knowledge, skills and values of teachers to ensure effective implementation. As a matter of principle, professional development needs to be, first and foremost, attentive and responsive to student learning and performance. It needs to attend to authentic themes and issues in the day-to-day work of teachers in relation to student learning and be respectful of those theoretical and technical knowledge bases that inform the act of teaching (Broad & Evan, 2006).

#### *Mentorship*

Undoubtedly, promoting the mentoring of newly trained teachers could enhance teaching competence and quality. This, therefore, implies that institutionalizing mentorship in our schools and colleges is another window of opportunity offered to educational authorities to whip up teacher competence. It has even been argued in certain circles that the most effective way to transfer skills and knowledge quickly, and inculcate loyalty in new employees to cooperate in an organization is through mentoring (Robinson, 2001). Mentors help teachers to develop practical knowledge for teaching, which includes; acquiring techniques and skills, knowing about resources, and understanding the context and culture of teaching (Feiman-Nemser & Remillan, 1996).

In the opinion of Furlong, Barton, Miles, Whiting and Whitty (2000), one significant way of influencing the skills, knowledge and values of teachers is to change the form and content of their initial training. This stems from the fact that many teachers lack adequate skills when they come out of training (Kuyini & Desai, 2008; Agbenyega & Deku, 2011). Consequently, mentorship is a strategy often adopted to fine-tune such newly trained teachers in line with the requirements of the school and curriculum. According to Sergiovanni and Starrat (2002), mentoring is intended to help new teachers to successfully learn their roles, establish their self-images as teachers, figure out the school and its culture, understand how teaching unfolds in real classrooms, and achieve other goals that are important to the teachers being mentored. Mentoring is also intended to help new teachers improve upon their effectiveness in demonstrating the schools’ standards for teaching (Heeralal, 2014).

#### *Professional Learning Communities*

Another technique that strengthens teachers’ competence is the organization of professional learning communities. Such learning communities tend to serve two broad purposes: (1) improving the skills and knowledge of educators through collaborative study, expertise, exchange and professional dialogue and (2) improving the educational aspirations, achievement, and attainment of students through stronger leadership and teaching. For example; in the United States, Darling-Hammond and

Richardson (2009) consider professional learning communities as a new paradigm in which teachers work together and engage in continual dialogue to examine their practice and students' performance, and to develop and implement more effective practices. According to Vescio, Ross and Adams (2008), the main premise of professional learning communities is that student learning improves. It is a platform for teachers to share knowledge in respect of their practice. Knowledge of practice is a type of knowledge generated when teachers investigate learning and teaching in their own classrooms and school sites, which could be a form of school-based teacher development (Ruthven & Goodchild, 2008; Sowder, 2007). Most of the time, teachers value the knowledge that arises from such activities because the outcomes are personally significant and context-specific (Putnam & Borko, 2000).

## Conclusion

The main thrust of this paper is that equal emphasis should be placed on all the four rubrics of teachers' professional capacity. The turbulent wave of moral decadence among so-called professional teachers in Ghana, partly emanate from the apparent neglect of the professional values rubric of teachers' professional identity. The four rubrics and their respective indicators should therefore be given equal attention. To help teachers develop their identities, teacher professional development programmes in Ghana should encourage the creation of situations that foster metacognitive and reflective practices. Such programmes should make "teacher identities" an area of focus. Pre-service and in-service teachers should be encouraged to record their reflections on their teaching experiences. This could make them active participants in their own learning. Such reflective processes will also enable them to continually reconstruct their professional knowledge and identity.

This paradigm has a slant towards churning out competent and ideal professional teachers who are capable of containing the exigencies of all times in Ghana. Based on relevant stakeholder consultation, this paradigm does not only bridge the gap between the theoretical perspectives that relate to competency-based teacher education models and practical realities, it emphasizes relevant, implementable and achievable curriculum goals and content. Continuous professional development programmes and activities should be tailor-designed to address the real needs of students. Such programmes should as well be attractive and binding on all teachers. The adoption of professional learning communities and networking among Ghanaian teachers could also foster the cross-fertilisation of ideas, which may further sustain their competence.

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