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## THE TEACHING PROFESSION IN THE HISTORY OF GHANAIAN EDUCATION

by

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This article presents part of the data gathered for a study of Ghanaian elementary teachers' job satisfaction and their attitudes to their profession and other job alternatives. Since one of the central objectives of the study is to see how the teachers view their profession vis-a-vis alternative avenues of employment in Ghana and how such comparisons influence their work behaviour and plans, we examine in this article historical evidence on the influence which such factors as salary and conditions of service, teachers' associations and their prestige and professional status have had on their work behaviour and plans. Other points which we shall examine are teacher education and factors which have helped to improve the teachers' general conditions of service.

Western schooling was introduced in the form of 'castle schools' by the Portuguese, the first Europeans to visit Ghana in 1471. For detailed discussions of the development of Western education in Ghana, see Hilliard, 1957 and McWilliam 1959. Similar castle schools were later established by the Dutch, the Danes and the English in their castles.

However, it was the Missionaries of the Basel Mission, the Wesleyan Mission, the Bremen Mission, the Roman Catholic Mission and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Mission who, by their educational activities, extended some schooling to the common folks in Ghana. The Government later joined hands with the Missions to carry out the development and expansion of education throughout the country.

The general growth of elementary education was inevitably accompanied by a corresponding need for professionally trained teachers.

### Teacher Education

At the initial stages of educational development, teaching in the schools in Ghana, as in other parts of West Africa, was modelled on the well known monitorial systems of Joseph Lancaster and Andrew Bell (Hilliard 1957) which were popular in Britain and Canada at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In this system, the scarcity of trained teachers was somewhat short-circuited. One Master or trained teacher was in charge of a school and a number of monitors were appointed from among the pupils in the top of the school to help him by being in charge of the 'mechanical' teaching work and rote learning in the various classes. Similar teaching was adopted in Ghana.

However, despite its popularity, the monitorial system had to be abandoned in England because among other things, it encouraged much mechanical learning and the monitors were also immature for teaching which demanded not only the teaching of reading, writing and arithmetic but also the exercise of moral influence on pupils. Thus the problem of shortage of teachers was tackled by training professional teachers.

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Similarly, in Ghana efforts were made to train professionally qualified teachers. The Basel Mission established a teacher-catechist theological seminary at Akropong in 1863 and a second one later at Abetifi. These and the Roman Catholic teachers' college at Bla were the only institutions for teacher-training education in Ghana up until 1909.

In teacher education as in the establishment of schools, the Government saw the need to supplement the efforts of the Missions and so in 1909, it opened a training college in Accra which became the teacher training centre not only for Government teachers but for the teachers of all missions who had no teacher training institutions of their own. This benefited all missions with the exception of the Basel Mission and the Roman Catholic Mission who, as indicated above, had a training college at Bla in the Trans-Volta Region.

The duration of the training course in Accra was two years and the students' performance in their final examination at the end of their training determined the type of certificate (Hilliard 1957) awarded them. There were three types, first, second and third class certificates. These in turn determined the salaries of the holders. At the bottom of the ladder were the holders of third class certificates who received an annual salary of £20. The salary for the holders of second class certificates was £25 and for the first class certificate holders was £30 per annum. In addition, teachers received annual grants ranging from £5 to £20.

The Wesleyan Methodist Mission also established a training college, first at Aburi and later transferred it to Kumasi in 1924. Training in these colleges was extended from two years to three years in 1923.

The institutions improved the supply of certificated teachers but did not completely solve the problems and uncertificated teachers remained in majority in the schools as shown by the following figures for 1927 (Hulard, 1957:86).

Table 3: The strength of the Ghanaian Teaching Force in 1927

Teachers	Men	Women	Total
Certificated	927	37	1,009
Uncertificated	1,084	104	1,188

#### Further Expansion in Teacher Education Facilities

The expansion in teacher training facilities continued and a large number of teachers continued to receive professional training as more training colleges were established. In 1928, the government began to assist a training college for women which had been started at Cape Coast by Roman Catholic Sisters; it also encouraged the missions in their efforts by giving them grants to train women teachers.

With such Governmental encouragement, the missions continued their efforts in teacher education. In 1930, the Roman Catholic Mission opened St. Augustine's College at Amlsano, near Cape Coast and the English Mission too opened St. Nicholas College at Cape Coast in the same year.

Although the increase in the number of certificated teachers (brought about by the increase in facilities for teacher education) did not keep pace

with the enormous expansion in primary education, it was appreciable and in fact the period under review was one of the few which saw certificated teachers outnumber uncertificated teachers in elementary schools in Ghana, thus providing evidence for Governor Guggisberg's emphasis on quality in education. In 1938 there were 3,000 teachers in the elementary schools. Of these 2012 were trained and 988 were untrained or uncertificated, a proportion of approximately two to one.

Meanwhile, the effect of the world-wide economic depression of the thirties was felt in Ghana too: it led to yearly cuts in Government expenditure generally which naturally affected education. Savings were made by, among other things, reducing teachers' salaries and cutting down the staff of the Education Department.

However, educational development did not completely cease and despite the depression and the world war that followed it, some progress in educational growth was achieved. In 1943 the Government opened its first training college in the Northern Territories at Tamale. In the same year a four-year teacher training course was introduced in the Methodist Women Training college in Kumasi. Earlier, a similar course had been introduced at Achimota training college some years before. The period also saw the establishment by the Scottish Mission, of a two-year primary teacher training college at Odumasi in the Eastern Region of the country.

The recommendation of the 1937 Education Committee's Report concerning training colleges was implemented. Two-year as well as four-year colleges were established and by the end of 1950 there were in existence nineteen teacher training colleges comprising eight certificate 'A' or four-year colleges and eleven certificate 'B' or two-year colleges. They gave an annual output of some 623 teachers.

By the end of 1950 there was a grand total of 3,989 certificated teachers in Ghanaian elementary schools but at the same time there were 5,000 untrained or uncertificated teachers in the schools. Thus the two to one proportion of trained teachers to untrained teachers that obtained in 1938 became almost reversed by the end of 1950.

However, the increase in facilities for teacher training in the early fifties began to redress this imbalance between trained and untrained teachers in the post-independence years and thus by September 1960 there were 12,000 trained and 10,000 untrained teachers. But the implementation of the free and compulsory primary education overwhelmingly increased the number of untrained or pupil teachers and the trend since then has persisted to the present time.

#### **Teachers' Salary, Conditions of Service and Teachers' Association.**

From teacher education we shift the focus on to teachers' salary and conditions of service, an important area of interest in this study.

How teachers' salary and other conditions of service operated to influence their attitude to their work and their career plans during the early period of educational development in Ghana can be gleaned from some of the reports of the Directors of Education of the period. One Director of Education Mr George Macdonald commenting on the effects of poor salaries for teachers in his 1893/94 report to the Governor wrote:

"Salaries, I regret to say are extremely low, and in consequence the ranks of those engaged in teaching are constantly and regularly being thinned by the desertion of many who have commenced work as teachers, into other branches of employment which offer more adequate payment for the labour performed."

There are two remedies for this source of trouble to the Managers of schools.

- (a) There should be a recognized official graduation of teachers, and
- (b) Each grade should carry a recognized annual salary under an agreement between Managers and teachers. Educ. Dept. Annual Report, 1894: 20).

He proceeded to cite average monthly salaries of teachers to support his argument. The two recommendations he made presumably led to the classification or graduation of certificates with specific salaries and the additional annual grants we indicated above.

These and other actions taken by the educational authorities to arrest the problem of teacher drop out seem to have achieved that purpose. For, commenting on the effects which improved salary and conditions of service some years later another Director of Education for Ghana, Mr D. J. Oman wrote:

"It is extremely encouraging to find in almost every instance the inspectors when reporting on the work of the past year have something favourable to say of the teachers, whether in assisted or non-assisted schools" (Annual Report of Education Department 1927-1928).

One Provincial inspector notes "Teachers are not only smarter in appearance, but they exhibit more interest and keenness in their work. The more prosperous and settled nature of their employment has increased their incentive". Another remarked "The improved status of the mission teachers appears to have reacted favourably upon the tone of the schools". And a third says "Teachers appear to have more confidence in themselves and pupils are brighter and more attentive, while the decrease in the number of unqualified teachers has done much to raise the tone of schools".

He saw the causes that had brought the desirable improvement as the following:

#### Minimum Salary Scale

Section 6 of the Education Ordinance lays down that no registered teachers employed in Government, assisted or non-assisted, schools shall be paid at lower rate than such as shall be prescribed.

The minimum salary scheme was drawn up by the majority of missions in consultation with the Government and has in almost every case improved the position of teachers. The increased satisfaction with their position has resulted in a closer attention to duty, with consequent good to themselves and their school. (Annual Report of Education Department 1927-1928)

The quotations from the two Directors of Education clearly show that even at this early stage of educational development in Ghana, salary and other conditions of service had the potential effect of either driving teachers

away from teaching into alternative employment or of retaining them in the teaching service.

There are other instances which show how poor salaries acted to drive away teachers from the teaching field. The following is an interesting case example. As early as the eighteen forties a notable headmaster one Joseph Smith of Cape Coast who had received some of his education in England and had been appointed in 1829 to head the Cape Coast Castle school resigned his post because he was denied legitimate increase in salary. (McWilliam, 1959: 14-15). He had rendered creditable services during the Governorship of George Maclean from 1830 to 1843 and when a new Governor, Lieutenant Governor Hill, took over from Maclean, he realised that the salaries of the teachers at the time were inadequate. For instance, Joseph Smith was receiving a salary of £54 per annum, a salary which Governor Hill described as "perfectly an inadequate compensation." (McWilliam 1959). Each of the untrained assistants of Joseph Smith was receiving a salary of £1.2/- a month.

Governor Hill thus requested the Colonial Office to make funds available for the improvement of the Cape Coast school and for increasing the teachers' salaries. He proposed to raise Joseph Smith's annual salary to £100. The Colonial Office turned down the Governor's proposal and Joseph Smith resigned his post.

There was real need for raising the teachers salaries which were very low even when the low cost of living of the time is taken into account. For instance, a number of teachers who around 1856, were sent to do pioneering job of opening schools in the Eastern and Western Wassaw and Akim in the Western and Eastern regions of the country had to make do with the paltry salaries of £1 a month paid from locally collected poll tax revenue (McWilliam 1959). Thus the Director of Education, Mr George Macdonald was right when he wrote that the teachers' salaries were extremely low and were causing teacher drop outs.

The salaries of teachers in the Mission schools were generally lower than Government school teachers. There were two reasons for the disparity. First, the Missions did not have enough funds to provide adequate salaries, and second in those days, (and the idea seems to persist in the minds of some Ghanaians even to the present time), teaching usually undertaken by teacher-catechists was regarded as 'sacrificial work'.

The poor conditions of teachers were later to have disastrous effects on education in the years immediately following the first world war. During the war period, the expansion of education had continued. For instance between 1913 and 1919, 54 new schools were opened and enrollment increased by 8,500 pupils. The few training colleges existing at the time could not keep pace with the expansion in education by producing corresponding numbers of teachers. Thus there was acute shortage of trained teachers. The situation was made worse by "a flood of resignations especially among the more senior and experienced teachers, caused by unattractive pay and conditions of service in 1919. This was overwhelming; over the whole year 900 'teachers' had to be newly appointed to keep the total teaching force up to the required strength of 600. (McWilliam 1959). As a result of these circumstances the standard of work in the schools fell considerably during this period.

However, as the extract from the reports of the Director of Education, Mr D. J. Oman, quoted earlier indicates, there was considerable improvement

in both the salary and status of teachers during the governorship of Guggisberg. Teachers in Mission Schools or non-government schools had a guaranteed salary scale although their pay and general conditions of service remained a source of discontent among non-government teachers until 1950 when the Erzuah Committee made recommendations to rectify it.

The Erzuah Committee recommended that the elementary teaching service should be unified and that teachers in both government and non-government schools be put on the same salary and pension scales and that the Government should cease to employ a category of teachers 'as government teachers'. This recommendation was implemented in 1956.

The Committee went further to make far-reaching proposals on teachers' salary. Three principles guided the Committee's proposals on teachers' salary. The first of them was "that teachers should command salary scales higher than other persons with similar qualifications, experience and ability in other walks of life . . . We are aware that such high recognition as we propose is not accorded to teachers in most other countries, but we believe that it is necessary if this country is to develop rapidly and achieve its place among the nations" (McWilliam 1959). Secondly, it emphasised that the country could only afford the new salary increases if the general standard of the teachers' work in the schools was 'raised considerably'. Thirdly, the Committee was aware that the successful implementation of the Accelerated Development Plan depended largely on the teachers.

The result of the recommendations was appreciable increases in the starting salaries of the various grades of teachers. Pupil teachers at the bottom of the hierarchy who previously received £42 per annum now started with £84. The starting pay for certificate 'B' teacher was raised from £72 to £100 per annum and that of certificate 'A' teacher from £84 to £150.

It seems clear from the foregoing that the Erzuah Committee did a lot to improve the pay and other conditions of service of elementary school teachers in Ghana. But a chain-reaction soon occurred. Workers in other occupations and professions in Ghana demanded similar improvements in their working conditions and they were given. Thus the few years that followed the implementation of the Committee's proposals saw similar salary increases for employees in other occupations. As a matter of fact, in some cases the other occupations offered better working conditions (McWilliam 1959) and between 1956 and 1960 approximately 3,000 teachers left teaching service for alternative jobs outside teaching resulting in the annual wastage of 8.7 percent.

It was this alarming wastage which led to the Government's efforts to arrest the problem that in 1961 resulted in the 'New Deal for Teachers' (K.N. Bame, 1972: 14-15). The New Deal made further increases in teachers' salaries. The pupil teacher was now put on a salary scale of £G144 to £G180. The increases in salary of certificated 'B' and 'A' teachers varied between £G35 and £G85. Teachers who had been in the service for longer periods had biggest increases. Furthermore, the New Deal stipulated that 12 percent of the then certificate 'A' teachers would be promoted Senior Teachers and put on a scale of £G500 to £G700. In addition a new grade of Principal Teachers who would have a salary scale of £G900 was to be created. This was really a 'new deal' because previously the maximum annual income which an elementary teacher could earn in teaching service was less than £G500

Since the New Deal, further increases in teachers salaries have been made. After the first military coup in Ghana, the National Liberation Council appointed a Commission — "The Mills-Odoi Commission" in 1967 to inquire into the structure and remuneration of the public services in Ghana and make recommendations. (Mills-Odoi, 1967). The Commission recommended increases in teachers salaries along with increases in the salaries of other employees in the public services in Ghana.

The following table gives in a summary form the increases in teachers' salaries which have been made by Ghana Governments from 1953 to 1969. (Bediako, 1970 : 13). Initial salaries are given for the years 1953 to 1961 and both initial and maximum or terminal salaries are given for 1969.

Table 4: Increase in Teachers' Salaries from 1953-1969.

Grade	Salaries Per Annum			
	Initial 1958	Initial 1961	Initial 1969	Maximum
Pupil Teacher	₵168	₵ 288	₵ 359	₵ 434
Certificate B Trained Teacher	220	400	480	900
Certificate A Trained Teacher	300	500	612	1,092
Senior Teacher	—	1,000	1,380	2,388
Principal Teacher	—	1,400	2,040	2,388

Such increases in salaries and improvement in conditions of service of teachers sketched above have been achieved partly through the negotiations of teachers' professional associations whose origin and development we now examine.

#### Teachers' Associations

The historically important and notable period of Governor Guggisberg saw also the inception of teachers professional associations in Ghana. For, Mr Oman's report from which we have quoted excerpts earlier in this chapter indicates that the Education Ordinance of 1925 "having raised teaching to a profession, teachers gained a higher status, and the moment was ripe for binding them together so that the efficiency of the individual might be improved by the promotion of discussion of questions concerning the profession generally." (Annual Report of Education Department 1927-1928).

Indeed, Mr Oman himself, the then Director of Education, did bind some teachers together to form the first teachers' professional association in Ghana in 1926. As he continues in his report, "In 1926 a teachers' Association existed in Cape Coast, and teachers had already begun to band themselves together in other places. At the refresher course held in July of that year considerable attention was given to the ideals and principles of education and to the Teacher's relation with the Home and Community. Discussions were led by the late Dr. Aggrey and by the Reverend R. Fisher, who had always been in close touch with teachers and, as Master in the Government Training College since 1st January 1922, had had particular opportunity of getting to know their needs." (Annual Report of Education Department 1927—1928).

Soon after the formation of this association, similar associations or



branches of it were formed in other parts of the country. By December 1927, there were in existence as many as 62 branches having a total membership of 997.

Since it was formed on the initiative of a colonial boss and employer, it is not surprising that the aims of this first professional association of teachers were to be definitely non-political and non-sectarian" (Annual Report of Education Department 1927—1928). It aimed mainly at upholding professional ideals and raising the standard of work in schools and paid little or no attention to conditions of service.

However, this professional idealism was soon to change in response to the economic realities of the time. As indicated earlier, Ghana too felt the effects of the world-wide economic depression of the thirties which led to reduction in salaries of teachers in 1931. The teachers reacted quickly to the reduction in salaries in 1932 by forming the first teachers' organisation, founded to improve their conditions of service— 'The Assisted Schools Teachers Union' which later became the Gold Coast Teachers' Union under the leadership of its first president a Mr J. T. M. Yankah. The Union was able to prevail upon the authorities to minimise the proposed cut in salary and later to withdraw it completely.

Encouraged by that achievement, the Union now turned its attention to two main objectives, namely, the securing for all teachers, irrespective of whether they were Government teachers or not, a unified salary scale and conditions of service and an identical pension scheme. Although the union could not achieve these objectives, its members cherished the hope that some day they might achieve them when their own African leaders assumed the reins of government. This hope turned out to be well-grounded. The African Government formed under Dr. Kwame Nkrumah in the early fifties desired the same changes and in 1955 it passed the Teachers' Pension Ordinance. In the following year the teaching service was finally unified and "government teachers were offered the choice of retirement or transfer to Mission and Local Authority employment (McWilliam, 1959 : 66).

To return to the development of teachers' Unions, once they had started, they began to multiply, between 1935 and 1950 there emerged a number of small unions some based on religious affiliations, others on subjects taught or the level of the educational system at which the teachers taught. There were for instance, the Unions of Presbyterian, Methodist, Catholic school teachers as well as Government school teachers; African Graduate Teachers and Mathematics Teachers Associations. (Bediako, 1970)

But unity is strength and the unions were aware of this fact. Thus during the forties and fifties, the various teachers associations felt the need for unifying all the unions to form one organisation. Attempts to this effect culminated in the amalgamation of the Gold Coast Teachers' Union and the National Union of Teachers. However, it is one thing agreeing to unite and another showing unity in practice. There never was any unity among the unions in practice, and so no single organisation could claim the allegiance of all the teachers' unions and present their case effectively to the Government.

The Government was in due course to impose unity by legislation. Its Industrial Act of 1958 radically changed the structure of trade unionism in Ghana. It brought into being a new Trade Union Congress embracing all trade unions in the country. 'One of its members was to be a single union for

teachers and non-teaching staff of educational institutions. (McWilliam, 1959 67). This Act and subsequent amendments to it made necessary a formation a 'Union of teachers and cultural services' later to be known as Ghana National Associations of Teachers (GNAT). All teachers were automatically members of it and by definition members of the Trade Union Congress to which union dues were deducted at source from teachers' salaries as well as from the wages and salaries of employees in the unions forming the Congress.

It is true that birds of different feathers find it difficult to flock together if they ever do; and so teachers being professional group did not find it comfortable for their union to be in one big Congress with the unions of railway workers, electrical workers, workers in Public Works Department and so on. Moreover, the teachers felt that the TUC was overly politicised and so they made representations to the Government concerning their wish to be outside the T.U.C. There was a referendum among teachers in which they voted overwhelmingly in favour of staying outside the Trade Union Congress. Consequently the Government in 1967 agreed to the request of Teachers and Nurses who had made similar representations to be outside the T.U.C.

Having opted out of the T.U.C., the teachers formed Ghana National Associations of Teachers (GNAT) embracing all teachers in educational institutions below the level of University. In other words, according to its constitution, which was drawn in 1963 in response to instructions from the Minister of Education, all teachers in pre-University institutions are members with the exception of pupil teachers who are associate members. The membership is thus compulsory but in recent years a few teachers have challenged the legality of this compulsory membership and in some cases have refused to pay the membership dues sanctioned by the Ministry of Education. (Bediako 1970). The Association and its predecessors have some appreciable achievements to their credit. To summarize, through representations to the Governments and Committees, the Teachers' Union have achieved,

- (1) Improvement in salaries of all categories of teachers
- (2) A unified Teaching Service with identical pension scheme for all certificated teachers
- (3) Longer holidays for pupils and teachers
- (4) Some avenues for promotion such as Senior Teacher, Principal Teacher, Senior subject Master and Vice-Principal, the last two in secondary schools and training colleges.

#### **Factors that have helped improve Teachers' Conditions of Service**

It seems in order at this point to delineate some of the factors which have helped the teachers unions in Ghana to have to their credit this fairly impressive record of achievements.

The twin factors which either gave rise to, or interplayed with other factors (internal and external) to bring about the remarkable improvement in elementary school teachers' salary and working conditions are the almost insatiable demand for education in Ghana and the importance which the various governments have attached to education. Beginning with the colonial government under Guggisberg and his successors to the present day, Ghanaian governments have regarded education as a 'keystone' of not only a people's life and happiness but also of social, economic and political advancement.

Three related internal factors which led to great demand for teachers and consequently a higher price for them are the Accelerated Development Plan for Education, Independence and Africanization policy and the fee-free and compulsory elementary education, all of which we have mentioned in passing in this chapter. It will be recalled that one of the aims of the African majority government elected in February 1951 was to satisfy as soon as possible the popular demand for some "education for every child of school going age". This led to the Accelerated Plan. In January 1952, the very first year of its implementation 132,000 children, twice as many as in the previous year commenced primary schooling. Six years later when Ghana attained independence there were 450,000 children in primary schools about double the figure in 1951 an equally large number, 115,831, in middle schools (McWilliam 1959).

This tremendous expansion in education made it incumbent on the Government to train, attract and retain teachers to carry on the task. We have seen the increase in salary and improvement in conditions of service for teachers which were recommended by the Erzuah Committee to achieve this end.

The Africanization policy also contributed to the demand for teachers. At the attainment of independence, the government introduced this policy which in effect meant that many expatriate personnel in key positions were to be replaced by Africans. This in turn called for a rapid expansion of the educational system, that is more teachers and other educational facilities to train the urgently needed African manpower not only to replace the expatriates but also to contribute to the growth and development of the country's economy.

However, the key factor which made possible the tremendous growth and expansion in education and considerable improvement in the lot of teachers was external trade. Just as the world-wide economic depression of the thirties had telling effect on Ghana's economy and led to a reduction in teachers' salaries so did the economic boom which followed the second world war lead to extraordinary rise in the price of cocoa — the backbone of Ghana's economy — and made possible the notable educational development we have been examining.

As a result of the post-war boom Ghana began to accumulate reserved funds from the cocoa revenue. This accumulation continued from year to year up to the time of independence. For instance, the value of Ghana's imports and exports in 1949 were N£90 and N£98 million respectively; where, as corresponding figures for 1955 were N£174 and N£192 million respectively, indicating a huge surplus of N£18 million attributable mainly to the rise in the selling price of cocoa overseas. Such surpluses piled up annually and at independence Ghana's foreign reserves totalled about N£600 million. This almost unprecedented, prosperity for Ghana gave the Government the much needed financial platform for its development programmes.

It is these funds which made possible educational expansion as well as the improvement in teachers' salaries and conditions of service.

In addition to the reserved funds two external conferences helped the expansion and development in education and the improved working conditions for teachers. The first was the "Conference of African States on the Developments of Education in Africa" held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in 1961 under the auspices of UNESCO/ECA. (UNESCO, 1961). The targets for

educational development which the participating states including Ghana, set for themselves for the period of 1961 to 1980 could not but give fillip for the phenomenal expansion in education which has taken place in Africa in general and Ghana in particular. The expansion in education inevitably led to great demand for teachers and indirectly contributed to the increases in teachers' salaries.

The main targets which the countries set for themselves were:—

- (i) Primary education (to cover broadly six years) shall be universal, compulsory and free.
- (ii) Education at the secondary level shall be provided to 30% of the children who completed primary school.
- (iii) Higher education shall be provided mostly in Africa itself to 20% of those who complete secondary education.
- (iv) The improvement of the quality of African schools and universities shall be a constant aim.
- (v) The percentage of national income earmarked for financing education shall be increased from the present 3% to 4% in 1965 and on to 6% in 1980".

The second conference was 'special intergovernmental conference on the Status of Teachers,' held in Paris in October, 1966, again, under the auspices of UNESCO. Ghana was represented at this conference too. The recommendations which came out of it may appropriately be regarded as internationally approved professional 'Bill of Rights' for teachers. The recommendations must on one hand have spurred GNAT on to press for its demands of improvement in teachers' conditions of service and on the other hand must have had direct influence on Ghana Government to grant the demands.

The recommendations on teachers salaries given in paragraphs 115 to 124 are of particular interest to us and for illustrative purpose we quote the recommendations in paragraph 115.

"Teachers salaries should: (a) reflect the importance to society of the teaching function and hence the importance of teachers as well as the responsibilities of all kinds which fall upon them from the time of their entry into service, (b) compare favourably with salaries paid in other occupations requiring similar or equivalent qualification; (c) provide teachers with the means to ensure a reasonable standard of living for themselves and the families as well as to invest in further education or in the pursuit of cultural activities, thus enhancing their professional qualification; (d) take account of the fact that certain posts require higher qualifications and experience and carry greater responsibilities." (UNESCO, 1966).

Cognizant of the fact that recommendations of conferences more often than not end on official shelves and are never implemented, the conference did not just stop at making the recommendations. It went further to urge UNESCO to take "measures for the implementation of the recommendations".<sup>2</sup> This UNESCO did through subsequent regional conferences.

Thus both external and internal factors conjointly favoured the teachers' cause. It is, therefore, not surprising that GNAT and its predecessors have achieved appreciable success in improving the working conditions of Ghanaian teachers.

## The Professional Status of the Elementary Teachers Before Independence

It seems appropriate to conclude this picture of the development of the teaching profession in the history of Ghanaian education with an examination of an aspect of the profession which also assumes importance in our study (Bame, 1972), namely the professional status of the teachers before independence. How did the teachers fare in the field? How did they perceive themselves and how were they perceived by others in their community? How much prestige did they enjoy? What relationship existed between them and the educational authorities and their supervisors?

We get a lively and vivid description of how teachers in Ghana and elsewhere in West Africa fared in the past from the pen of a British official, one J. S. Laurie, who is quoted at length by McWilliam. In 1868, the British Parliament sent Mr. Laurie to West Africa to report on "the state of education in the West African settlements". His report gives the following picture of the teachers:

"The teachers", he says, "are self-possessed and straight-forward, and at the same time their inborn softness of manner lends a peculiar grace to their whole bearing. Notwithstanding that their earnings are sometimes as low as one pound per month, they always contrive to dress well, and to surround themselves with higher than average luxuries". At the top of the primary schools, the best pupils compared favourably with pupils in rural schools in England, but lower down the school things were not so bright." (McWilliam, 1959: 29).

This picture of the teachers apparent contentment with themselves and their profession tallies with what we glean from some of the reports of the Directors of Education in the nineteen twenties. An example of such reports is one by Mr. Oman from which we quoted passages in our discussion of teachers' salaries and conditions of service. It will be recalled he indicated the improvement in teachers salary and conditions of service had had remarkable effect on their keenness with their work and enthusiasm as well as confidence in themselves.

The enthusiasm manifested itself in other ways. It led to the teachers binding themselves to form teachers' associations; as we have indicated above, the associations were non-political and did not even bother much about conditions of service but rather concerned themselves about professional ideals and improvement. Thus at the refresher course held in July 1926, the teachers paid considerable attention to "the ideals and principles of education and to the teacher's relation with home and the community". (Annual Report of Education Department, 1927-28 : 24). The keenness and professional idealism of the teachers also clearly manifested itself in the activities of their meetings, thus Mr Oman reports that it is gratifying to note that such projects as compiling a syllabus of work or even a small text book have engaged the attention of teachers' meetings." (Annual Report of Education Department 1927-28).

If the teachers in the past were apparently content with themselves and their profession, what was the relationship between them and the educational authorities and supervisors? Here the picture does not seem that rosy. Here again, we glean some idea of what the relationship was from the reports of the educational practices of the time.

One such educational practice was the system known as 'payment by

results' (McWilliam 1959 : 35). In 1902 the Board of Education introduced into Ghana this system which had been abandoned in England in 1895. According to the system, the grants made to each school and thus in many instances the salaries of the teachers depended on the number of pupils in each class as well as on the school who passes an annual examination conducted by inspectors. (McWilliam 1959 : 33). It was some sort of mechanical method employed to ensure that the Government had adequate returns from the money it spent in paying the salaries of teachers in the form of successful pupils they produced.

The tension and friction between teachers and inspectors and in the schools generally resulting from the system can be easily imagined. Under the system, one of the principal aims of an inspector's visit to a school would be to find out by means of an examination whether or not the teachers have been able to make their pupils absorb some facts irrespective of the methods used. This was done to enable him allocate grants to the school. The teachers knowing that their pay depended on an examination of this kind resented it and, of course developed resentment for the inspectors as well. The system of 'payment by results' therefore "made the teachers and the inspectors enemies instead of workers in the same field". (McWilliam 1959 : 33).

Similarly, the relationship between teachers and managers, who were and still are usually representative of the various churches, did not seem to have been any better. It was almost always conflictual, so much so that a Director of Education, Mr. George Macdonald in 1893 stressed in his report "that between Managers and Teachers there exists no form of agreement and in consequence the teachers are constantly changing". (Education Department Annual Report 1893-94 : 18).

One source of the tension between teachers and the educational units, that is the Churches, was the rigid discipline to which the Churches subjected the teachers. Up till recently they subjected the teachers to very rigid code of conduct based on the code of ethics of the religious denominations. As it might be expected the code which was binding on the mission teachers contained a list of penalties for a number of specific offences centered generally around sexual morality. It made life uncomfortable and teaching career insecure for some teachers in the denominational schools throughout the colonial period until the Erzuah Committee changed the situation for them in 1952.

In the view of the Committee, such externally formulated and enforced codes of discipline more often than not resulted in injustices to teachers. Thus, the members point out in their comments that "From representations made to us and from our own experience we conclude that the code has operated harshly in a number of cases and has failed in its object; it has occasioned grave injustice and has led to blackmail. We consider that members of the public wish to be assured not that a teacher is abiding by the code of ethics of the religious denomination to which he subscribes but that he is a proper person to take care of children." (McWilliam 1959 : 95).

They therefore made one of their very important recommendations with regard to the teaching profession, namely, that a teachers' professional council should be set up "to consider all cases of professional misconduct and have power to remove a teacher's name from the register of Teachers or impose any lesser penalty which it considers just." (McWilliam 1959 : 96).

It seems clear from the foregoing that the teachers, especially mission teachers, could not have been content with all aspects of their professional

life. However, one other aspect of their life, the prestige and status they enjoyed in their communities must have given them added satisfaction in the colonial days. During the period, the elementary teaching profession commanded much more respect than it does now and the teachers enjoyed high status.

This was due to a number of reasons. First, during that period education was not widespread as it is now and the educated minority including the teachers were accorded much respect for their education by the illiterate majority. Related to this point is the fact that the teachers provided needed clerical service and leadership which only they and the other educated few were capable of providing in those days.

Thus the town or village teacher in those days was a letter writer and reader and a counselor not only to the local chief but to all members of his community.\* In the case of the teacher-catechist he was also the local preacher in the chapel. He was an example whom parents encouraged their children to emulate. He set the vogue in fashion in dress and style of life which people in this community imitated. For, in the village it was the teacher who would perhaps own a radio and subscribe to the national newspaper from which he obtained the news and passed it on to the people in the community. Such services and leadership were enough in themselves to secure for the teacher respect, prestige and high status. But there were other sources for his prestige. In those days the teacher, even the pupil teacher had a better educational background than what a large number of pupil teachers have now.

Then again, in the early colonial days, the teaching profession was one of the more prestigious occupations available to the indigenous people. For as Foster points out, the educated Africans in those days were denied the most desirable occupations monopolized by the Europeans. (Foster 1965: 93—106).

Finally, as Laurie indicates in his report, the teachers in those days, despite their poor earnings, endeavoured to maintain a style of life indicative of their leadership position and so they did "always contrive to dress well and to surround themselves with higher than average luxuries" (McWilliam 1959:29).

However, having enjoyed such prestige and high status because of all these factors, it is understandable that a drastic change in their status which has followed the attainment of independence should be a source of frustration to the elementary teachers now. (Bame, 1972). Independence has made available to Africans positions and jobs formerly exclusively reserved for Europeans; Thus there were now many occupations open to Africans which were far more prestigious than elementary teaching. These together with other factors have led to a drastic change in the teachers former prestigious status and that is a source of concern to them.

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\* The investigator has observed most of the points presented here. Jane Servent Kessler who studied the public primary school system in Dakar, Senegal, West Africa, in 1955—57 makes similar remarks about the prestigious and leadership position enjoyed by the teachers at that time. See Jane Servent Kessler, *Educating the Black Frenchman*, (an unpublished Doctoral thesis, Harvard Graduate School of Education, Harvard University 1958).

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