

## Cristopher Ameyaw Akumfi

Minister of Education



*Professor Cristopher Ameyaw Akumfi was born at Techiman (Ghana) in 21 of January 1945. He attended the University of Ghana from 1965-1970 and obtained both his BSc Hons and MSc degrees in zoology. Between 1972 and 1976, he attended the University of Michigan, USA, where he obtained his Ph D degree in the field of Animal Behavior. He started his teaching career in 1970 at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana, as an Assistant Lecturer and attained Professorship in Zoology in 1991. He served as head of Zoology Department, Dean of the Faculty of Science and Pro-Vice Chancellor of the University. In 1998, he was appointed the Director General of the Ghana Education Service. In 2001, when a new Government was elected into office, he was appointed the Minister of Education.*

### **Improving teachers' competence and their working conditions through reform of the contents, curricula, methods, structures and means of teaching**

**INTRODUCTION** Basic education in Ghana is undergoing reform. The reform program is expected to make this level of education free and compulsory by the year 2005. Furthermore, and more importantly, it is expected to ensure quality education for school-age children in basic schools. Measures have been put in place to improve the performance of teachers.

**PRE-SERVICE TRAINING** Teacher education in Ghana has been programmed to be "demand-driven". In the first place, teacher education should be demand-driven in terms of the quality of teachers required for teaching at the basic level, that is, at the primary and junior secondary school levels. Competent teachers should be produced through effective training program. This will start by recruiting qualified persons for training. Those who qualify for entry/first year trainees take a promotion examination based on foundation studies.

Another improvement practice we have introduced into initial teacher preparation is to emphasize performance rather than mere theoretical knowledge. The new program will allow teacher trainees to spend the first two years on the college campus. The first year is devoted to foundation studies to strengthen the background knowledge of the students. The second year the emphasized methodology. In the third year, the trainees will be attached to schools and teach under the supervision and guidance of school mentors and link tutors from the teacher training colleges.

**IN-SERVICE TRAINING OR CONTINUING TEACHER DEVELOPMENT** we have accepted the fact that teacher education should be regarded as a life-long process for improvement and/or maintenance of the competence of the teacher. Thus, after the pre-service training, the teacher should be given the opportunity to go through cycles of in-service training. Currently, there is provision for in-service training, but this is ad hoc. There are plans to structure and institutionalize in-service training for teachers. The programs will be designed and documented so those teachers will know in advance what training programs are available. Then, the programs should be institutionalized at various levels - school level, district level, national level and institutional level.

**MOTIVATION OF TEACHERS** Teachers needs to be motivated to perform effectively. Apart from increase in salary we think that we should sensitize our citizens to give healthy recognition to teachers. Provision of accommodation and praise for a job well done could contribute to this. **The Best Teacher Award Scheme at the national level contributes to the recognition and motivation of teachers who excel in their work. Other incentive packages, including accelerated promotion for excellence in teacher performance, are being worked out for implementation.**