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**Exploring Teachers' Sense of Professional Identity
in Relation to their Experiences in Two Deprived
Rural Districts of Northern Ghana**

By

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Canterbury Christ Church University

**Thesis submitted
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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Abstract

The main aim of this study was to understand how public basic school teachers in two deprived rural districts of Northern Ghana make sense of their professional identity based on interpretation of their experiences. Thus, the conceptual framework was based on teachers' experiences in relation to the contextual dimension of their work (i.e. the school environment, community and district education management); the professional dimension and the personal dimension.

Data collection was carried out in Ghana from December 2016 to February 2017. Seven teachers were purposively selected across the Bongo and Nabdam Districts to serve as focus teachers for the study, although in line with the data collection method, there was the opportunity to interact with many other teachers during observation of the focus teachers in their schools. Data collection utilised semi-structured interviews and participant observations, while analysis involved exploring themes inherent in the data.

Five key themes emerged from the analysis of teachers' experiences: *'recognition'*; *'respect and regard'*; *'support'*; *'voice'* and *'commitment'*. Analysis of these themes together with the profiles of focus teachers revealed that teachers' sense of professional identity was influenced not only by their personal values of making a difference in the lives of children, but also by their experiences in the classrooms, schools, community, District Education Offices and policy environment. Consequently, there emerged competing dimensions of teachers' sense of professional identity as they were torn between sustaining their personal values in teaching and coping with constraints imposed by their work environment. Teachers still demonstrated commitment to fulfilling their personal values and professional responsibilities. However, they were prone to losing their sense of commitment, as constantly striving without the enabling conditions to do so was taking a toll on them.

The findings have implications for policy and practice which include the need to create contexts for teachers to participate in policy decisions. Education authorities, school heads and parents also need to support teachers, empathise with them, and show appreciation through praise and valuing of teachers' expertise. On their own part, teachers need to feel valued inwardly, so they can feel a positive sense of identity as teachers who are making significant contributions to the lives of children and development of society.

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Abbreviations

ADP: Accelerated Development Plan

BECE: Basic Education Certificate Examination

BDA: Bongo District Assembly

CHPS: Community-Based Health Planning and Services

DEO: District Education Office

DMTDP: District Assembly's Medium-Term Development Plan

EdSAC: Education Sector Adjustment Credit

EFA: Education For All

FCUBE: Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education

GES: Ghana Education Service

GNAT: Ghana National Association of Teachers

GSGDA: Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda

GSS: Ghana Statistical Service

IBE: International Bureau of Education

JHS: Junior High School

MDGs: Millennium Development Goals

MOE: Ministry of Education

MOESS: Ministry of Education, Science and Sports

NDA: Nabdam District Assembly

PTAs: Parent-Teacher Associations

SDGs: Sustainable Development Goals

SMCs: School Management Committees

SPIP: School Performance Improvement Plan

SSSCE: Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination

VSO: Voluntary Service Overseas

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1. Background to the Study

Basic education is the foundation for the human resource development of every country as it offers children a variety of basic knowledge to progress in their education. This implies that a solid basic education system would possibly enlighten and empower people to advocate economic improvement and social change (Asare, 2011). The Ghana Ministry of Education acknowledges the vital role that basic education can play in the lives of children and society. In its 2003 policy document, it pointed out that basic education is expected to pass on to children basic skills that will facilitate the growth of their potentials, which will enable them to contribute to reducing poverty and promoting socio-economic growth in their communities and the country as a whole (Ministry of Education, 2003).

Teachers have a central role in developing this human capacity in children as they provide children with the essential skills to critically analyse and challenge the economic and social issues in their localities. As the Voluntary Service Overseas study in some developing countries noted, although there are a number of factors that determine the delivery of quality education for children, much depends on teachers (VSO, 2002). It is, therefore, argued here that because teachers play such a significant role, then understanding their lives and work, together with what may influence their contribution to the learning needs of children is key.

The 11th Education For All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report makes a powerful case for considering teachers' issues. The report emphasised that a country's 'education system is only as good as its teachers'. Unlocking teachers' potential is, thus, critical to enhancing the quality of knowledge imparted to children. The Report further makes a point that teachers can only 'shine in the right context' and appealed to every nation to have

teachers who are satisfied with their profession, enjoy teaching, and who are supported by well-managed education systems (UNESCO, 2013/14, p.i).

This argument is also contained in teachers' work and lives literature, (for instance, Acker, 1999; Bangs and Frost, 2012; Day, 2017; Goodson, 2008, Johnson, Kraft and Papay, 2012) who advocate the need to pay attention to issues regarding the lives and work of teachers. These include understanding the context of teaching and learning, the circumstances that may enhance or constrain teachers' work and the impact of all these on teachers' experiences.

It is, however, often reported that the teaching force in developing countries, including Ghana, is continually demoralised (VSO, 2002; Bennell and Akyeampong, 2007). Basic resources in schools are major concerns across many countries (Adedeji and Olaniyan 2011; Buckler, 2011; Wyatt, 2013). Many countries are reducing their investments in, and attention on issues of teaching and learning resulting in poor working conditions for teachers. In their study, the Voluntary Service Overseas, for instance, reported that the working situations of teachers were fragile and seriously deteriorating and that teachers in many countries existed in a 'climate of frustration...and despondency' (VSO, 2002, p.24). There are also concerns about the management styles in many countries. Teachers involved in both the VSO (2002) and Mpokosa and Ndaruhutse's (2008) studies complained of not being listened to by leadership. In Ghana, Salifu and Agbenyega (2013a) claim that teachers are manipulated by their superiors who usually positioned them as subordinates. Treating teachers this way limits their ability to negotiate for better conditions of service. As teachers' conditions of service and professional identity are interlinked, teachers who feel controlled by authority are likely to cultivate a lukewarm attitude towards their practice (Cannella and Viruru, 2004).

Teachers' pay is also noted to be so low that they cannot earn a decent living as Bennell and Akyeampong's (2007) study with teachers in twelve countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia revealed:

‘Pay is so low that teachers, like many of their students, do not eat properly before coming to school. Over one-third of teacher respondents in Ghana, Sierra Leone and Zambia agreed with the statement that ‘teachers in this school come to work hungry’.

Not only are teachers paid poorly, but also payments are sometimes delayed and irregular.

Although the influence of salary on teachers’ work and lives may differ from context to context, unsatisfactory salary coupled with poor working conditions has the tendency to reinforce low morale among teachers thereby leading to poor attitude towards work (Tikly and Barrett, 2011). In ten out of the twelve countries involved in Bennell and Akyeampong’s (2007) study, dissatisfaction with salary was identified as the key issue that diminished teachers’ motivation in their job. This interrelationship is reiterated by Kirk (2008) as she claims that if teachers are paid low, late or never at all, their morale can justifiably decline to nearly nothing.

The attendant consequences of all these is being noticed as the teaching profession fragments, leading to continual decline in the learning outcomes of children in many countries. It is estimated that 250 million children in developing countries are innumerate and also without the basic skills in writing and reading, ‘let alone the further skills they need to get decent work and lead fulfilling lives’ although approximately fifty percent of them have spent a minimum of four years in school (UNESCO, 2013/2014, p.186). The Hewlett Foundation, which supports quality education in developing countries paints a similar gloomy picture about the situation of basic education in developing countries. According to its 2008 report, ‘quality is suffering’ in many developing countries as millions of children enter school but a few of them are actually learning. The report highlighted that only 25 percent of primary 6 pupils in Zambia showed minimum literacy, while only 22 percent of primary 6 pupils in Malawi demonstrated minimum literacy. The situations in Ghana and India were no different. In Ghana, the report showed that primary 6 pupils’ performances on simple multiple-choice reading tests were as low as what one would expect from random guessing, while in India, 50 percent of children from Standard 1 to 5 in primary schools could not solve two-digit subtraction (The Hewlett Foundation, 2008, p.2). Considering that the quality of education that pupils receive depends largely on teachers, the current situation of teachers and teaching in developing countries, including Ghana, is disturbing and deserves attention.

Having explained the background to the study, the next four sections discuss the rationale for the study.

1.2. Rationale for Researching Teacher Professional Identity

The original theme of this study was “Teachers’ Professional Capability: A Qualitative Case Study of Basic School Teachers in Two Rural Districts of Northern Ghana”. This means the original theme was focused on exploring the factors that influence “teachers’ professional capability”, that is, teachers’ ability to function effectively in their job (Sen, 1999).

Implicit within this aim of the study was an understanding that teachers’ professional capability is affected by a variety of conditions including policy issues, school environment, the community within which teachers live and work and teachers’ own beliefs and values (that is the ‘teacher self’). There was evidence in the literature to support this conceptualisation. For example, Robeyns (2005) in his article ‘The Capability Approach: a theoretical survey’, argues that people’s capabilities are influenced not only by personal factors, which include the attributes of the individual but also social factors which include institutional roles, power, norms, policies and relations; and environmental factors such as the physical location of people. In line with this understanding, data for the study was intended to be gathered through interviews with teachers themselves, head teachers, pupils, parents and key education officials such as the district education directors and circuit supervisors. In addition, I planned to observe the school environment and daily routines of teachers as well as interact with them and get to know them in their everyday settings.

However, an initial exploration of the concept of capability raised some fundamental questions such as, *‘how do basic school teachers think about teaching as a profession in the first place?’*; *How do they think about themselves as teachers and what issues influence their perceptions? How do the way teachers perceive themselves affect their work?* and *What are their expectations in the teaching profession?* As I reflected on these basic questions, it became clear to me that researching, first, how teachers view themselves as professionals and how they think others view them, that is their sense of professional identity, is an important first step that could lead to a better understanding of

how teachers can function well in their practice (Kincheloe, 2003; Williams, 2007). It could also lead to a better understanding of what it means to be a teacher ‘striving to be effective in a changing policy, workplace and personal contexts’ (Bullough, 2011, p. 45).

This important role of teachers’ professional identity in their professional practice has been documented extensively in the research literature (e.g. Day, 2017; Kelchtermans, 2009; Mockler, 2011; Williams, 2013). In one of his latest books “Teachers’ Worlds and Work: Understanding Complexity, Building Quality”, Day (2017) for example, pointed to professional identity as key to teachers’ sense of effectiveness. It is the drive that keeps teachers in their work and allows them to exercise discretionary judgement in their classrooms, what Hargreaves (2016) referred to as decisional capital. Drawing on her research on the formation and mediation of teacher professional identity, Mockler (2011, p.522) seemed to support this view by arguing that;

‘The articulation of one’s identity is a first step towards theorising professional practice through the explicit linking of ‘what I do’ with ‘why I am here’, and in this we find a rationale for exploring teacher professional identity in the first place’.

In effect, the argument being made here is that an understanding of teachers’ sense of their professional identity is essential because who they think they are as teachers influences what they do in their job (Watson, 2006). This relationship between teacher professional identity and their practice is discussed in detailed in Chapter Three.

A search in the literature revealed that teacher professional identity is not a new research area in the field of teacher education. Extensive research, both quantitatively and qualitatively, has been conducted to identify how teachers perceive their professional identity and the factors that influence their perceptions (e.g. Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop, 2004; Day and Kington, 2008; Flores and Day, 2006; Mockler, 2011; Rodgers and Scott, 2008). However, these research studies involved teachers largely in high income and developed countries. Research into teachers’ professional identity has not been given enough consideration in developing countries, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa which differs culturally, economically and materially from developed and high-income countries. Worthwhile questions to ask, which this study hopes to contribute in answering are: *‘How do teachers in developing countries including Ghana, which differ*

from developed countries perceive their professional identity?’ and ‘What personal or contextual factors influence teachers’ perceptions of their identity?’ This partly informed the two overarching research questions in this study: ‘How do basic school teachers in Bongo and Nabdum Districts make sense of their professional identity?’ and ‘What issues influence teachers’ sense of their professional identity?’

In Ghana, specifically Northern Ghana, no research has been carried out exploring public basic school teachers’ sense of their professional identity. The research works tend to focus on teacher motivation, since the working and living conditions of teachers in this part of the country are challenging (e.g. see Akuoko, et al., 2012; Attiah, 2013; Baba, 2012; Cassidy-Brinn, 2011; Tanaka, 2010). While acknowledging that motivation is an important part of the work of teachers, for teachers to be motivated it ‘requires them to have a positive sense of identity that fuels, builds and sustains their motivation’ (Day, 2017, p.156). A positive sense of identity is also important in allowing teachers to manage the emotional challenges that are an unavoidable part of their work. It, therefore, matters to understand how teachers make sense of their professional identity.

It is hoped that findings in this study would contribute to understanding teachers’ sense of professional identity in the two districts and how best to support teachers so as to release their positive energy as a ‘creative, essential and indispensable resource’ in children’s education (VSO 2003, p. 9). The findings are also expected to contribute to the literature on teachers’ sense of professional identity in deprived rural contexts.

1.3. Rationale for Researching Basic School Teachers

Basic education has been the subject of scrutiny by the international community such as the World Bank and United Nations. For instance, in Dakar 2000, the UN-ratified Millennium Development Goal on primary education called for an expanded vision for basic education to meet the basic learning needs of all children by 2015 (UNESCO, 2000). A joint document review report on external support for basic education in developing countries, which was commissioned by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2003, also stressed the core priorities of primary education as a human right, means for poverty eradication and way of addressing social inequalities (Freeman and Faure, 2003). Such a broad vision features prominently in the current United Nations

Sustainable Development Goals, one of which reaffirms equitable quality basic education for all children by 2030.

The spotlight has turned on basic school teachers as key determinants of quality education (Acker, 1999; UNESCO, 2013/14). It is now widely recognised that without good teachers, a good education system is impossible, and without a good education system no country can provide its citizens with a quality life.

In view of this, the Sustainable Development Goal on education is redefining the focus of teaching and learning by placing teachers at the forefront in the attainment of the 2030 education goal. Likewise, the International Bureau of Education whose agenda focuses on supporting the capacity of education systems to provide equitable quality education and equal learning opportunities for all children, agrees that focusing on enhancing the work of teachers and how to support them in their work is necessary to ensuring equitable and inclusive quality education for all children (Marope, 2015).

Many developing countries are adopting strategies to supporting the work of teachers in order to ensure quality education for all children. In Ghana, both the Ministry of Education and non-governmental agencies are making efforts to support teachers in their work. However, these efforts largely focus on quantitative measures such as increasing the number of teachers and schools. While these interventions are important, the qualitative dimensions of basic school teachers' own experiences have remained largely under-explored. This study therefore, applies qualitative design in order to explore comprehensively teachers' sense of their professional identity, which is crucial, as argued already, in understanding how teachers function in their practice.

In exploring the issues, I utilised my experiences as a former professional basic school teacher and considerable practical knowledge of practices in the Ghana Education Service. As Creswell (2009) posits, bringing this knowledge into the research is helpful as the researcher shares some knowledge with participants, while also having knowledge outside of the group as a researcher. However, Denscombe (2007) warns that precautions need to be taken to ensure that preconceived prejudices do not overly influence the study. While this precaution is noteworthy, prejudices are conditions of situational understanding because all interpretations are shaped by a system of personal and

professional values and beliefs about a situation. Hence, understanding of the research situation is enhanced not by ‘detachment from one’s biases’, but by being open to the situation and modifying one’s initial preconceived ideas (Elliot, 1993 p. 18). As explained in Section 1.5 of this chapter, I addressed this situation by acknowledging my preconceptions as an integral part of the research process and using reflexivity as a way of addressing the tensions between my engagement and impartiality of the research situation (Bradbury-Jones, 2007).

1.4. Rationale for Researching Teachers in Northern Ghana

Northern Ghana comprises the Upper East, Upper West and Northern Regions of the country. The Upper East and Upper West Regions account for 4.2% and 2.8% of Ghana’s population respectively, while the Northern Region accounts for 10.1% of the country’s population (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012). The main economic activity in Northern Ghana is farming. However, poor climate with prolong dry seasons and extreme droughts in this part of the country affect farming activities. Because of this, poverty is widespread with many households experiencing daunting challenges (Addy, 2013; Akologo and Klinken, 2008).

It is estimated that out of the 53 poorest districts in the 216 districts nationwide, 24 of them are in Northern Ghana (IBIS, 2009). Poverty levels are so high that most households are not able to meet even the basic needs such as food and shelter for their families (Alhassan, 2013). The situation in the North is so depressing that the National Development Planning Committee and the UN Development Programme (2012, p. 20) remark that;

‘The high incidence of poverty in the three northern regions and among food crop farmers as well as high depth of poverty and inequality in spite of remarkable reduction of poverty at the national level and in rural areas should engage attention of policymakers and relevant stakeholders’.

This part of the country is also seriously behind other regions with respect to water, education, electricity and health care, perhaps because much of the natural resources in the country are located in the southern part (see Table 1 below).

Table 1: Poverty, Health, Electricity and Water Situation by Region in Ghana

Region	Poverty Incidence %		No Access to Health Insurance %	School Attendance %	Access to Electricity (Rural Areas) %	Water Facility %	
	Poverty	Extreme Poverty				Pipe-borne	Bore-hole
Upper West	70.7	45.1	87.7	63.6	26.9	8.0	92.0
Upper East	44.4	21.3	81.1	63.4	39.3	10.1	85.7
Northern	50.4	22.8	72.3	50.4	9.1	-	45.5
Brong-Ahafo	27.9	6.6	68.6	78.9	50.0	20.0	56.7
Ashanti	14.8	2.9	46.5	87.9	62.1	24.1	69.0
Volta	33.8	9.0	60.6	77.0	69.4	27.8	47.2
Western	20.9	5.5	52.1	87.4	57.1	17.1	77.1
Central	18.8	6.8	66.1	83.6	57.1	40.0	45.7
Greater-Accra	5.6	1.5	36.4	92.0	42.9	28.6	14.3
Eastern	21.7	6.0	61.7	86.6	38.9	13.0	55.6

Source: Ghana Statistical Service, 2015

With respect to education, for example, it is observed that the percentage of children who repeat a year at the basic level in Northern Ghana is higher than the average nationally (Akyeampong et al., 2007). The issue of children who are not in school in that part of the country is also critical. There is also evidence that many schools in the North are under-resourced. Classrooms are particularly a major challenge leading to overcrowding in many schools. Although the pupil-teacher ratio at the national level is around 34:1, in many schools in Northern Ghana, the ratio is as high as 88:1 (IBIS, 2009).

This has serious implications for teaching and learning. Teaching in large class size, according to Ampiah (2010), undermines the quality of education that children receive. Sall, et al. (2009) agree that quality of education delivered to children is a function of the number of pupils in a class because with large class size, it becomes difficult for teachers to monitor and manage the learning needs of all pupils.

The high pupil-teacher ratio is further compounded by a dearth of textbooks, syllabuses and other instructional materials in schools (Casely-Hayford et al., 2013); and difficulties in retaining qualified teachers in rural areas due to lack of social amenities there (Addy, 2013). A typical rural community in Northern Ghana does not have access to good roads, electricity, potable water and health care facilities as seen in Table 1 above. As a result, many professional teachers do not accept postings to schools there and those who accept to go, do not stay for long before seeking transfer using health as a key justification (Hedges, 2002). As explained later in Chapter Two, there are two categories of basic school teachers in the Ghana Education Service. The professional teachers are posted by authority at the Ghana Education Service headquarters in Accra to the various regions for onward posting to the districts and schools. There are also non-professional teachers who are usually recruited and posted by the districts. Professional teachers are entitled to request voluntary transfer from their schools or districts after a certain number of years after their first posting, although final approval for a transfer request lies with the respective district director of education (GES and GNAT, 2000). The qualifications and conditions of service of professional and non-professional teachers in the Ghana Education Service are explained in detail in Section 2.5 of Chapter Two.

It is observed that teachers who eventually stay in their post remain unhappy and tend to engage in unprofessional conducts such as unauthorised absence from, and lateness to school resulting in a situation where many schools are unproductive (Casely-Hayford et al., 2013). In an attempt to tackle the trained teacher deficit, non-professional teachers, who do not have the requisite skills and experiences in teaching, are recruited and deployed to fill vacancies in schools there. In their study on 'the financing and outcomes of education in Ghana', Thompson and Casely-Hayford (2008) found that there has been a decline in the number of professional teachers in the North. A later World Bank (2010)

study on the education of Ghana, also found that less than 40% of the teaching force in Northern Ghana is trained and this has been declining over the years. A potential negative consequence of a decline in professional teachers is that children in this part of the country are likely to experience more challenges to progressing in their learning and career compared to their counterparts in other parts of the country.

While highlighting these challenges in Northern Ghana is important, what appears to be missing in the literature is that, it does not go beyond examining these challenges to understanding how teachers feel about being teachers and teaching under such situations and their aspirations. This explains why my study intends to go beyond reiterating these challenges to understanding how teachers make sense of their professional identity under such conditions.

This is important because if government's policies and programmes intended to improve the work of teachers and quality of education are to be successful, then understanding how they feel about as teachers under such working and living conditions is key (Welmond, 2002). The deprived context of this study is, therefore, aimed to draw the attention of authority, policy makers and other stakeholders to both the dangers and opportunities in teaching and living in deprived rural areas that could foster the development of measures to facilitate the work of teachers in those areas. These impoverished and least developed areas are the ones most in need of improvement. Therefore, improving the conditions of teaching and the experiences of teachers in these areas is a crucial step to enhancing the quality of education; which has a direct impact on the education system's ability to be a driver of transformation and a route out of poverty for the multitudes of people who experience social exclusion and economic deprivation in this part of the country (Casely-Hayford et al., 2013).

1.5. Personal Rationale for the Study

The choice of the study topic was also partly based on my own professional background and experiences as a former professional basic school teacher in the Ghana Education Service. Conventionally, what researchers bring to the research situation, in terms of their identity, background experience and knowledge, has been regarded as bias which should

be avoided rather than making it an important part of the research. As a result, there is usually the inclination for researchers to put aside what they know about the issues and settings they intend to study (Robson and McCartan, 2016). However, in this study I profess a different view because such ‘experiential knowledge’ and experiences about the issues and settings to be studied should rather be taken advantage of, although it is important to deal with potential biases by scrutinising any prejudices and assumptions (Maxwell, 2013, p.44).

After my initial teacher training education in the Bagabaga College of Education, I was posted to Nungu Junior High School in the Talensi District of Northern Ghana. The Nungu Community is approximately 30km away from Tongo, the district capital. This community was deprived of basic social amenities such as electricity, public transportation, potable water, decent housing and health care facilities.

The main source of drinking water for the community was the White Volta (The Volta River) and accommodation for teachers in this community was an abandoned Forestry Department’s building. This building was dilapidated with some roofs leaking. The road network linking the community to the district capital and other communities was also deplorable. As a result, this community was isolated from other communities including the District Education Office (DEO) in Tongo, resulting in poor communication between teachers and officials. Sometimes teachers received information from the DEO late as this community was tagged as ‘overseas’ because of its distance from the district capital and isolation from other communities. This made living and working there very daunting for my colleagues and me.

Teaching and living under such situations, teachers were supposed to enjoy certain incentives such as earlier promotion. This is a policy in the Ghana Education Service (GES and GNAT 2000). However, this policy was not implemented in the district as stated in the policy documents based on a personal experience. In 2007, I was eligible for promotion to the rank of ‘Superintendent I’. As part of the promotion requirements, an official from the DEO was expected to observe and assess my teaching in my classroom but all my attempts to get an official to come to the school and assess my teaching failed

as they were not prepared to travel to the school because of the poor road network. Hence, I was not promoted. I felt that I was not treated fairly.

In my interactions with colleagues in other schools in the district, I noticed that my experiences were not unique. For instance, some teachers who happened to be observed and assessed for their promotions, waited for a year and in some instances over a year before receiving their promotion letters, the corresponding salary and other benefits. This situation compelled some of my colleagues to resign from the profession, while the few teachers who were granted study leave with or without pay never returned to the classroom after furthering their studies.

These experiences were the key influences in my decision to leave basic school teaching to pursue further studies in the university, so I could move to teach at the higher level with the hope that I would enjoy better conditions of service at that level. As I reflected on my own experiences, a number of questions were raised in my mind. For example, *'what do teachers think about themselves teaching under such conditions?'*; *'what keeps teachers working under such challenging conditions?'* and *'what are teachers' expectations for enhancing their work and lives in these areas?'* It was partly due to these personal experiences that I embarked on this study to explore teachers' perceptions and their aspirations for enhancing their professional identity in these districts. Therefore, drawing from the rationale for the study, it is clear that the focus of the study was not based on any technical reasoning. Rather, it was based on a decision to engage with an issue that is of global, national and personal concern.

1.6. Study Aim, Objectives and Questions

1.6.1. Study Aim

The aim of this study was to understand how teachers make sense of their professional identity in relation to their experiences.

1.6.2. Study Objectives

The main objectives of the study were:

1. *To overview the basic education system, employment, working and living conditions of basic school teachers in Ghana.*
2. *To review the literature related to teacher professional identity.*
3. *To use case study to provide an in-depth understanding of teachers' sense of professional identity and the issues or forces influencing this in deprived rural areas of Northern Ghana.*
4. *To draw out implications and make recommendations for educational policy and practice.*
5. *To contribute to literature on teachers' professional identity in deprived rural contexts.*
6. *To make suggestions for further research in deprived rural contexts.*

1.6.3. Research Questions

Research questions are key to every study. As Strauss and Corbin (1998) posit, they set the boundaries for the study and suggest ways for data collection and analysis. Thus, they need to align with the study's aim (s). Thus, in view of the aim of this study, four questions were appropriate:

1. *How do basic school teachers in Bongo and Nabdam Districts make sense of their professional identity in relation to their experiences?*
2. *What issues or forces influence teachers' sense of professional identity in deprived rural areas?*
3. *How do teachers' sense of professional identity influence their professional practice?*
4. *What are the aspirations of teachers in deprived rural areas for enhancing their sense of professional identity?*

1.7. Organisation of the Study

This study is organised into eight chapters. Chapter 1, as presented above, provided a general introduction to the study. It started with an explanation of the background to the study and how the study progressed from ‘teacher professional capability’ to ‘teacher professional identity’. The chapter also justified why this was deemed most appropriate. Included in this introductory chapter was information about my professional background. As a former professional basic school teacher who had taught in a rural school in the Northern part of the country, my experiences and knowledge of the operations of the education system in Ghana was a major strength in this study. The chapter also justified the decision to focus the study on basic school teachers in deprived rural areas of Northern Ghana and concluded with an outline of the study aim, objectives and questions.

Chapter 2 explains the context of the research. The chapter provides a brief historical background of Ghana and the disparities that exist between the different parts of the country. The chapter also discusses the basic education system in the country. Here, I examine the educational reforms in the periods before and after independence.

This is followed by an explanation of the management structure of basic education in the country. Since basic education is free and compulsory in the country, this chapter also examines the various sources of funding in the sector together with the challenges in ensuring equitable distribution of financial resources to all regions. The chapter also explores the nature of training of basic school teachers. As there are two categories of basic school teachers in the Ghana Education Service, this chapters also explores these categories and their employment conditions. The chapter concludes by looking at the key incentive packages for motivating basic school teachers in the country. Here, the National Best Teacher and School Award, promotion and the study leave with pay schemes are explored.

Chapter 3 reviews literature related to the main concepts of the study. It explores various perspectives regarding the concepts ‘self’, ‘identity’ and ‘teacher professional identity’, which are all relevant to understanding how teachers make sense of their professional identity. The chapter also examines in the literature, the impact of teacher professional

identity on their professional practice. Drawing on perspectives from these concepts, the chapter outlines how teacher professional identity is conceptualised for this study.

Chapter 4 discusses the methodology and methods of data collection. The chapter begins with an explanation of the two main methodological approaches that form the basis of inquiry in the social science research, that is, the quantitative and qualitative approaches and justifies why the interpretivism, associated with the qualitative approach, was deemed most appropriate for the study. It further discusses how participants were selected and the data collection methods. The data analysis process is also explained in detail in this chapter. It also explains why findings in the study are trustworthy and provides a reflection on how ethical issues encountered in the study were handled. As qualitative research relies on the principle of reciprocity where the researcher and participants engage in a sharing process, this chapter concludes by explaining how teachers and schools that I observed benefitted from me in the form of teaching, marking of exercises and participation in their morning and closing assemblies.

Chapter 5 discusses the data on the background of the focus districts, schools and teacher's own profiles. The background information of the districts includes the physical, economic and social characteristics of the districts, while with respect to the schools, the information includes the physical and human resources. The personal and professional information of each focus teacher such as teachers' reasons for entering teaching, qualifications, teaching experience, level of teaching (Kindergarten, Primary or Junior High) and marital status are also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 6 explains teachers' experiences and implications for their sense of professional identity under the key themes that emerged from the data. As the data collection was influenced by the conceptual framework, the structure used to explain the themes covers all dimensions of the framework.

Chapter 7 discusses focus teachers' profiles together with teachers' experiences under the four research questions of the study. This is done in relation to the literature reviewed and the conceptual framework that guided the study. The first section of this chapter discusses teachers' sense of their professional identity and the factors influencing this. This is followed by discussing the impact of teachers' sense of professional identity on their

professional practice. The chapter also explains the aspirations of teachers for enhancing their professional identity and draws out the implications of the findings for policy and practice. As explained in Chapter One, it is expected that the findings in this study would provide a greater understanding of teachers' sense of professional identity and the recommendations are expected to contribute to on-going efforts to enhancing the work and lives of teachers in these deprived rural areas.

Chapter 8 provides a reflexive conclusion to the study. Here, I reflect on the usefulness, strengths and limitations of the study. In this final chapter, the lessons that I have learnt personally in the course of the study which I hope to apply to my professional and academic work in future are explained. Suggestions for further studies are also made here.

Chapter Two

The Research Context

2.1. Introduction

Chapter One outlined the general background to the study and justified the rationale for focusing the study on teacher professional identity. Here, I argued that understanding teachers' professional identity is an important first step to understanding how they function in their practice. I also justified why it was important to focus the study on basic school teachers in Northern Ghana. Here, I argued that this part of the country is in need of more improvement. Therefore, improving the work of teachers there is key to enhancing the chances of children in achieving their career goals and contributing to the development of their communities. My personal rationale, which was based on my own experiences as a former basic school in that part of the country, was also explained here.

This chapter explains the research context. It discusses briefly the background of Ghana. This covers the geographical, political and socio-economic characteristics of the country. Since the country is diverse, it is important to understand these characteristics in order to understand the context of the study. The chapter also discusses the basic education system in the country and the employment and working conditions of teachers at that level. It also pays attention to the management and financing of basic education, nature of training of teachers and schemes to motivate teachers.

2.2. Background of Ghana

Ghana is in West Africa, sharing boundaries with Burkina Faso to the north, Cote D'Ivoire to the west, Togo to the east and the Gulf of Guinea to the south. With a land area of 230,020 square kilometres, the country's total population is estimated at 28 million (Ghana Statistical Service, 2016). Until 1957, the country was under colonial rule by the British who took over from the Dutch. The system of rule was indirect, where chiefs were allowed to rule over their respective traditional areas, while the British government controlled key affairs of the country (Boahen, 1975).

The British government became the ultimate determiner of matters bothering the lives of the local people including the form of education for children, which is discussed in detail in the next section (Perbi, 2004). The government was also responsible for infrastructural development in the country, although Boahen (1975) argues that road and harbour construction, for example, was limited to timber, cocoa and gold producing areas of the country to enable the government to transport the raw materials to the harbours for onward shipping to Europe to feed industries and factories.

Concerned with colonial dominance, individuals and pressure groups in the country staged series of protests for independence, leading to an end to colonial rule in 1957 (Perbi, 2004). Prominent among the individuals who led the protests was Dr Kwame Nkrumah who subsequently became the first democratic elected president of the country. Despite that colonialism has since ended, it is observed that remnants of colonial legacies continue to 'live' with the nation. For instance, with reference to education, Agezo (2010) argues that the school curriculum continues to reflect the colonial form of education where priority is placed on reading, numeracy and writing. Similarly, because of their experiences during the colonial era, traditional rulers in the country believe that they must exercise their power over their subjects to prove how powerful they are (Agbenyega and Deku, 2011).

Since becoming the first country in Sub-Saharan Africa to attain independence, Ghana has adopted a multiparty democratic system. The country is often referred to as a haven and an advocate for peace, unity and cooperation in the sub region. The president, elected through a general election, is the head of state and Commander-in-Chief of the Ghana Armed Forces. Although there are some overlapping characteristics, the country is generally heterogeneous in terms of ethnicity, dance, language, religious beliefs and practices. For instance, there are approximately ninety-two different ethnic groups in the country who use their different dialects in non-academic communications as well as in their everyday conversations. However, the English Language remains the official national language and the medium of instruction in schools from the upper primary level while in the kindergarten and lower primary levels both the English Language and Mother Tongue are used.

Located directly above the equator, the country has a tropical climate made up of heavy rains and high temperatures. The vegetation along the Northern zone known as the savannah is mostly dry and dusty because of shorter rain falls followed by long harmattan spells, while the middle and southern belts are covered with green vegetation because of the heavy rains there throughout the year. While the country is known for its exportation of raw products such as timber and bauxite, it was famous in the colonial era as the Gold Coast, because of its supply of gold to the international market. The country still produces and exports gold in addition to oil which are the main sources of foreign earnings for economic development. However, agricultural activities are the dominant economic ones. It is estimated that 44.7% of the population aged 15 years and above engage in the agricultural sector (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014a). It is also the only sector dominated by people in the rural areas. The country is also endowed with natural reserves and monuments which make it an attractive destination for tourists. Earnings from the tourist sector contribute about 6.67% to the country's Gross Domestic Product annually (Frimpong-Bonsu, 2015).

The need to facilitate effective management of developmental projects and resources led to the division of the country into 10 administrative regions made up of 216 districts (Ofori 2002) (see Figure 1 below). Despite this division, there are still evidence of inequitable distribution of resources and developmental projects tend to favour regions in the South than in the North as discussed in the previous chapter.

Figure 1: Administrative Map of Ghana



Source of Map: Google Image

Besides regional disparities, inequities are also widespread between urban and rural areas in the country. For instance, whereas seven out of every ten persons aged 15 and above in urban areas are literate, only about two out of every five of their rural counterparts are literate. The situation is not different in terms of employment. Whereas about 32.5% of people in urban areas engage in wage employment, the corresponding percentage in rural areas is 8.6% (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014b). These disparities tend to serve as a conduit for reproducing social inequality in the country.

2.3. The Basic Education System

This section examines three key areas of basic education in the country; the background of basic education, management and financing. Since the study focuses on teachers at this level, understanding these areas is important in understanding the situation of teaching and learning at that level. For example, while discussing the background of the basic education system is intended to help in understanding how the system has evolved over the years, examining the management and financing of the sector will help in understanding the difficulties confronting not only teachers but the education sector as well.

2.3.1. Background of Basic Education in Ghana

The basic education system in the country comprises eleven years, starting with two years of Kindergarten for children at age four, followed by six years of Primary School for children at age six and three years of Junior High School for children at age thirteen. In addition to the mainstream basic schools, there are a few special schools that provide education to children with special needs. Inclusive basic education, however, remains a challenge because of the lack of the relevant physical resources and special trained teachers to teach children with special needs in the mainstream schools (Opoku et al., 2017).

Statistically, there are a total of 37,678 public basic schools in the country with total pupil enrolment of 5,770,892 in the country (see Table 2 below for details).

Table 2: Statistics of Public Basic Schools and Pupil Enrolment in Ghana

Level	No. of Schools	Pupil Enrolment
Kindergarten	13,828	1,285,479
Primary School	14,405	3,244,997
Junior High School	9,445	1,240,416
Total	37,678	5,770,892

Source: Ministry of Education Performance Report, 2014/2015

Basic education in the country has a long history which dates to the pre-colonial era. Education for children at that time was informal, in which knowledge and skills were passed to them orally and in the form of apprenticeship. As McWilliam and Kwamena-Poh (1978) noted, the purpose was to instil good character and personal hygiene in children. It was also aimed at equipping children with knowledge about the culture, beliefs, values and history of their communities to help them function well in society. However, this form of education was replaced by formal schooling with the arrival of the Europeans into the country and successive governments have since made efforts to promote it. This study examines the two main periods in the evolution of formal basic education in the country; the colonial and post-colonial periods.

2.3.1.1. Basic Education in the Colonial Period

Historically, formal basic education in the country began in the 15th century through to the 18th century following the arrival of the Europeans into the country (Amedahe and Chandramohan, 2009). Formal schooling referred to as ‘western-style of education’ was introduced by the European Merchants and Missionaries. The Merchants established schools in the 15th century purposely to educate their own children who came with them to the country and to educate young people to engage in commercial enterprises. Unlike the vision of the Merchants’ Schools, the Missionaries set up schools along the coastal areas of the country in the 18th century to train local people to read the Bible and interpret it to other local people (Perbi, 2004). Because of this, the curriculum was focused on basic literacy in reading and writing. The medium of instruction was English Language

until the 19th century when the ‘Mother Tongue’, which refers to the indigenous language of the children, replaced English Language.

Some observed that the form of education introduced by the Missionaries was not patronised by many locals as many Ghanaian parents were not keen to enrol their children into such schools (Amedahe and Chandramohan, 2009; Foster, 1965). Only children of the wealthy merchants, staff of the European Missions and some important chiefs attended such schools. A study by Talton (2003) found that the view among most parents was that the immediate transformations that this form of education was bringing to their daily lives were not important to them. Moreover, Christianity was viewed as a foreign religion and many parents did not see the need to send their children to mission schools to be taught and trained. This is explained by Crossley and Watson (2009, p.636) as the ‘uncritical international transfer of educational policy and practice from one context to another’. According to them, context matters in policy enactment. Hence, the transfer of ideas from one context to be implemented in another without sensitivity to the cultural and local interests and needs of the people can hinder the laudable intentions of such ideas.

Later in 1925, under the influence of the British government, a 25-year educational development plan was proposed to replace that of the Missionaries. However, it was observed that such a plan was meant to benefit the colonial masters themselves. As noted by Lavia (2012, pp. 14-15), the actual purpose of education at that time was to provide the foundation for ‘power and control, in which the legitimacy of metropolitan rule would be established and maintained. [Thus] the type and content of education was determined by the priorities of the imperial rulers’. A similar comment is made by Mfum-Mensah (2005, p.75). According to him;

‘...formal education in Ghana changed from missionary-oriented schooling as an agent for proselytizing to a British model dubbed 'Westminster education'. This system was elitist in its form and structure and promoted British ideologies. A major objective was to train local people to fill clerical positions in the colony. The 'fortunate few' indigenous children who enrolled in school received instruction in English’.

This remark implies that, the intervention by the British government was not contextually suitable either. Teaching children in English Language which was foreign to children was

not culturally sensitive. Instructions in the Mother Tongue is an essential way of fostering the cultural identity of a country (Anyidoho, 2003).

Thus, adopting a foreign language as a medium of instruction at the onset of children's learning 'takes away something from their humanness and lets them feel they are representing themselves badly', showing only some of their full personality and intelligence (Allwright and Bailey, 2004, p.173). Children who were not fluent in the English Language were likely to view themselves as inferior, thereby stalling their participation in classroom activities. The Phelps-Stokes Commission anticipated the challenges that could arise from the British system of education, including the medium of instruction in schools. Following the commission's recommendations, the Mother Tongue was reintroduced as a medium of instruction from primary one to primary three (Foster, 1965). After independence, all governments that came have promoted proficiency in the Mother Tongue among children as seen in their language policies. At present, the Mother Tongue and English Language are the medium of instruction from kindergarten to primary three, while only English Language is used from primary four to the university level. Some selected Ghanaian languages are also studied as subjects at the junior high, senior high and tertiary levels.

Although strides were made under the British government, expansion in the sector was slow. According to Akyeampong et al. (2007, p.5), the vision of the 25-year plan was 'primary education must be thorough and be from bottom to the top' instead of free and compulsory. Thus, the focus was more on quality rather than quantity. Many argue that the plan seemed impressive as it emphasised quality education, universal and inclusive curriculum. However, the failure to make it free meant that part of its objective of ensuring universal education was not achievable (Akyeampong et al., 2007; Amedahe and Chandramohan, 2009). Access to education and household income levels are interconnected (Akyeampong, 2009). Therefore, any plans to make education available to all children that do not consider the socio-economic characteristics together with the opportunity costs of attending school in poor families and the measures to address them can undermine the chances of children from such families from accessing education.

With Ghana under limited self-rule, the government envisaging the key role that education could contribute to national development proposed the Accelerated Development Plan (ADP) in 1951. The ADP reiterated 'Universal Primary Education' and abolished all forms of fees in schools. A notable strength of this plan was that it embarked on massive expansion of schools setting the pace to realising free education in the country. The ADP paved the way for many children to enrol in schools. Pupil enrolment rose from 153,360 in 1951 to 1,137, 495 by 1966 (Amedahe and Chandramohan, 2009). Understanding the implication of trained teachers for education delivery, the ADP also began establishing teacher training colleges to train teachers.

Despite the successes chalked by the ADP overall, there were imbalances as schools in Southern Ghana and urban areas recorded more increases in enrolment than those in the North and rural areas of the country (Akyeampong, 2009), a gap which still persists and continues to account for the inequalities in the country. In addition, the concentration on access without adequate measures to ensure quality implied that there was no guarantee that children would learn the basic skills and progress in their learning. With the expansion in schools, more teachers were needed to fill them. As a result, untrained teachers were engaged to teach, particularly in the rural parts of the country, leading to poor teaching and learning in many schools (Akyeampong et. al., 2007). It was also observed that even the trained teachers from the colleges lacked the capacity to deliver quality education as the nature of their training was ad hoc lasting for just weeks to few months (Amedahe and Chandramohan, 2009). As Hill (1984, p.13) argues, the impact of policy implementation without all the key 'elements' is that quality will be affected, and pupils are likely to complete basic education without acquiring the basic skills expected of them at that stage. King, Palmer and Hayman (2004, p. 4) give a similar reminder that, there can be no 'automatic effect' in making basic education a priority. Certain essential elements must be put in place as well in order to realise a 'virtuous cycle of influence'.

It appears that post-colonial government attempted to respond to the challenges that the education sector was confronted with. The next section explores these interventions.

2.3.1.2. *Basic Education in the Post-Colonial Period*

Through the enactment of the 1961 Education Act, basic education was reaffirmed free. Local authority councils were also empowered to participate in the management of education while parents were supposed to support in the functioning of schools in their catchment areas (Kadingdi, 2006). Such a move was commendable as Webster (2000) argues, policy reforms are likely not to enjoy the support of the local community required for its successful implementation if policy makers fail to seek and incorporate local input into them.

Basic education saw a steady growth. It was observed at the time that, access to education in the country increased much more than any other country in Sub Saharan Africa (Akyeampong, 2009; Akyeampong et. al., 2007). However, such gains could not be sustained due to political instability. As Amedahe and Chandramohan (2009, p. 11) noted, following the 1966 coup which overthrew the president, Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's basic education was marking time until the 1970's;

‘The decade of the 70s was marked by the rise and fall of several short- lived administrations, some of which paid attention to education, but whose influences on the system were rather sporadic’.

Between the 1966/67 academic year and 1969/70, pupil enrolment dropped from 1,116,843 to 975,629. Within the same period, primary schools decreased from 7,913 to 7,239. Concerned about these declines, the new government headed by The National Redemption Council (NRC) set up The Dzobo Educational Review Committee to investigate reasons for the decline and make recommendations for possible recovery. The recommendations included a reduction in the number of years for basic education from 17 years to 12 years to allow the government to make some savings. A ‘New Structure and Content for Education’ with emphasis on practical subjects such as agriculture, technical and vocational subjects was also proposed (Amedahe and Chandramohan, 2009). However, the implementation of the recommendations was impeded by the economic recession in the 1980s following the overthrow of the NRC government (Akyeampong, 2004).

We are made to understand that the impact of the recession on the education sector was so severe that the government could not supply textbooks, chalk and registers to schools (Amedahe and Chandramohan, 2009). The introduction of practical subjects into the curriculum also tended to be inconsequential because the economic situation at that time did not favour the training of graduates in practical skills. The fact that the country was experiencing economic crisis, made it difficult to establish industries that would demand for the practical skills that schools were producing (Akyeampong, et al., 2007; Kadingdi, 2004; King and Martin 2002). Classrooms were also poorly maintained. At the same time, the country experienced brain drain as the government could not pay teachers and many of them moved to Nigeria for greener pastures because of the oil discovery there at that time (Akyeampong et al., 2007). What this means is that both quality and access were at their lowest levels, compelling the government to seek financial support estimated at US\$45million from the World Bank to reform the sector in 1987.

2.3.1.2.1. The 1987 Educational Reforms

The vision of the reforms was to restore not only access to education but also quality. It is estimated that 97% of all funds realised went into salary of teachers as part of government's efforts to attract more people into the profession. This implies that only 3% remained for infrastructure and instructional materials (Amedahe and Chandramohan, 2009). The Evans-Anfom Commission was formed to identify the challenges and recommend key areas that needed immediate attention. The Commission claimed that about 27% of children aged 6 were not in school and blamed this on inadequate facilities, a view that is corroborated by Akyeampong et al. (2007). Thus, it was suggested that the building of classrooms and resourcing them with instructional materials should be a shared responsibility between the district assemblies and the central government. As Amedahe and Chandramohan (2009) observed, this placed a burden on parents as local assemblies that could not raise revenue internally to build classrooms and equip them passed the cost to parents.

Basic education was further reduced from the 12 years to 9 comprising 6 years at the primary and 3 years at the junior secondary school to enable the government to make additional savings. Free education was also withdrawn, and parents were charged indirect

levies such as culture, examination and sporting fees as part of the cost recovery efforts (Amedahe and Chandramohan, 2009). This meant that school attendance was unlikely for children whose parents failed to pay, although it was likely there would not even be enough resources in schools to cater for all children. Following their study on the impact of fees on primary education in poor countries, Bentaouet-Kattan and Burnett (2004) make us understand that indirect charges can even be a bigger obstacle to accessing education as school fees make up a tiny part of the cost of education. Other critics have made similar arguments that in situations where supplementary costs are rising, the impact of free education becomes a mirage (Akyeampong, 2009; Akyeampong, et al., 2007). To some extent, these claims are true as a survey in the country found that two-third of children from poor families were engaged by their families in different kinds of activities to generate money to support their education (Ghana Statistical Service, 2003). Although the 1987 reforms made some gains by increasing the number of schools, supply of textbooks and reconstructing old school buildings and training more teachers, its implementation was not fully achieved until 1995 following the country's endorsement of the Education For All agenda, which is explored next.

2.3.1.2.2. Global Agendas and Basic Educational Reforms

Post-1987 reforms of basic education in the country were influenced, basically, by agendas of the international community. Globally, basic education became a priority following the first 'Education For ALL' (EFA) world conference in Jonteim in 1990. Basic education was agreed as a basic human right and proposals were made to ensure that all children everywhere had the opportunity to enjoy that right (WCEFA, 1990). This idea was also overwhelmingly embraced at the UN-ratified Millennium Development Goals and now the Sustainable Development Goals. Achieving universal basic education has since become the focus of the global community and many nations are strongly endorsing it as seen in their policies for basic education (Hayman, 2007). One key policy measure that many countries are using to achieve this agenda is fee free. It is often argued that the payment of fees of whatever kind amounts to a denial of the enjoyment of that right (Akyeampong, 2009; USAID, 2007).

Ghana, having subscribed to the EFA agenda, demonstrated its preparedness to achieving the EFA targets through the enactment of the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) policy in 1995 to abolish all forms of fees. It appeared the government was determined not only to abolish fees, but also to ensure that children received quality education as stated in the Ministry of Education's policy document that;

‘At the heart of FCUBE [Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education] was the government's commitment to make schooling from Basic Stage 1 through 9 free and compulsory for all school-age children...[and] to improve the quality of the education services offered’ (MOE 1996, p.1).

Some recent interventions to augment the FCUBE policy are the Ghana School Feeding Programme and Capitation Grant.

Almost three decades since the country subscribed to the EFA agenda, there is sufficient evidence that access has been remarkable (Akyeampong et al, 2007). All regions in the country have recorded increases in school enrolments. The Ministry of Education, Science and Sports 2007 sector performance report indicates that pupil enrolment had reached 92.5% by 2006 (MOESS, 2007). Similar claims are made by Adamu-Issah et al. (2007). As they observed, between the 2004/2005 and 2005/2006 academic year, enrolment of pupils in class 6 rose from 59% to 69%, and this has been increasing. However, the concern of critics is that while enrolments are increasing over the years, there is no corresponding increases and improvements in resources in schools. For instance, in 1996, the teacher to pupil ratio was 1:43. By 2005, the ratio had risen to 1:63 (Little, 2010). Schools are also confronted with a dearth of instructional materials leading to poor teaching and learning as discussed in Chapter One. In an assessment of basic education in the country, it was revealed that only 10% of primary 6 children attained proficiency in mathematics, whereas approximately 25% of the same children were proficient in the English Language (Wereko and Dordunoo, 2010). This implies that majority of children in the country are ill-equipped with the basic skills and knowledge, which are the building blocks for children's progress in education.

These reports raise the question ‘of what use is education for a child to complete school but does not understand or cannot apply the fundamental skills to his or her life and the social, cultural, economic and political needs of society?’ Writing on children's access to

education in some countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, Lewin (2009) appears to endorse this dilemma. He argues that access to ineffectual schools which have few teachers and instructional materials and where children learn little, does not represent any meaningful access. In other words, basic education as a fundamental right for every child is likely to yield little effect on the lives of children if effective learning does not take place.

These concerns make UNESCO's (2005) caution that there is risk in prioritising access over quality critical. It is one thing to get all children into school and another to ensure quality education for all of them. Thus, while the determination by successive governments to achieve access is commendable, it may not be sufficient. By this, it is appropriate to suggest that access to education should be treated as a means to achieving the actual purpose of education for children rather than an end product in itself. Access should form part of a long term political and governmental determination to providing holistic education to children in the country.

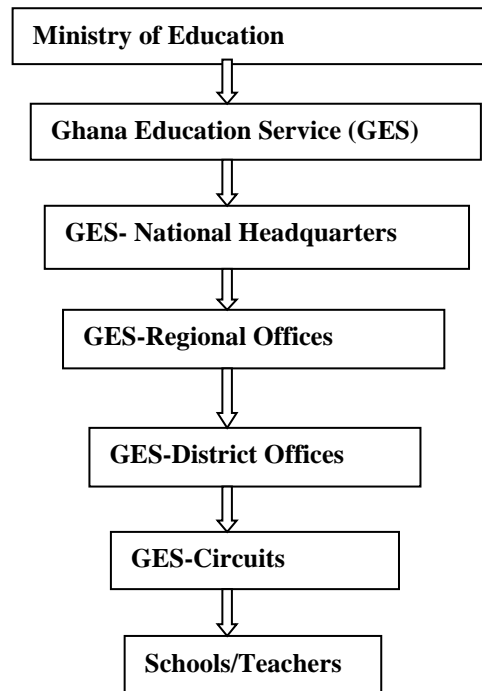
Recent reforms in the basic education sector were introduced in 2007 under the caption 'Meeting the Challenge for the Twenty First Century'. These reforms aim at providing high quality basic education for all children at early stages of their lives, starting 2 years in Kindergarten, 6 years in Primary and 3 years in Junior High (Adamu-Issah et al, 2007). Following an evaluation of the FCUBE policy, basic education has also been reaffirmed as free and compulsory with new intervention policies added as stated already. This is commendable as policy making should be a continuous process (Bowe et al., 1992). New subjects such as Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Citizenship Education and Creative Arts have been included in the curriculum. According to the Presidential Committee on Education which made the recommendations, ICT was particularly critical because;

‘The increasing importance of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the creation of wealth and the transformation of the economies of nations cannot be ignored in the educational development of Ghana. A well planned and effective training programme in ICT will provide the necessary skilled labour to meet the demands of industry and business, improve efficiency in the economy and create wealth...Government should equip all basic and secondary schools, training colleges, technical and vocational institutes with computers. ICT should be introduced as practical hands-on activity at the basic level to stimulate the interest of children. Where there is no electricity, small generators should be provided...’ (Presidential Committee on Education, 2002, p.viii).

2.3.2. Management of Basic Education

The management structure in the basic education sector is top-down, in which instructions from the Ministry of Education go through the Ghana Education Service (GES) headquarters to the regions, districts and circuits before finally reaching schools and teachers (see Figure 2 below). This is also the channel for implementation of educational policies directives (Ghana Education Service, 2010). The Minister gives orders to the director general of the GES at the headquarters. He or she then issues the orders to the directors in charge of education at each of the 10 administrative regions of the country. The directors at the regional level forward the directives to the directors in each of the 216 districts who work with circuit supervisors, head teachers and teachers to implement the directives.

Figure 2: Ghana Education Service Structure



Many have observed that plans to deepen the decentralisation agenda started by the Accelerated Development Plan through District, Municipal and Metropolitan Assemblies' Oversight Committees have been ineffective as key decisions about budgets and logistics in the sector are still determined and controlled at the Ministry of Education headquarters (Bennell and Akyeampong, 2007; Casely-Hayford, 2011). The curriculum is also centralised and structured allowing little chance for individual schools and teachers to interpret and adapt (Akyeampong et al., 2007). For instance, all public basic schools in the country start the school day and close at the same time. All schools also teach the same subjects and the syllabuses are structured such that from one level to the other, there is a link in topics taught in the different subjects. Newly trained teachers are also deployed centrally from the Ministry of Education to the Districts, Municipal and Metropolitan Assemblies for onward posting to schools.

2.3.3. *Financing of Basic Education*

Since the making into law of the Education Act of 1961, successive governments have made efforts to expand basic education as part of the national development agenda (Amedahe and Chandramohan, 2009). As stated at the start of this study, there is a strong

belief that basic education is strategic to the development of the country. In line with this agenda, the cost of basic education continues to be borne by the government. What this means is that no issues such as parents' failure to afford tuition fees and other critical learning resources should serve as an impediment to any child from benefitting from basic education. This is a policy directive that is still in place. In addition to this, the government, through the Ghana School Feeding Programme, provides one free meal for children in some selected schools. The registration fees for candidates of the Basic Education Certificate Examination are also subsidised, all in an effort to ensure that no child fails to progress to the secondary school level because of parents' inability to pay the fees for the examination. Due to this, the education sector claims huge portion of the national budget. According to Amedahe and Chandramohan (2009), 22% of the budget in 1992 was allocated to the education sector and out of this 45% was spent on the basic education sector alone. The Ministry of Education estimates show that over 11% of the country's Gross Domestic Product is spent on education and more than 30% of the education annual budget is spent on the basic education sector (MOESS, 2009).

The huge expenditure in the sector has compelled governments over the years to solicit financial support from international donor agencies (Casely-Hayford, 2011). Support from these agencies come in different forms like grants and loans in support of different programmes and projects (see Table 3 below).

Table 3: Some International Donor Funding of Basic Education in Ghana

Name of Project	Name of Donor	Amount (in millions)	Period
Whole School Development	Department For International Development (DFID)	£50.00	1988-2005
Teacher Training	International Development Association (IDA)	US\$1.10	1990-1994
School Building and Rehabilitation(EdSAC-II)	IDA	US\$15.20	1990-1994
Primary School Development Project	United States Agency for International Development (USAID)	US\$35.00	1990 – 1995
Construction of Classrooms	European Commission	US\$14.10	1996-2000
Basic Education Sector Improvement Programmes	IDA DFID USAID	US\$11.04	1996 – 2001
Quality Improvements in Primary School	USAID	US\$53.00	1997-2004

Source: Thompson and Casely-Hayford (2008, pp.13-14)

Aid from these donor agencies have supported the sector significantly. However, the over reliance on them has adverse consequences as their support is sometimes accompanied with conditions which may not be consistent with the underlining objectives of the programmes and projects they intend to support. The inability of the government to satisfy such conditions leads to delays and withdrawal of support and even in some instances, diversification of programmes (King and Palmer, 2010). This raises concerns with respect to ‘national ownership’ of educational policies. Critics claim that in many instances salient programmes are imposed on the sector by these foreign donor agencies (Ayamdoo and Ayine, 2002; Thompson and Casely-Hayford, 2008). For instance, the Education Sector Adjustment Credit (EdSAC-II) project by the International Development Association of the World Bank included a condition that compelled the

government to ensure that its recurrent expenditures for basic education did not exceed 62.0 % of the education sector's total expenditure.

There was also a condition that to achieve total cost recovery, tuition, examination and textbook user fees should be reintroduced into primary schools and all proceeds accrued should be invested into a recurrent fund. Similarly, in the World Bank's own evaluation of its influence in the educational reforms in 1987, it admitted that although the reforms were driven by the government of Ghana, the Bank had some influence on the shape of programmes as it was the one that persuaded the government to limit vocational training at the Junior High Level to just 'an introduction to tools' (Akyeampong, 2017, p.5). Due to this, the Ministry of Education was more accountable to the World Bank rather than the government of Ghana. Such interferences denote what I describe as a 'new imperialism' which restricts the ability of the country to decide its own educational agendas (Tikly, 2004, p.190).

This is not the only funding challenge in the sector. There are also instances of delays in the disbursement of approved funds within the Ministry of Education itself. In their study exploring funding of the sector, Ampratwum and Armah-attoh (2010) identified that a key challenge facing the Capitation Grant intervention policy, for example, was that funds from the Ministry of Education were often not released to schools on time which negatively affected academic work in many schools. The Ministry of Education itself seemed to acknowledge this challenge by stating in its 2007 education sector performance report that in addition to supply of physical resources and facilities, timely release of funds was key to ensuring effective functioning of schools (MOESS, 2007).

Inequitable spending and allocations of financial resources across all regions of the country is another key concern as poverty-stricken areas, mostly in rural districts, are under-funded in relation to teachers and resources spent per child in school (Casely-Hayford, 2011). A World Bank research recognised this funding gap. The research, which analysed the spending pattern of Ghana's education sector, found that poor regions received less than 30% of the financial support required compared to their counterparts in well-resourced regions (World Bank, 2010). This implies that well-resourced schools with less resource deficits continue to enjoy more support, while those located in poor

regions and in need of more financial support to improve tend to receive less. The rippling effect of this challenge is the widening in the stratification of education in the country.

Notwithstanding the huge financial burden, successive governments in the country continue to stress free basic education as reflected in the policies for the sector and budgetary allocations to it every year. Having explored the key areas in the basic education sector, the next sections focus specifically on the situation of teachers. The first section discusses the training of basic school teachers.

2.4. Training of Basic School Teachers

The training of basic school teachers in Ghana has been expanding over the years since 1953. A key vision of the Alternative Development Plan in 1951 was to train more teachers for primary schools leading to the establishment of the Emergency Teacher Training College in Saltpond in 1953. According to McWilliam and Kwamena-Poh (1978), the purpose was to provide shorter training consisting of six weeks in five courses for untrained teachers in the system. By the end of 1953, about 298 teachers had completed their training. However, training teachers for six weeks became a major concern for many stakeholders leading to the upgrading of their training to two years (Amedahe and Chandramohan, 2009). By the end of 1957, the number of untrained teachers had dropped from 11,055 to 9,688 and by 1960 the number of teachers trained in the colleges had reached 12,000, reducing further the number of untrained teachers to 8,000. The payment of allowances to teachers during their training was a key incentive package that attracted more people to enrol into the colleges (Amedahe and Chandramohan, 2009). This strategy continued until the 2014/2015 academic year when the payment of allowances was replaced with student loan following the upgrade of the teacher training colleges to the level of tertiary institutions.

Currently, the training of basic school teachers in the country is provided by two types of institutions; selected public universities and the Colleges of Education. The duration for training in the universities is three years for a diploma programme and four years for a degree programme. The Colleges of Education, on the other hand, offer a three-year Diploma in Basic Education residential training. A newly qualified teacher with Diploma

in Basic Education is the lowest rank and this is the minimum entry requirement for basic school teachers (GES and GNAT 2000; Ministry of Education, 2012).

According to the 2014/2015 Ministry of Education Sector Performance Report, there was a total of 211,101 public basic school teachers in the country. Out of this number, 47,774 were non-professional teachers while 163,327 were professional teachers (Ministry of Education, 2015C) (see Table 4 below for details).

Table 4: Statistics of Public Basic School Teachers in Ghana

Level	Number of Teachers	
	Professional	Non-professional
Kindergarten	22,934	14,213
Primary	72,552	24,163
Junior High	67,841	9,398
Total	163,327	47,774

Source: Ministry of Education Sector Performance Report, 2015C

Notwithstanding the consistent increases in the number of trained teachers over the years, there is still perennial deficit of teachers (Amedahe and Chandramohan, 2009; Bennell and Akyeampong, 2007). The employment of non-professional teachers over the years as an intervention measure does not appear to ameliorate the situation. The challenges, partly, can be attributed to deployment. As discussed earlier, many teachers refuse to serve in remote and rural areas as working in those places usually imply working under severe conditions.

Low remuneration could also be another factor accounting for the teacher deficit. Many argue that basic school teaching in Ghana is often regarded as monetarily unrewarding (Agezo, 2010, Amedahe and Chandramohan, 2009; George, 2010). An Education International research on the supply, recruitment and retention of teachers in six Anglophone Sub-Saharan African Countries including Ghana found that basic school teachers' salaries were not only lower in the Ghana Education Service, but also much lower compared to other professions requiring the same qualification and experience (Sinyolo, 2007). According to the March 2011 edition of 'Teacher Solidarity', an

independent online magazine concerned with teachers' work, a newly trained teacher's salary in Ghana was approximately US\$260. This amount was almost four times lower than that of a newly enlisted police officer in the country (Teacher Solidarity, 2011).

In a later study, Salifu and Agbenyega, (2013a) found that the monthly salary of a newly trained teacher with Diploma qualification was US\$280. The situation is even worse for the non-professional teachers, most of whom earn salaries below the poverty line (Sinyolo, 2007). Moreover, apart from head teachers who receive allowances in addition to their salaries, basic school teachers do not earn any allowance for extra duty, maintenance or accommodation (Salifu and Agbenyega, 2013b). This is in conformity with public sector salary amendments by the government. The amount that the government is able to spend on workers in the public sector is influenced by the fiscal policy agendas which are set up in grants and loans agreements with the International Monetary Fund (ActionAid, 2005). As part of the International Monetary Fund conditions, it places a wage cap on government's expenditure (International Monetary Fund, 2007). This limits the capacity of government to give additional allowances to public sector workers, including basic school teachers in the country.

Coupled with low remuneration is the low prestige attached to teaching at the basic level (Benneh, 2006). Basic school teachers are often seen as semi-professionals because of the nature of their recruitment into the Ghana Education Service (Macbeth, 2010). The increasing demand for teachers to fill vacancies has resulted in the recruitment of unqualified and less well-educated people to teach. According to Guajardo (2011), when teachers are recruited from lower academic background, it contributes to the existing view of basic school teaching as a lower-skilled profession. There is evidence that many graduates in the country only accept teaching at the basic level as 'employment of last resort' (Bennell and Akyeampong, 2007, p.ix). The point is that, in a developing country like Ghana where people's status in society is associated with money, the amount that teachers receive as salary contributes in determining how they are viewed and treated by the public (Cobbold, 2007). The VSO (2002) study makes us understand that teachers' prestige matters greatly to them because low status erodes their feelings of pride in the profession.

A new measure to tackle the trained teacher deficit is the introduction of a distance learning programme, ‘Untrained Teachers Diploma in Basic Education’. The programme targets untrained teachers who are already in the Ghana Education Service by training them for four years to upgrade their pedagogical knowledge and expertise. Available evidence suggests that untrained teachers are eager to upgrade themselves through the programme (Casely-Hayford, et al., 2013). However, the high cost of enrolment into the programme and tuition fees, as there is no government subsidy, serve as a hindrance to enrolling into the programme (Inkoom, 2014). According to Tanaka (2010), some teachers already enrolled in the programme are considering giving up because of the financial burden. Also, due to the location of the selected tutorial centres, some teachers tend to absent themselves from classes because of the cost of transportation. This implies that although the programme is commendable, the failure to take into account the cost element is likely to have adverse effects not only on enrolment but also completion by many teachers enrolled in it.

The next section explores the employment conditions of teachers. As there are two categories of basic school teachers in the system, this section delves into the conditions of employment of each of these categories.

2.5. Employment Conditions of Basic School Teachers

The conditions of employment of public basic school teachers in the Ghana Education Service depends on whether the teacher is a non-professional or professional teacher. This section looks at the employment conditions of each category.

2.5.1. The Non-professional Teachers

The non-professional teachers do not have any recognised professional qualification to teach. This category of teachers includes the National Service Scheme Teachers, Youth Employment Agency Teachers, Volunteer Teachers and Pupil Teachers.

The ‘National Service Scheme Teachers’ are graduates from the tertiary institutions who are often posted to schools by the National Service Scheme Secretariat to teach as part of a national policy which mandates all graduates from public tertiary institutions in the country to serve the country for at least one year after graduation. The ‘Volunteer

Teachers' are usually employed by Non-Governmental Organisations, communities or schools' Parent-Teacher Associations to help in areas where there are shortages of teachers. These teachers may or may not receive any salary. The 'Pupil Teachers' are usually graduates from second cycle institutions who are temporarily employed by the Ghana Education Service to fill vacancies in rural and deprived schools of the country. Second cycle institutions in the country refer to the senior high, vocational and technical schools that children progress to, after successfully completing their basic education. The Youth Employment Agency Teachers are recruited by the Youth Employment Agency in collaboration with the Ghana Education Service as part of government's programme to generate employment opportunities for the youth of the country (Ministry of Education, 2015b).

As non-professional teachers in the country are paid relatively low, coupled with the fact that they are not entitled to teachers' conditions of service such as promotion and study leave with pay, their morale tends to be chronically low (Bennell and Akyeampong, 2007).

2.5.2. The Professional Teachers

The Professional teachers have a recognised professional qualification after completion of a relevant teacher training programmes from an accredited institution for the training of teachers. A professional teacher's rank shows his or her position in the Ghana Education Service and determines his or her roles (see Table 5 below).

Table 5: A Summary of Professional Teachers' Ranks and Responsibilities in Ghana

Rank	Qualification	Roles and responsibilities
Superintendent II	Diploma	Teaching in basic schools
Superintendent I	Diploma	Teaching in basic schools, senior high and technical, schools, supervising teachers in basic and senior high and technical institutions and administrative duties
Senior Superintendent	First Degree	Same responsibilities as a 'Superintendent I', but with some additional responsibilities
Principal Superintendent	Minimum of three years of satisfactory service as a 'senior superintendent'	Same responsibilities as a 'senior superintendent. He or she is also qualified to become a head teacher of a basic school
Assistant Director	Minimum of three years of service as a 'principal superintendent'	Administrative duties at the district, regional or national offices of the Ghana Education Service
Director	Minimum of three years of satisfactory service as an assistant director	A District Director of Education. He or she can also head a senior High or Technical School or a College of Education.

Source: GES and GNAT (2000)

Promotion through these ranks depends on a number of factors, although, it is largely based on long service. As part of the Ghana Education Service's measures to motivate teachers in rural areas, teachers in those areas are entitled to earlier promotion (GES and GNAT 2000). Thus, where teachers in rural areas are expected to have a suitable teaching and professional record for a minimum of two consecutive years to be eligible for promotion to the rank of 'Superintendent I', their counterparts in urban areas are expected to do so for three consecutive years. A teacher's rank also determines his or her salary. This implies that two teachers could be in the same rank, but their salaries and other benefits would differ depending on which of them was promoted first.

2.6. Teacher Motivation Schemes

Realising the need to attract more people into the profession and retain them, the government together with the Ghana Education Service has some schemes for motivating teachers in the service. One of such schemes is the National Best Teacher and School Award, initiated in 1995 and celebrated on 5th October every year to coincide with the celebration of the World Teachers Day (MOE, 2015a). Among the purposes of the scheme is to acknowledge hardworking pre-tertiary teachers in the country. This is intended to motivate them to deliver quality teaching and to encourage them to be dedicated to their duties. According to the Ministry of Education (2004, p.23), the award is initiated to:

- Boost the morale of teachers
- Raise the status of teachers
- Encourage excellence in professional performance among teachers
- Restore the traditional respect of the teaching profession

For a teacher or school to be eligible for the award, certain criteria must be fulfilled. In terms of the National Best Teacher Award, a teacher must be a professional teacher and who at the time of the award must have taught for a minimum of five years with innovation and creativity (Ministry of Education, 2004). The teacher must also show a good professional and academic record with good knowledge of educational issues and policies. These qualities should reflect in the teacher's professional practice such as quality of teaching and learning materials, lesson notes, quality of lesson delivery, classroom management techniques, participation in community and co-curricular activities (Akyeampong and Asante, 2005). Aside these, a teacher's work experience in rural areas is an added advantage. Competition starts with nomination of the teacher by the head teacher of the school. All nominees compete at the district level with the overall winner representing his or her district at the regional level. A similar process is followed at the regional level and the overall national winner chosen thereafter. Unlike the National Best Teacher Award, the criteria for selecting the National Best School is based on the

outcomes of pupils' performances in the Basic Education Certificate Examination (MoE, 2015a).

Currently, the overall national best teacher receives a four-bedroom house, while the first and second runners up receive a car each. Teachers in specific subject areas also receive awards ranging from handshake, certificates of merit, bicycles to gas cylinders (MoE, 2015a). The scheme, however, has some setbacks. According to UNESCO (2011), the selection criteria for awarding the best teachers and schools do not do enough to appreciate all schools and teachers working hard in the service. Considering the situation in many rural schools where resources and facilities are not available to facilitate teachers' work, the selection criteria have the tendency to limit the chances of teachers and schools there from benefiting from the scheme. As Cobbold (2006) claimed in his study with teachers in the Central Region, the scheme tends to favour teachers in the urban areas more than those in rural areas. At the district levels, similar award schemes are expected to be implemented. However, there is evidence that majority of districts are not able to initiate this because of resource constraints. Casely-Hayford et al. (2013, p.64) in their study, for instance, found that none of the districts under study had a policy to reward teachers. In the words of one of the District Chief Executives involved in the study, 'the scheme provides opportunity for hardworking teachers to be rewarded but there is no fund to motivate and retain teachers'.

Teacher promotion is another motivation scheme. For example, the minimum rank required to head a second cycle institution in the Ghana Education Service is Deputy Director. To qualify for this rank, a teacher must teach for at least 15 years with satisfactory performance. The intention for this requirement is to motivate teachers to stay in the service for long. Refer to Table 5 above for the various ranks in the Ghana Education Service.

The study leave with pay scheme also serves as a form of motivation for teachers. This scheme offers opportunity to trained teachers to pursue further studies while still receiving their salaries for the duration of their studies. Eligibility depends on a number factors including satisfactory performance, good conduct and programme of study. However, teachers who accept posting to rural areas have an added advantage

(Kuuyelleh, Ansoglaenang and Nkuah, 2014). Thus, while teachers in urban areas are required to teach for at least three years after their initial posting, their counterparts in the rural areas are qualified for the scheme after a minimum of two years of service.

The study leave with pay scheme also has its own setbacks. Apart from the monthly salary, the scheme does not cover the tuition fees of beneficiaries. Drawing from his own experiences, Salifu (2014) claims that the situation compels many beneficiaries to do additional job in the course of their studies in order to pay for their fees, thereby impacting negatively on the amount of time that they devote to their studies.

2.7. Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided a background to the research context. This included the geographical, political and socio-economic characteristics of the country, the basic education system and the situation of basic school teachers and teaching in the country.

Ghana is divided into administrative regions with the intention of decentralising developmental programmes and projects. However, it emerged from the literature in this chapter that programmes and projects still favour regions in the South than in the North. There exists also disparity between rural and urban areas with rural areas experiencing more infrastructure, employment, health and educational challenges than urban areas.

The chapter has also highlighted the various educational reforms since the colonial era. These reforms aimed to improve standards in schools and access for all children. However, the lack of corresponding increases in resources makes it difficult to achieve the intended objectives. The exploration of the management and financing of basic education in the country points out that the sector is faced with some challenges. The management structure is top-down giving more power to those at the top. Financing of the sector is also a challenge not only due to late or non-disbursement of funds but also because of the inequitable distribution of funds to all regions of the country. Here, schools in poor regions which are rather in need of more resources to improve tend to receive less financial support.

The chapter has also explained the training of basic school teachers and teachers' employment and working conditions in the country. It became clear from the literature

that, although all teachers in the country face challenges in delivering education to children, the circumstance of the untrained teachers appear to be profound as they are not entitled to the same conditions of service as the trained ones.

The chapter concluded with an explanation of the motivation schemes for teachers. The main objective of these schemes is to reward hardworking teachers in the country. This is expected to motivate and encourage teachers in their practice. However, it emerged that the selection criteria and resource constraints may not make it possible for all teachers to benefit from such schemes.

Having explained the context of the study, the next chapter explores broadly the main concepts and ideas in this study. It also outlines the conceptual framework which served as a reference for the data collection.

Chapter Three

Review of Related Concepts and the Conceptual Framework

3.1. Introduction

Having explained the research contexts in the previous chapter, this chapter explores the main concepts related to the study. The chapter begins by examining the concept of ‘self’. Here, different perspectives regarding the concept are explored. This is followed by looking at the concept of ‘identity’. All these are intended to lay a foundation for exploring the concept of teacher professional identity in the next section. The impact of teacher professional identity on their practice is also explored in this chapter. Ideas are drawn from all these concepts to conceptualise teacher professional identity for the study.

It is important to reiterate that in exploring these concepts in order to conceptualise teacher professional identity for this study, I draw largely on literature from western contexts. As argued in Chapter One, teacher professional identity is not a new area of research. However, while it is a well-established area in western contexts, it has not been given enough attention in developing countries, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. Hence, few publications exist in the literature to draw upon.

The study also draws from the literature some publications that are more than a decade ago (e.g. James, 1980; Mead, 1934; Nias, 1989, 1991; Maclure, 1993). As will be seen in subsequent sections in this chapter, teacher professional identity is an evolutionary process that draws on the experiences of teachers over time (Marcelo, 2009). This means, teacher professional identity is constantly evolving, as teachers continually define and redefine who they are. In other words, teachers’ perceptions of their professional identity shift over time due to a range of factors both internal and external to them (Flores and Day, 2006). As I am interested in drawing on different perspectives in order to conceptualise teacher professional identity for this study, this seminal literature is considered fundamental and significant for understanding the concept of teacher professional

identity. Thus, the use of both western literature and some publications over a decade ago is based on their fitness for purpose for this study (Boaz and Sidford, 2006).

3.2. The Concept of Self

One key concept in identity studies is the idea of ‘self’ and the way it is linked with identity. It is argued that ‘self’ anchors individuals in each situation (Hickman and Kuhn, 1956; cited in Charon, 1998, p. 81). Thus, identity studies require an understanding of the ‘self’ as a concept. This view is echoed by Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop (2004) who argue that studies on teacher identity need to consider the association between relevant concepts such as ‘self’ and ‘identity’.

The concept of ‘self’ has a long history which can be traced back to the ideas of the ancient Greek philosophers, Socrates and Plato, who conceived of the self as ‘know thyself’. However, modern literature recognises William James, the American Psychologist, as the pioneer who laid the foundation, organised and developed ideas about the ‘self’ into an area for research. According to James (1890, p. 291);

‘...a man's Self is the sum total of all that he CAN call his, not only his body and his psychic powers, but his clothes and his house, his wife and children, his ancestors and friends, his reputation and works, his lands and horses, and yacht and bank-account. All these things give him the same emotions. If they wax and prosper, he feels triumphant; if they dwindle and die away, he feels cast down, - not necessarily in the same degree for each thing, but in much the same way for all’.

James’s view suggests that what constitute the ‘self’ are determined by what a person can consider as his or hers. In other words, if a person can regard something as his or hers, then that something becomes one’s self. It also implies that, the ‘self’ is rational. Thus, it can be affected by one’s feelings. James argues further that the ‘self’ comprises two fundamental components. That is, the self as knower (I) and the self as known (me). The ‘I’ does the thinking and makes consciousness possible while the ‘me’ is an empirical aggregate of things objectively known. The ‘me’, thus, captures the mind’s interest which it wishes to keep its ‘self’ alive and thriving (Coon, 2000). The ‘me’ referred to as the ‘empirical self’ consists of three constituents; the spiritual self; material self; and social self. The ‘spiritual self’ refers to a person’s subjective being, including his or her dispositions, thoughts, beliefs and feelings. The ‘material self’ connotes all material

possessions. The materials that are treasured most are the ones that people would work hardest for. The 'social self' is the recognition one gets in the minds of other people.

James' conceptualisation of the 'me' as the 'empirical self' has implications for this study. First, in terms of the 'spiritual self', his conceptualisation suggests that each teacher, just like any other person, will have his or her unique beliefs, values and feelings which define who he or she is. The 'material self' implies that teachers would also strive to achieve what they treasure most in their job, while with respect to the 'social self', a teacher will have as several selves as there are different people who recognise him or her and form a picture of him or her in their minds, what Cooley (1902; cited in Aldiabat and Navenec, 2011, p.1077) refers to as 'looking glass self'. Cooley argues that it is not the actual images of oneself in the minds of others, but one's imagined images of oneself in the minds of others that constitute one's self. The understanding here is that other people constitute a mirror into which people would look to identify their opinions towards the self. These opinions, in turn, are incorporated into the sense of self (Aldiabat and Navenec, 2011). More specifically, what becomes the 'social self' is based upon what individuals imagine others are thinking about them.

Cooley's conceptualisation of the 'self' may be contentious considering that the attention on only what one imagines in his or her mind in defining one's 'self', while overlooking the influence of one's social environment is problematic. This is because one's 'self' can also be a product of social interaction, developed and refined through an on-going process of participation in one's society (Milliken and Schreiber, 2012). That is to say, if the 'social self' is only derived from what people imagine other people are thinking about them, then there is no assurance that a person's perceived social self necessarily matches other people's true evaluation of him or her (Zhao, 2014). In view of this, it is appropriate to situate the 'social self' also within one's interaction with the social world. As Mead (1934) in his book, *Mind, Self and Society* asserts, one's 'self' is integrally social. Thus, a person's sense of 'self' also emerges from his or her on-going social interaction with others.

Relating these views of the 'self' to the concept of 'identity', it can be said that because people can recognise and understand their relationship with other people in a social

situation, they are able to develop a self-concept call their identity (Charon, 1998). Thus, when people see themselves in relation to the situation, they are able to think about and identify themselves. Maybe a clearer explanation of this interrelationship between the self and identity is one provided by Rodgers and Scott (2008, p. 739). According to them the 'self' is the 'meaning maker' and identity is the 'meaning made'. Therefore, if one's 'identity' is a story, then one's 'self' is the storyteller. By this perspective, it implies also that identity is the aspect of the self that is public, which is perceived and interpreted during interactions with other people within a specific context (Vryan, Adler and Adler, 2003).

Although this study is not specifically about the 'self', the inseparable connection between the self and identity, in this case the teacher as a person and the teacher as a professional working in a specific context, implies that the personal attributes, which constitute the teacher 'self' need to be taken into account in exploring teachers' sense of their professional identity. As Bullough (2011, p.48) argues, the personal involvement demanded by teaching often leads to the 'unavoidable interrelationships between the personal and professional' dimensions of teachers. This is also contained in Jones and McEwen's (2000, p. 405) argument that essential to one's identity is the 'inner self,' which comprises attributes such as values and beliefs. However, surrounding this inner self are the external influences experienced by the person. While these dimensions make up a particular identity of a person, they do not exist separately. Understanding one dimension demands an understanding of the other. This connects to the next section which looks at the concept of identity in detail.

3.3. Understanding the Concept of Identity

Understanding the concept of 'identity' is equally fundamental to conceptualising 'teacher professional identity', yet there appears to be no agreement in the research literature about a single conceptualisation of it. The concept has taken on a variety of meanings as many different issues surface in any attempt to reach a single definition (Gee, 2000-2001). A possible explanation to the difficulty in arriving at a single definition could be due to the way the concept has been used in multiple disciplines over time. For instance, in the 20th century, the concept was used by psychoanalysts to mean

the personalised self-image an individual possessed. For them, identity formation was about uncovering and developing one's own potential, which Heshmat (2014) terms as 'authentic self'. By this, identity was seen as self-directed (Olsen, 2008). Concerned by this prominence on the individual by the psychoanalysts, social scientists proposed their term 'cultural identity' to imply the way any individual identifies with, or is influenced by, various cultural groups. Seen in this manner, identity was treated to mean cultural and social pointers such as gender, ethnicity, nationality, class, race and language. They, however, conceded that defining identity is one of the difficult tasks to do. Considering these varying perspectives regarding the concept, this study deems it rather appropriate to focus on examining the nature of the concept in the literature rather than seeking to find a single definition of it.

The argument is often about whether 'identity' is dynamic, stable, fixed or changeable. One standpoint is that identity is fixed and stable and rarely depends on any external influences (Nias, 1989). If this is understood to mean one's behaviour, attitude or way of reacting to situations will not change irrespective of the circumstances, it raises the fundamental concern regarding the influence of one's social environment. In view of the likelihood of change due to a myriad of external factors, it makes sense to rather think of identity as being dynamic, complex and diverse (Barrett, 2008; Hong, 2010; Williams, 2013); and that, it is formed through interaction within a particular context (Flores and Day, 2006; Sachs, 2001). A study by Teixeira and Gomes (2000) involving a group of 10 women college students of diverse racial, ethnic and academic backgrounds at the East Coast University demonstrated that the salience of identity of all students who participated in the study depended upon the contexts where they were experienced.

Cultural norms, influences of family, the background and experiences of participants all influenced how they perceived their identities and these identities changed over time due to a combination of these factors. These findings seem to be supported by Gee (2000-2001) who indicates that one's identity cannot be decontextualised and that the way one identifies himself or herself may differ from context to context. Therefore, identity is the kind of person that one is 'being recognised in a given context'. He makes us understand further that people can accept or contest their identities. Hence, identity is also subject to

negotiation and renegotiation with other people. This has important implications for teacher professional identity. As Melucci (1996) argues, negotiation for one's identity will require the ability to act and speak for what one stands for. Yet, this could be difficult for teachers to achieve since authorities may not always consider it to be in their interest to give a voice to teachers in the service. Sachs (2005) notes, when teachers strive to safeguard their interests, authorities do not sanction it but instead chastise them. Meanwhile, the development of 'a strong professional identity is what distinguishes the expertise of teachers' from other professionals (ibid, p.19).

Some scholars also argue that because identity is influenced by context, people can project multiple identities (Gee, 2000-2001; Day, et al., 2006a). That is, although people may have a core identity which they will try to retain, this may not exist independently of other identities (Burke and Stets, 2009). An example is a teacher who can identify himself or herself not only as a teacher in his or her subject area but also as a teacher in a particular school, country and even with all teachers in the world. However, Pennington and Richards (2016) caution that there is risk in projecting multiple identities and suggest that multiple identities must be kept in balance to avoid identity crisis where a person is not sure about his or her identity or may question who he or she is in a particular situation. As Lemke (2008, pp. 31) argues, there are often 'struggles over the kinds of identities' that people are permitted to claim for themselves, struggles over the kinds of identities they can conceive for themselves and struggles over which identities in any social institution people strive to establish in themselves. Illustrating his argument, Lemke points out that institutions often seek to make their employees 'good employees', who show concern about the interests of the institution and who see themselves through role identities such as the good worker. Thus, schools may seek to make teachers accept the image of the 'competent teacher'. However, under such situations, the extent of agreement among the different views of a particular identity is the dominance of some interests over other interests, although Somekh and Thaler (1997) seem to contrast this claim. While they acknowledge that identities can be challenged by social institutions, they believe that individuals also have the capacity to both accept demands emanating from their social interactions and at the same time reject them. Hence, they are able to represent themselves in their own way in any social situation.

Besides this broad characterisation of identity, the concept can also be understood through specific categories. Burke and Stets (2009) in their book '*identity theory*', suggest three categories; personal identity, role identity and social identity.

The personal identity relates to the set of attributes defining a person such as one's name, sexuality and gender. These attributes of the person remain unique and consistent over time and across contexts, thereby accounting for the person's distinctiveness or individuality (Hogg, 2011; Schwartz et al., 2009). What informs actions is the person's own goals rather than the demands of others (Burke and Stets, 2009). Therefore, a person will reveal what he or she chooses to reveal of his or her personal identity depending on who the audience is (Smit and Fritz, 2008; Vryan, Adler and Adler, 2003). Drawing from earlier arguments in this section, these claims about the personal identity may not be entirely true. Gender identity, for example, is not simply about someone being a male or a female. As Lemke (2008) argues, it could also be used widely to mean a variety of identities that do not necessarily match these conventional views of male and female. Thus, personal identities are not entirely matters of internal states or unique personalised discourses but also are 'contested public terrain' as they may mean different things to different people (ibid, p.32).

The role identity, according to Burke and Stets (2009), is the meanings of a role that individuals associate themselves with. Stryker (2007) claims that the different meanings people associate with their roles are connected to their expectations of the roles; which are further associated with their social positions (Burke and Stets, 2009). Because the meanings of the role people associate with serve as reference points to them, they hold implications for their attitudes and behaviours. That means, people will behave in line with the meanings they associate themselves with to conform to those meanings. Moreover, because the meanings of the roles are partly derived from interactions with others, different individuals may have different meanings for the same role identity. According to Burke and Stets (2009), when this happens people tend to negotiate the meanings with others who may have a different understanding of that role identity. This may lead to individuals settling on a compromise as to the role identity meaning they can claim and the actions that correspond to that meaning. This view appears to be supported

by Ibarra (1999), who argues that other people's reactions shape identity by endorsing or failing to endorse new behaviours.

The social identity is based on a person's identification with a socially formed group. As a result, the person sees things from the group's perspective. This is based on the assumption that individuals as group members think alike and act alike. From this, they develop a sense of 'we' or 'us' and 'them' (Burke and Stets, 2009, p. 119). Thus, members of the in-group are most likely to define themselves in a positive way, which in turn implies that people outside the group may be identified in a negative manner (Chonody and Teater, 2016).

Burke and Stets' (2009) categorisation of identity is useful for this study, as they point out that although the personal, role and social dimensions of one's identity may differ, they are likely to exist simultaneously depending on the situation that people find themselves. An example in teaching could be a teacher who is part of a specific school, functions as a teacher within that school and fulfils this role in his or her own way. In view of this, this study situates 'teacher professional identity' in the middle of the personal, role and social identities in order to draw perspectives from all three. As this study is first of its kind with teachers in this part of the country, it is expected that this will provide an opportunity for a broader exploration of teachers' sense of professional identity.

Wenger (1998) also argues that identity construction, as an experience, encompasses three kinds of belonging: engagement, imagination and alignment. Through engagement, people establish and maintain joint enterprises and negotiate meanings. Engagement, thus, allows people to invest in what they do and in their relations with other people, gaining 'a lived sense of who we are' (ibid, p. 192). Imagination refers to 'transcending our time and space and creating new images of the world and ourselves' (ibid, p. 176), while alignment coordinates people's activities within broader structures, allowing the identity of a larger group to become part of the identity of the individual participants. Thus, alignment shapes identity construction by connecting 'local efforts to broader styles and discourses' in ways that allow people to invest their energy in them (ibid, p. 186).

In effect, what can be deduced from the discussion in this section is that identity is always in the making, rather than fixed. It shifts according to people's experiences and contextual

factors, which include interactions with others. This explains why identity may be multiple, dynamic and varied in nature. This leads to exploration of the concept of teacher professional identity, which is the focus of this study, in the next section.

3.4. Complexities in Defining Teacher Professional Identity

Like 'identity', the concept of 'teacher professional identity' is not easy to define. Sford and Prusak (2005, p.16) simply think that seeking a single definition is like attempting to collapse 'a video clip into a snapshot' as teachers do not depend on only a single source to define their professional identity.

In an attempt to gain a better understand of the different perspectives regarding the concept, Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop (2004, p. 108) reviewed 22 studies in the research literature from the period 1988 to 2000, as this was thought to be the era that identity emerged as an area for research. They noted a lack of a single and clear definition of it and in some studies, the absence of a definition. They pointed to the challenging nature of understanding it, and the unclear differences between the personal and professional aspects of teachers' identity. For them, teacher professional identity comprises teachers' vigorous pursuit of their professional learning in line with their goals. A similar opinion is shared by Morrison (2013). According to him, teacher professional identity cannot be limited to a single understanding because being a teacher implies different things in the different communities and schools that teachers live and work. Therefore, it is about teachers explaining themselves within the different contexts through their experiences.

Teacher professional identity is also understood from the socio-cultural standpoint as arising from teachers' relationships with their social environment. Thus, it is both a 'process' as it is ongoing, interpreted and reinterpreted and a 'product' because of all the influences on the teacher from his or her social interaction as contained in Olsen's (2008, p.139) comments that;

‘I view identity as a label, really, for the collection of influences and effects from immediate contexts, prior constructs of self, social positioning, and meaning systems (each itself a fluid influence and all together an ever-changing construct) that become intertwined inside the flow of activity as a teacher simultaneously reacts to and negotiates given contexts and human relationships at given moments’.

In other words, it is the way teachers understand their own individual experiences and ‘how to be’ and ‘how to act’ (Sachs, 2005, p.15). The claim that teacher professional identity is varied to be limited to a single definition is obvious here. However, there appears to be a common view that teacher professional identity, as a form of identity, is dynamic and created through forces both external and internal to teachers. This links to the next section which seeks to understand from the literature how teachers construct their professional identity and the forces influencing this.

3.5. Understanding Teachers’ Construction of Professional Identity

The way teachers perceive their professional identity has been labelled in different ways. For example, Rodgers and Scott (2008) refer to it as ‘identity formation’; Parkinson (2008) discusses teacher identity development; Sfard and Prusak (2005) say teacher identity-making; Coldron and Smith (1999) and Watson (2006) term it construction of teacher identity; and Flores and Day (2006) talk of shaping of teacher identity.

Whatever the label that is attached to it, the point is that teacher professional identity is something that evolves based on the context (Day et al., 2007; Gee, 2000-2001; Morrison, 2013); teachers’ relationships with others, which involves emotions (Hargreaves, 2001; Rodgers and Scott, 2008); and the stories that teachers tell and live by (Connelly and Clandinin, 1999; Mockler, 2011; Rodgers and Scott, 2008). Context and relationships relate to the external aspects of their professional identity construction while emotions and stories are associated with the internal aspects of it.

3.5.1. Context and Teachers’ Professional Identity Construction

It is often argued that although teachers draw on their own ideas and beliefs during their pre-service training to form an image about the kind of teachers that they would like to become (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009; Sachs, 2005), as they transit from pre-service into their teaching career, they may be confronted with new experiences in their

workplace which may challenge their initial beliefs and ideas (Morrison, 2013). As a result, parts of their identity begins to reform or diminish due to their new responsibilities and professional experiences, what Beauchamp and Thomas (2009, p.175) describe as ‘a shift in identity’.

As teachers are expected to continually learn, interact with others and reflect on their professional and personal experiences and make adjustments accordingly, this shift in identity occurs throughout a teacher’s career (Hobbs, 2012). In her study, MacLure (1993) found that teachers constantly formed and reformed their professional identity because at different times they experienced uncertainty about who they were, what was expected of them and how they were perceived by other people. Barrett’s (2005) study involving teachers in Tanzania supports these claims.

This may explain why it is often argued that teacher professional identity is more or less fragmented (Day et al., 2006a); as well as varied and multifaceted (Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop, 2004; Rodgers and Scott, 2008). While not refuting these claims, it is also possible that the situation that teachers find themselves could also determine, significantly, which aspects of their professional identity would be given prominence (Deaux, 2000). This ties to the next discussion on teachers’ construction of professional identity with respect to their relationships with others, which also involves emotions.

3.5.2. Relationships, involving Emotions and Teachers’ Professional Identity Construction

Schools are social institutions where teachers relate with different people including pupils, colleagues, authority, parents and the wider community. Teachers’ relationships with these different people, as observed by Day et al. (2006b), are fundamental in the construction of their professional identity. In her study involving teachers in Tanzania, Barrett (2005, p.52) found that relationship was important to teachers’ construction of identity. According to her, while in urban schools, the relationship between parents and teachers, for example, was ‘unproblematic’, in village schools the relationship was not cordial. Accordingly, teachers in the village schools felt that their ‘authority as children’s second guardians was undermined. From this, it can be deduced that positive relationships among teachers and with other members in their workplace most likely will have positive

impact on their feelings about their professional role identity, whereas poor relationships could erode their sense of pride as teachers (VSO, 2002).

However, Ball and Goodson (1985) remind us that teachers do not depend on only their relationships with people in their workplace to construct their identity but also things or situations including the subjects they teach. In their study, Beijaard, Verloop, and Vermunt (2000, p.761) observed that teachers saw 'themselves as a combination of subject matter experts, didactical experts and pedagogical experts'. However, in the course of their career, most of their perceptions shifted from a concentration on 'subject matter expertise to didactical and pedagogical expertise'.

From the arguments here, it can be understood that relationships at teachers' workplace are complex which can provoke emotions in teachers, thereby affecting the way they perceive themselves (Flores and Day, 2006; Rodgers and Scott, 2008). As Schutz and Lee (2014) argue, a key part of teachers' professional identity relates to the emotions associated with teaching. Teachers invest their 'selves' in teaching. This investment involves emotional experiences that provide salient evidence regarding their evolving identity (Nias, 1996). Therefore, emotions and teacher professional identity are inseparably related to each other. For example, some unpleasant emotions may represent a challenge to teachers' existing identity-related goals about pupils learning, whereas, pleasant emotions about pupils learning may suggest a confirmation of their identities. In the classroom, for example, Schutz and Lee (2014, p.174) posit that teachers may feel frustrated when pupils' performances do not match teachers' expectations. Under such circumstance, teachers may reconsider their identity, by asking themselves: 'can I do a good job as a teacher?' In contrast, teachers may experience pride and enjoyment, when they see pupils succeed in their learning which may provide teachers with an opportunity to reinforce their identity as good or competent teacher.

Hargreaves (2001) has elaborated on this interrelationship between emotions and teacher professional identity by identifying five emotional dimensions in teaching which he refers to as emotional geographies of teaching: 'moral', 'professional', 'political', 'physical' and 'socio-cultural' dimensions. In relation to the moral dimension, Hargreaves (2001) argues that teachers may experience positive emotions when they are shown gratitude for

their work and or given support from other people. On the other hand, negative emotions or 'moral distance' may occur when a teacher feels his or her purpose in teaching is lost or threatened by others. Such feelings can be detrimental to teachers' professional identity. As Cross and Hong (2009) argue, when there is a discrepancy between a teacher's existing identity beliefs and what is happening in his or her classroom, there is the likelihood for those identities to be challenged, leading to potential changes in those identities. The findings in Nias's (1991) study involving teachers in England during the curriculum reforms era seem to support this claim as the teachers who were the first to implement the reforms reported that they felt a sense of bereavement, frustration and loss as the aims of the reforms were at odds with teachers' opinions about the nature of the reforms.

However, Hargreaves (1994) in his earlier work does not seem to agree that differences in purpose should necessarily lead to 'moral distance'. According to him, it can also be useful to work with people with different purposes. He makes the point that in a profession like teaching where values continually shift, and diversity widens, teachers rather need to understand and learn from other members, embrace differences and try to collaborate in order to create shared goals. This view is echoed by Goleman (1998) who posits that although working towards reducing differences in purpose in organisations is good, working with people with different purposes are also productive. Hence, differences in purposes should not necessarily provoke negative emotions or moral distances in teachers.

With respect to the professional aspect of emotions, Hargreaves (2001) claims that teachers may experience negative emotion when their expertise and competences which are at the heart of their job are questioned by other people, whereas positive comments from others about their work is a source of positive feelings for them, all of which affect the way they feel about themselves as teachers. In terms of the political dimension of emotion, it is argued that emotions are not only moral or professional concerns for each teacher but also, they are political (Hargreaves, 2001). They are linked to teachers' perceptions of powerless and power in their job (Beatty, 2000). This means that increases in teachers' power to have control and make their own plans will make them feel more

protected. As possessing of power also means increases in their status, this will make teachers feel content and happy in their job (Hargreaves, 2001). Regarding the physical aspect, teachers tend to express negative emotions in situations where they experience infrequent interactions with other members in their workplace rather than engaging in positive interactions. And in terms of the socio-cultural dimension, teachers' perceptions that parents do not demonstrate much care for their children can provoke responses of disgust among teachers (Hargreaves, 2001). On the other hand, teachers may experience positive emotions when their schools have good reputation in the community and when teachers are offered support (Leithwood and Beatty, 2008).

In effect, the understanding regarding emotions and teachers' professional identity construction which needs to be emphasised is that emotions play significant roles in teachers' relationships with their work. They either draw teachers closer to other people and things in their workplace or distance them, both of which have implications, positively and negatively, on how they construct their professional identity.

3.5.3. Stories and Teachers' Professional Identity Construction

Teachers' professional identity is also associated with teachers' creation and interpretation of meaning through the stories they tell (Rodgers and Scott, 2008). That is, the stories or narratives that teachers tell about themselves contribute to making sense of who they are (Mockler, 2011). It is also about teachers' interpretation of the stories that other people tell about them (Sfard and Prusak, 2005). This understanding is shared by Clandinin and Huber (2005) who claim that teachers' professional identity is an epitome of the stories they live by which are shaped by the environments of their lives and work. Because of this, teachers live 'storied lives on storied landscapes', which are both outside and inside of their schools (ibid, p.44). This should not, however, be interpreted to mean a unitary or fixed identity. As Rodgers and Scott (2008) argue, during a teacher's career, he or she may acquire new experiences, teach new subject matter or experience changes in his or her socio-economic status, which are all likely to make his or her stories multiple or even inconsistent.

3.6. Frameworks of Teacher Professional Identity

This section examines Day and Kingston (2008) and Mockler's (2011) frameworks for exploring teacher professional identity, which this study also draws upon to conceptualise teacher professional identity.

3.6.1. Day and Kingston's (2008) Framework

Drawing on findings from a four-year longitudinal research project (between 2001 and 2006) involving 300 teachers in primary and secondary schools in England, which explored Variations in Teachers' Work, Lives and Effectiveness, Day and Kingston (2008) proposed that teacher professional identity may be understood from three interrelated dimensions: situated-located, professional and personal dimensions.

Within the situated-located dimension, teachers' perception of their professional identity is associated with a specific school or classroom context and it is affected by conditions of the school, resources, level of disadvantage, leadership, support and comments from other people (Day and Kingston, 2008). This is based on the assumption that teachers' workplace is a setting which can be very persuasive and demanding, thereby impacting on how they make sense of themselves as teachers (Reynolds, 1996). Thus, teachers' professional identity becomes the collection of the influences and effects from the contexts that become entangled as a teacher reacts to a given contexts and human relationships at given moments (Olsen, 2008).

The professional dimension arises from teachers' experiences regarding policies and the education ideals of teachers. Here, it is believed that within the teaching profession, there would be inconsistencies between the education system's expectations of how the teacher should act and behave and teachers' own view of their role (Day and Kingston, 2008). This dimension is, therefore, subject 'to the influences of policy and social trends as to what constitutes a good teacher' (Day et al. 2007, p.107). Because of this, teacher professional identity relates to such areas of their practice as workload, responsibilities, policy and continuous professional development. On the other hand, the personal dimension reflects teachers' experiences outside their school and classroom environment.

This often involves teachers' relationships with friends, members of their families and influential people in the society.

Although these three dimensions can be viewed as separate, Day and Kington (2008) argue that they are actually interlinked. Thus, depending on the interaction between them, various professional identities can emerge. They argue further that at any given situation, one of these three dimensions may turn out to be dominant, which may pose a threat to other identities. Dealing with such tensions can be challenging as it requires additional time and emotional energy from the teacher. This seems to explain why MacLure (1993, p.312) describes teachers' professional identity as 'a continuing site of struggle'.

3.6.2. Mockler's (2011) Framework

Similar to Day and Kington's (2008) framework is one proposed by Mockler (2011). She conceives teacher professional identity as 'the way that teachers, both individually and collectively, view and understand themselves as teachers which is 'formed within, and also out of the narratives and stories that form the 'fabric' of teachers' lives' (p.519). Mockler's framework was borne out of her criticism of the instrumentalist's approaches to understanding teachers' identity. As she claimed, the instrumentalist's approaches were based on technical rationale and placed priority on 'what works' over what it is to 'be' a teacher, which reflects teachers' own perceptions of their work. This criticism by Mockler seems to give a reminder of Nias (1989) caution on the risks of prioritising the technical-rationale over the human in conceptualising teacher professional identity. According to Nias;

'Teachers have hearts and bodies, as well as heads and hands, though the deep and unruly nature of their hearts is governed by their heads, by the sense of moral responsibility for students and the integrity of their subject matter which are at the core of their professional identity ... Teachers are emotionally committed to many different aspects of their jobs. This is not an indulgence; it is a professional necessity. Without feeling, without the freedom to 'face themselves', to be whole persons in the classroom, they implode, explode – or walk away' (p. 305).

Mockler, therefore, sought to offer an alternate view to understanding teacher professional identity. Like Day and Kington's (2008), Mockler's framework suggests

three aspects for understanding teachers' professional identity; teachers' personal experiences, the professional context and the external political environment.

The personal aspect relates to teachers' personal lives which exist outside their professional territory. Here, teachers' personal attributes such as hobbies, values and interests are salient in influencing their professional identity. Included in this dimension also are teachers' experiences in relation to their involvement in social groups in the community and family experiences such as parenthood. Teachers' own previous school experiences are also key components of this dimension. That is, their perceptions of education arising from their own previous experiences as students have implications for how they see themselves and act as teachers.

The professional context, according to Mockler, is associated with those aspects of teachers' experiences which arise within a particular educational context. Here, the school or education system within which teachers work and their professional learning experiences affect their sense of professional selves. Included also in this dimension are teachers' experiences outside the particular school or education system context but still within the professional realm of teachers. Here, teachers' participation in professional unions and associations and recognition for teachers' professional achievement and competence have implications for their professional identity. The external political environment dimension relates to discourses that are external to the profession. Here, government policies pertaining to teachers' work and political ideologies which impact on teachers' lives and work play a key role in influencing their sense of professional identity or may even reshape their existing identity.

The crux of Mockler's framework is the conception that teacher professional identity is an ongoing concept which is influenced by personal, professional and political domains of teachers' lives and work. Like Day and Kington's (2008) framework, the three dimensions interact in an overlapping way and at the confluence of their interactions is a teacher's feelings about what it means to 'be' a teacher (Williams 2013).

The next section examines the relationship between teacher professional identity and professional practice.

3.7. Linking Teacher Professional Identity to Professional Practice

Teachers act the way they do in their profession not only based on the knowledge and skills they acquired during their preservice and in-service training, but also based on the kinds of teachers they are (Acker, 1999). This view suggests a relationship between teacher professional identity and their practice. Because of this relationship, teachers will usually ask themselves this key question about their professional practice: ‘Who am I in this situation?’ (Connelly and Clandinin, 1999, p. 3). When the answer is positive, it is more likely to impact in a positive manner on their practice. Thus, teacher professional identity serves as a lens to how they act (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009; Morrison, 2013; Sachs, 2001).

In their classrooms, many teachers are confronted with children, some of whom are keen to learn while others may not. More so, others may have specific learning needs requiring special attention (Day, 2017). For teachers to do their best to create opportunities for all children to learn and progress under such situations, it demands of them to possess a positive sense of who they are as teachers (Dewe and Cooper, 2012; Sachs, 2003). This view seemed to be shared by Hammerness, Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005, pp. 383-384), as they argue that ‘developing an identity as a teacher is an important part of securing teachers’ commitment to their work ...the identities teachers develop shape their dispositions[and] where they place their effort’. Smit and Fritz (2008, p.100) following their study involving teachers in South Africa also make a compelling argument for paying attention to teacher professional identity as they claim that;

‘Education will not improve with financial efforts or the provision of workshops addressing policies, teaching practice, and management unless teachers’ identity receives prominence’.

What is suggested here is that efforts aimed at stimulating the work of teachers, unavoidably, need to strive at enhancing the landscape of teacher professional identity. Beijaard, Verloop and Vermunt (2000) explain this point further by claiming that teachers who express positive identity in their job are more likely to be motivated to initiate creative ideas in their schools to enhance education delivery for children. They are also more engendered to develop cordial professional relationships with authority and collaborate with their colleagues in their practice.

In another perspective, it is argued that teacher professional identity affects the extent to which teachers are willing to implement policy decisions in their professional practice (Day, 2002). Policy decisions and reforms often require extensive pedagogical knowledge and skills from teachers (O'Sullivan, 2002). Thus, the extent to which they are received, implemented and sustained will depend on the extent to which they align with or challenge teachers' feelings about their identity (Day, 2002). In their study on teachers' perceptions of their professional identity involving 80 teachers in the Netherlands, Beijaard, Verloop and Vermunt (2000) found that teachers' willingness to get on with educational reforms and to implement them in their teaching contexts was influenced by their identity. In the study, teachers' perceptions of their identity were related to their subject matter and didactics. Thus, the reforms that sufficiently dealt with both teachers' subject matter and didactics were more likely to be successful as they were congruent with teachers' perceptions of identity. Although, Jansen (2001) appears to disagree with this assertion by claiming that the success of reforms depends much more on the interplay between policy, practice and politics, he nevertheless concedes that the nature of the engagement itself is reliant on acknowledgement of the identities of all the elements involved.

Other views link professional identity to teachers' intentions to leave or stay in teaching. They claim that, teachers who express negative identity are more likely to leave the profession than those who have positive sense of themselves as teachers (Day, 2017; Hammerness, Darling-Hammond and Bransford, 2005). The study by Hong (2010) seems to support this claim. Hong interviewed 27 teachers who were at different phases of their career regarding their professional identity. Relating their perceptions with their intentions to leave or stay in the profession, Hong found that although teachers' intentions to leave the profession depended on the stage in their teaching career, overall teachers who were dissatisfied with themselves as teachers due to emotional burnout were more likely to leave the profession.

However, the relationship between teacher professional identity and practice is not as straightforward as seen above. The relationship can also be reciprocal (Cameron, 2001; Beltman et al. 2015; Watson, 2006). Being reciprocal, professional practice can also

affect teacher professional identity. Thus, teachers may not necessarily do what they do because of how they perceive themselves, but they may also become who they are because of what they are able to do in their job. Drawing from her study involving teachers in Ontario, Canada, Lasky (2005) claimed that teachers' professional identity was at risk from policy reforms and the nature of their implementations. Teachers claimed that the reforms were imposed on them, which affected their identity, as the policies did not match with teachers' perceptions of what makes up good education. A similar link is made by Pennington and Richards (2016). They argue that, in classrooms where favouring conditions such as small class size, good facilities and resources exist, it is more likely for teachers to succeed in their teaching and to enjoy high satisfaction in their work. However, where disfavouring conditions such as large class size, limited facilities and resources exist, teachers may feel that it is impossible to fulfil their teaching goals.

All these have ramifications for teachers' professional identity. Large class size, for example, means increased workloads. Increased workloads result not only in teachers spending longer hours in planning and assessing pupils, sometimes outside school hours, but also demands teachers' extra energy in order to manage classrooms which could be made up of pupils with different behavioural and learning needs and abilities (Day and Gu, 2007). Although, some teachers may be able to sustain their commitment under such conditions because of their moral purpose, others may feel a sense of discontent and frustration (Pennington and Richards, 2016). In her study involving teachers in Chile, Avalos (2010) found that teachers' inability to do a good work because of scarcity of resources and limited time affected a key component of their professional identity- their sense of being able to carry out their job effectively. While teachers in her study indicated that they felt the public doubted their competence, they also acknowledged that there could be a bit of truth in the public's perceptions, because the conditions in which they worked did not enable them to do a quality work.

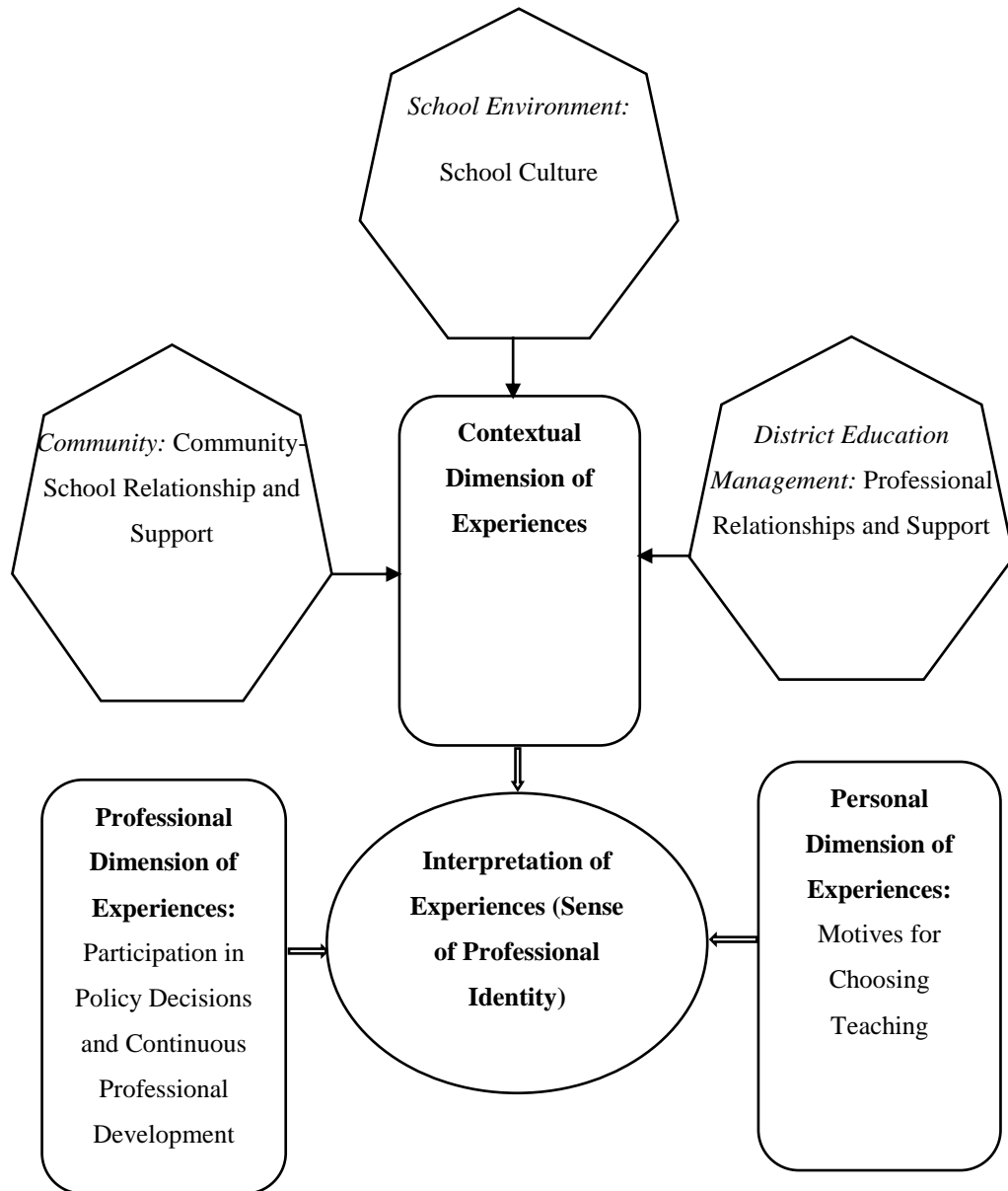
Drawing from the discussions above, the next section explains how teacher professional identity is conceptualised for this study.

3.8. Conceptualising Teacher Professional Identity for this Study

As noted in the previous sections, no single definition of teachers' professional identity can capture the different perspectives associated with the concept. However, what the various perspectives appear to have in common is that teacher professional identity is not a fixed attribute but a shifting, continual and dynamic phenomenon which is subject to interpretation and reinterpretation of teachers' experiences. It is also clear that teachers' professional identity is influenced not only by teachers' own personal attributes but also by factors associated with their working environment. Thus, the way teachers make sense of themselves as teachers is based on interpretations of their continuing interaction with the context of their work (Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop, 2004).

This study aligns itself with these views and conceptualises teachers' professional identity as the way teachers feel about themselves as teachers based on interpretation of their experiences. Drawing upon the literature generally and more specifically adapting Day and Kington (2008) framework for understanding teacher professional identity, this study explores teachers' sense of professional identity from three interconnected dimensions; the contextual, professional and personal dimensions. The contextual category in this study explores teachers' experiences in relation to the school environment, community and district education management, while the professional dimension is associated with teachers' experiences regarding educational policies and continuous professional development. The personal dimension explores teachers' personal values in teaching. As argued in previous sections, even though the study focuses on teachers' experiences to understand their sense of professional identity, the inseparable relationship between the teacher as a professional and the teacher as a person implies that the personal attributes cannot be disregarded when exploring teachers' sense of professional identity in relation to their experiences. The diagram in Figure 3 below captures the main ideas in this study and outlines the conceptual framework from which teachers' sense of professional identity were explored. However, the study did not explore teachers' perceptions in relation to each of these dimensions as separate units. Rather, it was positioned in-between them to allow for broader exploration.

Figure 3: Conceptual Framework for Teachers' Professional Identity



Source: Adapted from Day and Kington, 2008

3.8.1. The Contextual Dimension

As the literature in previous sections suggests, the contexts in which teachers live and work unavoidably shape how they perceive themselves and how others think about them as teachers. Therefore, situating teacher professional identity within the context of their work in this study implies the need to know the issues that impact their professional identity.

Within context, one of the key factors influencing teachers' experiences is the school culture, which includes the shared values, symbols, norms and assumptions inculcated in the daily functions of the school (Johnson and Kardos, 2008; Sergiovanni, 2006). School culture makes clear the issues that are important and how all members should act (Stolp and Smith, 1995). This view may be true to some extent considering that in many instances the conditions under which schools operate, both internally and externally are determined by the school culture. Thus, the way teachers respond to events, unite among themselves and give purpose and meaning to their work is influenced by the norms and values of their schools (Deal and Peterson, 1990). All these in turn affect teachers' professional identity, as Borgler (2001) argues that teachers are more likely to feel a positive sense of identity when they have positive experience in their schools. Blasé and Kirby (2009) make similar claim that, the school as an organisation, its activities, goals and vision are key to how teachers feel about themselves in their job. Therefore, it is important to ensure a positive school climate to allow teachers to collaborate and interact regularly among themselves and with school leaders and pupils.

It is often argued that, a positive school culture is built on leadership (Deal and Peterson, 1990; Schein, 2004; Sergiovanni, 2006). This is because leadership determines the fundamental vision of the school and how resources are made available and used. Therefore, they have a greater responsibility in ensuring that teachers work in a climate satisfying to them (Deal and Peterson, 1990). As Blasé and Kirby (2009) argue, when teachers experience satisfaction in their school environment, it enhances their sense of belonging to their schools. Broadening this argument, Deal and Peterson (1990) suggest that school leaders should reward the good works of teachers in order to enhance their feeling of satisfaction in their job. This seems to be the view of Rauno and Heikkinen

(2004) also, as they claim that rewards are key in influencing how teachers feel about themselves as teachers because they see their work as a process of giving and receiving acknowledgement and this lies at the heart of teachers' work. As a result, where teachers' efforts go unnoticed, 'disaffection looms large' (Rosenholtz, 1991, p.141). What can be understood from these claims is that if reward is lacking it can have negative implications on teachers' sense of professional identity as found in MacLure (1993) study with teachers in England. MacLure's study explored the professional identity of 69 teachers in three local education authorities in England and found a kind of teacher identity she described as 'spoiled identities'. Teachers in the study expressed a continuing sense of 'bewilderment and frustration at a system' which they felt did not acknowledge their efforts (ibid, p. 317). While some teachers took a decision to retire early, others decided to resign from teaching.

The literature makes us understand that giving rewards takes different forms including monetary and non-monetary incentives. There appears, however, to be no agreement regarding which one has greater influence on teachers' sense of identity (see Dörnyei, 2001; Seligma, 2002; Armstrong, 2007). Some argue that monetary incentives matter most to teachers because apart from enhancing their standard of living, they represent a source of psychic fulfilment in their job (Johnson and Kardos, 2008; Olatunji, 2011). Conversely, Blasé and Kirby (2009) think that in an underpaid profession like teaching, non-monetary incentives is what matters most to make teachers feel positive in their job. According to them, apart from heightening teachers' satisfaction, self-esteem and sense of belongingness in their work, non-monetary incentives improve teachers' loyalty to their leaders. Thus, teachers are likely to feel encouraged and enthusiastic to support their schools' goals. While this study does not have the capacity to make any informed judgement on these contentions, considering that individual teachers may place different values and priorities or may even have different expectations in their job, it is reasonable to suggest that attention needs to be paid to both the monetary and non-monetary incentives (Armstrong, 2007). This view appears to be shared by Johnson, Berg and Donaldson (2005, p.1) in the following comment that;

‘Intrinsic and extrinsic rewards sometimes interact. For example, pay, is seldom an important incentive that draws people into teaching, but it can take on increased importance when working conditions-e.g.,lack of supplies or a chaotic school environment-make it difficult or impossible to succeed with students’.

Teachers do not work in isolation. Parents, other community members and administrators, at various levels of the education system, are involved in the education of children. As Finnan and Meza (2003) argue, these different people also have their own values, beliefs, assumptions and expectations. Schools may decide or not to embrace these values, expectations and perspectives. However, either choice has both negative and positive implications on teachers’ experiences. As Nias (1989) claims, teachers usually like to operate in a family-like and friendly environments and with a supportive team because such environments harness teachers’ synergies for the common good of children and schools. As teachers’ experiences and professional identity are interlinked, Beijaard (1995) posits that if schools can develop a positive climate to allow teachers to experience support and satisfaction in their professional relationships with all the different stakeholders involved in the education of children, they can be more successful in making teachers feel positive about their identity. This is a claim supported by Buchanan (2015) following her study involving teachers in California.

3.8.2. The Professional Dimension

The elements of professional dimension considered here are teachers’ experiences in relation to educational policies and professional development. The need for teacher’ participation in policy decisions is significant for their professional identity. Mockler (2011, p.517) seemed to make this clear in her article “Beyond ‘what works’: understanding teacher identity as a practical and political tool”;

‘Teachers’ work, encompassing the decisions they make on both a short and long-term basis about approaches to such things as curriculum design, pedagogy and assessment (to name a few), is framed by and constituted through their understanding and positioning of themselves as a product of their professional identity’.

The argument made by Mockler (2011) is based on the acknowledgement that teaching is a profession and that teachers are the stakeholders with the ‘greatest and most direct stake in issues of education (Lefstein and Perath, 2014, p. 33). Thus, such key decisions

affecting their work rest upon teachers themselves to make. Therefore, teachers' experiences in relation to the policy making processes are fundamental to their professional identity. According to Little (1993, p.3), policy decisions or reforms may mean 'a substantial departure from teachers' prior experiences, established beliefs and present practice'; requiring them to continually construct, destruct and repair boundaries' along their professional identities (Margolis 1998, p.133). Lasky (2005) has pointed out this relationship by claiming that policies that align with teachers' existing experiences, for example, are more likely to enhance their sense of professional identity than those that do not. Drawing on findings from her study which sought to understand how teachers in California made sense of themselves amidst policy changes, Buchanan (2015) also found that there was a complex relationship between teachers' professional identity and their experiences in relation to reforms. When teachers' existing identity fitted with their local policy reforms, their commitment was stepped up. On the other hand, when there was a mismatch between teachers' existing identity and their local policies, they pushed back by rejecting, or reconfiguring such policies. This may explain Bangs and Frost's (2012) claim that involving teachers in decisions affects an important aspect of their identity, which is their sense of ownership and responsibility for their actions.

Within the professional dimension also, participation in professional development is key to teacher professional identity (van Veen, 2008). Professional development influences teachers' experiences not only because it leads to improvement in teachers' ability to deliver quality education to children, but also opportunities for them to develop their knowledge and skills help them to keep up to date with happenings in the teaching field (Guskey 2002). This is because teachers live and work in a rapidly changing environment, such that whatever knowledge and skills teachers acquire in their pre-service training becomes stale as new challenges and realities emerge. In Australia, Andrews and Louis (2004) found that where teachers were able to develop in their profession, it not only enhanced their knowledge, but also had a significant impact on their feelings about themselves as teachers because gaining new skills and knowledge potentially changed teachers' perceptions and attitudes. Similar claims are made by Trent (2011) in his qualitative study involving eight teachers in Hong Kong. The study examined how teachers believed their experiences in a professional development course

shaped their identity construction, upon completion of the course. He found that participants not only believed the impact of the course in terms of their own classroom teaching was positive, but also it contributed to them seeing themselves in a particular way within the context of their whole school communities. The response of some participants indicated that their experiences may have contributed to established identity positions such as ‘science-language teacher’ and ‘history-language teacher’. These identities were equated with teachers who were willing to keep learning and growing as content and language teachers and who understood the problems students faced in learning and who possessed teaching strategies to help their students in their learning.

The next section examines the personal dimension.

3.8.3. The Personal Dimension

Teachers’ professional identity is often described as the person within the profession because of the obvious interrelationship between the personal and professional aspects of their work as discussed earlier. One personal factor which this study is interested in is teachers’ motives for entering teaching. Evidence from the research literature implies that people enter teaching for different reasons. Stiegelbauer’s (1992) study involving 203 teacher trainees in the University of Toronto identified that teachers’ wish to influence younger generation and society; role models; passion to share expertise and knowledge were the main reasons that attracted student teachers into the profession. Hayes’ (1990) study also found that teachers entered the profession because they considered teaching as an inspiring responsibility, an easy job and a highly dignified profession. The influenced of former teachers, job security, salary, opportunity to express talent and creative ability and loved for children were also salient in teachers’ choice of the profession.

These reasons are broadly classified into intrinsic, extrinsic and the influence of other people. As Balyer and Özcan (2014) explain, individuals who are attracted mainly by intrinsic reasons see teaching as an autonomous and appropriate profession that will allow them to feel happy, while those who enter primarily by extrinsic reasons are attracted by external benefits such as pay, job security and flexible working conditions including vacations. Individuals are also influenced by other people such as parents, peers or former teachers.

Even though, this broad classification is usually what is applied in research, this study is interested in understanding whether teachers chose teaching because they viewed it as a job; a career; or a calling or vocation. These reasons may not essentially imply that a teacher with one reason or the other for choosing teaching will teach better than others with different motives. However, they have implications for teachers' feelings about their professional identity (Day, 2017). It is often argued that teachers who enter the profession because they see it as a 'job' do it for economic reasons such as salary and promotion (Bastick, 2000; Seligman, 2002). The security of service and attractive conditions of service including holidays all account for their choice as found in Hayes's (1990) study. Thus, such teachers drive their satisfaction in the profession through external benefits, while those who regard teaching as a 'career' are influenced by its contribution to society and the respect associated with it. As such, those teachers are more likely than those who see teaching as a job to invest their personal time and resources into their work (Seligman, 2002). For those who see it as a 'calling' or 'vocation', they are genuinely passionate and intrinsically motivated in their teaching for its own sake. They see it as an important and socially worthy profession (Balyer and Özcan, 2014; Seligman, 2002).

Taking all this into account, it is clear that people enter teaching for reasons that are influenced by factors both altruistic and extrinsic to them. However, many scholars argue that because teaching is an emotional job, the desire to work with children and help them develop both in their learning and career are the most important reasons that drive people into the profession (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012; Scott, Stone and Dinham, 2001; Watt and Richardson, 2008). In accordance with this argument, Fullan, (1993, p.12) claims that when you 'scratch a good teacher and you will find a moral purpose' in him or her. Two deductions can be made from this claim. First, moral purpose of teaching is a salient driving force for the profession, and second, as a teacher having a sense of moral purpose, a desire to do good will influence his or her professional practice. Explaining this further, Noddings (2010, p.12) claims that teachers sometimes underplay their own personal and professional problems and needs and focus their energies towards fulfilling the needs of their pupils. That is, they respond to the needs of their pupils as if they were their own needs, what she calls 'motivational displacement'. These claims may be true to some extent as findings in Watt et al.'s (2012) cross national study involving teachers in

Australia, Germany, USA and Norway, for example, found that regardless of context and teachers' experiences, the key factor that attracted and kept teachers in their work was their desire to make social contributions, and work with young adults and children.

However, Adendorff et al. (2002) do not seem to agree entirely with these views. They argue that moral values alone may not be sufficient to keep teachers going in their work and to ensure they sustain a positive sense of professional identity. Confronted with extremely challenging teaching environment, there is likely to be a conflict between the values that informed a teachers' entry into the profession and their ability to fulfil such values. According to Nias (1989), this could impact on teachers' feelings about themselves as teachers, as their inability to fulfil such values leaves them feeling inadequate and guilty in their work. This argument is acknowledged by Fullan (1993). According to him the way schools operate as well as decision makers treat teachers, for example, has the potential to adversely influence teachers' moral values, thereby affecting how they feel about themselves as teachers. Such contentions make it reasonable to suggest that attention needs to be paid also to the extrinsic reasons that attract teachers to and keep them in, the profession even in situations where it is evident that teachers are chiefly motivated by their moral values.

3.9. Summary of Chapter

This chapter has explored the main concepts of the study. As the teacher as a person and as a professional are interlinked, the chapter began by discussing the concept of the 'self' and its relationship with identity. This was followed by exploring, the concept of identity. Here, it emerged that a person's identity is an influence of both his or her personal attributes and the social environment. As a result, identity is not fixed and stable but continually constructed and reconstructed. Like identity, teacher professional identity is also an influence of the personal attributes of the teacher and his or her experiences in and outside the school environment.

The chapter has also examined Day and Kington (2008) and Mockler's (2011) frameworks for understanding teacher professional identity. Both frameworks echo the views that the way teachers feel about themselves as teachers is affected by factors that are both internal and external to teachers. Drawing from the various perspectives

regarding 'self', 'identity' and 'teacher professional identity', and specifically, adapting Day and Kington's (2008) model, the conceptual framework that underpinned the study was outlined and explained.

The next chapter discusses the methodology and methods of data collection for the study. Here, the study approach and strategy are explained. The selection of participants and how data was collected and analysed are also discussed. As the method of data collection involved contact and interaction with participants, the chapter also examines the ethical issues that were encountered and how they were handled.

Chapter Four

Methodology and Methods of Data Collection

4.1. Introduction

In Chapter Three, concepts related to this study including ‘self’, ‘identity’ and ‘teacher professional identity’ were reviewed. Ideas from these concepts were drawn to conceptualise teacher professional identity for the study. More specifically, Day and Kington’s (2008) framework for understanding teacher professional identity was adapted to serve as a guide to the study. In line with this framework, the contextual, professional and personal dimensions of teachers’ experiences were explored. The chapter also explored the impact of teachers’ sense of professional identity on their practice.

This chapter explains the methodology and methods of data collection for the study. It begins by explaining my position in relation to the study. As someone with multiple identities in relation to teachers and the setting of this study, clarifying where I stand in relation to the study is necessary. This is followed by discussing the study approach together with the paradigm, in this case, interpretivism. The chapter also acknowledges an alternative strategy, ethnography, but justifies why case study strategy is deemed more appropriate for this study. The instruments of data collection are explained, followed by the participants and sampling technique. Discussion in this section also includes a detailed procedure for the data collection and analysis to answer the research questions. Here, I also justify why the findings are trustworthy. To ensure that the study meets established standards and criteria for social science research, the ethical issues encountered in this study are discussed. The chapter also reflects on the methodological issues that arose from my interactions with teachers, pupils and their settings and how I managed these.

4.2. Situating Myself

Researchers often adopt the position of either an insider or outsider. In other cases, it tends to be both. Denscombe (2007) makes a distinction between these two positions.

While the 'insider researcher' studies a particular population where he or she has associations with in terms of identity or experiences, the 'outsider researcher' does not have any association with the population under study. Explaining further what is usually expected of the researcher in either positions, he indicates that assuming the position of an insider enables researchers to utilise their:

'identities, values and beliefs to play a role in the production and analysis of qualitative data and therefore researchers should come clean about the way their research agenda has been shaped by personal experiences and social backgrounds'(ibid, p.300).

He also makes us understand that, as an outsider, researchers become aware that;

'their self is intertwined with their research activity, but...they can exercise sufficient control over their normal attitudes to allow them to operate in a detached manner, so that their investigation is not clouded by personal prejudices'(ibid, p.301).

I have explained in Chapter One that my professional background identified me with teachers in this study. Nevertheless, since I wanted to learn about teachers' opinions as they were those in the field, I did not want to cloud their views with mine. Thus, I also assumed a position of an 'interested guest' in the field (Mears, 2009, p. 101). This made me both an insider and outsider in the study. Adopting the position of an insider was beneficial in a number of ways including easy access to teachers and detailed information. Assuming an outsider position was also helpful in thinking, as much as possible, about my role as a researcher, interactions with teachers, and data analysis and interpretation. These benefits are explained in detail in subsequent sections in this chapter.

While adopting the role of both an insider and 'interested guest' is a helpful positioning for a better understanding of participants and the issues they share, there are also challenges associated with such a positionality (Armstrong, 2001; Greene 2014). For Beoku-Betts (1994), following her experience as a black woman conducting research in a culture different from her own but similar in terms of a common background and heritage, both positions are helpful. However, they masked greater complexities in the research situation as her African identity was also both advantageous and a drawback for her study. Asselin's (2003) conclusion seems to support the views of Beoku-Betts (1994) as she claims that, while there are clear benefits, such a nested positionality also provides

complications. According to her, dual position can result in role confusion where the researcher responds to the participants, issues or data from a perspective other than that of a researcher.

What this means is that role confusion can occur in being either an insider or outsider researcher. However, there appears to be a greater danger when the researcher is familiar with the research setting or participants through a role other than that of a researcher. Commenting on a possible impact of her insider status on her interviews with participants in her study, Armstrong (2001), for example, noted that her ‘enthusiasm for a subject dear to her own heart may have influenced participants from considering certain aspects of their experiences. Elaborating how being an insider may affect a research process, Chavez (2008) also claims that there may be difficulties with recognizing patterns due to familiarity with the setting, partiality in selecting participants, difficulty in breaking or maintaining relationships with participants when leaving the field and overload with exchange or reciprocity requests from participants.

As stated above and explained in subsequent sections in this chapter, although I had a positive experience with teachers in the field, it was not without some difficulties. My background appeared to be enough to make some teachers both comfortable and confident in me to reveal some personal and often painful personal life stories to me. Specific details of these stories cannot be shared in this study as they were personal and not related to my study. In an interview with one teacher, I asked about her family background. Some discussion regarding this question revealed personal details which were emotional in nature ranging from problems with her in-laws to health issues. She talked about these issues in ways that I doubt she would have done so, if I were a researcher with a different background. Often, after listening to her for some time, I felt as if I had to steer the conversation back to specifically discuss issues in relation to my study. However, this was a difficult task not only because she kept returning to those issues but also I felt that I ‘owed’ this teacher a listening opportunity because of the confidence reposed in me.

That was not the only challenge associated with my positionality. As will be seen in subsequent sections in this chapter, professionally, as these teachers felt that I was one of

them, at times, the conversations would turn such that they rather assumed the role of the researcher, asking me questions and quizzing me about my plans when my study was finished. They would also ask me how the outcome of my study would help to improve their situation. Even when I redirected the focus of the conversation on my questions, some teachers kept returning to this concern. I realised that there was a reason for this. It could be that not only was this linked directly to their needs, but also they wanted to know what approach, based on my experience, I would use to ensure that their voice was actually heard as one teacher doubted whether authority would acknowledge their concerns. To this end, I felt as if my participants would hold me more accountable for my study than they would with a researcher with a different background. I got the impression that teachers felt that being a former teacher, I would make sense of their struggles in ways that would attract attention from authority. Such expectations from teachers would seem reasonable, and in some way rational, as it is suggested that people tend to lean towards those with whom they have some form of common characteristics (Chang, 2002). However, as explained in Chapter Eight, the urgency with which these teachers wanted improvement in their situation presented a struggle for me. I felt an added sense of responsibility and pressure to analyse and present teachers' stories in ways that would appeal to authority.

Also, with my 'interested guest' position, I was expected to play a neutral role (Denscombe, 2007). I admit that, to some extent my background could have affected the gathering of data. For instance, when teachers used a phrase like, 'You are aware of what I'm saying already', I would ask follow-up questions or make comments to allow teachers to elaborate their responses. However, in one occasion with one teacher in my first week of observation, my follow-up comment was close to suggesting rather than redirecting the teacher, as I commented, 'I had such experience in my school'. This disclosure of my own experience may have influenced the response of this teacher in a way which may not have emerged without my comment.

Nevertheless, I think my awareness of my positionality through reflexivity minimised as much as possible the likelihood of clouding participants' views with mine. I cannot claim to have resolved completely all the struggles that I faced in relation to my positionality.

However, reflexivity provided ways for me to deal with these tensions in a manner that, they did not impact negatively on my study. This is explained in more detail in Section 4.12 of this chapter. The effect of reflexivity in the research process is widely acknowledged in qualitative research (Brown, 2012; Haynes, 2012; Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2000). For instance, in her work on negotiating the insider-outsider status in research, Brown (2012) acknowledges the positive effect of reflexivity in dealing with the tensions that are often associated with this positionality. She posits that reflexivity produces different effects in the research process. Thus, researchers must be conscious of this in designing and carrying out the research as well as analysing the data. Without this awareness, there is a higher risk of losing focus of one's role as the researcher and not the researched.

4.3. The Study Paradigm

The two fundamental methodological approaches that guide research in the social sciences are the quantitative and qualitative approaches. The underlining distinction between the two approaches is in their assumptions regarding either being a positivist or interpretivist paradigm (Willis, Jost and Nilakanta, 2007). Traditionally, quantitative approach is linked to positivism while the qualitative is linked to interpretivism.

The positivist paradigm makes the assumption that objective reality exists 'out there' already which is measurable, observable and stable (Merriam, 2009, p. 8). Hence, there is little room for interpretation about it (Thomas, 2009). This explains why the positivist paradigm adopts a numeric description and presentation of phenomena and assumes that only those phenomena which are observable are countered as knowledge (Creswell, 2009). This paradigm also stresses generalisation of results of research beyond the confines of the population under study. This preoccupation for generalisability displays itself in the great consideration attached to sampling issues and in particular the 'representativeness of samples' (Bryman, 1988, p. 34); so that findings can give statistical estimations of prevalence (Ritchie, Lewis and Elam, 2003).

In comparison, interpretivism seeks an understanding of the subjective opinions of people. This paradigm assumes that reality is not out there waiting to be uncovered as facts, but a phenomenon that can be understood in different ways (Coleman and Briggs,

2002). Thus, reality is uncovered not just by giving a description of what participants say. Rather, it is about getting underneath what they are saying to discover the meanings that they ascribe to their experiences (Larkin, Watts and Clifton, 2006). Here, the core task of the researcher is to treat participants as subjects. This manner, he or she is able to engage actively with them, listen to their accounts of experiences and incorporate them into his or her own ways of understanding participants, the issues, the context or all three (Hays and Singh, 2012). By doing this, the researcher is also able to gather rich and detailed data. However, because knowledge claims are arrived at through interpretations, conclusions are also likely to differ from one researcher to another (Willis, Jost and Nilakanta, 2007).

It could be argued that combining both the positivist and interpretivist paradigms in a single study would produce better findings. However, since this study aimed to explore the subjective opinions of teachers and interpret them in order to gain a deeper understanding of how they make sense of their professional identity and the issues influencing this, the interpretivist paradigm was considered more appropriate. Applying this paradigm allowed me to engage actively with teachers and listen to accounts of their experiences and incorporate these into my own way of understanding them and the contexts.

4.4. The Study Strategy

The purpose of a study strategy is to facilitate data collection (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2010). Two strategies often associated with researching participants in their natural environment are ethnography and case study. Although there are shared features among these strategies which are to understand and obtain meaning, the use of fieldwork and an inductive approach to data analysis' (Merriam, 1998), key differences exist between them. For example, while ethnography usually requires the researcher staying relatively longer with participants in the field, sometimes lasting for years, to learn about participants' culture and social practices in order to be like 'natives' (Hockey, 1993, p.201), case study explores a phenomenon within its real-life or natural environment where the researcher considers that the context of the phenomenon under exploration has an impact on the issue being studied (Yin, 2009).

As the main aim of this study was to understand how teachers made sense of their professional identity within a particular context, which in this study was teachers in deprived rural areas, it meant that the specific context of teachers' work and lives was significant to understanding the issues. Moreover, considering that I hailed from the Northern part of the country and also, I was already familiar with some of the practices in the basic education system of Ghana, I did not need to spend longer time with these teachers first learning about their culture and social practices, including language as part of my data collection as often the case in 'ethnography'. Thus, the case study approach was considered more appropriate for exploring teachers' experiences and interpreting them in order to gain a deeper understanding of their sense of professional identity.

Moreover, since the case study approach leans towards the competence and expert knowledge of the researcher to give trustworthiness to the findings it was appropriate in this study because of my background (Yin, 2009). Taking my experiential knowledge together with familiarity with the policies, practices and operations of the Ghana Education System into the study helped me to understand events and actions seen and heard more quickly than if I did not have this background knowledge (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Throughout my years of teaching in the field, I gained an understanding of how things work in the Ghana education system, and why, and what will occur under certain situations. This knowledge was relevant in understanding and interpreting the issues.

A variety of case studies are suggested in social science research. Stake (2005) categorises them as 'intrinsic', where the researcher has a genuine interest in the case and the intent is to better understand it; 'instrumental', which provides insight into the issue as the 'case' is often examined in depth and its contexts scrutinised; and 'collective', where the researcher examines different cases for purposes of comparison. Yin (2009) also suggests three types: explanatory, exploratory and descriptive case studies. The explanatory is applied in situations where the study seeks to explain presumed causal links between cases, while the exploratory is applied in situations in which the issue being examined has no clear and single set of conclusions. The descriptive, as the name implies, seeks to describe a phenomenon in the actual context that it happens. Yin (2009) further

differentiates between the ‘single case study with embedded units’ and a ‘multiple or collective case study’. The single case study with embedded units enables researchers to explore one case in detail while considering the impact of various circumstances on participants’ views. This type of case study is sometimes referred to as a nested case study since the various units form an integral part of the broader case being studied (Thomas, 2016). The multiple or collective case study, on the other hand, allows several cases to be examined in order to understand the similarities and dissimilarities between them (Yin, 2009).

In deciding which type of case study was applicable to this study, I took into account the overall design of the study. Therefore, the ‘single case study with embedded units’; ‘descriptive’; ‘intrinsic’; ‘instrumental’ and ‘exploratory’ case studies were most suitable. Regarding the single case study with embedded units, this study focused on basic school teachers in deprived rural areas in order to examine their sense of professional identity and the issues that influenced this. However, this could not be possible without examining teachers’ opinions relative to the school environment; community; and district education management. It is in these settings that the experiences of teachers can be explored in detail (Baxter and Jack, 2008). The study was also partly descriptive because, it gathered data on the background of the districts, communities and schools of focus teachers (i.e. locations, physical resources, teacher population and pupil enrolment). It also explained the basic education system as well as the employment, working and living conditions of basic school teachers in the country. Including this information in the study was important in enhancing understanding of the situation of teaching as a profession in the country. Also, as already indicated, this study emerged partly from my experiences. Thus, I had a vested interest in understanding teachers’ sense of professional identity. This made the study ‘intrinsic’. This study was also instrumental since I aimed to examine the experiences of teachers in depth. Hence, the decision to use both observation and interviews to gather data. Finally, this study was largely exploratory because it sought to discover the professional identity of teachers in deprived rural areas. Although I was familiar with some of the situations in deprived rural areas, I considered this as one-dimensional since I viewed the situation as one person (Thomas, 2016). I felt that

exploring the views of teachers currently in the field would give credibility to the situation of teachers in such areas.

However, critics of the case study approach argue that the cases under study are not often representative of the population. Due to this, generalisations are not always possible and question the value of such a study (Scott and Russell, 2005). In my view, these criticisms appear to signify a misunderstanding of the fundamental purpose of case study, which is to explain a matter in detail in a specific context (Hancock, 1998; Yin, 2009). Therefore, in this study, the extent to which the findings can be generalised to other areas depends on how far different people including teachers themselves, pupils, researchers and school administrators in similar situations can relate the findings to their own situation or contexts. In other words, when it comes to making generalisations in this study, part of the task lies with readers of this thesis who must be provided with the necessary and enough information to decide how far the findings have implications across contexts (Denscombe, 2007; Taber, 2007). That is, the case being studied here should enable whoever reads this thesis to feel sufficiently informed to decide whether the context of my study is similar and relevant to his or her own. This was why data collection paid detailed attention to the unique features of teachers' school environments, communities and districts. In addition, a benchmark for judging the worth of this study is the extent to which the findings are suitable to contribute to policy and practice and existing literature. As Bassey (1981, p. 86) makes it clear, if case studies;

‘...are aimed at the improvement of education ...and if by publication of the findings they extend the boundaries of existing knowledge, then they are valid forms of educational research’.

Therefore, if findings in this study can assist in addressing issues relating specifically to teachers in this study while there are still relatable aspects that apply more widely to teachers in similar contexts, what Bassey (1999, p.52) terms as ‘fuzzy generalisation’, then part of the purpose of this study is fulfilled.

4.5. Participants for the Study

This study focused on public basic school teachers, as most Ghanaian teachers work in this sector. This sector is also the larger provider of education for children in the country.

A total of ten public basic school teachers, selected across the Bongo and Nabdam Districts, participated in this study. Four of these teachers participated in the first stage of data collection which was interviews only, while seven teachers, including one of the teachers who participated in the first stage of the data collection, were involved in the second stage of data collection. These seven teachers served as focus teachers in the study. The decision to select only seven teachers for the second stage of data collection was based on several reasons. First, the sample did not need to be large to support issues of prevalence, since these are not the focus of qualitative research (Ritchie, Lewis and Elam, 2003). Second, the interest of this study was not to generalise the findings at a statistical level but to examine teachers' experiences in detail. Therefore, it was better to focus on depth of coverage of the issues rather than breadth in terms of sample size (Thomas, 2016). In other words, it was appropriate to focus on a smaller number of teachers in order to gather rich data. However, it is important to indicate that, in line with my data collection methods which included participant observation, I had the opportunity to interact with some head teachers and other teachers in focus teachers' schools during my observation. This added rigour and richness to the data collected. Although pupils were not the focus of this study, I also observed and interacted with them in their schools and classrooms as I was asked to teach in two schools. I will discuss the implications of my interactions with pupils and teachers in subsequent sections of this chapter and in Chapter Eight.

4.6. Selecting Participants

The focus of this study on basic school teachers called for an approach that would ensure that all the key characteristics of basic school teachers in the country, discussed in Chapter Two, were covered. Thus, participants were purposively selected to include at least one teacher from the three levels of basic education in the country. Selecting participants purposively also helped to achieve some diversity. Teachers of different biographical and professional profiles in terms of gender, teaching experience and qualification were included (see Table 6 below). Such a diversity of participants ensured that the findings could reflect basic school teachers, although not generalisable across all basic schools in the country as explained already. Selecting participants purposively also

made it easier and cheaper as I did not have to spend so much time and effort to, first, identify all teachers in the two districts and use a laborious random selection process to select them (Gravetter and Forzano, 2012).

Notwithstanding the flexibility of the purposive sampling approach, critics are of the view that it is prone to bias (Connaway and Powel, 2010); and that the sample selected does not reflect the total population (Cohen, Manion and Morrisson, 2010). Fortunately, as stated elsewhere in this chapter, a sample representative of the population was not the aim of this study. Hence, the possibility that the sample might not be representative of the population was immaterial here.

Table 6: A Summary of Focus Teachers' Profile

Name of Participant (pseudonyms)	Gender	Qualification	Teaching Experience in years	Level of Teaching	District (pseudonyms)
Japri	Male	First Degree	11	Primary	Zolema
Lapeka	Female	Diploma	6	Kindergarten	Talema
Etiko	Male	SSSCE	5	Primary	Talema
Igbenaa	Male	Diploma	11	Primary	Zolema
Eninga	Female	Diploma	5	Kindergarten	Zolema
Kagah	Male	First Degree	9	Junior High	Talema
Raka	Female	Diploma	5	Kindergarten	Zolema

Source: Field Data, December 2016

The profiles of focus teachers are discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

4.7. The Selection Process

To identify teachers who would be willing to participate in this study, three kinds of negotiations were carried out. First, seeking permission from the District Education Offices, head teachers and teachers themselves.

Initial contact was made to the education director of the Bongo District through telephone; first, to introduce myself and second to know what was expected of me to gain access to teachers in the district to conduct my study. This was done while I was still in the university preparing to return to Ghana for my fieldwork. Informally, my request was granted. However, the director asked for a formal letter from my university for documentation in the District Education Office. This was done upon my return to Ghana with an introductory letter from The Graduate School (attached as Appendix A). Coincidentally, the director for the Bongo District Education Office happened to be the former Human Resource Manager for the Nabdam District Education Office, who I happened to meet during my master's study. I took advantage of this previous contact and relationship with him in negotiating access (Silverman, 2011).

Similarly, access to carry out the study in the Nabdam District was sought through the formal letter from The Graduate School. In both districts, I attached an introductory letter, which outlined my professional background and experience, the nature and purpose of my research and the support I expected from the district (attached as Appendix B and C). In both districts, I received written consents to proceed with my field work with teachers (attached as Appendices D and E). After granting me permission, the director of one of the districts offered to help me to identify possible deprived rural schools that I could involve in my study. This offer was politely declined as I was aware this could compromise confidentiality of participants. Negotiating access in both districts was relatively easy perhaps because of my background.

The first thing I did after receiving the permission from the District Education Offices was to make rounds of the various locations of circuits with rural and deprived schools. Such initial rounds were useful as I was able to identify and familiarise myself with the routes and locations of schools. This information also helped me to plan my movements around the schools, in terms of time and resources. I made a rough sketch of a map of the locations of schools to help me in this direction. Actual visits were then made to schools. In every school that I visited, first, I met the head teacher, in some schools it was the assistant head teacher, and explained the purpose of my visit to the school. I gave a copy of the letter from the respective District Education Office and my own introductory letter

which outlined my professional background and experience, the nature of my study and how I wanted teachers to be involved (attached as Appendix F). Where permission was granted, I proceeded to ask for the information of all teachers in the school in order to decide who to select. The information included the classes that they were teaching (whether upper or lower in the case of the primary level), qualification, number of years of teaching and whether they were trained or untrained teachers. All these variables were necessary to ensure a balance in the selection of participants.

Like the case with one of the district directors, in some schools, the head teachers or assistants themselves offered to help me by suggesting some teachers I could involve in my study. Again, these offers were politely declined. I explained that I had criteria for selecting teachers and that I would prefer to contact teachers directly. This was also important because participation in this study was voluntary, so I did not want potential participating teachers to feel they were being coerced to participate because of recommendation by the head teacher or assistant. Moreover, I was mindful of other potential dangers associated with the use of third parties to contact potential participants. While third parties may be familiar with potential participants, they can hardly explain the nature and purpose of someone else's research as well as respond to any questions that potential participants may ask (Seidman, 2006). They may, thus, be helpful for gaining access but should be used as little as possible to make actual contacts with potential participants. Following this reminder, I decided to contact potential participating teachers myself. Fortunately, I expended little time and effort in getting head teachers to grant me permission, except in situations where they were genuinely busy in performing school activities such as conducting examinations for pupils and filling in School-Based Assessment forms as my visit coincided with the end of the first term for the 2016/2017 academic year.

Next, I met the selected teacher and explained the nature of my study and the kind of participation I expected of him or her. I gave a copy of my introductory letter, which explained my professional background and experience (see Appendix G). I attached the participants' information sheet and consent form and allowed some time for the teacher to read (see Appendices H and I). The purpose of doing all these was to give them as much

opportunity as possible to enable them to make an informed decision on whether or not they would like to participate. Here, also, I did not have difficulties getting teachers to consent to participate. In most schools, I got feedback from selected teachers on the same day agreeing to participate. Two reasons could account for this. First, maybe my professional background acted as a catalyst; and second, it could be that teachers were keen for their voices to be heard.

I then collected the contact numbers of selected teachers, so I could keep in touch with them and remind them of my appointments with them. Although I did not need more than one teacher in each school, I spoke to another teacher in the same school so that in case the selected teacher was unable or decided later not to participate in the study, I could turn to the second teacher to replace him or her. This proved to be a good decision as in one school the selected teacher could not honour the appointment. He had to travel to his former school to collect his certificate and would be absent from school on the week I was supposed to visit his school to observe him and conduct the interviews. I had to turn to the second teacher.

4.8. Data Collection

A total of three months (December 2016 to February 2017) was spent in the field for data collection. My fieldwork was intentionally planned to coincide with the end of the first school term and beginning of the second school term of the 2016/2017 academic year. This was intended to allow for time to first, try out my interview guide, test my digital audio recorder, and make amendments where necessary before proceeding with data collection with my focus teachers in the second school term. It was also intended to give me the opportunity to identify the locations of schools and make appointments with focus teachers ahead of the actual data collection in the second school term. Regarding my means of transport to and from the field, I used my cousin's motorbike. My cousin was in the university pursuing his first degree, so the motor bike was handed over to me. Also, as my hometown is far away from the two districts, I arranged for a single room in my friend's house in the Upper East Regional capital, Bolgatanga.

4.8.1. The Data Collection Methods

Data was collected mainly through interviews and observation. However, these two methods were supplemented with the writing of field notes. The interview method was used to gather data for the first stage of the study, whilst both participant observation and interview methods were used in the second stage of data collection. Some quantitative data was also gathered from the Districts Education Offices regarding the pupil and teacher population in the districts. In the course of my field work, I also had access to the District Assembly Medium-Term Development Plan documents from the two District Assemblies. Although gathering of quantitative data was not part of the study design, all of this information was helpful in my understanding and analysis of the data.

Below is a detailed explanation of the data collection methods.

4.8.1.1. Interviews

Overall, interviews are an essential source of case study evidence because case studies are about human interactions, which should be reported and interpreted through the voices of interviewees themselves (Simons, 2015). The research interview is different from ordinary conversation because it has a pattern that transcends the usual daily human interactions. It also has a purpose, often, centred on ‘a theme of mutual interest’ (Kvale, 1996, p. 125).

Generally, three types of research interviews are identified in the literature; structured, unstructured and semi-structured. The structured interview relies on a pre-established sequence of questions that a researcher follows rigidly (Thomas, 2009). Questions are defined by what the researcher wants to hear (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003); and asked exactly as written, and probes, if included, are also standardised (Hays and Singh, 2012). The unstructured interview focuses on the surrounding context at the time of the interview (Hays and Singh, 2012). Due to that, it is sometimes difficult to synthesize the data. Conversely, the semi-structured interview, also known as in-depth interview, contains an interview guide which is a list of issues that the researcher intends to cover (Thomas, 2016). However, once the interview begins, the interviewee has more say in the structure and process. They have the freedom to tell their stories in their own way, although the interviewer guides and follows up on issues that are not clearly expressed

and lets the interviewee elaborate on those issues (Dornyei, 2007). Every interview question does not also have to be asked and the sequence and pace of interview questions can change (Hays and Singh, 2012) and questions can be modified to allow the researcher to respond to emerging issues in the field (Merriam, 2009; Rubin and Rubin, 2012).

In view of the aim of this study to explore teachers' views in-depth within the conceptual frame of the study, the semi-structured interview technique was considered the most appropriate means of obtaining data. The technique made it easier to arrange and guide the direction of the interviews. It also made it possible to observe non-verbal cues exhibited by interviewees indicating confusion, uncertainty, or waning motivation and react to those cues in constructive ways, thereby, boosting enthusiasm. The presence of people or other obstacles that had the potential to distract the interviewee were observed and reacted to accordingly to overcome or avoid those distractions.

4.8.1.1.1. The Interview Procedure

There were two stages of interviews in this study. The first stage involved interviews with four teachers. The reason for this was to give me an opportunity to try out my interview guide, determine questions that needed prompts and clarifications and to make all necessary changes. It was also intended to help me to test the audio recorder and determine the time required to conduct the interview. Issues arising from my first interviews were taken into consideration and modifications were made in my interviews with the focus teachers in the second stage of the data collection. For instance, the recording was clear, though there were some background noises. There were some interruptions as some pupils and teachers often entered the interview venue to talk to the interviewee. I tried to minimise these interruptions during interviews with focus teachers by ensuring that the interviewees alerted their pupils and colleagues about the interview time and venue. Also, three of the interviews in the first stage lasted more than the approximated time of one hour with each teacher. This impacted negatively on interviewees as they appeared tired although they were willing to continue with the interviews after the one-hour duration. This was modified by conducting two series of interviews on different days with focus teachers (see Appendix J for interview schedule).

Conducting two series of interviews was also useful in enriching the data. As Mishler (1986) argues, a single interview may miss substantial information that would more likely emerge across series of interviews. This position appears to be supported by Mears (2009) who indicates that conducting a series of interviews likely yields a stronger relationship between the researcher and interviewee, such that the interviewee is relaxed to talk about difficult or emotional experiences to the researcher whom he or she has had previous interactions with and established rapport.

The first series of interviews were conducted at the beginning of my observation. This focused on teachers' background information, how they became teachers and why they chose teaching as a profession. Questions relating to their experiences in the school, community and district were also asked. The second series of the interview which was conducted towards the end of my observation, focused on participants' feelings about being basic school teachers in deprived rural areas, how their family, friends and other members of community think about them as basic school teachers. Questions relating to how participants' perceptions of professional identity impacted on their professional practice and aspirations for enhancing their sense of professional identity were also asked. These questions were generated from my reading of the literature and related to my research questions (see Appendix K for interview guide). This second series of interviews were also used to clarify any issues in the first interviews.

One of the questions in my interview guide; 'How do your friends, family, community and society view you as a teacher?' seemed ambiguous to interviewees. The use of the verb 'view' appeared not clear to participants as three of them asked me what I meant by 'view them'. In the interviews with focus teachers, I substituted 'view' with 'see you' or 'think about you'. I also made use of signposts to guide participants on what to talk about. Another two questions; 'How do your own views about yourself as a teacher influence your practice?' and 'How do the views of others about you as a teacher influence your practice?' were not asked to majority of interviewees because in their answers to questions regarding their experiences in the teaching profession also talked about how their experiences impacted on their practice.

All interviews with participants were conducted in English Language through one to one face to face. Conducting the interviews in the form of one to one face to face made it easier for me to monitor and guide the direction of the interviews as there was only one interviewee at a time (Denscombe, 2007). I could observe non-verbal cues exhibited by interviewees and react to them appropriately. Also, I was able to observe events such as the presence of other teachers and pupils that were likely to interrupt the interview and react to overcome those potential interruptions (Shuy, 2003). Also, because I was in the same space with interviewees, I could build rapport with them which I think created openness in the interviewees to freely talk about their experiences.

I started each interview with an overview of the nature of the study, its purpose and the nature of interviewees' participation and how long the interview was expected to last. I also reminded interviewees of how data would be used and reassured them of confidentiality, while at the same time reminding them of the right to withdrawal from the interview without giving any reasons. This was done to make interviewees feel at ease and relax (Mears, 2009). I then sought the permission of interviewees to audio record the interview to ensure that everything said, including hesitations and tone, was recorded for transcription and analysis (Merriam, 2009; Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). Interviewees signed a consent form to confirm their consent to voluntarily participate in the interview and to allow me to audio record the interview. The following basic precautions regarding my audio recorder were checked; I checked to be sure it was functioning, and the recording duration was long enough to cover the entire duration of the interview. I also had spare batteries as a back-up. Although interviews were audio recorded, a few notes were jotted during the interviews in order to decide which aspects of interviewee's expressions to probe or seek clarification. Jotting down notes was also helpful in capturing any impressions I made about the interview situation as well as non-verbal expressions of interviewees to be used alongside the audio recording in the analysis of the data.

The choice of the time and venue for interviews was left at the convenience of interviewees themselves. However, being the researcher, I had the responsibility to ensure their choices were quite conducive for the interview to proceed (Legard et al., 2003). The venues for interviews included the following places; teacher's own classroom, head

teacher office or book store, under a tree and classroom corridor. It was interesting how interviewees reacted differently during interviews depending on the venue. For instance, I observed that the interviews that were conducted in the head teacher office or book store, interviewees moved to show me some of the teaching and learning materials in the school. In the teacher's classroom, participants showed me the class register and also demonstrated to me how they use teaching and learning materials in the class. Some also pointed to me the issues they talked about such as inadequate classroom furniture, textbooks and cracks on the walls of the classroom. Participants who chose to be interviewed under a tree or the corridor of the classroom explained that they felt their privacy was assured and that they were comfortable expressing their views. I observed that they paused the conversation whenever pupils or colleague teachers appeared to be coming towards the interview venue.

Attention was also paid to our seating position. Seating arrangements were such that it allowed for good eye contact between both of us. I also endeavoured to use appropriate facial expressions and head nods to encourage interviewees to continue talking. I was guided by Gillham (2000) warning that inappropriate use of these physical gestures makes interviewees feel uncomfortable. Thus, these were used sparingly and cautiously.

All interviews commenced with the general statement 'tell me about yourself'. This was done not only to enable me to collect important background information about participants, but also to allow interviewees to begin in a familiar territory (Denscombe, 2007; DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006). Although there was an interview guide, questions were worded in such a manner that allowed interviewees to share their experiences broadly rather than responding to direct questions. Questions were open-ended and allowed interviewees to talk about issues. This also allowed me to probe deeply into challenging or interesting expressions such as: '*They say teachers' reward is in heaven*'. Probing such comments was important in guaranteeing the accuracy of my interpretation of the data (Mears, 2009). Also, follow up questions were asked which helped to gain more insights into interviewees' experiences (Galletta, 2013; Mears, 2009).

Also, all questions were not strictly asked to interviewees as they were outlined in the interview guide since interviews are sometimes regarded as social conversations in which

perspectives are co-constructed between the interviewer and interviewee (Kvale, 1996). In view of this, one question may not be appropriate for all interviewees (Silverman, 2011). I also avoided asking leading questions as these questions likely suggest to interviewees a preferred response (Legard et al., 2003).

All interviews were conducted in English Language but there were instances that some participants asked if they could use their local dialect to make their expressions clearer or emphasise a point. I allowed this since I understood participants' local dialect and could translate it later during transcription. There were also measures to draw interviewees' attention to the end of the interview. I signalled an approach to the end of the interview by using phrases such as 'My final question is...', 'To conclude'. This approach to ending the interviews was important as it allowed interviewees to return to the feeling of ordinary conversation (Legard et al., 2003). I also checked to ensure that interviewees did not leave the interview scene with any unexpressed feelings or issues important to them. This was done by asking interviewees to share with me any issue they could not say during the interview perhaps because I did not ask them. I also gave them the opportunity to ask me any question they had, which some of them did. In many instances, participants asked how the findings of my study would benefit them. In responding to this, I indicated that I hope to draw the attention of stakeholders to the potentials and challenges in working in these areas through publication of my findings. I also intend to disseminate findings through conferences, seminars and workshops as well talking directly to policy makers and other stakeholders. This I hope would contribute to efforts at addressing their concerns. If that was my first interview with a focus teacher, I informed him or her of what I hoped we would talk about in the second interview.

In using interviews, I was mindful of critics of this technique for data collection who caution that there is the likelihood of bias influencing the interviews. As Selltiz et al. (1967, p.583) point out, 'interviewers are human beings and not machines and that the manner in which the interview is conducted may influence interviewees' responses. Extending this argument, Kvale (2006) talks of interviews as serving the interest of the interviewer who has hidden agendas to fulfil. Of course, 'no social activity is completely value-free' (Louisy, 1997, p. 201). Besides that, 'the fact that an interviewer has strong opinions on the subject' under study does not necessarily mean that his or her research

will be biased, nor does the fact that he or she has no strong stand regarding the study necessarily make his or her research free from bias (Selltiz et al., 1967, p.583). The important issue is whether the role played by the researcher results in any distortions to the outcome of the research or not. I was conscious of my role as a researcher during interviews with participants so not to influence their responses. I endeavoured to avoid asking leading questions. I also asked interviewees to clarify issues that were not clear to me which I believed minimised my influence on interviewees' responses.

4.8.1.2. Observations

Although case study is an interactive social process, sometimes it is only by taking a practical observation of events that one can obtain a comprehensive understanding of the issues (Simons, 2009). This is particularly important in studies involving observations of schools or classrooms. In this study, using observations afforded me the opportunity to see things that teachers were likely not to freely talk about in the interviews or were not even aware of (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2010). Also, this was useful in discovering whether participants did what they said they were doing or behave in the way they claimed to behave (Bell, 2005). Information gathered provided a rich background against which I interpreted teachers' experiences.

With respect to the role played by the researcher through observation, one of three positions can be assumed. The first is unobtrusive observation, where researchers avoid intervening in the situations they are observing and may not identify themselves at all in some cases. That is, the researcher looks at the situation from a distance and remains completely detached from the research participants or the scene and thus has less influence on it (Angrosino, 2012; Maree, 2007). Arguably, detachment from participants can be a major setback in itself as it prevents the researcher from understanding fully participants or the issues under investigation. This is because he or she would not be able to ask any questions to clarify what participants have said or done.

The second is reactive observation, where researchers do identify themselves and explain their intentions to those they wish to observe. They may also intervene in the situation, though they try to limit their involvement in the research situation (Angrosino, 2012). A limitation of this form of observation is that the researcher has brief interactions with

participants which could limit opportunities for gaining, as much as possible, a full understanding of the participants or the issues under study (Maree, 2007).

The third is participant observation, where researchers strive to be active members of the group they are observing. Ball (1990, p.159) argues that researchers in the field cannot be 'invisible fly on the wall...but is always and inevitably a part of the scene'. They become members of the group to gain an insider's perspective on what is happening in participants' environments, without losing sight of their position as researchers (Angrosino, 2012). They are aware that they are interested in getting a subjective insider's view of the activity being observed. This subjective reality complements, rather than replaces, the researcher's view as an outsider. Lichtman (2006) recommends the use of the participant approach in research involving interactions between the researcher and participants because it helps bridge the power gap that often exists between researchers and participants in research in the social sciences.

For this study, the participant observation was considered most appropriate approach to observing focus teachers in their schools because it allowed me to observe more freely the physical school environment, lessons, school norms and practices, pupils and teachers' daily routines and interacted with and got to know both teachers and pupils in their everyday settings and earned their trust (Bogdan and Biklen 2003). It also afforded me the opportunity to have a first-hand experience on how teachers' experiences impacted, not only on their perceptions of what it means to be a basic school teacher in a deprived rural area but also on their professional practice.

However, I was aware of a probable drawback of this approach in research as participants' behaviour may be affected initially by the presence of the researcher (Dowling and Brown, 2010). Mercer (1991) also thinks that participants who are aware that they are being observed will tend to be more self-conscious than usual. They may spend more time than usual in preparing what they do. Luckily, this situation does not always affect the trustworthiness of the research as it usually dissolves as participants become familiar with the researcher and adjust to his or her presence through continual encounters (Johnson and Christensen, 2014). The relationship which develops, as a result, can rather

allow difficult truths and revealing stories to be discovered (Morse, 2015; Scott and Russell, 2005).

I was conscious that being a participant-observer goes beyond formal permission to conduct a study with participants to developing trusting relationships with them (Mercer, 1991; Silverman, 2011). Because of this, I entered the field and endeavoured to become an active member of it by not refraining from activities in participants' schools. This was a crucial step towards building trust with participants so that they would feel comfortable to share their experiences, 'be natural' and go about their daily activities in a usual way in my presence (Woods, 1996, p.52). Before I visited schools to begin my observation, I decided that the best way to relate with teachers and pupils was to be as open as possible with them and make it clear to them that I was in their schools not to evaluate their work but to interact with them. Also, I assumed the role of an 'interested guest' who was seeking an opportunity to learn and who appreciated their role as those who possessed the experiences I needed to know and understand (Mears, 2009, p. 101). The reason for this decision was that, this would permit me to be free to interact with participants as the field work progressed without creating suspicion.

Moreover, as a former basic school teacher who was aware of the need to appear decent, I also decided to conform to the dress code of the Ghana Education Service by avoiding the wearing of jeans, T-shirts and other informal dress codes to schools. This informal approach also helped establish rapport with teachers and pupils in their schools and made them feel at ease to express their views. In deciding to do all these, I was still conscious of my role as a researcher, so I do not become overly informal in my relationship with teachers and pupils.

4.8.1.2.1. The Observation Process

I was not restricted as to how long, in terms of days and hours, I could stay with each focus teacher in his or her school. However, I decided to spend approximately one week with each focus teacher (see Appendix L for observation schedule). Initially, I did not draw up any plan, regarding what specifically to observe in each focus teacher's school. On my first day in my first school, I was 'just hanging out' in the environment in order to become familiar with participants' environment, daily routines and power structures in

the school (Kvale and Brinkman, 2009, pp. 107-108). I also intended to use information gathered to serve as reference point for my interviews with teachers.

For the first week, I observed almost every activity in the school environment. Exhaustive notes were written, recording details of everything I saw and heard. However, this was refined as the weeks progressed. As Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (2007) caution, writing extensive notes can interfere with an understanding of what is witnessed and observed. Furthermore, though it is important for observers to include a wider range of items to observe in the field, this does not prove to be feasible as researchers are restricted by the accuracy with which to observe and record situations they hear and see (Denscombe, 2007). So, the issues to observe need to be limited to just those most relevant to the research. In view of this, I narrowed my observation in the subsequent weeks to observing teachers' interactions among themselves and with the head teachers and their pupils and teachers' relationships with the community. I also read school documents, watching anything else that could enable me to understand the experiences of teachers (Patton, 2002). I was also interested in observing at least one lesson of each focus teacher. I decided that the best time to do so was the third day of my presence in the school, although some teachers were comfortable for me to move in and observe their lessons at on any day. I wanted to first gain familiarisation with their school life as well as some degree of acceptance by both pupils and teachers (Nespor, 1997).

I also intensified my engagement with other teachers in 'normal conversations' or casual chats during their break time to hear also their feelings and views. I also spent some time to observe generally the physical school environment as this was also necessary in understanding the contexts under which teachers worked. I should make this point. I had the expectation that some head teachers would ask me what information teachers in their schools had shared with me. But, surprisingly, this was not the case in all schools. Rather, at the end of my observation some head teachers were interested in knowing whether I had gathered, enough, the information I wanted. This was striking and gave me food for thought although this was not a matter for exploration in this study.

Notwithstanding the adequate preparation, observing and interacting with teachers was not without some challenges. The challenge I encountered in all schools was how to listen

to teachers during conversations without making my opinions clearly known to teachers, as I was a researcher. For instance, apart from head teachers and assistant head teachers, all other teachers were not expected to visit the District Education Offices in both districts during school hours (8am-12noon for Kindergarten; 8am-1:30pm for Primary School and 8am-2pm for Junior High Schools). This was a matter of regulation in both districts. However, during interaction with teachers, they expressed serious concerns about this directive. Some teachers indicated that due to the long distance of their schools to the District Education Offices, those who had issues such as irregularities in the payment of their salaries, personal loan deductions and promotions to be addressed in the District Education Offices sometimes got to the office at 4pm. Staff at the education offices were supposed to be in the office at this time. However, teachers claimed they sometimes left the office before the closing hours. Some teachers said they had to travel to the office several times before they could meet the officials in charge to have their concerns resolved. Teachers talking about these experiences, would ask me '*do you think they are fair to teachers?*' '*what do you think my brother?*' and '*Are teachers being treated fairly?*'. One teacher even asked whether teachers in the United Kingdom were treated that way. Some teachers would put it '*we are suffering here*'.

It was necessary to respond to these questions arising from teachers as this is 'reciprocity' which can help build trust (Mears, 2009, p.107); and encourage participants to continue to talk about their own experiences 'in a more inner voice than before' (Seidman, 2006, p.89). However, it was challenging to express my views without sounding judgemental. I constantly reflected on my role as a researcher at that moment and the fact that I was researching an issue in which I had a strong interest in and held some views. This constant reflexivity helped me in responding to teachers' concerns in wider terms without reinforcing, either positively or negatively, what teachers were saying (Seidman, 2006). For instance, rather than answering 'yes or no' to their questions, I would say 'I have heard some of these concerns from some of your colleagues'; 'this appears to be a major concern for teachers in the district'. To some extent, this approach to dealing with teachers' questions worked for me.

4.8.1.3. Field notes

My data collection also included field notes as explained earlier. As an observer in the field, I needed to turn what I saw, heard and experienced into data in order to augment the interviews and observations I made. This was done through the writing of field notes. These notes were captured in three different forms; mental notes, jotted notes and full notes.

The mental notes were used in situations when it was inappropriate to write down what I saw, heard or experience such as writing down teachers' expressions during chats with teachers while they were present or where those conversations were deemed private. For instance, in my first week of observation, one teacher who observed that I was writing down some notes asked me why I was writing every conversation when I said I was only interested in observing them. It appeared he was not comfortable. After that, I took precaution by capturing these in memory and later writing them in detail (Thorpe, 2008). The decision not to make teachers aware I was writing what they shared with me in 'private' conversations was based on my observation that doing so would interrupt conversations as some of them were likely to feel uncomfortable.

The jotted notes contained highlights of important occurrences that I intended to write in full later. For instance, during observation of focus teachers' lessons in the classroom, I wrote down as quickly as possible anything that was of interest to me such as how teachers introduced lessons, involved pupils in their lessons, used teaching and learning materials and responded to pupils' questions. I also jotted quickly some conversations with teachers and pupils where it was appropriate to do so. The atmosphere of each of the venues where each interview was conducted and teachers' emotions and gestures during interviews which could not be captured by the audio recorder were all jotted. Although I expanded both the mental and jotted notes after returning to my residence from the field, this was not the case in all schools. In some schools, I expanded these notes as soon as I got the opportunity whilst still in the schools' premises. For instance, when all teachers had entered the classrooms to teach leaving me alone, I elaborated on the notes I jotted or kept in memory.

Finally, full notes were taken when the situation was conducive to do so. For instance, during my interaction with some head teachers, I could write in full basic background information about the schools and the resources available in their schools, including pupils and teachers' population. I was also able to write in full information that was pasted on the schools' and District Education Offices' notice boards as this was public notice. I also captured my own feelings about how my field work was progressing and how participants were responding. My thoughts and ideas about how my data would be analysed and interpreted were also written in full. I went through my field notes each day after returning from the field. This was helpful in deciding on what issues to follow up the next day (Hays, 2004).

It is important to acknowledge that writing what I experienced, saw and heard was helpful in my data analysis, although a potential impact of this on participants was that those who happened to notice that I was writing my observations were likely to feel uncomfortable (Muswazi and Nhamo, 2013). I think that this potential effect was minimised through my continuous presence in the school for a week, identifying myself and interacting with teachers and pupils. It was also likely to be resolved through my willingness and interest to participate in schools' activities such as teaching, sports, and morning and closing assemblies.

4.9. Data Analysis

I was aware of alternative approaches to analysing qualitative data such as the quasi-statistical approach, which uses words or phrase frequencies as key methods of determining the relative importance of concepts; and the grounded theory approach, which is used principally to develop a theory grounded in the data (Robson and McCartan, 2016). However, data in this study was analysed thematically by searching and identifying patterns or themes and their relationships within the data (Clarke and Braun, 2013). This approach was deemed most appropriate because of its alignment to the exploratory nature of this study (Robson and McCartan, 2016).

Rather than just indicating the themes that emerged from analysis of the data, this section provides detail outline of the analytical steps to arrive at the themes. My view is that

merely stating that categories emerged from the data ‘is not enough to explain how or why patterns were noticed’ (Malterud, 2001, p. 486).

The first step was transcription of the interviews.

- *Transcription*

This stage involved a full transcription of all the audio recorded interviews (see Appendix N for a summary of interviews). The aim of this was to transform the spoken words into texts to facilitate data analysis (Dickson-Swift, et al., 2007; Sutton and Austin, 2015). In addition to spoken words, the transcript captured non-verbal cues such as ‘silences’ which communicated discomfort or a ‘pause’ for thought of what to say. Physical bodily gestures and facial expressions which showed teachers’ strong passion in helping pupils or dissatisfaction were all captured. Words such as ‘hmm’, ‘aha’ and ‘aah’ which signified emphasis were also captured in the transcript. In the analysis of interviews, ‘what is not said may be just as important as what is said’ (Kvale, 1996, p.278). Therefore, capturing these non-verbal conversations added meaning to the spoken words which helped in the interpretation of the data.

To ensure accuracy of transcribed data, each transcript was verified against each voice recording by reading each transcript while listening to the corresponding recording (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). This process was also important in correcting any spelling or punctuation errors. To be able to identify each transcript, they were assigned names. However, teachers’ actual names were assigned pseudonyms and any identifiers of teachers such as names and locations of schools and districts were also replaced with pseudonyms.

- *Coding of Data*

Data was coded to identify the key issues, patterns and themes that were revealed through the participants’ narratives of their experiences and my observations. Although data collection was guided by the research questions, coding of the data was done inductively. That is, the codes emerged from my interaction with the data rather than following a predetermined order arising from my reading of the literature. The essence of adopting

this approach was to minimise the possibility of ignoring potential useful issues outside the research questions but could be important to the study (Robson and McCartan, 2016).

The coding process began with familiarisation with the data by initially reading the transcript of each focus teacher and field notes carefully and repeatedly in order to capture the 'essential features' in each teacher's expressions (Sandelowski, 1995, p.373). I noted down initial key expressions in participants' expressions together with my own thoughts and impressions of their expressions. This process enabled me to begin to organise the data and establish relationships between participants' experiences in the data.

The transcripts together with the field notes were manually coded. This approach to coding the data was most appropriate as it enhanced my familiarity with the data (McLafferty and Farley, 2006). This also made it easier to make connections between the themes that emerged. In doing this, I read each of the transcripts and field notes to identify comments and expressions that emerged as central to participants' experiences. The comments and expressions were given labels. For example, as I read through the transcripts and notes, comments such '*compensation*' and '*workload*' began to emerge. These were coded as 'nature of teachers' job'. Comments such as '*even where to hang the TLMs is a problem*'; '*...no textbooks, and syllabuses*, and '*...the wind will come and blow everything away*' were also coded as 'school facilities and resources'. The same process was followed in coding the entire transcripts and notes. This process was finalised at a point when no new common patterns emerged.

The next step was to put the codes together to form themes.

- *Theming*

Theming in this study refers to the drawing together of codes from the transcripts and field notes to present the findings in a coherent and meaningful way. Emerging themes were identified and reorganised into thematic headings such as '*recognition*' '*voice*' and '*commitment*'. The rationale for going through this process was that at the write up of the findings, it would be possible to present the data from the interviews and field notes using quotes from the individual transcripts and field notes to illustrate the source of my

interpretations. In this way, it would also make clear to the reader that the themes under discussion emerged from the data (Seers, 2012; Sutton and Austin, 2015).

I was flexible in my search for themes. As this is a qualitative study, the focus was not what proportion of my data set needed to show evidence for it to be regarded as a theme. Rather the 'keyness' of a theme was based on whether it captured something important in relation to the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Initial themes were reviewed and redefined to ensure that themes reflected both the coded extracts, the entire data set and the research questions. In doing this, some themes were combined to form one theme, for instance, '*respect*' and '*regard*' were collapsed to form one theme '*respect and regard*'. Other themes were split into sub-themes, for instance '*support*' was split into two sub themes; '*support for continuous professional development*' and '*support for daily tasks of teaching*', while some themes were embedded into the major themes. For instance, '*neglect*' was embedded into '*Support*'; '*dissatisfaction*' into '*Recognition*' and '*role model*' into '*Commitment*'. Next, I identified the essence of each theme and determined the part of the research question and the conceptual framework each theme captured. I also searched for evidence that challenged themes such as teachers who said that in their school's community, they were treated with respect. It was at this point that I assumed that the data honestly represented teachers' experiences. This process was an ongoing one whereby I constantly moved forward and backward among the data, literature and research questions until no new theme emerged.

- *Interpretation of Data*

The next step of the analysis was the interpretation of themes, where I made meaning of the data (Creswell, 2009). However, this was not treated as a separate step, as interpretation started even at the point of transcription where I began to familiarise myself with the data. At the transcription stage, I had already started establishing relationships between teachers' experiences and implications for their sense of professional identity. This was followed through the coding and theming stages. Therefore, interpretation of the data was an integral part of the data analysis process rather than a separate step.

In interpreting the data, I looked at the ways teachers made meaning of their experiences and the ways the broader context of their work and their own attributes influenced those

meanings. That is, I moved from description of the themes or patterns in the data to interpretation, where I analysed the meanings of the patterns and the implications for teachers' sense of professional identity (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In doing this, quotations from participants were used to support the interpretation. This was important because 'with the skilful use of quotes, researchers can add aesthetic value to research findings and, thereby, draw more attention to the voices of participants who might otherwise have remained unheard' (Sandelowski, 1994, p. 480). Using direct quotations from participants also helped to present a 'coherent and persuasive story about the data' (Clarke and Braun, 2013, p. 121).

- *Writing Up*

The final step was the writing up of the data. Again, this step was not treated as a separate one, as the writing up of the data started even at the point of transcription, with the jotting down of salient expressions and continued throughout the whole process of analysis.

In effect, while it is helpful to explain these steps, I should make it clear that they only served as a guide to my analysis and were not followed sternly such that I could not move to the next step without finalising the prior one (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Instead, it was an iterative process where I repeatedly moved forth and back between the whole data set. In fact, data analysis even began before I entered the field. Following my reading of the literature, I had already thought about how to listen to, interpret and write up the data. I should also acknowledge that the data analysis was aided through my presentations at various conferences, workshops and seminars both within and outside the university. Every time I was preparing for a conference or seminar, my insight into the data enhanced further. Besides, some comments and suggestions of participants who were not familiar with my study contrasted with my own and my supervisors' who were familiar with my study. This added deeper and different perspective to my analysis. Similarly, friends, colleagues, former colleague teachers who I prefer to call my 'academic family' also played a key role in critiquing my analysis. All these provided a springboard to look further and differently into my data.

4.10. Ensuring Trustworthiness of Data

As expected of all research, there was a need to ensure that findings of this study were trustworthy. This is important in evaluating the worth of the study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). This was particularly crucial in this study considering that I was researching an issue I have experiences with, and interest in, that could be influenced by my own experiences and prejudices. Because of this, several strategies to assure trustworthiness of the findings were employed.

To begin with, I demonstrated trustworthiness through prolonged engagement. This means staying in the field to establish and sustain relationships with participants and the settings in order to understand and discuss teachers' experiences accurately (Hays and Singh 2012; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Arguably, the more time a researcher spends in a study setting engaging with participants, the more trust is established between the researcher and the participants (Morse, 2015). The attendant impact is that the researcher will get rich and better data as more information will be revealed and data will be more credible. As indicated in previous sections, I spent a week with each focus teacher interacting and observing their daily routines. I also showed interest in their activities through participation in some school activities. Interviews were also conducted in two different stages. This meant I had a prolonged engagement with participants which made me feel confident that the data was credible.

Furthermore, the use of purposive sampling to select focus teachers across all the three levels of basic education with different qualifications and experiences supports trustworthiness of the data. By taking into consideration teachers of varying experiences who were exposed to the same context, in this case deprived rural areas, the findings reflect the essential characteristics of teachers in these districts (Hays and Singh, 2012). I also employed member checking by seeking clarification of participants' responses and expressions through probing questions during my data collection (Baxter and Jack 2008; Cohen, Manion and Morrisson, 2010). This was important in ensuring 'goodness of fit' of findings as it avoided any misunderstanding and misinterpretation of participants' opinions (Hays and Singh, 2012, p.206).

It is argued that because in qualitative research, ‘the researcher is the instrument’, there are bound to be discrepancies in interpretation of issues observed and interviewed by different researchers (Ball, 1990, p.167). While this may be the case, I tried to provide enough details about myself and the research process to enable readers make decisions about the extent to which findings relate to research involving participants in similar settings or participants, what Sandelowski (1986) terms as leaving a decision trail. Throughout this study, every process and procedure have been explained in detail and clearly. For example, although the study was not autobiographical, it was essential to acknowledge the influence of my own experiences and position as a former basic school teacher on the study design and the fieldwork. My position as an insider and outsider demanded an awareness of the two ‘hats’ I was wearing and how this would influence my views on the issues I was exploring (Miller, 2012, p.129). This open acknowledgement helped as much as possible to manage potential biases as I reminded myself of this throughout the study through constant reflexivity. Moreover, because of my privileged dual position, I could identify easily with these teachers which enriched my understanding of their experiences and access to rich and sensitive information. Arguably, other researchers in a different position might not have been privy to such data or understood well the complexities of these teachers’ situations. I have also explained in detail the research strategy and justified why case study was deemed most appropriate for the study. As the main strength of a case study strategy lies on its detailed contextual information (Baxter, and Jack, 2008; Yin, 2009), I have explained in detail the background of the focus districts, teachers’ schools and profiles (see Chapter Five). It is, therefore, possible for readers ‘to recognise and connect with the events and experiences shared by teachers in this study (Simons, 2015, p. 178). Other researchers exploring similar settings can also relate to the findings.

The use of triangulation in my data collection also helped to minimise the possibility of bias so as to obtain trustworthy data. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue, when data is gathered from different sources and yields similar findings, then the credibility and dependability are assured in the findings. As discussed, data was gathered through both interviews and participant observations. These methods were complemented with the writing of field notes. This approach ensured that I gained as full a perspective as possible

of the experiences and perceptions of participants. The use of both interviews and participant observations also ensured that I could identify whether participants did what they claimed they were doing in my interviews with them and to identify any contradictions or distortions among the data source. The findings from the different sources in this study yielded similar findings indicating that the findings are credible.

Researchers are also entreated to ensure findings of a study are genuine reflections of participants' experiences (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). This is achieved by minimising interference with the data and listening to the data as much as possible (Hays and Singh, 2012). To fulfil this requirement, during the data collection, leading questions which had the likelihood of influencing participants' responses were avoided as much as possible. As I was also aware that my professional background, experiences and preconceptions could affect the study, I tried as much as possible to be reflexive in every step and decisions made. My reflexivity as the researcher added to the rigour of the research, by checking any subjective biases and prejudices, thereby creating transparency. Finally, I employed peer review in this study by discussing the data collection methods, interview guide, transcripts and initial analysis with colleagues as well as presenting work in progress at conferences at the university and outside it. All these added different perspectives to some of the issues that were likely to be taken for granted. Therefore, one can have confidence in the findings.

4.11. Ethical Issues

Ethical issues were treated as an important component in the entire study process as it is a necessary requirement for researchers to show how they plan to protect human subjects involved in their study and 'obtain formal approval' for their plan (Yin, 2009, p.73). This was particularly important considering that part of my data collection involved participant observation, which meant that I had to spend some days with teachers and pupils in their schools. It became increasingly crucial because of the reputation of the university, schools, communities and the districts involved.

As a student of Canterbury Christ Church University, I followed the university and British Educational Research Association's ethical procedures in conducting research. Ethical approval was sought from the University's Ethics Review Committee before

starting data collection (attached as Appendix O). Moreover, I properly followed the established scientific behaviour standards in order to avoid plagiarism. Thus, I have duly acknowledged in both the bibliography and the in-text referencing all writings and references used in this study.

In addition to these, there were specific ethical issues addressed in this study. First, to make potential participants understand and agree to participate in this study without any duress, a participant information sheet was given to them (Heath et al., 2007). This sheet contained enough information about the nature and purpose of the study, how the data would be used, what participation and how much time was required of them. Included were my contact details for correspondence.

Potential participants were given time to read the information and decide whether they would like to participate in my study. I was guided by Silverman's (2011) caution that participants should not be forced to participate in a research. As result, it was stated in the participant information sheet that their participation was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw at any time, without giving any reasons. Focus teachers were reminded of this throughout the fieldwork.

Due to the nature of the study, it was also important that the identities of participants, and anyone they talked about remain undisclosed to the public. This was important throughout the study. Before and after interviews, I assured participants of confidentiality. In all schools, the head teachers informed pupils and teachers about my presence on my first day in the school. In some schools, I was given the opportunity to talk to them directly during the morning assemblies. In doing so, I assured them I was not in the school to evaluate their work but to interact and learn from their experiences. I also made it clear to them that information gathered would be handled confidentially. Both hard and soft copy documents gathered during my fieldwork were kept securely. Although, in some schools I took pictures of the physical school structures and pupils in their classrooms, I did not share these publicly in any presentation of my data. Findings were always discussed in a constructive manner and with sensitivity during presentations at conferences and seminars and discussions with colleagues. The same principle was applied in the writing up of the thesis because of the parties involved, that is, the

university, districts, schools, teachers and the country. I avoided making references to specific locations such as school location or community, district or anything else that has the potential to compromise the confidentiality of information shared by participant. I also avoided labelling documents in a manner that could compromise confidentiality. Participants' confidentiality was also respected during presentation of data at conferences and seminars as their names were represented by pseudonyms. This does not, however, imply that I compromised contextual information. These were discussed in more general terms. On the other hand, since this study was entirely qualitative with data collection involving one to one face interviews with participants and observations, participants could not remain entirely anonymous.

Ensuring the safety and well-being of participants such as their emotional and psychological well-being was also a priority in this study. Because there was a possibility of harming or 'injuring' participants emotionally and psychologically, sensitive questions on private matters including pay were constructed broadly allowing them more choice to discuss them with me during interviews and 'normal conversations'. During interviews, I also watched out for signs of discomfort, and where there was a suspicion for discomfort I checked with the participants if they were willing to continue or to stop the interview (Lewis, 2003). For instance, during one of the interviews, an interviewee almost wept whilst narrating her experiences with a snake in her room. I paused the interview and checked with the interviewee to be sure the interviewee was comfortable to continue. Some teachers also expressed deep sentiments in talking about their salaries and daily experiences of teaching in their classrooms. In all interviews, I stayed after the interviews were concluded and the recorder switched off, to respond to any concerns and to give participants an opportunity to talk about some of the issues discussed or any other matters of concern to them. This was done to make participants feel relaxed. I should say that in addition to suggestions from my supervisors, my training on 'Basic Techniques of Counselling' in my first degree on Psychology was helpful in responding to teachers' emotional issues. Participants were also made aware that they could contact The Graduate School if there were concerns, suggestions and complains regarding my study that they would like to raise.

Finally, data gathered from the field were stored securely. The recorded interviews, documents gathered, and other field notes were kept in my laptop protected by a password. They were backed up on the Canterbury Christ Church University server to save them securely as well minimising the danger of loss. Key documents such as interview transcripts and field notes were also printed out and kept safely as a precautionary measure. I intend to completely destroy all audio recordings and notes from the university server and my personal laptop as soon as the study is completed. Hard copies of all documents relating to the study will also be deleted permanently.

4.12. Reflexivity

In this study, I was conscious that an awareness of my own role as the researcher and the way this could influence participants was important to allow me to acknowledge the way in which I would affect both the research processes and the findings (Haynes, 2012). Put differently, I was aware that I as the researcher, and the participants could influence each other mutually and continually in the research process (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2000). This awareness made me consider how my thinking came to be as well as how my understanding of participants and the issues they shared with me were reviewed in the light of new understandings and how this in turn affected the study (Haynes, 2012).

It is essential that this awareness is shared with readers of this thesis. Through reflexivity, I recognised and understood how my professional experience and being a native of Northern Ghana could influence my approach to the study. Being a former professional basic school teacher myself who also taught in a deprived rural area, researching basic school teachers in deprived rural areas was likely to raise some concerns, regarding impartiality, bias and prejudice in researching a familiar setting (Louisy, 1997). It is most likely to take for granted important issues and practices that require analysis from a disinterested viewpoint (Spindler and Spindler, 1982). I acknowledge that these concerns arose throughout my study, but I was able to balance my position as a researcher with participants' perspectives through reflexivity. I was aware that as a researcher, my task was to learn from my participants' views and not to cloud them with my own prejudices and bias. This tended to prove advantageous to my study. For instance, prior to entering the field for data collection, I had anticipated that potential participants were likely not to

talk about issues in detail or see the need to reveal issues in detail to me through only interviews, considering, not only because of my professional background and experiences, but also because I am a native of Northern Ghana who presumably knows some of the issues concerning teachers in that part of the country.

Meanwhile, such detail information was important in understanding teachers' perceptions in this study. The research design was, therefore, structured to allow for the use of both interview and participant observation techniques in my data collection. This decision was justified subsequently in the field as some teachers during interviews and normal conversations tended to take for granted certain details with remarks such as '*as you are aware*'; '*as you know already*', '*but you yourself you know the situation of teachers in rural and deprived areas*' '*What else do you want us to tell you?*' Some teachers simply responded, '*nothing has changed*' when I indicated to them I had left teaching almost a decade ago and things were likely to change. Teachers' assumptions were not always correct as I did not know some of the current issues they talked about. I resolved this situation by reminding participants that my perspectives and experiences about the teaching profession, in particular, and the Ghana Education Service, as a whole, did not matter in this case as they were those being studied and whose voice had to be heard. I was also honest with them that some of the issues in the Ghana Education Service were new to me. An example was the mass promotion of pupils, where all pupils were promoted to the next class at the end of the academic year irrespective of their performances, which some teachers talked about.

It is necessary to acknowledge that though my cordial relationship with participants was helpful in gaining their trust and building a good relationship, a possible consequence of such a relationship was that they were likely to give information in a way that they perceived was helpful to the study rather than the reality (Dornyei, 2007). Although this may be seen as a setback in research, it was not detrimental to my data collection. It rather helped to gain access to rich and detailed data as participants were more comfortable in talking about their experiences. Moreover, I was conscious of the need to be sensitive in handling the data. In this regard, I was aware that it was not my experiences and perceptions of the issues that mattered. Rather, it was what participants

were saying or doing that was more important (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Taking this on board, I constantly kept my data in mind even when I was not sitting on a desk with my laptop or computer writing. On daily basis during the fieldwork, as I rode on my motor bike to and from the field, walked or sat, I questioned myself as much as possible the methods used to gather and analyse data and the interconnection between them.

I also constantly reflected on the interpretation of the data and my responsibility as the researcher in all these. This constant reflexivity continued even after my fieldwork through to the final write up of this thesis. While I did not aim to find quick-fix answers to any concerns that arose, I was confident that I would ultimately arrive at findings that would represent the experiences of participants. Doing all these also made me understand why data analysis is a process and not an event. The point to emphasise here is that I did not feel unproductive when I was not directly engaged with the data. It was equally fruitful to allow some moments just thinking about the data, before returning to work on them. After all, as Nias (1991, p.162) comments;

‘...not all cerebral activity takes place at a conscious level and ideas can form while left to ‘compost’ slowly... returning again and again to the data... to continue the gardening metaphor, one rakes it into such a fine tilth that ideas germinate easily’.

4.13. Reciprocity in the Field

Qualitative research advocates ‘fair exchange’ (Daly, 1992, p.5); also referred to as ‘mutual benefit’ (Rossman and Rallis, 2012, p.157). This corresponds with the concept of reciprocity where the researcher and participant(s) engage in a reciprocal sharing process (Acker, Barry and Essevald, 1991). The essence of doing this is to acknowledge the value of the contributions that participants make towards the accomplishment of the research activity (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006).

Although not deliberately designed as part of my fieldwork, reciprocity in this study took the form of service to teachers and their schools. There was no specific compensation, including monetary benefit, promised to participants in return for participating in my study. However, some schools benefitted from my marking of exercises. I also had the opportunity to teach pupils in the Kindergarten (KG) in two different schools, one school in each district. In the first school, I was asked to teach the class of the focus teacher

(KG2) while she moved to KG1 to teach. The KG1 teacher, who happened to be the head mistress of the school, had to attend to the circuit supervisor who had visited the school on that day. In the second school, the focus teacher was indisposed, and I was asked to step in and teach her class.

In another school, I helped one of the teachers who participated in the first stage of the study, to conduct exams for his pupils after my interview with him. This took the form of helping him to distribute the question papers and collecting them back at the end of the examination. In all schools that I observed, I also made sure I reported to school by 7:45am as this was the time teachers were expected to be in school. This enabled me to join teachers in their daily routines such as supervising the sweeping of school compounds and attending morning assemblies. In one school, I helped the focus teacher who happened to be the sports teacher of the school in organising the sports boys and girls for training towards the inter-school sports competition in the circuit. Some teachers were also keen at getting feedback from me on their teaching after my observation as they felt that I might have experience that would be valuable to improving their classroom management and teaching. However, as this had ethical implications, I refrained from pointing out specific areas that I felt needed improvement. Rather, I talk about these broadly making references to my own experiences in the classroom.

Teachers told me they felt, as one teacher put it, *'happy to have our own'* [referring to me as a former basic school teacher] come back to listen to their experiences and that participating in my study was an exciting experience for them. For some teachers, their inclusion in my study was also something that made them feel that they were valued. Japri commented that, just the fact that he was selected for the study was enough to make him feel honoured. Indeed, he felt that it showed that, as the assistant head teacher of the school, the head teacher had seen something good in him worthy of sharing with me. When I reminded him that he was not selected based on the recommendation of the head teacher but my own criteria, he insisted that it did not make any difference since that still meant I saw something in him worthy of sharing in my study. It was not uncommon to hear teachers say they felt privileged to be part of my research. Initially, I felt it was an over-exaggeration to hear teachers express profoundly and repeatedly how they felt

honoured that I had valued them, hence had come to hear their opinions. However, upon reflection, it reminds me of Goodson and Sikes's (2001) claim that utmost to a person's state of being is a positive sense about oneself and getting to know that he or she is valued by others.

On my part as the researcher, engaging in all these activities in the field was an exciting experience. For instance, stepping into the classroom once again to teach after almost 10 years, not only offered me an opportunity to have a practical experience of some of the challenges teachers shared with me, but it was also an exciting experience for me to apply my pedagogical skills in the classroom once again. In one of the classes that I taught, I was told by the teacher that the pupils were happy and wished I would come to teach them again, which in itself did not make me feel comfortable, as I was concerned about how the teacher would feel about those comments from her pupils. However, the teacher said she was happy that her pupils enjoyed my teaching.

4.14. Summary of Chapter

The main purpose of this study was to understand how public basic school teachers in two deprived rural districts of Northern Ghana made sense of their professional identity. This chapter has outlined and justified the methodological approach adopted to explore teachers' experiences, opinions, feelings and thoughts that helped to gain a better understanding of their sense of professional identity.

The first section offered an explanation of the study approach and justified why the use of qualitative approach located within the interpretivist paradigm to explore teachers' perceptions of their professional identity was appropriate. Here, the aim of the study and methods of data collection informed the choice of this paradigm. The second section in this chapter presented the study strategy, in this instance, case study. The section argued that this strategy was appropriate because the study sought to explore teachers' perceptions in relation to their experiences in their natural working environment, which is in line with the principles of case study strategy. Though, there are different types of case studies, I justified why the 'intrinsic', 'descriptive', 'exploratory', 'instrumental' and 'single case study with embedded units' case studies were applicable in this study. The section concluded with an acknowledgement of some of the criticisms of the use of a case

study strategy in research. However, these criticisms appeared to represent a misunderstanding of the main purpose of case study which is not to generalise findings at a statistical level but to explore a 'case' in a specific context.

This was followed by a look at the participants and sampling approach for the study. Seven teachers were selected to serve as focus teachers. However, in line with the data collection methods, which included observation of focus teachers, I had the opportunity to interact with many other teachers. I decided to select only seven teachers because participants do not need to be many to support issues of prevalence. Hence, it was better to focus on depth of coverage of issues rather than breadth in terms of sample size.

In terms of the approach to sampling focus teachers, the purposive sampling technique was considered appropriate as it helped to ensure that various characteristics of basic school teachers were represented. Next, the data collection methods were discussed. This section began with an outline of my preparation for the data collection which included arrangements for accommodation and means of transport to and from the field and negotiating access with the districts directors, head teachers and teachers themselves. Data was gathered by mean of semi-structured interviews and participant observations. These methods were complemented with the writing of field notes. These notes included my observations of the physical and social climate of focus teachers' schools. I also captured my own experiences in the field and how my field work was progressing. The section indicated that using these different sources ensured that the data gathered was rigorous and that the findings were trustworthy. The section also outlined the data analysis approach. Data was analysed thematically by searching for themes or patterns in the data. Although, using this technique requires the researcher to follow some steps, these steps were not followed strictly. Rather, they were adapted which made it flexible for my data analysis.

The ethical issues that were considered in this study were also discussed. These were issues related to informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, safety and well-being of participants, voluntary participation and data storage. These ethical issues were addressed by complying with the British Educational Research Association and Canterbury Christ Church University ethical guidelines. The chapter concluded with a

reflection on the entire study process, identifying the challenges encountered during the fieldwork and how they were dealt with. As qualitative research needs to run on the principles of 'fair exchange', I explained how schools benefitted from my service through teaching and participating in sporting activities, morning and closing assemblies.

Chapter Five

Background of Focus Districts, Schools and Teachers' own Profiles

5.1. Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the research methodology and methods of data collection. I justified why qualitative research approach located within the interpretivist paradigm was considered most appropriate for this study. The methods of data collection, which were interviews and observations, as well as procedures for gathering and analysing data were explained. The chapter also discussed the ethical issues encountered in the study and how they were addressed as well as why findings in the study are trustworthy.

This chapter explains the data gathered on the background of the focus districts, schools and teachers' own profiles. Although in Chapter One, I explained the conditions in Northern Ghana as well as rural areas and schools in the country, discussing the specific situations of the districts and schools involved in this study before launching into teachers' own experiences in the next chapter is necessary. My emphasis on context here is not only beneficial in understanding teachers' experiences and implications for their sense of professional identity in the next chapter, but also helpful to readers to determine whether they can relate with the realities identified in this study.

The first section explains the background of the focus districts to give a portrait of the kind of physical, economic and socio-cultural settings that these teachers lived and worked.

5.2. Background of Focus Districts

The focus districts in this study were the Bongo and Nabdam Districts, which are among the most deprived rural districts in the Northern part of the country. The Bongo District shares boundaries with Bolgatanga Municipality to the South, Nabdam District to the East, Burkina Faso to the North and Kasena-Nankana District to the West, whereas the Nabdam District is bounded to the South by the Talensi District, North by the Bongo District, West by the Bolgatanga East District and to East by Bawku West District. The

major languages spoken in the Bongo District are Bonne and Guruni, while Nabt and Guruni are spoken in the Nabdam District.

Statistics from the 2010 population census show that the Bongo District has a total population of 84,545 comprising 96 communities, while that of the Nabdam District is 33,826 made up of 23 communities (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010). The pattern of settlement in both districts is disperse. Houses are scattered in the communities, perhaps because of the fact that agriculture-related activities are the major economic activities for the people. Households engage in the rearing of livestock, fowls, guinea-fowls and cultivation of food crops, which require some space of land.

Unlike the Nabdam District where the topography is generally flat, some areas of the Bongo District are rocky. It is estimated that 40% of the land surface is occupied by rocks, thereby reducing the amount of land available for agricultural activities (BDA, 2010). Many families, therefore, supplement their needs through the sales of handicrafts such as baskets, smocks, leather products and animal cages.

According to the Bongo District Assembly's Medium-Term Development Plan (DMTDP) under the Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda (GSGDA), 2010-2013, a majority of the youth in the district are not in any gainful employment. Similarly, the 2014-2017 DMTDP document of the Nabdam District Assembly indicates that there is lack of other employment avenues besides subsistent farming for the teeming youth in the district. The situation has resulted in high incidence of migration of the youth to places in the South such as Kintampo, Kumasi, Suyani, Accra and Takoradi in search of greener pastures. However, non-governmental organisations such as IBIS, World Vision, Catholic Relief Services, ActionAid, Save the Child and Camfed are collaborating with the District Assemblies to ameliorate the situation.

Because these districts are neighbouring they also have similar social characteristics. Houses in both districts are typically compound in nature consisting of smaller households, usually headed by a male family who controls resources in the house. With regard to social amenities, both districts are connected to the national electricity network. However, several communities within these districts do not have access to electricity. In the Bongo District, only 11.5% of communities have access to electricity (Ghana

Statistical Service, 2014a). The corresponding percentage in the Nabdam District is 8.6% (NDA, 2014). Many households rely on torch lights, kerosene lanterns and candles for light, while wood, crops remnants and charcoal serve as energy for domestic activities including cooking (see Tables 6 and 7).

With respect to water, the main sources of drinking water for households are bore-holes and dug-out wells although some communities also rely on sources such as dams, streams and rivers for water (see Tables 7 and 8). Water in some of these dams, streams and rivers sometimes get dried up in the dry season which starts from October to April. When this happens, the people, usually the children and women, trek to neighbouring communities to fetch water.

Table 7: Household Utilities in Nabdam District

Source	No. of Households (%)
Kerosene Lanterns	71.7
Torchlight	18.4
Electricity	8.6
Crops Residues for light	0.3
Firewood for light	0.3
Firewood for cooking	70.3
Gas for cooking	1.4
Water from borehole	72.6
Water from well	10.9
Water from other sources	16.4

Source: NDA, 2014

Table 8: Household Utilities in Bongo District

Source	No. of Households (%)
Kerosene Lanterns	64.8
Torchlight	20.3
Electricity	11.5
Wood	39.2
Crops Residues	53.7
Gas for cooking	1.2
Water from borehole	80.3
Water from well	8.0
Water from pipe	2.9
Water from other sources	6.0

Source: BDA, 2010

Mobile network is also available in both districts although not stable, particularly in the rural communities. There are also no roads linking a greater number of communities posing a challenge to public transport services to such communities. Most people commute by bicycle, motor bicycle or on foot. Moreover, apart from the main trunk roads linking the Bolgatanga Municipality to Bawku which passes through some communities in the Nabdam District and the main road connecting the Bolgatanga Municipality to Bongo, there is no road surface within both districts with bitumen.

Health care facilities in the Bongo District are one hospital located in the district capital, four health centres, two clinics and twelve Community-Based Health Planning and Services (CHPS) compounds. The Nabdam District has no hospital. However, there is one health centre in the district capital, five clinics and three CHPS compounds spread across some communities.

There are markets in these districts which serve as both social meeting grounds and commerce. Besides the main markets located in the district capitals, both districts have smaller markets in some communities. Items traded in these markets include leather materials, smock, poultry, baskets, straw hats, foodstuff and animal cages, metal materials, and farming materials, livestock, fowls and guinea-fowls. In addition to a few shops built by the district assemblies in the district capital markets, trading in most markets are done under kiosks and temporary sheds erected by the traders themselves (see Figure 4 below). These markets play significant roles in the development of these districts. For example, apart from the Districts Assemblies Common Fund allocated to each district by central government and donor funds, markets in the country serve as the main source of internal revenue for the district assemblies for their development projects including the education sector. This implies that districts with the capacity to raise more revenue from their markets would have more capacities to fund their development programmes.

Figure 4: Sample Markets in Bongo and Nabdum Districts

A market day in Zorko, Bongo District



A market day in Pelungu, Nabdam District



Source: Field Data, February 2017

Both districts also have rural banks. While the bank in Bongo District is located in the capital, the Nabdam District bank is sited in Kongo. There are also private individuals who operate what is popularly called ‘susu’ where they collect and save money for people on agreed terms and conditions. However, these banking services are not within the reach of many communities outside the districts capitals.

Socio-culturally, the people of the Bongo District celebrate the ‘Azambene’ Festival [translated as Fire Festival] between October and November every year to mark their victory over the Bosasis, who were occupying their land. During the climax of this festival, households sacrifice animals to their gods and prepare meals amid drumming and dancing and invite friends, relatives and well-wishers to join. The festival also provides opportunities for families, the paramount chief and sub-chiefs and the communities to take stock of the year and plan for the next. The people in the Nabdam District on the other hand celebrate the ‘Tenglebigre’ Festival literally translated as the festival of harvest in November every year. This festival is celebrated to thank their gods and ancestors for a good farming season as well as successful harvest. Traditional religious practices dominate in these districts followed by Christianity and Islam. That may explain

why the people attribute their successes to their gods and ancestors during their festive activities.

Educationally, there are 67 public basic schools with a total pupil enrolment of 12,221 in the Nabdam District while that of the Bongo District is 205 with a total pupil enrolment of 35,385 (see Tables 9 and 10 below for a breakdown of schools, pupil enrolment and teacher population). In addition to basic schools, the Bongo District has two senior high and one vocational school, while the Nabdam has one senior high and one vocational school (Field data, December 2016).

Table 9: Public Basic Schools, Pupil Enrolment and Teacher Population in Nabdam District

Level	No. of Schools	Pupil Enrolment		Teacher Population	
		Boys	Girls	Professional Teachers	Non-professional Teachers
KG	24	1,411	1,483	58	35
PRIMARY	24	3,487	3,313	162	68
JHS	19	1,213	1,314	165	23
TOTAL	67	6,111	6,110	385	126

Source: Field Data, December 2016

Table 10: Public Basic Schools, Pupil Enrolment and Teacher Population in Bongo District

Level	No. of Schools	Pupil Enrolment		Teacher Population	
		Boys	Girls	Professional Teachers	Non-professional Teachers
KG	75	2,977	3,781	219	57
PRIMARY	74	11,926	8,874	398	104
JHS	56	4,430	3,397	298	56
TOTAL	205	19,333	16,052	915	217

Source: Field Data, December 2016

The next section explains further the conditions of schools in focus teachers' schools.

5.3. Background of Focus Teachers' Schools

The discussion of the background information of teachers' schools covers the resources and facilities in their schools. In terms of the physical school infrastructure and facilities in focus teachers' schools, there were few differences between the different schools across the two districts. For instance, all schools did not have a full complement of syllabuses, textbooks and other instructional materials. The textbooks and syllabuses of some subjects were photocopies, which were made from other schools. In terms of furniture, in five schools, dual desks were shared by three to four pupils with some pupils either sitting on the bare floor or on mats. Some pupils with the help of their teachers mounted blocks and stones and placed wooden boards across them to serve as furniture. In the remaining two schools, one school had tables and chairs for each pupil, whilst in the other school, there was no furniture at all for pupils. Figure 5 below is a photograph of me teaching in a Kindergarten class in one of the schools during my field work. For ethical reasons, I have masked the faces of the pupils.

Figure 5: Pupils in a Kindergarten Class



Source: Field Data, January 2017

All schools had permanent classrooms for pupils except in two schools, where in one school pupils studied under trees and in the other school, teaching and learning was held in a temporary structure which was erected using wire mesh and plywood. With respect to class sizes, all classes in focus teachers' schools exceeded the Ghana Education Service recommended teacher to pupil ratio of 1: 25 for Kindergarten; 1:35 for Primary School and 1:25 for Junior High School (Ministry of Education, 2003). Also, five out of the seven schools did not have accommodation for teachers at all. Although, the remaining two schools had accommodation, this was not enough for all teachers in the schools. As a result, some teachers lived outside their school and travelled daily to their schools. The challenge for these teachers was that the routes to some schools were difficult to travel on as they were rough and full of potholes and channels which teachers had to manoeuvre through. For some teachers, travelling on bicycles lasted over two hours.

Although, the situation in both districts and in all schools were similar, what this information adds to the study is a detailed explanation of the contexts within which these teachers were living and working, which is in line with the approach of the study. As explained in Chapter four, part of the responsibility for assessing how far case study findings relate to studies in similar contexts falls to the reader who must be provided with detailed contextual information about the research (Denscombe, 2007). Thus, explaining

the specific context of focus districts and schools was intended to enable readers to make informed judgement on this matter.

While the background information of the districts and focus teachers' schools was similar, there were some differences in teachers' personal and professional profiles in areas such as age, qualification and teaching experiences which are discussed next.

5.4. Profiles of Focus Teachers

The personal and professional profile of participants explored in this study were participants' age, teaching experience, marital status and reasons for entering the teaching profession. These elements are important in understanding teachers' sense of their professional identity.

All participants were below the age of forty with teaching experience ranging from five to 11 years. Teachers at this stage of their career are found to be more motivated, passionate and willing to engage in their work (Day, 2002). However, they may also have ambitions such as raising families and upgrading their knowledge and skills in the profession. Thus, the extent to which they are able to achieve both their personal and professional ambitions in the profession, may influence how they make sense of themselves as teachers and how they prioritise their school work.

Also, within the realm of professional identity, the way teachers perceive themselves will differ depending on their reasons for entering the profession. As Seligman (2002) posited, those who see the profession as a 'calling' or a 'vocation' tend to be enthusiastic and committed to teaching for its own sake. Thus, they see their role as making contribution to the good of society. On the other hand, teachers who regard teaching as a 'job', do it for the sake of salary and may not be passionate and committed to the profession. The implication here is that, what informs an individual's entry into the profession could have an impact not only on how he or she sees himself or herself in the profession but may also impact on his or her professional practice.

The next section explains in detail the profile of each of the seven focus teachers. Names of the teachers, schools, communities and districts are pseudonyms for the sake of confidentiality.

5.4.1. Japri

Japri is 36 years old. He is married and has one child. He started teaching in 2005 after his initial teacher training at the Tumu College of Education in the Upper West Region of the country. He has a first degree in Basic Education and was at the rank of ‘Senior Superintendent’. That means he was qualified to head a basic school, teach at the senior high level and supervise basic schools at the circuit level (see Table 6 in Chapter Two).

Becoming a teacher was a childhood ambition for Japri. His passion was influenced by his former primary school teacher who he described as ‘*my role model*’. He narrated how he was influenced by this teacher to enter teaching;

‘Well! what made me to be a teacher was, when I was in P4 [primary four], we were taught by one teacher and in fact, the way he was handling us, I was touched. I saw him not only to be a teacher but he was a guard, a parent and a leader. So from that point, I realised that there is a lot of joy in the teaching profession. Because I realised that whenever that particular teacher was with us, I could see the joy that he experienced as he took us through. Why am I saying so? There were times this teacher, imagine, he was staying at Galbo and in those days motorbikes were not common as we are seeing them today...But this teacher could get up early in the morning from Galbo with his bicycle and paddled to school before some of us would even get there [to school]. And in fact, when he entered the class, the way he took his time to take us through and the joy that he experienced was so marvellous. Quite apart from that, this master [teacher], regarded us as his younger brothers or children in the sense that there were times that he even bought shaving sticks, I mean the blades, bring them to school and shave us. You can imagine a teacher devoting his time to shave boys in the whole classroom. If actually he doesn’t have joy in the profession, I don’t think he would do such a thing’... Since then, I was wishing that if chance opens one day, I would be a role model like this [him]. So that prompted me to enter into the teaching profession after successfully completing SSS [Senior Secondary School]’.

His main aim was therefore to also help children to reach greater heights in their career just as his former teacher helped him. Japri had taught in different schools before he was transferred to Kotazo primary school in the Zolema District in 2014. At the time of this data collection, he was the assistant head teacher of the school. Because of his position, he had additional administrative responsibilities of supporting the head teacher in the functioning and management of the school.

The total pupil enrolment of the school was 323 for classes one to six. However, classes three, four and five were divided into two. There were 11 teachers, comprising seven

professional teachers including the head teacher and four non-professional teachers. Japri taught pupils in class six which had a class size of 42.

I noticed during my observation that Japri was not only a teacher to his class pupils but also acted as a guardian to three of his class children who had a single parent as a result the death of their father. He would ask them every morning if they had eaten before coming to school and feeling well. He was also responsible for their exercise books, pens and paying for their end of term examination fees because their mother could not afford. Japri not only appeared to be replicating his former teacher but also his attitude was a typical illustration of the inseparable connection between the teacher as a person and the teacher as a professional.

5.4.2. Lapeka

Lapeka hailed from the Nago District which is two districts away from the Talema District where she was teaching. Lapeka started teaching in Gupe Kindergarten (KG) in the Talema District in 2012. Her passion to become a teacher started when she was a Sunday school teacher in her church at her hometown. Teaching children in the church *'was just something that I normally enjoyed doing'*. That explained why she decided to study Basic Education in the university, so she could become a teacher, though her elder sister wanted her to study a *'Management Programme'*. Because of this, she found her greatest pleasure in helping her pupils *'to move even higher than where I am now'*. She is 37 years old, married and has two children. She holds a Diploma in Basic Education from the University of Education, Winneba and she was at the rank of 'Superintendent I'. With her rank and qualification, she was qualified to take up administrative roles in the school in addition to teaching.

The total pupil enrolment of the school was 129, comprising 71 pupils in KG1 and 58 in KG2, with three teachers including the head mistress. The third teacher was a non-professional teacher. Lapeka was teaching in KG1. The school did not have any permanent physical infrastructure. Initially, it was using an old primary school building after the primary school was relocated to a new building. However, the building had developed wide visible cracks and some of the roofs had started ripping off. The head mistress described the building as *'not safe for teachers and pupils'*. Classes were, thus,

held under Neem trees and without any furniture for pupils. Teaching and learning materials were stored in the primary school storeroom.

During one of my interactions with her after observing her lesson, she was forthright to ask me how I felt about her lesson and what I thought could make her lesson better. However, for ethical implications, I could not point out to her any specific weaknesses and strengths in her lesson. Rather, I discussed these broadly with her using my own experiences as a former teacher.

Observing Lapeka, I noticed both the joy and despair that is often associated with the work of teachers (Acker, 1999). I saw a clear sense of pride when talking about her efforts at finding some of the materials herself for teaching, but at the same time her frustration when trying to control pupils who were often distracted by passers-by and animals moving and grazing around them during lessons. She seemed to genuinely enjoy and like children.

5.4.3. Raka

Raka was a KG1 teacher. Raka is in her late twenties, married and has a two-year old daughter who lived with her in the school quarters. She indicated that growing up;

'I just made up my mind that I wanted to become a teacher simply because of their work. I always see it to be good'...I like playing with children particularly and being a teacher you have that kind of relationship[opportunity] to get closer to children and even share whatever you have with them'.

That was Raka's reason for entering teaching and since becoming a teacher, she has always felt happy when she entered her class and saw her pupils who were eager to learn.

She started teaching in 2012 after her initial teacher training in St John Bosco's College of Education. She was at the rank of 'Superintendent I'. She was transferred to her current school, Kombibisi KG in the Zolema District, in the 2014/2015 academic year following a misunderstanding she had with some parents in her previous school's community. The school had a total pupil enrolment of 131, that is, 68 for KG1 and 63 for KG2. The teacher population was three including the head teacher who was also the head teacher for the primary school. Raka's dual responsibility as a parent and teacher, in addition to the fact that she lived within her school's community in both her previous and current

schools, appeared to make her more informative participant with respect to teachers' experiences in their communities. She had the opportunity to interact regularly with parents at several different platforms; as a neighbour, member of church with some parents and teachers. During my observation, Raka had missed classes once because she was indisposed. I was asked to stand in for her while she stayed in the teachers' quarters to recover.

5.4.4. Kagah

Kagah is 33 years old and married. He holds a first degree in Basic Education from the University of Cape Coast and started teaching in 2008 and he was at the rank a 'Principal Superintendent'. He was, therefore, qualified to head a basic school, teach at the senior high level and become a circuit supervisor in basic schools.

Growing up, Kagah wanted to be a lawyer. However, his mother who was the breadwinner of the family died when he was still in the Senior High School. He could not, therefore, afford the cost of training in the Law School after his senior high education due to financial constraints. He therefore opted for the teaching profession. Kagah does not regret becoming a teacher because *'I'm enjoying the profession and I'm loving it'*. He believes that it is also another opportunity to serve children and society;

'On the first day, I said I wanted be a lawyer but I couldn't fulfil that dream so I had to move to my second choice and my second choice was to be a teacher because even with the lawyer you still have to work with human beings. You have to defend human beings here and there. Ahaa. Because I'm the type [of person] I don't like cheating. You see that this person is cheating and you just sit down and watch it, I don't like it... So I feel great being a basic school teacher because I am also helping this little ones. I always have the passion for this little ones because they are the future so if you don't train them well and they grow up to be a burden, you see that it will not augur well'.

Kagah was transferred to his current school, Sogtaaba Junior High School (JHS) in the Talema District, in 2012. The total pupil enrolment of the school was 79, that is, for JHS one to JHS three, with nine teachers including the head teacher. One of them was a non-professional teacher. As a subject teacher for English Language, Kagah taught in all the three classes. Linking the various subjects taught at the JHS level to different career prospects formed a key part of Kagah's interactions with his pupils. He said that doing that would guide pupils to begin to think of their future career choice.

The school was established in 2012 in a temporary structure which was built by an NGO to set up a guinea fowl farm. However, this structure was later converted into a school to serve children in the community as they used to travel to other communities after completing primary school to continue their junior high education. Teaching and learning materials were stored in the house of the assembly member of the community as there was no book store in the school. There was no playground either. Pupils moved to the primary school to use the playground there during inter-school sporting activities.

5.4.5. Igbenaa

Igbenaa started teaching in 2003 as an untrained teacher. He subsequently pursued the Untrained Teacher Distance Education programme in the St John Bosco's College of Education for his Diploma in Basic Education. He was at the rank of 'Superintendent II'. This means his core role in the Ghana Education Service was teaching at the basic level.

After his secondary education, *'there were other options but I chose to be a teacher. I love it'*. His choice of teaching as a profession was influenced by the benevolence of his former basic school teachers, who supported him with money, uniforms and books to complete his basic education after the death of his parents when he was still very young as he narrated;

'My father died when I was about five years old. So there was nobody to take care of me. It was then my senior sister who was married that very year but realised because of the death of my father nobody could take care of me. She had to divorce with the husband and come home to take care of me because my mother too was old. I'm the last born of my parents as I said earlier on... Some teachers too were good to me because of my performances in class. They loved me. Almost every teacher who taught me loved me. So in terms of books, printing fees, those days sports and culture fees, some teachers were paying for me because they realised that I was good but nobody was there to pay those fees for me and if I don't pay too I would be a dropout and they didn't want me to waste that my brain. So some of my teachers helped me and that my late sister of bringing me to whom I am now'.

Having been through such difficulty situations, he entered teaching so he could replicate the kindness of his former teachers by providing similar opportunities to children so that *'they will also become somebody one day'*. That was his utmost pleasure in teaching. That is also why he had accepted to teach in rural areas.

Igbenaa early experience regarding his education affected the way he related with his pupils. In the course of one of his lessons that I observed in the class, he shared his personal experience with his pupils and encouraged them to study hard and that it did not matter about their family background because God can bring help from anywhere to them. According to Igbenaa, some of the pupils were not motivated to study hard because they felt that they could not progress beyond the basic level because their parents cannot afford the cost of secondary education for them. He later told me that he does it occasionally to encourage his pupils. Igbenaa is in his early thirties and married. He had taught in two different schools within the district before he was transferred to his current school, Nayi primary school, in 2013. The school is located in an isolated forest in the middle of two communities to serve both De-ero and Bunkoroka communities. The Bunkoroka community was separated from the school by a river. According to Igbenaa the location of the school from the Bunkoroka community affected pupils' attendance during the rainy season as there was no bridge across the river.

The total pupil enrolment of the school was 279 for classes one to six, with a total of seven teachers including the head teacher. One of them was an untrained teacher. Igbenaa taught in class three with a class size of 57. Igbenaa had added responsibilities to teaching in the school. He was the sports teacher in the school and was therefore in charge of training the sports boys and girls for inter-school competitions. On two different mornings during my observation, Igbenaa trained with the school boys' football team as they were preparing for the inter-school competition in the circuit. On both occasions, arrangements were made for the head teacher to take over his class for the first two periods. Here, I noticed the support that teachers get from one another.

5.4.6. Eninga

Eninga holds a Diploma in Basic Education from the Jasikan College of Education in the Volta Region of Ghana and started teaching in 2011. She was at the rank of a 'Superintendent II'. Her childhood ambition was to become an immigration officer. However, after her secondary school, she was convinced by her family to go into teaching as a stepping stone;

'I was not ready for the teaching profession. It was my parents and sister. They asked me to join 'pupil teaching'. That's why I went into teaching...'

Although, Eninga felt teaching was a service to society and she was doing her best to help her pupils, she was still reconsidering her ambition to join the immigration service in the future. She emphasised, *'...so when I get my money [promotion salary arrears] I will only teach for one year or two years and I will find my way. I want immigration. So that's just my mind'*. She was particularly passionate for the immigration service because of the relatively high salary and the respect accorded that profession.

She is in her late twenties, married and has a baby girl. She taught in Tumtum Kindergarten in the Zolema District. The total pupil enrolment of the school was 76 for KG1 and KG2 with a total of four teachers including the head teacher who was also the head teacher for the primary school. However, at the time of my data collection, Eninga was the only teacher in the school. This was because the head teacher spent most of his time in his office in the primary school which was in a different part of the community. The other two teachers were untrained teachers who were employed under the Youth Employment Agency. According to Eninga, they were not regular to work because they had not been paid any salary since their engagement in September 2016. The school had furniture for all pupils.

5.4.7. Etiko

Etiko is in his early thirties and single. He holds a Senior Secondary School Certificate (SSSCE) qualification and started teaching in 2012. However, at the time of data collection, he was in his final year of his studies to upgrade his qualification to Diploma in Basic Education at the Jasikan College of Education through Distance Education with the support of an international NGO, GPEC. Because, Etiko was still undergoing his training to become a professional teacher, his conditions of service were different from the trained teachers. His salary was lower and he was not entitled to promotion.

Etiko's auntie wanted him to become a nurse. However, *'one thing is just that I fear dead bodies and then blood. That's one of the reasons why I didn't want to go there [nursing]. But for teaching, I hope that place [in the teaching profession] I will be able to do my best. That is why I applied for the job'*. That is, he hoped that by becoming a teacher, he

would be able to help children to achieve their ambitions and that one day his pupils would acknowledge him for helping them. This was the part that kept him going in teaching.

He taught in Yori primary school in the Talema District. The school was established in 1962. It is located in the same premises with the KG and Junior High School. The school had a total pupil enrolment of 376, for classes one to six, with a total teacher population of seven including the head teacher. Two of the teachers were untrained teachers. Etiko taught in class two which had a class size of 69. Unless Etiko and his pupils were doing any outdoor activities during the Physical Education lesson, any visitor to the school could hardly see him as he was always in his class even during break times possibly because of the workload that kept him within the bounds of his class.

5.5. Summary of Chapter

This chapter has explained the research site. It was divided into three parts: the background of the focus districts; schools; and teachers' own profiles. Including this information in the study not only helped in analysis of the data but also it is expected to give readers ideas about the socio-cultural characteristics and economic status of the districts, the human, material and physical resources available in focus teachers' schools and teachers' own unique characteristics, all of which have implications for teachers' sense of professional identity.

While the situations in the two districts and teachers' schools were similar, teachers' personal and professional profiles differed in terms of their qualifications, teaching experiences and reasons for entering the teaching profession, buttressing that teachers as individuals also have their unique characteristics.

The next chapter explains teachers' experiences and the implications for their sense of professional identity. This is done under the five key themes that emerged from analysis of the data.

Chapter Six

Teachers' Experiences and Implications for Professional Identity

6.1. Introduction

Having laid out the background of focus teachers' districts, schools and teachers' own personal and professional profiles in the previous chapter, this chapter builds on that by explaining the themes that emerged from analysis of teachers' experiences. As explained in Chapter Four, teachers' experiences were analysed thematically by looking for common patterns or themes across the data and their relationships to the research questions. In searching for themes, I was flexible in my approach. As this is a qualitative study and does not aim to make generalisation of findings at a statistical level, important consideration was not attached to what proportion of my data set was required to provide evidence for it to be regarded as a theme. Rather the 'keyness' of a theme was based on whether it captured something important in relation to the research questions (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.10). Five key themes emerged from the analysis of the data, namely:

- *Recognition*; this theme captured teachers' concerns for their efforts to be appreciated in the form of financial and material incentives as well as in kind through praise and concerns for their daily struggles in these deprived rural areas by authority and parents.
- *Respect and Regard*; this theme captured teachers' concerns for the need for teachers and the basic school teaching profession to be treated with dignity.
- *Voice*; this theme captured teachers' views regarding their participation in educational decisions and policies both at the national and local levels.
- *Support*; this theme comprised two sub-themes; teachers' concerns for support from authority in their continuous professional development and support from authority and parents in their daily tasks of teaching.

- *Commitment*; this theme captured the level of investment (time, effort and resources) that teachers put into their work and the desire to help children in their learning.

As this study was about teachers' sense of professional identity, these themes captured teachers' experiences and how they affected their sense of professional identity, which is how they felt about themselves as teachers. The conceptual framework, explained in Section 3.8 of Chapter Three, and the research questions informed the dimension of data collection. As such the structure used to present the data under the key themes is related to evidence covering all aspects of the framework. The themes '*recognition*'; '*respect and regard*'; and '*support (for daily tasks of teaching)*' relate to the contextual dimension, while '*Voice*' and '*Support (for professional development)*' relate to the professional. In presenting the findings under each of these themes, first, I provide evidence of participants' experiences in these districts. This is followed by the implications of participants' experiences for their sense of professional identity and finally, teachers' aspirations for enhancing their professional identity in these districts. As the conceptual framework also included the personal dimension of teachers' experiences, these themes are discussed together with teachers' personal attributes, which were their reasons for entering teaching, in the next chapter in order to provide a deeper understanding of teachers' sense of professional identity. The '*commitment*' theme, on the other hand, relates to research question three, which sought to understand the impact of teachers' sense of professional identity on their professional practice. Hence, in presenting this theme, I provide only evidence of participants' commitment, both from the interview data and observation field notes.

Quotations from the interview transcripts and extracts from my field notes are used extensively to support the findings. This is done not only to describe participants' subjective experiences and perceptions in detail but also to present a 'coherent and persuasive story about the data' as explained in Chapter Four (Clarke and Braun, 2013, p. 121) and what the data tell us about teachers' sense of professional identity. I am aware that 'with the skilful use of quotes, researchers can add aesthetic value to research findings and, thereby, draw more attention to the voices of participants who might

otherwise have remained unheard' (Sandelowski, 1994, p. 480). In using these quotations, important consideration is given to staging. That is, quotes are not presented without clear guidance as to what is to expect in them since any group of words may have more than one interpretation.

The theme 'recognition' is discussed first.

6.2. Recognition

Recognition for teachers' efforts and daily struggles in these deprived rural areas was a concern for participants in this study. They expressed that despite the difficult circumstances under which they lived and worked, their efforts were not recognised and appreciated. They also indicated that notwithstanding their challenging circumstances, they were making important contribution to the human resource of the country. Teachers in Japri's school, for example, cited that a former pupil of the school was currently pursuing Medicine in the University for Development Studies, Ghana. Yet, as they claimed, the contributions teachers in rural areas were making to the lives of children and development of the country were not appreciated. In the words of one teacher in the school, *'the service is not rewarding enough'*. Teachers' sentiments suggest that if given recognition there is more chance of enhancing a positive identity.

The first section under this theme examines the experiences of participants as contained in the data.

6.2.1. Evidence of participants' experiences

Two categories of participants' experiences emerged; participants' experiences inside their classrooms and experiences outside their classrooms. Inside the classrooms, participants had to deal with class sizes that exceeded the required Ghana Education Service teacher-pupil ratio; teach without all the materials they needed to facilitate their work; and deal with children from poor academic background. Outside the classrooms, accommodation and other social amenities appeared to be a challenge for them. As they said, they were doing their best amid challenging working environments, yet their efforts were not recognised.

Here, I present first, evidence of participants' experiences in their classrooms, then followed by their experiences outside their classrooms.

- *Participants' experiences inside their classrooms*

Analysis of the data identified that participants had to contend with overcrowded classrooms in their schools and without all the teaching and learning materials. A clear impact observed was the workload on participants as they had to spend more energy and time in preparing, teaching and assessing pupils, sometimes outside normal class hours, not to mention the emotional drain of teaching in such classes. In Etiko class, the class size was 69. He bemoaned the situation in his class as he said;

'...as at now in my class they are getting to 70 for one teacher. So, when you are teaching and how to mark exercises is always difficult because of how the number is great'.

In Eninga's school, the situation was not different. The school had classrooms for both KG1 and KG2. However, Eninga was the only teacher in the school. Overseeing the two classes alone, she always combined the two classes, with a total enrolment of 76, for teaching. A visible impact of this was the pressure on Eninga to attend to pupils at different levels during the same lesson as well as monitor and manage pupils' behaviours in class. She lamented the difficulties she encountered in the classroom;

'As we are sitting like this, you'll see some saying that "I'm going to drink water". Some will come and say, "this one has beaten me..." As you're busy on board, others are sitting and fighting. So, you see that because you are [I am] alone, how to handle [them] is not easy'.

Eninga stated further that;

'...and here we don't have TLMs [teaching and learning materials]. Nothing... You see that at the KG we are supposed to have this kind of charts, the A, B, C alphabet charts, then the other charts with the teachers' manuals but we don't have them. So, it makes teaching here very difficult. Sometimes when you want to prepare your lesson plan, you have to move to other people [teachers] and collect their books...'

Japri expressed similar experience in his school. The school had classrooms for all classes. However, a challenge facing teachers was teaching and learning materials and furniture. He shared his experience;

'...in terms of teaching and learning materials, textbooks, we also lack the books. There are even some of the classes when you go there, you have about only two or three textbooks or ten textbooks. Some they don't even have...'

Teaching at the KG, pupils start their learning with *'my first copy book'*. However, Lapeka's school did not have these books. She narrated the efforts teachers were making to help pupils who did not have *'my first copy book'* to enable them to participate in lessons;

'...So, what we normally do is that we normally use exercise books and design it. [That is] we draw the lines and put [write] the things on the board. And pupils like those that don't have the book, we ask them to be looking at the board and also be tracing inside their books'. You can see [she pauses and shows me some of the books] this are the children's books'.

As many pupils did not have these books, she sometimes took pupils' exercise books home to design and bring to school the next day so that those pupils could participate in the lessons;

'And you know they are many, many of them don't have the books, 'ehhe' so it's not easy. At times, I'll send the books and draw the lines so that the following day I'll bring. If it is time for us to write, I'll give to them'.

Making references to their experiences, participants claimed that while teachers were making efforts to help pupils in their learning, their sacrifices and efforts were not *'rewarded'*. A profession that is deemed to be unselfish, teachers were often told their *'reward is in heaven'*, said Lapeka. She, however, appeared not to be excited by this notion as she put it;

'...though it's in heaven but what [do] we also have to depend on earth? You can't just be working and say my reward is in heaven. We [teachers] also want to achieve something on earth'.

Participants' experiences in the classroom, not only arose from dealing with overcrowded classrooms and teaching and learning without all materials they needed to facilitate their work, but they had to deal with children with poor academic backgrounds as well. This meant that teachers had to put in extra time and efforts in their preparation and teaching. For instance, Kagah was in one of the most deprived schools in this study. He bemoaned that unlike urban schools where;

'...some of them[children] even have the books, they study at home, their parents are literate and they even help them before they even come to school, [in the rural schools] teachers will take students from the scratch, they don't understand anything, they can't speak English, simple things they can't even comprehend. Then the teacher you have to take them through from the scratch and these students grow to become better people in future yet it is not reflected in your salary'.

He claimed this marked a *'lack of appreciation for the amount of work we are doing here'*.

My observation of teachers in the field corroborates some of the claims of participants in the classrooms expressed in the interview data. As indicated already, the class size of all participants observed exceeded the stipulated Ghana Education Service teacher-pupil ratio. Commenting on the pupil enrolment in his school, the head teacher of Etiko's school said *'sometimes I pity my teachers because you can imagine one teacher teaching as many as 77 pupils, in the case of primary three'*. He added that *'at times he can't even go for break'* because while pupils were on break, he had to continue marking pupils' exercises and preparing for the next lessons after break.

I also observed that in the Junior High School where pupils took extensive notes, teachers would write notes on the blackboard for pupils to copy into their exercise books. As teachers at the JHS level were subject specialists, in many instances, when it was time for change of lessons, the next teacher would have to wait for pupils to finish copying notes from the previous lesson so that the teacher could clean the blackboard and start his or her lesson. This not only put additional burden on teachers considering that teachers spent a greater part of instructional time writing notes on the blackboard but also the additional energy needed to do this every day. This was compounded by demands for teachers to give as many exercises to pupils as possible, mark class registers every day, and prepare lesson notes daily.

The situations at the KG and primary levels were not different. For instance, I observed Lapeka during her lesson on 'Literacy'. In a class of 58 pupils, there were eight textbooks. During the lesson, these books were shared to pupils in groups of seven pupils per book. Each pupil was expected to *'Look and Say'* what he or she saw in the book. These were pictures of different fruits that pupils were expected to look and identify in

the reading book. This created confusion in the class as each pupil wanted to turn the book towards his or her direction. Lapeka had a huge task controlling pupils. At the lower primary, pupils studied six subjects and at the upper primary pupils studied seven subjects. I observed that some pupils used one exercise book for all subjects. This trend presented additional burden to teachers as they had to quickly mark any exercises given and return the books to pupils, so they could use for the next lessons.

As indicated earlier, participants' experiences were not related to only the classroom. They also shared their experiences outside their classrooms.

- *Participants' experiences outside their classrooms*

These experiences concerned participants' daily struggles because of accommodation and other social amenities for all teachers in their schools. Lapeka shared her experiences regarding accommodation for teachers in her school. When she was posted to her school, which is located two districts away from her hometown, she could not afford to travel daily to the school. The teachers' quarters was also not in good condition. However, when she was asked by the head mistress if she could stay in that building, she responded, *'I'll manage it. So far as I like the job and I have been posted here, what will I do?'* She recounted her experiences;

'...my challenge was accommodation. I suffered here. Where to stay wasn't easy... it was tough... By then the school's old quarters was there. It is up there and how the place is, I wish you were there to see it with your eyes... When I got there, actually it was not easy but I said 'ok'. I'll manage so far as I like the job and I have been posted here, what will I do? They went and cleaned the place and I packed my things [and came]... At times, you will be sleeping there, then you will see snakes. One day, [she pauses], light is not there, nothing. The place is just there, two rooms and one [room] was even condemned, the sideways was even leaking.... If it is raining, at times, I have to pick my baby and just push her at the corner there and I will be standing at the corner. If the rain stops, I'll mop and put my mattress back and start sleeping again. At times you'll even go, if you ask my colleague teachers they will tell you. One day, I got there and a big snake was there....'

[She narrated her experiences with the snake and how they got rid of it from the building]

'So, as for this place, accommodation is the big challenge. As a new teacher, if you come here and you're not careful you'll run away'.

Lapeka's experiences appeared to reflect those of other participants as Etiko expressed similar comments that one of the major challenges facing teachers in his school was 'no accommodation'. Due to that he travelled daily to school from his hometown.

Etiko narrated his experiences travelling daily;

'...as I was telling you, in the remote areas we always find a lot of problems. Because looking at it, look at where I'm staying, Doko, you have to take a motor bike, sometimes my motor will spoil and I have to walk to this place'.

He added that travelling daily using a motor bike on the rough road was not only tiring but also 'more expensive for him' considering the amount of money he spent on buying fuel and maintaining his motor bike. He added that, 'sometimes we [teachers] have to go to Kotie [the nearest school] to share [accommodation] with teachers there'. However, this was challenging for teachers because a room that was meant for one teacher was shared by 'two or three teachers', he claimed. Yet, 'no reward for us', he indicated.

In Japri's school, there was also no accommodation for teachers. As result, all teachers stayed outside the school and travelled daily to their school. He lamented that by the time teachers arrived in the school, they were already tired, yet they had to teach their pupils;

'...most at times, you realise that because of that long distance and because some [teachers] have to get up early in the morning and prepare before coming, you see that by the time they get to school they are tired...but they have to enter and teach...so it's not easy at all here'.

In the two schools that had accommodation for teachers, teachers indicated that it was challenging for teachers because of the lack of water and electricity. Raka's school had teacher quarters where some teachers, including Raka stayed. However, a challenge for teachers there was water. Teachers 'have to walk for a long distance and even if you get there, there will be many people and you will be struggling with the community people to get water...'. She claimed that teachers were going through a lot just to be able to help pupils in their learning but 'the officers are not doing what they are supposed to do for us to also be happy to do the work'. She emphasised the lack of recognition from parents again;

'Just like the same way I complained about the people in the office, some of the parents too they don't see that hard work from us. Some don't see it. They don't appreciate our work too'.

In all schools visited and observed, three communities had access to electricity though none of the schools in these communities was connected to the electricity. Interacting with teachers who resided in the school accommodation, they indicated that rather than relaxing after closing from school, they had to continue with their lesson notes preparation as there was no light at night to enable them to prepare for the next day's lessons. Raka, however, relaxed after school and used a torch light at night to prepare her lesson notes.

A common phrase that was used by teachers during my interaction with them was that they were in these deprived rural schools *'trying to make the impossible possible'*, yet their efforts were not appreciated. Igbenaa started wondering whether it was worth it continuing to devote their time, efforts and resources when authority did not appear to see it worthy of appreciation. He did not mince words when he said that if the trend continued, *'then it will come to a time everybody [every teacher] will want to teach in the urban area'*. Here, it can be seen how recognition for teachers' efforts and struggles in these districts is important to participants. They felt that they were working under difficult circumstances, yet their efforts at helping children in their learning were not rewarded.

The experiences of participants evidenced here support Salifu and Agbenyega's (2013) argument that, in spite of the challenging environments in which teachers in deprived rural schools of Ghana live and work, they are poorly compensated. Such experiences had implications on how participants in this study made sense of themselves as professionals in these districts, which the next section looks at.

6.2.2. Recognition: Implications for participants' sense of professional identity

It is argued that recognition lies at the heart of teaching in that 'a teacher's work is a process of receiving and giving recognition' (Rauno and Heikkinen, 2004, p. 164). Thus, if this important element is lacking it can have implications for teachers' sense of professional identity (VSO, 2008). It emerged clearly from participants' experiences that teachers were working hard in an educational system that did not seem to recognise and appreciate their efforts. This had implications on how participants felt about themselves

as teachers in these districts as Etiko said that the lack of recognition for teachers' efforts and struggles made him feel that teachers were *'not valued'* and that authority did not *'care about'* them or what they were doing in such areas. Japri seemed to express similar experiences. Sharing how he felt about being a teacher, Japri said, *'...it's like they [authority] don't care about our situation... they don't care about how we are doing or the work'*. He added that *'sometimes it makes you sad. Because you're suffering here but nobody cares about what you're doing'*.

For Lapeka, the lack of recognition for teachers' struggles and efforts made teachers feel that *'your service is not needed'*. She expressed;

'...you feel like your service is not needed. You feel like you're just doing [working] but what you're doing is not important to anyone. You're just doing it because you have to do it because what you will do... You're just doing it just because of your daily bread but not because your service is needed. uhhh!

Interacting with other teachers in the field, some of them expressed similar concerns that despite their struggles in these 'hard to reach places' like their schools and the contributions they were making to the development of society, they were not rewarded for their efforts. When asked how they felt about as teachers in relation to their experiences, the phrase *'it means they don't care about us'* was commonly used. Some teachers would say *'we are not valued'* that was why little attention was given to their concerns. Justifying his claim, one teacher in Igbenaa's school said;

'...if you value something, you handle that thing well because, day in, day out, teachers complain of poor salaries, poor allowances and a whole lot of things. And it is like they pay deaf ears to it. Our issues of promotion, at times we complain a lot but they don't listen to it [us]. There are times teaching and learning materials, like this, we complain but they don't listen to us'.

The head mistress of Lapeka's school made a similar remark that teachers were *'actually suffering here but it's even like we're not valued'*.

The implications of the lack of recognition, as seen here, shows how participants perceived themselves as unimportant. This seemed to explain why Igbenaa, for instance, had begun to question whether it was worth continuing to invest their efforts in these areas. Overall, akin to MacLure's (1993) study involving teachers in three local

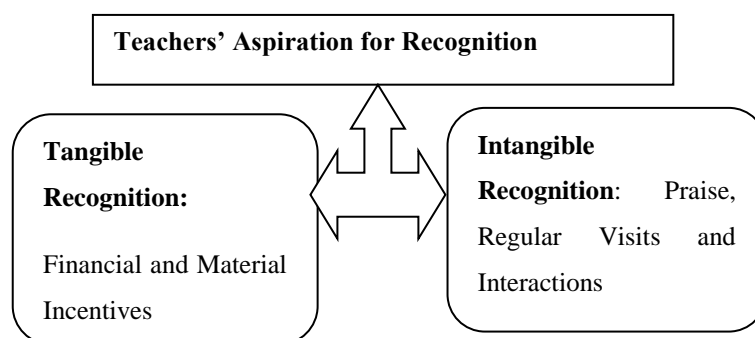
authorities in England, teachers in this study appeared to feel a sense of disaffection at an educational system that did not recognise and reward their contributions.

Participants had aspirations which may be significant in enhancing how they feel about of themselves as teachers in these districts.

6.2.3. Recognition: Participants' aspirations for enhancing their sense of professional identity

It emerged clearly from participants' expressions that they wanted their efforts and struggles in such areas to be recognised and appreciated. They expressed a number of aspirations which are put into three: financial and material incentives; praise; and regular visits and interactions. These aspirations are further broadly categorised into tangible and intangible recognition.

Table 11: Teachers' Aspiration for Recognition



- *Financial and material incentives:*

'It is not the matter of giving [only] physical money...if they try and give you some kind of reward and you also use that one as appreciation...'

It emerged that participants wanted recognition in terms of both financial and material incentives. Kagah lamented that while teachers in deprived rural areas had to put in extra efforts as well as faced many challenges, their workload was not commensurate with their salary.

He, therefore, wanted teachers to be given some allowances in addition to their salary for the hardships teachers encountered in such areas; *'...so there should be allowance for us*

so that we'll use that to also compensate ourselves'. Lapeka appeared to share similar views. She said, that while teachers wanted to go to heaven as they are often told their reward was in heaven, teachers had plans to accomplish on earth. Therefore, issues regarding teachers' salary should be given attention;

'...So, they should always try, in terms of [our] salary they should also try to assist us. So that's what I would also like for them [authority] to do for me as a teacher in terms of our arrears and our salaries'.

Igbenaa, however, expressed that teachers were not necessarily looking for only financial incentives but;

'...something just to make us happy. Something for us to feel that we have been appreciated. People have recognised us. We have been recognised. Because I'm in a rural area, that's why, maybe by the end of the year I'm given this. That's why, maybe occasionally or on this occasion, I was awarded this, that is why this day they came to my school and gave us this. Whatever, anything that is motivative, I think we will be happy'.

Etiko appeared to express similar views that *'it is not everyone [every teacher] who will like to go to the rural areas'* to work due to the difficult circumstances under which teachers lived and worked. Therefore, teachers who had accepted to be there should be given some incentives to make them feel appreciated and happy. He opined;

'So at least this kind of teachers they should always try to get something to make them happy to stay in the villages... it isn't that giving you something will make you big. But that one is a kind of appreciation for you being in the rural areas and you will also be happy with the children'.

Etiko did not, however, mean only financial incentive but any form of incentive just to show that teachers' efforts were appreciated. He clarified that;

'...it is not the matter of giving physical money but at least, at the end of the month even if they get TD box [TD is a kind of local soap commonly used by households for washing and bathing] and say "take and wash your things" or something like that...[or] if they try and give you some kind of reward and you also use that one as appreciation'.

He seemed to be optimistic that if the efforts of teachers were recognised and appreciated it had the potential of motivating teachers to continue to stay in such areas to work.

Etiko claimed that;

'...they will even transfer you to a city and you will say you're ok [in the rural area]. It isn't that you are ok, but what they [authority] are doing for you, you also appreciate and want to be with the children in the village. That's what I mean by if they transfer you to a city you'll say you're ok in the village'.

During my interaction with one teacher in Igbenaa's school, he seemed to share a similar position as Etiko and Igbenaa. He said, *'...we are not asking for something big but anything so that we will feel that they're seeing what we are doing here'*. He did not however, make any specific suggestions as he insisted *'anything'*.

- *Praise: '...every person [every teacher] wants to look big [therefore] when you have done something good and they cheer you up, you always feel alright'.*

Significant also to participants feeling that their efforts were recognised was praise. They wanted the good works of teachers to also be recognised in kind through praise. Igbenaa said that in his school, officials occasionally visited. However, his major concern was the feedback that teachers received from authority which he claimed was unsatisfactory as officials failed to praise teachers for good work done.

He expressed;

'Some of them [officials] do come and when you are right they won't write anything in the log book...and indicate "Mr A has done well. We have cross-checked his attendance, lesson notes, his pupils' attendance, exercises and what of you and he has done marvellously well". They won't say that. But let them come and see me lacking one thing, they will write and put my name there, that "Mr A has failed to do this or that".'

In his view, the good works and efforts of teachers should also be recognised through praise when they visited. *'...so they should always write something for the good things we are doing'*. Japri appeared to share similar views that the efforts teachers were making should be recognised in praise. He claimed that teachers were often blamed that *'we the teachers are not doing our best... that we are not doing our work well'* if pupils did not do well in their final exams, *'forgetting that we don't have the TLMs and some of us have to look for materials to come and teach'*. He claimed that while teachers were blamed for the poor performance of pupils, *'it's like what you're giving to the pupils or the district, the officers don't see it to be praiseworthy'*, he lamented. This seemed to be the view of Raka also. She said that *'...every person [every teacher] wants to look big [therefore] when you have done something good and they cheer you up, you always feel alright'*. She, therefore, suggested that;

'In a situation where you have done something good, they [officials] should be in a mood to appreciate so that the next time you do something wrong and they complain then you will know that they do praise you sometimes and then blame you sometimes. But not to always wait for the bad side to blame but the good side they won't praise you.'

Teachers' quest for praise was not limited to only authority. Interacting with some teachers during my observation, they also wanted parents and the wider society to praise teachers in rural areas for the contribution they were making to the human resource development of the country despite the challenges. Teachers in Etiko School would back their argument by making reference to a former Member of Parliament of the constituency who had his basic education in a rural school. They claimed that but for teachers in the rural areas, the former Member of Parliament would not have risen to that level.

- *Regular visits and interactions:*

'...if you don't go there, it means that you ignore them...'

Also, important to participants feeling that their work was recognised by authority was regular visits by authority to interact with them and find out their concerns or needs. Etiko expressed that while teachers were struggling in deprived rural areas, officials failed to visit regularly teachers in schools to interact with them and to find out their challenges and needs using the difficult nature of roads leading to such places as excuses;

'...Some of the places I mentioned, like Gugu, it will even take more than a month you won't even see an education officer there. "That oh if I go there my car will do this or that". So they should always try and move there to see how the teachers are doing, the consequences that they are facing there. I could remember some of them will say "it's not easy because the road is not good".'

In his view, if officials failed to visit teachers, it meant that they ignored them as he claimed; *'... because if you don't go there, it means that you ignore them...'* However, if authority visited teachers to see how they were working, teachers would feel that officials *'cared about'* what and how they were doing there and the challenges they faced in such areas. Etiko suggested that authority should show concern for teachers' daily struggles through visits to their schools and interacting with them to know their concerns and needs there. As he claimed, *'if you try and visit them, it's good'* because if they did not visit, it meant that authority *'do not care about us or what we are doing here'*, he emphasised.

Interacting teachers in Kagah's school, one seemed to share similar views. He said that *'they [officials] don't come all the time and when they come they won't talk to us about how we're doing'*. He said officials appeared to be more interested in inspecting lesson notes than interacting with teachers to know the challenges they faced and how they could help them when they visited;

'It is like their attention is so much on the lesson notes ...When they come, what they do [ask] is that "where are your lesson note books?"'

He wished that in addition to checking on lesson notes, officials would interact with teachers to find out their needs in such areas and how well to motivate them to work.

As seen, participants had different aspirations for enhancing their sense of identity. However, Japri expressed an opinion which though did not fall under any of the three categories but seemed worth paying attention to. When probed how he wanted authority to *'care about'* the concerns of teachers as this was a phrase used often by him, he responded that;

'everything is about leadership... Why am I saying so? At times, somebody may be picked [appointed] as the director but the question is "does he know the ups and downs in teaching and learning process before he is picked as a director?" If he is knowledgeable in these areas, fair enough for us. But if he is not, then he is likely to mess up because what we look at to be crucial as far as our work is concerned, he may look at it not to be crucial...'

He, thus, suggested;

'...so whenever they are choosing a particular director, they should make sure they pick somebody who's knowledgeable enough in teaching and learning so that he will understand our needs. Once he understands our needs well, he will be in the right shoes to address our needs properly'.

Raka and Etiko appeared to share in Japri's concerns with the following comments;

'Dealing with the officials there, uhmm! It is just a problem. Any time you send information, even though they will receive it and say they will work on it, immediately you leave, that ends it. All your documents will be kept down. They won't even attend to them till the next time that you'll be going to check up whether it has been processed successfully or not. There you'll still find it in their registry office still. Not even moved to any of the officials there. So, for working with the officials too it is just problem. It is just a problem, yah! It is just like always they are not eager to do the work...' [Raka].

'...when you go there, let's say with a problem, sometimes you fill the documents instead of them to do and send it to Accra [Accra is where the Ministry of Education headquarters is located] they will not. Because you're struggling you're eager for them to do it for you, but they will wait aaaaa before they will do it. Sometimes it makes you sad. Because when you're teaching, and they are doing that it pains you. Sometimes you have to send it there and they will relax and work on it at the time they want to do it' [Etiko].

What they seem to be suggesting is that authority needs to show urgency in dealing with teachers' concerns, so they would feel that they are cared about.

The next section explores the second theme, 'respect and regard'.

6.3. Respect and Regard

There seemed to be a perception of lack and or loss of respect for teachers and regard for the basic school teaching profession in the two districts. As in the view of Japri, the respect that teachers enjoyed in society in the past *'is depreciating, is coming down'*. While some participants did not have an idea as to why they were not respected, others seemed to attribute it to people's mind-sets that basic school teachers possessed low certificates and that they were not qualified to be professionals. This had implications for participants' perceptions of their identity as professionals as they appear to feel that they were seen as worthless or insignificant. Participants' expressions suggest that they wanted their expertise and knowledge as professionals to be respected and that they should be regarded as important stakeholders in the education of children and the human resource development of the country.

The first section under this theme presents evidence of the experiences of participants.

6.3.1. Evidence of participants' experiences

In the opinion of participants, there was a lack and or loss of respect for teachers from children, parents, the community and officials at the district education offices. This

subsection provides evidences of participants' experiences, first, from children, parents and the wider community.

- *Respect and regard from children, parents, community and colleagues*

Japri had been teaching for eleven years. He felt that teachers no longer enjoyed the respect that they did in the past in the eyes of children. He recalled his experience when he was a pupil in the primary school. He observed that children respected teachers but had now noticed, that respect seemed to be lost. Japri shared his views;

'I could remember, when I was in P2, 3 and 4. By then, that was when most of the southern teachers were posted to this place to do their national service and others were posted here to teach. And in fact, by then when they come, you could see that, that kind of respect was always given to them. Because we had that kind of fear and respect for them. Whenever you see them at market site or funeral grounds, you shy away. You don't even want them to know that you are there...'

Japri, however, observed that the trend has changed as he claimed teachers no longer enjoyed that respect. He expressed his sentiments;

'...but these days, it's a different story. Children see you in market on school days and they even want you to see that they are there... And there are times when they are sitting down and chatting and you are very curious, you can imagine that, some of them they don't even regard teachers as people of that higher standard'.

He stressed; *'the image teachers are having is depreciating, is coming down now'*. He, however, did not seem to know what had made teachers lose respect in the eyes of children as he responded to a probe as *'...and I don't know why'*.

Raka seemed to express similar opinion regarding respect for basic school teachers. She however, perceived that teachers had lost respect not only in the eyes of children but the wider community. She lamented;

'...for the respect, I mean all. The community, how they relate to you, the parents, the children and outsiders, how they will value you is different as compared to when you are in the tertiary or senior high...'

Raka appeared to think the lack and or loss of respect for teachers and regard for the profession was due to people's mindsets that basic school teachers, unlike their counterparts at the senior high or tertiary levels, possessed low certificates and that they did not have the requirements to be regarded as professionals. She claimed;

'...because for the basic school, their understanding is that you don't have all the requirements that you need to have to be a professional teacher, that is why you are there. But for the SS [senior secondary] and the tertiary levels, there they respect you because they know [think] that you are somebody and you have all the qualifications. So there the respect is different from that of the basic school'.

Raka recollected that since she started teaching in 2012, she had encountered a lot of problems with members of the community;

'Since I was appointed as a teacher, that was in 2012 up to now I have faced many problems with community members. Example, when I was at Gamgu, I was teaching in class two. One day, I punished my children [pupils], then one of them went home and told the parents that I punish them. Now what this child's parents did was that they just came to the school. They didn't even go to the head [teacher]. They just came to me and said why should I punish their child and then what and what... So anything we do, they won't even come to the school and ask what you have done but just to come and attack you ...'

Raka recalled again that;

'One time it was the same punishment that we gave out to our students [pupils]. Then we [teachers] went to the market to buy something, and unfortunately one of the students' mother sells in the market. So when we got there she called one of us and we responded and what that lady said was that "it is not our fault that we are punishing their children but because we have never given birth to a child, we don't know how it costs to become pregnant and to give birth to a child. That is why we always sit there and punish them and do whatever we want" So for the community, and me as the teacher in the community, it wasn't easy for me so I collected transfer to be out from that community'

Lapeka recalled similar experiences with a parent in her school which she considered as a disrespect to teachers;

'You know as for[the] community, I don't listen to the community but at times you see that as a basic teacher, at times some of the parents they walk in and they say things by heart and you yourself if you're not happy with the work[profession] you'll also say things that you don't like [to say]... At times, they come to insult us but you have to accept it. Currently, one parent last came here because of the daughter and just opened the mouth and said "what do you know? If you claim to know go to the Senior High School and teach and stop disturbing our children".'

Etiko appeared to express similar sentiments when he said society *'don't value...'* *'They don't value us at all'*, he stressed. In his view, society was not unfair to teachers, considering that the other professionals that society respected so much were taught by

teachers. He wondered whether it was because teachers do not wear uniform that is why society did not recognise them as teachers who are worthy of respect;

'...Instead of them to give teachers respect, because, no matter who you are, if not a teacher, can you be there? Who teaches you in the classroom before you will become somebody? Sometimes, I ask myself, "Is it because we don't wear uniforms like the police or the nurses or what?" I don't know why. I don't know whether we should also be wearing uniform so that they will know that we are also professionals'...The way they should have been giving us respect is not there. The way they [parents] talk to us... Some of them, little thing they won't even ask you politely. They will even attack you personally...'

There appeared, however, to be a good relationship among teachers in their schools. When asked about his relationship with colleagues in his school, Kagah responded that;

'Oh, it is cordial, it is very cordial. We treat each other cordially. We have come to understand that we are here because of the children not our personal gains. So when we come we try to relate cordially in order to assist these students move in their lives and also become meaningful citizens in future. I think that is what happens here. We relate, we eat together, we try to help each other... If there's any problem we are facing, we just solve it easily and we go on. It is because of the children we are here not because of our personal interest'.

Igbenaa shared a similar experience.

'On the side of my relationship with colleagues or colleague staff, it is very cordial. We don't have any problem'...we all respect ourselves'.

My observations confirm some of the claims made by the focus teachers in the interview. Interacting with teachers in Etiko's school during my observation, one of them claimed that in the past, teachers were regarded as people who possessed special knowledge and ideas, as such they were often the first people to be contacted to resolve family and social issues in the community. From his experience growing up in his community, teachers were often the first people communities looked up for intervention in social, health and family issues. Whenever, someone was sick and he or she did not want to go to the hospital, teachers were often the first to be called upon to go and *'explain things to the person and finally the person will agree to go to the hospital'*. As such teachers by then were seen as *'eye opener to communities'*.

The head teacher of Igbenaa's school who was in his mid-fifties also shared similar views that, teachers were often the first to be called upon to resolve misunderstanding between couples because society believed that teachers had *'special knowledge that they don't have...so if a teacher was in that community they will come to you first before calling their family members'* to intervene in resolving their issues. He claimed further that teachers were so respected that parents would send foodstuff and other gifts to teachers for their contributions to their children's learning and the community. He still remembered his father sending a guinea-fowl to his former middle school [now Junior High School] class teacher during Christmas as a gift. *'But these days, the trend has changed dramatically'*, as he felt teachers were no longer revered in society. Eninga shared in this view. She, however, thinks that society may have a point for not respecting basic school teachers. According to Eninga, the conditions under which teachers live in their communities is deplorable. She cited examples of some teachers who resorted to alcoholism in their communities as a result of frustrations.

Teachers in Kagah's school, however, seemed to have a different experience with members of their school community. They said they were treated with respect because *'the [community] feel that you the teacher you're knowledgeable. You know everything in the world. The community really accords us respect'*, according to one teacher who had been teaching in the school since its establishment in 2012. He added that the chief of the community *'even wanted to give land free to us to be farming'*. Due to the good relationship between teachers and the community, teachers said that they were always ready to give out their motor bikes to send any community member who was sick to the nearest clinic at Santenga Community.

- *Respect and regard from officials in the District Education Offices*

It emerged also that participants were concerned about respect from officials at the District Education Offices. They indicated that they felt officials did not treat them with respect. These sentiments expressed by Japri appeared to illustrate the feelings of participants with regard to their relationship with officials;

'...excuse me to say, I don't know whether once we are dealing with the job, they see us to be secondary officers. Because when you get to the office, GES office there, at times the way the officers they treat us is nothing to write home about... Simply because you're a teacher. And they look at themselves once they are in the office, they are horses. And once you are there handling chalk, they look at you to be a secondary human being and that has not been good with us. It has been a particular canker we are battling for the past years...'

Japri cited an instance where his colleague had an encounter with an official in the district education office when he visited the office to have his document endorsed;

'... You can imagine, one instance, a teacher went there [to the district education office] for his form to be endorsed. When he got there, one of the secretaries, the first question he asked him was "are you supposed to be here at this time?" Even without greeting him. Thank God, that day this our colleague teacher was able to maintain his temper...you can imagine somebody just meeting you at the office. You'll not even greet the fellow. All that he can ask is "are you supposed to be here at this time?"'

In his view, this attitude was *'more or less an insult'* to teachers. He further claimed, that was not the only incident teachers had experienced with authority. Rather, many teachers have had similar experiences with authority in the district education office. Japri lamented, *'...and not him alone. There have been several instances that they behave that way towards many teachers'*. In the opinion of Igbenaa, some of the officials treated teachers as if *'there is a personal hatred or so between some of us and them'*, a situation he indicated made him *'feel sad'*. He, however, recommended the district director of education for treating teachers with dignity as he said *'...but there are some, especially our director like this, when you have a case he will attend to you. Even if he won't solve it for you, he'll speak to your satisfaction'*. Japri seemed to agree with the opinion of Igbenaa that the director sometimes treated teachers with some respect. He recalled that;

'...there was one time the district director he did something very nice for us. For that one, I have to thank him. Because there was a point in time when he realised that, the officers were looking down upon the teachers and he stood up and said he doesn't want any of his teachers to be looked down upon because he was once a teacher before he rose up to the directorship. So, if they are insulting a teacher, it pains him, it hurts him... And in fact, I have to thank him a lot for such a move'.

Interacting with teachers in Kagah's school, one of them expressed that while teachers were respected by their school community, *'the authority, the way they talk to us is not good...'*

Overall, like the findings of Bennell and Akyeampong (2007) study of teachers in developing countries including Ghana, participants' experiences presented here show that they were not respected and that there was no regard for the basic school teaching profession in these districts. Such experiences had implications on how they felt about themselves as teachers in these districts. The next section below looks at this.

6.3.2. Respect and Regard: Implications for participants' sense of professional identity

Teachers' perceptions of the lack and or loss of respect and regard for the profession in the eyes of children, parents, the wider community and officials at the district education offices appeared to make teachers feel they worthless and insignificant. As in the view of Japri, the lack of respect for teachers by authority made teachers feel as if they were 'secondary human beings'. He emphasised, '*...because it's like they don't see you to be a human being*'. Raka seemed to share the views of Japri. She said that treating teachers with disrespect made her '*feel like you're not a human being for them to respect you*'. She added that she is '*not always happy*'.

After sharing her experiences with parents in her school community, Lapeka lamented;

'...something like this, you as a teacher, you will think that nobody thinks about you...nobody thinks that you're doing something important...'

Lapeka added that the lack and or loss of respect and regard for teachers not only made teachers think that they were '*nobody*' but also;

'...it makes you not to feel happy and at times too it leads you to frustration'... [Because] when the community accepts you and respects you, you feel happy. But if they don't respect you, you feel like your service is not even needed. Ahaa! That is why they don't value you'.

Lapeka felt bad and sometimes regretted becoming a teacher;

'...it makes you feel bad...sometimes you regret even being a teacher... Sometimes, you will be questioning yourself, "Is it that I can't teach well that is why? Is it that I'm doing the wrong thing?" So if you question yourself and you see that it is not because I'm doing the wrong thing but they don't respect you, you feel bad'.

Lapeka claimed that the status of teachers in society was so low that many children would not even like to choose teaching as their profession in future. She recalled that;

'...just recently, I was watching tele and small children they ask, "What do you want to be in future?" Nobody. None of them was mentioning teacher. They were all mentioning doctor, police. But a teacher, nobody. None of them mentioned a teacher'.

Etiko appeared to express similar sentiments that the lack of respect for teachers and regard for the profession makes teachers see themselves as offering a service which was seen as important;

'... you can imagine that you're teaching someone's son or daughter and that person does not respect you. How will you feel? It means what you're even doing they're not seeing it to be something important, that is why they don't value you'. He added that 'sometimes it makes you sad'.

He was contemplating moving to other professions or institutions where he claimed he would feel happy because of the respect for those professions and institutions;

'At times, I ask myself "is it better to go to a different profession or institution where I will be happy". Because they will give you respect there and you will be happy'.

For Eninga, from her experiences as a teacher who taught in two different communities in the district, *'there is no respect in teaching'*. A situation which made her feel like teachers were *'doing something which is not valued'*.

Interacting with teachers in Kagah's school, one concern for teachers was the way authority related with teachers. *'The authority, the way they talk to us is not good, they make us feel inferior'*, according to one teacher in the school. One teacher in Etiko's school also expressed that teachers who were seen as *'special human beings in the community'* in the past were no longer regarded as such. Losing such an important status in society not only made teachers feel unhappy but also *'you feel like you're not even somebody, that's why nobody is respecting you'*. He seemed to wonder whether the situation in which teachers found themselves could be *'a curse from God. Our salary is not good and common respect too which will not cost you anything we cannot get'*.

Evidence from the perceptions of participants as seen in this section demonstrates how the lack and or loss of respect for teachers and regard for the basic school profession made participants see themselves as worthless. This seems to resonate with Day et al. (2007) arguments that treating teachers with disrespect can make them feel unimportant. It is widely recognised in the literature that such perceptions tend to weaken teachers' levels of energy, motivation and commitment (Dewe and Cooper, 2012, Hong, 2010).

Therefore, to bring out the positive energy of teachers, it is important for teachers to be treated with respect. This appears to explain why Lapeka expressed;

'You know as a human being, if they respect you, you feel fine and anytime you enter the class, you're also happy to do your work. But if they don't respect you, even the zeal to do the work may not be there'.

She asked rhetorically, '*...what do you think will happen to the children if you're not happy with the work?*' Thus, participants seemed to think that basic school teachers should be respected and regarded as professionals because without them children '*can't jump*' to the higher levels in their educational career and become police, nurses or doctors who participants claimed society respected more. This is examined in detail in the next section.

6.3.3. Respect and Regard: Participants' aspirations for enhancing their sense professional identity

It was evident from participants' sentiments that they wanted their knowledge, expertise and skills as professionals who were making an important contribution to the human resource of the country, just like the other professionals, to be respected. For instance, Etiko said that teachers should be respected just like the other professionals. He pointed out that society should '*respect us like the nurses and police...*' He opined; '*they [society] should know that without us the nurses or police will not be there'...so I will say they should also respect us. Ummm!*' Similarly, one teacher in Etiko's school, asked rhetorically, '*...the lawyers and doctors that they respect, did they jump to be [come] doctors?'*. '*We [teachers] are the people who will teach them to be a doctor, ahaa!*' he pointed out.

It seemed that participants did not want to be respected and regarded as professionals only because they taught the other professionals like the police and lawyers who participants claimed society accorded more respect, but also because basic school teachers were the foundation to children's progress to the higher levels in their education.

For Lapeka, teachers at all levels of the education system were important and should be respected as such. Lapeka stressed that basic school teachers, in particular, are the foundation to children's progress to the other levels in their education because '*without us*

they [children] can't jump to the SS [senior secondary]', she claimed. She also appealed to parents that, *'...they should know that we are here because of the children...they should see us as human beings and also respect us whether I'm teaching in day care, primary or SS or wherever teacher'*.

For Raka, *'to consider things, we have the same qualifications but just because I'm in a basic school, that makes them not to regard me as a teacher'*. This did not make her feel *'happy'* as contained in her expression that;

'they should understand that it is not only those who are at the tertiary level or the SS level that they have to regard them as professional teachers but in the basic school so far as they are all having the same qualification, it means they can perform the same functions. So, they should have that respect for all of us.... 'they should treat us [teachers] like the way they want us to do our best'.

Eninga made similar comments that, *'some people don't value teachers at all... when they see you as a basic school teacher, they normally think you don't know anything'*. She however, said *'but this is not the case'*. As she said some basic school teachers have the qualification to also teach at the higher level but were at the basic level because *'we cannot all be at the same place [level]'*. She therefore wished that teachers at the basic level would be regarded as professionals and respected.

Now, I go on to explore the third theme of *'voice'* which was also important to how participants perceived themselves as teachers in these districts.

6.4. Voice

Opportunities for participants to have their *'voice'* heard in policies, reforms and decisions both at the national and local levels emerged as a concern for participants. The data revealed that there was little engagement with teachers by policy makers and authority of the Ghana Education Service at both the local and national levels to seek their opinion regarding policy formulations, reforms and decisions. Participation expressed that decisions on education policies and priorities were often decided without considering their input and the realities in deprived rural areas.

It appears teachers did not want control of policies and reforms but opportunities for them to make their input into them because *'...we are with the children and being with the*

children, we know what is good for us or the children or what we need in the school', according to Etiko. The next section provides evidence of participants' experiences. This is followed by the implications of their experiences on their sense of professional identity.

6.4.1. Evidence of participants' experiences

Participants' experiences within this sub-theme is categorised into three: participation in national policies; participation in district level decisions and involvement in school management and function.

- *Participation in national policies*

In the opinion of teachers in this study, teachers were those in daily contact with children and had a better understanding of issues that could help in making policies have a better impact. However, they felt they were often left out in formulating policies and making reforms into the curriculum.

As claimed by Etiko;

'...we are with the children and being with the children, we know what is good for us or the children or what we need but here is the case, we will always be there and then at an instance they will tell us that we are changing the syllabus or we changing this. They always meet at the top level there and rather bring it to us to implement or to use it...'

Igbenaa made similar claims that from his experience;

'...I have never seen like they [Ghana Education Service] want to do something and they will go round and talk to teachers before that "oh this is what we want to do. So, what do you think?" Or talk to you to know whether what they going to do is good or bad. Before we know, they have changed this or they have added and rather ask us to implement'.

In an interaction with the head teacher of Igbenaa's school, he shared similar opinion. He has taught in different schools in two different districts within the Upper East Region. He said that even head teachers of schools were often left out in policy decisions and reforms. He recounted his experiences regarding the 2007 Educational reforms which introduced subjects such as ICT, Basic Design and Technology (BDT) and Creative Art into the curriculum. According to the head teacher, the reforms were done without engagement with teachers. He claimed that if teachers were consulted, particularly those

in rural areas, they would not have recommended the introduction of ICT as a subject into the curriculum without first proposing that electricity, computers and computer laboratories be made available in schools. He indicated that schools in rural areas were struggling to implement aspects of the reform as teachers did not seem to be prepared to implement such policies but were *'forced to implement them'*. He expressed; *'look at ICT, no light [electricity], no computer. How will it work?...They think every policy is good for all of us'*.

Teachers were also concerned about the nature of the school teaching time table for basic schools. They described the time table as *'very structured'* and not suitable for schools in deprived rural areas but they were *'forced to follow it'*, in the words of one teacher in Japri's school. At the KG level, teachers were expected to teach six periods in a day while at both the primary and junior high levels, nine periods were taught in a day. At both the KG and primary levels, each lesson lasted 30 minutes while that of the junior high school is 35 minutes (see sample time tables in Appendix P).

All basic schools are expected to follow this format. However, considering the class size of their schools, Raka said it was difficult for teachers to implement this. She justified;

'...why I'm saying that is that look inside my class, they are 68...I'm to teach and mark exercises using the 30 minutes'...you see that it is not easy...and I have to make corrections for them too and change to another subject...'

She also cited that it was difficulty for her to follow strictly the time table not only because of the class size but also because she had to teach certain subjects without the textbooks. An instance she talked of was teaching reading comprehension without reading books for the pupils. She resorted to, first, writing the entire passage on the blackboard and called pupils out in turns to read. The challenge for her was that she could not do this within the stipulated time allotted for the lesson. She said;

'...the time you will spend in writing it on board and reading it over and over for them to understand, then coming out one by one to also practice, in fact you cannot take the 30 minutes that you're supposed to use for a lesson to do all that. And it is also a must that you should teach within the [30] minutes that you're supposed to use as prepared. So it makes the work difficult for us.'

When probed, Raka seemed to suggest that the time table should be made flexible so teachers could adapt it to suit the realities and conditions of their schools. She claimed, this would be beneficial to children's learning;

'...so, if I get the chance to meet them, I'll say they should make us do [draw up] our own time table...we will know how to do it and teach the children well.'

Participants also shared their experiences regarding their participation in decisions at the district levels.

- *Participation in decisions at the district level*

It also appeared that there was little input by participants in determining the learning needs and priorities of education for children in their districts. One area of concern was the mass promotion of children. Lapeka said that teachers were told to promote all pupils to the next class irrespective of their performances. She seemed to have a different perspective, though there did not seem to be an opportunity to contribute. She expressed that;

'...the way they say we should be promoting the children. You see some children because they say we should promote them, you see the results is not good but they'll come and tell you to promote them...'

When probed, Lapeka did not appear to know the rationale for the mass promotion of pupils as directed by authority as she responded, '*I didn't know why they want to just promote all of them*'. In her view, mass promotion of pupils was not helpful for pupils' learning. As she claimed, schools would end up producing pupils who would not acquire the basic skills;

'... if they give the law that we should promote all of them, at the end you see that we end up producing children who are just chaff. You see a child, if you say "is", the child cannot even write "is". Then the child is in P6, P5. What's this?'

She wondered whether education was about equipping pupils with skills or for '*children to just finish the school and go away*'. She seemed to suggest that if she had her way, she

would propose that the old system where pupils were promoted based on performance be reintroduced;

'... So, I'll say they [should] bring the old laws back. That one was better' ...so if we [teachers] realise that the child is not doing well, we should demote that child or they should let us to know the way to handle that child...So if they can take note of that thing. That will help the children to learn better'.

Kagah made similar claims which also suggested that there was little opportunity for teachers in determining the learning needs of pupils. Sharing his experiences, he recalled that in the 2015/2016 academic year, his school decided to conduct a selection exams for the final year pupils for the BECE exams. Some of the pupils failed and the school decided to repeat those who failed. However, when the information got to the district education office, the director was not happy with the decision of teachers in the school and asked teachers to register all pupils for the exams after all if the children did not pass to enter the secondary school, they could go to the vocational institution to learn a trade. Kagah recounted that;

'There was one time we [the school] conducted exams for the form three. We wanted to select them for the final BECE exams. Some failed. So, we wanted to stay [repeat] them... When the information got to director, he was not happy about it. The director said we should allow all of them to go and write...[after all] if they don't pass they will go to vocational school...so we said ok'.

However, teachers were not happy with this directive by the director, as he claimed the essence of teaching pupils is to ensure that pupils acquired the basic knowledge to progress to the next level of their education but not to just allow everyone to progress. He also claimed this was likely to discourage pupils from studying hard after all *'whether they even pass or fail, they'll go to school...nothing will push them to learn hard'*. Kagah claimed further that teachers were made to feel that apart from teaching in the classroom, they *'cannot decide what was good for the children'*. Japri also said that when the Basic Education Certificate Education results were released, pupils in his district did not perform well. All teachers were concern about the poor results and were considering what could be done to enhance the performance of pupils. However, according to him, the district director of education took a unilateral decision and imposed it on teachers and schools;

'...Just recently there was an issue involving our exams. The BECE [Basic Education Certificate Examination] results were not good... and we were told that our director is looking for heads ...we were told the director came and he was hot, telling them "We [teachers] must, we have to do this or that or that"... So, he gave so many options... And when he was addressing them, any time a particular head teacher wanted to put up the hand and talk it was a problem...'

Japri indicated that teachers were equally not happy about the results. They were, therefore, not against adopting measures to improve the performance of pupils. However, making decisions without allowing teachers to also contribute to what should be done was undermining teachers' role as key stakeholders in the education of children;

'...They believe that they are the officers and we are only there to do what the office sees to be right'.

He claimed further that whenever teachers wanted to make their concerns known to authority at the office, they were taunted as *'too known'*;

'...most at times if you want to complain, they say "eehh! You're too known". Meanwhile we have been moving to other districts we know what's happening there. So when we come and it is not happening like that, we have every good reason to complain. So that has been the problem here. Hmmm!'

The phrase *'too known'* is usually uncomplimentary in Ghana. It is often used to label a person who claims to possess superior ideas. Therefore, by *'too known'*, Japri seemed to mean that whenever teachers expressed their dissatisfaction about the way they were treated in the district or made suggestions, they were negatively criticised.

- *Involvement in school management and function*

Another area of 'voice' that emerged from the data was participants' involvement in school management and functions. There seemed also to be little consultation between participants and their head teachers on the management of their schools. This was particularly in relation to the use of the Capitation Grant. Raka claimed that although teachers were expected to be involved in deciding how the capitation grant should be used to improve teaching and learning in schools, the head teacher spent the capitation grant without involving teachers in planning how the money should be spent.

Raka indicated that teachers were sometimes asked to sign receipts when they did not have idea of how the money was spent;

'... for the head [teacher]... In case of this their capitation grant, anytime he is to go for the money even we won't sit down and make a plan, what and what we are to use it for and at the end of the day, everything will not be provided ...'

She claimed further that;

'...and there are some receipts that you sign without even knowing how the money is spent. He will ask you to sign and you have to sign because he is the head. You can't argue with him. If you're to argue, it will mean a different thing'.

Eninga expressed similar experiences with her head teacher. The head teacher of the Kindergarten (KG) was also the head teacher of the primary school which was located in a different part of the community. Eninga was the only trained teacher in the KG.

Eninga complained that though she was the one present in the school and knew what the school needed, she was rarely involved in the preparation of the School Performance Improvement Plan (SPIP), which spelt out the needs of the school and how the Capitation Grant should be spent to improve teaching and learning. She shared;

'...you know the KG accounts is different from the primary but the head [teacher] is just doing the SPIP... you don't know what to do...he should have brought it to me because I'm there. I know what the school wants... he just did it himself. He didn't come here. Costing self, he costed himself... so that is what he is doing'.

This was a sentiment that some teachers in Kagah's school shared about their head teacher. According to them, he was holding onto much power and was not willing to delegate teachers even when it seemed necessary. The ICT teacher talked of a workshop he was supposed to attend but the head teacher attended instead.

Evidence from participants' expressions seen here, shows that they had ideas about the process and relevance of education for children and roles teachers can play to make policies and decisions work better. However, there seemed to be little engagement between participants and authority including policy makers to enable them to make their input into policies and decisions. These experiences of participants had implications on how they made sense of their identity which is examined in the next section.

6.4.2. Voice: Implications for participants' sense of professional identity

Participants' perception of the lack of involvement of teachers in local and national decisions and consideration for the realities of rural areas had implications on participants' perceptions of their professional identity. They appeared to feel a sense of distance from policies and decisions, as they openly expressed sentiments such as; *'I don't think these policies are made for us'; 'They do what they want but not what's good for us'; I am not sure this time table is for us'*. This seemed to make participants see their professional role as just implementing policies and reforms enacted by authority.

Japri expressed sentimentally that if authority took decisions without seeking the input of teachers, it meant that teachers were not regarded as capable of contributing to decisions as he indicated that; *'...if you don't let them also talk, it means that you don't think that they can also suggest something...'* This expression may also imply that Japri felt that authority did not want teachers to make suggestions. The impact of this was that he felt that teachers were not expected to contribute to policies but to only wait and implement decisions made by authority;

'...because of that we [teachers] only sit here and wait for them. Whatever they [authority] bring, we do for them'.

Etiko seemed to express similar views. He pointed out that formulating policies without seeking the input of teachers meant that the role of teachers as stakeholders in the education of children was only limited to doing teaching in the classroom. He expressed;

'...the way they always meet at the top there and rather bring to us, it means we're supposed to be only doing the teaching'.

Lapeka's expression *'we are only teaching the pupils but we don't have any say about what is good for them!'*, appears also to be illustrative of the perceptions that participants had about their role as stakeholders in the education of children, as a result of the lack of engagement in policies and decisions.

Participants, however, expressed some aspirations that may enhance their perceptions, which are presented in the section below.

6.4.3. Voice: Participants' aspirations for enhancing their sense of professional identity

Participants' expressions seem to suggest that they were not necessarily against policy reforms and decisions. They did not also necessarily want to take control of policies and decision but as they said they were those on the ground and in daily contact with children.

They were therefore more familiar with realities in their school contexts. Because of this, they had a better understanding of the needs of children and schools and that of teachers themselves and wanted policy makers and authority to seek their opinion in formulating educational policies and decisions as Etiko seemed to suggest;

'...we are with the children and being with the children, we know what is good for us or the children or what we need...So it is good that they should always involve us. It will be good that like if they're going to introduce something then they should involve us so that we too can also take part. We are with the children and we know our problems and whatever we are facing'.

Igbenaa made similar claims that;

'...we are here. We know what will work or not'...they have not been in the classroom, maybe even if they are teachers before, they are not in the classroom again. Things are changing. We are in the classroom now and we know what is good'.

Igbenaa, therefore, wished that teachers would be involved in decisions regarding education for children. When probed further how he wanted teachers to be involved in policy formulations and decision making, he indicated that teachers did not necessarily mean policy makers should visit every school and talk to every teacher. He suggested that this could be done through their teacher union, the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) representatives at the various levels who could pass the information to all teachers to seek their views;

'...We have GNAT reps at the circuit, district [and] regional. Even in our schools we have GNAT reps who can pass information to us. So, if there is anything, they should pass the information to them and we will get it. You see what I mean...'

It can be deduced here that teachers wanted opportunities to make their input into policies and decisions to make them work better.

The next theme '*support*', is examined below.

6.5. Support

As stated already in the introduction of this chapter, this theme comprised support for teachers in their continuous professional development (CPD) and support for teachers in their daily tasks of teaching. The data revealed that there was little support for participants both in their continuous professional development and their daily tasks of teaching pupils. This not only made them feel helpless in what they could do to help their pupils in their learning but also, seem to perceive that they were not seen as important as Etiko wondered whether it was because they were in the rural areas.

6.5.1. Evidence of participants' experiences

Participants' experiences are presented in two parts. First, their experiences regarding support for their CPD and second, their experiences in relation to support for their daily tasks of teaching. This is followed by the implications for their sense of professional identity and aspirations for enhancing their sense of identity.

- *Support for continuous professional development*

Teachers in this study were eager to continuously upgrade their knowledge and skills in the profession. However, it appeared that there were little opportunities for them to do so. One concern of participants was the 'study leave with pay' policy. As a matter of policy in the Ghana Education Service, basic school teachers are entitled to study leave with pay after a minimum of two years of continuous teaching. This is intended to offer support to teachers to upgrade their knowledge and skills in any tertiary institution in the country while still receiving their salary. However, analysis of the data has revealed that very few teachers in this study benefited from this policy because of the Ghana Education Service preference for teachers who wanted to pursue studies in the Sciences, Mathematics and Languages.

Igbenaa expressed dissatisfaction with the criteria for granting the study leave for teachers to upgrade their knowledge and skills as it limited opportunities for many of them to benefit from it. He claimed the '*policy is only on paper*'. '*You can ask my colleagues*', he referred me. Igbenaa's views were corroborated by some teachers I interacted with in the field. In Etiko's school, two teachers indicated that they were eager to upgrade their

knowledge and skills and had applied for it twice but were not granted though they had taught for the minimum number of years required. Similarly, the headmistress of Lapeka's school, had been teaching for twelve years. She wanted to pursue further studies in 'Early Childhood Education' in the University of Education, Winneba as she was a kindergarten teacher. She said that she had applied for study leave with pay twice but was not granted though she had taught for the minimum number of years required. She reiterated that the Ghana Education Service;

'is not fair to teachers at all'... 'So, study leave, forget it. You won't get it. If you're applying they will be asking whether you're going to do Maths or Science or English... But some of the courses if you go there you won't even get'.

Lapeka expressed that she was not motivated to apply for study leave with pay because from the experiences of the head mistress of her school, she knew she 'won't even get'. She lamented;

'Me like this I won't even agree to write a letter and send that I want study leave because I know I won't even get. Because I'm not going to do science or English or the other ones. So why should I waste my time and apply if I already know I won't even get?... That is why some of us are still hanging... Because me like this, I'm in the KG. What I want to do is "Early Childhood Education" but I won't get [the study leave]'.

Although Etiko has not applied for the study leave with pay because he was non-professional teacher, he said he knew some professional teachers who were refused when they applied;

'I was communicating with colleagues and they mentioned that it is true. That it is very difficult. Though I haven't applied for study leave but I know some teachers who have applied and they have refused them. Even currently a friend at Kosec applied and they refused her. So a lot, a lot of teachers want to go and study but they don't get'.

Interacting with teachers in Raka's school, one teacher in the school claimed that teachers wanted to upgrade their knowledge and pedagogical skills but they 'cannot do that without the study leave with pay'. This teacher had also taught for five years continuously. This meant that he had attained the minimum qualification to be granted with study leave with pay. However, he applied for it in 2016 to enable him pursue further studies in 'Social Studies' but was refused.

In Raka's opinion, *'what they are doing is not good, it is like all teachers are teaching science or something like that' ...we are not all teaching it'*. Not all teachers had similar views. Kagah seemed to think that though the criteria for granting the study leave to teachers limited opportunities for many teachers in the system to upgrade their skills and knowledge, the Ghana Education Service (GES) was justified in doing so. His view was that, there were few qualified teachers of science and mathematics in the GES. As a result, it was important for authority to place priority on teachers who wanted to upgrade their knowledge in those fields, so it could attract more teachers to those fields.

However, occasionally the districts organised workshops and in-service trainings for teachers as a way of supporting them in their professional development. Etiko acknowledged that;

'...the District Education Office sometimes does good. They organise workshops for us to go. They will train us on how to improve upon our teaching'.

Eninga made similar comments that sometimes workshops were organised by the district education office for teachers, which in her view was *'always good'*. She, however, indicated that;

'...but the in-service training side, at first it was the GES who always does it for the teachers but now they said no more that one. It is the head teacher who will take the capitation money and do the in-service training in the school...But since I came to this particular school, [Tuntum KG], we don't have anything like in-service training. None. Since 2015 to 2017'.

Interacting with other teachers in the field, I found that the workshops did not include the untrained National Service, Youth Enterprise Agency and Community Volunteer teachers. This situation seemed to make some of them feel as if they were not part of the Ghana Education Service. Those untrained teachers I interacted with claimed that they were conversant with the content of the subjects they taught but a challenge for them was the methods of teaching the subjects. One of them who taught in Japri's school claimed;

'...my difficulty is with the lesson delivery. I always have difficulties delivering my lesson because I am not trained...I am ok with the content but the methods of teaching is my problem'.

Some head teachers were making efforts to support the non-professional teachers. An example was the head teacher in Kagah's school who said that he provided some training

to the Youth Employment Agency teacher who was posted to his school in the areas of lesson notes preparation and filling in of the School Based Assessment Form. He however, said that this was not enough to equip the teacher with the rudiments of classroom management and lesson delivery since the teacher did not have any initial training in teaching.

Teachers confronted with class sizes higher than the stipulated class size also said they needed in-service training on the methods to use to teach in such classes effectively. One teacher in Etiko's school, for instance, claimed that he was trained to teach a maximum of 35 pupils in class. So, confronted with a higher class size, it was a challenge for him in managing and using certain methods to teach his pupils. He lamented, *'we need training on how to handle [teach] the children well'*.

- *Support for daily task of teaching*

Regarding support for teachers in their daily tasks of teaching, it also emerged that participants received little support, in terms of teaching and learning resources, from both authority and parents. Comments from participants suggested that this was a major hindrance to their professional task of teaching pupils as they felt helpless in what they could do to support pupils in their learning.

Igbenaa indicated that in his school, for some subjects, there were no textbooks and syllabuses. Under such circumstances, teachers were compelled to teach anyhow as they had limited options as to what they could do;

'...we have some subjects we are supposed to teach but there no textbooks [and] there are no syllabuses. So how do you teach? Sometimes either there will be only the syllabus but no textbook or there will be textbook and no syllabus. So you teach 'burukaburuka' [translated as 'anyhow']...You start at where you want and end where you want. Because if there's a textbook but there's no syllabus, you don't know how the syllabus goes about... And if the syllabus is there and the textbook is not, the syllabus is just something very little for you to always refer to...' 'So, that is why I said you teach burukaburuka...'

From his experience, teaching in that way was not helpful for both teachers and pupils. He put it; *'it is affecting us paaaa'*[a lot]. Japri expressed similar experiences in his

school. The school had classrooms for all classes. However, a challenge facing teachers was instructional materials and furniture. Japri shared his experience;

'...in terms of teaching and learning materials, textbooks, we also lack the books. There are even some of the classes when you go there, you have about only two or three textbooks or ten textbooks. Some they don't even have. So regular supply of textbooks is an issue'.

Japri added that;

'If you're talking of infrastructure [classrooms], the infrastructure is there...but furniture is a very very crucial issue here... So you see that because of that problem, when I give them something to write, most of them will rather leave where they are sitting and they will rather prefer to come to where I'm sitting and put their exercise books on my table. So most at times, I have hectic time to chase them because if I allow them, they will be blocking those at the back...Uhhh!'.

Lapeka also expressed that teaching under trees was challenging for her as pupils were often disrupted by the passing of vehicles. This affected the concentration of her pupils;

'...at times if you're teaching, the children won't even concentrate. By the time you realise some of them are turning and they are out. At times, they will see car passing, you see them clapping hands especially if it's market days... by the time you realise and say "sit down, sit down" they are all running, rushing and they are going...'

Teaching under trees also posed a challenge for her as she could not display teaching and learning materials during lessons. She recounted her experience during one of her lessons;

'...I could remember one time under the tree there, I hanged things [teaching and learning materials] there and the wind just came and the board and everything was now flying and the children were rushing to pick them'.

Etiko expressed similar experiences in his school. Etiko used to teach in class six but had just been moved to class two. He recalled that in his former class, there were no reading books for all pupils which posed a major challenge to him. He expressed; *'the class I was teaching first, p6, you enter to teach reading comprehension and you have only two books, which is very bad'*. Raka also indicated that children at KG stage learn better through concrete materials. She bemoaned that the lack of teaching aids to demonstrate to pupils and allow them to practise makes the work of teachers difficult as they struggle to make any impact;

'...children like these, they learn well by demonstrating it for them to see and to also practise. That makes them to learn faster than to learn in abstract. And now that there are no enough teaching and learning materials, it is not easy. For the work here, it is not easy...'

Participants had made complaints to authority at the district education offices to help them but they were yet to receive any positive response, as Raka claimed;

'We do complain to the office ... they always say they have heard but there are no funds yet... The next time you're to complain, they will say talk to the PTA so that the parents themselves will provide. Now that the parents themselves are seeing it as a waste of time for their wards, how will they be ready to provide for them. They won't...That is why we are forced to manage with the floor. You were seeing that some of them always put the slates on their laps while writing. Some put it on the floor while writing.'

Raka's sentiments were echoed by Igbenaa who indicated that through his head teacher, teachers had made requests to the District Education Office but *'the office doesn't provide the necessary materials' ...'That is the problem we are also facing here'*, he added.

Participants had also asked parents to help them with some of the materials but some parents were yet to respond to teachers' requests. Lapeka said that teachers in her school had asked parents to buy *'my first copy book'* for their children because the school did not have these books. However, most parents were yet to buy for their children;

'We normally talk to them [parents] "oh this is what we think if our pupils get it will help them to learn". Some of the parents will say they will buy and that will be the end and we can't do anything. So, that is how it is in Gupe KG here.'

Eninga expressed similar experience in her school. She indicated that *'at the KG level some parents will tell you that the children cannot write so they will not buy them the books'*. She wondered how teachers would teach pupils who did have books to write in. She expressed;

'So if they cannot write and you will not buy him or her book, so when will he or she be ready to write. It is in the book that he or she will be scribbling and drawing... For that one we don't know what to do. Normally, we complain every time we complain...bear when you came, I was saying that they should bring their books. Still those who brought just some few number and the rest are just sitting down...[meanwhile] every Friday, we are supposed to give them homework. So, if you [pupils] don't have a book, where will I write the home work for you? So, those are the challenges we're just facing at the rural area'.

She retorted, *'you see that with those things the school is not improving at all and as a teacher how can you be happy'.*

Observing teachers in their schools, a situation I noticed was the teaching of ICT. In all schools, there was no single computer for practical lessons. While some teachers skipped practical lessons entirely, some teachers I observed improvised their own ways of teaching the practical aspect of the subject. A typical example was Igbenaa during a lesson in ICT on the uses of a computer. He used his personal mobile phone to demonstrate to his pupils how a computer works in similar ways such as for typing, saving and retrieving information, listening to music, watching videos and playing games. He remarked after my observation of his lesson that *'half a loaf is better than none'*. In Japri's school, one teacher brought his own laptop to demonstrate to pupils during lessons but with no opportunity for pupils to practise, as he claimed pupils may damage his laptop if he allowed them to practise with it. Some teachers resorted to borrowing some of the materials from their colleagues. However, in most instances, it was either just one textbook or syllabus to guide teachers in their lesson notes preparation but not enough for use by all pupils in class during lessons. Describing the situation in his school, the head teacher in Igbenaa's school said; *'so bad. Less than five textbooks per subject. Some no syllabuses. No lesson note books'*.

Here, it can be seen that participants wanted to do their best for their pupils. However, there appeared to be little support for them to upgrade their knowledge and skills as well as resources to facilitate their work. This evidence buttresses the observation made by Salifu and Agbenyega (2013b) that teachers in rural areas of Ghana are not well supported.

The implications of such experiences on participants' sense of their professional identity in these districts are examined next.

6.5.2. Support: Implications for participants' sense of professional identity

It has been noted in the literature that teachers' perception of their professional identity is rooted in the extent to which they are supported to perform their duties as expected of them and progress in their professional goals (Barrett and Avalos, 2011; Day, 2017). Thus, teachers would develop a positive sense of identity if they are supported (Barrett and Avalos, 2011). Evidence from participants' experiences show that though teachers wanted to do their best possible for their pupils, as expected of them as professionals, having no access to supporting materials left them feeling their possible strategies to teaching were limited. In the words of Raka in relation to support for teachers' daily tasks of teaching;

'...without them (teaching and learning materials), I don't think your teaching will be successful. Even though you'll do all your best but the percentage that you'll be expecting to get[achieve] you will not due to the shortage of teaching and learning materials'.

For Igbenaa teaching some subjects without textbooks or syllabuses to guide them meant that, *'you are limited to the information that you have ahaa!...unless you yourself go for maybe a book from a different school to check for some information...'* With regard to opportunities for continuous professional development, expressions such as *'we don't know what to do'*; and *'we're only managing like that'* made by teachers during interactions with them in the field seem to also show this feeling of helplessness in what teachers could do to help their pupils in their learning. Commenting on the impact that this had on the work of teachers, Igbenaa, for example said that;

'...That's why at times they will come and say we are not supposed to prepare the lesson notes this way or we are not supposed to teach this way. But you didn't give us opportunity to go and learn the new methods. So, what will we do? Because what I know is what I also do or use to teach'.

Similarly, the 'Basic Design and Technology' (BDT) teacher in Kagah's school said he was not comfortable in teaching his subject because he was trained as a 'Technical Skills' subject teacher. However, since the reforms which changed the subject from 'Technical Skills' to 'BDT' he has not had an opportunity to upgrade his knowledge and skills. Teaching the subject had therefore become difficult for him but as he put it; *'... but what can I do?'*

These sentiments are critical to how teachers can make sense of themselves as there is evidence that, little or no support for teachers can lead teachers to feel unimportant (Rosenholtz, 1991). This appeared to be the case for the perceptions of participants in this study. Etiko's sentiments for instance, appeared to convey the perceptions of participants regarding support for teachers in their daily tasks of teachers;

'Sometimes you have a lesson and you want the students to understand so you find out for TLMs to teach them to understand but you can't find. I don't know whether because we are in the remote area that's why or in town schools it is the same'.

Lapeka seemed to have a similar perception when she said the Ghana Education Service and policy makers did not see the KG as an *'important place'*. Hence, the lack of support for teachers;

'... It's like they don't see the KG as important place. Because if that's [not] the case, look at this big school and they are not even thinking of the KG...'

As she bemoaned *'...thank God the wind hasn't started all that... Because we are sitting under the trees...And because it's [an] open place... at times you even send the teaching and learning materials, where to even hang it is a problem'*.

Participants' perceptions in relation to support for continuous professional development was no different. As seen, the opportunity for participants to be granted a study leave with pay to upgrade their knowledge and skills depended on the subjects they taught and wanted to pursue further. As preference was given to teachers who wanted to upgrade their knowledge and pedagogical skills in the Sciences, Mathematics and Languages, participants who were not teaching these subjects felt that their subjects were not valued.

As Lapeka, for instance, expressed;

'...I have been teaching for five years and if I want to upgrade myself, you'll tell me that because of the course I want to do, I won't get [study leave] and my colleagues in different courses are getting it. You feel depressed. And I have been here almost five years and granting me study leave to go and study and come back, you will tell me that my programme or the course that I'm going to do is not needed. It's like they haven't even value you. You don't have any value or the programme that you're going to do is not important to them'.

Igbenaa seemed to express similar views when he said that the policy was ‘*only on paper*’ as it favoured ‘*few teachers*’ in the sciences who he thought the Ghana Education Service was more interested in.

Participants, however, expressed aspirations which could enhance how they make sense of themselves in these areas. They wanted opportunities for all teachers to continuously upgrade their knowledge and skills as well as resources to facilitate their work there. Evidence of these aspirations is explored in the next section.

6.5.3. Support: Participants’ aspirations for enhancing their sense of professional identity

It was clear from participants’ expressions that they wanted more support in their work. Regarding continuous professional development, they wanted the Ghana Education Service and policy makers to create more opportunities for all teachers to upgrade their knowledge and skills. As they claimed, the preference for certain subject teachers limited opportunities for many teachers who wanted to upgrade their knowledge and pedagogical skills. For instance, in the words of Lapeka;

‘So, I think if they can change that thing so that all of us have the same chance to go and study so we those who are not teaching science or English can also get the study leave to go and study further... So, I will say the make it equal for all of us. So that if you teach for the [minimum] number of years then you can also go and upgrade yourself. But if they consider that because I’m not going to do this subject or that I won’t get, then you only be hanging around. But what can you do?’

Igbenaa seemed to make similar appeal that opportunities should be given to all teachers to upgrade their knowledge and pedagogical skills. This, in his opinion, will enhance teachers’ work and ultimately lead to better teaching and learning for pupils;

‘...So, I will say opportunity is given to every teacher to go for further studies and also learn new things because if the chance is always there for us to go and learn new things...it will help us and also help the children. But if they are not giving us that chance and we are using our old styles of teaching, at the end it affects the children. And you being the teacher too, it will affect you because nothing new will be added to what you know already’.

With respect to support for their daily tasks of teaching, participants also wanted schools to be provided with the relevant materials to facilitate their work as Lapeka made a

passionate appeal to authority to pay attention to the KG because it is the foundation of the education system;

'Like I get the opportunity to meet them [authority], the first thing I'll like them to do is school infrastructures... and our books. Uhmm! Our work books ...Uhmmm! they should know that everything about the child starts here. The child will not just get up and go to primary or JHS. They have to pass through the KG. So, they should always consider the KG too to be part of the school system in terms of infrastructure and those teaching and learning materials that will help us to build the pupils up'.

Etiko expressed similar concerns that '*... they should try and provide the necessary materials for the rural school*'. He claimed that, '*if they do that teachers will also accept to go to the rural schools and teach*'. Igbenaa after sharing that teachers were compelled to teach '*burukaburuka*' [anyhow] without books and syllabuses appealed that '*...so that is why I'm pleading to GES to find a way of getting us the books*'. Igbenaa also seemed to share in Etiko's view that if rural schools are well resourced more teachers would accept posting there as he cited an example in his school;

'I can tell you in this school, one teacher was once posted here and he refused. He never came. Why didn't he come? Because he saw that we were somewhere that he didn't like. When he paid a visit to us, we received him. We assumed that he reported. When he went back he never came. Meanwhile, he told us he was going to prepare and come. He never came because he saw the school was somewhere and he didn't want to be here'.

The final theme, 'commitment' is examined next.

6.6. Commitment

As indicated, this theme relates to research question three, which sought to explore the impact of participants' perceptions of their professional identity on their professional practice of teaching. Therefore, in presenting this theme, only evidence of participants' expression of commitment from the interview data and observation field notes is outlined.

6.6.1. Evidence of participants' commitment from interview data

Evidence from the data shows that although participants had a negative perception of themselves as teachers in these districts, they seemed to be committed to their professional task of helping pupils in their learning in these areas. When questioned about how their feelings about being teachers in these districts impacted on their practice, almost all focus teachers, six out of seven, expressed commitment to helping their pupils

in their learning. Teachers were hopeful that by helping these children in their learning, they would grow up to achieve their personal goals. The children may also contribute to the development of their communities and the transformation of the society they live in, and this may in turn have a positive impact on the country as a whole.

The sentiments of these teachers appear to reflect Noddings' (2010, p.12) notion of 'motivation displacement'. As she argued, like parents responding to the needs of their children, teachers often respond to the situation of their pupils as if it were their own. They do so by denying themselves of attention to their own situation for the moment. That is, whatever their situation, their energy is focused on helping their pupils to achieve their plans or realise their hopes. This was evident amongst participants in this study, as Kagah acknowledged that though there were a lot of challenges in living and teaching in deprived rural areas, he wondered what would happen to children there if all teachers refused posting to, or refused to stay in such areas to teach them. He expressed;

'As I said there are a lot of challenges teaching in the rural areas. There are a lot of challenges [but] if all teachers are praying for them to be posted to the urban areas what will happen to the rural children? That is to say, they will not even have a feel of education. So, I think it's ok even though there are a lot of challenges'.

Kagah recounted that after completing his initial teacher training, he was posted to a school which was about 14 miles away from his hometown. There was no accommodation for teachers in the school and he did not have a motor bike. He had to ride a bicycle to and from school daily. He said he could have used the long distance as an excuse not to attend school regularly. However, he did not do that because he felt that he was *'preparing younger ones for their future'*. With that mindset, he could not use his circumstance to absent himself from school. According to him, doing so would mean denying his pupils the opportunity to learn and hence achieve their future goals. He expressed;

'... I can't leave them [pupils] roaming just because of my selfish interest. Because if I don't go to school and sit in the house, it is my own selfish interest. It is like I'm benefiting from it but the students [pupils] will not benefit from it...So that is the reason why I had to sacrifice to ride daily just to help. And then it was a primary school. It wasn't a junior high where you can say it is not all the time you have lessons. You know primary schools here in Ghana, you have one teacher to a classroom. So, if you don't go, nobody will be in your classroom. And the students that you think one day they will be future leaders, they will not be able to achieve their aims'.

Etiko expressed similar comments. He recounted the numerous challenges he faced as a teacher in his district. He laments *'...as I was telling you, in the remote areas we always find a lot of problems. Because looking at it, look at where I'm staying Doko, you have to take a motor bike, sometimes my motor will spoil and I have to walk to this place'*. Travelling daily on a motor bike was not only tiring but also more expensive for Etiko. He lamented also that, *'the respect is not there. No motivation with the salary but some of us have taken the pain to be here'*. According to him;

'If everyone [every teacher] says they want to go to the cities to teach, who will come and teach those innocent children in the rural area. A president can come from a rural area. A doctor can come from a rural area. So, that's why some of us are here so that we can help the children'.

He hoped that by helping children to achieve their future goals, his contribution to the lives of such children would be acknowledged by them one day. As he said *'...maybe one day, he [or she] will say "oh, if not this teacher, I didn't know where I would have been now"*.

Etiko's views were echoed by Igbenaa who pointed out that *'there is no city or town that was born a city or town. They were all rural areas that developed or migrated from rural areas to maybe urban areas'*. He indicated that the only way rural areas could develop was by teachers helping the children in those areas in their learning and career pursuits so that one day they could also contribute their quota to the development of their communities. He expressed strongly;

'...definitely, one day this place may not be a rural area. It is we [teachers] who are there who will change it. Who will teach the children and the children will grow up and also develop it to an urban area'... If we all go away, that means the place will continue to be a rural area and there will not be any literate from that community so at the end of it all what a hell to us'.

He asked rhetorically, *'So why should we all run away and leave them?'* Expressing such strong views was reinforced by emotions and other facial expressions. In the view of Raka, teachers were in the school to *'build up the children to become good citizens... So, upon all these [challenges] I still feel ok'*. In her opinion, there were bound to be challenges in the teaching field. Therefore, she was committed to the profession notwithstanding the challenges she faced as a teacher. She put it;

'... there are lapses, yah. You cannot get everything to just be ok for you at all times. No. There are sometimes that you have to face problems and there are sometimes you have to also face the good side. So, upon all what it is happening, I'm still ok to be a basic school teacher'.

It was also revealing to know the extent to which participants placed priority on their pupils learning sometimes affects their own family matters. Japri, for instance, shared the impact of his commitment to teaching pupils on his family life;

'...there are instances even my wife, my dear wife will tell me that most at times it is like I have more interest in the children [pupils] I am handling more than even her. Because there are certain issues I should have been asking for permission to stay away from school to handle them but it is like most at times I'm dying for them [the pupils] and I regard her issues as secondary'.

Japri explained how he dealt with such sentiments expressed by his wife;

'Most at times, when she says things like this, I have to always take my time and tell her that I value her so much, that is why I married her. But just as I value her, the interest of the children [pupils] is at my heart too'.

Not all focus teachers expressed the same level of commitment. Eninga expressed that she did not enjoy being a teacher and that teaching in a deprived rural area was frustrating for her. She declared that her next plan was to leave the teaching profession citing specifically low salary and lack of respect for teachers as her main reasons;

'For me, my next plan is to leave the teaching profession. That's my plan [makes some gestures]. We are all running away from the teaching profession... I want immigration. So that's just my mind'.

When asked further why she wanted to leave the teaching profession for immigration service, she said that *'there's money in it [immigration service] more than teaching. So,*

it's money'. There's [more] money in it than teaching. It is money that we are working for... And there is no respect in teaching' she claimed.

Focus teachers and other teachers I interacted with during my observation also seemed to show commitment to helping pupils in their learning. Evidence of this is provided below.

6.6.2. Evidence of participants' commitment from observation data

Evidence from my observations of focus teachers and interactions with other teachers in their schools across the two districts also point to teachers demonstrating commitment in their daily routines. This was especially illustrated, first, through teachers' attendance to schools. As I arrived in schools at the start of the school day, I discovered in many instances that a full complement of teachers had already arrived by 7:45am despite that some of them had to travel on roads which were rough and lasting for about 2 hours on motor bikes. The teachers' attendance books also showed that majority of teachers were consistent in their attendance to school.

In Kagah's school, which was the only Junior High School involved in this study, where teachers taught specific subjects, teachers who did not have lessons in the morning would still arrive before classes began and stay after their lessons till closing hours. They also demonstrated commitment by staying in school, in turns, after normal school hours to organise extra classes for the final year pupils who were preparing for their external Basic Education Certificate Examinations (BECE) in June 2017.

It was also observed that teachers who happened to be late to school due to breakdown of motor bikes which was the commonest means of transport of teachers in these districts or due to other circumstances, would telephone in for a colleague to step in for them. The head teachers of five out of the seven schools were not assigned to teach any specific class perhaps because of administrative responsibilities. Therefore, they were often available to step in for any teacher who was not able to come to school or was getting late to school. It was also revealing to observe that teachers committed their own resources to getting teaching aids to teach pupils. Lapeka, for example, taught a lesson on '*The Food We Eat*'. As part of the lesson, pupils were to identify fruits such as pineapples and bananas. These are fruits grown in the southern part of the country and were not common

in many parts of the North except in the major markets. She taught the lesson the previous day. However, when she travelled to the regional capital to fill her gas cylinder, she bought the fruits and brought to class to show to her pupils.

Teachers also appeared to show commitment in helping pupils even outside their classrooms. My interaction with teachers revealed that in addition to teaching, they were actively involved in sensitising parents about the benefits of formal education to their children and parents themselves. Teachers claimed parents in these communities did not appreciate and understand the importance of formal education to their children. As a result, some parents preferred to engage their wards in family and home activities which affected pupils' attendance to school and learning. In Etiko's school community, for example, on market days, some parents preferred to engage their children to help them transport charcoal or fire wood to the market to sell. Also, in Kagah's school community, where there were small-scale mining activities in the community, teachers expressed similar experiences with parents. Some parents preferred to involve their grown-up children in such activities. This affected pupils' attendance to schools. Teachers claimed that as part of their responsibilities to their pupils, they were actively engaged in sensitising parents. Teachers in Kagah's school were collaborating with an NGO, Afrikids, in sensitising parents. In addition, the NGO had supplied some needy pupils in the school with books, uniforms, money, pencils, shoes and sandals and those from far distances with bicycles *'just to keep them in school as parents always use the poverty as an excuse'*, in the words of the head teacher.

Also, as the major economic activity for the people in these communities was farming, parents also preferred to engage their children in farming activities or ask their daughters to stay at home and take care of their younger siblings or their sons to look after livestock while the parents worked in the farm. This resulted in high absenteeism particularly during the planting and harvesting seasons. Teachers were making efforts to encourage parents to allow their attend schools. This was done through PTA meetings, though they said these meetings were poorly attended by parents. In the words of one teacher, *'we're trying to educate them much or more'*. Though teachers' efforts were making an impact, *'some few parents still lack the understanding. They still want to engage their children in*

farming and family activities while they are in school', said Igbenaa. Teachers were however, not giving up in their efforts, as he claimed, *'we are still enforcing that parents understand and allow them [their children] to do the right thing at the right time'*. Interacting with the head teacher of Japri's school, he also said that whenever a pupil absented himself or herself for a particular number of days without permission, he would ask the respective class teacher to visit the parents of that pupil in their home to find out the reasons for the absenteeism. During my presence in the school, one of Japri's class pupils, a girl, had absented herself from school. According to Japri, that particular day was the third day of her absence from school. He visited the girl at home. He realised that the girl's parents were reconstructing their house and had engaged their daughter in fetching water for the preparation of the local mortar for the building. Teachers claimed they were doing all that in the interest of helping the children to stay in school and learn.

Overall, evidence from the interview data and observation field notes showed that teachers were making efforts to ensure that children had the opportunity to stay in school and learn. The findings here contradict the broadly expressed claim that teachers in rural areas in Ghana are less committed to their professional task of teaching (Tanaka, 2010); and that they often arrive late to school and leave early to engage in private businesses to supplement their meagre salary (Agezo, 2010). This finding here also disagrees with the Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) study in six districts of Northern Ghana, which reported that teachers showed poor attitude towards their work such as high teacher absenteeism and lateness because of their dissatisfaction with their working conditions (Casely-Hayford et al., 2013).

Nevertheless, participants revealed that they were feeling *'bad'*, *'sad'*, *'not happy'* and *'frustrated'* about their situations in such areas. These feelings could eventually have an impact on teachers' commitment, as in the words of Japri;

'When you are in a particular set up where your image is high, you also try to give your best. But in a situation where your image is low it will be like whatever I even do that is the same thing. Are you getting it? So, most at times some will just do anything to represent anything with the exception of the highly committed ones ...'

It could also eventually have an impact on teachers' intentions to stay in these areas or even in the profession. Igbenaa, for example, did not hide his feelings when he said that if

the situation under which teachers lived and worked continued *'then it will come to a time everybody [every teacher] will want to teach in the urban area'*. Also, Etiko expressed sentimentally that he sometimes wondered whether to move to other professions or institutions where he claimed he would feel happy because he felt he would be respected there;

'At times, I ask myself "is it better to go to a different profession or institution where I will be happy?". Because they will give you respect there and you will be happy'.

As well, the expression of Lapeka that *'sometimes you[I] regret even being a teacher...'* should not be taken for granted regarding the impact teachers' perceptions of their professional identity may have on their intentions to stay or leave the profession.

Also, as seen already, participants were not satisfied with the level of support for their professional development and to engage in their daily tasks of teaching. The attendant effect is that the quality of knowledge imparted to pupils in these areas could be adversely affected. The lack of support for teachers in terms of materials for their daily tasks of teaching, for instance, resulted in some participants skipping practical lessons in subjects such as ICT and some of them teaching *'anyhow'* [The word of Igbenaa]. This may not be helpful to pupils' learning. As Barrett and Avalos (2011) argued, when teachers are not supported well in their work, they may not rise to the challenges of their professional practice but resort to familiar teaching strategies and feel justified in doing so. Limited opportunities for teachers in their continuous professional development, on the other hand, implies that teachers would not keep up-to-date with new knowledge in their field to enable them function effectively in the classroom.

6.7. Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the findings of the study organised under five key themes. Evidence from the data showed that teachers' efforts were poorly recognised and appreciated despite the challenging environments under which they worked, both inside and outside their classrooms. There also appeared to be a lack and or loss of respect for teachers and regard for teachers from children, parents, the wider community and officials at the district education offices. Teachers seemed to have ideas about the purposes and

processes of education for children. However, there was little opportunity to make their input into both local and national policies and decisions beyond teaching in the classroom. The findings also showed that teachers wanted to do their best for their pupils but there was little support, both in terms of instructional materials and opportunities to continuously upgrade their knowledge and pedagogical skills.

Teachers' sentiments suggest that recognition both in financial and material terms and in kind would be promising in enhancing their sense of their professional identity in these areas. However, I am cautious in this claim partly because the way teachers make sense of their identity is not static but continually formed and reformed over time and in line with contextual factors (Barrett, 2008; Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009; Day et al., 2006a). This implies that there is no assurance that teachers' sense of professional identity once constructed will remain the same over time and context. In the same way, their aspirations may vary from time to time as they develop in their career.

The next chapter discusses the personal profiles of focus teachers together with their experiences presented in this chapter under the four main research questions of the study. As argued already, the personal investment of teachers into their work, implies that their professional identity cannot be completely understood without considering their personal attributes together with their experiences. The chapter also draws out the implications of the findings for policy and practice.

Chapter Seven

Discussion

7.1. Introduction

The specific aim of this study was to understand how teachers made sense of their professional identity. That is, the way they felt about themselves as teachers based on interpretation of their experiences. Chapters Five and Six presented the data. Chapter Five explained the background information of the two focus districts, focus teachers' schools and teachers' own profiles, while in Chapter Six, the five key themes that emerged from teachers' experiences, that is, *'recognition'*; *'respect and regard'*; *'voice'*; *'support'* and *'commitment'* were presented. The themes *'recognition'*; *'respect and regard'* and *'support'* (for daily tasks of teaching) were related to the contextual dimension of teachers' experiences, while *'voice'* and *'support'* (for continuous professional development) were connected to the professional dimension of their experiences. The theme *'commitment'* emerged from the personal dimension.

This chapter discusses the implications of both teachers' personal profiles and their experiences for their professional identity under the four research questions that guided the study. As explained in Chapter Three, the inseparable link between the teacher as a person and the teacher as a professional implies that teachers' professional experiences alone are not enough to fully understand their sense of professional identity. It is important to analyse the implication of teachers' experiences for their professional identity together with their personal profiles. The chapter also draws out the implications of the findings and makes recommendations for educational policy and practice.

The four research questions of the study were the following:

1. *How do basic school teachers in Bongo and Nabdam Districts make sense of their professional identity in relation to their experiences?*
2. *What issues or forces influence teachers' sense of professional identity in deprived rural areas?*
3. *How does teachers' sense of professional identity influence their professional practice?*
4. *What are teachers' aspirations for enhancing their sense of professional identity?*

The first section below answers both research questions one and two. The findings shows that the way teachers in this study made sense of their professional identity was interconnected with the issues or forces that influenced this. As a result, it is appropriate to analyse these two research questions together. This is followed by research questions three and four, while the final section draws out the implications of the findings and makes recommendations for policy and practice.

7.2. Teachers' Sense of Professional Identity and Influencing Issues

The purpose of this section is to draw together teachers' profiles and experiences and discuss them in order to gain a deeper understanding of how teachers made sense of their professional identity in these districts. The analysis of both the personal profiles and experiences of teachers in this study suggests that there were a set of competing forces influencing their sense of professional identity, which are summarised into Figure 6 below. Consequently, teachers were expressing a disjointed sense of professional identity as they were riven between commitment to their personal values and professional responsibilities and dealing with external constraints emanating from their workplace and policy environment.

Figure 6: A Summary of Competing Forces Influencing Teachers' Sense of Professional Identity

Positive Forces		Negative Forces
• Sense of calling or vocation	vs	• Being undervalued for commitment and professional knowledge and expertise
• Fulfilment or satisfaction in helping pupils	vs	• Limited resources and facilities to support
• Desire and ability to take initiatives and contribute to school development	vs	• Limited participation in policy decisions and limited and inequitable opportunities for professional development

These sets of competing forces are discussed in detail below.

- *Sense of Calling or Vocation vs Being Undervalued*

Teachers in this study had clear values for entering the teaching profession. As seen in Chapter Five, some of them entered teaching because they love the profession and wanted to engage in it. For other teachers, the passion to work with children and help them in their learning was the main reason that attracted them to the profession. That was why, having enjoyed teaching children in the Sunday school in her church, Lapeka decided to enter teaching so that she could continue to work with children. She was not alone as a number of other teachers I interacted with during observation of focus teachers shared similar reasons for becoming teachers. Japri traced his attraction to the teaching profession as far back to his primary school days when he was influenced by the dedication of his class teacher to the academic, social and emotional well-being of him and his colleagues. Making reference to such memories, he felt there was joy in helping others. He wanted to experience that joy, hence his choice of teaching as his profession after his secondary education. These teachers believed that teaching was the best way for them to serve society.

What this signifies is that, the teaching profession was a calling or vocation for these teachers (Seligman, 2002). That is, they were driven by their passion for the profession, a feeling of wanting to do their work and sense of service to children and society. As Leithwood and Beatty (2008) argued, for most teachers, because teaching does not just denote a job but vocation, the variables that influence their entry into the teaching

profession and keep them in it constitute a significant part of their professional identity. Teachers' reasons for entering teaching in this study was central to their sense of professional identity as they expressed overwhelming pride as being teachers who were strongly committed to achieving their ambitions of not only helping pupils in their learning but also making a broader social contribution as contained in Igbenaa's comments in Page 36 of Chapter Six that;

'... there is no city or town that was born a city or town. They were all rural areas that developed or migrated from rural areas to maybe urban areas. One day this place may not be a rural area. It is we [teachers] who are there who will change it. Who will teach the children and the children will grow up and also develop it to an urban area'... If we all go away, that means the place will continue to be a rural area...' [Igbenaa].

This excerpt makes clear Igbenaa's sense of professional responsibility that goes beyond just imparting knowledge to children to making a larger contribution to society as he hoped that through such contributions, children would achieve their career ambitions to enable them to contribute to improvements in their communities and developments within the districts in future. Etiko's view that he was committed to helping children in the rural area because teachers in rural schools were also capable of producing leaders such as a 'president' and other professionals such as 'doctors' reinforces these teachers' sense of contributions beyond just helping pupils in their learning in the classroom. In many instances, it was remarkable to observe that, expressing such views during both interviews and informal conversations was accompanied by bodily gestures and facial expressions that demonstrated teachers' overwhelming enthusiasm in their work.

Looking back at the personal dimension of the conceptual framework of this study, teachers' sentiments here appear to concur with the notion that teaching is emotional work (Day and Kington; 2008; Leithwood and Beatty, 2008; Nias, 1989); and that most teachers 'enter the profession for the noblest of reasons' which are to help other people and also contribute to society (Nieto, 2003, p.7). As Nieto (2003) makes us understand, this is a core aspect of their professional identity. While this dimension of teachers' sense of professional identity was positive, there emerged the competing dimension which suggests that these teachers could be smiling outside and feeling proud as teachers who were committed to their professional tasks and achieving their values in teaching, but at

the same time feeling disillusioned on the inside. This dimension arose, first, from teachers' feelings that their commitment went unnoticed. As these teachers viewed themselves as committed to their work, showing appreciation for their commitment was important for them to feel valued in their work. Yet, accounts of their experiences in these deprived rural areas show that they were dissatisfied with the level of appreciation for their efforts. Teachers felt they were working hard but such efforts were not noticed and rewarded.

What stood out clearly in teachers' perceptions was that they felt a sense of disaffection and disillusionment at both parents and authority who they claimed did not give attention to teachers' issues and concerns. Such feelings appeared to affect their sense of identity as they could not reconcile their sense of commitment to their work with the recognition received for such efforts as some teachers began to wonder whether it was worth continuing to invest their time, energy and resources into their work. As noted by Hargreaves (1998), because teaching is an emotional work when the conditions of their work obstruct that emotional nature, teachers' professional identity are affected likewise. As seen in the findings, the lack of recognition made teachers in this study view themselves as teachers who were being undervalued for their contribution and effort. To this end, the Ministry of Education and Ghana Education Service together with officials at the District Education Offices, school heads and parents all have profound roles to play in creating conditions in which these teachers would be able to make positive links between their efforts and contributions, which in this study were inextricably connected with their sense of identity, and the recognition for such commitments. With this, teachers are most likely to continue demonstrating commitment in their work for the good of children (Hansen, 1995). As the work of Day, Elliot and Kington (2005) with teachers in Australia and England makes us understand, institutional support for teachers is a key factor contributing to the sustenance of teachers' sense commitment. Thus,

‘...the challenge for policy-makers and school leaders concerned with issues of ... sustaining of high-quality teachers and teaching, is to create contexts in which teachers can make connections between the priorities of the school and their...identity and commitment’ (ibid. p.575).

That is, efforts aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning that discount the values that influence teachers' entry into teaching and sustained them in it are bound to be

unsuccessful. This is because these elements are fundamental aspects of teachers' professional identity in their work (Hammerness, Darling-Hammond and Bransford, 2005; Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012).

A related issue that also made these teachers perceive that they were not valued emerged from their relationships with parents, the community and officials at the District Education Offices. The findings show that while the relationships between teachers and their colleagues and pupils were positive, which was valued by them, the relationships between some teachers and parents and officials at the District Education Offices were not cordial. As some teachers claimed, their knowledge and expertise as professionals were not respected and that their status in society was undermined. As parents, members of the community and officials at the District Education Offices were among the people that these teachers interacted with in their workplace, the bad relationships between teachers and these different people also affected their sense of professional identity. Through teachers' feelings about the lack and or loss of respect for them and the low status accorded the teaching profession, they formed a picture of themselves as teachers who were not treated with dignity. Perceiving themselves this way also made them feel distrusted to do a good professional job. This may explain why one of the focus teachers, Lapeka, began to question herself whether it was because parents, for example, felt teachers could not teach well or were doing the wrong thing that was why they were not respected;

'...Sometimes, you will be questioning yourself, "Is it that I can't teach well that is why? [Or] is it that I'm doing the wrong thing?"

Such feelings about themselves as teachers were also beginning to erode their sense of pride as teachers who were strongly committed to their professional task of helping children and making a wider social contribution.

As an eventual consequence of erosion of teachers' sense of pride, as noted by Day, Elliot, and Kington (2005), they are likely to make critical decisions such as whether to continue as committed teachers, reduce their levels of commitment or abandon the profession entirely. In other words, if teachers lose their sense of pride in the profession, which is core to their sense of identity (Schutz and Lee, 2014), it affects not only

retention but also their sense of commitment to their professional task of teaching. To the extent that teachers in this study felt that their professional knowledge and expertise were not respected, they were prone to such decisions, as expressed by Etiko in Section 6.2 of Chapter Six that;

'At times, I ask myself "is it better to go to a different profession or institution where I will be happy". Because they will give you respect there and you will be happy'.

Clearly, Etiko viewed teaching as a vocation and demonstrated a sense of commitment. However, disregard for teachers' professional knowledge and expertise could eventually have a strong negative influence on his intention to either continue to stay or leave the profession. It was also likely that some of the teachers could continue to stay in the profession but with low levels of commitment to their professional tasks as also suggested by Japri in Section 6.5 of Chapter Six that;

'...when you are in a particular set up where your image is high, you also try to give your best. But in a situation where your image is low it will be like whatever I even do that is the same thing. Are you getting it? So, most at times some will just do anything to represent anything with the exception of the highly committed ones who know why things are happening this way and why they should give their best. They are the ones who will continue to give their best. But those who would like to go by the trend they will just do anything to represent because they have the notion that," if you do good they will insult and if you do bad they will insult".'

He clarified the phrase '*just do anything to represent*' to mean that when teachers feel that their professional expertise and knowledge were not valued, they would not rise to their professional tasks and may choose to engage in unprofessional conduct and behaviours such as absenteeism and lateness thereby leading to low time on task with their pupils.

The next set of competing forces revolved around teachers' source of satisfaction in their work and the support they needed to enjoy such satisfaction.

- *Sense of satisfaction vs Limited support with resources and facilities*

The main source of fulfilment for teachers in their work in this study centred on the children they taught. A sense of responsibility and overall enthusiasm towards helping children were the sources of satisfaction for them. Here, teachers found most satisfaction

in issues related to the affective dimension of their work such as improving the understanding, performances as well as achievements of pupils. They derived personal fulfilment, first, in knowing that they made their pupils understand their lessons. When probed about their utmost pleasure in their work, some teachers revealed that they felt happy when they were able to teach their pupils, who were keen and trying to learn, to understand their lessons. That is, by making pupils understand what they did not know originally was a source of joy for them. Even one of the focus teachers who was considering leaving teaching still felt that it was important to do her best possible for the children because they were the source of her motivation at that time in the teaching field. Teachers' demonstration of enthusiasm to making sure that their pupils understood lessons was exemplified in some teachers' passion to devise creative ways to facilitate teaching and learning in their classrooms amid the limited resources. Their enthusiasm could also explain why some teachers travelled to relatively better resourced schools to borrow materials and photocopy books and even in some occasions purchased materials using their own money.

It was not only about making their pupils understand lessons, but also teachers gained satisfaction by seeing the impact of their efforts reflected in pupils' careers. That is by seeing the children they taught complete their basic education and progress to earn a career provided additional joy for teachers as some teachers in Japri's school were rejoicing in the success of a former pupil of the school who was pursuing Medicine in the University. This can also be tied to Igbenaa's claim that his main aim for entering teaching was to help children to progress in their career and '*become somebody one day*'. By helping children to '*become somebody one day*', he meant helping children to fulfil their career goals. With this, they would become responsible citizens and also contribute their quota to the development of their communities. This could also be the reason why teachers in Kagah's school took a strong personal interest in the attendance of their pupils to school by collaborating with the NGO to create awareness among parents about the need to show interest in their wards' education by allowing and encouraging them to attend school regularly. For these teachers, when pupils did not attend school regularly, it could impede their learning which can affect their chances of progressing beyond the basic level to earning a decent career in future. As seen, beyond creating awareness

among parents, some teachers made efforts to personally visit the homes of their pupils if they absented themselves from school without permission. Clearly, these teachers were making sacrifices for their pupils which, as Leithwood and Beatty (2008) noted, are not the emblem of some other professions. For some teachers, this was the most significant fulfilment in their work as they hoped that the children they were making sacrifices for would acknowledge in the future that, but for them, they would not have achieved their goals in life as some teachers themselves were acknowledging the contributions of their former teachers to their career as seen in Chapter Five. This sheer affective reward of seeing pupils earn a career in future and attributing the source of their success to them as teachers was a source of fulfilment for these teachers. The feelings of teachers here seem to resonate with Schutz and Lee's (2014) claim that teachers tend to experience enjoyment or pride, when they see their students achieve in their learning and these successes provide them with an opportunity to reinforce their professional identity.

Strikingly, some teachers wanted not only to see their pupils progress ordinarily to earn a career but also, they would even feel greater satisfaction if they were able to help their pupils to earn a career higher than where they themselves were in their career as expressed by one focus teacher, Lapeka;

'I feel happy if I teach my pupils to become more than me in future' ...that is one thing [the part of teaching] that is motivating me to be here'.

Some teachers who were parents themselves consistently said that as parents who expected teachers of their own wards to do their best for their children, they also had an obligation to do so for children in these deprived areas. Apparently, these teachers were putting themselves into the shoes of the children in these areas which goes to reinforce the inseparable link between the teacher as a person and the teacher as a professional.

However, the main issue to highlight here is that the key driving force for teachers in their work in this study was within this intrinsic satisfaction of not only teaching pupils but also caring for them and guiding them so they could realise their full potential. Fullan (1993) describes this as the moral mission of teaching, which is at the heart of teachers. As he argued, when you 'scratch a good teacher', you will always find in him or her a desire to help and inspire pupils as well as care about their learning and career progress.

Thus, teachers will feel a sense of satisfaction in their job when their moral purpose is fulfilled.

What can be inferred from these arguments is that when teachers are restricted in their efforts to achieve their moral purpose, they may feel enormous sense of frustration and demoralisation in their job (Johnson and Kardos, 2008; Osborn et al., 2000; Nias, 1989). That is, when the things that teachers value, which are essential components of their identity, diverge from their experiences in their classrooms, there is the potential for those identities to be challenged, resulting in potential changes in those identities (Cross and Hong, 2009). As teachers in this study derived their satisfaction through the difference they could make in the lives of pupils, there was the need for them to have the resources and facilities to enable them to fulfil such a mission. However, it was difficult for teachers to achieve such a satisfaction in this study as they struggled to find the resources and facilities they needed in order to meet the learning needs of children. They felt that although situations in their schools were critical, enough attention was not given to them. Not only did this make teachers feel a sense of neglect by authority and parents as explained in the previous section but also, some teachers felt that they could not achieve a sense of identity that aligned with their drive to do their best in helping pupils in their learning and career progress. That is, they felt that the consequences of their efforts did not reflect the values that attracted them into teaching. As clearly seen in the words of Etiko in Section 6.2 of Chapter Six;

'Sometimes you have a lesson and you want the students to understand so you find out for TLMs [teaching and learning materials] to teach them to understand but you can't find' [Etiko].

These experiences were echoed by other teachers who claimed that although they felt accomplished in their teaching if they were able to help their pupils, a key challenge for them was limited support with resources. The views of teachers here point to a tension between their values which informed their entry into the profession and the resource deficit to fulfilling such values. While teachers are expected to adapt, improvise and be innovative under such situations, as some teachers were doing in their classrooms, teaching without the needed resources affected some teachers' sense of accomplishment as they felt that their situation did not allow them to do enough for their pupils. With such

feelings about themselves, these teachers were prone to adopting a ‘retreatist position’ which may include seeking transfer from these districts or pursuing the option of leaving the profession for other areas where this is ‘a realistic possibility’, as explained earlier (Osborn et al., 2000, p.68). However, as an eventual result of lack of alternative job opportunities, unfulfilled teachers may be forced to stay where they are (Rosenholtz, 1991). As discussed in earlier chapters (see Chapters One, Two and Five), there are limited employment and job opportunities in Northern Ghana as well as in rural districts of the country. Thus, it is possible that some of these teachers who felt unfulfilled in their personal values may, eventually, be forced to stay in the teaching profession but find ways of satisfying their values in teaching including seeking transfer to perceived better resourced or favourable schools within or outside these districts. On the other hand, since the approval of a transfer request lies with the directors of education at the district offices (GES and GNAT, 2000), some teachers may be compelled to stay in these districts and schools, just to keep their job but with minimum efforts if their transfer requests are refused.

The third set of competing forces emerged from teachers’ view that they had the desire and ability to take initiatives on behalf of their pupils and contribute to school improvement but there were limited opportunities for them to do this.

- *Desire and ability to take initiatives and contribute vs Limited participation and limited and inequitable opportunities for professional development*

Teachers in this study felt that they possessed informed understanding, expertise and knowledge about their practices and issues about education generally in these deprived rural areas than anyone else. Not only did this make them have the desire but also, they felt that they had the ability to take initiatives on behalf of their pupils and contribute to school improvement through involvement in decisions at the policy level and in their schools. These feelings were also significant in teachers’ sense of professional identity.

It would be expected that since teachers had such ideas, there would be chances for them to make their input into decisions that determined the school curriculum, learning needs of children and the daily functions of schools. However, this was not the case according to the views of teachers as their voice was marginalised both at the policy decision level

and in the daily operations of their schools. Decisions regarding policies, reforms and logistics were made at the top and passed down to teachers who were at the lower level of the Ghana Education Service organogram, thereby giving limited chances for them to contribute to decisions when it came to key matters which directly affected their work. Teachers were taken by surprise by new policies and reforms as the expression of Igbenaa, for example, in Chapter Six revealed;

‘...I have never seen like they [Ghana Education Service] want to do something and they will go round and talk to teachers before that “oh this is what we want to do. So, what do you think [about it]?” Or talk to you to know whether what they are going to do is good or bad. Before we know, they have changed this or they have added and rather ask us to implement’.

Yet, there is evidence that involving teachers in decisions has positive effect on their sense of professional identity. Besides making teachers feel valued in their job (Durrant and Holden, 2006); giving voice to them boosts their sense of ownership of the outcomes of policy decisions (Bangs and Frost, 2012). In this study, the lack of voice impacted negatively on teachers’ sense of their role identity as they felt that they were seen as ‘just implementers’ of policies. That is, their role in the education of children was limited to only classroom activities. Hence, policy makers did not see the need to consider their input into policies. As Furlong (2005) argued, when decisions such as curriculum design and how teachers should do their work are decided at the top without involving teachers themselves, it leads to a shift from viewing teachers as critical players; what Whitty (2008) regards as a de-professionalisation of teachers.

Public basic school teachers in the country have a professional association which represents teachers’ voice during engagements at various levels including the Ministry and the Ghana Education Service. However, the difficulty for teachers to make inputs into policy decisions could be due to the power structure of the education system together with the channel of communication in the sector, which places teachers at the bottom (see Figure 2 in Chapter Two). Rather than seeing teachers and schools as a valuable source of ideas when it comes to key decision making, as Kpessa (2011) observed, policy makers in the country tend to regard them as the source of the problems to which they are expected to offer solutions. There is, however, risk in viewing teachers that way. Although they may not be at the top of the education bureaucracy and may not have the power to make

decisions, potentially, they have the power with respect to numbers to determine the success of decisions made by those at the top. In other words, they could resist decisions made by policy makers (Binder, 2012). Although there were no indications in this study that teachers resisted decisions made by policy makers and authority by refusing to implement them, it appeared they surrendered a fundamental aspect of their professional role as seen in the expression of Japri in Section 6.4 of Chapter Six that;

‘...because of that we [teachers] only sit here and wait for them. Whatever they [authority and policy makers] bring, we do for them’.

As Burke and Stet (2009) argued in relation to people’s sense of their role identity, the expectations that people associate with their roles hold implications for their attitude and behaviour. This implies that these teachers were likely to continue focussing on only the classroom aspect of their role. Yet, the role of teachers in the education of children is not limited to only classrooms teaching but also requires them to contribute their critical ideas and experiences to policies (Ingersoll, 2007). The evidence in this study is a matter of concern as it implies that these teachers were not viewed as critical players in the policy making process. Besides, it is a ‘missed opportunity’, as also noted by Durrant and Holden (2006, p.91), for policy makers not to have in their policies the input of teachers, who are expert witnesses both in the conditions within which they work, and in relation to their knowledge of their pupils and their own needs (Hansen, 2017).

At the school level also, analysis of teachers’ views suggests that some head teachers took unilateral decisions and expected teachers to comply or simply endorse them where they had little ideas about how such decisions were arrived at. Working under such school contexts created a situation that made some teachers feel that they were not seen as capable of making any contributions to school improvement beyond their daily task of teaching in their classrooms. Teachers’ sentiments suggest that they were likely to lose their sense of belonging to their schools, although their sense of moral purpose could still draw them closer to their pupils (Royal and Rossi, 1999). Because of this, it has been suggested that it is important to involve teachers in deciding school goals (Bangs and Frost, 2012; Osborn et al., 2000). They should also be involved in determining the best ways to pursue and achieve them. While agreeing with such suggestions as it was also acknowledged by some teachers in this study, according to some teachers’ views, simply

asking teachers to participate in decisions may be one-directional which may not be enough to allow them to feel fully fulfilled in their professional role. It was as well about having trust and confidence in them that they are capable, professionally, to contribute to their school development. This was critical to teachers' sense of professional identity as having trust and confidence in them was likely to reinforce a sense of identity in them as teachers with critical roles to play in their schools. Evidence from the data, which is also endorsed by Lewis, Schaps and Watson (1995), suggests that a sense of belonging to their schools could lead to increased sense of satisfaction and a greater collective responsibility for children's learning.

Besides involvement in decisions, limited and inequitable opportunities for teachers in this study to continuously upgrade their existing knowledge and expertise served as a constraint to teachers' ability to take initiatives on behalf of their pupils and contribute to school development. The findings show that support for teachers' continuing professional development was not prioritised. As noted in relation to the study leave with pay policy to support teachers to pursue further studies, the current selection criteria which placed priority on teachers who wanted to upgrade their knowledge in certain subjects, was not fair to majority of teachers. This created ill-feeling among some teachers who could not benefit from the policy as, expressed by one focus teacher, Lapeka in Section 6.5 of Chapter 6;

'...I have been teaching for five years and if I want to upgrade myself, you'll tell me that because of the course I want to do, I won't get [study leave] and my colleagues in different courses are getting it. You feel depressed. And I have been here almost five years and granting me study leave to go and study and come back, you will tell me that my programme or the course that I'm going to do is not needed. It's like they haven't even value you. You don't have any value or the programme that you're going to do is not important to them... Me like this I won't even agree to write a letter and send that I want study leave because I know I won't even get. Because I'm not going to do science or English or the other ones. So why should I waste my time and apply if I already know I won't even get?...That is why some of us are still hanging...Because me like this, I'm in the KG [Kindergarten]. What I want to do is "Early Childhood Education" but I won't get [the study leave]'.

This excerpt and similar ones reveal an important aspect of teachers' sense of their professional identity, which is teachers' sense of their subject identity. Some teachers felt that the subjects they taught and wanted to pursue further studies in were not seen as

important. As pointed out in previous chapters, the situation for the non-professional National Service, Youth Enterprise Agency and Community Volunteer teachers was more critical not only because they could not afford the training programmes available to them but also because they were excluded from the occasional workshops organised for teachers at the district levels. In teachers' work environment, equity is a critical factor in determining how they feel about themselves as teachers in their job (Lewis, Schaps and Watson, 1995). Thus, teachers who perceive that they are not equitably treated in their professional development are more likely to feel that the system does not care for and about them (Kroth, 2007; Leithwood and Beatty, 2008). As seen in this study, teachers expressed a sense of neglect because they were not equitably treated in their professional development. While the professional teachers related this treatment to the subjects they taught, the non-professional teachers were more concerned about their exclusion from the occasional workshops organised for teachers.

Having discussed teachers' sense of professional identity and the forces that influenced this, the next section discusses the impact that this had on teachers' professional practice.

7.3. The Impact of Teachers' Sense of Identity on their Practice

This study also sought to explore the impact of teachers' sense of professional identity on their professional practice. Research evidence in the literature suggests that the way teachers perceive themselves impacts on their practice (Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop 2004; Day, 2017; Hong, 2010; Mockler, 2011). Thus, a positive sense of identity most likely impacts positively on teachers' practice. As one of the objectives of this study was to contribute to policy and practice, I was also interested in understanding this relationship.

This study has found an important issue regarding this relationship. Although the negative forces influencing teachers' sense of identity appeared to be outweighing the positive, the teachers in this study did not allow this to negatively impact on their professional tasks of teaching pupils, as they still demonstrated overwhelming commitment. For some of these teachers, experiencing such situations in their working environment was part of the normal vicissitudes of their work and lives. That is, it was to be expected as part of their job. Therefore, it was about enjoying the good moments they derived by working with

their pupils and contributing to their learning and career, while managing the challenging situations and making the best out of such situations for the sake of the children. This is revealing not because it contradicts previous studies involving teachers in rural areas of the country as pointed out in Chapter Six, but also because it contrasts with studies in similar contexts in Sub-Saharan Africa such as that of Mkumbo (2012, p.222). The study which explored ‘teachers’ commitment to, and experiences of, the teaching profession in Tanzania’ revealed that teachers’ commitment was overwhelmingly low, with teachers citing ‘poor working environment, poor government and community attitudes towards the teaching profession as the main de-motivating factors’ for their commitment. However, I acknowledge that specific characteristics of each study could account for the differences in the findings. For example, while both studies adopted purposive sampling techniques to select participants and involved teachers in rural contexts, the methods of data collection differed. While this study used interviews and participant observation as methods of data collection, Mkumbo adopted focus group discussion. Such differences in the methods of data collection could have influenced the outcome of both findings. Nevertheless, the finding here is noteworthy.

Teachers’ commitment in this study is also significant considering that it is claimed that teachers who have family responsibilities would usually place their families’ needs over professional work (Ahmad, 2008). That is, happenings in teachers’ lives outside work in their schools such as family commitments and responsibilities have profound negative influence on teachers’ commitments to their schools and pupils. This was not the case for teachers in this study. As the focus teachers’ profiles in this study show, six out of seven teachers were married. Out of this number, five had children they were caring for. Only one teacher was single. However, he had relatives who relied on him for financial support. Yet, this did not influence negatively on teachers’ commitment to their work as seen, for example, in the excerpt in Section 6.6 of Chapter Six;

'...there are instances even my wife, my dear wife, will tell me that most at times it is like I have more interest in the children [pupils] I am handling more than even her. Because there are certain issues I should have been asking for permission to stay away from school to handle them but it is like most at times I'm dying for them [the pupils] and I regard her issues as secondary...Most at times, when she says things like this, I have to always take my time and tell her that I value her so much, that is why I married her. But just as I value her, the interest of the children [pupils] is at my heart too' [Japri].

Clearly, teachers' responsibilities to their pupils in this study were a priority.

Overall, what the findings here say about teachers is that external contextual and professional forces could have a negative influence on how teachers' make sense of their professional identity, but they may not have a strong influence on teachers' sense of commitment to their professional tasks of helping their pupils. That is, although these teachers may have competing dimensions of their sense of professional identity, their sense of identity as committed teachers who wanted to make a difference in the lives of their pupils and contribute to the broader development of society was more important to them and dominated in their professional practice. The findings here seem to be consistent with Deaux's (2000) claim that although a teacher may express multiple and fragmented identities, the circumstances that he or she finds himself or herself plays a significant role in determining which aspect of his or her identity will be given prominence.

This is encouraging. However, it begs the important question of what should be done to sustain teachers' commitment in view of the contextual and professional challenges confronting them. As Adendorff et al. (2002) argued, faced with exceptional challenging working circumstances, as in the case of teachers in this study, teachers' sense of purpose can be under threat. That is, the moral values that they bring into teaching alone may not be sufficient to keep them going throughout their career. Even Fullan (1993; 2007), who has researched and written extensively on the moral purpose of teaching, acknowledges that the way schools operate, the way the educational structure is planned, and the way decision makers deal with education have the potential to constrain the moral purpose of the teacher.

It is possible that because of their tremendous sense of purpose, these teachers may continue to thrive (Day, Elliot and Kington, 2005); but doing so without the enabling

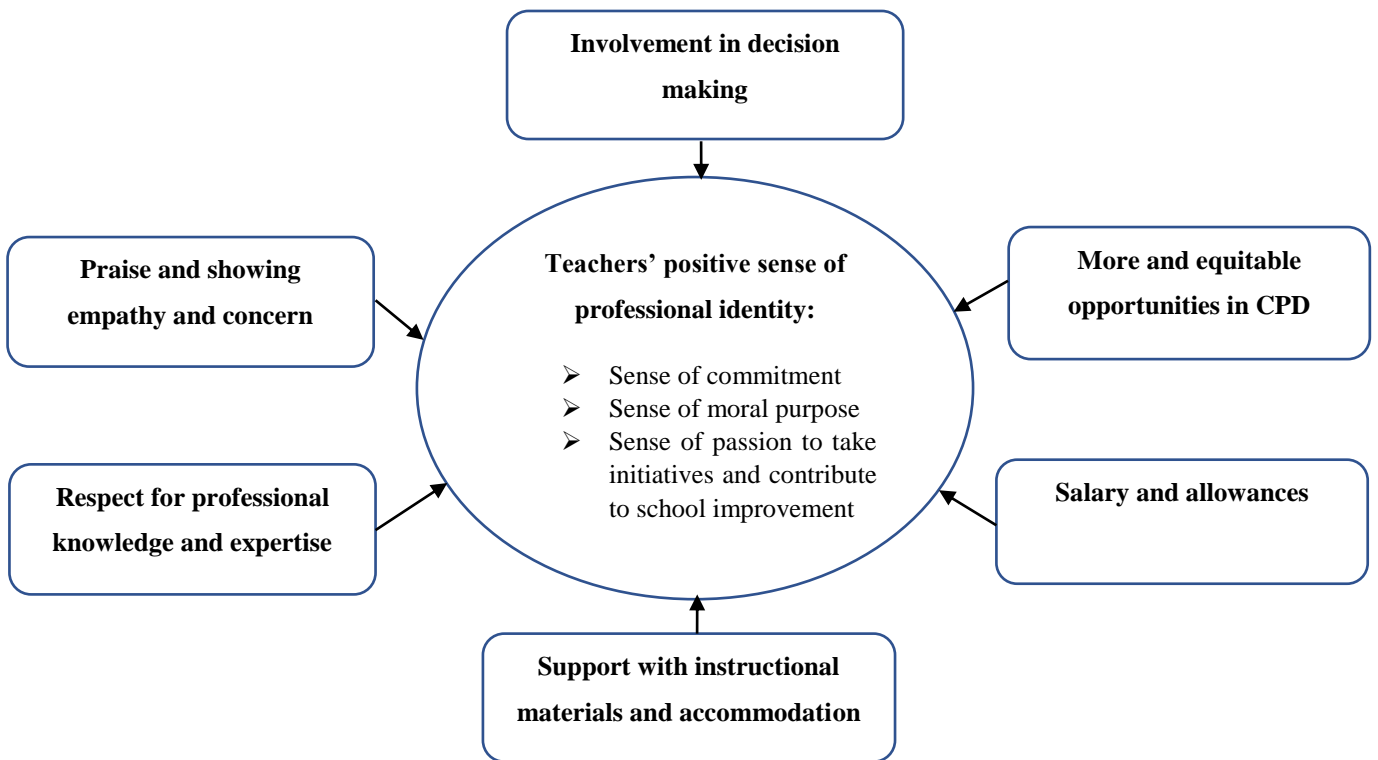
conditions may lead to, as also observed by Farber (1991; cited in Fullan, 1993, p.66), ‘frustrated overcommitment’, where these teachers may feel that the only way to bridge the gap between what they were investing in their work and the satisfaction derived from it was to overwork. Doing this, however, is risky as they are prone to breakdown (Fullan, 1993). This should be a concern considering that four of the focus teachers in this study were in the early stages of their career, while three were in their mid-career stages. This implies that these teachers still have a significant contribution to make to children and society. However, inferring from the claims above, the extent to which they can thrive throughout their career depends on the extent to which their experiences in these areas will permit them.

Precisely how teachers in this study felt the contextual and professional challenges confronting them could be addressed in order to enhance their sense of professional identity in these areas is the issue for discussion in the next section. It is the expectation of this study that when these are met, it could play a significant role in sustaining teachers’ sense of commitment, as there is substantial evidence that, being committed as a teacher also requires a positive sense of professional identity (Day and Kington, 2008; Hong, 2010; O’Connor, 2008).

7.4. Teachers’ Aspirations for Enhancing their Sense of Professional Identity

From the discussion of teachers’ profiles and experiences above, the study has identified three positive dimensions of teachers’ sense of professional identity, which are all affective in nature. It has also identified the contextual and professional factors that would strengthen these dimensions. These are summarised into Figure 5 below and the strengthening factors discussed in detail subsequently.

Figure 7: Teachers' Positive Sense of Professional Identity and Underlying Strengthening Forces



It is important to reiterate that I was interested in identifying and understanding the forces that could enhance teachers' sense of professional identity in this study as seen in Figure 7 above. However, I acknowledge that the relationship between these underlying strengthening forces and teachers' sense of professional identity can be reciprocal. In this regard, teachers' sense of their professional identity can also influence the way they perceive these forces as argued in Section 3.7 of Chapter Three.

The forces *praise and showing empathy and concern; respect for professional knowledge and expertise; support with instructional materials and accommodation* relate to the contextual dimension of the conceptual framework of this study, while *Salary and allowances; more and equitable opportunities in CPD; involvement in decision making* emerged from the professional dimension of the framework. While the implementation of some of them may require the investment of huge resources, others are practical and doable in the immediate term. For instance, while *support with instructional materials and accommodation, salary and allowances and professional development* may require huge resource investment, *praise and showing empathy and concern; respect and*

involving teachers in the decision-making processes as well as in the operations of schools which are attitude-related are doable immediately with minimal financial resource.

- *Praise and showing empathy and concern*

One of the aspirations of teachers which emerged from analysis of the ‘recognition’ theme was that teachers wanted to be praised for their efforts and contributions. Argument for praising teachers for their good work is that teachers see praise as a key element in enhancing their morale and attitude towards their practice (Blasé and Kirby, 2009; Nias, 1989). Blasé and Kirby (2009) in their study, for example, pointed out the power of praise. As they noted, of all the strategies used to influence teachers’ work, praise was the most effective one. In this study, analysis of teachers’ sentiments suggest that they aspire for praise for two reasons: First, they perceived praise as a valuable tool in boosting their sense of pride in their work. Second, praise for these teachers was also linked to a way of sending a message to them that their work was acknowledged and valued. With this, they would feel encouraged to do more for their pupils as well as support efforts aimed at improving their schools.

One way that school leaders can praise their teachers is by commending them individually during private conversations or in groups during school meetings for their contribution (Blasé and Kirby, 2009). In addition to this, the findings in this study show that it would serve better if teachers are asked about what form and aspects of their work they would want to be praised for, as individual teachers expressed different preferences. While some teachers wanted to be praised by authority at the District Education Offices for their efforts in their classrooms and schools in the form of written notes as expressed by one of the focus teachers, Igbenaa, that, whenever officials from the district visited their schools, they *‘should always write something for the good things we are doing in our school’*, some teachers wanted to be praised by parents and the wider society for their contribution to the human resource development of the country.

About showing empathy and concern for teachers’ work, first, the findings suggest that teachers wanted to be in regular contact with authority at the District Education Offices. They hoped that by doing so, they could share their concerns and experiences with them.

They were also dissatisfied with the way their concerns were dealt with at the District Education Offices. For these teachers, authority did not empathise enough with them, although some teachers acknowledged that the challenges in dealing with teachers' issues could be due to logistical constraints. Nevertheless, they wanted authority to demonstrate interest in addressing teachers' issues. Besides authority, teachers were also unhappy about the lack of interest by parents in their wards' education. They felt that parents needed to show more concern by getting involved in their work there.

Under the Ghana Education Service Act 778, the management of schools is a shared responsibility between schools and parents (Ghana National Association of Teachers, 2010). Accordingly, parents are expected to support schools in all initiatives and with resources to ensure improvements in schools and pupils' performances (Ghana Education Service, 2010). However, teachers' opinions in this study show that this was left in the hands of only teachers. Parents rarely visited schools to interact with teachers and get to know what was expected of them. Even Parent-Teacher Association meetings which were the formal grounds for both teachers and parents to discuss issues on school improvements were poorly attended in some schools. This was upsetting for some teachers as one focus teacher, Eninga, complained;

'...this community too when you call for meeting, that's PTA meetings, it's very difficult for them to come. About two or three will come, then the rest no. You have seen that the total number of the pupils is 76 but during the PTA meeting when you're to count the parents, you see that they will not even be up to half of the 76. So, we don't know what to do. Last, we called for PTA meeting, that was last two weeks we called for PTA meeting. Those who came, the women were ten and the men were two out of 76. So why?' ...And you know that it is at the PTA meetings that all the information that we have that we inform the parents that this is what you are supposed to do for the child. So, if they don't come, we don't know what to do'.

As Hargreaves (2001, p.1070) argued, teachers rather prefer to engage in regular and continuous interactions with parents. Thus, in situations where interactions are infrequent it can provoke frustrations among them, leading teachers to lose important dimensions of their identity, which are passion and enthusiasm (Day and Gu, 2009; Fullan, 1993). Overall, teachers' aspirations here seem to reflect Blasé and Kirby's (2009) claim that, in many situations, empathy and demonstration of interest in teachers' work is all that teachers need to achieve a sense of satisfaction in their work. Therefore, giving them

opportunities to talk about their concerns, listening to them and offering support where appropriate is crucial to enhancing a positive sense of identity in them.

- *Respect for professional knowledge and expertise*

It also emerged that teachers in this study wanted their professional knowledge and expertise to be respected. Analysis of teachers' sentiments suggests that they aspired for respect for a number of reasons. First, being treated with respect was fundamental to feeling a sense of worth for these teachers. After all, as some teachers claimed, without the basic school teacher, children cannot jump to the higher levels to learn and achieve their career goals. They were therefore, as important as teachers at other levels.

Feeling a sense of worth was also an important positive motivator to sustaining their commitment in their practice as some teachers claimed that in an environment where the image of teachers is high, it propels teachers to do their best. It is clear from the evidence of this study that schools as social institutions where teachers relate with pupils, colleagues, parents, authority and the wider community, their experiences with these various people influence their sense of professional identity (Rodgers and Scott, 2008). Accordingly, if schools can develop a positive culture that promotes healthy relationships among teachers and the various people involved in the education of children, they can be more successful in enhancing a positive sense of identity in teachers (Beijaard, 1995; Buchanan, 2015). When this happens, these teachers will not only remain in the profession, but also, they are more likely to be inspired to serve their pupils, schools and communities to the best of their ability.

- *Support with instructional materials and accommodation*

Support with resources such as classrooms, textbooks, furniture, syllabuses, computers and accommodation also emerged as critical for teachers in this study. They aspire for support with instructional materials because it was not easy to achieve their instructional goals without support from parents and authority in terms of resources. For these teachers, if favouring conditions such as good facilities and resources existed in their schools to enable them to achieve their instructional goals with their pupils, it would allow them to realise a situated identity consistent with their values.

Teachers' aspiration for support was not limited to instructional materials only. They also aimed for support with accommodation. The lack of accommodation for them affected not only teachers' own comfort but also this affected teachers' time on task with pupils as some teachers were not able to attend school regularly during certain times of the year as contained in the excerpt below;

'...and then lack of teacher's quarters for those who are from far away distance. In the rainy season like this, it is always hard for some to be punctual and then regular due to it raining sometimes and because of how the path is not good'. [Raka].

What was significant about teachers' aspirations for support with accommodation was their hope that this could influence positively the decision of other teachers to accept posting to such areas, a view shared by teachers involved in Bennell and Akyeampong's (2007) study.

- *Salary and Allowances*

Teachers in this study were dissatisfied with the amount that they received as salary and the lack of compensation for them. Casely-Hayford et al. (2013) have pointed out that such feelings can create disloyalty and divided attention as teachers are likely to take up additional employment in other institutions to augment their income. Dissatisfaction has also become a major reason for teachers experiencing frustrations in their work (Sarpong, 2002). A potential effect of all this is a loss of professional identity among teachers, with negative consequences on their professional practice as they may develop laid-back attitudes (Buckler, 2012; Cannella and Viruru, 2004). It was striking to find that although teachers in this study expressed dissatisfaction with their salary, such feelings did not negatively affect their commitment to their practice, which is inconsistent with a number of research findings involving teachers in similar contexts in the country where teachers attached priority to income over their commitment to teaching (Agezo, 2010; Casely-Hayford et al., 2013). As reported in Casely-Hayford et al's., (2013) study for example, teachers in rural areas in particular tended to engage in their own businesses to supplement their meagre salary. As a consequence, many of them attended school late or absented themselves, and those who even attended school did not stay till closing before leaving. This was not the case with teachers in this study. On the basis of the evidence in this study, I agree with Dörnyei's, (2001) claim that a teachers' intrinsic aspiration to

educate and impart knowledge to children is always more important to them as a job-related goal than the salary that they earn.

Notwithstanding this, teachers aspired for reasonable salary and allowances because they felt it played a key role in their personal lives as the amount that they earned affected their standard of living in their communities. It was difficult for them to meet their family and personal needs sometimes compelling them to borrow from other people in their communities as complained by one of the focus teachers;

'...by the time the month will end you have to borrow. Go to this person and borrow, give me this, give this. By the time the month will end you will take the salary and go and pay debts...'. [Etiko].

Accordingly, this and similar situations affected teachers' image in their communities as some of the people they borrowed money from tended not to accord them respect and in some instances humiliated them if they either delayed in paying or could not pay back the money. According to some teachers, when they are talking of workers who cannot make it in the society in the country, basic school teachers are often among the first that society referred to because they find it difficult to live comfortable lives. Clearly, these teachers were linking reasonable salary to enhancement in their status in society. That is, satisfaction with their salary would influence positively on their sense of self-worth in society (Olatunji, 2011). Some teachers also related earning reasonable salary to a form of recognition for their contributions by authority. While some teachers wanted a permanent increase in their salaries, other teachers preferred additional allowances as compensation for their hardships.

The influence of remuneration on how teachers feel about themselves in their job and act is a contested area in the research literature. Some evidence suggests that in high functioning education systems where teachers 'enjoy high status in society', salary is prioritised (OECD, 2014). Aside from motivating them in the practice, paying them well makes them feel they are 'regarded and treated as professionals' (ibid, p.35). Conversely, Seligma (2002) asserts that since teachers who possess a sense of calling are highly self-motivated, teaching goes on with or without financial incentives and that salary has no effect on how they feel about and act in their job. While Armstrong (2007) simply thinks that it is not necessary to debate whether teachers are self-motivated or driven by

financial remuneration. According to him, what is important is to pay attention to both the intrinsic and extrinsic values because both are logically interlinked.

Whatever the arguments, it is reasonable to say that the way salary will impact on teachers' work and lives differs from context to context. Although teachers in this study possessed a sense of calling, in a developing nation like Ghana where basic needs such as shelter, food and healthcare are key challenges for many people (Bennell and Akyeampong, 2007), better remuneration for teachers in this study has the potential to improve their lives, thereby encouraging them to retain focus on their job. However, it is important to also encourage self-help initiatives among teachers themselves in their schools. One way of doing this could be the setting up of a welfare fund in their schools, where voluntary contributions could be made monthly into it, to support themselves in their financial needs. Contributions could be shared or put into investment ventures based on common understanding. There is evidence that self-help activities are beneficial not only because they provide practical, mutual and immediate support for the people who share a common difficulty but also, they provide opportunities for them to see new ways of livelihood (Robinson, 1980). Although Robinson (1980) made this point in relation to self-help initiatives in primary healthcare, it seems to resonate more broadly, including the situation of teachers in this study. It could help teachers to identify alternative means of earning additional income which could enhance their living standards.

- *Involvement in decision making*

The professional voice of teachers in this study in the form of participation in policy decisions did not receive the recognition it deserved, according to teachers' perceptions. Yet, in the work of teachers, voice is regarded as a way of empowering them by allowing them to 'give voice to their teaching struggles in order to become conscious agents in their pedagogy' (Britzman, 2003, p.160). It comes as no surprise that teachers in this study felt not only undermined in their role, but also aspired for recognition of their voice in the policy decision-making processes at the district and national levels as well as the day to day decisions and management of their schools. While they linked their involvement in decisions to yielding better education outcomes for children, involving

them in the management of the school was a way of fostering teamwork and collegiality among teachers in their schools (Blasé and Kirby, 2009; Osborn et al., 2000).

Evidence from the findings shows that teachers did not want their participation to be limited to just creating chances for them to raise their concerns as they perceived this to be limiting in scope. Neither did they want to have control over policy decisions. Rather, teachers wanted to be integral part of processes such as policy initiatives and curriculum reforms. It was the hope of these teachers that when they were made to feel important in their role, it would result in a greater satisfaction with their role identity. Teachers' aspiration here aligns with Frost and Durrant's (2002) claim that it is not just about giving autonomy to teachers, but it is also about allowing them to experience the fulfilment of having an important impact on their professional practice and eventually on the quality and outcomes of students' learning.

Essentially, the point to make here is that, if teachers in this study are to be recognised as among the most important stakeholders in the delivery of education and to be able to prepare children to contribute to the development of society in the future, then those forces deprofessionalising them need to be addressed (Hargreaves, 2003). From the evidence in this study, involving them in the decision-making processes at all levels would be the appropriate way of addressing this (Hoyle, 1995; Sachs, 2005).

- *More and equitable opportunities for continuous professional development*

Teachers' ability to progress in their profession has been linked to how they make sense of their identity. Barrett and Avalos (2011) believe that teachers' sense of identity is embedded in how they feel able to accomplish their professional tasks and move on in the profession. Hence, supporting teachers in their career development holds the potential of creating a positive sense of identity in them. Teachers in this study aspired for more and equitable opportunities to develop in their profession because this was central to their ability to impart quality knowledge to their pupils and keep them up to date with new ideas in their field. Also, some teachers' suggestions that chances should be given to all teachers to go for further studies and not limited to only teachers in certain subject areas suggest that they would feel equitably and fairly treated. Giving more opportunities to

teachers of certain subjects implied that the other subjects that they taught were not regarded as important according to some teachers in this study.

Although teachers were more concerned about the study leave with pay policy which was the more formal approach to providing continuous professional development to teachers, some teachers also identified workshops, seminars and other informal situations as contexts that could allow them to learn from one another. There were limited chances for teachers to interact among themselves and share their experiences. Some teachers attributed this to the nature of the teaching time table in their schools which they claimed was too rigid and allowed little time to plan their own activities and interact among themselves.

For others, the workload in their classrooms made it difficult for them to have any time left to do other activities including interactions among themselves. Yet, when teachers interact among themselves, both within and outside of their schools, it allows them to exchange successful strategies and experiences in their individual classrooms and schools, identify the fundamental needs of their contexts and how to work towards improving them (Kedzior and Fifield, 2004). With this also, new and relatively inexperienced teachers will benefit from the expertise and ideas of those who are experienced and working in these deprived rural areas. As argued elsewhere, doing this could make teachers feel part of their school, circuit or district as a community working together for the good of pupils.

Effective collaborations among teachers in their workplace is built on leadership (Schein, 2004). That is, it is necessary for school leaders to support and encourage interactions, exchange of ideas and experiences among teachers. However, teachers should not be forced to engage in such activities, what Hargreaves and Dawe (1990, p.227) call 'contrived collegiality'. That is, interactive activities among these teachers need not always be administratively determined and controlled; nor should such interactions pose a threat to teachers' actual daily tasks of teaching pupils. Rather, such engagements should be flexible enough in terms of venues and time and oriented towards the needs of teachers. They should arise from teachers' own analysis of their needs so that they do not perceive that such activities are imposed on them. This is important because when

teachers' needs and activities are determined for them it contributes to teachers seeing themselves as incapable of taking initiatives (Osborn et al. 2000).

7.5. Implications of Findings and Recommendations for Policy and Practice

One of the objectives of this study was to draw out the implications of the findings for policy and practice and make recommendations. The findings have some important implications both within the two deprived rural districts involved in this study and similar contexts. The findings confirm existing research reports that working and living in rural areas of the country is extremely difficult for teachers (see Bennell and Akyeampong, 2007; Casely-Hayford et al., 2013; Tanaka, 2010). Therefore, it makes sense to join voices in advocating that the government should make considerable efforts to equip all rural schools with enough and relevant resources to improve the work and lives of teachers there. However, this is practically not possible for a developing country like Ghana, with enormous economic challenges to provide all resources to all deprived rural schools in Northern Ghana which make up the bulk of rural basic schools in the country (Addy, 2013). As seen in the findings in this study which are supported by other research reports reviewed in Chapter Two of this study, successive governments are struggling to make a significant impact in this direction.

Fortunately, the strong sense of commitment of teachers in this study suggests that teachers could mediate, significantly, for the resource deficits. After all,

‘of the many resources required by schools, the most vital are the contributions- efforts, involvement, and commitment-from teachers. Not only are the quality of these contributions related integrally to school goals; they are ultimately the means by which other resources are acquired’ (Rosenholtz, 1991, p.140).

However, appropriate measures need to be adopted to support teachers in their efforts. Evidence in this study suggests that teachers would be in better a position to do more for children and society amid the challenges if they feel appreciated in their efforts. As seen in the literature in Chapter Two, strategies to compensate teachers in deprived rural areas of the country have focused, largely, on schemes such as the national best teacher and school award and study leave with pay. This study has revealed that these schemes may not be doing enough to boost teachers' morale in these areas due to the bureaucratic

processes involved in accessing them. Developing a motivation culture at both the school and district levels that acknowledges teachers' efforts in kind through praise, empathy and concern for the challenges confronting them in these areas are much more promising. As some teachers emphasised, they were not necessarily looking for something 'big', 'physical' or 'material' to make them feel recognised in their work but just 'something' to show that their hard work was valued. This altruistic way of appreciating teachers' efforts is a key finding in this study which is worthwhile in redirecting the attention of the Ministry of Education, Ghana Education Service, parents and other stakeholders in supporting teachers at no or minimal monetary cost.

The findings also reveal that, while some teachers were improvising and adopting creative ways to facilitate teaching and learning in their classrooms, other teachers felt helpless in their situation. The head teachers in some schools joined their teachers in expressing feeling of helplessness because of the limited resources at their disposal. While not discounting the need for head teachers to empathise with their teachers, as teachers valued this, it is important that head teachers also play their leadership role by supporting and encouraging teachers in their schools to see creative ways of making use of the little resources available to them.

Teachers also need to be encouraged to collaborate and share their school and classroom experiences with colleague teachers. This study recommends that schools, circuits and the districts should incorporate in their schedules, plans that foster both formal and informal collaborative activities among teachers. Suggested activities such as seminars, team working, and clubs for teachers could be planned in each school, circuit or district. When teachers collaborate with their colleagues they share some sense of identity as fellow professionals (Cowie, 2011). That is, collaboration can serve as a source of emotional support from their colleagues which is likely to influence teachers' commitment to stay in the profession and in these deprived rural areas. As argued elsewhere, collaboration is also a positive measure that will incur minimal material and financial resource but will among other benefits allow teachers to come together to share experiences, identify the specific needs of their contexts and how to collaborate in their efforts to improving them.

Parents and other community members are another resource that can provide support to teachers in their work. They possess valuable 'knowledge of their children that is not available to anyone else, they have a vested and committed interest in their children's success', and the skills to contribute to the work of teachers (Fullan, 2007, p.190). However, some existing reports indicate that it is often difficult to get the support of parents in the rural areas of Ghana. Many claim that parents are less educated. Therefore, investing their time and resources in their children's education is not a priority for them (see Akyeampong et al., 2007; Hashim, 2005; VSO, 2002). I do not discount that parents' level of education could have an influence on their investment in their children's education. In a similar way, I do not disregard that under such situations teachers and school leaders rather need to reach out to the communities and parents and engage meaningfully with them (Henry, 1996; cited in Fullan, 2007).

However, this study believes that there could be underlying forces influencing parents' involvement in and support for teachers in these rural areas beyond what is reported. For instance, it is possible that parents may recognise the value of education for their children, the family and the wider society but they may feel that it is schools' job and that they cannot possibly make any contribution. It may also be that parents trust teachers to do a good job for their children even without their involvement. Also, it could be that parents are constrained in terms of material and financial resources to support schools. In view of all these possibilities, it is suggested in this study that further detail research be conducted on the conditions that influence the relationships between teachers and parents in rural areas from the viewpoints of both teachers and parents. This could lead to a better understanding of ways of enhancing parental involvement in, and support for schools and teachers in these areas. This can be an interesting area for further research for me and other researchers and even for the schools and districts themselves.

Teachers will be better equipped with the skills and ideas to take initiatives and improvise in order to meet the learning needs of pupils if they have opportunities for in-service training. A number of teachers admitted that their classroom delivery could be more effective if they were given some regular in-service training. The current strategy for providing professional development for basic school teachers which focuses largely on

the Study Leave with pay policy for professional teachers and the Untrained Teachers Diploma in Basic Education programme for the non-professional teachers do not seem to address this challenge as the majority of teachers complained that they were not able to access them. As Day (2017) argued, for teachers to do well for their pupils and schools, they need to be supported to continuously develop their subject knowledge and competencies. The lack of this not only frustrates and demotivates teachers, but also it means that new knowledge and skills do not reach children in these schools. This study suggests that one way to do this could be the provision of regular short courses which will not require huge financial resources and will not take teachers outside their school and classroom contexts for training, as opposed to the current policies which are capital intensive. These short courses should be flexible enough in terms of preference, cost, time and venues to encourage all teachers to participate in them.

The findings in relation to teachers' voice also have implications for policy and practice. It is important that policy-makers in the Ministry of Education together with the Ghana Education Service should not see teachers as 'just implementers' of policy decisions and reforms, but rather active participants in deciding them. Doing this will require a different approach to the communications channel in the sector. This can be done by creating open and clear channels of communication at all levels of the sector to allow teachers to make their input. Head teachers need to also cultivate a culture of trust in their schools by keeping an open and honest dialogue with teachers regarding issues of the daily functions and management of schools which has the potential to improve education. As Durrant and Holden (2006) argued, giving voice to teachers signifies that they have a stake in transforming their schools which can generate enthusiasm and energy in them. As they claimed further;

‘without the contribution from different voices it is impossible to aspire to any kind of shared vision. Without shared vision, it is more difficult to engage members of the school community in improvement processes’ (p.91).

Although Durrant and Holden's (2006) argument was made in respect of giving chances to all members of the school community to make their contribution in school transformation, it appears to hold specifically for improving the situation of teachers and teaching in this study.

Support with accommodation also has implications for policy and practice. Although the lack of accommodation did not affect the work of teachers involved in this study, some teachers claimed that some of their colleagues refused posting to such areas due to the lack of social amenities, particularly accommodation. While not disregarding the need to make available accommodation and other social amenities for teachers in rural areas to enable them stay comfortably and do their work, it is important that teachers are informed of the realities of working and living in these challenging areas during their pre-service training. As argued earlier in this section, it will be difficult if not impossible for the government to provide all these amenities. In view of this, the Ministry of Education should rather consider making changes to the teacher training curriculum by incorporating courses, as part of teachers' pre-service training, to educate them about the realities in working and living in rural areas and how to manage this. Efforts must be made at this stage to make teacher trainees aware of the importance of their work not only to children in rural areas but also the districts, zone and economy of the country.

Induction service for newly trained teachers can also prove useful in dealing with this situation. Currently, the Ghana Education Service does not have any policy for official induction of new teachers to support them to make the transition from a teacher trainee into a full professional teacher status (Kuranchie, 2013). Similarly, schools do not have in place induction service to help newly posted teachers get ready for the demands of their work in their new environments. Yet, there is a possibility that new teachers will encounter challenges emanating from unawareness of their new working environment. If their experiences are distressing at the early phases of their career, they are likely to lose passion for their job. If they even stay, they may not be prepared to do their best (Akyeampong, 2003). To this end, it is important to have induction service for newly trained teachers. As part of this, teachers could be given a simple induction pack of basic household amenities as a gesture.

Finally, this study has also found that teachers have to feel valued in their professional knowledge and expertise if they are expected to perform their responsibilities well. According to the findings, teachers were not respected because of people's mentality that they were not qualified, good and capable, although some of them possessed the

qualification to teach at the senior high level and take up administrative duties. Authority did not also respect them perhaps because of teachers' lower status in the Ghana Education Service. Just as it is recommended that teachers need to be appreciated by parents and authorities in kind, it should be the same with 'respect and regard' for them. Schools and communities need to foster positive attitude and mutual respect. Authorities need to also make teachers feel valued in their classrooms. In line with this, the hierarchical structure of the Ghana Education Service needs to be reconsidered. As discussed in Chapter Two, teaching at the basic level is the entering point in the Ghana Education Service. However, as teachers progress through the ranks, they are either transferred to the senior high schools to teach, or the education offices to take up management positions, and immediately they have access to a vehicle, car loans, bungalow and other privileges (Addae-Mensah, 2000). This situation does not augur well for the image of those in the classrooms, as it portrays that their comfort is less important. While making these recommendations, it is also important that teachers should recognise themselves as professionals who are qualified, good and capable and feel an inner sense of self-worth.

7.6. Summary of Chapter

This chapter has discussed the findings under the four main research questions that guided the study. In line with the research paradigm of the study, this was done through interpretation of teachers' profiles and experiences in order to gain a deeper understanding of their sense of professional identity.

The discussion of teachers' profiles and experiences here has pointed out a variety of positive and negative forces influencing teachers' sense of professional identity and teachers' aspirations for enhancing this. It emerged clearly that, teachers derived personal fulfilments in their job from helping pupils to learn, progress and earn a career, making a social contribution and from external acknowledgement of their work from authority, parents and policy makers as well as support and concern from authority and parents. This suggests that it is important to ensure that balance of the forces influencing these teachers' sense of professional identity, summarised in Figure 7 of Section 7.2, are on the positive side so that teachers can feel happy, satisfied and enjoy doing their work. That is,

there is the need to ensure that the psychological fulfilments of teaching (i.e. the positive forces) outweigh teachers' frustrations (i.e. the negative forces) in order to enhance their sense of professional identity.

The chapter has also drawn out the implications of the findings and made some recommendations for policy and practice. Here, it is acknowledged that although resources are key to ensuring children receive quality education, the reality of the situation in these areas suggests that teachers could be the main ingredients in ensuring this. Because of this, it is important that more attention is given to the affective dimension of teachers' aspirations such as praise, respect and empathy with them, as these seemed to be much more valued by teachers.

The next chapter provides a reflexive conclusion to the study. It explains the usefulness, strengths and limitations of the study and gives direction for further studies. In this final chapter, I also reflect on what I have personally learnt in the course of my study which have implications for my professional and academic life in future.

Chapter Eight

Reflexive Conclusion

8.1. Introduction

In this thesis, I set out to understand how basic school teachers in two deprived rural districts in Northern Ghana made sense of their professional identity. That is, the way they felt about themselves as teachers based on interpretation of their experiences. My justification was that to understand better how teachers do in their work, it is important to, first, grasp an understanding of their sense of professional identity and this could only be possible by letting teachers themselves talk about their feelings about their work and lives. Thus, the research questions focused on how teachers made sense of their professional identity in relation to their experiences; what factors or issues influenced their sense of professional identity; the impact of their sense of professional identity on their professional practice; and teachers' aspirations for enhancing their sense of professional identity. Chapters Five, Six and Seven have provided answers to these questions.

The overarching finding of the study is that the feelings that teachers in this study expressed about themselves as teachers in these deprived rural areas were inconsistent as they were swaying between emotions such as love and frustration; fulfilment and despondency. Yet, they expressed a profound sense of commitment to teaching pupils. This study regards teachers' commitment as an important resource in these deprived rural areas. Unfortunately, evidence from the study shows that policy makers, parents and districts education management were not aware of this dimension of teachers' professional identity and did not utilise it. There is, however, a consequence if such a resource is not taken advantage of, because over time it is likely to diminish (Bullough and Baughman, 1997). As seen, there were both constraining and facilitating factors, all of which affected the way teachers made sense of their professional identity and hence requires a balance. Fortunately, some important variables have been identified in this study and discussed in Sections 7.4 and 7.5 of Chapter Seven which can contribute to

both achieving this balance and serving as the basis for rethinking and redirecting focus on ways of enhancing teachers' sense of professional identity in these areas. This is discussed further in the next section on the usefulness of the study. Considering that this study was first of its kind in Northern Ghana, and a deprived rural context for that matter, the study not only makes significant contribution to the literature in this direction, but also it is a good starting point for other researchers interested in exploring the views of basic school teachers in this part of the country. Such studies can contribute to the building of a greater body of literature in this cultural context, which could be useful in both complementing and counterbalancing the western literature.

This final chapter provides a reflexive account of the usefulness, strengths and limitations of the study. It also explains how my identity itself became a source of hope for teachers in these areas for improvement of basic education for children. The lessons I personally learnt in the course of the study and directions for further studies are also explained.

8.2. Usefulness of the Study

I have argued in different chapters in this study that the future of children as well as Northern Ghana depends largely on teachers. They are the most important stakeholders to give children the basic education they need to progress in their careers, so they can lift themselves, their families and communities out of poverty. However, teachers can only succeed in doing this in the right contexts (UNESCO, 2013/14).

This thesis has identified teachers whose sense of professional identity gives reasons for both hope and concern. There is hope because the teaching profession meant not only an activity but also a character which seemed to make their work morally inextricable from their personal lives. As discussed in the previous chapter, helping pupils in their learning, caring for and about them were all priorities for these teachers in their work. The feeling that they were doing something that was contributing to the broader good of society also gave them a reason to continue working in these areas. Teachers gave all signals that they had a zeal to do their best for children, and this mattered greatly to them especially when some of them appeared to recognise that basic education for children is fundamental to improving conditions in these impoverished rural communities. However, it is a concern because it is difficult to claim that such a sense of purpose would be sustained throughout

their career. In the previous chapter, I made recommendations for policy and practice which included prioritising teacher professional development and fostering school culture that supports teachers and values their knowledge and expertise.

However, some of the concerns that teachers raised appear to be systemic in nature. In reviewing the basic education system, employment and working conditions of basic school teachers in the country, it became clear to me that a huge part of government's source of funding for the education sector comes from international donor agencies, mostly the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. These donor agencies put a cap on government's expenditure as part of their conditions for granting assistance (Thompson and Casely-Hayford, 2008). This is a matter of policy to control government's spending (Addo et al. 2010). There is also evidence that government's failure to comply with their conditions leads to either delays or non-disbursement of funds (Addo et al. 2010; Alexander, 2001). What this means is that the government is compelled to limit the amount that it is able to spend on public sector workers including incentives for teachers who are working and living in challenging areas. As seen in Chapter Two, successive governments have struggled over the years to satisfy teachers' demands for increases in salaries and incentives. Such situations bring with them the need to rethink alternative and sustainable ways of making teachers feel appreciated in their work with minimal financial and material resources.

Evidence in this study suggests that creating an environment for teachers in deprived rural areas to feel satisfied in their efforts need not be expensive. Teachers' accounts in this study show that they were excited that the study had provided an opportunity for their voices to be heard and hoped that I would carry this forward. The key message that they appeared to be conveying to all who matter was that, they were doing something important in these areas and they needed to be seen, heard and acknowledged to be doing so. In other words, they wanted to tell policy makers, parents, education authorities and society generally that they needed to put themselves in teachers' situations, what I would call a 'moment of empathy' with teachers (Sergiovanni, 1992, p.106). This could be the most promising way of assuaging their frustrations. As it has been argued, teaching is such an emotional job that empathy has occupied an important dimension in how teachers

feel about themselves and do in their work (Beatty, 2000; Hargreaves, 2001). Therefore, to empower them to deliver the desired education, there is a need to give attention to their emotional feelings such as stress, frustration, joy, morale and satisfaction in their work (Beatty, 2000). In other words, people need to enter the emotional world of teachers in order to have a greater sense of how it feels like to be a teacher. With this, they can create a happy and satisfying climate for teachers to deal with the enormous daily hassles of their work. Teachers themselves expressed that acknowledgement of their frustrations, dissatisfactions and joy itself will lead to positive feelings in them even if not changing things materially. This should trigger a pause to anybody recommending strategies which are deemed appropriate for compensating teachers in deprived rural areas of the country. In view of evidence in this study, they should begin to recognise the things that teachers themselves consider most important to them and start from there, as more is likely to be gotten from teachers by doing so.

8.3. Reflections on the Strengths and Limitations of the Study

8.3.1. The Research Design

The qualitative approach is often criticised for its reliance on a small number of participants who do not represent the population under study as argued in Chapter Four. Hence, findings from such studies are not generalisable. This could be considered a limitation of this study. Of course, teachers and schools involved in this study did not statistically represent the two districts, not to mention all teachers in Northern Ghana. However, they did represent in terms of being teachers in Northern Ghana. Therefore, it is my expectation that teachers in similar contexts can relate with the findings, what Bassey (1999, p.52) calls ‘fuzzy generalisations’.

Moreover, in the course of my fieldwork, I saw many other schools and communities in these two districts in similar conditions. As stated in Chapter Four, I also had the opportunity to interact with many other teachers in these districts who expressed similar views, thereby providing triangulation to confirm my analysis leading to a more robust study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). I am not, therefore, convinced that much difference would have been made regarding the findings overall by involving more teachers and

schools. In Chapter Four, I also argued that it is important to juxtapose criticisms of the qualitative approach with its benefits such as in-depth exploration of the issues and access to rich and sensitive data, which I believe outweigh the disadvantages.

However, because the study involved observation of schools and focus teachers' lessons, the reaction of teachers and pupils was a concern. In Section 4.7.1.2 of Chapter Four, I explained the measures that I adopted to minimise any negative impact of my presence on the daily routines of teachers and pupils in their schools. In addition to this, at the start of my observation, all focus teachers assured me that my presence in their schools as well as classrooms would not interrupt their behaviours and daily routines, as they felt they could identify with me. Nevertheless, I was aware of Argyris and Schon's (1974) caution that, when somebody is questioned about his or her action under a particular situation, the response is usually his or her espoused theory of behaviour for that circumstance. As they argue;

‘This is the theory of action to which he [or she] gives allegiance, and which, upon request, he communicates to others. However, the theory that actually governs his actions is his [or her] theory-in-use, which may or may not be compatible with his [or her] espoused theory’ (p.7).

I was also aware that people have the inclination to react either unconsciously or consciously unless they are not made aware that someone is observing them. However, I am not sure what further actions I could have taken to minimise the impact of my presence after explaining to teachers that I was not in their schools to evaluate their work but to learn from their experiences and showing interests in teachers and pupils' daily activities.

8.3.2. Researching in a Familiar Setting

My experiences in this study, particularly during the data collection in the field convinces me that it is worthwhile to have some knowledge and understanding of the setting to be studied. Familiarity with the setting was helpful in many ways including establishment of rapport and access to sensitive and confidential information. While some teachers were not concerned about confidentiality of the information they shared with me, it was not uncommon for some teachers to express that because I was like one of them and not a 'stranger' they were confident that I would not 'expose them'. Therefore, they would tell

me the issues they do not normally disclose to strangers. A teacher in the school that Igbenaa taught backed his claim by indicating that he was reluctant to disclose certain information to a group of undergraduate students from the University for Development Studies who were in the school to explore teachers' and pupils' views regarding the impact of the Ghana School Feeding Programme for basic schools in the district. This was a strength in this study, as it meant that the suspicion that usually lurks in the mind of participants in social research (Hockey, 1993) was absent in this study because of my familiarity with the context.

Familiarity also brought a certain degree of informality to my conversation with participants. This was beneficial in preventing misunderstanding and misinterpretations of what participants said or meant and understanding the issues explored quickly. Being aware that I understood their local dialect, some participants in the course of conversations were comfortable to use the local dialect to make their points clear or emphasise an issue although all interactions with teachers were in the English Language. One example was the use of the word '*burukaburaka*' by one of the focus teachers to demonstrate how teachers were compelled to teach 'anyhow' because in his school for some subjects there were textbooks without syllabuses and vice versa. There is no doubt, therefore, that a researcher with a different identity would have had a different experience with participants and possibly would have come to a different conclusion, although it is possible that there could be overlapping issues to those found here.

It is also clear from the chosen paradigm, interpretivism, that I had some prejudices based on my familiarity with the setting, which Gadamer (2004) believes both hinder and facilitate interpretation of issues heard and seen. I have made efforts, as much as possible, throughout this study to minimise the effects of my prejudices on the study. At the start of this study I have made clear my background as part of the rationale for the study and how that, partly, had an effect on the research questions. Through reflexivity (see Section 4.12 of Chapter Four), I also constantly reminded myself of the role I was in as a researcher. Yet, no matter how hard one tries to recognise one's prejudices, to some extent, one can still be myopic (Mercer, 2007) or blinded to them (Gadamer, 2004). Having taught in a school in that part of the country, not to mention living a greater part

of my life there, I am not able to analyse the consequence this could have had on my interpretations of teachers' experiences unconsciously.

8.4. My Identity Giving Hope to Teachers

Although this study was designed to give voice to teachers, I did not expect that my identity itself as a native of Northern Ghana would be a source of hope for teachers and thus place a greater and challenging expectation on me. For some teachers, it was not about my presence in the school as a former colleague or researcher that raised their expectations for more attention to, and improvement of their situation, but it was about my identity as a native of that part of the country.

On my second day of observing Lapeka, she commented that some teachers in the Primary School, which was located in the same premises with the Kindergarten where she was teaching, had asked about me having seen me with her the previous day. When they were told of my background, they were looking forward to meeting me and hearing from me. Later in the course of my observation, when I talked to some of them, they told me that they felt happy to have someone like them [referring to my background as a native of Northern Ghana] come to listen to their experiences and hoped that I would help improve teachers' situation and basic education in Northern Ghana after my studies. They were not particularly concerned about the contributions the research could make to improving teaching and learning. Rather, these teachers expressed high expectations that, as a native of Northern Ghana, I would use my experiences and network in the UK to get resources such as books and computers to support schools in the North.

These teachers were keen on keeping in touch with me, which I suspect is to see what I would do regarding their expectations after my studies, and some of them have since called to chat with me. Hockey (1993) in his article 'research methods-researching peers and familiar settings' depicts this kind of complexity when conducting a research in one's own ethnic heritage. As he argued, doing so has a kind of value and credibility that is not available in other settings. Yet, it can be difficult as the expectations on the researcher are often greater than on a stranger doing a research in the same context. Thus, there are likely to be effects upon the researcher's 'self' and the group long after the fieldwork is terminated. Although my response to these teachers' expectation was that sending some

books and computers will only solve a practical short-term issue and what is really needed is policy change and a different approach to leadership to support all teachers, this dilemma lurks in my mind as I constantly think of how I can live up to such a social responsibility that was not part of the aims of my study.

8.5. Reflections on Lessons Learnt in the Study

Upon reflection, I find that doing this PhD was not only about giving a voice to teachers in these areas but an invaluable learning experience for myself as well. I have gained a better understanding of the nature of empirical research. That is, it can be immensely exciting and rewarding but at the same time messy and frustrating as knowing precisely what will occur in the course of the inquiry is not possible all the time. It seems Jackson, Boostrom and Hansen (1998) partly share in my experiences. They argue that in research, choices are never over once one decides on what to explore or look for as things do not always happen as initially planned. This study has helped in the development of my research knowledge, skills and competence, as I have learnt to design qualitative study, use different methods to gather data, analyses the data and present the findings in writing. I can foresee myself applying the experiences in doing all these in my future research endeavours.

The study has also provided me a lens to examine my own values which could possibly influence my professional work in future. It is an open secret that one of the main motivations for doing a PhD is for economic and social benefits. Covertly, I had such a drive at the start of my study as I hoped that after my studies, I would earn a higher salary and occupy a higher position in the Ghana Education Service. However, having come to the end of my study, I feel that earning a doctorate goes beyond this. It is as well about who one becomes after the doctorate experience. As I intend to return to teaching after my studies, if there is one thing that I have learnt from teachers in this study which I could add to my attitude towards work in the future, it is about cultivating a moral purpose in teaching. That is, the welfare of my students, colleagues and the development and growth of the institution should be my focal point. Among all the experiences in this PhD journey, this discovery was the one most heart-warming for me.

That said, there were also challenging moments arising from some of the choices I had to make in the course of my study. For example, deciding which aspects of the data should be included or left out in my analysis was not an easy one considering that this was fundamental to ensuring that the findings not only made sense, but they were trustworthy as well. In making those decisions, I also needed to adhere to ethical considerations in my analysis as I was aware that ‘improper data analysis is an ethical issue because it can result in publishing false or misleading conclusions’ (Wasserman, 2013, p.3). Because of this, the themes that emerged from the analysis were continually reconsidered and critically reanalysed. Doing this was not only time consuming but more importantly it required a lot of critical reflection, energy and efforts. However, considering that valuable experiences in research are achieved not only through data collection in the field but the challenges with the data analysis processes as well (Ball, 1990), I regarded my experiences as an asset rather than a liability in my study (Jackson, Boostrom and Hansen, 1998). Such experiences allowed me to look further and differently into my data and my own ideas.

8.6. Direction for Further Studies

One of the objectives of this study was to make recommendation for further studies. This section explains ways that further research can build on this study. The further studies that appear to be promising in adding to knowledge to teachers’ sense of professional identity continues to be qualitative studies. I cannot see how quantitative studies using surveys or questionnaires as instruments for data collection would arrive at similar clarity and deeper insights about the feelings of teachers in these deprived rural areas. It was through the combination of interviews and my first-hand experiences of the situation of teachers through observation that revealed the detail of issues in this thesis.

This study only explored the perspectives of teachers in the public sector. Including teachers in the private sector for comparison would also be valuable in understanding any differences and similarities between teachers’ sense of professional identity in the private and public sectors and the factors accounting for this.

Research exploring the views of pupils, parents and key officials of the District Education Offices such as the directors and circuit supervisors in these two districts appears to be a

valuable next phase. Interviewing them about how they perceive teachers would be beneficial in complementing and counterbalancing teachers' views found here. Factoring in their views would be useful in examining the claims made by teachers. These views may then be explored further with teachers to get their opinions on them.

Teachers in this study were asked to share their experiences in a specific context, which was a deprived rural one. However, considering that teachers continually construct and reconstruct their identity throughout their career, it is possible that these teachers may be transferred to different districts or change schools in the course of their career. Similarly, educational policies can change, leading to a work atmosphere satisfying to these teachers. It is, therefore, recommended that this current study should be extended longitudinally, in order to explore how these teachers' sense of professional identity evolves over time in their career and the factors accounting for this. Looking back at the data, I have noted that two teachers, Japri and the head teacher of Igbenaa school, in sharing their experiences with me appear to give the indication that over their career there has been a shift in the way they perceived themselves. For instance, the head teacher mentioned that over his twenty years' experience in teaching, he had noted that respect for teachers, for example, was dwindling but could not immediately think of any factors responsible for this. A longitudinal study would be helpful in exploring in detail the factors accounting for such shifts in perceptions.

Having discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the study, reflected on how my identity made teachers feel hopeful and valued, the lessons learnt in doing this study and directions for further research, I conclude this thesis with a final word.

Final Word

This study has given an opportunity to teachers to express their sense of professional identity. However, I acknowledge that my account of teachers' views in these two districts may not completely convey all their feelings, let alone to mention all basic school teachers in Northern Ghana. There may be some distortions as 'no one's efforts to organise another's thoughts can ever be fully free of distortion' (Nias, 1989, p.2). Nevertheless, I hope that these teachers and those in similar contexts can find their voice in my thesis.

That said, I think more work remains to be done, not only to project the voices of teachers in this study beyond what I have done in this thesis but also the voices of other teachers in similar situations in the country. After all, as Jarvis (1992, pp.246-247) reminds researchers;

'Beyond answers to the questions lie more questions and answers, and yet more questions lie beyond and these also demand answers. Learning, then, typifies the human condition and is part of the human quest-one that is bound to remain unsatisfied within the bounds of time'.

This reminder is a good note to bring my thesis to an end.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Introductory Letter from The Graduate School



Monday 3rd October 2016

Head of Graduate School:
Professor Adrian Hopton
Direct Line 01227 782700
Graduate School Administrator
Direct Line 01227 782701
E-mail: graduateschool@canterbury.ac.uk

Student Name: Roger Abogzuah Ayinselya

Student ID: AY115129246

To whom it may concern,

This is to confirm that Mr. Roger Abogzuah Ayinselya is currently a Graduate School Scholarship student at Canterbury Christ Church University, enrolled on the MPhil/PhD in Education from 1st October 2015, for 3 years and 6 months. Roger's end date is 31st March 2019.

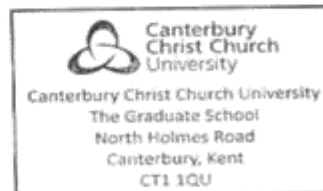
As part of Roger's research, he would like to carry out fieldwork in your institution. We would be grateful for any assistance you can offer Roger with this.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you require any further information.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paige Stewart".

Paige Stewart
Graduate School Administrative Assistant
Graduate School
Canterbury Christ Church University



Appendix B

Introductory Letter to the Director of Bongo District



The Graduate School
Canterbury Christ Church University
Canterbury, Kent
CT1 1QU
06/12/2016

The District Education Director

Bongo District, Ghana

Dear Sir,

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH IN THE BONGO DISTRICT

Following my earlier interaction with you via phone, I attach a letter from my university.

As already discussed with you, I am expected to work on a thesis as part of my degree requirements. As a former teacher in Nungu Junior High School in the Nabdam District, from 2005 to 2007, I have opted to conduct my research with some basic school teachers in your district. The research investigates teachers' perceptions of their professional identity. It is my expectation that the findings of the research would enhance educational policies that would motivate teachers in the district in particular, and the country as a whole.

I would be most grateful if you could grant me the opportunity to involve some basic school teachers in your district in my research.

Thank you.

Roger Abogzuah Ayinselya

Email: r.a.ayinselya269@canterbury.ac.uk

Appendix C

Introductory Letter to the Director of Nabdam District



The Graduate School
Canterbury, United Kingdom
Canterbury Campus
CT1 1QU
6th December 2016

The District Education Director

Nabdam District, Ghana

Dear Sir,

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH IN THE NABDAM DISTRICT

I am Roger Abogzuah Ayinselya, a former basic school teacher in Nungu Junior High School in the Talensi District. I am currently pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD in Education) programme in Canterbury Christ Church University in the United Kingdom. As part of my degree requirements, I am expected to work on a thesis. I have, therefore, opted to conduct my research with some teachers in your district. I have previously involved some basic school teachers in your district in my master's dissertation, which investigated teachers' working conditions in the Nabdam and Jirapa Districts. The findings of the dissertation were shared with some head teachers and the Member of Parliament (MP) of the Nabdam Constituency in February, 2015 during a workshop in the district office.

The current research investigates teachers' perceptions of their professional identity in the Bongo and Nabdam Districts. It is my expectation that the findings of the research would enhance educational policies that would, not only enhance the image of teachers but also motivate teachers in the district in particular, and the country as a whole.

I would be most grateful if you could grant me the opportunity to involve some basic school teachers in your district in my research. Attached is a letter from my university.

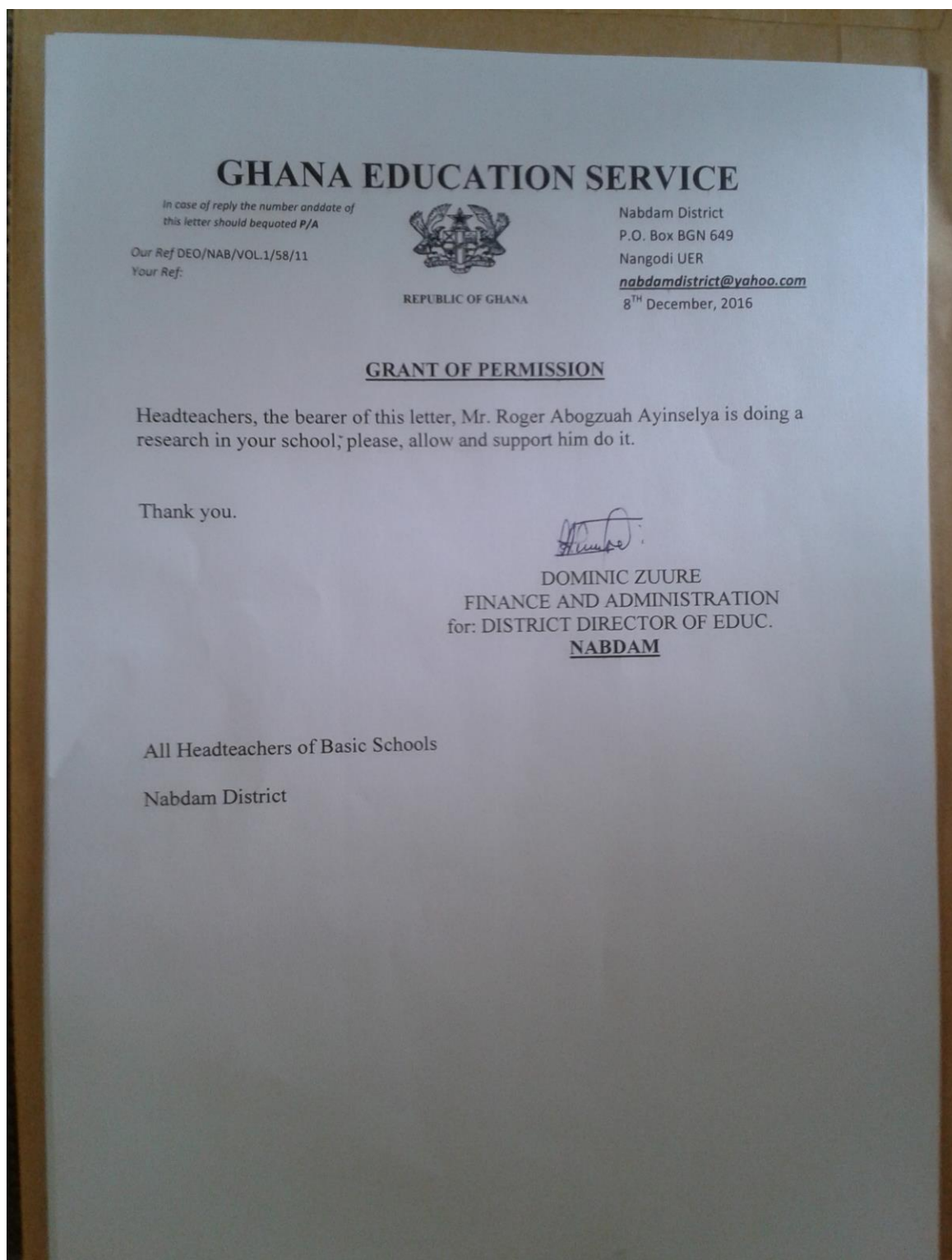
Thank you.

Roger Abogzuah Ayinselya

Email: r.a.ayinselya269@canterbury.ac.uk

Appendix D

Acceptance Letter from Nabdam District




Appendix E

Acceptance Letter from Bongo District

GHANA EDUCATION SERVICE

In case of reply the number and date of this letter should be quoted

BND/ED/UER/150/Vol. 3/12
Our Ref:
Your Ref:



REPUBLIC OF GHANA

District Education Office
P. O. Box 4
Bongo, U.E.R.

Date: 12th December, 2016

Email: gesbongo@yahoo.com

**RE- PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH WITH TEACHERS IN SOME
SELECTED BASIC SCHOOLS IN THE DISTRICT.**

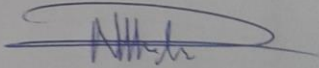
With reference to your letter dated 8th December, 2016 on the above subject matter, permission has been granted

You are by this letter permitted to enter into your proposed Circuits and schools to conduct the research.

Kindly report to the headmaster before entering the schools.

By this letter affected Circuit Supervisors and headteachers are notified to assist to carry out this exercise successfully

Thank you.


DUNCAN NSOH
DISTRICT DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
BONGO

Roger Abogzuah Ayinselya
Canterbury Christ Church
University - Canterbury
UK

Cc: ALL AFFECTED CIRCUIT SUPERVISOR
ALL AFFECTED HEADTEACHERS

Appendix F

Introductory Letter to Head teachers

The Graduate School
North Holmes Campus
CT1 1QU, Canterbury
December, 2016

The Head teacher

.....
.....

Dear Sir,

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL

I am Roger Abogzuah Ayinselya, a former basic school teacher in Nungu Junior High School in the Talensi District. Now, I am a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) student in Canterbury Christ Church University in the United Kingdom. As part of my research degree, I am doing a research project on basic school teachers in the Bongo and Nabdam Districts.

The purpose of my research is to explore the professional identity of basic school teachers in rural areas and the issues that influence their work. I would also like to learn about their achievements, challenges and constraints. To do this, I would like to spend time with some teachers observing and talking to them. Teachers' participation in the research is entirely voluntary and all the information given will be confidential.

It is my hope that findings in the research will help to motivate teachers in their work and contribute to improving the quality of education in the country.

I would like to visit your school from..... to 2017 to interact with one of your teachers and observe his/her daily experiences. I would be most grateful if you could grant me the opportunity to involve your teacher in the research.

Attached is a copy of a letter from the district education directorate granting me permission to conduct my research in the district.

Thank you.

Roger Abogzuah Ayinselya

Mobile: 0540556227

Email: r.a.ayinselya269@canterbury.ac.uk

Appendix G

Introductory Letter to Potential Participants

The Graduate School
North Holmes Campus
CT1 1QU, Canterbury
December 2016

Dear Sir,

I am Roger Abogzuah Ayinselya. I was a former basic school teacher in Nungu Junior High School in the Talensi District. Now, I am a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) student in Canterbury Christ Church University in the United Kingdom, and as part of my research degree I am doing a research project on basic school teachers in the Bongo and Nabdam Districts.

I would be most grateful if you could participate in the research. Attached is the participant information sheet explaining the purpose and nature of the research. I have also attached a consent form. If you agree to participate in the research, sign the form and return to me.

Any information provided will be treated as strictly confidential.

Thank you.

Roger

Mobile: 0540556227

Email: r.a.ayinselya269@canterbury.ac.uk

Appendix H

Participant Information Sheet

The purpose of this research

This research is being conducted as part of my PhD study. I want to identify teachers' perceptions of their professional identity. I am interested in learning about how you view teaching as a profession based on your experiences.

How research will be conducted

The research will take the form of an informal discussion interview. The discussion will be recorded so that I can make a transcript of what we have both said. This is to make sure I can check that I have correctly understood what you have told me. I will ask you to sign a consent form to say that you are happy for the interview to be recorded and for the information that you supply and that we discuss during the interview to be included in this research. I will only use information that has been discussed with you.

Confidentiality and Data protection

Everything that we discuss will remain confidential and I will remove from the research report any identifying information to ensure that you remain anonymous in the final presentation and report. The information that you provide will be stored on the university server and my own laptop, protected by a personal password. This is done to ensure the information is stored safely and securely. It will only be kept until the report has been finalised and assessed.

You need to be aware that the findings from this research may be presented at conferences, workshops, seminars etc. No information linking you to this research will be presented at these events.

Your right to withdraw

You have the right to withdraw from this research at any point during the process and to do this you must let me know as soon as possible.

Time commitment

I expect our interview will last no longer than one hour.

Contact details

Mobile (UK): +44 (0) 7424601227; Mobile (Ghana): 0540556227

Email: r.a.ayinselya269@canterbury.ac.uk

Appendix I

Participant Consent Form

- The participant information sheet has been explained to me and I have had the opportunity to ask questions.
- I would like to take part in the research and consent to my data being used as described in the participant information sheet.
- I agree for this interview to be recorded (please tick the box if appropriate)

Name: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix J

Interview Schedule with Focus Teachers

Pseudonym	First Interview schedule	Second Interview schedule
Kagah	10-01-2017	12-01-2017
Lapeka	16-01-2017	20-01-2017
Japri	24-01-2017	26-01-2017
Etiko	31-01-2017	03-02-2017
Raka	07-02-2017	10-02-2017
Igbenaa	13-02-2017	16-02-2017
Eninga	21-02-2017	24-02-2017

Appendix K

Interview Guide

i. Background Questions:

- Tell me about yourself (i.e. name, age, family and educational background etc.)
- Tell me your initial training experience to become a teacher
- Why have you selected teaching as a profession?
- How long have you been teaching?
- What is your greatest pleasure in teaching?

ii. Experiences in the School and District Questions:

- What kind of school do you teach in? (i.e. school environment and resources, norms, leadership practices, teacher population, class size etc.)?
- Share with me your experience working with other teachers and head teacher in the school?
- Share with me your experiences living and teaching in a rural area/setting in this district
- From your experiences, what are the key issues facing you in rural settings in this district?
- Do these issues face other teachers in your opinion?

iii. Perceptions Questions:

- How do you feel about being;
 1. a basic school teacher?
 2. a teacher in a rural and deprived setting?
- How do your friends, family, community and society think about you as a teacher?
- How do your own feelings about being a basic school teacher in a rural and deprived area influence work?
- How do how others think about you as a teacher influence your work?

iv. Aspirations for enhancing Professional identity Questions:

- What are your plans for professional development?
- What sorts of things do you do (or try to do) as part of your professional development?
- If you could talk to policy makers, authority and parents what would you ask them to do to enhance the identity of teachers?

v. Concluding Questions:

- What else would you like to share about yourself and professional future?
- Do you have any questions that you would like to ask me?

Appendix L

Observation Schedule with Focus Teachers

Pseudonyms	From	To
Kagah	10-01-2017	13-01-2017
Lapeka	16-01-2017	20-01-2017
Japri	23-01-2017	27-01-2017
Etiko	30-01-2017	03-02-2017
Raka	06-02-2017	10-02-2017
Igbenaa	13-02-2017	17-02-2017
Eninga	20-02-2017	24-02-2017

Appendix M

Sample Observation Notes

District: Zolema **School:** Nayi primary

All teachers arrived at school by 8: 00am and majority of pupils were also in school. After the morning assembly, teachers moved straight into their classrooms to start teaching. Classes remained quite quiet though in some classes pupils and teachers could be heard reading aloud passages. And in the lower primary, pupils could be heard crying and teachers shouting in some classrooms.

At break some teachers remained in their classrooms still marking pupils' exercises. Pupils were outside playing football in the school field, 'ampe', running around and banging tables, chairs, windows and doors. Teachers ensured that pupils re-entered and remained in the classroom during teaching and learning hours. The school was a beneficiary of the Ghana School Feeding Programme. Teachers sent their pupils in turns to be served with food at lunch time.

On the second day, five out of the seven teachers had arrived at school by 7: 45am. After the morning assembly, Igbenaa who was the sports teacher of the school took the male football team to the field for training. The team was preparing for the inter-school football competition in the district. The head teacher who was not assigned to any class, stood in for Igbenaa to teach his class for the first three periods before first break while he was on the field. By 8:05 am, all teachers were in school.

Igbenaa took over his class after the training session. I sat with the head teacher in his office which also served as a common room for teachers during their break. At 12:15 pm, the head teacher left for the District Education Office for official assignment. Some teachers still remained in their classrooms during break time. Moving round, I saw that teachers were still marking pupils' exercises. Some teachers gathered in the head teacher's office to interact and have their lunch.

On the third day, I observed one of Igbenaa's lessons in the classroom. The lesson was on reading comprehension. There was only one reading book which Igbenaa claimed was photocopied from his colleague in a different school. He wrote the passage on the blackboard. The blackboard did not have space for the four-paragraph passage. He wrote only three paragraphs. Writing on the blackboard, some pupils could who sat on the bare floor could be seen moving round. Intermittently, Igbenaa turned to caution them to remain seated and quiet. Interestingly, he would point to them 'can't you see that a stranger is in our mist'. It was a two-period lesson (lasting 60 minutes). He spent almost twenty minutes writing the passage. He wrote out some key words in the passage and took pupils through the pronunciation and meaning of those words. This was followed by reading out the entire paragraphs loudly twice to the class before asking pupils to read out loudly. Pupils were asked to volunteer to come to the blackboard to read out the passage to their colleagues using pointers. He also asked some pupils to come to the blackboard to read.

Appendix N

A Summary of Participants' Interviews

Each interview started with normal conversation to build rapport with interviewee. This was followed by a reminder of the purpose and nature of the interview and that participation was voluntary. Because of this he or she could withdraw at any point of the interview. Recording of the interview all begun after seeking permission. At this point, interview was asked to share with me personal information such as age, married status and qualification. They were also asked to talk of how they chose teaching as a profession. In terms age, it ranged from late 20s to late 30s. Apart from one participant, all were married and some of them had children. Participants' qualification also ranged from senior high school certificate to first degree. They also had different reasons for entering teaching. For some, it was through the influence of their former teachers and family, while others loved the profession and wanted to work with children. However, helping pupils in their learning and career progression was the key motivation for them in these deprived rural areas. For instance, Raka, said that 'I just made up my mind that I wanted to become a teacher simply because of their work. I always see it to be good'...I like playing with children...'. For Eninga, 'I was not ready for the teaching profession. It was my parents and sister. They asked me to join 'pupil teaching'. That's why I went into teaching...'

Participants were also asked to share information regarding their school backgrounds-physical environment, resources, class size etc. In all the schools, teachers did not have the full complement of teaching and learning resources. In a number of classrooms, there were not furniture. Some pupils sat on the bare floor while others mounted stones and broken blocks to serve as table and chairs for them. For some subjects, there were syllabuses without textbooks or vice versa. Some teachers looked for their own materials, while some teachers in the sciences skipped practical lessons. For example, Japri who taught in the primary school level, expressed that; '...in terms of teaching and learning materials, textbooks, we also lack the books. There are even some of the classes when you go there, you have about only two or three textbooks or ten textbooks. Some they don't even have. Hmmm! So regular supply of textbooks is an issue'. Etiko expressed similar experiences in his class that, 'sometimes you have a lesson and you want the students to understand so you find out for TLMs to teach them to understand but you can't find'. They felt that they were working hard amid the limited resources but their efforts were not acknowledged and rewarded.

Teachers felt neglected by authority and parents. Accommodation was also challenge for all teachers. Only two teachers stayed in quarters in their schools. The rest rode daily on motor bikes to and from school. With respect to participants' relationship with parents, the community and the officials in the DEOs, it varied. However, overall they expressed dissatisfaction in relating with them. Participants also expressed regarding opportunities for CPD. They felt they were not equitably treated as preference was given to teachers of the Sciences, Mathematics and Languages. They were also dissatisfied with opportunities for participation in operations in their schools and contributing to local and national policies. They felt that they were just implementers of policies, although they had ideas that they wanted to contribute to making policies work better.

Appendix O

Ethics Form



4th July 2016,

Ref 15/EDU/033

Dear Roger

Project title: Exploring Teachers' Professional Capability: A Qualitative Case Study of Basic School Teachers in Two Rural Districts of Northern Ghana

Members of the Faculty of Education Research Ethics committee have reviewed your application and have agreed to grant approval. Your application was thorough and all supporting documentation was in place.

I confirm that you can commence your research. Please notify me (or my replacement as Chair of the committee), of any significant change in the question, design or conduct of the study over its course.

This approval is conditional on you informing me once your research has been completed.

With best wishes for a successful project,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Viv Wilson", with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Dr Viv Wilson

Acting Chair, Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee.

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Appendix P

A Sample Basic School Teaching Time Table

		KANGA PRIMARY SCHOOL								
		TIME TABLE								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
		08:00	08:30	09:00	09:30	09:50	10:20	10:50	11:20	12:00
		08:30	09:00	09:30	09:50	10:20	10:50	11:20	12:00	12:30
MONDAY	1	MATHEMATICS	CRE. ART			ENG. SPEAKING	R. M. E			
	2	ENG. SPEAKING	MATHS			M. E. GH. LANG.				
	3	MATHEMATICS	CRE. ART			LIBRARY	R. M. E			
	4	MATHEMATICS	CRE. ART			LIBRARY	R. M. E			
	5	MATHEMATICS	CRE. ART			LIBRARY	R. M. E			
	6	MATHEMATICS	CRE. ART			LIBRARY	R. M. E			
TUESDAY	1	INT. SCIENCE	MATHS			MATHS	CIT. EDUCATION			
	2	MATHEMATICS	R. M. E			CIT. INT. SCIENCE				
	3	ENG. GRAM.	R. M. E			MATHS	NAT. SCIEN			
	4	MATHEMATICS	ENG. READ.			ENG. REA.	NAT. SCIENCE			
	5	ENG. WRITING	MATHS			MATHS	CRE. ART R. M. E			
	6	MATHEMATICS	ENG. WRIT.			ENG. WRIT.	INT. SCIENCE			
WEDNESDAY	1	ENG. WRITING	MATHS			MATHS	R. M. E GH. LANG.			
	2	MATHEMATICS	ENG. WRIT.			MATHS	INT. SCIENCE			
	3	ENG. WRITING	MATHS			MATHS	INT. SCIENCE			
	4	MATHEMATICS	ENG. WRIT.			MATHS	INT. SCIENCE			
	5	ENG. WRITING	MATHS			MATHS	INT. SCIENCE			
	6	MATHEMATICS	ENG. WRIT.			MATHS	INT. SCIENCE			
THURSDAY	1	MATHEMATICS				ENG. READING	CIT. EDUC.			
	2	ENG. WRITING				MATHEMATICS	I. C. T			
	3	NAT. SCIENCE				MATHEMATICS	GH. LANG.			
	4	MATHEMATICS				GH. LANGUAGE	R. M. E			
	5	ENG. READING				P. E. P. E.	I. C. T			
	6	R. M. E. ELASH				ENG. READING	CIT. EDUC.			
FRIDAY	1	P. E. P. E.	NAT. SCI			NAT. SCI	ENG. SPEAKING			
	2	NAT. SCIENCE	MATHS			MATHS	ENG. GRAM. GH. LANG.			
	3	I. C. T	ENG. GRAM.			P. E. P. E.	NAT. SCI.			
	4	R. M. E	ENG. READING			INT. SCIENCE	CIT. EDUC.			
	5	MATHEMATICS	GH. LAN.			GH. LANG.	LIBRARY READING			
	6	ENG. GRAMMAR	MATHS			MATHS	GH. LANGUAGE			

Appendix Q

Presentations and Publications by the author

Ayinselya, R.A. (2018) *Teachers' Perceptions of their Professional Identity in Relation to their Experiences in two Deprived Rural Districts of Northern Ghana*. A paper presented at Athens Institute for Education and Research (ATINER) 20th Annual International Conference on Education, 21 May. Titatia Hotel, Athens, Greece. Abstract available at: <https://www.atiner.gr/education>. The main paper was accepted on 6th October, 2018 for publication in ATINER's Paper Series.

Ayinselya, R.A. (2017) *Exploring public basic school teachers' perceptions of their professional identity in two deprived rural districts of Northern Ghana*. A paper presented the Postgraduate Research Association (PGRA) Open Knowledge Exchange Seminar, Canterbury Christ Church University, North Holmes Campus, 26 October.

Ayinselya, R.A. (2017) *Exploring teachers' perceptions of their identity: A qualitative case study of public basic school teachers in deprived rural areas of Northern Ghana*. A paper presented at Identity and Pedagogy theme group mini conference, Canterbury Christ Church University North Holmes Campus, 23 June.

Ayinselya, R.A. (2017) *Exploring public basic school teachers' perceptions of their professional identity in two deprived rural districts of Northern Ghana*. A paper presented at the Postgraduate Research Association Conference, Canterbury Christ Church University North Holmes Campus, Canterbury, 25 May 2017.

Ayinselya, R.A. (2016) Global Goals and Basic Education in Developing Countries: The Unceasing Debate about Impact. *Postgraduatesincise*. Available at: <https://postgraduatesincise.wordpress.com/>

Ayinselya, R.A. (2014) *The Impact of Language Policy on Teaching and Learning: A Reference to Basic Schools in Ghana*. A paper presented to the Education, Inequality and Social Justice Students' Group, The Graduate School of Education, University of Bristol, UK.

Ayinselya, R.A. (2014) *Girl-Child Education in Northern Ghana: An Analysis Using Fraser's Framework of Social Justice*. A paper presented to the Educational Leadership, Policy and Development Group, The Graduate School of Education, University of Bristol, UK, 20 March 2014.

Ayinselya, R.A. (2014) *The Achievements and Challenges of the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education Policy in Ghana-A Critical Discourse Analysis*. A paper presented to the Educational Leadership, Policy and Development Group, The Graduate School of Education, University of Bristol, 17 March 2014.

Ayinselya, R.A., Nyein, A.A. and Cassidy, L. (2013) *Issues affecting the experiences of current international, postgraduate students studying in The Graduate School of Education at the University of Bristol in adjusting to life in the UK*. A paper presented at The Graduate School of Education Research workshop for postgraduate students, 12 December 2013.

Ayinselya, R. A. and Nyein, A. A. (2013) *The Impact of International Agendas on Primary Education in Ghana and Myanmar*. A paper presented to the Educational Leadership, Policy and Development Group, The Graduate School of Education, University of Bristol, 5 December 2013.