CHILDHOODS IN GHANA: UNDERSTANDING THE WORK OF NGOs AS CULTURAL BROKERS AND TRANSLATORS IN CHILDHOOD CONSTRUCTION

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CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it reproduces no material previously published or written, nor material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

_____ (Signed)

Sampson Addo Yeboah (Name of student)

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family, and the participating NGO and cocoa farmers I worked with. My interactions and involvement in your lives have inspired my interest to understand planned interventions and development projects better!

Abstract

Child protection is an important issue in Ghana. The country was the first in the world to ratify the United Nations Conventions of the Right of the Child (UNCRC). There is also a whole government ministry dedicated to child protection. As such, a vast amount of energy and funding are devoted to generating the right policy, models, and interventions, which are in line with international standards or global text such as the UNCRC to protect children. However, little attention is given to the relationship between these models and policy, and the actual practices the implementations are expected to legitimise. Using an actor-oriented approach, this study follows the network of a child-focus NGO during the implementation of an intervention to prevent child labour and encourage schooling in a rural cocoa growing area of Ghana. The study uses ethnographic method to get into the lifeworld of NGO field officers tasked to implement the intervention and reveals that practices on the field are uniquely different from the intervention prescriptions. NGO officials, however, spend the best part of their energies on maintaining coherent presentation of their efforts as a consequence of prescribed policies and models and to achieve measurable success, to meet expectations of higher administrators, safeguard their jobs and to ensure funding. The study concludes that in doing so, NGO officials as victims of the wider development narrative, block the opportunity to learn from the real challenges that make childhood intervention successful beyond measurable and visible achievements.

Keywords: Cultural Brokers; UNCRC; Development Aid; Ghana; Child-focus NGOs

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Acronyms

CPC	Child Protection Committee
GES	Ghana Education Service
ILO	International Labour Organisation
JHS	Junior High School
LEAP	Livelihood Empowerment Against Power
NCCE	National Commission for Civic Education
PTA	Parents Teacher Association
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SWD	Social Welfare Department
TCPC	Teacher Child Protection Committee
UNCR	United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child
UNICEF	United Nations International Children Fund
WHO	World Health Organisation

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.0 Emergence of NGOs as cultural brokers

In the study of childhood development, there is very little ethnography on the practices of child-focus NGOs. This thesis seeks to contribute to filling this gap through an examination of the responses and observation of the lived experience of the variously located and affected social actors involved in childhood development interventions. It will focus on the activities of a child-focus NGO, during the implementation of a childhood development intervention based on the United Nations Conventions of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The intervention aims to prevent child labour on cocoa plantations in a rural area of Ghana. Child-focus NGOs in Ghana can be categorised as childhood cultural brokers or intermediaries due to their translation activities. They work with international documents such as the UNCRC to effect change in childhood construction and practices in local arenas. The emergence of child-focused local NGOs, although recent, is effectively affecting the construction of childhood in Ghana and elsewhere in Africa.

Local NGOs or development brokers and translators are social actors implanted in a local arena in whose politics they (brokers) are directly or indirectly involved (Bierschenk, Chauveau, De Sardan, & Kossi, 2002, p. 4). They serve as intermediaries who drain off external development aid and introduce external policies (in the direction of the social space corresponding to this arena). With the acquisition of funds, development brokers such as child-focused NGOs aim to translate a form of childhood construction which is defined by international documents, (i.e. individualism and child rights-based), into communities such as African traditional communities (including rural areas) where, in most cases, a collective (sharing) way of existence is predominantly practised by local people (Nsamenang, 1992, 2008).

Child-focused development brokers or NGOs are often seen as getting childhood policies right. They use international and national guidelines of best practices and their activities are often realised as a consequence of these international models in an attempt to, in the expression of Montgomery (2009, p. 1) 'Globalised childhood'. These groups of people who play a crucial role in development arenas until recently have largely not been studied. This could be due to the concentration of development researchers and funders on generating good policies and on being seen as engaged in useful humanitarian activities.

Brokers or intermediaries are often analysed with two perspectives. They could be imagined as the link integrating and bringing together diverse social economic and political actors to achieve an objective which cannot be realised by the diverse individuals working on their own (Neubert, 1996, p. 2). On the hand, they could be seen as untrustworthy people in the middle who bring about the unnecessary, costly distance between individuals and the desired transaction they wish to complete (Lewis, 2014). The first outlook provides a window through which one may consider child-focused NGOs as useful brokers in the context of improving the situation of children by directing international funding to children's wellbeing.

However, studies that examine child-focus NGO activities and practices as a consequence of international policies and models in local arenas are scant. This study in gaining access to and exploring actors' strategies and interpretations will show how the activities of child-focused NGOs interlock through processes of accommodation and negotiation. The study will provide valuable reflective insights into the operations and effectiveness of child-focused NGOs, by detailing what Lewis and Mosse (2006, p. 1) express as "the complex set of local, national and cross-cultural social interactions" in childhood translation and brokerage.

The activities of brokers are common to all societies, although their importance or the nature of their activities vary depending on settings. In traditional African societies,

unofficial brokering is present in traditional marriages where family heads meet to broker a marriage deal between potential couples. Brokering is also present in religions where worshipers seek answers from ancestors through a local priest.

Historically, the functions of the broker or translator in Africa became more institutionalised during colonial rule (Blundo, 2006; Mamdani, 1996). To have a working relationship, both colonial authority and the local populace, depended on groups of brokers who often exercised enormous power and control. Mamdani (1996, p. 23) notes the authority of these brokers when he states this about a local chief serving as an intermediary between colonial powers and local indigenes "thus fused in a single person are all moments of power: judicial, legislative and executive' orders". This situation caused brokerage in the colonial times to become a situation of "decentralised despotism" (ibid, p. 37), i.e. brokers did not have problems in influencing the orientation of African colonial policies and practices in line with their interest or understandings.

Starting from the 1960s when African countries began to gain independence from colonisers, the importance of brokers have become even more entrenched (Bierschenk et al., 2002; Blundo, de-Sardan, Arifari, & Alou, 2013). This is due to the newly formed African nations need for development aid (money) to run. These aids were given by former colonial powers or through loans that were gained through bilateral and multilateral agreements (Okolo, 1983, p. 245). Until today, the mobilisation of development aid and the ability to control its distribution remains an important task to African politicians[1]. This, in effect, renders them as brokers or translators, between international funders and the local people of Africa.

[1] In Ghana, it is not uncommon for politicians to campaign for a second term, by touting the amount of development aid, grants and loans they have been able to mobilise during their first term

Bräutigam and Knack (2004), however, explains that over the years, development aid to African countries has decreased. They claim among many other reasons the deteriorating relationship between African governments and some development agencies as the cause. Bierschenk et al. (2002) further explain that conditions for the disbursement of public aid are increasingly stringent and African governments are no longer the only entities receiving donor funding in African countries. They note

> Consequently, one aspect of the crisis of the African state is the fact that they are no longer in the position to drain off or control a significant portion of North-South aid flows because donors no longer trust them. A significant proportion of development aid therefore transit via intermediary national networks, separate and apart from the classic administrative and political apparatus and via circuit of decentralised aid (decentralised development co-operation, town partnerships/twinning, one-off charity operations…), in which **NGOs** from the North and the South assume increasing importance (ibid, p. 7 emphasis mine)

The failures and disappointments in development managed by government agencies, has caused international donors to switch to a new slogan popularly referred to as institutional building. In this instance, development buzzwords such as participation and empowerment are common in development rhetoric (See A Cornwall & Brock, 2005). The idea is to promote development through societal self-organisation as a part of the bottom-up approach. Development brokers such as child-focused NGOs were seen as crucial to this trajectory, thus needed to be supported at a cost to government agencies.

In addition, reforms imposed on and the democratisation of African governments have changed ways in which development aid is distributed. The reforms have generated spaces for action for a great many intermediary organisation such as local NGOs, community groups, and local opinion leaders who often involve themselves in brokerage or the activities of intermediaries. In this way, childhood development brokers assume growing importance at international, national, and local levels. Their actions, in most cases, determine the

distribution of development aid on childhood and the qualification of a proper childhood within nations.

In Ghana, the activities of NGOs became prominent after the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) of the early 1980s (Laird, 2008). During this period, many African governments, including Ghana, were directed by international organisations, namely the IMF and World Bank, etc., to cut subsidies on various aspects of their economy, including the agricultural and the health sector. This lead to widespread difficulties and famine; Ghana, for example, experienced widespread famine from 1982 to 1986 (Agyeman-Duah, 1987; Boafo-Arthur, 1999). Loans were taken from the World Bank and IMF to ameliorate the situation, particularly to protect women and children. Among other conditions attached to the loan, international NGOs became the necessary conduit for service delivery on child protection. In 1960 the first ten, registered NGOs emerged in Ghana; by 1990 this number had increased to 350(Laird, 2008).

At the end of the 1982-86 famine, international NGOs in Ghana had successfully changed their focus (Bosu, Ahelegbe, Edum-Fotwe, Bainson, & Turkson, 1997). They started to operate as cultural brokers and translators and were active in influencing tastes in the area of education, health, and social protection. For example, the Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI) and the Malnutrition Rehabilitation Centres (MRC) were key child survival and development intervention run by international NGOs. These programmes developed further to become part of community health and wellbeing infrastructure with an emphasis on human rights including rights for children

A few research have responded to the prevalence of NGOs as cultural brokers and translators on childhoods in Ghana and elsewhere in Africa (e.g. Benefo & Schultz, 1996; Legesse, 1980). Most of them, however, focus on the importance of international documents on childhood and less on the activities of these child-focus NGOs. For example, Legesse

(1980) writing on human rights and society, maintained that if Africans were the sole authors of the Declaration of Human Rights, the rights of the community might be foremost to that of the rights of the individual. This argument, together with other factors, is said to have laid the foundation for the promotion of individual rights for children in Ghana and other non-Western countries (Agbényiga, 2011, p. 27). Later the emphasis on individual rights of the child became prominent when Ghana adopted the UNCRC. The articles within the UNCRC became essential for defining the image of childhood promoted in Ghana by government agencies and child-focused NGOs. These childhood (singular) constructions, however, are fundamentally different from the local construction of childhoods (plural) in many parts of Ghana and elsewhere in Africa. However, before I discuss further the different culturally constructed childhoods in Ghana, the following paragraphs will first analyse some of the specific ways African childhoods are represented by development brokers particularly local child-focused NGOs.

1.1.1 A cultural and post-structural critique of child-focus NGOs

Children in Ghana and elsewhere in Africa[2], are seen as vulnerable and innocent (Abebe & Ofosu-Kusi, 2016; Burman, 1994a; Wells, 2015). This image of vulnerability and innocence often reverberates with popular Western media and indeed multitudes of scholarship (Burman, 1994a). In this instance of representation, the Ghanaian (African) child is presented as exposed to, and a victim of hardship. This portrayal challenges the abilities of their parents and the society in which they live to care for them. International organisations further buttress this image by publishing bold statistics, which focuses on child exploitation, high infant mortality, child trafficking, child labour and physical abuse.

[2] The term African children are used interchangeably with Ghanaian children because, existing literature on children on the African continent have generally lumped children from diverse cultures and backgrounds together, and referred to them as African children, paying less attention to their diversity.

The negative picture, which is portrayed about Africa also affects its children and works into the organisational structure of the international organisation (Burman, 1994a). Manzo (2008) and Ruddick (2003) explains that Western media particularly focuses on problems such as civil and tribal wars, corruption and dependence on external aid, HIV/AIDS epidemic and lone Ghanaian (African) children in need of help. Researchers and NGOs working as intermediaries with Ghanaian (African) children worsen the issue by focusing on children in crisis. They routinely focus on a uniform childhood defined by existential challenges. This flattens children varied experiences and makes the African child a mere site for intervention. In this regard, some researchers have accused international and local NGO, of mainly portraying this need for intervention of the African child to serve their end (See Burman, 1994a; Wells, 2015).

Burman (1994a) argues that NGOs have been particularly dominant in representing and constructing the lower and middle-income world, especially children from Africa for a Western gaze. Such organisations depend on public donation on promoting particular beliefs about the developing world and pictures of stand-alone children help them convey certain messages. Images of children failing to survive help justify a child saving mission (Burman, 1994a, 2008). While this negative picture of the Ghanaian (African) children are portrayed, rarely is attention given to children living normal lives, or what local parents and children make of the whole globalisation of childhood construction (Twum-Danso, 2016).

The reason for this portrayal could be because Africa is seen as a backward continent (Jarosz, 1992). The continent is presented as lacking infrastructure, strong institutions, and a robust economy to propel futuristic development. Thus, a portrayal of children as thriving will seem out of place in the picture that the West holds of Africa and will probably deprive international NGOs who depend on such portrayals to fund their activities.

Abebe and Ofosu-Kusi (2016), further points to another portrayal they refer to us the exotic image of the African (Ghanaian) child. In this instance, the Ghanaian (African) child is portrayed as growing in a world where s/he is immune to technology, politics, and general changes to society. Thus, the African perspectives on childhood and other issues are silenced and presented with external solutions as the way to go. This silencing of the African perspective in most cases is perpetuated by Western-inclined local child-focused NGOs and professionals who serve as cultural brokers and intermediaries for international NGOs and other organisations (See Nsamenang, 2002; Yeboah, 2014). The exotic and humanitarian crisis image portrayed of the Ghanaian (African) child influences the need to streamline these childhoods to meet international standards using legislature, and assurance of the individualistic rights of the African child. Thus far, the discussion on child-focus NGOs practices above has importantly criticised the focus of the child-focus NGOs, which seem to be geared towards serving their own end. A post-structural focus on child-focused NGO as societal institutions, however, offers a different angle of critique.

The post-structural critique of societal institutions started in the early 1980s. With this approach, the focus of the gaze shifts from objects to institutions. In the case of this study, a shift from a gaze on the child to the activities and politics of child-focused NGOs. The works of Jacques Derrida and most importantly, Michel Foucault influence this approach of changing the object of the gaze.

In the book selected interviews of Michel Foucault (Kritzman, 2015, p. 82), Social scientists are encouraged to turn their gaze on how individuals and societies are constructed by social context. Foucault argues that modern institutions (for example, child focus NGOs) have come into being by developing and adapting myriads of techniques of governance (management), none of which are integral to them as an institution. Thus, to decentre power, and understand social construction, Foucault encourages the study of institutions through the

examination of the numerous techniques of discipline and technologies of the self; which is operating throughout society to fix how people construct themselves, their conduct, and their relations to others. Such enquiry aims to trace the operations of power as it creates subjects, discourses, and institution through time. Foucault encourages study beyond states but also to include the various institutions, including the politics and institutions of schooling and childcare to understand how behaviours end up been constructed the way they do.

Pence and Nsamenang (2008, p. 11) point to the institution of schooling, as a potent tool for constructing and controlling society. Schools maintain remarkable uniformity despite a great diversity of context; they do not only provide information but also define what constitutes knowledge, who is qualified to provide it, where it is provided and to what ends it is to be used. Guidance by those defined as higher on the education/schooling ladder can take the form of colonisation of other cultures and societies and close supervision in regards to children's and in some cases adult development (Pence & Nsamenang, 2008). Child-focus NGOs by placing themselves in the position to educate on and construct childhood in local arenas wield enormous power over childhood and whole societies, which ought to be studied. However, studying institutions such as child-focus NGOs can be a daunting task due to the "closed" circumstances under which these institutions are run and the challenge of finding an appropriate methodology to study them.

1.1.2 Studies on development agencies (NGOs)

Over the past few years, researchers in development have dealt with methodological challenges to the study of development institutions in different ways. Lewis and Mosse (2006) explain that the general post-structuralist caution is to be wary of methods that present themselves as intractable in explaining social changes and the associations within them. That notwithstanding, three main methods or approaches, are often deployed in the work of NGOs as cultural brokers. According to de Sardan (2005). Anthropologists have categorised these

approaches to development as instrumental, ideological and populist, and lastly deconstructive approaches

An instrumental approach to development is a view on policy as rational problem solving, which shapes how development is done. Lewis and Mosse (2006) claim that the source of this toolkit solution approach may be traced to Anthropologist who due to their positions as consultants, applied researchers or bureaucrats with large development organisation such as World Bank, IMF, OECD etc., may be compelled to adopt the means-end approach. Anthropologists, in this instance, may end up prescribing measurable simplistic ideas to resolve complicated local challenges to development.

Escoba (1995a) writing on the instrumental approach, explains that the statistical nature of the instrumental approach makes it very appealing to NGOs and government agencies in developing countries. For example, child-focused NGOs in Ghana usually apply the instrumental means-end approach to the construction of social childhoods. They usually have a package or product on childhoods targeted at children; with the assurance that if such packages are implemented the situation of children will improve.

Another approach used by Anthropologist in studying development is the ideological and populist approach (Blaikie, 2000; Mohan & Stokke, 2000). In this instance, an emphasis on participatory methods focuses on bottom-up instead of top-down approaches to development. An important example of the bottom-up approach is the work of Chambers (2000) in his book 'Whose Reality Counts: putting the first last', he advocates for participatory forms of learning and development while rejecting extractive ones. This method though, has been criticised as populist. For example Hobart (2002, p. 12) notes the following, "the rejection of planning from above in favour of a bottom-up approach does not however necessarily change matters, because the terms and the kinds of action expected usually remain to to be defined by superiors". A. Cornwall (2008, p. 270) further claims that in recent

times development organisation such as the World Bank uses participatory terms in their programs to gain moral authority over already taken decisions. 'de Sardan (2005, p. 117) has referred to Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) a bottom-up approach, as 'ideological populism'. Development researchers such as de Sardan rather advocate methodical populism, which is the taking of a local point of view to understand the rationale of actions.

Lastly, the anthropological approach to development as critical and deconstructive (de Sardan, 2005). This approach analyses development as a discourse that is in the form of a system of knowledge technologies, power relations and practices that can order and limit description; Foucault's work on governmentality influences it[3]. In this instance, the Western developed countries are seen as those setting agenda for development and hold a historically specific discourse of power of the West over the developing world. Little attention is paid to local knowledge; rather the aim is to suppress such (Escoba, 1995a; Hobart, 2002)[4]. Foucauldian deconstructive approach has also been criticised (For example see Ferguson, 1994)[5], that it essentially downgrades agency and views development as against the will of actors and not a political strategy. Thus, while deconstruction effectively deals with the instrumental approach, critics claim it only replaces it with the machine, anonymity, and automaticity

[3] See Lemke (2010) writings on Foucault's Bio-politics lecture.
[4] In the introduction to the edited book the growth of ignorance, Hobart (2002, p. 2) Juxtaposes deconstructionism with populism and exposes the populist nature of deconstruction approach to development. He explains that the relationship of the developer (expert, cultural broker) and those to be developed are not self-evident but part of a long history of changing Western representation of other societies. In this instance, the developer or cultural broker depict a state of affairs requiring action or intervention of some kind usually by the cultural broker. Non-western societies are depicted as savages or uncultured and in need of law and order, and it is the West alone that can provide the progress based on rational government and economic activity.
[5] Ferguson (1994) demonstrate how projects led by big international organisation in Lesotho a developing country failed abysmally because the planned development projects deny their embeddedness in the politics, structure and struggles of the local people. However, these projects succeeded in expanding bureaucratic state power in peoples' everyday lives, which is often labelled as unintended consequences.

In this dissertation, the aim is to move beyond bottom-up, an instrumental means-end or a critical deconstructive approach to development research. This research aims to reaffirm the value of noninstrumental nonnormative research perspectives. The research will pay equal attention to the social process of policy, and the informal relations which offer an opportunity to analyse the interaction of ideas and relationships in development arenas by closely following actors. Long (1990) encourages this approach and attempts to map out the task for actor-oriented development research. He claims that the research process is not to merely establish a general taken-for-granted human rationality but to identify and to characterise rationale or irrationalities, the conditions under which they arise their viability or effectiveness for solving specific social problems and their outcomes.

Actor-oriented approaches demand a focus not only on discursive consciousness (ability to express knowledge) and intended consequences of human actions but also on practical consciousness and unintended consequences. It calls for an engagement with participants in the construction of meaningful and nonmeaningful realities, and how this impact in the totality of the lived culture (Long, 1990). However, getting into the lifeworld of participants demands an attitude of expecting the unexpected during the actual practice of implementing the child-focus NGO.

1.1.2 Reasons for studying child-focus NGOs

There are two reasons for this study's focus on child-focused NGOs. First, the relevance of the study lays in the fact that Ghana almost three decades ago became the first country in the world to ratify the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). As a result, many child-focused NGOs and government agencies in Ghana implement programmes based on the UNCRC. However, the situation of children when it comes to child

protection is a far cry from what the UNCRC envisions for children and the success stories common in government and NGO reports.

A second reason for studying child-focus NGOs is my experience as a volunteer with a child-focus agency in Ghana. Before my PhD study, I worked as a Principal Education Officer, with the Ghana Education Service (GES). This was in a rural village where agriculture was the major occupation of the locals. As a teacher, I was often disappointed to see a good number of my students not coming to school or absenting themselves to work on farms or engage in other economic activities. I realise that the situation of absenteeism was also due to rural parents asking their children to help them on farms or asking them to engage in some errands in the morning, which caused them to be late to school. I often thought that if parents were educated and sensitised enough about children's right to education and the illegality of child labour, they would stop taking their children from classrooms to help on farms. These thoughts cause me to volunteer with the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) within the community.

The National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) is a government agency with a duty to educate the citizenry on their rights and responsibilities. In rural communities, they focus mostly on child protection to stop the worst forms of child labour, get children into schools, and ensure the welfare of children. As a volunteer, I spent most of my vacations in the offices of the NCCE to participate in the interventions they rollout to prevent child labour in the community. I developed an interest in the activities of institutions that are supposed to implement child protection policies during this experience.

I was part of a team tasked to implement an intervention on children's participation in decision making with a focus on the best interest of the child in mind. The child development manual giving to us by NCCE asked us to empower children on their rights and educate parents on the protection of children. We were supposed to do this through

engagement with rural parents and local authority. For days, we sat in the offices and did not go out to meet with the parents or children in the communities. However, when we did, the ideas in the manual to get parents to understand the illegality of child labour were not followed as planned. Instead, we met with an opinion leader had discussions with him and went around the community to post posters on child protection. I was informed that we did not meet with all the parents because the opinion leader we met was serving as the spokesperson for all the other parents and so by meeting the local opinion leader, we could be assured the message will be disseminated to local parents.

I was truly disappointed in this practice of working through a supposed spokesperson of the local parents. This is because one of the major goals of the programme was to encourage grassroots participation; however, what I witnessed was a rural elite participating. In addition, reports on the intervention did not portray the practice of working through a spokesperson, but it detailed a prudent and coherent community entry practices. Reflecting on the experience, I concluded that one of the major issues that probably caused staff of government agencies to behave differently on the field from the goals agreed on was due to inadequate budget. I imagined child-focused NGOs with direct international funding would be different.

The government in Ghana does not fund Child-focus NGOs. They are set up in most cases due to an intense passion that an individual or organisation have for children. In the development south, local child-focused NGOs are often funded by international organisations and are in most cases required to follow international standards on childhood, to get policy right, and to link research with policy. Thus, there was much reason to conclude that their activities on child protection will undoubtedly be as a consequence of policies and interventional goals.

The first step in prospecting for potential child-focus NGO to participate in the data collection, however, revealed something different. It indicated to me that child-focus NGOs might not be so forthcoming on their practices. This made me even more determined to study the practices of child-focused NGOs because it was extremely crucial to understand how they legitimise their activities and make themselves relevant in determining what constitutes good and proper childhood and what does not. My first contact with a child-focus NGO carved out the challenge ahead in researching the activities of child-focus NGOs.

Sam: Good morning, sir, how are you doing?

NGO Staff: Hi Sam I am doing well, thanks for finding out. It has been a long time since you visited us, and we are glad to see you again (He calls a staff member to say that I [Sam] am around). The last time you were here, you did very excellent work with the rural parents on our programme. After reading your report, we have come to realise it is important to incorporate some of the local knowledge of child protection in our programmes to create a familiarity bridge with the rural parents because indeed their child protection perspectives are different.

Sam: Thank you Sir, I am happy and honoured to know that my research has served a useful purpose.

NGO Staff: So, are you done with your studies now?

Sam: No, sir, it is one of the main reasons why I am here to ask for your permission to conduct another study.

NGO Staff: Oh, ok! So, what do you intend to study this time around?

Sam: I intend to focus on the work of NGO staff themselves. I will study their efforts as childhood brokers and translators in childhood construction because most of the policies they work with are base on global text such as the UNCRC. If you grant

permission, I will attempt to analyse the whole network of necessary activities during the implementation of childhood policies, particularly policies that border on child labour and basic formal education. I will start from your (NGO) offices and continue to the field when your field staff goes to work with the parents.

NGO Staff: Ok! This study is very different from your last one, so I will have to discuss with other senior members of this organisation and give you a reply after a week.

(A week later)

NGO Staff: Hello Sam, so we had a good discussion about your research proposal, and we concluded that the best way we can help you conduct your research is for you to prepare all the questions you want answers to, and we will complete them and return it to you…

At this point, I was fully convinced that the actual field activities of child-focused NGOs were important and should be researched through observations. However, it was also obvious that researching people in organised institutions about their work, is not the same as researching ordinary people in a community on their lifestyle, which turns to be the core of ethnographic research. The NGO in the vignette above was one that I was almost certain that I would have access to conduct my study. I had conducted my master research study with them, and I knew the staff reasonably well. After this unanticipated roadblock, I came to realise that beyond theoretical knowledge, NGO staff are duty-bound to protect sensitive practices or actual knowledge peculiar to their activities.

Theoretical knowledge differs from practical knowledge goes a local Ghanaian saying. This phrase is used when differentiating between knowledge for understanding and knowledge for action. While the saying is not derogatory, it is also not a compliment within the Ghanaian settings and is often applied to people who are adept in theoretical knowledge

but are unable to apply it in reality. Long and Long (1992) have pointed out that the purpose of this distinction in the different types of knowledge is to draw attention to the problems of reconciling fundamental research and theory with practical demands of policy-making and intervention. Faced with these problems, NGOs and some researchers in childhood construction and development often take the easier path of fundamental research thus avoiding the real struggle of seriously dealing with issues of practical concern.

In this study, I use an actor-oriented approach, which goes beyond fundamental research, but rather aims at integrating structure and actor perspectives and actions. The reason for using an actor-oriented approach is to analyse the everyday life experiences and understanding of social actors in childhood construction. It involves a careful study of the practical knowledge that individuals create to make them relevant between different social interests. Thus, the study centres on the researched, not the researcher. To grip the "insider knowledge", there was a need to be sensitive about the lifeworld of the participants in order to be allowed into their lifeworld, and them into mine. This yielded ethnographic research that was truly reflexive at every turn of the study.

1.2 Outline of the thesis

In the way of a thematic overview, the foregone introduction above covers chapter one of this study. Chapter two starts with a brief discussion on the origin of the global construction of childhood, followed by the main research objective. This objective was reached through an extensive literature review in chapter two focuses on the childhood issues identified but not properly solved in literature due to the overwhelming focus on the area of African childhood in crisis. The chapter also discusses the theoretical framework of Actor-Network Theory (ANT) and its relevance to the research study.

Chapter three details the reasons for adopting ethnography as a method for this study. Ethnography emphasises participating in the lifeworld of research participants to understand the unique actions of research participants that impact practice; thus, the reason for choosing it. This is then followed by a discussion on the historical and theoretical underpinnings that culminated in ethnography. I also discuss the important principle of reflexivity and its influence on my choice of ethnography. There is also a discussion on the ethnographic tools of participant observation, informal conversation, interviews, and focus group discussion used in collecting data.

In chapter four, I detail the setting up of the research in Ghana. This involved getting access to potential institutions and manoeuvring my way to get the permissions needed to conduct the research. This is then followed up by a discussion of secondary data based on documents that guide the activities of child-focus NGOs. I then turn my attention to the details of the intervention been implemented by the participating NGO to prevent child labour while encouraging basic formal schooling for children; and the participants that finally contribute data to the research.

Three groups of participants contributed data to this research. The first is the NGO officers, who are mainly young adults between the ages of 28 and 35 years and are often sent to the field to implement interventions; a few of them have studied to the university level and were very enthusiastic about their jobs as field officers. I detail how I had to be extremely sensitive about how they felt of my presence in their offices, and how I finally gain access and built rapport with them. The second group of participants were farmers who participated in the interventions. My association with farmers at workshops led me to develop close relationships with some of them and led to informal conversations and focus group discussion on their perspectives on children's work and formal education and the intervention in general. Professionals who work directly with children were also involved in interviews and informal

conversation. These included teachers, a police officer, and an officer working with the social welfare department. After that, I detail NGO field officers practical strategies in dealing with the various social actors in the field. The strategies include NGO organisational structure and expectations on NGOs, which requires that they produce intervention reports that are in line with expected goals even if it means they must ignore practical realities on the field.

Chapter five, I detail parents thought about formal education and children's work. Most of the parents believe the narrative that formal education for their children will lead to a bright future. However, their agency shows that the form of education that they want is a practical form of education that can lead to immediate jobs, but not education with a long gestation period. Chapter five ends by showing that perspectives on who a successful child is fundamentally different from the aims of the intervention been implemented

In chapter six, I discuss findings on parents' perspectives on child protection. I focus on parents' perspectives on Early Childhood Development (ECD) and discuss important values that parents hope to inculcate in their children. These values, however, seem to be the exact opposite of what the child-focus intervention hope to achieve. I then show that by NGOs ignoring the local knowledge on child protection, they missed opportunities to learn on how to make child protection meaningful to rural parents beyond a show of visible success. In the concluding chapter seven, I looked at the implications of an actor-oriented approach and the implications of the findings, including a final note on a direction for future research.

1.2.1 Chapter summary

This chapter sets out to outline the direction of this dissertation. The chapter has shown through literature that very little exists in the form of ethnographic studies on the activities of child-focus NGOs. This may be due to the proliferation of means-to-an-end approach, which is common in NGO and government reports. The chapter has explained that the focus

on child-focused NGOs is because although Ghana was the first country to ratify the United Nations of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) the situation of children is a far cry from what is envisioned by the UNCRC. While many reasons have been giving for this, not much has been focused on the actual work of child-focus NGOs.

This study makes a shift to the actual practices of child-focus NGOs, which is claimed to be a consequence of childhood policies and interventions. It also traces the history of NGOs as cultural brokers and their emergence in Ghana. A cultural critique of the works of child-focus NGOs has also revealed that the focus on the humanitarian crisis portrayal of children in the global South goes to serve the end of child-focus NGOs more than the children they hope to help. A post-structural critique, on the other hand, encourages social scientist to shift their gaze on child-focus NGOs to understand how they construct childhood and determine which childhood construction is proper. In doing so, child-focused NGOs through reports and various forms of research, disqualify numerous forms of childhood in favour of a particular kind.

Chapter Two: Literature review and theoretical framework

2. Introduction

This chapter reviews literature on the themes and aims of child-focus NGOs activities. The initial idea for this thesis was to research on Ghana government's efforts at childhood construction. However, after an exhaustive literature review, the direction of the study shifted to how child-focused NGOs are working as cultural brokers, engaged in framing, dissemination, and qualification of meanings on childhood construction, and what qualifies as proper childhoods. This was a gap that when researched, promised to contribute new knowledge to the construction of the globalised child.

As an overview, this chapter is in two parts. The first part looks at literature in the field of childhood development; it then narrows down to the situation in Ghana. The second part looks at the theory that influences the methodology used for this study. In what follows, I consider the current and relevant literature on childhood construction, which forms the major themes for child-focused NGOs as cultural brokers and translators.

In the literature reviewed on Ghanaian and African childhoods, child-focus NGOs usually draw attention to childhood in crisis. Mostly the portrayal depicts a patriarchy society that limits freedom and agency of children. In addition, there is the portrayal of illness, famine and a lack of appreciation for formal education, especially in rural areas. The literature on African childhoods thus paints a single picture of children in dire need of protection, thus making child-focused NGOs indispensable in their aims and activities to protect children.

The lack of research on the activity of child-focused NGOs, and how they negotiate their aims in practice was a clear gap identified in the literature. In the following paragraphs,

I present a discussion on the detail literature review. First, I present scholarly work on issues about the globalisation of childhoods. This is followed by a brief history of legal structures and provisions on Ghanaian childhoods. Then the concepts and challenges of social childhoods and finally, challenges of constructing Ghanaian childhoods after the normative global child.

2.1 The normative global child: its origin and reach

Childhood, at its simplest, is the early phase of the life course of people. Different periods though have had different conceptions[6] about childhood. In modern times, there is a certain assumption among many that the nature and needs of childhoods are defined and known. This assumption is largely due to what Montgomery (2009) referred to as 'globalisation of childhoods. The supposition of the globalised child, however, is recent and came into being in Western Europe between the 17th to the 19th century (Heywood, 2001). Childhood is constructed at this instance, most importantly, as a distinct phase of life separate from adulthood[7]; children are conceptualised as in need of protection from evil due to their innocence. Also, there is a need for an enabling environment for children to play, to receive a formal education, and to be free from work. These constructs assembled constitutes the nature and embodiment of childhood in Western Europe.

[6] Heywood (2001, pp. 27-40) Details a history of childhoods from the middle ages when children were seen as sinners out to dominate those around it or a Romantic innocent as yet uncorrupted by society to modern times where children have individual rights. He explains how capitalism in recent times has constructed childhoods to be a time of play and formal education in order to keep labour (parents) focused on working to provide for children whilst at the same time preparing children for the job market.

[7] Aries 1962 (Cited in Heywood, 2001)claims the nature of Western childhoods has not always been separated from adulthood. He argues that during the middle ages European children were treated as small adults as soon as they left the stage of physiological dependence. Children were, immersed in all aspects of social and working life and were not accorded any special rights and responsibilities. While some have taken issues with Aries, the central thesis of his argument stands. Social scientist and Historians generally agree that the current nature of childhood as a time of play, education and free of work among other things, are invention of Western modernity including capitalism

The spread of the Western construction of childhood generally started with the activities of Christian missionaries and through colonisation by European nations. For example, Apt and Blavo (1997) explains that the Children Care and Reformation Ordinance 1928, was the first child protection legislature in Ghana. It was mainly the British colonial master response to child protection and welfare in Ghana; and was wholly an import of what was present in the United Kingdom and did not take into consideration the collective nature of the locals.

Boyden (2015) explains that in recent times, Western construction of childhoods is carried and intensified throughout the world by international policies and organisations. Foremost among these organisations is the United Nations International Children Education Fund (UNICEF) with its main instrument The United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The document is the single most successful convention of UNICEF due to its ratification by all nations in the world, except the United States. The UNCRC positions Western European construction of childhood to have a global reach more than any other form of childhood construction. Boyden (2015, p. 193) notes

> As the twentieth century has progressed, then, highly selective stereotyped perceptions of childhood-of the innocent child victim on the one hand and the young deviant on the other, have been exported from the industrial world to the South. They have provided a focal point for the development of both human rights legislation at the international level and social policy at the national level in a wide range of countries.

The UNCRC has 54 legally binding articles that primarily construct childhood after the Western child. It places a strong emphasis on the child's innocence, vulnerability and the promotion of individual child rights in the area of nationality, education, health and the family, and further sees children work as illegal (UNCRC, 1989 Art 32). Ansell 2005 explains that the UNCRC additionally enjoys support from other international organisation

such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO) World Health Organisation (WHO) and the World Bank.

These organisations run a similar discourse of childhoods in their programmes bordering on child individual rights and welfare. The support of Western Europe construction of childhood further affects the programs and interventions of these international organisations, especially when dealing with developing countries. Burman (1999, p. 178) discussing morality in the social development of childhoods, argues that Western European construction of childhoods is now merged into aid and development policies as if all societies wholly accept it as the best form of childhoods. Nonetheless, this image of childhood is exported within global discourse through these organisations.

Pupavac (2001) argues that the permeation of Western construction of childhood through the UNCRC has effects on childhoods in Africa and elsewhere in the world. She posits that the protectionist concept in Western European childhood construction and carried in global documents criminalises, or at best makes it problematic for children elsewhere to show any childhood traits that are deemed as inappropriate for Western children such as taking up some level of work, etc. (Boyden, 2015; Pupavac, 2007). The pervasiveness of Western European childhood has further been internalised by some people and groups in non-Western settings and has led these groups to see as problematic childhoods in their context without questioning agendas behind the globalising of childhoods after the Western child.

Burman (1994b, p. 31) goes further to claim that the Western construction of childhoods is not normative but political. The relationship set up through the promotion of Western construction of childhood on developing countries ‘echoes that of colonial paternalism and corresponding infantilization of the peoples of those countries.’ Other agendas may hide behind the promotion of Western childhoods in the developing South. For

example Beinart (Cited in Burman, 1994b) points to, 1)The positioning of the child as the future consumer of European and Western goods, 2) The role of health services, medicine and health education as acceptable ways of entrenching colonial control; and 3) The demand for labour with a corresponding focus on the reproduction of the labour force.

Governments of developing countries inevitably may have to sign international documents as part of loan conditions (Kayizzi-Mugerwa, 1998). These conditions may be geared towards the adoption of Western Europe construction of childhood. The lack of resources may cause them to partner with an international organisation such as the IMF, World Bank, USAID, etc. These organisations, as explained earlier, support Western Europe construction of childhoods as carried in the UNCRC. Ghana was the first country to sign the UNCRC and domesticated it into a local law known as Children's Law 1998 Act 560. Reasons for the haste by Ghana to embrace the UNCRC, among other things could be due to a need to access funding from an international organisation. Since signing the UNCRC, promotion and adoption of a Western European construction of childhood is encouraged throughout Ghana. Parents, both urban and rural, are encouraged by local NGOs and Government agencies to pursue child-centred and rights-based childhoods similar to Western European cultural orientation of childhoods.

Research on the global cultural economy, however, shows that there is no clear domination when two cultures merge but the creation of a new culture (Appadurai, 1990, p. 305). Berger (2002) goes further to identify four possible combinations that can result from such cultural interface: synthesis, coexistence, the replacement of local cultures by global culture and rejection. Writing on the UNCRC in Africa, S Burman (2003, p. 38) identifies a fifth outcome that can result from the interface of different cultural construction on childhood. She notes that 'in countries where the values of all or part of the society are base on group rights not those of the individual, the UNCRC if overly optimistic… becomes a

recipe for social and legal *conflict*'. However, as stated earlier, the UNCRC is ratified by all countries in the world except South Sudan and the United States. Most of the countries that ratified it in 1990 were developing countries in Africa. There are many probable reasons why developing countries were the first to ratify the UNCRC the following paragraphs will look at the case of Ghana.

2.1.1 Possible reasons for Ghana's adoption of the UNCRC

The UN General Assembly adopted the Conventions of the Rights of the Child on 20th November 1989. The Government of Ghana was the first country in the world to ratify the UNCRC in 1990. The 19 countries that followed Ghana were predominantly developing countries in Africa. Government documents do not clearly state the specific reason why Ghana was quick in pending its signature to the UNCRC. However, Mbise (2017), outlines the possible reason for the adoption of the UNCRC by Ghana and other African countries by looking at how policy diffusion occurs. Theorists (for example Dobbin, Simmons, & Garrett, 2007; Gilardi, 2010; Walby, 2009) have pointed to several mechanisms for policy diffusion; these include coercion, emulation, learning and competition.

Coercion occurs when powerful actors such as government and international organisations influence the policy choices of less powerful nations (Dobbin et al., 2007). It is a common mechanism when it comes to international relations. Mbise (2017) Explains that powerful countries explicitly or implicitly influence the probability that weaker nations will adopt the policy that they favour by manipulating the opportunities and constraints encountered by the target countries either directly or through the international and non-governmental organisations they influence. It involves strong countries exploiting powerful asymmetries to impose their policy preference on weaker countries.

A well-known coercive strategy used by dominant countries is to link financial aid to the adoption of a policy that is supported by powerful countries (Gilardi, 2012). Conditions may are imposed by organisations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and world banks on weaker countries lending. Clark (2009) explains that, as most developing countries are the recipient of donor funding various forms of coercion mechanisms become important in explaining why Ghana and other developing countries than developed countries ratified the UNCRC quickly. Clark (2009) further notes that while the USA has not ratified the UNCRC, it is known that it uses its economic hegemony to impose the international treaties on other countries.

Mbise (2017) explains that Ghana and other African countries, in particular, are not strangers to coercion; which is impressed on them by the intermediaries of developed countries. Most of these weaker countries do not have the capacity or political will to resist these conditions, which increasingly delves into the cultural and social spheres of other countries. For example, human rights and the movement associated with them often originates from the developed Western countries; these countries then go ahead to impose the human rights ideologies on countries that depend on them for aid. The UNCRC may probably have enjoyed such advantages from developed countries, thus its quick ratification by developing countries in Africa.

The UNCRC was passed in the early 1990s. This was at the time the World Bank and other development agencies had a strong hold on African countries due to the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) it had impressed on them (Konadu-Agyemang, 2000). The UNCRC may have also been impressed on Ghana and other African countries as part of these internationalisation movements. Coercive mechanisms can take many other forms. In some instances, it is subtle in the form of the psychological reproduction of notions of Western "superiority" and African "inferiority"; such that what emanates from the Global North can

be seen as authorised truth (see Hobart, 2002) and quickly emulated by developing countries such as Ghana and other African countries.

Emulation is another mechanism used for policy diffusion (Gilardi, 2012). The mechanism is also known as mimicry and is the process of copying foreign models in terms of symbolic or normative factors rather than a technical or rational concern about functional efficiency. Countries that mimicry international standards, often do this to be perceived by others and themselves as being advanced or progressive. This mimicry seems to hold for Ghana and other African countries. For instance, extensive violation of children rights are often reported in most of the African countries' that have ratified the UNCRC by the media and other channels. United Nations International Children Education Fund (UNICEF) reports on such countries are replete with themes of child trafficking, child soldiers, prostitution, and lack of resources to children in general.

In Ghana and other African countries that have ratified the UNCRC, social welfare and child protection receive inadequate budget funding (Laird, 2012). Strang and Chang (1993), notes that developing countries sign treaties even though they do not have the resource capacity to carry them through. Ghana and other African countries were shifting to democracy and all its tenets in the 1990s. Carbone (2012), claims that most of the policies that were signed by African countries around this time were adopted to gain international respectability.

Ghana, as the first country to ratify the UNCRC, may also have caused a bandwagon effect for other African countries to follow suit. The international community often portrays Ghana as the standard of measure for political stability and institutional building on the African continent. It was the first country to declare independence from the British colonisers on the African continent and had a reputation of a stable and working democracy. This reputation of steady development together with coercion from stronger developed countries

and financial institutions may have caused Ghana to be in haste to ratify the UNCRC and to bring its local law the Children's Law 1998 Act 560 into close resemblance.

2.1.2 Diffusion of UNCRC into Ghana's local law on children

Ghana regularised its childhood local laws and other child-oriented policies in accordance with the UNCRC in 1998. Notable among these legal provisions is the Children's Law 1998, Act 560 (Hereafter Act 560), which positions the child as a right bearer and denounces children's work(G.O.G, 1998). The law is seen as a vehicle for enhancing the situation of poor and marginalised children in Ghana. However, more than two decades after its enactment children's lives remain in complete contrast to what was envisioned. Although there had been a forecast that the Act 560 would represent a positive transformation in the lives of children in Ghana, the reality on the ground seems to point to an unreceptive environment for child protection and implementation of children rights as envisioned by the law (Laird, 2002; Yeboah, 2014).

Legal efforts to reform Ghana's childhood laws to comply with international documents began in 1995. The UNCRC and other international documents that Ghana had ratified were used as the standard of measure. Manful and Manful (2013) explains that a restructure of the child care legislation resulted in the Criminal Code (Amendment) 1998 Act 554; the Children's Act 1998 Act 560 and the Juvenile Justice Act 2003 (Act 653). The children's Act 1998 Act 560 operates on four general principles 1) Non-discrimination, 2) The right to life, survival and development 3) Civil and political rights, freedom and parental responsibilities 4) Family environment and alternative care.

Act 560 ensures the welfare of the child in situations of health, education, and culture. For example, it states amongst other things that no child shall be deprived of access to education, medical attention and any other thing necessary for her/his development it also

prohibits dehumanising cultures which children may be subjected. Finally, it states that in all cases, the best interest of the child shall be paramount in any matter concerning the child. (G.O.G, 1998; Yeboah, 2014)

2.1.3 Constructing Ghanaian childhood as envisioned by UNCRC

The emergence of 'Globalisation of childhoods' has seen children been granted increased protection (See Montgomery, 2009). Childhood is increasingly constructed after the concept of the Western child. In Ghana childhood construction, as envisioned by the children's law 1998, Act 560 is influenced heavily by the UNCRC and faces many challenges; foremost of these factors is poverty (Yeboah, 2014). Research has noted that cultural differences and the unequal socioeconomic realities that face developing countries Ghana included render any efforts at childhood construction and protection geared after the Western child negative (Lachman et al., 2002; Yeboah, 2014). Ghana and many countries in Africa do not have the resources to construct childhoods as envisioned by international documents. Poverty, however, in most cases, does not lead to automatic abuse or lack of protection of children although; it can limit the capacity of societies caring for a child.

Research on Ghanaian childhoods explains that efforts at childhood development should aim at providing an enabling environment for children to thrive; not a negative critique of traditional ways of constructing and rearing children (Yeboah, 2014). In her paper a rethink of the implementation of Ghana's children Act 560, Laird (2002) similarly explains that ultimately, the structural deficit that works against childhood construction as envisioned by the law is what needs to be addressed. Manful and McCrystal (2011), further adds that challenges such as lack of child protection personnel, and financial resources for agencies charged with child protection; and corruption among officials such as police, militates against effective childhood construction as envisioned by the law.

Another challenge to constructing Ghanaian childhood as envisioned by the UNCRC is the ideological difference between local understanding of childhood construction and the UNCRC (Yeboah, 2014). Twum-Danso (2012) claims Ghanaian are more inclined to inculcate respect, responsibility, and collective living in their children; as against responsibility-free childhoods replete with individual rights carried in international documents such as the UNCRC. Pupavac (2001) further explains that the adoption of international documents on children, which are inherently different from what parents envision for their children may bring about tensions and issues that, cannot be ignored. For example, parents in Ghana and elsewhere in Africa may see the implementation of childhood construction as envisioned by UNCRC based local laws undermining their authority to control their children (Pupavac, 2006). Snipstad, Lie, and Winje (2010) suggest that the targeting of children by childhood-oriented agencies end up sidelining parents and caregivers, thereby creating a knowledge gap.

Amidst the challenges of implementing the UNCRC, the Ghanaian government has put in some genuine efforts to improve the situation of children. Ensuring the interest of the child has led the Ghanaian government to establish welfare policies specifically for children, to reduce poverty and enrol them in school. The following paragraphs identify some thematic issues addressed by the government to improve the situation of children.

Poverty alleviation and basic education: The government of Ghana embarks on several social and economic interventions to reduce poverty. For example, in 2007 and 2008, The Livelihood Empowerment against Poverty (LEAP) programme was introduced. The poor and families with large numbers of children, especially rural dwellers, began to receive cash support monthly. Basic education in Ghana has also seen improvement and incentives for it to be more attractive to children. Currently, the basic formal education framework of Ghana is base on a 2007 Government white paper. Education extends to 11 years; it starts with two

years of kindergarten followed by six years' primary, then three years junior-high-school, and finishes off with four-year senior high school. Goals of formal primary education in Ghana is to inculcate literacy, numeracy, and skills in problem-solving (Masko & Bosiwah, 2016). Formal basic schooling begins at age four and ends at 15. Most schools are government-operated, although there are few private schools.

Basic education: The government of Ghana provides resources to facilitate education. These include infrastructure, personnel, teaching, and learning materials. The government of Ghana has also developed policies and laws to encourage parents—especially poor rural parents—to enrol children and keep them in school. In the 2005-2006 academic year, the government absorbed school fees for all pupils enrolled in basic public schools, resulting in free basic education (Akyeampong, 2009). In addition, the school feeding programme introduced in 2006, aimed at improving the nutritional status of school pupils. It was first started on a pilot basis and now extended to all basic schools. The programme, in addition to NGO sensitisation on children's basic right to education, brought about increment in basic school enrolment throughout the length and breadth of Ghana.

In Ghana, NGOs advocate for childhood base on Western construction. They usually operate on the themes of children's rights, participation, and a policy based on the best interest of the child principle. These principles are based on individual rights, which are different from the communal culture of traditional Ghanaian societies, especially rural communities. However, local childhood construction pathways when they are not according to legal structures are seen as below standard or illegal. For example, most Ghanaian parents believe it is alright to spank a child to correct them (Twum-Danso, 2012). However, the 1992 Constitution of Ghana article 28(subsection 3) states that 'a child shall not be subjected to physical punishment or other cruel inhuman or degrading treatment.' Thus, in legislative terms, some provisions largely protect children from physical punishment. Child-focused

NGOs work with these internationally-influenced-local-laws and other international construction on childhood with the hope of achieving uniformity in Ghana a country with different cultural groupings

2.2. Childhood in literature and the focus of NGOs

Generally, child-focused NGOs work within the parameters of social childhoods, which is identified as a contemporary area of study established in sociology. (James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998; Wells, 2015) Although there is an ongoing debate about some of its concepts and paradigms (See Hammersley, 2016). The Western construction of the child, although in the minority serves as the yardstick used by child-focused NGOs for determining the quality of childhoods in other parts of the world.

The parameters and paradigmatic direction of social childhoods are elusive and controversial. A growing number of scholarships define childhood as a social construct (James et al., 1998; James & Prout, 1997; Nsamenang, 2008; Panelli, Punch, & Robson, 2007). They explain that the experience of one's childhood is dependent on the social construction and intergenerational relations within society and that expectation on children cannot be hinged on chronological age or natural physical development. Children learn what is expected of them through a long association with their society (Holloway & Valentine, 2004; James & Jenks, 1996; Nsamenang, 2002). Hammersley (2016) however, sees an irony with this assumption of childhood, in that given the importance of cultural variations in childhood and the downplaying of cultural universals the only stable category that is given to children he claims is biological including chronology.

Childhoods are also affected by time and space(James et al., 1998, p. 27). What goes into being a child or the embodiment of childhood is significantly influenced by historical happenings(Heywood, 2001; Qvortrup, 1994). Childhoods do not exist in a finite and

identifiable form; the space and time factor of childhoods means that global childhood studies should be approached from a hermeneutic perspective, i.e. subjectivity and not singularity should characterise studies in childhoods and childhood culture(Nsamenang, 1992). Hence in childhood studies, there should be a goal or an endeavour to understand childhoods around the world (Tisdall & Punch, 2012).

The second concept of social childhood is that children lives can be studied in its right (James et al., 1998; James & Prout, 1997). Children's right in this instance is promoted to adult rights; particularly by child focus NGOs and agencies. The differences between children and adults are played down by denying deficit views; children are encouraged to decide for themselves (e.g. UNCRC). However, Hammersley (2016), points out an obvious challenge with this concept. He explains that on other occasions, the difference between children and adults are emphasised. For example, in situations where unscrupulous adults groom children for sex; children, as old as 17 years can be said to be different from adults and their decisions maligned by adult influence.

Currently, two major perspectives on social childhoods dominate research, and the focus of child-focused NGOs; these are Majority and Minority childhoods(Wells, 2015). Economically poor children of the world, who predominantly live in Asia, Latin America, and Africa make most of the world's children population and are termed Majority World Children. They are usually portrayed as children who have lost their childhood because they need to work and contribute to the family well-being and survival (Burman, 1994a; Panelli et al., 2007; Wells, 2015). Majority world childhoods culture is judged by Western countries as inappropriate and lacks behind or is deficient when examined within the globalised model of childhoods, which is based on Western ideals of what is 'proper and right' childhoods (Boyden, 2015; Burman, 1994a; Wells, 2015).

Minority World Childhoods are the Western construction of childhood. A lesser number of children in the world, who predominantly live in developed countries, experiences this. Minority world childhoods are characterised by a time of play, responsibility-free and an extensive list of individual rights(Boyden, 2015). Western Europe childhoods predominate minority childhood perspectives. The minority childhood, although small in number, are powerful in their impact on development policy and practice in the world.

Burman (1994a) points out that, the traces of the need to protect and reconstruct Majority world children from work and focus them on play and education, is a result of the influence of Minority world childhoods. Others have also claimed that so pervasive is the focus on the importance of the Minority world child's perspectives on the rest of the world that, some local NGOs and researchers from the Majority worlds such as Africa, criticises the perspective of childhoods from their settings (Nsamenang, 2002). Rural majority world childhoods are seen as problematic and are usually the focus of Child-focused NGOs, in the case of developing countries such as Ghana.

Majority world childhoods

Majority World Childhoods is the nature of childhood culture, experienced by children situated in rural settings of developing countries (Ansell, 2005; Panelli et al., 2007). It is characterised by themes of a humanitarian crisis with international NGOs doing their 'best' to 'save' the situation(Burman, 1994a; Richey & Ponte, 2011). In the following paragraphs, I will discuss some themes that serve as the focus of NGOs working as cultural brokers and translators when it comes to childhood in Majority World Childhoods.

Childhood construction and protection efforts by international NGOs: Social interventions, overseen by international organisations, is a major feature of Majority rural childhoods (Manji & O'Coill, 2002; Wells, 2015). The perspectives that Minority world

childhood are the 'proper' childhoods have caused many international NGOs, racing to 'save' children in developing countries. These children are in most cases introduced to individualistic concepts of childhoods, which in most cases may be inherently different from the collective living of their localities. Thelen and Haukanes (2010) have explained that in such instances, typical ways of doing things may be disrupted, creating stressful situations, particularly when parents are left behind in such interventions. Super and Harkness (2008, p. 108) further explain that such education and interventions may cause children to start reporting as child abuse, situations they had deemed as part of their way of life previously.

Basic education attendance: Enrolling at basic primary education is shown as registering success among rural Majority world childhoods (Easterly, 2009). This is partly because governments of Majority Worlds Childhoods (Developing countries) are seen as heeding to a call by international organisations about the importance of basic primary education (Easterly, 2009). These governments are often committed to meeting certain targets expected of them by international organisations. Children in majority world are reported as enrolling because they and their parents believe that formal education will allow children to be associated with the wider world, modernity, social mobility and an escape from poverty (Besley & Burgess, 2003).

Sickness and under-five child mortality: Although overwhelming advances have been made in medicine and healthcare, globally, children living in the majority poor parts of the world are shown as suffering from one epidemic after the other. In Ghana and elsewhere in Africa, focus on research has mainly been on HIV/AIDS, malaria and the ills that come with malnutrition (Ansah-Koi, 2006; Burman, 1994a; Manzo, 2008). Also, inadequate healthcare facilities and services, especially in rural communities of the majority world, are constantly researched and reported (e.g.Dünser, Baelani, & Ganbold, 2006). Where orthodox medicine and vaccines are available, Parents and children, especially those in Africa, are portrayed as

too illiterate to appreciate the usefulness or full benefit of such provision. Thus, under-five child mortality is on the ascendancy, even where solutions are 'available'(Morgan, 2010).

Socio-economic challenges: This is the mainstay of literature researching social childhoods of Majority world childhoods (Ansell, 2005; Wells, 2015). The severe socio-economic challenges reported in this literature are presented as the bane to the wellbeing of rural Majority world childhoods. In the end, formal education in rural communities of the majority world seems to fail because of its poor quality; education seems to be a pursuit of unrealistic dreams by children and their families (Serpell, 1993). Practical work by children in the majority worlds which assures them of skills to survive in their communities is often tagged as child labour, and in most cases marked as illegal by governments (Yeboah, 2014). This is because children's work in the majority world is seen as a hindrance to the pursuit of formal primary education which is encouraged by governments in Ghana, for example, the government uses the legal instrument to ensure the uniform right for children in a country with many different cultural groups. The following paragraphs describe Ghana as a country and the nature of legal and cultural practices on children

2.3 Profile of Ghana

The Republic of Ghana is located in West Africa. Cote d'Ivoire borders it on the West, Togo on the East and Burkina Faso on the North and Northwest. The Gulf of Guinea lies to the South of Ghana and covers a coastal line of 560km. The total land area of Ghana is 238,537 square kilometres. Ghana is considered a lowland country. Although there is a range of highlands on the eastern border Mt. Afadjato 884 meters above sea level is the highest elevation in Ghana and is in the Akuapem-Togo ranges west of the Volta River. Ecologically, Ghana is divided into three distinct geographical zones. The Northern Savanah, which is drained by the Black and White Volta Rivers; The middle and western parts of the country

are characterised by a heavy canopy of the semi-deciduous forest with many streams and rivers; and finally the low, sandy coastal plains. The Volta Lake, created by a hydroelectric dam in the east of Ghana, is one of the largest human-made lakes in the world.

History and demography

Amongst the African countries colonised by the British, Ghana was the first to gain independence on 6 March 1957. Subsequently, on the 1st of July 1960, Ghana became a republic in the British Commonwealth of Nations. Greater Accra serves as the administrative and political capital of Ghana. Governance of Ghana is in the form of multi-party democracy with a president who is up for election for a term of four years with a maximum of two terms. Ghana elects its parliamentarians every four years and has a relatively independent judiciary and a vibrant and free media, which is about 90 per cent privately owned.

Ghana's population is estimated at 27 million as of 2014. The populace is spread over 16 administrative regions: Upper East and Upper West, Northern, Brong Ahafo, Ashanti, Eastern, Western, Central, Volta and Greater Accra regions etc. The trio of Greater Accra, Ashanti and Eastern regions is home to 50 per cent of Ghana's population. The smallest region Upper East covers approximately 2 per cent of the population of Ghana. For efficient administration, local governance and equitable distribution of resources; regions are subdivided into 216 districts. Amongst the several ethnic groups that make up the Ghanaian population, the Akan's, are by far the largest. They constitute 48 per cent of the population, followed by the Mole-Dagbani 17 per cent Ewe (14 per cent), Ga-Dangme (7 per cent), and other small ethnic groups (GSS 2013b).

Economy

The agricultural sector employs 45 per cent of the economically active. Other sectors, such as the service sectors employ 41 per cent; these also include the informal sector, which

employs a substantial proportion of the Ghanaian population the majority being self-employed (GSS 2015). Gold, Cocoa, and Timber are the main export commodities of Ghana. However, in its bid to diversify, the government in recent times has added the so-called non-traditional products; namely pineapples, bananas, yams and cashew nuts to exports. Another significant contributor to economic growth is the tourism industry. It is currently the third-largest foreign exchange earner and the fastest growing sectors of the Ghanaian economy.

Over the past two decades, the structure of the Ghanaian economy has seen some changes. For example, the service and industry sectors are now the largest contributor to the Ghanaian economy, a position previously held by the agricultural sector. As of 2014, a combination of the service sector, the industry sector, and the agricultural sector contributed 101 per cent to the gross domestic product, with the service industry alone accounting for 52 per cent. In that same year, the service sector, which is mostly headquartered in Accra, the capital of Ghana recorded its highest growth.

Figure 1 Map of Ghana showing 16 regions

Accra is the economic, administrative, and political capital of Ghana; currently, it has about 4 million people as inhabitants. Broadly speaking Accra can be divided into two sectors the central business districts and the residential districts. The main banks and department stores

of Accra is found in the central business districts. Economic activities within Accra include manufacturing of processed foods, textiles, clothing, and chemicals and processing of wood products. The residential areas, on the other hand, can be divided into two categories, there are the densely populated slums, and unplanned areas, which are popularly known as the Zongos in the local language example of such areas, are Nima, Ashaiman etc. These communities serve as home to lots of migrants from other parts of Ghana who come to Accra to look for jobs.

There are other residential areas in Accra, which, although planed, are not considered as high-end communities. These include Adenta, Ashaleybotwey etc. The residential areas in Accra considered plush and high-end include East Legon, Roman Ridge, North Ridge, Dzorwulu and Cantonments. These are both residential and business areas and serve as homes to several foreign embassies and missions and privileged internationally funded NGOs who operate in Ghana.

Child-focused NGOs active in Ghana

The following are the most prominent international Non-Governmental Organizations, Civil Society Organizations and Community Based Organizations, operating in Ghana. Most of these organisations work with the UNCRC and seeks to construct childhoods in the local areas they operate after the Western child.

Plan Ghana

Plan International Ghana is the country office of Plan International. It is one of the very active child-based NGO in the research area. Plan International Ghana operates on three main pillars in Ghana. It aims to promote the education of children as the key to long-term empowerment of young people. Plan Ghana seeks to reach children in rural areas and to get

more children to enrol in primary education. They work with and sponsor government agencies to make sure children are in school.

Plan Ghana aims to improve childhood in all situations. They do this through child participation and addressing gender stereotypes and capacity building initiatives. In protecting children, Plan Ghana does not seem to include parents in their activities. The NGO further aims and claims to increase the incomes of poor and vulnerable families, to empower them to ensure an improved future for their children.

Child Rights International

CRI aims to improve the lives of children in communities, especially those in rural ones who may experience child labour. The NGO raises funds to support projects and activities at the community level, directed at the protection of vulnerable children. They also roll out intervention on education, employable skills, income-generating activities and the elimination of child labour and human trafficking. Peer education; is one CRI main project. In this project, children are educated and encouraged to create awareness among their peers on the prevention of child labour and their rights. Other children-based NGOs in Ghana include Youth as a Mission for Development, Youth and Women Foundation, Action Aid, BASICS International, Etc. They all operate to protect children by ensuring their rights as envisioned by the UNCRC and legal instruments within Ghana

2.3.1 History of child rights in Ghana

Historically, Hill 1962, (Cited in Frimpong-Manso, 2014) claims the first group in Ghana to give formal assistance to children outside the extended family system was the European Christian Missionaries. The Christian faith encouraged missionary activity in caring for the abandoned orphan and disabled children. Schools were established by the Presbyterian and European missionaries, which also cared for such children (Ametepee & Anastasiou, 2015). These activity by the missionary were helpful because, in some ethnic groups in Ghana,

traditions dictated that certain category of children were forbidden to be raised by traditional families (Nukunya, 2003)

The Children Care and Reformation Ordinance 1928 was the first childhood construction legislature in Ghana (Apt & Blavo, 1997; Ardayfio-Schandorf, 2006). It was mainly the British colonial master response to childhood construction and welfare. The document was wholly an import of what was available in the United Kingdom and did not take into consideration the extended family traditions of the local people. Research on the effect of the ordinance on the indigenous people pointed to a negative turn (Apt & Blavo, 1997). For example, the family focus and collective decision making in caring for children were widely ignored by the investigative and court-ordered intrusion of outsiders (childcare professionals). Thus, although the approach mostly failed to include the extended family, it was the first to construct the child in legal terms; it further bestowed individual rights on the child, which was foreign to the collective traditions of the locals.

Currently, Ghana is presented in principle, as a reference point in proper childhood among sub-Saharan African countries. Twum-Danso (2009) reports that amongst African nations, Ghana was the first to ratify the UNCRC and subsequently adapted it into a law known as Children's Law 1998, Act 560. Manful and Manful (2010) explain that economic and administrative reforms have been introduced to better the situation of children. Globalisation also has advanced changes in the organisational landscape of childhood construction in Ghana. These reforms in Ghanaian childhood construction policies, Laird (2002) claims often directed by Western donors and is geared towards a resemblance of childhood construction documents in the West and after the development of the Western child.

Research, however, claims that these reforms have been less effective in improving the situation of children in Ghana (Twum-Danso, 2012). Reasons giving include a lack of grassroots participation and consideration of perspectives of local stakeholders (Yeboah, 2014); and a resort to the law in the belief that it is the most effective and perhaps the only way to improve children's livelihood (Gready & Ensor, 2005). Thus, Although Act 560 is seen as a catalyst for improving children lives in Ghana, its implementation has faced many challenges. Thus, the reality and situation of children's lives in Ghana is markedly different from what the law envisions. In the following paragraphs, I present a thematic overview of the childhood situation in Ghana

Child labour

The prevention of child labour, while ensuring the right to basic formal education of children, is the major theme of most child-focus NGOs in Ghana. It is also, among other things, the main goal of government agencies and international documents on childhood construction. The modus operandi of most child-focused NGOs in Ghana is on liberating children from child labour and ensuring their rights (Particularly right to formal education). Most of the literature reviewed sees the activities carried out traditionally, especially by rural children as child abuse or labour(Heady, 2000; Ray, 2002). A few exceptions though have directed attention to situations where children are employed as hired labour or pawn by parents as the real challenge of child abuse (Grier, 2004; Hear, 1982; Koomson & Asongu, 2016).

Hilson (2010) claims the lack of plentiful formal sector employment in Ghana may also push children to work. Children in this instance aim to help their impoverished families out. For example, in Tallensi-Nabdam District, Upper East region of Ghana, boys and girls elect to pursue ardours work in artisan and small scale mining across the region to help parents (Hilson, 2010). Yeboah (2014) further explains that in poor rural communities of

Ghana where both parents are involved in fishing, farming or trade, children's participation in family life is usually tied to their involvement in this economic activity.

Parents and children themselves may see children who are stopped from working in some instance, as no more been useful (Sackey & Johannesen, 2015; Yeboah, 2014). Similarly, Abebe (2007) researching Ethiopian childhoods, claims that rural children may feel good, that they can contribute to the family income. Other empirical evidence tries to identify the real reason children in Ghana have to work, the consensus among such literature is that the situation of children working seems to persist because in many instances government of Ghana and NGOs glide over the underlying causes of poverty responsible for the existence of child labour (Hilson & Garforth, 2012; Yeboah, 2014). Chant and Jones (2005)thus, advise policymakers to tread cautiously on sweeping moves to outrightly and instantly ban child labour. This is because there are linkages between children work in some instances to finance their families and their formal education. In that regard, Hashim (2007) points out that children's voice-oriented research should be encouraged, so children themselves voice out constraints on their lives.

Children's work and school in Ghana

The general narrative portrayed in the literature reviewed depicts the importance of basic schooling for children. Children's work, on the other hand, is seen as eroding the gains of basic education and childhood development (E.g. Ananga, 2011; Heady, 2003; Seshie-Nasser & Oduro, 2016). Some researchers argue that children need protection from work that prevents them from pursuing formal education; they argue work hinders formal education (Bass, 2004; Grimm, 2011). While other researchers claim children's' work itself should be seen as a form of education that prepares children to survive in the realities of their communities, particularly where available rural formal education may not be useful for

subsequent employment, continuation to secondary and higher education or its benefit exaggerated due to its woeful quality in rural areas (Yeboah, 2014).

Poor school infrastructure can also lead to children dropping out of school and engaging in work. Parents, in this instance, may not see the need to invest in schooling where the children will mostly fail (Boyle, Brock, Mace, & Sibbons, 2002; Yeboah, 2014). In such circumstances, improving the infrastructure quality of schools may encourage parents to send their children to school, instead of involving them in work. Gyan, Mabefam, and Baffoe (2014), further add that children who are from poor or rural areas of Ghana are at a disadvantage since they are expected to write same exams with children in other parts of the country who have better teaching and learning materials.

Lack of teaching personnel for rural children can also be a challenge; this is because teachers often refuse to post to rural areas (Walker, Bush, & Oduro, 2006). This often makes parents decide that children must work or will succeed elsewhere (Hilson, 2010). Although, education seems to be widely valued even in the poorest communities because of its much-communicated abilities to help children to obtain better status in life, and lifting families from poverty (Gaddah, Munro, & Quartey, 2016). Although there are several challenges associated with rural schooling, child sexual abuse perpetrated against children in schools often have a better chance of it been documented. Children in rural schools may be the first in line to receive institutionalised help than children who are not in school.

Child Sexual Abuse (CSA)

Research on child sexual abuse in Ghana is scant due to the sensitive nature of the topic. However, the few done on it claims it is a major problem in Ghana (Eg. Coker-Appiah & Cusack, 1999; Pappoe & Ardayfio-Schandorf, 1998) The primary challenge to child sexual abuse is silence and lack of reporting by victims and their families to authorised officials

(Coker-Appiah & Cusack, 1999). Anecdotal evidence shows that girls from the deprived economic background are more prone to being victims of all types of violence, including sexual abuse; people increasingly seem to turn a blind eye to this challenge.

Acceptance and perpetuation of CSA have been reported to be due to myth and false beliefs (Boakye, 2009). In Ghana believes surrounding CSA include; perpetrators must be suffering from psychological or spiritual anomalies; and, sexual desires in men are stronger thus men find it difficult to control their urges and in most cases, will go to all lengths to satisfy their sexual desires (Pappoe & Ardayfio-Schandorf, 1998). These beliefs have caused victims of child sexual abuse in some cases, been blamed for arousing the perpetrator (Collings, 2006). The internalisation of such believes may bring about a lack of motivation to report victims by children and their families. (Boakye, 2009; Coker-Appiah & Cusack, 1999)

CSA may also be viewed as bringing about collective embarrassment; thus, a tendency not to report (Coker-Appiah & Cusack, 1999). The collective nature of families in Ghana means that the shame suffered by the victim of CSA also affect extended family members. Most families in a case of child sexual abuse will rather protect the family name and the reputation of the victim, than to report to authorities (Collings, 2006; Pappoe & Ardayfio-Schandorf, 1998) In Ghanaian communities, there is a strong belief that a victim of rape will find it difficult to get a marriage partner in future (Abotchie, 2008).

Definition of CSA further makes it problematic in Ghana. Sika-Bright and Nnorom (2013) argue that the prevalence could be high or low in the Ghana context base on the definition adopted. International documents usually define CSA as sexual activities with anyone under the age of 18. Most cultures in Ghana, however, determine the sexual maturity of children based on rites of passage and not chronological age. For example, among the Krobo of the Eastern region of Ghana, Dipo rites are what confirms the sexual maturity of a

girl (Steegstra, 2002). The performance of Dipo rites is usually done at the start of the first menstrual period where a child in most cases will be younger than 18. However, in recent times, rites of passage notwithstanding parents in most cases will report to authorities an adult who has sex with a girl who is below the legal age of 18. Parents in this instance may situate themselves and adopt useful bits of Western construction of childhoods while maintaining their traditional construction of childhoods.

2.3.2 Childhood cultural practices in Ghana

The Ghanaian worldview on childhood, childrearing, and construction is holistic. It starts with a pair of mature couples who conceive a child into a family defined by complex interconnected relationships made up of extended kin. The new-born-child is received into an environment of tradition and community, and is adored by whole family and community and nurtured like a treasure[8] (Nukunya, 2003).

The child in the Ghanaian and West African society is conceptualised as underdeveloped until they can think analytically and morally. Discussing the development stages of the Ghanaian and West African child, Pence and Nsamenang (2008) argues that as social intelligence changes, the child is immersed into different roles at different stages of life without which, the child is considered as a mere "dangler" to whom the designation of person does not appropriately apply. Thus, while children are actual human beings in the traditional Ghanaian setting, they only become persons in the real sense of it when they can exercise their moral capacity and make a moral judgement.

[8] Modernity and changes in economy have had effect on the traditional view of childhood. For example, with the promotion of individual rights, based on Western construction of childhood by government agencies, in schools and the consumption of Western way of life through music, movies etc., Western educated Ghanaian parents and children, are increasingly questioning the legitimacy of traditional childhood values. Although important aspects of traditional childhood values still persist.

Early Childhood: moral development in Ghana

Among traditional Ghanaian groups, the first few days after a child is born is replete with traditional rituals. However, there are subtle differences among the diverse cultural groups. For example, the child before seven days is seen as a spiritual being, and it's only through rituals after the first week will the child be ushered into the physical world and is named among the Southern people (Gas, Ewes and Krobo). The Northern people of Ghana comprising of the Upper East, West and Northern regions on the other hand, outdoor the child on the third day for rituals to be performed. In times past, facial marks made by an incision on the face used to be common among various traditional groups in Ghana. The Northern people made multiple marks on the forehead and the cheeks, while the Southern people made a single mark on the cheek of the newborn[9]. It is a normal practice for children to be giving a name and taught morals at a very early stage.

The naming ceremony is an important celebration among the various traditional groups in Ghana. Although subtle differences do exist, the idea is to introduce the child to the community. Among the Ewes, Gas and Ashanti's of Ghana, naming ceremony serves as the first point of teaching morality lessons. During outdooring and naming ceremony, the head of the family lineage addresses the child by its name for the first time in public, and puts a tiny drop of water, followed by a tiny drop of alcohol in the child's mouth; these symbolisms representing good and evil respectively, are explained, and the child is admonished to choose good. Nukunya (2003) explains that the use of water and alcohol serve a second purpose; It reminds all who witness the naming ceremony of the child that they are under obligation to train the child to be of good morals symbolised by water and to refrain from evil symbolised

[9] Facial (tribal) marks were for both spiritual and identification purposes. It was believed among the various traditional groups that by causing an imperfection on the face of the child, the child becomes less desirable to evil spirits and thus increases the chances of the child surviving infancy. This practice was mainly as a result of the high infant mortality experienced in the past

by alcohol. This collective observance, in part, establishes the communal responsibility of kin and the whole society towards the child.

In traditional Ghanaian societies, local values and customs are used to teach children morals. Research evidence (e.g.Abotchie, 2008; Harkness & Super, 1992; Nukunya, 2003) claim the traditional family serve as the base agent using proverbs, daily routines, social and community life to give insight to children on human behaviour. Thus, from the family and the community, the child begins to develop a sense of self, participatory skills, social values, and ways of the world. The interconnection of kin and an environment of mutuality further make childcare a social enterprise where others share in caregiving functions and the imbibing of morals.

Core morals that taught to children in Ghana are responsibility, respect, obedience, and reciprocity. Different clans, however, may emphasise one value over the other the principal instructor of morals is the biological mother of the primary caregiver. Older siblings who are matured and deemed of good standing by parents also have the mandate to help in training and caring for children. In this instance, older siblings may even have the authority to correct younger siblings where needed, and often, they will have blessings of parents (Twum-Danso, 2013). This responsibility giving to older siblings is a form of training: that as one matures morally; more responsibility is left in his or her charge. Extended family members are also expected to play similar roles.

A sense of respect, in particular, is socially expected and form part of people's especially children daily lives. The respect value taught to children, and which older people expect from younger ones gives senior community members a sense of dignity and importance. Children who go contrary to the expectation of respect are likely to face the consequences.

Another important value taught to children is reciprocity. This value is seen as part of an informal welfare system for adults. Children are often taught to reciprocate benevolence. Thus, adults who take their responsibility of caring for children seriously expect children to return the favour when children are adults. Further, neglected children in the Ghanaian community may feel indebted to other adults who had taken up parenting duties on behalf of their biological parents. Reciprocity also means that inversely adults are also expected to show moral maturity to earn respect from children. In Ghanaian communities,' adults who do not show moral maturity and discipline are compared to children.

Good moral values confer on individual personhood. The values of responsibility, respect and reciprocity and conforming to norms of the community are of utmost importance. However, this moral character also places the child in a position of lower status, while older ones occupy a position at the top of the hierarchy. Thus, social power dominance and the reverence for the old are used to control children in traditional Ghanaian society. Children who may insist on their right outside the group interest are seen as going wayward

Childhood emotional development and early attachment in Ghana

Children in Ghana are born into an extended or nuclear family system, which is the two forms of families in Ghana. In nuclear families' a child usually form an attachment with his or her mother who tends to be the primary caregiver, or in some cases, children may form attachments with the maternal grandmother who may move in to help with the newborn baby. In the extended family system, children may form attachments with women who may not necessarily be the biological parents of the birth mother but may offer to care for the child.

Among the Tallensi people of Ghana, Worsley (1956) explains the mother builds a unique bond with the child that she breastfeeds exclusively for a year. Worsley further notes that even when there is minimal physical intimacy between mother and child due to work

and other obligations, the child may build intimacy and early attachment with other extended relatives who will be handy to help the child. This form of attachment though seems to be short-lived for boys who according to Worsley, after weaning are monitored less by the mother in comparison to girls who may be watched or chaperoned until they get married. Irrespective of gender, children among the Tale people Worsley notes remain dependent on their parents for emotional needs after weaning and are not encouraged to seek independence from the collective family. Clark 1999 makes similar claims about children's early attachment among the Ashanti people of Ghana but add that fathers are less conspicuous when in such activities.

The nurturing of Ghanaian children to be dependent and attached to parents and extended relatives comes into sharp contrast with Western construction of childhoods; which encourages independence and the demand for individual rights. Act 560 of Ghana, which is base on the UNCRC, encourages children to seek individual rights and participation in decision making, which is not seen as a virtue in most traditional Ghanaian families.

Gender development and construction in Ghana

Gender differences among children in Ghana start to show at about age six; children before then, they are viewed as similar. Gender roles are differentiated, primarily through children's play and other socialising practices and activities. Parents in Ghana will usually nurture children into specific activities or behaviour patterns based on gender. Children who are same-sex with a parent will be trained by that parent to conform to expected social norms required of that gender and among siblings and the community. Other adults within the community may help in the gender development of the child.

Boys in Ghana are trained to take up muscular roles. Typical among the attributes encouraged in boys are endurance and strength even in times of adversity. Also, boys are

expected and are trained to suppress emotions and all forms of feminine traits. In situations where boys and men are going through pain and adversity in Ghana, they are greeted with a local cliché *Obarima nsu*, which explains, as 'men don't cry'.

Girls in Ghana, on the other hand, are kept under close supervision. They are expected to be groomed to be humble, obedient, and subservient by their mothers and grandmothers who are expected to be good examples of these traits for girls to emulate. At the time of getting married, girls are expected to be well vexed in keeping a house. They learn this through practice under the tutelage of mothers and are expected to engage in household chores such as cooking, cleaning, and the care of younger siblings if any.

Adults in Ghana are expected to reinforce these gendered norms, and children who do not conform may face some form of sanctions. For example, a boy who displays feminine traits may be stigmatised as less than a boy and may not be allowed to join boys in their activities — girls who on the other hand display too much masculinity, may be suspected to be witches. Children therefore usually seek for an opportunity to perform expected gendered roles. In traditional Ghanaian families, boys are chosen for important activities over girls.

The child in the matrilineal and patrilineal extended family system

The embodiment of childhoods is intertwined with the lineage and intergenerational system in Ghana (Nukunya, 2003). Thus, traditional childhood construction and rearing practices in Ghana are incomplete without reference to the family or lineage system. The family system determines inheritance allocation, a household where the child will spend his early years, and most importantly, the socialising morals (Abotchie, 2008; Nukunya, 2003). The Morals that a child is trained in are directed by the lineage system that the child belongs. Sarpong (1974) explains that this is due to the need for cultural reproduction. The influence of the extended

family system has several implications for the values assigned to children and their socialisation.

The two primary lineage systems in Ghana are the patrilineal and matrilineal system; these are known as the extended family systems. Nukunya (2003) notes that these family systems are collective and emphasise group responsibility and cohesiveness in all socio-cultural situations, including parenting. Matrilineal lineage in Ghana is where children trace their descent through the mother's lineage. Girls in matrilineal systems are very important, and the only ones who are capable of contributing or determine the future generation of the matrilineal society through childbirth (Nukunya, 2003). This situation, however, puts a huge burden on women in such clans, to produce children. Barrenness and childlessness are frowned on and not encouraged; this also makes children very important in matrilineal families (Nukunya, 2003).

Children in matrilineal systems cannot directly inherit their father but can legitimately claim an inheritance from maternal uncles. The idea is to keep family property[10] within and not to lose it through marriage and inheritance. Thus, mothers in matrilineal families promote a special bond between her children and that of her kin as against the kin of her husband. Nyarko (2014) claims that in strict matrilineal lineages in Ghana, a father may not have an interest in his biological children but rather may concentrate on his nephews and nieces who are customarily expected to inherit him. However, in a counterclaim, Adu-Gyamfi (2014) explains that the matrilineal system does not mean fathers in these societies do not care for or have no interest in their children.

[10] Members from one clan marry from other clans, in times past where clan property particularly land is allocated to members for farming, direct inheritance of land by children from their fathers means that they will be taking land from theirs fathers clan to the mother's clan. This is especially the case in matrilineal clans where children belong to the mother's family. Thus, children were not allowed to inherit fathers. This though is changing due to the interstate succession law of Ghana. That notwithstanding, there are still pockets of instances today, where family members of a deceased man may try to stop his children from inheriting him.

My observations indicate that irrespective of the lineage system biological mothers and fathers usually corporate to care for their children. In Ghana, the major ethnic group that practice the matrilineal system of inheritance is the Akan who also happens to be the largest in Ghana. The patrilineal system of family lineage is simple. In this instance, children inherit directly from the biological father without any interference. The traditional group Ewes and Krobos are mostly patrilineal. Many other family practices among traditional groups in Ghana centres on children. Take, for example, some childhood ceremonies among the Krobo of Ghana.

2.3.4 Some specific childhood customs in Ghana

The Krobo family lineage is paternalistic, and children are expected to take after their father's clan. The Krobo see marriage as a union between two families' not just individuals, making marriage a necessary arrangement that unites clans thus highly commended. Childbirth is important among the Krobo and is considered an obligation for all women. A barren person is regarded as ill-fated, cursed, and usually stigmatised. It is rear for a woman not to bear children out of her will. An important belief among the Krobo people is that there is no child is illegitimate.

Children born out of wedlock among the Krobo belong to parents of the mother. In times past, women who fail to get a husband may get pregnant and bring the children to their parents; such children are referred to as Yobi (a woman's child) and are cared for by maternal grandparents[11]. Twins among the Krobo are special and seen as possessing exceptional powers from the gods. Mothers of twins are regarded highly in their families and communities, and special ceremonies are performed for them. In times past, the status of a woman bearing twins is raised to that of a male warrior and is giving a fine axe and a red

[11] Although currently in Ghana parents of Krobo women warmly receives children born out of wedlock, it is encouraged that women get married before having children

feather to put in her hair. To distinguish twins as special, they are giving special names, and so is the child immediately born after the twins; who is also seen as possessing special powers.

In instances of divorce, the father retains the custody of the children. While men may sue for divorce for the misconduct of their wives; women are not allowed to sue for divorce, even if a man misconducts himself, especially with another woman. The only time a woman may be allowed to sue for divorce is where the husband is cruel, refuses to house her in his home or properly care for her. A woman may also sue for divorce, where her husband deserts her for three years without maintenance.

The customs of the Krobo shows how important children are to the unity and existence of the Krobo community. Much of their customs are centred on protecting children and raising them to be useful members of the Krobo community[12]. One such important traditional value aimed at grooming girls to be useful Krobo citizens is the Dipo

Dipo: The making of a Krobo girl into a woman

The Dipo custom is an important rite of passage for young girls and is by far the most popular among the Krobo people; it is a custom decreed by the Kloweki goddess (Earth god). In one way or the other, all Krobo tribes perform it. The custom aims to train young girls in the ideals of womanhood. A girl is selected to go through the custom at the first sign of womanhood, in most cases after first menstruation.

Usually, a prominent community member's house is selected, and groups of girls going through the Dipo rites are housed there for 12 months (three months in recent times). During this period, the girls train in this 'institution' (selected house) and go through training on how

[12] In recent time's modernity, education and tough economic situations have altered various aspects of traditional communities like that of the Krobo people. Thus, social net for children in these communities may have lost some of its efficiency

to keep a home, personal hygiene, and keep a family. They may also learn economic activities to help them support their future family. Common vocation taught to girls includes bead making, weaving, pottery, etc. Priestesses visit these girls daily and instruct them on morals expected of them as women.

A girl who gets pregnant during or before the Dipo rites are performed for her is banned from the community. According to Kole (1955), the crime which is more serious than the violation of the Dipo rites is wilful murder. In the past, the man who gets the girl pregnant before the rites is sold as a slave. In recent times, the man pays a hefty fine for purification of the girl and the whole community. In addition, the violation of the Dipo rites is a great shame on the family of both man and girl involved.

Figure 2 outdooring of Dipo girls after completing of rites of passage (picture available on World Wide Web)

Successful girls who go through the tutelage and rituals are now capable of starting relationships and marriage. However, before this, the girls are carefully examined to make sure they have satisfied all the requirements of the custom. A day is fixed where the girls are dressed in beautiful beads with a small piece of cloth to cover them. They then dance to traditional songs known as Klama in public. The last performance known as Yifom is where the girls' heads are washed clean (some have explained this to mean washing away of girlish attitudes)

The custom is an effective way of protecting girls from early and unwanted pregnancies. Recently though, some girls may be reluctant to go through the customs due to the modern construction of childhoods, education and allegiance to other religious practices that denounces Dipo. Also, childhood laws may site as inhumane or a violation of their dignity the dancing of scantily clad girls in public.

Many changes have affected traditional culture to protect children. The lineage systems and kinship foster care have gradually lost some of its capacity to respond to the needs of children requiring protection. Yeboah (2014) explains, Western civilisation, government policy, and education have had and continues to influence family systems and childhoods in Ghana, although some aspects of tradition persist. The family and children remain the centre of the social structure, childbirth, status ascription and traditional ways of socialisation is still important, although other cultural practices around children and the family have seen a decline. Polygamous marriage, as well as childbirth rate, are on the decline (Adu-Gyamfi, 2014).

Higher levels of literacy, coupled with economic challenges, have caused a reduction in large families. In urban communities of Ghana, Nyarko (2014) notes that nuclear families, where parents focus more on their direct biological relations, are more common than in rural communities. In nuclear families, there tend to be fewer children and dissociation from collective living involving extended family members and children who may not have capable parents.

In the end, modernity seems to have created a situation where the buffer children enjoyed in traditional Ghanaian societies are gradually eroding. The government of Ghana hence tries to protect vulnerable children by constituting legislature and policies that can assure children's basic protection. In what follows, I will discuss a brief history of the traditional welfare system to protect children before the institution of legislature.

The precolonial child welfare system in Ghana

Formal welfare system for protecting children did not exist in Gold Coast now Ghana before the arrivals of Christian missionaries (Goody, 1966). However, as mentioned above, anecdotal evidence points to the fact that it was the norm for children to be cared for through kinship foster care, extended family, and other community networks. The aim was to provide care and protection for children whose wards were unable. Oppong (1973) notes that some cultural practices made it possible for parentless children or children from low-income families to be fostered to kin or a community member to receive proper upbringing and to learn a trade.

Children in Ghanaian societies in time past belonged to the whole community (Nukunya, 2003). Ansah-Koi (2006) further explains members were committed to the welfare of children because they believe that it takes a 'village to raise a child'; thus, guardianship was provided for children who had no parents. The communal and collective care of children was made possible, according to Nukunya (2003) by the close settlement and living arrangements of ethnic groups in Ghana. Within these arrangements, Frimpong-Manso (2014) notes that among the Akan traditional groups, for example, certain women had designated responsibility of taking care of orphans, elderly and children in general.

In traditional Ghanaian societies, children are valued and desired. Thus, there is a focus on protecting children in the social organisation and lineage system of traditional Ghanaian societies (Nukunya, 2003). In most cases, the strength of traditional Ghanaian lineage systems is based on the numbers of its membership. Thus, making the addition of children useful, valuable and desirable (Owusu, 2007).

Availability of extended kin support is another reason people desire to have children. Nyarko (2014) suggests the high fertility among traditional Ghanaian societies could be because of norms and practices that support large families. For example, among the Akan's

of Ghana, couples who have ten children are giving gifts of congratulations and an honorary name in some instances[13]. Thus, Nyarko (2014) interestingly claims Ghanaian parents receive more rewards from reproduction[14] than parents in many other societies. Also, due to a lack of formal social welfare system in Ghana, children are seen as the primary source of support during old age, and in rural areas as labour for subsistence farming. The government of Ghana, however, uses legal structures to regulate the work of children, and NGOs that work with children in Ghana are expected to use these legal structures to guide their activities.

The literature reviewed thus far has shown that legal structures on childhood in Ghana construct childhood after the Western concept. This focus has influenced NGO efforts and research on Ghanaian childhoods. Thus, research is directed towards a comparison with Western childhoods. As a result, general conclusions of scholarships and reports on NGO interventions in most cases portray as problematic any traits of Ghanaian childhoods that are not in tandem with the Western world construction of childhood. Buttressing this situation, Twum-Danso (2016, p. 456), notes that 'the focus of much of literature on Ghana and children elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa is on widespread poverty, child labour, the diseases that have wreaked havoc on children in Africa and conflicts that have devastated communities and societies.

The importance of such critical studies and NGO reporting on African childhood in crisis is not underestimated. Many have made the public aware of challenges surrounding childhood; some have also suggested solutions to challenges plaguing childhoods in Ghana and other parts of Africa. However, the overemphasis and overwhelming focus on a crisis childhood paint almost all children in Ghana and elsewhere in sub-Sahara Africa with one broad brush that emphasises 'deficiencies,' difficulties and crisis; hence, a need for

[13] This practice though seem not to be popular in recent times.
[14] Currently the average children per Ghanaian woman is 4.22

intervention. Meanwhile, the activities of child-focus NGOs is often assumed as a consequence of well-thought-through policies and models. Thus, the failure of interventions is often blamed on the ignorant or uneducated African who does not yield to change.

2.4 Point of departure

This thesis on childhoods in Ghana carves a different path. It focuses on the activities of organisations that work with childhood policies, with the view that policy and practice is not a straightforward scripted translation of ideas into reality, but a messy free-for-all in which processes are often uncontrollable and results uncertain.

In this research project, I argue that moving forward, research on the construction and challenges of childhoods in Ghana and elsewhere in Africa should aim at the actual work or practices that cultural brokers such as child-focused NGOs engage in framing. Such research should go beyond the prescriptive, and "measurable success" reports common with NGO dissemination, but rather the totality of the network that influences their activities.

Research with this focus is important because while enormous energy and funds are allotted to the child-focused agencies and NGOs, little research examines the activities that legitimise the policies and models they practice. This research will thus proceed with the following aims and objectives

2.4.1 Aim and research objectives

To,

1) Follow up the network of child-focused NGOs activities in the implementation of childhood intervention in a Ghanaian community.

Sub-objectives

a) To study how NGO intervention/policy goals play out in the field during implementation
b) To study the organisational process of a child-focused NGO (communication, negotiation and bureaucracies) and how these processes affect the implementation of interventions?
c) Explore the influence of local cultural values on NGO interventions.

To achieve the objectives above, this research followed to the best of ability all the social actors within the network of the participating child-focused NGO. This includes animate and inanimate social actors, to understand the totality of experience involved in implementing intervention on childhoods and the framing of its construction. Actor-oriented approach to the study of development is adopted to realise the goals of this study. The approach is situated in the broader interdisciplinary field of science and technology studies or the study of Science, Technology, and Society (STS) (Latour, 2005, p. 94). In the following paragraphs, I will briefly discuss the remits of STS and the analytical framework adopted for the study of the activities of Child-focus NGOs in this study, namely Actor Network Theory.

2.5 Analytical framework: Study of Science, Technology, and Society (STS)

STS, as a field of research, has a goal of conducting better, more relevant studies of science in the making of knowledge (Asdal, Brenna, & Moser, 2007, p. 7). It deals with political engagement, thematisation, and practices of various forms of development interventions. Latour, one of the respected researchers on STS, explains that science, technology, and society are a continuum. There is no science on the one hand and society and values on the other. These dividing lines are found only in theories and imaginations. Instead, we should

follow Actors and study how they create reality through the diversity of their practices and material resources (Latour, 1987, pp. 1-17).

A major political challenge in STS is to conduct better and more relevant studies of science and development. Such an endeavour should be oriented towards participation and cooperation with the actors in the field, in the process of experimentation and learning. The social actors include everyone who plays a part in the social process. The aim is to study what role the sciences and development play in this social process of constructing society, and how facts are problematized and politicised in the sciences.

In STS, science, technology, and development are seen as intervening in nature and politics. This approach provides a much better way to understand what scientific and development activities are, than do the old notions of how science discovers and describes reality. Thus, the assertion is that science and technology generate reality rather than discover or reveal it. They continually bring about new, transformed, material realities (Asdal et al., 2007, p. 9).

Thus, the social in STS should not be seen as a disruptive element needing to be purged from science but rather as an ever-present necessary component of scientific knowledge. This implies that scientific success should not be explained by referring to strictly epistemic and coherent steps while explaining off failures and rejected theories by using social elements. Rather, the same sociological methods conceptual tools and analyses should be used to explain both success and failures. In that way, science is urged not to focus on explaining success only. The way to this, according to Latour (1987), is to study the development of fields of knowledge and then focus on controversies within these fields. The rationale is that it is here that the various interests, values, and cultural resources of science would manifest or reveal themselves.

Another way of studying politics and social aspects of intervention is to focus on the intervention or scientific text persuasions and rhetoric (Law, 2000). Scientific, intervention, and description texts by researchers do not necessarily portray the reality of pictures, attitudes, and motives for action. It is most important to gain a first-hand understanding of the textual practice been asserted. This can be done by looking at how observations are translated into texts and how this textual representation is again translated and used to construct and stabilise facts. An important way to observe this textual transitivity of science is to use ethnography.

Ethnography, a method for studying human behaviours and practices can be used to study science technology and development. The goal is to see how the social is produced and maintained through the various layers of social interaction. This is because social order does not exist as a given beforehand but instead is something always under construction. The focus is to interpret the common and the normal and to observe and understand unfinished knowledge, science, and development in the making, rather than knowledge that has already been black-boxed.

The importance of observing knowledge in the making is based on the argument that knowledge is relative and that it varies based on the different environments in which it is created. Studies of science, technology, and society then view natural sciences as a social construction, whose ideal of objectivity is hardly different from its criticism of the social sciences. The idea that natural sciences are a social construction also throws light on the importance of reflexivity this is because language and text, which is the main mode of communication in the social sciences, can no longer be seen as a neutral tool because reality in most cases is constituted through language. Thus honest reflexivity in social sciences reveals that the knowledge the social scientist brings on board is intersubjective and a co-creation between actors within the network of study.

2.5.1 Theoretical framework: actor oriented approach

Actor-oriented approach seeks to analyses the interactions between links in a network (Callon, 1986). It can be one of the most useful methods in the study of practices in science, technology, and development. Long and Long (1992) explains that the approach explores how meaning is produced by cultural brokers and negotiated in practice. The approach emphasises the significance of interaction for the various actors involved and helps to analyse the operations of NGO as cultural brokers by examining their formal objectives and the goals that are realised through practice by actors at different levels of cultural brokering.

The approach considers realisation and practice as a complicated free-for-all uncontrollable process in which results are uncertain. Long (2001), one of the known patrons of Actor Network approach to the study of development agencies, describes the approach as

> an ethnographic understanding of the social life of development projects from conception to the realisation as well as the responses and lived experiences of the variously located and affected social actors (14-15*)*

Lewis (Cited in Lewis & Mosse, 2006, p. 9) explains further that actor-oriented approaches facilitate understanding of the ways government bureaucracies and development organisation operates; and the differences between their formal objectives and goals and those that emerge through practices and strategies pursued by actors at different organisational level. Gledhill (1994, p. 134) however criticise the actor-oriented approaches, by pointing to the fact that the orientation tends to ignore the broader issues of power and structure.

Gledhill explains that while the actor-oriented approaches help to break out of the structuralist-functionalist strait-jacket, it also places it in a new one if actor-oriented researchers make actor-oriented strategies the centre of their analysis at the expense of broader causal factors. Long (1990, p. 13) counters this argument by explaining the issue at

stake is not to separate actor and structure, but rather to confront the challenge of explaining the differential response to similar structural circumstances which are best done using ethnography of actor-network approaches. In what follows, I will discuss principles important to Actor-Network Theory and useful to this study.

2.5.2 Actor Network Theory (ANT)

The main aim of Actor-Network Theory (ANT) is to break with the division between technology and society and between human and non-human actors. It focuses on establishing a seamless web or network where the interactions between the links of the web are studied. People, technology, and natural phenomena can all be components in materially heterogeneous actor-network and take on the role of actors (Asdal et al., 2007, p. 23). Bruno Latour and Michell Callon developed the theory with contributions from John Law and others. They aimed to focus the discussion of society and its nature from the humanist approach popular with anthropologists, to the wide social and cultural context, which they also referred to as heterogeneity (Callon, Rip, & Law, 1986, p. 22).

Latour and Callon were more interested in the explanation of the totality of experience, i.e. the principle of symmetry. This requires all knowledge claims to be treated equally and to be explained sociologically. Thus, they avoided the privileging of minds over the material. They did not focus solely on the agency of humans but rather the 'summing' and circulation of effects (Latour, 1999). ANT looks at the combination of things that come together to produce power, which humans are but a single link in this combination. Thus, in ANT, it is important to reject humans as the masters of the world and technology. Latour and Callon, refer to this combination as "*agencement" or* association of effects. *Agencement* focuses on whatever is generated, as due to arrangement and combinations rather than discussing attention to distinct parts (Callon et al., 1986; Latour, 1999, 2005).

Agency and Power

Agency is the channel for accomplishment and is usually seen as normative to humans. This is due to the assumption that things happen because people cause them to happen or intends it. Actor-Network Theory (ANT) argues that this dualism ought to be abandoned, but rather the relational effect of materials including machines and objects should be accorded with the same agency (Callon, 1986, p. 22); this referred to us generalised symmetry. The differences between human and non-human actors can only be known when exploring the relationships. In recent times, people are increasingly coming to the realisation that they live in a world that is prefigured or they are emplaced, that technology is having a major impact on people's lives as much as people impact technology (Heidegger, 1993). This is making more people appreciate the agency of inanimate things.

Association and their Effects

The nature of society, according to Actor Network Theory (ANT), is based on the powers of association. As explained above, the founders of ANT refer to this association as *agencement* and is the central focus of explaining the nature of society in ANT (Latour, 1986). Callon (1999) explains further and posits that intention and consciousness are often imagined as the source of power. However, to understand associations and their effects, one has to forget this imagined source of power and rather focus on effects.

Example of effects of association is when people behave orderly, or the incidence of pilfering reduces substantially when a camera device is fixed in a room to record behaviours that may be used as incriminating evidence. In this instance, the ability to understand the power of effects will depend on the capacity to set aside any potential notions of consciousness, intentions, desires, and motives, but rather focus on the change in action, caused by the presence of the camera in the room. Thus, instead of assuming power emanates

from the intentions of humans alone, in ANT, power is traced to sets of effects and relations including that of inanimate things (Callon et al., 1986; Latour, 2005).

Following the actors

ANT makes it a point to follow actors to verify which translation takes place. This is because the composition of Society and Nature does not obey any definitive rules (Callon, 1986). Following actors, enable users of ANT to avoid the gazing on others or having a pre-conceived idea ahead of events and thus avoid been judgemental or over-interpret the cultures or mental concepts of others. By following actors, ANT confronts the epistemological foundations (how we can know) of actions been studied. This makes the immersing[15] of oneself into the situation of others to understand the rationale for their actions important to ANT users. A successful following of actors situates interpretation in reality and prevent interpretation from being a matter of thought only[16].

Translation and networks

The translation looks at how and when the mutual enrolment and the interlocking of interest, come together to produce the realities of a project or development intervention. Thus, in ANT, facts are not just explained off, but rather the several ways through which, the actions of others are whipped into alignment are examined. This implies that all actors have their interpretations; however, only powerful actors can transform the concepts of others to conform to their perspectives. Thus, to generate and translate development, projects work by creating a conducive environment to sustain the interest of supporters. These inner workings

[15] Actor Network Theory builds on Marx Webber's Verstehen, which advocates for the understanding of others (i.e. their meanings and action) from their point of view. It demands that the Actor or participant of a research is treated as a subject but not object; and a recognition that humans do not simply respond to manipulation be it research or development intervention

[16] In his paper domestication of the scallops and the fishermen of St Brieuce Bay Callon (1984), demonstrate how following actors, can reveal what transpires and the uncertainties of development projects.

of development projects (Black box) although usually opaque to us (outsiders), is what should be the concern of ANT researchers (Latour, 1987; Mosse, 2005a).

2.5.3 Critique of Actor Network Theory (ANT)

Actor Network Theory (ANT) as discussed above is situated in the social studies of science and technology, which maintains that science and technology are cultural practices. This implies that science technology and development are central to the construction of society. Thus to understand the interactions within society and to do social science, the practices of science ("technoscience", development, technology etc.), and how it creates interest, project meaning and social realities for social actors must be studied.

Social actors whether animate or inanimate create social realities by participating in interactions and networks. The symmetry within actor-network theory means that no actor, whether animate or inanimate, is more central to others within the network. ANT researchers explain that there should be no theory for what is human and thus social and that what is human or social must be seen as the effect of the attribution and distribution of status position and characteristics rather than as essences of nature.

In the article "Some Elements of Sociology of Translation: Domestication of the Scallops and the Fisherman of St Brieuc Bay" Callon (1984) demonstrate symmetry by using the term actor in a way that does not distinguish between human and non-human actors. In the article, Fishermen, Scallops and Researchers, were all actors in the network to replenish the production of scallops in St Brieuc Bay. The Sociologist at this instance does not have to distinguish the difference between human and non-human actors when s/he moves from interacting with the technical to the social and from nature to society. The symmetry between animate and inanimate things in actor network theory is against the backdrop of material

semiotics where “actants” are any entities that have a position in the discourse; and distinction are not made between human and non-human actors.

Haraway (2007) criticises the presentation of animate objects in ANT as without any specialised knowledge. She argues for the presentation of knowledge objects as an active part of what she calls the “apparatus of bodily production”. She distinguishes between animate and inanimate objects in the network by using the term, situated knowledge. By this, she implies that knowledge objects are actors with life and agency and are not discovered or revealed through scientific practice she explains

> “Narratives about the real world require that we converse with and participate in a social relationship with the objects. These objects are not simply technological apparatuses with the agency, but nature with agency narrative about the real world must, therefore, contain a form of conversation in which nature and the world are not just passive resources for our narrations but are active partners with an independent sense of humour.”

Haraway (2007) argues from a feminist standpoint and criticises ANT further by pointing to the reliant on powerful actors within the network. She explains that ANT sees only through the eyes of the powerful and that ANT researchers base their studies on actors who have the power to ally themselves with others and to build networks and empires. They follow actors but only those with the power to make their will prevail. She claims that studies of this type not only describe these powerful but also help to shore up their power.

The focus on the powerful means that others are marginalised in the networks. Star (2007) criticises this approach further by claiming that ANT researchers lose sight of those who perform the invisible work of maintaining the networks. They also lose sight of the invisible work that consists of building an identity on the margins of or about several networks where others build and hold power. This criticism demands that researchers in ANT ought to analyse the situation of actors squeezed into or out of a particular role. This can be done by studying networks from the bottom up. Taking as a starting point, the marginal

actors, those who are made silent, fall by the wayside or are only spoken on behalf of, and they do not have a voice in the network. The issue at stake here is keeping an eye out for those who are squeezed out of the network or into standards they have not wished for themselves and their voices never been heard by researchers or network builders.

2.5.4 A model on Actor Network or operationalisation

Actor-Network Theory looks at the connections and relations between links that bring about reality (See page 73 now for illustration). Before data collection, I did not consider the relations of a child-focus NGO intervention to the field as an instrumental translation of ideas into reality but as it were, a messy-free-for-all situation in which processes could be uncontrollable and result uncertain.

The intervention studied for this research had four[17] moments of translation important to the implementation of the intervention. Moments of translation are links that can help to trace the network of activities of the participating child-focused NGO. The moments identified going into the field are 1) Aims of NGO: in this instance, I focused on how child-focus NGOs become indispensable to other actors by defining the nature of the problems of children feeding of controversies and prescribing interventions as necessary solutions. 2) Mobilisation and Bureaucracies: with this moment of translation, I focused data collection on the relations inside and outside of the NGO offices I looked at how senior staff in the NGO dealt with field officers, and how this relation impacted on the work of frontline officers during the intervention.

Also important for the consideration was the bureaucracies and relationships that exist between field officers and senior NGO colleagues. In this instance, I analysed translations within the networks and how social actors are interlocked and assign actor roles? 3) Guidance

[17] These are the blue links in the illustration see page 73

document: here I focused data collection on the forms and source of knowledge on childhood development that NGOs educate rural parents with, and the ones they try to prevent parents from getting access to or label as inappropriate for children's development. 4) The final moment of translation looked at local knowledge on childhood. This focused data collection on realities that did unfold during the implementation of interventions; are parents successfully enrolled or do they stick to their local values and knowledge on childhoods, what are parents perspectives on basic rural schooling for children which is the main goal of the intervention and other childhood cultural values. The diagram below (see page 73) illustrates the four moments of translation anticipated before fieldwork and how these associate and interact with other social actors may play out in the field.

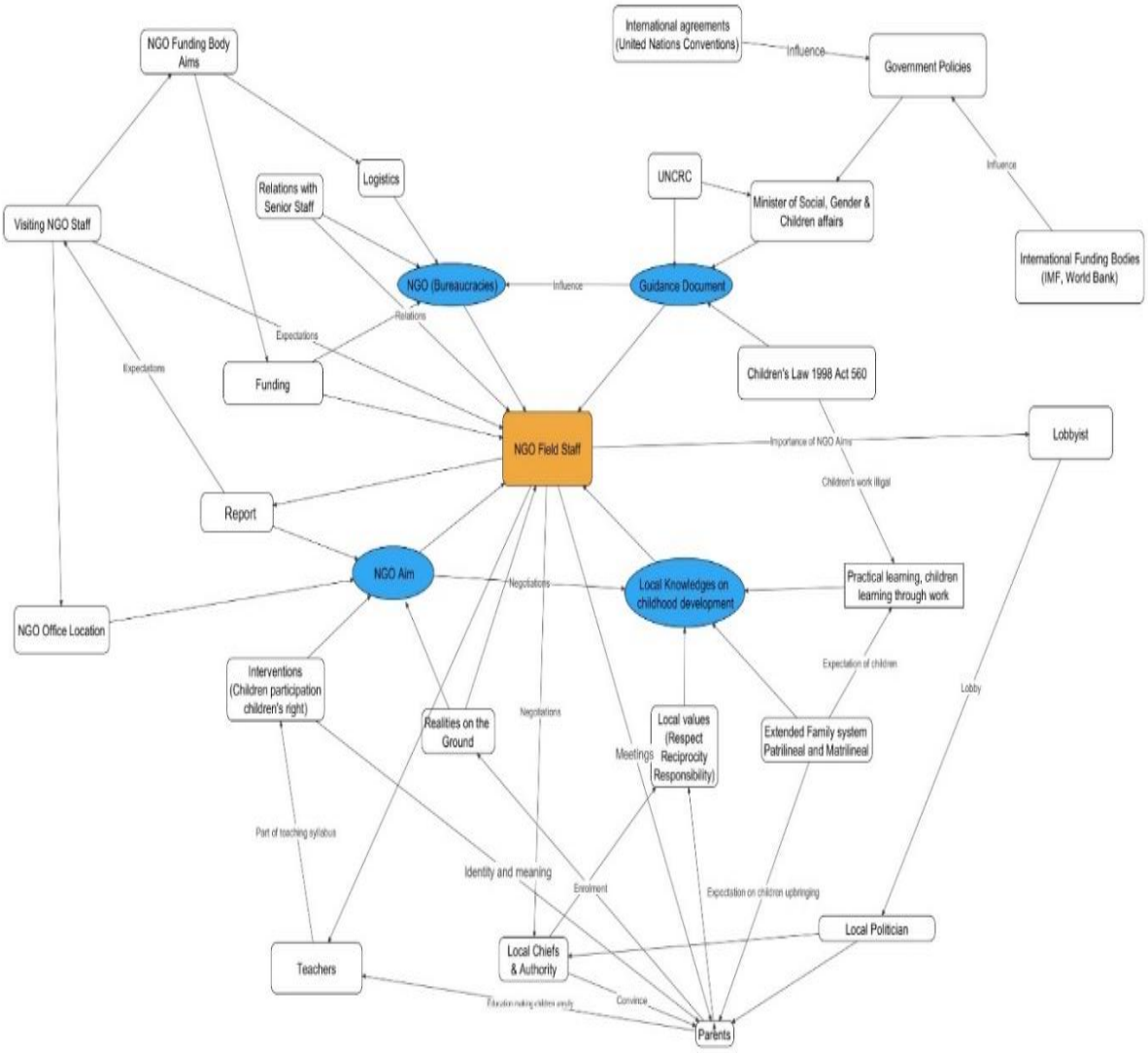
The moments of translation discussed above helped to trace and focus data collection on the network of the participating NGO. It further helped to focus the research on the totality of all the entities that came together to associate and effect each other to bring about a functioning child-focused NGO intervention. The guiding principle of Actor Network Theory focuses analyses on the very essence and motives of the actors involved. This includes NGO officials' bureaucracies, government policies, NGO branded artefacts, rural parents, or the researcher's presence. During data collection, I approached NGO and government policies on childhood development as a macro phenomenon, which can only be meaningful, in situated contexts, i.e. their practicality will depend on the meanings assigned to them as a result of the ongoing life-experiences, expectancies and relationships developed with actors involved.

2.5.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has looked at the literature and theoretical framework that guides this study. The concept of childhood as a time of play, education and free of responsibility is globalised and is carried in international policies. However, this is a Western Europe construction of childhood and is not normative as many assume. Most developing countries find that to access and collaborate with the international community; they may have to accept Western Europe construction of childhood. Ghana in 1998 streamlined its existing child protection and construction policies to comply with international documents on childhood, such as the UNCRC. However, almost two decades since these childhood policies and laws came into effect, the situation of children has not improved as the law envisioned. The current study aims to research into organisational practices, concepts, strategies and limitations of a child-focused NGOs and how these are networked to construct childhood interventions.

The literature review has also covered the most relevant themes on childhood both in the activities of NGOs and in academia. Actor-Network Theory (ANT) has been discussed as the orientation most suitable for the study because of its consideration of the network and agency of all social actors, including inanimate objects. After identifying the theory that will guide the study, it was time to engage in the actual data collection. The following chapter three discusses the ethnographic approached used and some specific tools and how it played out in the field.

Figure 3 Source Author: A Theoretical model of ANT showing possible links necessary for the implementation of the child-focus intervention. The writings between the links shows the interests, negotiations and influences through association that must come to bare for the intervention to take off



Chapter Three: Research Methodology

How do I know that you exist and if you do, how do I know my concepts represents your real existence (Thompson, 1978, p. 6)

3. Introduction

This chapter details the methodological approach used for data collection in this study. It examines the ethnographic approach that facilitated interaction between the researcher and research participants. Prior to data collection, my state of mind could be summed up by the quotation of E. P. Thompson stated above. I worried about how I could go further beyond the normal question and responses but to get into what Long and Long (1992, pp. 23-26) explain as a form of culturally constructed variations of human agency and the concrete forms of discursive and non-discursive means expressed through different social actor strategies and power conceptions. I.e. to get beyond the spoken word.

To get beyond the acoustic blast, access into the lifeworld of the research participants was necessary (Gillespie & Cornish, 2010, p. 34). Ethnography, as a particular mode of looking, listening and thinking about a social phenomenon was extremely useful in getting beyond the spoken word and into the lifeworld of my research participants and them, into mine. The ability to understand responses in context created a situation for a reflexive data collection, which helped to understand the research participants' meanings and strategies.

As a precautionary note, the ethnography I pursue in this study is based on an approach of getting the view from inside and from outside. Thus in the finding chapters, I present a view based on both participant and analytical perspectives. I refrained from an assumption that I knew what my participants were doing and why. At the same time, I present an analytic representation of my participants' understandings and activities in a way, which is usually different from, and might even conflict with how my participants see themselves and their

world. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p. 231) explain that the tension that is generated due to the participant and analytical perspectives is highlighted “if we think of the ethnographer as simultaneously concerned to make the strange familiar so s to understand it and to make the familiar strange to avoid misunderstanding it”. Thus to achieve a credible representation of my participants, I endeavoured to avoid the taking at face value what appeared to be obvious.

Another precaution that I took in this ethnography experience was to be careful about portraying particular situations as general claims. It is often inevitable to draw general conclusions of some kind. How I chose to handle the particular to general tension, in this case, is to produce a thick description of field events so that readers will judge the general value when they use those descriptions to understand new situations in which they are interested or involved.

As a way of overview, there are two sections to this chapter. In the first part, I discuss the historical and theoretical underpinnings that make ethnography particularly useful to this study and why I chose it. The second section looks at, the tools that I deploy to collect data and the challenges thereof. Most of these were the traditional qualitative tools such as interviews, participant observation, and focus group discussion. Other tools were very informal and had to be improvised on the field. However, they proved valuable and necessary to gain access and to hold on to rapport. In what follows, I discuss how ethnography has developed over the years.

3.1 Ethnography: theory and historical underpinnings

Ethnography, as a social research approach is elusive when it comes to its definition. Respected writers on ethnography have rather resorted to the history of ethnography and what ethnographers do (for e.g Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007) than to attempt a specific definition of the approach. Willis and Trondman (2000) have referred to the group of methods

that come together to make ethnography; while Berry (2011) discusses the nature of the ethnographic approach which "naturally" aligns itself to some researchers than others.

Ethnography is an approach that specializes in the study of human social behaviour. This core function in itself may suggest why an all-encompassing definition is elusive and might not be needed; this is because human behaviour is always changing and contextual. However, looking at what ethnographers do as suggested by Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) may inform on the ethnographic scope and its importance in studying human social behaviour. They explain that ethnography involves

> the researcher participating overtly or covertly, in people's lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said and/or asking questions through informal and formal interviews, collecting documents and artefacts – in fact, gathering whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the emerging focus of inquiry (Ibid p.3).

This working definition has been achieved through relentless criticism of social research and ethnographic methods over the years.

Ethnography at its earlier stages in the 19th century was often dismissed by positivism (natural scientific methods) as inappropriate to the social sciences due to the subjective nature of its findings. This, however, led Sociologist such as Blumer (1969), Schatzman and Strauss (1973) and a few others to develop a "blueprint" for social science research which they often termed as naturalism. The idea of naturalism was that as far as possible, the social world should be studied in its natural state. This moved the focus of social research from methods, to the social actors themselves. Blumer (1969, pp. 27-28) explained the shift from methods was necessary because methods are mere instruments designed to identify and analyse the character of the empirical world and as such their value exists only in the suitability in enabling this task to be done he advocated for the study of social behaviour in its natural

settings. Naturalist argued that the social world could not be understood in a cause and effect relationship or by universal laws because cultural meanings determine human actions.

The cultural or intersubjective worldview of social research was influenced by a wide range of philosophical and social ideas such as symbolic interactionism, phenomenology and hermeneutics. Proponents of symbolic interactionism (for example George Herbert Mead, Horton Cooley and Herbert Blumer) argued for the rejection of the stimulus-response model of human behaviour but rather a study of society through the interpretation process that occurs between humans during interaction (Blumer, 1969, pp. 78-79). Thus, according to naturalists or early ethnographers, to understand people's behaviour, one must use an approach that gives access to the meanings that guide the society under study's behaviour. Symbolic interactionism through this proposition had now laid a solid foundation for ethnography which positivist orientation could not reject.

The work of Kuhn (2012 first published 1962) critiqued the linear methods of positivist approach and boosted interpretive and ethnographic methods further. Khun argued against the history of scientific knowledge that portrayed it as a careful accumulation of knowledge towards the truth. He and others (Karl Popper, Imre Lakatos, Paul Feyerabend) showed that the work of advance science does not follow a linear methodology, or the presupposition of empirical scientific theory but rather to put it as Feyerabend (1993) expresses it in his book Against Method

> This is shown both by an examination of historical episodes and by an abstract analysis of the relation between idea and action. The only principle that does not inhibit progress is anything goes (Ibid: 14)

Feyerabend was thus suggesting that while natural scientists portray scientific inquiry as systemic and a follow of calculated steps to reach new knowledge, what natural scientist practice to discover new knowledge, can best be described as anything goes i.e. without any rules or system. Kuhn (2012 first published 1962) came up with the term *paradigm shift* to

describe the change from normal ways of doing things to discover new scientific knowledge. This implied that the judgement of the validity of scientific claims is always relative to the paradigm within which they operate. Although this critique was mainly against the positivist traditions, it was also against naturalism or interpretive analyses (hermeneutics).

Interpretivist research, which was now gaining traction as the way to do social research, had also been influenced by the hermeneutics of historical text, notably the work of Dilthey (2010 first published 1974). Thus, interpretive research for many years was involved in a rigorous task of locating the meaning intended by the author in relevant cultural settings and not necessarily the settings of the researched.

Gadamer challenged this objective way to observe and analyse text within the humanities. He explained that meaning could not be sought for in text because they are not objects. In his work Truth and Method, Gadamer argues for humanities that rather describes what they do when they interpret things. He states in his book Truth and Method… "my real concern was and is philosophic: not what we do or what we ought to do but what happens to us over our wanting and doing" (Gadamer, Weinsheimer, & Marshall, 2013, p. XXVI First published 1975)

Gadamer developed philosophical hermeneutics as an improvement in Dilthey's work. He explained that the process of understanding the social world of text is unavoidably tainted with the prejudices or understandings of the interpreter. Thus, interpretation should not be seen as a matter of social meaning in their terms but a construction that must reveal the socio-historical position and background assumptions of the researcher; in short, the importance of positionality and reflexivity in the ethnographic process. Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics is very influential on ethnography and how it is employed in social research. However, ethnography, as intended by Gadamer, is challenged yet again by another group of philosophers who are referred to as anti-realism.

Anti-realism philosophers are also known as post-structuralist or post-modernist. While several of them have challenged philosophical hermeneutics, the most influential ones have been the works of Foucault and Derrida. In his book "Of Grammatology", Derrida (2016 first published in English in 1976 by Gayatri Spivak) argues that ethnographers cannot capture the full meaning of behaviour because their constructions are constituted in language or text which is not stable and is constantly shifting. He advocates for the deconstruction of text in other to find hidden meanings in binaries (opposites).

The point of Derrida's argument was that meaning in social endeavours can be captured in many forms, including the written text[18]. However, ethnographers mostly use text to communicate the meanings they construct as against say video, art or drama thus losing some aspects of the social meaning. The written text Derrida further argues is not a transparent medium allowing the reader to see transparent through it but a construction that is based on the politics, the writing style or the rhetorical strategy of the ethnographer. Derrida uses examples of Claude Levi-Strause, Ferdinand de Saussure and Jean Jacques Rousseau to show that the most avid critics of structures in societies could end up in it through their writings and through discursive gestures that are aligned to the logocentric[19], phonocentric[20] and metaphysics[21] of presence (Derrida, 2016, pp. 97-118). Other anti-realists, however, had different ideas.

Michel Foucault, for example, argues that we should not be so engulfed with the truth or falsity of the ideas that we study, but rather with the regimes of truth in which this idea is constituted and how entities institutionalise practice (Foucault, 1984, p. 9). To Foucault, the

[18] For example in the cultures of the Akan people of Ghana, communication can be through music and dance (E.g. Adowa). During durbars, local chiefs communicate to their subjects not only through spoken language but also through dance and symbols in cloth.
[19] Logocentric- is the presupposition that words and language are the fundamental means of expressing external reality.
[20] Phonocentric- the idea that sound and speech are superior to the written language.
[21] Metaphysics- an examination of the fundamental nature of reality.

problems of truths are transitive. He posits that different regimes of truth are established in different contexts reflecting sources of power and resistance. He claims that social sciences are socio-historical and that they are a tool of modern society in the process of surveillance and control. Thus, what is treated as true and false in social science as elsewhere, is constituted through the exercise of power. Foucault argues that the function of research should be to liberate voices that are suppressed. Anti-realism philosophers are a major influence on society in recent times. This can be seen in the rise of feminist, queer ideologies and a general questioning of conventional ways of doing things.

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), explains that the influence of post-structuralists and post-modernists work has led to the subversion of conventional ethnographic and textual strategies. The idea that ethnographic accounts can forthright represent social reality has been widely rejected. However, in my opinion, these anti-realism philosophers are reminding ethnographers not to be stacked in the terms of Foucault a particular regime of truth or in some structure of doing things. Reflexivity, a key aspect of ethnography, provides a meaningful pathway to not being stack in regimes. It also gives a useful response to claims of transitive and intersubjective nature of truth or ethnographic meaning.

3.1.1 Reflexivity and ethnography

The concept of reflexivity acknowledges that the orientation of researchers will be shaped by their socio-historical locations, including the values and interest that these locations confer on them (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). The importance of reflexivity in ethnographic research is that it accepts the fact that social research cannot be carried out insulated from the world and the biography or personal characteristics of the researcher. By engaging in honest reflexivity, the ethnographer admits that s/he can engage in research where s/he can make the reasonable assumption that s/he can construct social behaviour as they are, and not merely how s/he perceives them or how s/he would like them to be.

The construction of social meaning through reflexivity does not automatically imply that what is constructed cannot represent social phenomena. To me, reflexivity represents the honesty of the ethnographer as s/he works with what is currently assumed to be knowledgeable while admitting that it can be erroneous or new knowledge could make them erroneous. Reflecting on the research process also demands the ethnographer declaring the effect of his/her presence on the research participant. While this may not be very comforting to a researcher due to the implication that his/her study is limited to the data elicitation circumstances under which social meaning was constructed. Reactivity to the researcher can be reduced or minimised through a diligent study on methodological practices and experience, or the researcher can report reactivity as a matter of his or her uniqueness in the field in itself is useful data.

In the article "Keeping The Self Intact in The Time of Cultural Wars", Emerson (1996) espouses the need for the researcher to accept his identity. Emerson discusses Bakhtin's thought on how it is important to declare one's status as a researcher while semi-participating in the lives of the people s/he want to study. This way of approaching the researcher/researched interface yields a much more in-depth constructed data rather than engaging in a futile attempt to eliminate the effects of the researcher or regard the researcher's presence as an obstacle to efficient research. Schuman (1982) buttresses this point by explaining that the presence of the ethnographer should be seen as a deeper opportunity to understand both responses and respondents.

In sum, ethnography to me has become one of the most useful ways to study social phenomenon because it has changed over time and is strong on reflexivity. The initial criticism of ethnography was the lack of objectivity labelled against it by positivist orientations. This caused social philosophers including Khun, Feyerabend, Gadamer and many others to develop an approach for the study of social research. Ethnography has, over

the years, been challenged about its ability to capture social meaning and has been refined appropriately to include reflexivity.

In my opinion, reflexivity plays an important role in the ethnographic approach making the knowledge it produces honest. The challenge that other approach such as positivist and naturalism faced to the study of social behaviour is because they lacked reflexivity and sought to distance the researcher from the researched. Reflexivity, however, provides the bases to produce accounts of the social world and justify them without a need to refer or appeal to the objectivity of the positivist worldview but the position and story of the researcher.

3.1.2 My ethnographic story (why I chose ethnography)

I decided on ethnography because of its emphasis on reflexivity and intersubjectivity[22]. Goodall Jr (2000, p. 137) defines reflexivity as "the process of personally and academically reflecting on lived experiences in ways that reveal the deep connections between the writer and her or his subject" and suggests that "to be reflexive means to turn back on yourself the lens through which we are interpreting the world." In social enquiry, the focus is on human behaviour and culture, which is studied through interaction. The emphasis on the need to pause and think about how the researcher's own story and presence influence the meaning been constructed is extremely important; fortunately, the ethnographic approach particularly lends itself to such reflections. Van Maanen (2011, p. XIX) further buttresses the personhood of the researcher and the importance of reflexivity by arguing that all ethnographic research is "highly particular and hauntingly personal" and that "any effort to detach oneself from one's work is bound to be quixotic" (unrealistic).

In encouraging reflexivity, ethnography emphasises lifeworld because this is what makes possible the doing of social research (Berry, 2011). The lifeworld is the story that one

[22] The idea that meaning should be constructed with the researched than the researcher

brings along to the research field. A consideration of the lifeworld is important because it helps to consider all the necessary lived experiences or conditions that must come together to make the ethnographic experience possible thus avoiding allocating too much emphasis on the researcher's agency. It entails the researcher recognising his social position or what is commonly referred to as positionality in ethnographic research.

Madison (2011) explains that positionality is vital because it forces us to acknowledge our power, privilege and biases just as we are critical of the power structures that surround us and our subjects. When we turn back reflexivity, we are accountable for our research paradigms, our positions of authority and our moral responsibility relative to representation and interpretation. Declaring our position in the research also makes the ethnographer ethical in his research and contributes to producing an ethic, rich and fair cultural accounts of the researched.

Gonzalez (2003, pp. 83-84) explains that ethic accountability is not just the telling of the ethnographic tale. It is the telling of our story or how we came to know the ethnographic tale, in other words, "what is the story of our story". An ethical ethnographic tale holds implicit that the teller can at any point of the research, tell the story of the ethnographic story. In confronting our own stories as ethnographic researchers, Berry (2008) explains that the ethnographer should ask more inclusive questions such as what storied experiences do we bring to the cultural inquiry? What experiences does the ethnography present to us? How does that relationship of experience shape who we are as a person and methodologist of ethnography?

In chapter one, I briefly touched on a volunteering experience that motivated my interest in researching child-focus NGOs. Other lived experiences have also made me more prone to ethnography when researching social behaviour. After my bachelor's degree, I moved to the United Kingdom with the plans of working for a while and then taking on

graduate studies. After about six months in London, I moved to Dover, where I had a job offer related to my field of training. However, I also found myself living in a predominantly, community, which was less cosmopolitan as London. For the first time, I became aware of the idea of been treated as the "other" and what it felt like to be "othered". This experience, however, has instilled in me the need to minimise harming anyone seemingly different from me; in this case, my participants by othering them.

Although I had this caution in mind, there were a few situations during data collection that seem to make 'othering' in the field inevitable. For instance, there were a few times that taking a notebook to jot down some very important things that my participants had said made me apprehensive because of the idea that they will be portrayed as the "other" been studied. However, I realised that because I had honestly declared to them that I was a researcher trying to learn from them, my reactions to othering research participants through the use of a field notebook were rather farfetched since participants continued their activities as normal when they saw me writing in my field notebook.

My experience of been treated as the "other" in Dover has also made me develop a knack for peaceful communication to avoid confrontation. I realise that interactions inevitably may lead to conflicts due to subjectivity. For example, I was aware that within the NGO where I conducted the study, there would be many interactions some positive others not. Some of my participants will demand to know what I am writing about them, which will develop into agreements or disagreements. However, going into the field, I was aware of this challenge and prepared to be cautious and refrain from the harmful representation of participants.

I am also mindful of entry and eventual exit from the research field. The fact that I will be leaving my participants has also positioned me not to develop intimate relations that will outlast the research encounter. My experience in living in the United Kingdom and exiting it

without leaving behind long term associations has trained me to enter into participants world, participate in it and to leave the physical presence intact to the best of my ability.

I have also learnt to be extremely observant due to my past life experience a virtue which naturally lends itself to participant observation. In the predominantly White community of Dover, some White groups preferred not to have other nationalities mix with them; it was important for me to be observant of my surroundings to decrease the chance of getting emotionally, verbally or physically abused. As a result, I regularly watched out for the expressions on the faces of a person or groups of people approaching me on the streets. When I had to use alleyways and subways, I checked out for the gender composition and demeanour of people to reduce the chances of confrontation.

Since this experience, attentiveness to my surroundings and watching out for behaviour cues has come easily to me, making me somehow a "natural" field observer. Because I have lived with the experience of been "othered", using ethnography did put me in a position of greater sensitivity to my research participants. Moreover, my constant reading of the latest developments in ethnographic research and methods better inform me about research practices that could be harmful or silences participants. One of my key goals during the research encounter is to create a good working researcher-participant relationship; this is possible if I am sensitive to the communication between myself and participants.

The experience I have related above is what Gonzalez (2003) will refer to us the story of my ethnographic story. The account is unique to me and my experiences and my conception of accountability. It guided me to confront how I am implicated in the whole ethnographic journey and to explain the reasons for the selection of particular tools for the collection of data with the participating child-focus NGO

3.1.3 Ethnography and the study of child-focus NGOs

Ethnography, as I have explained above, is about writing up society from observations and dialogues that ensue between the researcher and the researched. It assumes that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors (Bryman, 2012). Thus, a need for direct involvement and interaction with social actors, during which meaningful access must be established between the researcher and the participants for a considerable period.

I decided on ethnography because it is suited to research interactions within the areas of childhood construction, which are often silenced by NGO reports and yet essential to understanding their activities. Working under the cloak of all-encompassing policies or interventions, the activities of child-focused NGOs are often not analysed. In addition, ethnography can reveal insights into the social practices of child-focused NGOs, drawing attention to the nature of policy language, (e.g. catchphrases such as participation, empowerment, equality etc.) and how it is positioned to enrol supporters and create common goals for heterogeneous networks.

Ethnography can also reveal how child-focused interventions transform those who buy into them (community members, government officials, parents, etc.) make intervention part of their own social and cultural space. Ethnography further covers dimensions that quantitative approach may not be able to cover. It allows the social researcher to get beyond figures and the quantifying of social life by exploring and putting meaning to cultures that guide people's actions. Ethnography, with its emphasis on lengthy interactions with participants, is important in understanding how activities of child-focused NGOs unfold in a particular setting.

3.2 Duration of fieldwork and tools for development ethnography

Ethnography demands a lengthy period in the research field, with a focus on participating, observing and engaging in dialogues with the researched to construct meanings in context (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Walsh, 2013). To stay focus in the field and prevent the data collection becoming an aimless wondering or adventurous sightseeing, I developed a schedule to guide my activities in the field.

Activity	Data collection (January 2018- July 2018)							Transcription and Analysis			
	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	April.	May	June.	July.	Aug.	Sept	Oct.	Nov.
Ethical clearance & Lit Review (Ghana)	■	■									
Piloting and necessary changes			■								
Permission at the local level (Government Ministry and Head of NGO)				■							
Data collection: IDI + Observation + informal conversations				■	■	■	■	■			
Transcription and Analysis							■	■	■		
Discussion of data with participant & leaving the field									■		
Post Field Work Presentation										■	
Presentation at conferences											■
Writing thesis and manuscripts for publication											■

Figure 4: Source Author: Research and data collection Schedule

The schedule helped in experiencing deeper reflexivity during the seven-month data collection period; it constantly reminded me of my status as a researcher. It helped me to be critical and to question routine behaviours that my participants had taken for granted in the field.

The data collection schedule, among other things, also helped me to engage in purposeful observation of participants. The schedule helped me to remember that I was not just there to participate in the lives of the participant but also to study their way of life using observation and other tools. At every point during the fieldwork, the schedule helped me to select a particular tool to help in the data collection process.

Specialised and appropriate tools are needed when collecting ethnographic data. Gillespie and Cornish (2010, p. 32), explain that the use of different ethnographic tools enables a rich analysis of the different perspectives in the field and how they interact. This is because development practices involve many social actors coming together to achieve a common goal. These actors include donors, consultants, communities, and field officers who are often influenced by different perspectives and thus must negotiate their various subjective realities to achieve an intersubjective project goal

In studying intersubjectivity, Prus (1996) further argues that ethnographers should deploy the most suitable tools. These tools foment the entering into the everyday lives of people, to participate in their lives, to talk and to observe and to operate with people within their lived context. However, no matter the suitability of the tool used, interactions with participants can always be subjected to intersubjective analyses. In that, what the participants say might not be the same as what the hearer understands due to the dependence on each other to construct meaning (Bakhtin, 1986; Gillespie & Cornish, 2010), thus, it was important to use different tools to enhance the understanding of interactions and also to achieve triangulation.

3.2.1 Tools for data collection

Semi-participant observation at NGO offices

The first phase of the data collection was conducted in the offices of the participating NGO. This was in the form of observations, informal conversations, in-depth interviews, and semi participation in the routines of NGO workers[23]. Before entering the field, I had decided that observations that were not recorded in some form or the other were not data. Thus, I always had a small notebook and a pencil to note down activities that were of importance to the

[23] A detail account on how I went about getting permission and establishing rapport in the offices of the NGO, is explained in chapter four of this dissertation

research. Apart from observing and noting down the settings of the NGO offices, I conducted a formal in-depth interview where I tape-recorded data. However, after careful consideration of the mechanical way in which the in-depth interview unfolded, I decided it's either I find a way to build trust and engage informally with the field officers or I will end up with the very superficial information that I hope to avoid. In the end, I was able to engage more informally with the field officers (see chapter 4)

I took daily field notes during the three months of semi participant observation at the offices of the participating NGO. I jotted down phrases and words and in some cases, whole sentences in a notebook during an event or a day. I also recorded the context in which conversations were taking place and who was doing more of the talking and the listening. I noted down the general physical and emotional condition of participants and the actions that interactions do elicit. Then at the end of the day in the privacy of my room, I reflect on the day's events and write out fuller and more detailed notes and notes. I often reviewed my notes regularly and wrote notes on notes. I also kept a diary and a calendar to log events and listed activities that I participated in. I noted down all the people I spoke with within the NGO offices, and later observed their authority and influence within the organisation.

The use of a notebook was good for the collection of data for analyses. However, there were a few times that some NGO staff did change their line of conversation when I took my notebook to record events. These were the instances that semi-participant observation proved invaluable and important for the collection of in-depth data on the activities of the NGO. This is because it made me reflect on activities that were staged because of my presence as a researcher. I always thought about how much my presence affected their normal activities and vice versa. However, in most cases, the participants were aware of my status as a researcher; thus, when this reality kicks in participants seems to relax and continue their activities. Also, in many instances, NGO Field Staff were quick to explain some observations

to me before I even asked. My participation in the activities of the NGO staff also provided me with an opportunity where meanings of NGO terms were learned with great precision because I had their use in context and of the NGO office.

Throughout my stay in the field, semi-participants observations, precede interviews. This sequence helped to ask for explanations on issues observed, but not understood such as why child-focus NGOs concentrate their activities on mostly cocoa growing areas of Ghana and no other areas where children are known to engage in work. Further, the seven months stay in the field allowed me to observe the interaction that went on between NGO officials and local farmers. Also, through observations, I was able to make sense of topics that NGO officials were not able to explain because such questions were not constantly discussed among them, for instance, NGO officials hardly asked how local knowledge on childhood development benefit children; they simply in most cases assume there is no benefit on such knowledge.

As a semi-participant observer, I was able to detect activities and practices that my participants may have taken for granted. This could be because they were accustomed and uncritical about such activities. For example, when writing reports, participants completed forms with specific questions. How could they report on the unexpected things that happen in the field, this was a constant question on my mind? However, I always reminded myself as noted by Walsh (2013), that an extended stay in the field may cause me to become adapted to some of these practices and cause me to ignore them as well; thus I was extremely vigilant. The last caution I took on participant observation was to make sure I did not develop too cordial a relationship in the field. This was to avoid a situation where participants will behave in a way that they think will serve my purpose as a researcher. I also avoided extensive cordiality because, in the end, it would have been difficult to end such relationships when it was time to leave the field.

In-depth interviews

In-Depth Interviews (IDI) was important and useful because it allowed for the accessing of attitudes and values of participants. Usually, to start the interview, I will ask an open-ended question such as what is the general condition of children in this community. This form of questioning was important in two ways.

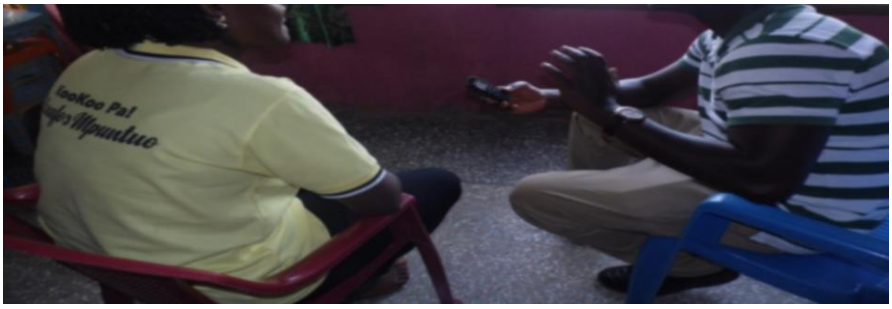


Figure 5, Source Author: The researcher with an audio recorder in hand conducting an in-depth interview with a field officer

First, it helped me to understand issues that I had observed but could not comprehend among children in the community; secondly, it helped to explore emotions and beliefs that go far beyond what a quantitative questionnaire could achieve. Interviews also helped to understand some of the assumptions of research participants on the intervention.

During interviews, I focused on how the interviewee opened and closed conversations. I also watched out for the assigning of responsibility, the claiming of authority, and mode of introduction of topics. The interviewees chose the venue for the interviews; this helped to create a welcoming and flexible space in which interviewees were relaxed to speak in their voice and expressions. Interviews also allowed me to observe silences and other nonverbal cues of interviewees. Silences were very important because in some instances it meant interviewees were withholding information or do not have the words to express what they want to say; such situations will usually cause me to probe further or rephrase a question to make them clearer. A lot of data was also captured during informal conversations — casual chats with participants.

Informal dialogues and third-person data elicitation were important to understand the motives of participants. In this form of data collection, I asked my participants about the activities and challenges of other child-focused NGOs other than their own. The advantages of such dialogues were clear. Participants were more forthcoming with information about their competitors. At the end of such conversations, I had collected data with the general realities and challenges of NGOs in the child-focused field, including the participating NGO. An important and unexpected advantage that came with third-person data elicitation was that after the sessions, potential participants easily agreed to participate in the research because I had built trust and a cordial relationship with them.

In all these encounters, I took the research to my participants and tried not to separate them from their "natural" places of operations for the sake of conducting research. In the end, semi-participant observation and informal conversations proved to be a useful tool for the ethnographic data collection I embarked on. However, it was my awareness of the expectations in using such a method, that positioned me to apply it in a way to derive quality in-depth data from my participants during the research encounter. However, during interviews, there were some terms that participants used, which I did not understand. Focus Group Discussions were very useful in handling such challenges.

Focus group discussion

I conducted two focus group discussions at the rural sites. One was with cocoa farmers who had come for the workshops organised by participating NGO, and the other was with cocoa farmers who lived in the community and were not necessarily associated with the NGO. I met and became friendly with the farmers who associate with the participating NGO during the intervention workshops organised by NGO field officers. As a semi-participating observer, I usually sat with the farmers during the workshop and did not participate in presenting workshop material on the prevention of child labour.

Farmers who were curious about my presence asked why I was not with the NGO staffs at the front of the audience explaining the intervention. I clarified my status as a student researcher, who was there to study how the interventions were implemented and to interact with farmers on their perspectives on the intervention. They asked about the university I study from, which then headed our conversation to life in Hong Kong and nature and work ethic of Hong Kong (Chinese) people. My constant association with the farmers during the various workshops that were held helped me to develop rapport and a cordial relationship with them. At the end of one workshop, nine of the farmers whose social and economic situation was representative of the cocoa farmer community agreed to have a focus group discussion with me.

Figure 6 Source Author: The researcher in a green and white shirt engages with cocoa farmers in a focus group discussion after the close of a workshop on preventing child labour on cocoa farms and keeping children in school.

At the start of the focus group, an initial banter and refreshment of soft drinks helped to relax an otherwise formal situation. During refreshment, I introduced myself one more time, passed informed consent to them, which I then read in English and explained in both English and the local language. I also declared my status as a student from Hong Kong Polytechnic University (see appendix for information sheet) and showed my identity card to dissociate myself from the NGO field staff in the minds of the cocoa farmers. The conversation and data that ensued have been discussed in chapter five of this dissertation.

I recruited the participating cocoa farmers for the second focus group discussion through a local opinion leader who was associated with the NGO intervention. I had rented a room in this opinion leader's house; this helped me to develop a good friendly relationship

with him. He introduced me to several local parents and told them about my research on childhood development. The opinion leader was very instrumental in serving as a gatekeeper to local parents in the community. Throughout the recruitment process, I took steps to ensure participants were theoretically comprehensive and had variable backgrounds and contexts. The atmosphere in the second focus group was as cordial as the first because I followed the right steps to break the ice just as I did for the first focus group described above.

The focus groups took place at the local community centre, a venue that was familiar with all participants. The discussions proved to be a great opportunity to know what the farmers thought about the intervention and their perspectives on rural formal education and children's work and development; the discussions were captured on an audio recorder. In order not to prevent the group discussion from becoming an aimless chat, I used a semi-structured interview guide, which I had memorised to prevent the situation from becoming formalised. Questions asked included; what is the best way to raise children in this community? What makes a young person successful? What are the issues to formal education in the community? Why do children drop out of school? Can you describe how you have benefited from the NGO intervention programmes? Etc.

Focus groups were great for the comparison of participants' response. Participants were good at clarifying the local meaning of what each other meant and added to it. They also responded to each other's ideas on some issues I had observed in the field, which helped in producing a comprehensive and in-depth data.

Semi-participant observation at the rural field site

I used spot-check observations during my observational and familiarity walkabout in the community (Paolisso & Hames, 2010). I was usually in the company of a local opinion leader during these sessions. He served a useful purpose in providing some explanations. Using the

snowball technique, 12 households whose circumstances (i.e. parents were cocoa farmers and had children who attended school) were important to the research in the community were selected for direct observation. It was important to use such criteria because the childhood development intervention of the participating child-focused NGO was to encourage basic education while discouraging child labour. The direct observations helped in identifying among other things activities that caused children to be 1) low attendees in schools 2) class repeaters and low achievers 3) sporadic attendance to the extent that they were unable able to follow the curriculum at school, and finally 4) why they engage in child labour.

Two houses out of the 12 were selected to be studied in each weekday during my stay in the field. These random visits were aimed at observing the activities of children at a time when they were supposed to be in school. If children were not in school, the activities they were involved in at the time of visit were noted in a field book. It was common to see, children engaged in household chores such as fetching water, firewood and helping parents with economic activities. Through informal conversations with parents to establish clarity on the chore, the activity observed was marked in my field notebook as likely to cause the child to be late to school, too tired to participate in meaningful academic work when in school or a cause for absenteeism.

Spot-check observations were also used to note down and reflect on the activities of parents and children at the first point of contact (See Paolisso and Hames 2010: 364-365). The spot check observation was usually recorded outside homes but during school hours. The focus of the spot-check was to study how activities conducted by children but influenced by parents, affected children's ability to participate in basic education. After a large sample of spot-checks was noted, it was possible to have a reasonable understanding of parents and children's work-related activities during weekdays (school hours). For example, it was obvious most children were absent from school or exceptionally late during market days

(Fridays) because they helped parents to transport agricultural produce to market for sale in the morning or they engage in economic activities such as head pottering on the market.

Figure 7, Source Author: Spot-check observation at the rural research site. Children are seen carrying water to the farm. Informal conversations revealed that the parents were waiting for the water to mix with chemicals and apply it on plants using a knapsack sprayer. This was about 9:30 am on a Friday when children were expected to be in school

Spot-check observations sometimes produced deep and troubling emotions in me while collecting data. This was particularly the case where I observed children engaged in work, which I thought were above their age. I often had to defend against such emotions by assuring myself that my concerns were due to my background and higher education.

After a lengthy engagement with participants, I realised I had reached a saturation point. The responses by my participants, particularly farmers, during the focus group discussions were essentially repeated during formal and informal conversations. For example, the idea that children working were a way for them to learn a skill was one of the main themes in conversations which were repeated by parents. This buttress the importance of conducting data collection using multiple tools and conducting several meetings with different groups of participants to triangulate results and verify their applicability. The repetition of data also indicated that it was time to end the data collection session. The intensive data collection, use of technology such as audio recorders, and photo cameras had resulted in the collection of large amounts of data, which demanded careful management and analysis.

3.2.2 Data management and dialogical analysis

All data collected were securely kept to protect the identity of participants. A personal laptop with a password was used to secure all information about the research encounter. Data collected were further backed up on an external hard drive and stored in a safe box under

lock and key. After transcribing, recorded data were erased, and all names were coded in the transcription, making it impossible to follow the identity of research participants. Transcribed data were marked with alphabets that matched with a participant list stored separately on another storage device.

Dialogical analysis was used to ascribe meaning to participants' utterances, interactions, and transcribed data collected. The use of dialogism was important because there was a need to consider analytically intersubjectivity, which is inherent in interactional and observational data. Linell (2009) explains that dialogism goes beyond immediate utterances to consider situations transcending phenomena. The approach also takes the analysis beyond the individual as the basic unit but focuses on the communicative relationship as the primary unit of analysis. In that sense, dialogism, takes the analysis of the utterance beyond what Bakhtin (1986) refers to as the acoustic blast but includes the expected audience to which it orients and the actual audience it finds.

First to familiarise myself with the data and ascribe meaning, audio recordings were listened to several times and transcribed. The text, including field notes, were repeatedly read and photos were carefully studied (See Finlay & Gough, 2008). Field notes helped to reflect on the context in which utterances were made, what the speakers were doing, who was being addressed, who was doing the talking, what future was being constituted by the speaker and the addressee, and the response that ensued the utterance.

Secondly, I considered explicit direct perspectives. These were simply the statement participants had expressed, in connection with what I had observed and background data I had collected on the situation, a decision to ascribe implicit meaning to the utterance or

otherwise is then made. I then consider the statement in terms of addressivity[24] and context, to examine if an alternative direct perspective were implied.

Figure 8 Coding frame for a dialogical analysis of intersubjectivity (Adapted from Gillespie & Cornish, 2010)

Level	Explicit	Implicit
Direct perspective (S⇨X)	Statements that explicitly communicate a direct perspective "I love going to the rural field sites."	Statement that can be interpreted as revealing a direct perspective "I love going to the rural field sites" (i.e. I do not see why I should stay in the office).
Metaperspective (S⇨O⇨X)	Characterisation that explicitly communicate a metaperspective "she said I love going to the rural field sites."	Quotation or characterisation that can be interpreted as revealing a metaperspective "she said I love going to the rural field site (i.e. she does not like office work).
Meta-metaperspective (S⇨O⇨S⇨X)	Quotation or characterisation that explicitly communicates a meta-metaperspective "He keeps telling people that I said I love going to the rural field sites."	Quotation or characterisation that can be interpreted as revealing a meta-metaperspective "He keeps telling people that I said I love going to the rural field sites" (He is trying to make me appear as if I hate working from the office).

Third, I considered metaperspectives (i.e. quotations in statements). This was done in the context of the background information I had about participants making the statement; with metaperspectives, the decision to ascribe an explicit or implicit meaning depended on prior information I had about participants making the statements. Meta-metaperspectives were rarely used in the analysis of the data collected in this study. The dialogical process elicited critical and thoughtful examination of preliminary conclusions and a reconsideration of dataset. After this iterative process, I was thoroughly familiar with the data and the basic meanings of participants' utterances and actions.

Basic meanings identified bordered on issues such as the importance of funding to NGO activities; parents' attitudes toward formal schooling; the importance of interpretive communities, importance parents attached to children working, frustration at the structure

[24] Addressivity is a term by Mikhail Bahktin to explain live speech. He explains that "any understanding in live speech, a live utterance is inherently responsive… any utterance is a link in the chain of communication" (speech Genres, 64, 68)

and quality of available formal education, the importance of basic formal education to rural parents, Etc. These basic meanings were refined to form bsic themes and then further into eight organising themes. The organising themes were grouped into three global themes. Links between themes were explored and cross-analysed across communities and different groups of participants.

In addition, I categorised professionals into different groups based on the nature of their work with children. NGO Officials; these included administrative and frontline workers of child-focused NGOs ensuring child protection. Technical Professionals (TPs), these included basic school teachers and Social welfare professional and were at the forefront of working with children. During analysis, the categorisation of professionals became further necessary because there were significant differences in their perspectives on rural schooling and children's work (See Anthony 2011, for similar categorisation). There were many challenges I had to deal with though before the collection of data, the main one been ethically positioning myself in a way that was acceptable to my participants.

3.3 Ethics and positionality

Research ethics are agreed-on standards that serve to ensure that most importantly, harm is not done, and respect and justice are assured. These accepted principles may vary from discipline to discipline, but the overarching aim is to ensure that there is a balance between the interest of the participant and the researcher. Positionality on the hand entails the researcher recognising his social position in relations to the research participants in the following paragraphs; I will discuss how these two concepts played out in the field.

To keep the trust as a researcher, I followed approved ethical standards both in academia and within the cultural context where I collected data. Before going to the field, the research proposal was submitted for ethical approval to the Human Subjects Ethics Sub-Committee (HSESC) of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. The committee reviewed the merits of

the proposal and gave the green light for data collection to commence. In Ghana, I submitted a letter to the appropriate authorities before contacting any potential participants (see appendix for permissions granted). Throughout my fieldwork, I ensured that the way I administered ethics, was in tandem with the research settings, and the basic requirements of justice, respect and no harm.

No payment or gift was given out or expected by participants. I explained to all that the exercise was voluntary, however, as a practice, I refreshed my participants with soft drinks before starting focus group discussions, this helped in most cases to break the tension and rub off shyness as we engaged in informal conversation before the start of the discussion. I also felt obliged to compensate caregivers who had travelled and taken time off their daily activities to participate in the focus group discussion. These monetary compensations were given only at the end of the sessions; participants had no idea this will be done; hence, their responses were not influenced. No participants were coerced or felt coerced to participate because they were all well informed about the purpose of the meeting.

Before starting a discussion, an informed consent form detailing the reason and nature of the research were explained to all participants (See appendix for informed consent). This was done in both English and the local language of the interviewees. It also informed participants that the study might not directly benefit them; however, the results of the study may contribute to new knowledge and understanding of the work of NGOs working with them as cocoa farmers. It may also help NGOs and other agencies in planning programs that will be useful and beneficial to parents in the community and beyond.

I asked permission before taking photographs. Participants were further informed that they could pass a question if they thought it was emotionally difficult during interviews with no negative consequences. I informed participants about interview sessions a minimum of one week before the actual interview date. In all this, I made the best of attempts not to disrupt

the normal schedules of participants and to balance power by playing down my position as a researcher.

I am a Ghanaian researching fellow Ghanaians. Before undertaking this fieldwork, I saw my position as free from the classical tradition of what Pink and Morgan (2013, p. 6) has referred to as the "Lone Ethnographer" out in an exotic space in search for otherness. However, during the research encounter, a series of activities and incidents made me come to an important realisation often glossed over by native researchers.

In ethnographic encounters, native researchers often celebrate the privileges of being an insider. Such a stance, however, fails to expose the negotiations on several occasions of identity and legitimacy that is necessary even for native researchers to be approved into the lifeworld of the researched. Nelson (1996) in explaining the situation of the native ethnographer claims that they are seldom considered as insiders by default, but rather they experience a series of "gradation and endogeny" through the course of their fieldwork; this was certainly true in my case.

At the initial stages of fieldwork, some actions and utterances of my potential participants, made me question how native I was in their eyes. These deep-seated reflections that I had were very important because research participants play an important role in the ethnographic enquiry. In the case of this study, NGO field officers had a great influence on the people and the places to which I had access to during the field encounter and their willingness to give me this access was based on their perception of me. However, the self-concept that NGO field officers did develop about me was through the interaction, and the information they had gleaned for themselves through our conversations.

I am a young male studying for a PhD abroad. The identities that were ascribed to me by NGO field officers made it a challenge for me to identify myself as a local or a native person like them while at the same time as a researcher. Through our conversations, NGO

field officers had come to learn my educational background of attending a prestigious senior high school and my bachelor's degree from the premier University of Ghana, thus even though at a point in time our relationship had become informal, NGO field officers referred to me as "Honourable". Although the term was used in a playful bearing, the title is reserved for important political figures in Ghana. Thus this informed me that I was seen as an important person amongst the NGO field officer and not the native insider I assumed I was before the research encounter.

After three months of association with my participants in the NGO offices, this privileged "other" they had associated with me seems to have waned. They now used my first name to refer to me regularly. However, it was also the case that a couple of NGO field officers always made it a point to engage me in intellectual discourse. Which I later learned was a calculated effort for these NGO officials to assert their intellectual capabilities over their colleagues in the office by demonstrating that they can hold their own, when debating a PhD researcher. It was obvious that while I was there to gaze at the researched, they were equally gazing at me to manipulate me to their advantage; in the eyes of the participants, I was not native enough although Ghanaian. However, continues association with them resolved this to an appreciable level.

The privileged identity that NGO field officials had tagged me with further played out in the rural field. I lived in the house of an opinion leader as a tenant. He served a useful purpose in introducing me to the rural folks during my walkabout in the community. Unbeknownst to me, my status as a researcher and my identity as a highly educated young person coming from Accra (capital of Ghana) served to bolster the affluence of the local opinion leader and his self-ascribed elite status. A situation, which nearly cost me the opportunity to interact with other cocoa farmers in the community.

My eagerness to be friendly with other local farmers I was introduced to, and my request to visit and interact with these farmers, seem to symbolise a public threat to the local opinion leader's self-concept. This became apparent to me when the local opinion leader told me during an informal conversation that he could give me all the information I need about the intervention since he had direct contact with the NGO field officers than any other farmer in the community. Of course, I went ahead, visited the other farmers, and had informal conversations with them and a focus group discussion. This helped in clearing any suspicions among other local farmers that I was an elite person who only associated with the local opinion leader. However, throughout my fieldwork, I had to negotiate my association with the opinion leader and the other farmers carefully to preserve my loyalties to both communities

At the end of the research encounter, I came to the appreciation that while it was true that I was a native Ghanaian researching Ghanaians, which of course served to my advantage, it by no means guaranteed my acceptance as a trustworthy researcher in my native country. However, a demonstrated knowledge of this reality, my constant effort to dissociate myself from such circumstances and determination to use appropriate language accepted by participants helped in entrenching the trust participants had developed for me

3.3.1 Language and legitimacy in the field

The language used in my interaction with the participants were English and Twi (Twi is the local language of the farmers and my mother tongue). The choice of one of these languages was based on the preference of the participants and my observation of the language that is often used by the participant since I was fluent in both languages. In the offices of the NGO, it was often English laced with Twi. I was aware that my degree of communicative competence, which is my ability to use and interpret the style of the spoken language in

various contexts, would determine to a significant degree my ability to enter the lifeworld of participants.

To me, what was most important when I engaged with participants was my ability to adapt to their discourse style. This is because the various styles used by the different participants were also a portrayal of their cultural identities. I was aware that my ability to master the language style would determine whether I would be allowed into the culture of NGO field officers and other participants or otherwise. In the offices of the NGO, it was easy to adapt to their style because I could easily use some of the development buzzwords common to NGOs due to my extensive secondary data collection on their guidance documents

At the rural sites, I had to put in much effort to use the Twi common to the farmers. The farmers use the original form of the Twi language without any English words. They were also accustomed to using idioms and proverbs in the local language, which, although I understood, could not use properly in my speech with them. Interviews done with the rural farmers were all in the local language. During translation, however, there were times I had to play back some recordings to two independent translators to ensure the reliability of what had been said by the farmers.

In the end, displaying competence in the specialised language of the NGO staff and conducting interviews in the local language of rural cocoa farmers helped in earning the trust and cooperation, which produced an honest interaction.

3.3.1 Quality control and data credibility

To assure the quality of data, ethnographic researchers use the term credibility, transferability, and dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The common terms used in positivist research is validity, reliability, and objectivity, which are not appropriate for this study due to the interactional nature of the study.

An important way to achieve a level of credibility when one seeks to research and explain others is to spend a long time with the researched. I did this through a long stay of seven months in the field during which I persistently and intently observed my participants going about their daily activities and having observations of interest explained to me. I also availed myself to criticism by making some aspects of the research report available to other researchers. I regularly sent a report to my supervisor for his comments during fieldwork. I was also flexible and searched for emerging instances in the field that challenged and demanded reformation of my objectives.

Denzin (1978, p. 302) further recommends the triangulation of methods to build credibility in qualitative data. He argues that "The rationale for this strategy is that the flaws of one method are often the strengths of another: and by combining methods, observers can achieve the best of each while overcoming their unique deficiencies" He observes four ways through which triangulation can be achieved; namely data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation and methodological triangulation.

In this research, I used method and data triangulation to build credibility. I used diverse methods, i.e. participants' observation, in-depth interviews and focused group discussions. I also gleaned data from secondary sources and local reports on child-focused NGOs. The final path I used to build credibility in the data I collected was member checking or validation. This mechanism is recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 314) to instil credibility in qualitative research. Per their recommendation, I showed aspects of the interview transcript to some of my participants to verify their meaning in interviews, and also to determine if their thoughts have been captured accurately.

Because generalisation of some kind is inevitable in research, I aimed at transferability of my research findings. Transferability is usually the aim of interpretive research instead of generalisation due to the context-specific of interpretive inquiry. In this research, I

determined to achieve this quality through a thick description of my research settings and participants. Thick description ensures that the reader of the final research report has a feeling of being in the field. Thus, positioning the reader, to assess the similarity of the settings described in the research report to the personal experience of settings familiar to the reader.

Finally, the dependability of the research methods I used to collect data is assured because I availed it for auditing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To achieve this, I made my research methods available to be checked for clarity and conciseness. I systematically recorded my 'audit trail' namely documentation of data, methods, and decision I took and in some circumstances, was forced to take on the field. The end product of such decisions was made available for assessing, and verification.

3.3.2 Chapter summary

This chapter has discussed the reasons for the ethnographic approach to this study. Ethnography to me is a particular kind of looking, listening and thinking about a social phenomenon. It does not demand a prior commitment to a distinctive kind of knowledge about the social world and how it can be understood, but the researcher's ability not to quickly conclude the motives of participants. It also calls for attention to appearances and motives, although this shouldn't be taking at face value and an analysis of how people act, including what they take for granted as a result of familiarity.

The historical and theoretical underpinnings of ethnography have led to the approach been respectful of the subjects it studies. The opposition to attempts to understand social life in terms of fixed determinant relationships helped to develop ethnography as a process to the study of social life. The shift from the analyses of text to the construction of meaning shows that ethnography does not see universalities in meaning, making it particularly suited for studying the human phenomenon.

The importance of reflexivity in ethnography cannot be overstated. It helps the ethnographer to be honest about his or her position going into the field and the fact that the ethnographer is currently working with what is assumed as knowledge while admitting that it can be erroneous or new knowledge can make them inaccurate. Reflexivity also includes declaring the effects of the presence of the researcher on the data collected. Apart from the process approach to the study of cultures that make ethnography particularly useful, my own experience of been "othered" has made me particularly sensitive to actions that will cause me to "other" my participants during the actual data collection. The appropriate tools identified to collect data were the traditional interviews, focus group discussions, observations, and informal conversations.

However, after identifying the right approach to be used, I had to setup the study and get the right permissions from participants. In what follows I present how I met government officials and NGO bureaucrats to get access to participants and engage with participants

Chapter Four: Social Actors, Networks and Translations

The interpretations offered by the… actors are performatives. They prove themselves by transforming the world in conformity with their perspective on the world. By stabilising their interpretations…(Latour & Porter, 1996, p. 194)

…aim at producing thick descriptions whose general value is to be judged by readers when they use those descriptions to understand new situations in which they are interested or involved…(Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 234)

4. Introduction

This chapter details the building of networks to support the childhood development intervention by frontline NGO officers in a rural community. It aims to, through thick description, transfer the reader to the field sites to have a first-hand encounter with the research participants. Guided by the principles of Actor Network Theory (ANT), the agency of both animate and inanimate objects are critically analysed in this chapter.

The issues involved are illustrated by reference to encounters that happened mainly between NGO field officers and cocoa farmers on the one side and between NGO field officers on the other and the researcher of the study project. Thus the findings reported here focuses on contextual fieldwork situations involving critical dialogue between social actors, which end product constitutes this study.

The interactions reported are not rigid but are adapted according to the dispositions of the participants and an attempt to get access to their meanings on the issues under discussion. There were several moments in the field, where what was required was not just human agency to contact social actors, but the need to take into cognisance what Giddens (1984, p. 6) define as the "knowledgeability and capability of all humans to change a pre-existing course in the circumstantial world in which they live." There was a need to explore the culturally

constructed disparities of human agency and the concrete forms of discursive and non-discursive means expressed through different actor strategies and conceptions of power (see Arce & Long, 1992, p. 214). However, getting access and developing a rapport that allows a researcher into the lifeworld of people working in organised institutions such as NGO field officers demands meticulous planning and time.

I started prospecting for potential participants for the study by writing formal letters to as many child-focused NGOs as possible. The letter explained the research proposal and encouraged potential participants to express interest. Within about a month, I served 21 NGOs with letters, and after about another month of waiting, I received replies from eight all in the negative. Meanwhile, the one-month waiting time was used to collect secondary data on child-focused NGOs. This exercise involved careful analyses of the guidance document used by child-focused NGOs. My main aim was to find out which documents had the most influence on NGO activities.

The collection and analysis of secondary data happened between December 2017 and January 2018. The exercise pointed to an important finding that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) serves as the main guidance document for many NGOs and indeed nations of the world. Article four (Protection rights) of the UNCRC directs all nations that ratify the convention to harmonise their national laws with the convention. Thus, any NGO working with a national law where the country is a signatory to the UNCRC directly or indirectly works with the document.

Ghana harmonised the UNCRC into a guidance law on children in 1992. The return to democracy and the creation of a new constitution to go along with democracy helped, and made it a lot easier for Ghana to incorporate the UNCRC. However, a full-targeted reform process to bring about complete compatibility between national law and the convention started in 1995. This process brought about several legislatures aiming to protect children in

Ghana. The major one, been the passage of the Children's Law 1998 Act 560. The Act aims to ensure the protection of children's right and to ensure that families, communities and the state provide development and care for children. These legislative instruments had a real and sustained impact on the operations of child-focus NGOs

4.1. Inanimate actors with agency (I): legislation and operational documents

Agency is often attributed to humans. However, inanimate objects do exert considerable agency, which is often linked to human actions. In Actor Network Theory, the term generalised symmetry demands that the agency of both animate and inanimate objects are considered equally (Callon, 1984, 1986). In the activities of child-focus NGOs, legislative and operational documents are important examples of inanimate actors that impact the aims of NGO interventions and the construction of childhoods within nations.

Ghana, for example, has had a long history of using legislature influenced by foreign organisations to govern children (see Apt & Blavo, 1997). In the case of the current children's law 1998 Act 560, its passage was closely linked to the UNCRC which was ratified by Ghana about three months after its adoption by the United Nations General Assembly; making Ghana the first country to ratify the treaty. Experts have pointed out that a range of factors, both internal and external led to the early ratification of the UNCRC by Ghana.

Internally Ghana had already been using some legislature to protect the welfare of children. These legal instruments had a close resemblance to the UNCRC. Experts claim that an environment favourable for the implementation of the CRC had long been in existence in Ghana. For example, education as a birthright has always been part of the national agenda and discussion in Ghana. The education reform program of 1987 had defined basic education, as the first nine years of school (ages six to fifteen) was made compulsory and free for all in the 1961 education Act. In addition, the nature of children's work had always been regulated

in Ghana long before the ratification of the CRC. The labour decree Act of 1967 stipulated that children under the ages of 15 might be employed but only within their own families domestically doing light agricultural work or household chores.

Other internal factors that helped for the quick ratification of the UNCRC was the existence of institutions tasked with the protection of children before the CRC came into being. For example, the Ghana National Commission on Children as early as 1979 was operational in Ghana. The commission represented a useful collective effort to bring issues concerning children to the forefront of development policy and agenda. Thus, some experts such as Tengey (1998 in Child rights in Ghana reality or rhetoric) had explained that Ghana had a deeper understanding of the UNCRC because there was already in existence a plethora of activities on children, which showed that in principle there was an effort to organise and use the legislature to protect children.

External factors also influenced Ghana's adoption of the UNCRC. As explained earlier, countries ratifying the UNCRC were bound to take steps to ensure that all children irrespective of their status within their geographical boundaries have access to the rights stipulated in the UNCRC. Countries especially developing ones were assigned representatives from the UN who lobby and make sure that the stipulations of the UNCRC are adapted into national laws without much change. Ratifying countries such as Ghana are also expected to report their progress on the implementation of the UNCRC to the UN Committee on the rights of the child periodically.

These expectations also demanded that Ghana had to review its policies and legislation after 1990. Some factors that helped in the review process of the local law to meet the standard of the CRC included the return to democracy in 1992, which was influenced mainly by the United States. This and other factors put together created an enabling environment for the formation of various legal instruments, including legislature on children, which were to

form part of the 1992 constitution. Thus from 1992, provisions specific to the needs of children were enshrined in the constitution of Ghana. Article 28 of the Children's law 1998 Act 560 specifically guarantees freedom and rights of every child in Ghana in wording similar to that of the UNCRC.

The UNCRC further enjoined the parliament of Ghana to uphold and safeguard the newly formed law on children. Thus in 1995, the government established the Child Law Reform Advisory Committee. The Ghana Commission on Children instituted the committee with the aid of parliament to ensure that the status of the law on children is upheld. Among the notable works of the commission was the push for the enactment of a comprehensive law, which would serve as the reference point for the effective and prompt dispensation of justice to children. This culminated in the establishment and passage of the Children law 1998 Act 560 in 1998. The law was a comprehensive document covering almost all laws relating to children into a single child-focused legislation, while at the same time incorporating the convention into the national law of Ghana; auxiliary agencies were further formed to help in enforcement.

The work of Ghana National Commission on Children, for example, aided the passage of other laws. This includes The Juvenile Justice Act 2003 (Act 694), The Gender and Children's Policy (2002) and early childhood care and development policy. Further, to make the justice system more responsive to the needs of children and to effectively deal with violence towards children and women, The Domestic Violence, and Victim Support Unit (DOVSU) formerly the Women and Juvenile Unit (WAJU) of the Ghana police service was formed. Its services are available in all regions of Ghana and some districts.

Another important landmark achievement of the work of Ghana National commission was its efforts at the establishment of the Ministry for Women and Children Affairs

(MOWAC) now known as Gender Children and Social Protection Ministry. On their website, the ministry announces that it is tasked among other things to

> "Champion the course of all women and children through the promotion of gender equality and the survival of development protection and participation of children to achieve equal rights for women and children in the development of Ghana".

Its duties include coordinating and monitoring child responsive policies as well as overseeing their implementation within the relevant sector ministries. Organisations that it oversees include National Council on Women and Development and the National Commission on Children, the coordinating of all national multi-sectoral committee and all inter-agencies on children rights and protection which uses to be under the Ghana National Commission on Children now came under the ministry as a subsidiary department.

The ministry served as the headquarters on the protection of women and children. It helped in the establishment and decentralisation of some of its function to other institutions throughout the country such as the district assemblies, family tribunals' circuit courts, and high courts. Decentralisation helped in swift administration of Act 560 in its entirety throughout the country. In sum, the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child has had a substantial impact on the governance and administration of childhood legislature in Ghana. However, it goes further to define who a child is in Ghana by influencing the provisions under the local law on children.

4.1.1 Provisions of the Children's Law 1998 Act 560

The letter and spirit of the Children's Law 1998 Act 560 have been praised as a useful and comprehensive piece of legislation. This is because the passage of Act 560, for the first time in the legal framework of Ghana brought together the various laws relating to child protection and welfare in one document, a finale, which embodies all legal issues, relating to children.

This development has made the act a reference point for childhood issues to be easier to enforce, promote, and access.

However, Woll (2000, p. 61) has pointed out that the act is also the most visible outcome of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This is because some definitions and parts of Act 560 have a close resemblance to the UNCRC. For example, the conveners of Act 560 in defining who a child is adopted the UNCRC definition as any person who is 18 years and below. This definition helped to clarify in simple terms who a child is in Ghana. The usefulness in this definition comes from the fact that various traditional groups in Ghana have different understandings and diverse ways of defining who a child is, thus putting to rest all ambiguity.

Act 560 is divided into six parts; all parts have a close resemblance to the UNCRC. Part one focuses on the right to education and wellbeing, the best interest of the child and child participation and the right to express an opinion on a decision relating to the child's welfare — the right to protection from exploitative labour, torture and forced betrothal. In part, one also there is the introduction of the concept of district assemblies acting on behalf of the state to assume parental custody of a child who needs care and protection and is not adequately receiving such within the home.

Part two looks at an alternative to handling issues about children without resorting to the main judicial process, which can be lengthy and cumbersome. The quasi-body that is instituted to do this is known as the Child Panel. The panel, among other things, serves as the alternative to handling civil issues about non-maintenance of children parental neglect child labour or maltreatment and truancy/failure to send children to school — other matters the panel handles include minor crimes committed by children such as petty theft. The nature of the child panels helps to bring a sense of ownership to community members in the administration of child protection, welfare, and legislative process because the panel is made

up of ordinary community members. Thus, child panels could use their ways to resolves childhood challenges, as far as this process falls within the boundaries of the children law 1998 Act 560.

Part three looks at the maintenance of children; it specifies what is expected in the case of parentage, custody, and access. Per Act 560, when deciding on custody, it is important to consider the age of the child, continuity with the family and community and the desire to keep siblings together. Act 560 also put the responsibility to educate children up to the basic level, on parents. Parents are expected to give reasonable shelter as part of maintenance. Those who fail in this when reported are forced to make payments, including existing arrears.

Part four discusses adoption and fosterage; the importance of this legal provision cannot be understated. This is because fosterage is an age-old practice in traditional Ghanaian families. In the rural area, parents may sometimes foster children temporarily to extended family members to keep extended family bonds strong or to allow children to learn a trade common with other extended family members. Parents in rural areas may also foster their children to affluent extended family members in urban areas in other for these children to have better access to higher education. However, in recent times, this practice of family solidarity is being exploited, and there are reports of children been pawned by parents to people who are not extended family members; such children end up been used as labour on farmland or fishing canoes. Thus, the focus on fosterage in part four of Act 560 is an indication that the government sees the importance to put in mechanisms that protect the right of children who are fostered.

Legislature guiding the employment of children is the focus of part five. Act 560 states that children below the ages of 18 cannot take part in hazardous or exploitative labour. Act 560 explains such work as any activity that deprives a child of its health, education, moral or physical development apprenticeship and another form of light work is however allowed at

the age of fifteen in limited hours. Part six looks at institutionalised care and focuses on the regulation of both state and residential homes. The focus of part six has brought about much-needed oversight to the private institutionalised care homes, which had records of abusing children. The stipulations of part six make it possible to cancel the licence of such institutions that are not able to keep children in a suitable environment for their development.

Act 560 is well thought through and shows a genuine intent to protect and improve the wellbeing of children. However, careful consideration of Act 560 shows that parts of it are mere domestication of UNCRC without much consideration of local knowledge on childhood. For example, Act 560 copying directly from the UNCRC frowns on the non-participation in decision making by children in a culture where parents train children not to be overly opinionated especially when dealing with adults; submissiveness is encouraged in children and is seen as a virtue locally.

Another reason Act 560 is seen as a direct copy of the UNCRC is due to stipulations of the first part of the convention. UNCRC makes provision for the basic rights of the child, which includes the right to grow up with parents unless decided by a social welfare officer that it is not in the best interest of the child. The child also has the right to the following: parental property, social activity, education and wellbeing (i.e. clothing, shelter, medical attention, immunisation, and adequate diet). Other essential rights ensured are, the right to express an opinion and actively participate in decisions affecting the wellbeing of the child and the right to protection from torture, degrading treatment and forced betrothal. These are also directly provided for in Act 560 with negligible changes.

The consideration of the influence of the UNCRC on local childhood construction and legislature in Ghana draws attention to the relevance of the agency of inanimate objects. It also helped to analyse some of the actions of NGO field officers and the standards that they are required to meet in the carriage of their duties. At this point in the research process, it

was necessary to adopt other initiatives to get access to a child-focus NGO. In what follows, I detail initial encounters with potential participants and gatekeepers; and how I managed to build rapport with the NGO that finally participated in the study.

4.2 The research network: government ministers and NGO bureaucrats

The first child-focused NGO I called on was the Krobo-Danish Foundation (KDF). This is also where I encountered my first roadblock to data collection. I was told the focus of KDF had shifted from focusing on children to working with women, particularly widows and vulnerable women in the community. Thus, they indirectly help children by improving the economic situation of vulnerable mothers. The second NGO I contacted was Plan Ghana (see vignette in chapter one) where I was informed that all the information, I require for my research should be written down and sent to the country director who will respond within three months.

The above roadblocks pointed to me that researching NGO Staff in an established organisation is much different from researching down or local community members. At a point in time, I started to believe that gaining access and setting up the rapport necessary to study, NGO officials in an organisation might be an impossible task. However, at the end of the data collection period, I realised that this was not the case. The skill that came out to be much more important and quite difficult to master at the beginning was convincing elite participants that what they say is protected and will not have any consequence on them. Most NGO Staff I realised struggle with how they can respond meaningfully to the research questions asked without giving away organisational secrets.

Two things aided me to develop trust and to collect useful data from NGO staff in this research. First, to be successful with NGO Staff, well-thought-out strategies for access and rapport are often helpful and necessary. Secondly, one must be particularly alert and ready

to take advantage of opportunities as they arise; unexpected situations can create valuable openings for unimaginable access to potential participants. In the instance of this study, using my circle of friends and relations was an important strategy for gaining access to the Chief Director of the Ministry of Gender Children and Social Protection who gave me unimaginable access to child-focus NGOs (See appendix for a permission letter from the ministry).

An initial opening came when I explained my research aims to my biological brother. After the discussion, he said to me "what you want to do is to talk to people who are at the administrative level and oversee child-focus organisations about how they implement policies". My brother happens to work with the Ministry of Trade and Industry in Ghana, Ministries in Ghana have a policy of moving around their Chief Directors after they have spent a maximum of three years at one ministry thus his former boss, had been moved to the Ministry of Gender Children and Social Protection as the Chief Director. My brother wrote a short introductory letter for me to be given to the Chief Director of the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection. Before contacting the director, I did a preparatory background study of the ministry, their current focus, and the external agencies they work with, in anticipation of any questions.

As is true of elite bureaucrats, they tend to be very busy, and I expected to be told to call back another day. However, after reading the introductory letter, the Chief Directors face lit up and was surprised to learn that I was the junior brother of his former work colleague (I am much bigger and taller than my brother). After about 15 minutes chat[25] which centred on the welfare of my brother, he took the formal request letter for a research study to be conducted at the ministry and read it. In the letter, I explained that I elected to come to their

[25] This chat was extremely useful in creating an informal and cordial relation with the Chief Director and opened many otherwise inaccessible doors.

institution because all the people I have talked to before my visit have mentioned that under the new Minister and the Chief Director it has been observed that the ministry has revamped its efforts at implementing policies that aim to protect children. I enclosed a two-page information sheet in the letter spelling out as clearly as possible, the rationale for the study, goals and objectives, methodology and my credentials as a researcher.

The chief director scheduled a meeting with me and invited two of his subordinates to join in the meeting. These subordinates were from the Ghana National Commission on Children and were officers who oversaw the activities of child-focus NGOs. This second meeting was a much more formal one than the first one, and it was aimed at establishing my credentials and credibility to do the research.

Adequate preparation for meetings, when seeking the participation of people in organised institutions, is of utmost importance if one expects to gain trust and access. Before the second meeting, I made extensive groundwork on two important topics which I thought will be of much concern to the Chief Director and his two subordinates. First was how the research study would benefit them, I mentioned that the study might help to bring to light what happens on the field during the implementation of policies and also to show the extent to which the policies crafted, are implemented in the field.

My audience at this meeting were top officials who hardly go into the field to have direct contact with children and parents; thus, they were very interested in research on the activities of frontline workers. I also knew some of the issues the ministry was concerned with, and I mentioned and added that as an ethnographer trained in observation, I could probably find out more about the ministry activities, through observations and analysis of perspectives that the ministry's staffs have ignored. I explained I could do this best if I have access to and attend meetings where I could reflect on the totality of issues the ministry has to deal with and also conduct interviews and analyse data collected during field encounters.

I clarified anonymity in clear detail to my audience at the meeting. This was to assure them that every participant would be protected. I further informed them that anonymity would also help me to get truthful opinions from participants. Thus it will be to my disadvantage to compromise it. I described the ethnographic nature of the research and explained to them that as a result, it was important I be attached to the Ministry or an NGO under its jurisdiction for a minimum of six months where I will work with potential participants in the office and on the field. I added that for me to be effective, I needed to be giving records and reports of events and allowed to take notes where necessary. I also made it clear from the onset that I was not evaluating the work of the ministry, and so I could not give solutions for identified challenges of the ministry.

At the end of the meeting, I was told that an arrangement would be made for me to start my research with Save the Child Africa a Child-Focus NGO. Looking back, I realise I was able to establish trust with the Chief Director of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection because I was able to clarify, set clear boundaries of the research and also state the importance of the research to them as policymakers. Also, I successfully clarify what they can and cannot expect from the research. I also explained that I would publish an article in professional journals from the data collected. However, having access and building rapport with top management does not automatically translate to rapport with the frontline staff this had to be developed on its own (See chapter 4). The following paragraphs will give a brief background of the participating child-focus NGO.

4.2.1 The childhood broker: Save the Child Africa (SCA)

There were two research sites for this research. The first one was the offices of Save the Child Africa[26] the participating NGO, where I worked as a researcher/intern participating in the daily activities of NGO officials. The second site is the rural communities of Owuram, Dawa North and Kwaman[27], where the NGO implements its intervention to stop child labour on cocoa plantations.

SCA was established in 1997 in Accra, Ghana. It was around the time Ghana in coordination with international donors and stakeholders had just concluded discussions on children rights, and Ghana had become the first country to ratify the UNCRC. Many international donors pledged funding to help Ghana in the realisation of children rights, as stated in the UNCRC. These developments led to the mushrooming of both international and local child-focused NGOs all over Ghana to implement childhood policies, especially in the rural areas of Ghana. SCA a local NGO is housed in a two-story complex at Biriwa within the Accra Metropolitan district. The residential area is an upscale neighbourhood and is home to some of Ghana's important people. The neighbourhood is planned area aimed at the upper classes of Accra. The residents in this neighbourhood are walled with high-end private security. Businesses common in this area include Law firms, high-end retail shops, and consultancies cutting across multiple industries.

My first impression of the offices of SCA was an NGO with good sources of funding for its operations. Their many staff were buzzing around preparing proposals, project reports, and telling the success story of SCA through microblogging websites. Also, the interior decoration and the air-conditioned offices suggested a certain level of luxury, which cannot

[26] The name of the NGO and its location has been changed to ensure anonymity. Any resemblances to real name or places is not intended

[27] Names have been changed for the purposes of anonymity

be taken for granted in Ghanaian society. Throughout my association with SCA, I wondered why an NGO concerned with the activities of poor rural children is situated in such a plush area in the capital far away from their rural sites. I further thought about how much of funding from partners went into renting, running the office space, and paying the numerous staff and how much went to rural communities to help poor cocoa farmers and their children.

4.2.2 Human actors: child-focus NGO staff and rural cocoa farmers

The interaction between social actors were a chaotic network with no certainty (see page 157 now) it span from relationships in the NGO offices to the field of implementation. At the time that I got permission to work with SCA, they had just gained a partnership agreement with an international cocoa buying firm called CocoaKing. The firm was concerned about the use of children on cocoa plantations and wanted to sensitise parents about the illegality of the practice, and finally, implement an intervention to end the practice. SCA is an important local player in the child-focus NGO field in Ghana. The NGO had about 20 permanent staffs and many other temporary workers who primarily served as Field Staff. Most of the workers at SCA were young and energetic; this I imagined was important because of the constant travel that they had to do in visiting the various rural field sites where interventions were ongoing. Majority of the SCA field staff share similar traits; the current employment at SCA seems to be their first job, and so they were very enthusiastic about their job due to significant unemployment rates in Ghana.

Fred, for example, is a young man of about 32 years. At the time that I met with him, he had worked with SCA for five years, the first three years he worked as a temporary worker and got a permanent position two years ago, the highest level of education Fred has had is secondary level although he has other diploma certificates. Since leaving school, Fred has taken up one temporary job after the other. He is very ambitious and is keen on establishing a firm that will train public speakers. Apart from his work as a Field Staff, Fred attends many

programmes on self-management and training. At the time that I met him, Fred had written a draft on outcomes of education in Ghana, which he intends to publish. The salary that he gets from working with SCA although not much; is very important to him because that's what he uses to finance his other private goals such as writing and publishing a book etc.

Fred, like the other frontline staff, likes it best when there is a project, and he is sent to the field for implementation. Going to the field offers the opportunity to earn extra money for travelling, accommodation, and food. Meeting the goals that his superiors set for him at SCA is most important to him because it assures him of his job. He tells me that he also makes sure that he writes good reports and visits field sites no matter how remote.

During my interactions with frontline staff, I noted that this group of actors' express views that are remarkably consistent with global childhood development narratives. They perceived formal basic education as the most important solution to rural poverty and that children working are the single major problem that has caused families to be poor and the inability for children to develop their talent. They also think that international funded project such as the CocoaKing Good-Child project has the capability of ending child labour and keeping children in schools. Almost all of the field staff seem to disagree with me when I suggested to them that the awareness of rural children working and not going to school, were induced from outside and may not be the real challenge facing cocoa farmers. It made me wonder under what social and historical conditions will people stop believing and start questioning narratives.

The second research sites were a cluster of three towns, namely Owuram, Dawa North, and Kwaman[28]. These are mostly agrarian communities in the capital of Atwima Nwabiagya Municipality, a district in the Ashanti region of Ghana. I had to involve all three towns

[28] Names have been changed

because the field officer from SCA I closely worked with was assigned to implement interventions in these three towns. The field sites were located on the western stretch of the Kumasi-Bibiani road. Owuram is located about 278km North West of Accra. Major occupations of the people living in and around Owuram are smallholder cocoa farmers and subsistence peasant farmers. Other occupations include fishing, small-scale surface gold mining, and lumbering of timber. Simple equipment such as machete knives and hoes are the primary tools used for agriculture. Family members, including children, are expected to contribute to household income and well-being directly or indirectly.

The ethnic group, known as the Ashantis, are the settlers of Owuram. They have a local chief known as the *Owuram hene* and local queen mother known as the *Owuram hemaa;* they both own allegiance to the paramount chief of the Ashanti region known as *Otumfuor*[29] in the Akan language. The *Ohemaa* (Queen mother) is an important traditional female ruler among the Ashanti's and other ethnic groups in Ghana — especially 'in the context of a renewed interest from African governments, donor countries and international organisation such as NGOs, in traditional authorities' to implement social interventions bordering basic education and wellbeing of children (See Steegstra, 2009)

Participants at the rural site were Cocoa farmers with children and a few child-focused professionals who lived within Owuram in the Ashanti region of Ghana. Cocoa farmers, in general, are important to the Ghanaian economy, due to the heavy dependence of the Government of Ghana on the proceeds of cocoa exports. This notwithstanding, cocoa farmers are usually impoverished and earn a daily income of USD 0.45, making an annual income of approximately USD 983. Take, for example, the case of Opayin Kwame with whom I had extensive informal conversations; he is a self-employed cocoa farmer cultivating a small farm

[29] Although Ghana is a democratic state, local traditional chiefs, do exercise significant authority over indigenes especially in rural communities, these authority though is usually overruled in a legal court of law

of about three hectors. He particularly struggles to access extension services; coupled with the high cost of farming inputs; his yields are usually on the low side thus, at an average of 0.45 tonnes per hectare. His situation was representative of most of the farmers who constituted my research participants.

Other issues that are affecting participating cocoa farmers were the seasonality of cocoa farming. This meant that incomes were not consistent year-round; hence, during the offseason, cocoa farming families' experienced heightened poverty, and economic vulnerability. The situation was such that most of them had to borrow money from loan sharks with the promise to pay during the peak harvest season. The poverty that the cocoa farmers experience had a direct impact on children in these communities. To support the household economic unit, children in Owuram usually may have to work or engage in child labour. Parents also did not have the funds to hire adult labour; hence, they usually obligate their children to help on cocoa plantations, particularly during the planting, nurturing, and harvesting seasons. Overall, the farmers I met seem to unfold countless tactics to take advantage of any material opportunity that they may come across.

The situation and practices of the cocoa farmers were not lost on me as a researcher. Before the PhD study, I worked as a principal education officer with the Ghana Education Service for two years in a similar rural setting and was familiar with childhood practices in agrarian rural communities of Ghana especially in the areas of formal education and children's work. This current research site however offered an opportunity to seek perspectives and motivations of people with diverse backgrounds: Childhood professionals working for NGOs, traditional local authority, parents' who did not know childhood development policies and parents who had some knowledge through their children's association with the Child Rights Club (hereafter CR-Club).

The Child Right Club (CR-club) is an extracurricular activity organised by Save the Child Africa (SCA) in the local school at Owuram. The local *Ohemaa* at the research site served as one of the patrons of CR-club. The club aims to ensure child rights—especially the right to education. In all, 64 participants, 39 men, and 25 women participated in the research. Many other children were observed without contact with them in the field sites

To participate in the ethnographies of my participants, I spent a total of seven months in the field. The first three were in the offices of the participating NGO and the last four months in the field where the NGO implements its intervention. The initial stages of data collection at the participating NGO offices were extremely challenging. The staff could not determine how they were to relate to me, whether as the intelligent PhD candidate who was there to check their every word or grammar or someone who was going to research them write a report and make it available to their superiors.

To break the communication barrier between NGO staff, and me, I made sure I was always in the offices of the NGO. My constant presence to engage with the NGO Field Staff, assured them that I was an ordinary person who was not out there to look out for their errors. I had casual conversations with them on what was making the rounds in the local news. I maintained a neutral stance in discussions so as not to come against the very participants I was hoping to build trust with. This helped to learn first-hand the relationships within the NGO offices and its effect on frontline staff operations in the field.

4.2.3 Associations and effects in NGO offices

Offices can be places for great collaborations and an arena for fierce battles. As an ethnographer researching NGOs in their offices, I needed to tread a fine line to be as neutral as possible in office politics while at the same time engaging with research participants. My first days at the offices of Save the Child Africa (SCA) proved to be very challenging, and for a moment, I thought it would not be possible to conduct my study at SCA. I later learnt

the challenges I faced was due to a preconceived rumour among junior staff and NGO field officers that I was someone who was coming to spy on them and make a report to senior staff[30].

There were severe interaction boundaries during the first two weeks of my presence at the offices of SCA. I was giving a desk in a large conference room as my station; and for two weeks, most of the Staff tried to avoid me as much as they could. This situation continued until I finally requested to have an interview with one of the field officers since I had permission to conduct my study from the director of SCA (I later found out that the person I interviewed was not a field officer but a secretary who had never been to the field). It was impossible to "break the ice" with this first informant at the SCA offices since she was bent on giving me short straight to the point answers which seemed to be premeditated. At the end of 45 minutes in-depth interview, it felt I had learnt nothing but answers from a textbook.

Figure 9 Source author: The researcher at the far end of the table engages an officer of SCA in an in-depth interview.

Several situations and incidents that occurred over the next few weeks revealed that gaining trust and access to field officers and junior staff at SCA would be an ongoing process that will have to be negotiated continuously. At one point while I was seated at the conference table, one of the staffs (I will call Fred) came to ask about the progress of my research. He asked if I could spare some few minutes to proofread a draft paper that he had written. I

[30] The director introduced me to the staff as someone who will research on the activities of NGO field officers and write a report on it.

agreed to do that. During one of our discussion sessions on his paper, I mentioned to him that the ideas he had discussed on childhoods were excellent and that he could present them at international conferences if he will write abstract and send them out. He immediately liked the idea and asked if I could help to write abstracts, I agreed. This information quickly got to the other field officers and junior staff at SCA offices, and they all came around to learn how to write abstracts. Through these abstract writing sessions, I was able to build rapport and develop trust with most of the field staff and was able to engage informally with them, a situation necessary for me to access their lifeworld and to participate in the culturally constructed world of these participants.

After gaining access to the NGO field staff of SCA, it was important to be sensitive and manage the relationship carefully. I had to show solidarity to Fred, develop a close bond with him while at the same time maintaining a casual and good enough friendly relationship with the other staff in order not to create tension or conflict within the offices of SCA with my presence. Thus, I made sure that any time I had to help other staff members to write abstracts, Fred, the first staff member who developed a close relationship with me was around[31]; this helped to create a very close bond between Fred and me. A relationship that assisted in the collection of quality and in-depth data about his lifeworld and strategies.

I spent three months working with the staff in the offices of SCA. I engaged in both formal and informal conversation, participated in their daily official bureaucracies to the extent possible, and allowed. The next four months were spent in the field with Fred and other NGO frontline officers who had gone to implement an intervention. The following paragraphs discuss the field experience and how the intervention was implemented.

[31] Fred had developed some oversight (or “ownership") over me and did not want me to teach other NGO officers how to write abstracts or apply to schools abroad without him been present

4.5 The Global/Local interface: The Goodchild Cocoa Intervention[32]

In 2011, the cocoa industry was said to be by far the biggest employer of child labour in Ghana (UNICEF & MoWAC, 2011, p. 92). In 2006, the National Programme for the Elimination of the Worst Form of Child Labour in Cocoa (NPECLC) was established to eliminate the worst form of child labour in cocoa-growing areas. Although some success were reported to have been secured such as Ghana been able to meet the Harkin-Engel Protocol[33], a published report and documentary on the use of child labour in cocoa-growing areas in recent times claims that 2.1 million children are still involved in child labour in Ghana, Ivory Coast and other parts of West Africa (O'Keefe, 2016). These developments are not lost on international cocoa buying firms that collaborate with local NGOs to implement child protection interventions in rural cocoa-growing areas.

Save the Child Africa (SCA) is a local child-focused NGO that collaborates with an international cocoa buying firm to stop child labour. SCA agreed with CocoaKing Europe and its subsidiary Cocoa for All, in September 2016 to be an implementing partner in the three-year Good Child Cocoa project. CSA the local child-focused NGO further partnered with Akua Pa (Good farming) local cocoa implements supplying shop on this project. According to the project manual, the Goodchild Cocoa project aims to improve the lives of cocoa farmers by investing in multiple demands driven intervention that empowers farming communities. A major aim of the project is to set up Child Protection Committees (CPC) to promote the total wellbeing of children in the cocoa community; namely to prevent child labour on cocoa farms and to ensure that children are enrolled and retained in schools; a similar related project started in 2015.

[32] The name of the project, NGO, and communities have been changed for the purposes of anonymity, any similarity to real names or places is not intended

[33] A multilateral commitment by the cocoa industry to comply with ILO convention182 of the worst form of child labour

Save the Child Africa was assigned cohort two under the Goodchild Cocoa project. This was made up of three districts Kwaman, Orwuram South and Dawa North. In each district, SCA worked with farmers in cocoa-growing communities, teachers in schools and traditional authority. The project was seen and described as an assault on rural child labour, particularly in the cocoa-growing areas where children are known for working on cocoa plantations. A central tenet of the intervention was to create awareness of child rights, particularly the right to schooling, and the illegality of child labour. Also important to the intervention is the child's right to participate in decisions concerning him/her.

To implement the intervention effectively, SCA divided its cohorts into cells and assigned field officers to each cell. An administrative level unit was established to control the personnel and operations of each cell; they included the executive director of Save the Child Africa, the head of logistics, and the financial accountant. The administrative level personnel also organised the planning and allocation of funds to be used in the field. Field officers are expected to develop tools including a community register, classifications of children into the various forms of labour in each village, and all other activities such as the formation of Child Rights Clubs in the different schools. Field officer are expected to report their activities to the administrative level personnel in charge of their cell

Figure 10 Source Author:The researcher with an NGO field officer in a light blue T-shirt, tasked to implement the CocoaKing Goodchild cocoa project in cohort 2

The frontline NGO staff worked directly under the administrative unit of the participating NGO. They also served as the operational unit that dealt directly with the cocoa farmer population. Each cell consisted of about 50 cocoa-growing villages. The field officer was thus the direct implementer of the CocoaKing Good ChildCocoa Project. S/He was in direct and regular contact with the client population of CocoaKing Europe. The constant interaction with the two contrasting worlds of the superior administrative unit and the cocoa farmer population demanded that field officers develop unique skills. These specialised skills were necessary for dealing with the needs of both the administrative system and its routines on the one side, and the politics of cocoa farmers on the other. A common strategy used by frontline NGO officers was to form groups among the cocoa farmers and appoint leaders to represent cocoa farmers in these groups.

4.5.1 Funding and expectations

During our work together, we engaged in informal conversations, which were directed, towards the research project, it was an excellent opportunity to know about his thoughts on SCA. Fred was very much concerned about the finances of SCA; how they can partner with international child-focus NGOs for funding and how funds are managed within SCA. When it comes to resource importance, he explains that

> *Logistical support giving by our foreign partners is most important for our activities. In most cases, we have to make different proposals for different funders to get collaborations and funding. The core thing is that we use international guidelines on childhood development, which is what funders look out for. Partners, for example, CocoaKing usually do not impose on us how funding should be utilised. What they are concerned about is to see a visible presence in the cocoa-growing areas that we are doing everything possible to stop child labour on cocoa plantations.*

I asked which sector of SCA operations gets most of the funding, and he explains further

> *It certainly does not come to us the field officers. The administration control all the funds. It is even difficult for them to allocate funds for us to go to the field, although funding from those cocoa firms is huge and comes in dollars. On many occasions, the announcement that there are no funds for fieldwork amazes me. As you can see, we are still sitting here in the offices because the accountant is now roaming about looking for money for us to go out when we should have been in the field a week ago (Fred NGO field Officer, 32yrs)*

In other informal conversations, I asked Fred about how he thinks the work they do as child-focused NGOs, implementing interventions on child rights and protection, benefits their funding partners.

> *The information we send to our funding partners is crucial to them. It helps them to build a good reputation with their national governments and other international institutions… cocoa firms need to show that they are preventing child labour at the sources where they get their raw materials, and so we need to make sure we are doing an excellent job for them. In any case, most of them have forms we complete when writing reports and we are not allowed to change anything on the forms without their permission (Fred NGO field Officer, 32yrs)*

I also asked about his relationship with senior colleagues at the SCA to know the level of independence field officers has. He explains that

> *At SCA, your relations with senior staff can affect your job as a field officer. For instance, you go to the field and see the reality. Nevertheless, you have to go along with what senior staff expect of you. If you insist on doing things*

differently two things are sure to happen either they will send you to a remote and difficult field, or they will not send you to the field at all which means fewer resources to you a likelihood of been fired when there is restructuring (Fred NGO field Officer, 32yrs)

The field officers serve as the bridge between the two contrasting and often conflicting social worlds of administrators and farmers. The interaction between these two entities produces a body of knowledge which is unique to the field officer, which leads him to devise his strategies for dealing with both the cocoa farmers and official administrative arenas. As I spent more time with the field officers, I realised that although the strategies they develop might seem to be highly individualised, they are influenced by the possibility of manoeuver and the discourse that already exist in these two different arenas and the context within which the two entities interact. It was apparent field officer could not simply escape these influences and constraints by pretending they do not exist. An attempt to do that will cause the field officer to lose his credibility both in the worldview of his administrators and cocoa farmers.

The skills needed for a field officer to remain relevant in the eyes of his superiors and the lay cocoa farmer is complicated and is also influenced by the ambitions of the field office. In the paragraphs, following I detail the strategies of Fred a field officer who tries to bridge the gap between the cocoa farmers and his superiors and their priorities during an intervention meant to stop children from working on cocoa plantations. He talks about some of the malfunctions and malpractices within the NGO and the shortcomings of the intervention. Although Fred has worked with the NGO for many years, he recently got a permanent position as a field officer. Because of this, he tries to work hard to meet the priorities of senior colleagues. This need seems to drive him to use strategies that appeal to farmers to get them to enrol on the interventions and report success to his superiors.

Frontline field officers employ many strategies to get farmers to enrol on the interventions. The main ones include paying out in full the allowance due to farmers when they attend workshops (many other field officers were known to pay half or a quarter of the allowance allocated to farmers). This strategy seems to have caused farmers to check which allowances are giving out and which officer is hosting a workshop before they attend. The situation appears to have become an essential factor in the reproduction of their particular livelihood strategies, which seems to be effectively concealed from administrators of the cell.

4.5.2 Group formation

A significant aspect of the work of the NGO Field officer consists of forming groups where there are no groups and keeping relationships within these groups (See page 157 right hand side for the groups and their connection and interests). A source of uncertainty for the Field officer is whether these groups will comply with the aims and objectives of the intervention introduced to them.

Groups formed by NGO Field officers had to be networked to create political support and a semblance of success. Take, for example, the Good-child Cocoa project described above. The project aims to get children in cocoa-growing areas to school while at the same time educating parents to stop child labour on cocoa plantations. The funders of the intervention (international cocoa beans buying firm) work with two local organisations to achieve this purpose. The first organisation is known as Kookoo Pa (Good cocoa) this organisation deals in subsidised agrochemical products and implements for cocoa farmers.

Figure 11 Source Author: A signpost displaying the services of Kooko Pa. The fourth point talks about social practices. The focus is mainly on preventing child labour on cocoa plantations.

Most of the farmers who benefit from the subsidies sell their cocoa beans to Kooko Pa onward to the big international cocoa buying firms. As part of the efforts to stop child labour in the cocoa industry, the international cocoa firms collaborate with Save the Child Africa (the participating NGO in this research) to implement interventions that will help to get children to school and stop child labour on cocoa farms.

To legitimise the intervention, the first thing Field officers do is to mobilise and maintain political support for the intervention, instead of orientating it. They do this by forming groups, which in this research are referenced as stabilising groups because, without these groups, the intervention is almost non-existent in the rural communities. The first stabilising group formed to support the intervention was the Farmer Child Protection Committee (CPC). The CPC members were a selected group of cocoa farmers who were regular customers of KooKoo Pa. With the help of Kookoo Pa staff, NGO frontline workers carefully select farmers who have some level of education or have had contact with city life and thus may have some idea about child rights or how education seems to have benefited children, by selecting such farmers, a measure of success to the intervention was assured right from the onset.

The first assumption by NGO field officers about this selected group is that they allow their children to work on cocoa plantations to increase their profitability. NGO field officers further assume that farmers believe that the long-term interest of their children is in basic education and that the farmers will approve of the interventions to stop child labour on the one hand and to send children to school and keep them there on the other.

Field officers usually organise workshops for the CPC members to explain the usefulness of the intervention. They hope to get farmers to believe in the need to stop child labour and to send children to school. The workshops are designed to get farmers to buy into the idea of the intervention and translate them back in their villages. The farmers, after going

through a workshop session, were expected to prevent child labour by first not engaging in it, and secondly educating other parents about the ills of child labour. Finally, farmers were to report to the appropriate authorities when they see child labour or abuse been perpetuated in the community. The Child Protection Committee groups also served another purpose most important to the field officers that they (CPC members) may not know about. A field officer explains that

Figure 12 Source Author: An NGO field officer speaks to cocoa farmers selected to be members of the child protection committee

> *They are vital for two reasons firstly they are the ones we hope will report child labour issues in the community to the social welfare department and secondly for me as a field officer when I have people from SCA visiting the site, the CPC members serve as evidence that I am working (Fred NGO field Officer, 32yrs)*

Thus the CPC, most importantly, serve to legitimise the efforts of field officers at the implementation of the intervention to senior members of the NGO and other interested third parties.

The Teacher-Child Protection Committee (TCP) was another stabilising group formed by Field officers to support and give legitimacy to the intervention. Members of the TCP included the principal of the local schools where the NGO field officers implement the intervention. According to the goals of the Goodchild cocoa intervention, the Farmer Child Protection Committee (CPC) was expected to liaise with the TCP, the school management

committee and the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) to ensure all school-going children were in school and not working on cocoa plantations. A network was in the making, to support the intervention. I asked Field Officers how the Teacher-Child Protection committee contributes to the intervention.

> *The teachers are respected in the rural communities, and so by getting them on our side, we hope they can also educate parents on child labour and most importantly help us establish child rights club in the schools (Fred NGO field Officers, 32 years)*

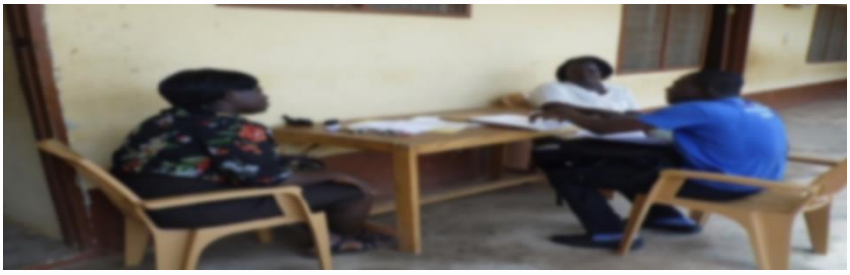


Figure 13 NGO Field Officers engages with Teacher Child Protection Committee members (see page 157 for their links and connections)

Thus, one of the main strategies of the NGO field officer is to ride on the reputation of other social actors to garner support for the intervention. The teachers, however, also had their interest in supporting the NGO intervention. They demanded that Fred and his NGO provide the school with books, computers, and other teaching and learning materials to facilitate the teaching of children in the community.

Traditional Leaders for Children (TLC) was the final stabilising group formed by field officers during the intervention. To get the traditional local authorities to give audience to the intervention, Field officers often had to use local opinion leaders and in some cases, local politicians to establish contact.

Figure 14 source Author: An NGO field officer solicits a local opinion leader to assist him in having an audience with the local traditional leaders

The meeting with the local opinion leader served as an opportunity for both social actors (i.e. opinion leader and NGO field officer) to benefit from the association. The local leader used the association with us (that is people from the capital) to cement his social capital as a person of importance in the village. This was obvious from how he introduced us to his fellow village folks and further buttressed the realisation that most actors within the network cooperated because of some benefit they perceive they could derive from the network, not necessarily related to child protection.

An opportunity to meet with the local chief came when field officers lobbied a president of a rotary club dedicating a library facility to the local school. The local chief had been invited as the guest of honour for the dedication. During the dedication ceremony, a local Field officer had the opportunity to address the local chief and other guests about children's right and protection. The local chief agreed with the field officers about the need to protect children but also raised issues with the poor infrastructural quality of government schools in the village and asked Field officers to relay to their superiors the need for support for the local school.

Figure 15 NGO Field officer addresses traditional authority about the intervention to prevent children from working on cocoa plantations.

Field officers explained the importance of traditional leaders in the intervention.

> *The traditional leaders are the custodians of the land, so it is important to involve them, and it is SCA requirement. It is quite challenging to get them together to talk about child protection, and so I have to look for opportunities where they are gathering to get the chance to address them like this dedication ceremony (Fred NGO field Officer, 32 years)*

Field officers in creating political support for the intervention do not limit themselves to the identification of a few groups of social actors. They also explain to these groups that their interests lie in the acceptance and admittance to the usefulness of the intervention. Take, for example, Fred, an NGO Field officer. He had a line of positive stories about the interventions which he uses in his interactions with the various stabilising groups. These were repeated during workshops and activity session to the different groups. He explains that children of cocoa farmers will succeed in life, advance to higher education and occupy important positions in the future if children are kept in school.

Teachers were told stories about how the intervention can help to improve the situation of children in school. Fred informs teachers that pupils will be more regular in school and be studious if teachers support the Child Rights Club, which educates children about their right to education and the illegality of child labour. Finally, he informs traditional leaders that, if

they support the intervention, and help to prevent child labour, they are sure to have useful, law-abiding citizens. In the end, Fred problematises the situation of children in the community and gives an important reason for all the stabilising groups to support the intervention.

After forming the stabilising groups, there was a conscious effort to interlock them in the intervention firmly. My observations showed that participants in the stabilising groups seem to have a strong opinion on how children should be cared for which was quite different from the ideas of the NGO intervention which is based on the UNCRC (These opinions are fully discussed in chapter six). This became apparent when I later had a focus group discussion with some parents. Thus, although the field officers had formed the stabilising groups, each group could submit to been integrated into the narrative of the intervention or refuse it by defining their plan to childhood development with different goals, orientations, motivations, and interests. It was never clear or guaranteed that the parents will practice what Fred was telling them and not take their children to the cocoa plantations. This is because, local knowledge on childhood development in the research area sees as a virtue a child, who contribute labour to the economic unit of his family be it domestically or on the cocoa plantations.

The cultural context was a strong influence on whether these stabilising groups will respond to Fred's intervention or otherwise. Several factors competitively defined childhoods in the research area and were a challenge to the intervention. There were local expectations on children, which demands that children work hard to support their parents; extended family members will also see parents as failed if their children cannot work and be useful in the community, and finally, the need for parents to see their children gain skills through work was an inhibiting factor to the intervention. Fred and the other NGO field officers were aware of these competing associations; thus, they built devices aimed at driving a wedge between

parents and these inhibitors such as local knowledge on childhood development, and all other entities that have the potential to define the nature of childhood development different from the goals of the NGO intervention.

Figure 16 NGO source author: Field officers doubled their efforts to convince parents about the importance of sending children to school and not involving them in work on cocoa plantations. They also discredited any other activity or influences that will let the parents orient their children in any other way apart from the ideas of the intervention or the principles of the UNCRC

The mechanisms for developing a wedge were subtle, seductive, and educative, while others were forceful and threatening. Fred and his colleagues multiplied their meetings and workshops to explain to the farmers the reasons why children must not work on cocoa plantations but rather stay in schools. They told attractive stories about parents in other villages who overlooked the short-term gains of making children work on cocoa plantations but religiously sent their children to school. Parents were told to think about the future of their children first, more than what extended family members expect of children. Also, parents were advised not to send their children to help extended family members on cocoa plantations neither should they let them work on plantations for money. NGO field officers told negative stories about children who had worked and how they were faring poorly; and also mentioned that when parents are reported for using child labour on cocoa plantations, they could be arrested by the police.

These stories seem to convince the parents of the usefulness of sending children to school and the evils of children working on cocoa plantations. The NGO field officers drew up and made comments on charts and graphs, which indisputably showed the incredible importance of basic schooling for children. They sang songs and danced with parents about a good future for children through education to show unity of purpose and

Figure 17 Source Author: after convincing lecture parents led by NGO field staff get up to dance to songs about the importance of schooling and the illegality of children working on cocoa plantations.

Figure 18 Source Author: Not all parents seemed to be convinced about the intervention narrative; the man seated had different opinions throughout the workshop and asked many questions. I followed up on him and had a focus group discussion with him and others later.

emphatically presented the spectacular results of other parents who went along with the intervention in other villages and how this has benefited them. In the end, Field officers seemed to have managed to form groups of farmers' teachers and traditional local authority and connected them to support the intervention.

It is important to note that before the emergence of the NGO Field officers, these groups did not exist; however, they were formed and assigned roles to translate the goals of the intervention. As Latour and Porter (1996) explain, the work of development agents are performative, and in this instance, they needed to stabilise their interpretations. As a result, Farmers were enrolled, competing associations (inhibitors) seemingly interrupted, and a

system of alliances with the various stabilising groups forged. Field officers then focused their energies on keeping these relationships between the connected groups together.

4.5.3 Maintaining relationships

Field officers worked hard to tie in the support they had created. Interacting with the parents, one cannot help but notice that they were very busy farmers who need to be on their farms for long hours. NGO field officers were aware of this reality. Thus they did everything possible to get farmers to attend workshops rather than to be on their farms. Field officers explained how they manage to get farmers tied into the intervention and to sustain interpretations by getting farmers to attend workshops and meetings.

> *Of course, they come because of the GHC 50 (USD 10) we give them as transportation; also, some of them want to position themselves in case there are any free things. The SCA T-Shirt, for instance, is very important to them because it gives them political identity back in their villages. Some parents even ask for ID cards, but we cannot provide those cards. Also, some of the farmers want to be leaders in their villages, and so they come and ask to keep the books for logging child protection... (Fred, NGO field officer 32 yrs.)*

Figure 19 Source Author: According to a field officer, some of the farmers at the workshop priced the opportunity to keep the logbooks for recording child labour cases in their villages because it gives them some sense of leadership.

Figure 20 Source Author: This T-shirt with a large inscription identifying the wearer as a member of child protection committee of his village according to an NGO field officer is an incentive for farmers to support the intervention because it gives a political identity back in the village.

Vast amounts of time and energies were invested in maintaining relations, which did not have a direct bearing on the protection of children. Both NGO field officers and farmers seemed to have their unique unwritten aims for supporting the intervention. This meant a degree of compliance with the broader political reasoning and culture of various actors, including marginalised groups in the network such as participating rural cocoa farmer. This, in a way, made the intervention and venues for workshops a field of display and patronage, personal honour and favours, which had to be maintained at all cost to get things done.

These uncertain expectations although not captured in reports sent to NGO offices or recognised by the intervention, were essential to the existence and practical running of the intervention. This was the reality throughout the whole period of the implementation of the intervention. While one village was introduced to the intervention for the first time, visits were also made to other villages that had been introduced to the intervention earlier. Such visits were to check the progress and effectiveness of translations that stabilising groups such as Child Protection Committee (CPC) members have been able to establish in the prevention of child labour on cocoa plantations.

4.6 Translation of the intervention

Translations are an important moment in the study of developmental processes. Latour (1999, p. 19) explain translation as

> The mechanism by which the social and natural worlds take form; the result is a situation in which certain entities control others. It also permits an explanation of how a few obtain the right to express and to represent the many silent actors of the social and natural worlds they mobilise.

The translation is successful when an entity allows itself to be represented and controlled by the other. It is a process before it becomes a result; this result, however, is uncertain.

Translation happens through the agency of both animate and inanimate social actors within the development process network. In the following paragraphs, I will discuss the agency of NGO artefacts within the network and the translation process.

Monitoring translations among the field officers involved going back to villages where they had previously implemented an intervention. The activity involved checking how good leaders of stabilising groups such as Child Protection Committees can represent and lead other members of the village to adopt the goals of the intervention. Inanimate actors within the intervention network were key players in the process of translation, and Field officers employed these fully to achieve their aims.

4.6.1 Inanimate actors with agency (II): politics of NGO artefacts

Agency of inanimate objects can be a powerful tool for translation (see bottom left of network on page 157). Inanimate objects may have the agency to control and direct the behaviour of knowledge objects far beyond human capabilities. Thus, in Actor Network Theory (ANT), the agency that is attributed to humans in the social world is the same assigned to inanimate things in the realisation of reality.

In the article "Do Artefacts Have Politics?" Winner (1980) illustrates the politics and agency of inanimate things. He explains that inanimate things have been used either in an authoritarian or democratic way to govern or control people over the years. Observations during this research reveal that NGO field officers relied heavily on inanimate things to establish legitimacy, authority and to realise a level of translation when doing their work. For example, during the formation of stabilising groups, NGO field officers had the use of the NGO field vehicle, which is a modern Toyota Hilux with the NGO branding boldly printed on it. The use of the car embodied specific forms of power and authority, which were very instrumental in getting the attention of farmers and attracting them to the field officers. It was

as if in the mind of farmers, the vehicle established the usefulness and importance of the project.

Inanimate objects had an effect on the whole intervention network and on social actors in a way that made it impossible to gloss over. NGO branded artefacts, for instance, established a sense of authority over rural cocoa farmers, which was not lost on the field officers. In informal conversations, field officers had said that CPC members liked it most when they were visited in villages with NGO branded vehicles, thus these artefacts although inanimate was crucial in the network and necessary to garner political support for the realisation of the intervention. This reality was particularly forceful when, in some few instances, we had gone to the field without branded vehicles.

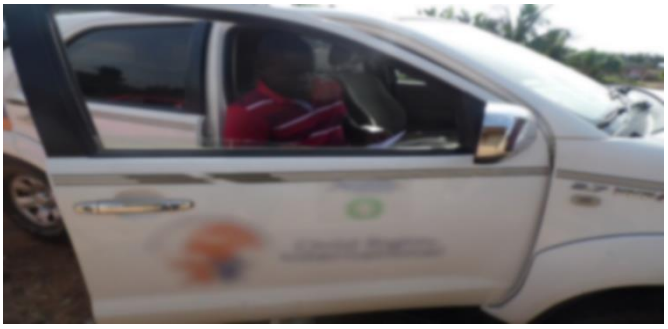


Figure 21 in this photo, the researcher is seen in the field vehicle of the participating NGO (Inscription has been blurred out to provide anonymity). This vehicle proved to be a significant pull factor when visiting villages to have workshops. A field officer explained that CPC members liked the respect they got from their fellow villagers when they were visited with this vehicle.

In one such case, we had to use motorbike taxi to visit a field site due to the unavailability of the NGO branded field car. Entering the village with the motorbike brought to the reality the full force of the politics and power of the branded NGO utility vehicle. Usually, with NGO vehicles, community residents will immediately come around and inquire about who we are after, or someone will be dispatched to get a local opinion leader or a politician immediately. However, this aura of importance and urgency was missing when we used the motorbike taxi. Nobody cared about our presence or the fact that we were from a child-focus NGO working with farmers in the community. The reality that CPC members may be indifferent towards the intervention beyond the respect that they gain through association or the material gains they may acquire through the attendance of

workshops was a constant challenge on the minds of NGO field officers. This, however, made NGO field officers deploy branded signposts and logos in strategic ways to showcase the work of the NGO beyond Field officers physical presence in the communities.

Figure 22 Source Author: The Researcher with an NGO Field officer ready to ride on hired motorbikes to visit Child Protection Committee (CPC) members in various villages

The branding and placement of the NGO logos on signposts and products giving to the participants was an essential feature of the intervention. In my opinion, it showed an NGO involved in strategic communication, with the intent to create an image of their work as beneficial and effective. The use of NGO branding and artefacts to communicate work had a deeper meaning of accountability not to the recipients of the intervention but third parties. These third parties include members of funding partners who may visit the site of intervention, citizens at the home of the funding partner who may be concerned that they are eating chocolate made from the labour of children, etc. It was apparent that an observer who does not consider the politics of such branding or postings, may perhaps also not go far enough to find whether the intervention been referenced by NGOs were benefitting the recipients. The projection of visibly doing "good" in the community was important to field officers because it justified their work and funding.

The actions of Field officers showed that they cared more about displaying the humanitarian aspect of their work than the real situation of the intervention recipients. This observation was confirmed when on an errand with a Field officer, children who were

engaged in work did not elicit any comments from him, but rather he was much more worried about the state of a signpost he planted some months back, which displayed the logo of the funders of the intervention.

Figure 23 Source Author: A signpost showing the name of an intervention recipient community and logos of funders of the intervention. Names have been blurred for anonymity

During data analysis and through further clarification from NGO field officers, some actions that were taking on the field became clearer. For example, the nature of child protection does not lend itself to the opportunity of placing plaques on buildings such as schools to communicate the work of the NGO. Thus, the NGO takes the steps of placing metal signpost in the community centre to communicate their work. These metal postings were important to the field officers since it was a visible sign of their effort at protecting children and "doing good" in the community even though the real substance of the situation of children may not have addressed.

NGO branded permanent structures also gave international funders goodwill among the local communities long after the intervention had ended. The intervention itself was for three years; however, the preoccupation of NGO field officers to make sure their signposts were planted at easy-to-see places showed where their real concerns lay. The NGO show of visible success had other impacts on the local communities. Farmers who engaged in focus group discussion although expressed sentiments, which indicated that they would be sticking

to their local knowledge on childhood construction, seem to be at least grateful that the NGO shows some interest in the situation of children in the community. Parents pointed out that officials of local government agencies, only came around the village when they needed to solicit for votes during general elections.

There were other effects that the NGO brands and donor logos had on local farmers. It rendered less important the significant and complex contributions of host governments and local agencies. For example, although government agencies make available social, human, and political capital for NGOs to operate. During field trips, the donor identities and logos did give the impression that the local farmers and their families owned their ability to raise their children properly and to have good yields from their cocoa trees through the advice and altruism of the NGO and its sponsors abroad.

NGO artefacts, including logos and identities, thus had a major role in the translation of the intervention to local people. The agency of inanimate objects in translating the intervention goals was an important tool to enrol parents to go along with the aims to prevent child labour. However, the actual translation that was established with parents was uncertain. The following paragraphs details the situation of translation among Farmer Child Protection Committee members when NGO Field officers visited.

4.6.2 Human Actors: A case of disloyalties and controversies

Translation, as I have explained earlier, involves the mechanism by which the social and material world take form. It often involves a few obtaining the right to represent the many. NGO Field officers form groups such as the Child Protection Committee to represent and to attempt to shape how childhood is constructed in the villages of the intervention.

Field officers often visited CPC members to check on translation. Our first three home visits yielded no results although the CPC members had been informed one week earlier that

a Field officer would be coming around. CPC members did not find the time to meet with Fred neither could anyone tell us where we could find them. After a careful search, we found one CPC member. To start with, the CPC member had forgotten the whole point of the intervention apart from the fact that Fred is some person from Accra who comes to hold workshops in the village occasionally. After considerable prompting, the CPC member seem to remember that Fred was around because of child protection (or at least he pretended to remember)

Fred went on to have about 30-minute discussions with the CPC member, which was mainly about where to find other CPC members and logbooks. CPC members are supposed to record cases of child abuse in the village in NGO provided logbooks for field officers to pick up when they visit. The CPC member informed Fred that since the intervention was introduced; there had never been a meeting about the child labour situation in the community. Also, the leader of the CPC who was appointed during the formation of the group had not recorded a single incident of child abuse, neither has he made the logbooks available for others to put down any records.

Figure 24 source Author: A CPC member, points to where he thinks the logbook could be. He introduces a colleague (white t-shirt) to the NGO field officer (holding backpack) with the aim to recruit him to be CPC member. In the end, the colleague declines membership of the CPC.

In the end, Fred decided he would have to recruit new members to form the CPC and give them a new logbook. The one CPC member we met took us to his colleague whom he was sure will be interested in being a CPC member. After a lengthy explanation of the

intervention and the goal of preventing child labour on cocoa plantations. The potential recruit decline membership of the CPC.

The scene was similar when we visited other stabilising groups. However, it was even more surprising when we visited a school only to find out that although the logbooks were available and on the desk of the school principal, not a single case had been recorded in it. Fred explained to the Principal that it was important to record child abuse cases so that it can be used to solicit funding and other equipment for the school. As we prepared to leave, Fred leaves more NGO booklets with logos of international funders of the intervention boldly printed on it with the Principal. He tells me that although no case had been recorded in the logbook, he is glad that at least the books had not been thrown away, it gives evidence that he has been in the school to implement the intervention.

Throughout the time we spent visiting stabilising groups, it was apparent that the few CPC members that we met did not show much interest in the whole idea of child rights and protection as explained by the NGO. Fred, the field officer, was aware, and so were the other field officers and even some administrators at the NGO offices. However, the NGO had to show a visible and coherent trail of success to sustain funding and partnership with international cocoa firms who need to show that, they are doing their best to stop child labour on cocoa plantations. Mosse (2005a) explains that most of the international development agencies that fund projects in developing countries insist that their local partners communicate measurable development success. This often means overlooking realities in the process of development while reporting what is expected.

4.6.3 Maintaining coherence vs reporting matters of concern

NGO Field officers worked hard in the field. However, observations show that their carefully planned intervention did not generate events, rather it helped stabilised and interpret them. Practices on the field constantly contradicted laid down regulations. Field officers, however,

seemed to be constrained to promote a view that their effective practices resulted in the implementation of the intervention because NGO hierarchy will expect nothing less. Reports produced by each Field officer were submitted to a higher administrative official. The production of reports was easy to the field officers since they were in full control of what goes into the field report.

Intervention and workshop reports usually had the structure of recording the number of farmers in attendance and expenditure in terms of allowances paid to attendees. The different farmers coming from different communities informed the number of communities that were reported as covered. For example, if ten farmers were at the workshop, and each person came from a different community, Field officers will record that the workshop covered ten communities. At workshops, Cocoa farmers typically raised issues that compel them to send their children to farms. These issues were, in most cases, not in line with the NGO intervention and thus were not recorded by Field officers. Issues that aligned with interventional goals, however, made their way into reports and, were described with development buzzwords such as *empowerment, child rights, education, participation, community register, and "development of quantitative tools to capture the situation of children in the community"*.

Field officers often reported traceable, systematic, and coherent way of implementing the intervention. They often claimed that

> a bottom-up approach in conjunction with a community register (which was referred to us tool 1) was used to zero in on a community. The register captures the extent of school enrolment and attendance and the involvement of children in the worst form of labour in the community. Tool 1 further covers demographic data on all households in the community. "This was instrumental in helping us to focus on households where children were found to be at risk of child labour; thus, parents of those households needed to be considered for the intervention (NGO report extract, June 2018).

Reports further claim that tool one was used in 100 communities and covered more than 12000 members in 3500 households. In the end, tool one was used to identify a situation where over 2100 children had dropped out of school. A second tool was then used to categorise children into forms of labour. Parents of households where children were endangered to be involved in the worst forms of labour were then targeted as participants for the intervention.

The recruitment of farmers, however, was a far cry from the systematic process described above. During my stay on the field, I observed that Farmers who participated in the intervention were customers of Kookopa, the firm that supplies cocoa implements to farmers at a subsidised rate. Farmers who enjoyed this subsidy were members of an association formed by Kookopa and were periodically called on to attend meetings. Attendees of meetings seem to be doing so to maintain their membership status with Kookopa and to position themselves for monies and any other free things that may be distributed at such meetings. In most cases, attendees trickled into very slowly, and field officers had to wait for hours before the start of a workshop.

Workshops and other activities of field officers were presented as successful endeavours led by farmers. In reality, though materials were presented in a top-down model where farmers were instructed on how to take care of their children. Field officers made it a point to ensure that by the time the reports get to NGO offices in Accra, an image of successful bottom-up is emphasised. The reports prepared will highlight intervention progress and achievements. It will further claim that the intervention has successfully promoted child rights and protection and has formed a Child Rights Club where children learn about their rights. Reports often describe situations where some children have been rescued from worst forms of labour and had been sent to school with the promise that the NGO will finance the basic education of the rescued child. Pictures of parents happily

participating in the NGO workshops and other activities, and children in school with NGO official will be added to reports as evidence. These pictures will, in most cases, feature as part of success stories of the intervention to prevent child labour on cocoa farms on the websites and printed materials of the NGO.

4.6.2 A trapped field officer

Observations and interaction on the field revealed one important fact that the intervention was not designed to solve local challenges of local actors, but rather to meet the predetermined realities of international funders. Field officers sent in strategically translated reports not out of mischief; informal conversations revealed that most field officers expressed doubt about the effectiveness of the intervention. Some doubted the capability of the intervention to stop parents from taking their children to the cocoa plantations, while others thought that children working on the plantations during vacations were acceptable. However, the field officers were also much aware of the expectation of the senior NGO administrative officers' to highlight project success. Report forms supplied to the NGO offices by international funders, demands quantifiable performance indicators, which were non-negotiable.

The quantifiable indicators served as the yardstick by which intervention achievements were measured. The indicators usually demand the number of children covered in the intervention, numbers of those who were involved in the worse form of child labour on cocoa plantations before the intervention, and numbers rescued from such a situation and sent to school. Indicators will also enquire about the number of parents who have agreed not to let their children work on cocoa plantations and are now trained to report child abuse cases to the authorities in their communities.

The insistence on quantifiable indicators usually tends to conceal the politics and social networking necessary for the project to succeed. For example, the culturally constructed meaning of children's work to children, parents and the community at large are not captured; if reports require only the number of children considered to be engaged in the worst form of labour. In addition, the report failed to capture the fact that the number of parents who participated in a workshop did so simply because they hoped to be reimbursed for the time they have spent at such workshops, a situation that field officers were much aware of.

Reports on the intervention focused on capturing what has been done, instead of what can be learnt or knowledge acquired. Thus, anything that is seen, as diminishing impact of the intervention tends to be hushed or described as an outlier. While a qualitative approach may not be an effective way for advocacy or political change, the depth of knowledge it produces is useful for a sustainable intervention, which would have been much useful to rural farmers. High-ranking NGO officials and intervention funders may not accept a qualitative approach due to the appealing, persuasive, and rhetorical power of numbers and words rather than of their representational capacity.

Another issue that seems to contribute to the reporting of measurable and coherent success by field officers is pressure to adhere to international standards. For example, the Accra Agenda for Action (OECD, 2008) is an international document which brought together donor and recipient countries that declared among other things, that development processes should "deliver results that will have a real and measurable impact on development". The pressure to produce measurable development results was heavily on funding recipients.

In addition, the need to develop proposals for funding that meet the expectation of funders cause local NGOs to work to satisfy external actors than the locals who are to be helped. This situation seems to cause NGO Field officers to be defensive on their activities and to refuse an official criticism of the rights-based interventions as not the real need or

concern of rural parents and their children. This is because only NGOs that are ready to fulfil the need of international funders to report quantifiable indicators on children rights to education and the illegality of child labour may acquire funding for operations.

Career advancement and security for field officers depended on the ability of field officers to report measurable success of the interventions they manage. Most of the field officers that worked with SCA were temporal workers; they were made permanent based on the number of 'successful' projects they managed. This created a situation where field officers produced reports that were in line with NGO goals to be marked as successful. Thus, little time was allocated for in-depth learning, but rather, the focus was on reporting impact.

4.6.3 Chapter summary

This chapter has followed the network of a child-focus NGO during the implementation of an intervention based on child rights. The intervention aims to prevent child labour on cocoa farms and to ensure that parents respect the right to education particularly. The chapter tried to establish whether the realisation of the intervention achievements is a consequence of NGO activities. The network stretched from the NGO offices to the field sites of the interventions. The first part of the network detailed power relations within the offices of the NGO and its effect on the implementation of interventions in the field. The second part demonstrated how Field officers formed groups where there were no groups initially to start a process of networking and translation of the intervention. It involved local farmers and other actors been mobilised to create political support and a stabilising entity for the intervention.

The chapter has revealed that the need for political support and legitimisation causes NGO filed officers to spend an enormous part of their energy in satisfying different expectations and interest of social actors. In addition, the emphasis on doing instead of

knowing makes the implementation process simplistic and fails to throw light on the uncertain nature of the intervention and human agency. The NGO field officers thus seem to miss an in-depth opportunity to learn about the real politics and actions that can make intervention sustainable beyond "measurable and visible success."

Finally, the chapter has revealed that NGO Field officers are victims of the bigger system (development narrative and process) in which they operate. This system causes them to be results-oriented, coherent and to implement childhood development in a linear routine without consideration of human reflexivity and agency. Thus, the whole intervention process becomes a platform for convenient interaction to achieve premeditated expectations with little recourse to the real situation of children working on cocoa plantations.

A theoretical model illustrating the reality of the intervention implementation

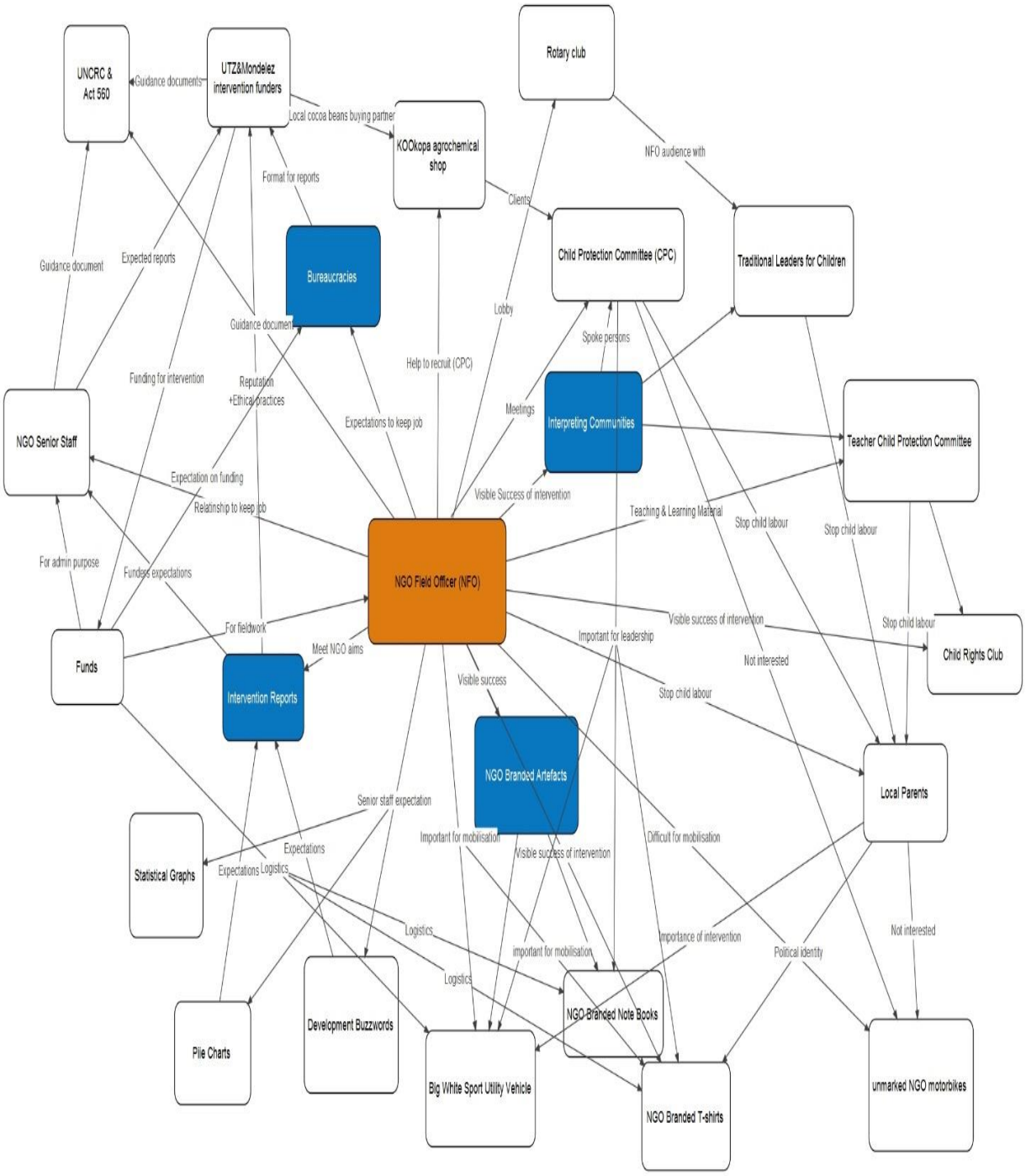


Figure 25 Source Author: This network illustrates the uncertain nature of interactions between actors. Associations are rife with self-interests, negotiations, conflicts etc. (i.e. writings on the links), between animate and inanimate actors. Although the satisfaction of unique interests are necessary for the running of a successful intervention, they are often not captured in intervention reports but rather a narrative of international policies and models been the consequence of intervention "success "is often portrayed.

Chapter Five: Actors in the margins, or education and its uses in rural Ghana

The reason for high valuation of schooling and literacy must therefore at least today lie somewhere else than in the practical advantages it can confer…(Maurice, 1993, p. 95)

5. Introduction

This chapter examines how formal schooling advocated by the NGO Field officers is perceived and used by parents in the education of rural children. The chapter's focus on rural parents' perspective on education is bifocal. First it hopes to echo through an analysis of the situation of formal education at the research site, the sentiments of Maurice (1989) that education and the literacy that comes with it can be used (or not used) in so many different ways that the technology it offers, taken on its own probably has no implication at all. Secondly, this chapter gives a platform for participating parents to voice their opinions on the push for rural basic formal education by the child-focus NGO. In so doing, this study acknowledges and responds to the critique of Actor Network Theory researchers, by Star (2007) that, they entrench the power of the powerful by following network builders (NGO Field officers) to the detriment of marginalised groups in the network.

I will look at two different trajectories on rural education for children; the first one is basic formal schooling. This takes the form of a teacher teaching pupils in a classroom setting. The United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) article 28, and many mostly Western humanitarian organisations and economic development funders such as World Bank, IMF mostly encourage this form of education irrespective of settings and the possible uses of the technology.

The second perspective on education is practical or hands-on. It is prevalent in rural communities of developing countries, and pupils gain skills through active and productive

participation with a skilled adult in most cases their parents. Rural parents perceive it as essential for children to develop useful skills and virtues for the success and development of children within the rural and cultural context. In most developing countries, however, governments categorise this form of education as child labour and illegal.

Agencies that work with the Government of Ghana and NGOs promote basic school and advice against children's work. This situation usually brings about a contested arena, particularly in rural communities where even though parents may agree to the narrative of formal basic schooling, they engage their children in work.

The chapter is structured as follows. The global perception on education is introduced, followed by Ghana and community context on education, discussion of findings that comprises of parents perception on education and a summary of the chapter.

5.1 Global perception of education

Education is important to ensure the desired development of children and for the continuity and the realisation of the anticipated goals of a society. However, the form of education that should be administered to children and the level of participation parents should be allowed in the education of their children can be a source of contention between parents and officials who encourage basic formal education. This is particularly the case where NGO officials try to introduce formal education in classrooms to rural children. Rural parents, in some cases, view children working on farms as a form of education and important for continuity in their societies; they often do not see children working as child labour as defined in international documents.

Promoting educational participation has been a global goal in the past three decades. In 1989 the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989), in article 28, enshrined the right of the child to education and ratifying States were obliged to "make primary education compulsory and available free to all." The UNCRC outlines the purpose

of education as developing the abilities of the child to the greatest potential. In 1990, UNESCO initiated 'Education for All' (EFA) and in 2000, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) made universal primary education MDG number two.

Although MDG2 did not state the purpose of involving all in education, the general objective of the MDGs was to reduce poverty through development. Sustainable Development Goal number four (SDG4) now addresses some of the shortcomings of MDG2. SDG4 focuses on inclusive and quality education for all. It clearly states that the purpose of education is to enable people to get better jobs, break the cycle of poverty and improve the quality of their lives (UN, 2015). The World Bank (WB) actively supports EFA and other UN educational initiatives unambiguously stating that the purpose of education is to invest in people's knowledge and skills to promote development (WorldBank, 2011).

These initiatives have generated funding for education, but the resources come with conditions when applied in developing countries. For example, Masko and Bosiwah (2016), claim that the numerous multilateral and bilateral donors involved in Ghana's basic schooling insist on a Western form of education as the evaluation standard and the prerequisite for funding. The funded educational programmes have failed 'to incorporate African education thought and practices that inform and shape the productive capacities of the vast majority of the population' (Nsamenang, 2002, p. 85). The UNCRC, MDG2, SDG4, the WB education initiatives rest on certain assumptions, for example, that schooling equals education, and that free basic education is free, will benefit and is of value to those in rural areas of Ghana as well as those in urban areas. But so far, free formal schooling and all the policies associated with it has failed to lift the rural poor out of poverty.

5.1.2 Education in Ghana

In Ghana, formal education is seen as a sure way to success. The normal trajectory of formal education promoted by governments is to complete nine years of basic education continue to

three years of senior high education and then terminate with a four-year university degree. Formal basic education is compulsory for all children of school-going age in the Children's Law 1998 Act 560 (hereafter Act 560). Act 560 is strongly influenced by Ghana's ratification of global documents such as the UNCRC and the United Nations Universal Primary Education agenda (UPE); the trend is similar for most African countries (Laird, 2002; Manful & McCrystal, 2011). Promoting participation in formal education in Ghana is rationalised by several claims. For example, each additional year spent in school is associated with a six to ten per cent increase in income earnings (Gaddah, Munro, & Quartey, 2015); children's engagement in work hinders their learning and path to prosperity (Bass, 2004; Keilland & Tovo, 2006; Spittler & Bourdillon, 2012). Basic formal education has come to be recognised as a vehicle to improve the situation of rural and marginalised children.

The literature on formal education pathways of children and youth in Ghana is steadily growing. Several of the studies have looked at the situational failure of the formal education system due to socio-economic challenges. Akyeampong (2009) contends that, in Ghana, increases in enrolments following the removal of fees have been much slower than in other countries with similar policies; the Free and Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) did little to reduce the other direct and indirect costs of schooling to poor households. Rolleston (2009) notes that although educational participation has grown slowly, there has been no improvement in attrition rates (school dropout).

Several studies have investigated the phenomenon of dropout, including from children's perspectives (Ampiah & Adu-Yeboah, 2009; Ananga, 2011; Dunne & Ananga, 2013). Poverty, gender (i.e. being female), and children's work are a major challenge to participate in formal education in Ghana (Akyeampong, 2009; Akyeampong, Djangmah, Oduro, Seidu, & Hunt, 2007; Chant & Jones, 2005). Other studies have noted that while the legal framework is in place to ensure access to education for all, little has been done to

enforce it, reflecting a lack of commitment by the government to its education policies (Akyeampong, 2009).

5.1.3 Community and family context

This section looks at the demand for education in Ghana. Community and family views on educational participation in Ghana are mixed. Pryor (2005) describes a community in Ghana where "schooling had no apparent intrinsic merits as the curriculum seemed irrelevant to village life." Similarly, Maurice (1993) writes about a village in Madagascar, where the education is used for a different pursuit than its traditional objective. Such views imply that there will be very little demand for something without intrinsic value or only needed for casual purposes. Hashim (2007, p. 917) notes that education, while not necessarily irrelevant, is just one possible way of securing the welfare of the whole family – parents and children – in the long run. Some of the studies mentioned above refer to the costs of education deterring demand. Although FCUBE is supposed to be free, in reality, parents face various costs associated with sending their children to school; these may include uniforms, school books and other fees imposed by individual schools.

While the government of Ghana has introduced the capitation grant to offset these costs, it has largely been ineffective (Akyeampong, 2011; Osei, Owusu, Asem, & Afutu-Kotey, 2009). The high attrition and dropout rates also reflect a lack of community interest and participation (or low levels of demand) in the existing form of education. Basic formal education for children is encouraged by civil society such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs), especially those funded by international organisations such as the participating NGO. They also educate parents on the rights of children — particularly a child is right to education — and encourages children to be in school. These NGOs primarily work with UNCRC.

Maurice (1993, p. 106) explains that the social and cultural framework in rural villages could subdue the implications of schooling and literacy to the cultural rationale so that whatever "intrusive" potential such elements might have will be rapidly tamed. In some rural communities where formal education is introduced for the first time, neither writing nor schooling makes any significant difference to the basic organising principles governing the evaluation of knowledge; rather literacy and schooling are put to use to reinforce previously existing patterns. In such situations, rural parents and children find ways to participate in formal schooling where necessary and exclude themselves from it where the cultural framework clashes with formal schooling.

Lewin (2009, p. 157) describes six 'zones of exclusion' regarding access to education in rural communities. Zones one to three relate to primary school including children who never enrol (Zone 1), children who drop out of primary school (Zone 2), and the 'silently excluded' who attend irregularly or their "achievement is so low that they cannot follow the curriculum" (Zone 3). Lewin (2009) comments about these 'silently excluded' that little is known about what influences their participation or decisions not to participate. When considering participation in and access to education, Lewin and Akyeampong (2009) contend that too often the focus is on the supply-side and investment to remove constraints without reflecting on what influences demand, particularly in poor, marginalised communities. This chapter attempts to address these gaps by exploring parents' perspectives and influence on their children's participation in education in the research area.

The overall objective of this chapter is to understand the uses of education for rural parents and their children, and how this play into the phenomenon of 'silent exclusion' (i.e. children participating in formal education only when it is convenient). Sub-objectives are to explore (1) parents 'perspectives of their children's participation in free basic education, and (2) parents' and NGO officials' interactions with different levels of the educational

environment around rural children. Parents in particular are giving the opportunity to articulate their views. Methods used in collecting data is extensively discussed in chapter three.

5.2 Findings

Key themes emerging from findings and discussed in this chapter overlap each other regarding issues participating parents identified as reasons for not enrolling children in basic school or reason for withdrawal. The themes have also been illustrated in an actor network diagram, to show how all the social actors are connected in their interactions and interests to create the situation of childhood education at the rural site; the writings in between the links are the interests, negotiations or conflicts between the links (please see page 181 now).

For analysis, professionals are categorised into NGO officials and Technical Professionals (TPs). NGO officials were at the administrative level and on the field of intervention, ensuring child protection, especially children's right to school. TPs were at the forefront of working with children such as school teachers and other officials who work directly with children. The categorisation of professionals during analysis was necessary because there were significant differences in their perspectives on rural schooling. This form of categorisation has been used by other researchers in similar circumstances (E.g. Anthony, 2011). In the following paragraphs, I will present findings on parents and NGO officials' interactions with the different levels of the educational environment in Ghana.

5.2.1 Parents' views on children's participation in formal education

Participating parents were of the view that formal education is good while children are young and cannot participate in work. However, education loses its importance when children are old enough to contribute to income generation. A woman had this to say about why her children currently were not in school

The children, I took all of them to school when they were young. But after primary six they were not very regular in school, and sometimes they want to follow me to the farm, so I let them come to do some work because many times there are no teachers, and the children they can not read… In most cases, it is impossible to bear the cost of running the family by myself if I don't get them to help me on the farm or go on errands to sell some of the farm produce… During the harvest season, I need a lot of hands if I will be able to harvest all the cocoa pods from the trees and to cultivate enough crops for subsistence (Akua 38 years Focus Group Discussion).

Parents mentioned poor academic performance for not sending children to school. A man explains that inability for his children to read after spending the little money he has on their education is the reason why he has withdrawn the children from school

I have six children, only the young ones go to school the four who do not, were in school earlier, but then things became too expensive, and so when they express an interest to work on cocoa farms and to focus on other trade, I agreed. The thing is you *spend so much on them, and they cannot pass the final exam I don't know a single child who has been able to enter the university after completing here in this community. They simply can not read and yet the cost of keeping them in school is very high. And yet education is supposed to be free (Kweku Atta, 41 years FGD)*

A woman whose son is not very regular in school added

…my boy is in school, but during the cocoa harvest time, I absented him a few times to help me harvest the cocoa. After I had finish harvesting mine, sometimes I asked him to accompany me to my brother his uncle's farm to help with the harvest because my brother's cocoa farm is so huge and during harvest time he needs all the hands he can get. My brother is very generous and gives my boy money sometimes. There is no chance I can say no to him when he asked me to come and help him out, and I

know he expects me to come with my boy. Sometimes we spend one week on his cocoa farm (Esi 45 years Focus Group Discussion)

Withdrawals usually happen, when parents consider the outcome of final exams, which was mostly poor. In a focus group, a man seems to express some regret at basic education when asked what the best way to raise children in the community is.

…Well, I honestly think if my son had learnt a trade, he would have been caring for himself and helping me to take care of his younger siblings. However, as things stand now, he has failed the final exam, and he is back at home, and now I have to find some trade to put him in (Manu 41 years Focus Group Discussion)

The poor pass rate of rural schools was another major cause of distress among participating rural parents; they explained that children usually fail the Basic Education Certificate Exam (BECE). This situation notwithstanding, observation and data analyses shows that parents in the community were aware of the importance of formal education but the poverty and the need to engage all hands in the family production unit; cause them to withdraw children or for children to become sporadic attenders of school (see link between parents and schooling at page 181). Children seem to achieve little in the eyes of parents from formal education. Ayisi, a man whose twin girls were 14 years, explains in a focus group discussion why her children did not have much of basic education.

I go to the city; I have seen how schooling can help some people who have pursued it. However, the long wait period and high monetary sacrifice needed for formal schooling to achieve tangible results are just not practical for me. Moreover, these days I have heard on the radio that a lot of people who finish school are not able to find jobs in the capital (Ayisi 47 years, Focus Group Discussion)

The extra income some children brought home was crucial and seemed to be the difference between a family that survives and one that may face economic challenges at the research site.

5.2.2 Local attitudes towards children's work

At the research site, perspectives on child labour differed among all three categories of my research participants (i.e., NGO Officials, Trained Professionals, and Parents). Participating rural parents referred to farm work, fishing and other economic activities as essential training for children and a form of education, and no child labour. A woman explains what she thinks will make a child successful

> *... When children participate in work from their early years, it is good for them because then they can learn valuable skills necessary for life. When they learn, they are very proud of themselves and are very industrious going into the future. My eldest child usually aims to harvest more cocoa beans than the previous harvesting season. (Alice 39 years Focus Group Discussion)*

Alice had three children; one of them Kofi was a member of the Child Rights Club (CR-club) in the local school. Thus, Alice had some knowledge about children's right to education due to invitations she gets to observe some activities of the CR-club, yet she saw children's work as a virtue. The local Queen Mother corroborates Alice's attitude by adding that

> *I think that they must be allowed to work because it is a form of learning. If a child, wants to become a farmer in future he must learn the skill through working on the farm... that is how my parents taught me how to make this handicraft by working with them, and now I make money through this profession. (Interview with Ohemaa Addobea, 52 years [Queen mother])*

Among the participants, both professionals and parents for her efforts at encouraging parents and children to be in school singled out the local Ohemaa (Queen mother). However, on

many occasions, it was observed that her job as Queen mother and an advocate for basic schooling often contradicts her attitude towards children working. During an in-depth interview, she explained why and how she encourages parents to enrol children in school.

> *Education surely is good, and I think it can give children a bright future if they work hard at school. I know some people do get good jobs and become important people by committing to school... in my duties as Ohemaa one of the significant things I focus on is the need for children to be in school and the importance of child protection, there are a few NGOs that partner and work with the traditional authority in this regard. The NGOs who want to work with the people in the community on childhood usually come to me and talk to me about what they want to do and in most cases ask if I could sermon the people or appoint a group of people they can work within the community. As part of the local authority, I always make it a point to have discussions with parents about the importance of sending children to school (in-depth interview with Ohemaa Addobea, 52 years [Queen-mother])*

Ohemaa Addobea has been a traditional female authority since her mid-20s. She is a member of the Queen-mother association that works closely with government agencies international NGOs to ensure education for children. Her traditional role includes ensuring wellbeing and protection of children in the community. Although she did not have any basic education, she reported with pride that all four of her children had had basic education. The first three could not manage a good enough grade to continue to senior high school and are plying a trade; she hoped the last child, Kukua, who is still in school could manage the feat. At the time of the interview (Friday afternoon), Kukua was at home sewing Kente (traditional hand-woven cloth) for sale (informally I was told Kukua was sick [field notes May 2018]). The sale of *Kente* is very profitable since it is used for decoration during traditional wedding ceremonies and other important occasions

Throughout my interaction with parents, they referred to children working on farms as learning a skill and saw it as necessary to child protection in their context. They will not label it as child labour when it was suggested to them. TPs (basic school teachers), on the other hand, thought child labour was wrong, but they were much more understanding of the circumstances that lead to it. This was obvious when a teacher explained what she would do for children to participate more fully in education

> *Sometimes when I go to the market, I see some of my pupils selling. They try to hide from me because they think I will punish them but, I know they have to do this to support their parents so left for me alone, NGOs should help poor parents with physical cash so that children may not have to work (Teacher, In-depth interview)*

NGO Officials were direct on the illegality of children's work. They referred to it as child labour, unlawful, and blatant abuse of children's rights; they blamed parents for children engaging in child labour

> *Cocoa farming and trading at the local market are important occupations in this community. They are also occupations that demand intensive labour. Parents in this community usually ask their children to accompany them to the farms even on weekdays, thus denying the children education... Parents around here seem to lack, or they do not see the importance of formal schooling, and so all their concentration is on their occupation and not much on the schooling of their children. They are much more concerned about cocoa prices and the profit they can accrue by cultivating an extra hectare than the long-term education of their children. This issue of children not going to school but working on cocoa farms is a problem that parents are an integral part of it. The parents are the ones who ask children to work. (Interview with NGO officer Fred 32 yrs.)*

However, many factors and interest causes rural parents to have this discursive attitude toward education. The following paragraphs portray some of them.

5.2.3 Practices around formal education

Observational data and informal conversations with participants also revealed that some practices around the mobilisation of basic education could also lead to silent exclusion. For example, I observed that most of the child protection officers working for NGOs and government agencies on basic education in the rural communities were young and single. Through informal conversation, I realised such officers are usually posted to the remote rural communities because they are thought of as being capable of coping with the harsh conditions in rural areas such as living with lack of electric and potable water. However, the information from young officers I observed seems not to be highly valued by older rural parents.

Apart from the age differentials, participating parents also believed that in some instances lessons taught to children do not yield tangible results but rather were making children unruly or difficult to govern most of them talked about issues bordering on child rights. A participant in a focus group discussion had this to say in response to the usefulness of the NGO intervention

> *We have been told, for instance, that it is wrong for us to punish the children when they go wrong. The teacher who told us also said that even the teachers are not allowed to punish the children in school if they misbehave in class and that the law is against it… We punish the children because we want them to do what is right; to me, some of this new laws or teachings will surely make taking care of children very difficult especially when they get to their teen years. (Kwame 44 years Focus Group Discussion)*

The discussions with Kwame showed that parents did not have much say on issues of formal education and training of their children. However, in most cases, parents informed on what

to without any regards to parents local knowledge on childhood, another reason why they may not take such information seriously.

The strict use of international documents guiding transnational education meant that participating parents had little chance of participation. NGO Officials I observed had reason to stick to transnational documents than the concerns of parents due to funding concerns. For example, NGO Officials reported that they focus among other things on ensuring children are in school. They do this by educating parents about the importance of schooling and working with other agencies to ensure basic education for children. An Official explained how they mobilise children to be in school

> *We work with the UNCRC. Also, most of the organisations we work with both local and international support the UNCRC. This makes it easier to work with them since we are all on the same page, for example, when it comes to issues such as the need for children to have rights to education and the illegality of child labour. We also work very closely with the Education Directorate of Ghana in this country and some of the local religious organisations to encourage schooling... (Interview with Mr Kumi 48 years NGO official)*

The UNCRC is the primary document of reference for international NGOs at the research site. These NGOs also work through other agencies such as the Social Welfare Department and sometimes churches to advance children's right to education in Ghana. Rural parents, on the other hand, were mainly told what was expected of them. NGO Officials seem to point to the supposed ignorance of rural parents about the importance of schooling as a justification for not involving them.

> *... as you can attest to, we work very hard to inform parents about the law through our workshops and interventions. The major challenge is that most of the parents are ignorant, and so they go back and involve children in work. Even though they come*

to the workshops, I do not see much change when we go to visit them in the communities (Conversation with Fred 32 years, NGO Field officer)

I observed that child protection professionals working in rural communities generally saw themselves as experts imparting knowledge on childhood development thus did not feel the need to engage fully with parents whom they perceive as ignorant. This had led to a lack of appreciation on the parts of NGO field officers on local knowledge on childhood development in the research area.

5.2.4 Parents' reasons for excluding children in transnational education

This section discusses the possible reasons for parents' perspective on basic formal education and children's work. Most NGO field officers and some teachers I interacted with explained that interrupted attendance contributes to a lack of progress in school. However, participating parents explained that very few children pass the final basic education examination. Thus, they were not acting irrationally when parents keep their children from attending school. On the other hand, they believe their children could gain a useful skill through work – a kind of apprenticeship or skill training. Also, they considered the standardised, transnational education with its Western values that are available in the schools to be undermining their traditional values and practices (see Kwame's quote page 174)

Parents who participated in this research widely practised the discursive frame of children learning through work. However, they also enrol children in formal schooling as expected of them by law, and the hope they entertain that formal schooling will uplift their children and themselves from poverty. The two different forms of education being practised simultaneously seem to be a major cause of exclusion of children from formal education. Rural parents seem to elect practical learning for children over formal schooling where there is a clash, informing through their actions where their priority is. It was obvious that the advocacy for basic education even by traditional leaders was often in conflict with their

permissive attitude towards children working, which limited children's ability to participate in school.

The activities of participating parents showed that they were not waiting for free formal basic education to deliver prosperity to their children. But rather, they were diligently acting to position their children to succeed in the realities of their community by training them in skills that can lead to income generation (Yeboah 2014). In general, there was a sense among rural parents to stick to traditional ways of educating children because it was more tangible and useful to the societal needs of their community than what formal transnational basic education offers.

In today's globalised world, the Western construction of childhood is at the core of modern educational policies. Thus, despite structural and historical differences amongst nations, communities and peoples, international documents such as the UNCRC and the Universal Primary Education (UPE) encourages education in a school setting, where children (including those in agrarian communities) are prepared for the international labour market practices (Ioannidou, 2007; Moutsios, 2010) and not the needs of communities.

Traditionally, however, education and knowledge acquisition in rural sub-Saharan Africa mostly takes a hands-on approach (Nsamenang, 1992; Nukunya, 2003). Children often work with adults and learn skills through participation. The literature on African childhoods suggests that children learn and acquire knowledge through, through involvement and participation in cultural and productive activities (Nsamenang, 2004). Thus, through hands-on involvement, a Ghanaian child gradually acquires knowledge, skills, and attitude appropriate to life in his or her community (Nsamenang, 2004; Serpell & Marfo, 2014; Spittler & Bourdillon, 2012).

The survival needs in poor rural communities, require intensive practical labour and industriousness (see parents connection to local knowledge on page 181). However, an

attempt at basic education seems to bring profound changes in the attitude of children at the research site. They were unwilling to take activities such as fishing and farming up, particularly where they have graduated from basic education or unable to continue to higher education. Thus, most rural children, instead of becoming a source of hope after basic education, seem to become a burden to be supported by rural parents; a situation parents try to avoid.

Rural children who had "failed" at basic education were often found loitering about in the village. Interactions revealed that some of these children had migrated to urban communities to find non-existent jobs. To avoid such development, some parents withdrew their children from basic school or engaged children in activities to get children focused. However, these activities also contributed to sporadic attendance and silent exclusion in formal schooling. This finding runs parallel to a report by Casale and Drimie (2010) where they claim that the poorest of rural parents in Malawi did not value formal education highly because available education did not give value for money. Indeed, at the research site, participating parents through their agency, rationally questioned the necessity of keeping children in school when the outcome of final exams after nine years of basic education was almost certainly going to be a failure or inability to continue secondary schooling.

The preconceived idea of failure in rural schools, plus the direct and indirect cost of schooling further contribute to silent exclusion. Although Basic education is free in Ghana, there is always a long list of things to be paid for as reported by participating parents (Kweku Atta, page 157). These extras and in most cases unapproved fees, seem to be a major cause of absenteeism, and sporadic attendance by children enrolled in basic education in the poorest of rural communities.

The indirect cost of schooling a child rather than having the child engaged in gainful employment also contributed to silent exclusion. The demands of formal education require

that children are taught a curricular in a classroom setting. However, where the quality of education is low in the poorest of rural communities, I realised that parents who participated in this research seem to compare the indirect cost of keeping children in such schools when they could be working and contributing to the family economic unit.

The rain-fed farming practised in the community further contributes to household income been insecure and seasonal. Thus, during sowing and harvesting periods, poor rural parents often require their children to absent themselves from school and contribute to farm work. Boyle et al. (2002) go further to explain that in situations where opportunity costs were too high, poor rural parents would rather not send their children to school altogether. Likewise, low income in Owuram District forced caregivers to engage children in school mostly at opportune times it was obvious household poverty makes children work and economic contribution too useful to be traded for rural formal education. Research on children's contributions to the household economy in poor geographical areas, claims that children's work often contributes substantially to, and secure the well-being of households (Bourdillon, 2006; Evans, 2010; Hashim, 2007; Nieuwenhuys, 2005).

Rural parents may proclaim the importance of formal education. However, an observation of their agency and tendency to withdraw their children at the slightest of a hindrance to engage them in work or skills acquisition could indicate education based on vocation or skill acquisition maybe much more important to rural parents. It also may explain the high incidence of silent exclusion, Nsamenang (2004) writing on African childhood development and skills acquisition claims that responsible intelligence is of much more importance than conceptual thinking in traditional sub-Sahara Africa. Further, Nsowah-Nuamah, Teal, and Awoonor-Williams (2012) concluded that while official statistics point to a halving of poverty from 1998 to 2005 in Ghana, there is no evidence that it was due to an increase in formal schooling. All these reasons may be the cause of parents been seemingly

interested in the benefits they could derive from NGO workshops and not the aims of such interventions.

5.2.5 Actors interests in transnational education policies

As explained earlier, in Ghana, basic education is expected to lead to secondary education and end with tertiary education. The implementation of policies that will lead to such reality, however, involves a considerable number of interactions between actors of different statuses. These actors come with varying resources and unique interests. For some, the implementation is a profession, a political strategy, or a market, which, when not satisfied, leads silent exclusion of children in basic schooling. Silent exclusion is explained by Lewin (2009) as a situation where children enrol in formal school but are absent, too tired to follow the curriculum, attend sporadically, or are withdrawn altogether; is often blamed on uneducated rural parents. However, a careful analysis of the findings of this study, reveals the conflicting interests of actors, both international and local in the basic education of rural children, all come together to contribute to the phenomenon of silent exclusion.

The interests of participating rural parents in educating their children seem to be geared towards making their children job efficient instead of job seekers. However, analysis of the data shows that the need for vocational or skills acquisition is often silenced or may not be followed due to Ghana government's obligation to implement transnational education policy such as the UNCRC (Article 28) which focuses on numeracy and literacy learning as opposed to skills acquisition.

Rural parents in this research, however, demonstrate that, while they may be aware of the importance of basic education and rules governing it, they may not vigorously pursue it for their children. This resistance seemed to be due to the lack of translation of rural parents' interests and the reality of their settings into transnational education policies. Essuman and Akyeampong (2011, p. 513) claims that much of the policy on rural parents participation in

education and the roles ascribed to community members is only "evident in principle but not as intended for practice". Rural parents were often seen as too ignorant to be represented in the discussion of formal basic education by child protection professionals.

The symbolic representation of child protection professionals' I observed also seem to contribute to silent exclusion. Field officers posted to rural communities were often young and childless. This was to the advantage to child-focus NGOs who were mostly headquartered in Accra the capital and work in rural communities; young field officers were more suited and willing to travel around the country within a short notice than older married NGO field officers. However, parents seem not to value the information on child rearing from these young NGO field officers. This could be because of the discursive, but the entrenched belief among participating rural parents (Ghanaians in general) that adults should be imparting knowledge to younger ones, not the other way around. Expounding on the importance of symbolic representation, Maguire and Matthews (2014, p. 20) explain that "in attempting to affect ethical and symbolic imposition, cultural intermediaries require a degree of authority – their constructed meanings and personal lifestyles must carry credibility if they are to be taken up by others."

Also, participating local officials implementing transnational education policies were often caught in conflicting necessities. NGO Officials probably did understand why rural parents withdrew their children from school and engaged them in work although it was quite clear it was due to the daily survival needs of parents. However, NGO Officials were answerable to their superiors, who expect them to implement formal basic education based on transnational education policies. When it comes to the choice of keeping their jobs or articulating the perspectives of rural parents on education, I suspect most NGO Officials will maintain their jobs. Because of this conflict, NGO Officials themselves seem to lack the required motivation needed to make their message on education participation impactful to

parents. They seemed to be most interested in having parents attend workshops and the show of visible success

NGO officials had no interest in considering local knowledge on child protection. Super and Harkness (2008) explain that the internalisation of Western values by child-focused officials (NGO and Government) derived from Western-oriented education that they have been trained in for many years, could be the reason for ignoring local needs on education. Also, government agencies and NGOs depend in no small extent on collaborations with international NGOs to fund their activities. However, to win collaborations, NGO Officials must work with and implement transnational education policies such as the SDG4, which is supported by international NGOs while denouncing local knowledge on childhood development.

NGO officials had urgent work to do. This work includes keeping themselves in business by collaborating closely with international NGOs that promote transnational educational policies. This situation seems to prevent NGO Officials from fully engaging rural parents' perspectives on the basic education of their children. Thus, a lack of ownership on the part of rural parents on the need for formal schooling of children had also increased the incidence of silent exclusion.

In my analysis, I realised that transnational education policies are structured to dominate all other forms of learning. This reality also contributes to silent exclusion; for example, in Ghana, the UNCRC (article 28), and accompanying SDGs (4) heavily influences policies and laws directing children's education. The form of education encouraged by Ghana Act 560 and Article 28 of the UNCRC, is formal education in schools (Masko & Bosiwah, 2016; McMillan, 2011; Rogoff, 2003). Article 28 of UNCRC further states in part that, the Nation-States shall recognise the right of the child to education and 'they shall make primary education compulsory and free to all' (UNCRC 1989 Art. 28). Additionally, UNCRC and

Ghana's Act 560 and other global documents demonise rural children's work in Ghana, when children's work comes into conflict with the pursuit of basic education. For example, article 32 of the UNCRC and section five of Act 560 of Ghana both discuss the illegality of child labour (G.O.G, 1998; UNCRC, 1989). These documents define child labour by chronological age, the nature of the work and labour relations such as domestic, economic, or as depriving a child of formal education (Bourdillon 2006), without considering the skills a child could be gaining from these jobs.

5.2.6 Chapter summary

This chapter has gone beyond the usual approach of Actor Network researchers following network builders. It has done this by giving a platform for marginalised rural parents in the network to voice their opinions on the form of rural education for children. Two forms of education were discussed. The first is basic formal education, which is promoted by the government of Ghana, international funders of childhood development policies, and local NGOs.

Formal basic education demands children to be in a school setting with a teacher as an instructor. Basic formal education is compulsory by law, and many legal structures promote it. The other form of education present at the research site is the traditional form of education, which instils skills in children through hands-on and participatory activities. When basic education is promoted in rural areas, government and NGO officials often encounter the challenge of dealing with the interface between children staying in school on the one hand and children engaging in work on the other. This is because interactions with parents revealed that children's work is seen as skills acquisition and not child labour. Thus instead of parents enrolling and keeping children at school, they were in the habit of withdrawing them when they were old enough and able to contribute to work.

Parents point to the poor quality of schools and the fact that the traditional objectives of schooling are often not realised in their case as contributing to the withdrawal of children and engaging them in work. Also, the poor nature of schools, according to parents, does not warrant financial sacrifices. In the end, parents seem to perceive schools as a place where children can go while they are young but are better off out of school and engaging in work when they are older. This will help them to be skilled and gainfully employed.

Thus, large numbers of children enrol in schools but are silently excluded from the curriculum, which culminates in their withdrawal as they mature. The cultural and economic reality of the participating rural parents made the implementation of a rights-based approach to childhood development and education difficult. The fact is promoting a child's right to education and illegality of children's work or labour may look laudable, but hard to implement by NGOs and development agencies.

This chapter has also shown that in communities where child labour is acute, the practice may not be a matter of choice but rather seen as a virtue by many rural parents. Values such as obedience and respect were important to parents and were taught to children. These values, however, also made it impossible for children to insist on their right to stay away from work when they are asked to contribute labour on, for instance, the family farm. In the next chapter, I will look at the effect of some local values seen as important for childhood development by parents and its effect on the successful implementation of the NGO intervention.

A theoretical model illustrating parents' perspectives on education for rural children

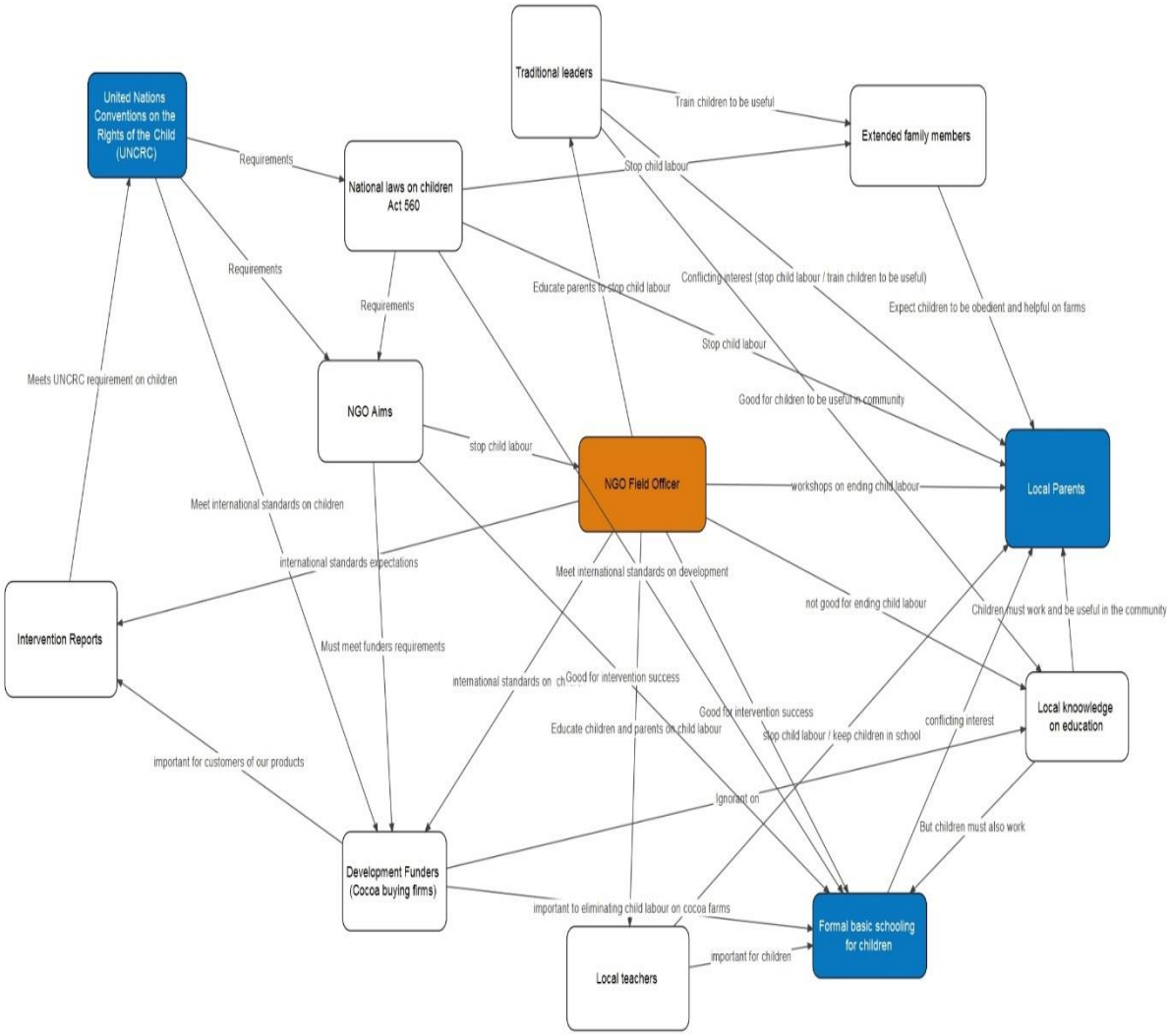


Figure 25 Source Author: A theoretical model showing the connections between social actors in creating the situation of formal education for rural children. The writings in between the links, illustrate the interests, conflicts or negotiations between the various social actors.

Chapter Six: Competing associations and their effect on translations

> *Euro-Western childcare and development approaches are promoted in a manner that suggests both an ignorance of the other heritages and a belief that others are incapable of producing a healthy adulthood (Pence & Nsamenang, 2008, p. 21)*

6. Introduction

Network builders (NGO frontline workers) in development processes hope to translate their version of the world on the people they wish to transform (Latour & Porter, 1996). However, several competing associations may want to recruit the object of network builders' interests to their version of the world. These competing associations may be in the form of social structures, natural settings, cultural values etc. Callon (1984, p. 10) uses the term *interessement* to describe the process that network builders use to corner the object of interest from other competing associations. In this study, an imposing competing association that constantly threaten the success of the intervention was the local knowledge(s) or cultural expectations on children's development at the research area.

This chapter focusses on the competing association of cultural expectations on children at the rural site; and how this may affect the successful translation of NGO intervention to enhance children's right to education and the illegality of child labour. For an appreciation of whether the local culture can enhance or impede the translation of the NGO intervention, the following paragraphs will first discuss the global childhood construction been promoted by child-focus NGOs. This will be followed by cultural and intergenerational expectations at the research site, discussion on the findings and finally the missed opportunity to learn from the reality of the context due to NGO frontline workers ignorance or neglect of the effect of the competing association of local knowledge(s) on children.

6.1 The notion of a globalized child

Protecting children using international rights-based guidelines is central in childhood policies of countries worldwide. Child rights are also prevalent in the activities of both international and local NGOs. This is, in most part, a consequence of the adoption in the early 1990s the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The convention has helped the course of children by giving a legal platform for children to claim rights due to their status as children. UNCRC explains child protection to be the prevention and responding to exploitation, violence, and abuse against children. The convention is widely successful; almost all nations have ratified it in the world[34] (Reynaert, Bouverne-de-Bie, & Vandevelde, 2009; UNICEF, 2006).

States that ratify the legally binding articles of the UNCRC are expected to protect children, from a range of types of maltreatment by adults. This can be both active and passive, including sexual, emotional, and physical abuse. States are also expected to promote child protection and rights in the fields of health, education, nationality, and family. The ultimate aim has been to modify group norms and ways of doing things perceived to be "disadvantageous" to a child (UNICEF, 2010). The promotion of a singular construction of childhood through the UNCRC has been referred to as 'Globalization of childhood' (See Montgomery, 2009), and an expansion of Western concepts of childhood and what a 'good' and 'proper' childhood should be (Boyden, 2015; Thelen & Haukanes, 2010).

To that end, S. Burman (2003) claim that in societies where collective existence is practised, acceptance of UNCRC with its undertones of Western construction of childhood and norms have come with much social conflict and contention. Others (for example Nsamenang, 2009; Pupavac, 2001, 2007) have also suggested that the whole adoption of

[34] The United States of America has signed but not ratified the UNCRC.

child rights constructed in the developed Western world might not yield preferred results in other cultures. Ghana is one case in point with many child protection policies based on the UNCRC. The following paragraphs look at some of these policies.

6.1.1 Ghanaian child protection environment

Ghana ratified the UNCRC and adopted it into a local law known as Children's Law 1998 Act 560; since then, the Government of Ghana has taken steps to develop criminal code and legislature that aims to improve and protect the lives of children. These include The Human Trafficking Act 2005, The Domestic Violence Act 2007, and the Juvenile Justice Act 2003. Other international documents endorsed by Ghana, to protect the child include The International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention on the Worst Form of Child Labour (WFCL) 1999. Ghana, in principle, has done everything possible to have its local laws on children mostly follow international standards.

As a country, Ghana has years of experience in using the legislature to protect children. As mentioned in chapter two above prior to the Children's Law 1998 Act 560, The Children Care and Reformation Ordinance 1928 was the first child protection legislature in Ghana (Apt & Blavo, 1997; Ardayfio-Schandorf, 2006). It was created during the colonial era in Ghana's history, where the British ruling class sought to respond to demands on them by the locals to protect vulnerable children. According to Apt and Blavo (1997), The 1928 ordinance on child protection was structured after child protection policies in the United Kingdom. The document was used until more recent documents such as the compulsive basic education policies, the Labour decree of 1967, and the establishment of institutions such as the Ghana Commission on children in 1979 and the Department of social welfare (Agbényiga, 2011). The Ghanaian government to ensure children's educational and survival rights and to protect children from inappropriate economic exploitation established all these documents and institutions.

In recent times, the involvement of the international community has brought about changes in the organisational landscape of child protection in Ghana (Lansdown, 2005; Montgomery, 2009). International NGOs such as UKAID, USAID and institution such as IMF, World Bank and UNICEF, often influence this change, which is geared towards a resemblance of child protection documents in the Western world or after the development of the Western child (Dobbin et al., 2007; Mbise, 2017). In Ghana, Economic reforms and administrative departments have further been introduced such as the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) initiative to improve the situation of children (Laird, 2012; Manful & Manful, 2010). State agencies have also been set up to ensure children's rights and protection. Foremost among them is The Department of Social Welfare; others are the Ghana National Commission on Children (GNCC), Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Police service, National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) and other non-governmental organization (GNCRC, 2005).

The Children's Law 1998 Act 560 of Ghana and the UNCRC are used as the standard of measure in child protection in Ghana. However, its implementation faces many challenges. Readily observed are the low levels of resources associated with the dissemination of information on the act (Manful & McCrystal, 2011). Thus, the majority of the research literature on childhoods in Ghana reports an unreceptive environment for the protection of children.

6.1.2 Intergenerational context

In the traditional Ghanaian context, children as in many other cultures are cherished and cared for (Nukunya, 2003). The care and rearing of children happen within families (including active participation of extended family members in the case of traditional and rural families). Because of the key role families play in the socialising of children, the

effectiveness of any intervention to protect children must be accepted to the by the family, relationships and hierarchies established within the family culture. Governments may do their part in providing legislature within their geographical boundaries to improve the situation of children; however, this cannot be realised as envisioned if the culture of childhood is at odds with these interventions and policies.

Intergenerational relations between children and adults in Ghana thrive on three key traditional virtues of obedience, responsibility and respect (Twum-Danso, 2009). These norms are expected of children, and it is often non-negotiable. They are important and continue to be the central currency for coexistence between adult and children in Ghanaian societies. Obedience expected of children demands that they should be willing to take up chores ask of them without much hesitation. Responsibility works closely with obedience and demands that children should be able to take up an initiative to help, especially where family members need help. In this way, children show their maturity and are giving more responsibilities, which come with privileges and respect for the children as well. Respect entails that children in the traditional families show courtesies including greeting, bowing, and listening to adults without in most cases talking back. These cultural practices, however, seem not to be compatible with the NGO intervention based on the principles of the UNCRC.

The child as a right bearer as advocated by the UNCRC is not a way of life for many traditional Ghanaian families. For instance, parents in most traditional Ghanaian families do curtail the autonomy of children and children are expected to rely on adults for guidance. This is because adults are often seen as knowing what is best for children. Article 12 of the UNCRC, however, advocates for the right of the child to participate in decisions that affect the child and the best interest of the child to be pursued (UNCRC, 1989).

Thus, most parents may not think it is appropriate to meet the ideals of article 12 (participation right of the child) of the UNCRC. They may also not believe that an

autonomous child is a virtue to aspire for and will not train their children in that regard. In traditional Ghanaian families, children who are overly expressive or assertive are often seen as disrespectful, deviants and uncultured. Community members will often see such children as bringing shame on their parents, as their unwelcomed behaviour will be judged as a sign of poor parenting skills.

Children traditionally are also expected to be communal, not individualistic, and may be expected to participate in activities to ensure the total wellbeing of the family. Participation, however, may take the form of work on family plantations such as during the harvest period on cocoa plantations where the whole family may be involved in harvesting cocoa or family members sitting around to break open cocoa pods. Children who do not participate in this kind of work may miss out on family time and may also be seen as unruly and useless by parents and may end up been punished. A strict application of article 32 of the UNCRC which directs that children should not work or engage in the worst form of child labour until they are 18 may, in this case, end up alienating children from participation in the family unit.

As a result, traditional activities carried out by children in Ghana are seen as child abuse or labour by international standards and most academic research (E.g. Boozer & Suri, 2001; Heady, 2000; Jones & Chant, 2009; Ray, 2002). Some researchers though have looked at the context of children's work, and directs attention to worst forms of child labour, such as situations where children are employed as hired labour, are abused sexually or pawn by parents, as the real challenge and substance of child abuse (E.g. Böhm, 2016; Hamenoo & Sottie, 2015). Not the sweeping generalisation of children engaged in work including the participation of household production unit or employment to contribute to impoverished families (E.g. Grier, 2004; Hear, 1982; Koomson & Asongu, 2016).

The lack of adequate formal jobs in Ghana is another reason why children take up work to contribute to family wellbeing. The aim in this instance is to help themselves and their impoverished families to survive. For example, Hilson (2010) claims in some districts of Ghana, boys and girls elect to pursue ardours work in artisan and small scale mining across the region to help parents. Research further points out that, parents and children themselves, may see the later who are stopped from working in some instance as not been useful (Hilson & Garforth, 2012; Sackey & Johannesen, 2015).

Research evidence (E.g. Admassie, 2002; Ray, 2002; Whitehead, 2006) shows that the situation of children working, which is illegal under national laws persist because in many instances governments and NGOs do not adequately tackle the underlying causes of poverty responsible for the existence of child labour. Thus, some researcher explains that for child protection as envisioned by international documents to succeed in poor African communities, efforts should be aimed at eradicating poverty. A lack of such an effort while at the same time forbidding child labour may bring about more difficulties to poor children and their families ability to ensure a measure of wellbeing and protection for children (Chant & Jones, 2005; Hashim, 2007).

This chapter of the thesis thus focuses on the influence of contextual realities and values on NGO interventions. Method for collecting in-depth data for the findings can be found in chapter three.

6.2 Findings

Critical observations and responses from parents inform the discussions. The opinions of NGO field officers have been laced into the discussion to show conflicts in the various actor interests. Quotes cited are representational of the perspectives of many parents; hence, names used here are pseudonyms.

6.2.1 Rural parents perspectives on early childhood development

Parents' ideas on child protection were fundamentally different from the ones promoted by NGO field officials and the UNCRC. They usually espoused the view that child protection is about providing for the physical well-being of children. A major concern was to make sure children are trained in the norms and customs of their culture and to safeguard the ability of them to acquire skills that can let them succeed in the community. Parents never talked about individual child rights because in most cases, they had never heard about it or when it is explained to them they did not think individualism is something they want to inculcate in their children. Early childhood protection care and education in Africa per the parents' perspectives focus on local capacity building, resources and Afrocentric literacy. In a focus group discussion, a woman puts it this way

> *…In this community, women raise children; we feed them and the whole family by growing our food and buying some from the market... We also observe customs that keep children safe. In this community, it is proper training for a child to greet, always show curtsies and other gestures of respect to elderly persons. A child, when mature enough, will be expected to take up some duties such as taking care of younger siblings or collecting water for the household. A child should be obedient to adults and must only talk when he is talked to. Also, it is improper for a child to call attention to himself in a social gathering (Akos woman 37 years FGD)*

Participating parents expressions and ideas of child protection did run parallel to findings by Nsamenang (2005, p. 2); where he notes that traditional African childhood development ideals "has its organisational coherence that is usefully oriented toward purposes different from those of foreign origin." The women referred to in the quote above were a network of indigenous community support of extended family and close community members who were available to support the newborn and his mother.

The child starts getting to know the ways of his community through this association. It is from this network of kin and relatives (see chapter two) that the child first gets its educational ideas and practices which is often embedded in family tradition or occupation, social and community life and daily routines. This network of women of both kin and friends, share caregiving to the newborn child, and a mother may often not worry about the whereabouts of the child within this network. The interaction with this network according to participating parents was to help children to learn morals, social values, participatory skills and ways of the world. Harkness and Super (1992) had made similar claims when they studied childhood developments in Kenyan families.

As the child grows up, he or she learns and develop traditional ways of his or her people (see Akos's quote page 193). Based on the child's maturity, various norms are taught to the child; some include rites of passage for girls (see Dipo making a Krobo girl into a woman in chapter two). Girls learn specific norms and practices appropriate for their maturity and boys take up skills that can position them to earn a living and care for their families in future. Employable skills are often learnt through hands-on learning and participation. Children are expected to respect and be obedient to all adults in the community due to the mutual support they get from the network of adult family and community members. Obedience from children to parents and indeed, all adults are not negotiable, especially if a child hopes to learn a skill from an older person.

Focus group discussion further revealed in-depth and interesting revelations on parents' thoughts on the NGO intervention, especially the idea of children's right to participation. For instance, I drew parents' attention to the idea that strict adherence to respect and obedience and the curtailing of children's opinion autonomy within the cultural context as expected will limit their ability to be creative and may destroy their initiative, to which a parent explained as follows

Children express themselves and are creative when they play[35] with their colleagues, but I think that children have a lot to learn from adults, and so for their good it is essential for them to learn from adults and obey them respectfully, surely I can and will only help a child who respects me not one who challenges me…(Kweku, man 41 years FGD)

Participating parents expect children to be expressive and participate in decision making, but this should be in the company of their cohorts. Indeed at the research site, and in traditional rural Ghanaian families in general, children are expected to play a role in their development. Pence and Nsamenang (2008, p. 23) explain that they have a responsibility in their self-education. They usually do this as expressed in the quote by Kweku through participatory peer culture, when they play with their mates and in the homes and other activity settings such as work and play activities. Through these activities, they learn key competencies necessary in their communities without direct instructions from parents.

The nature of skill acquisition in traditional African families, as explained by Nsamenang (2004) is through hands-on participation. Children gain skill for survival in their communities by watching and working with adults. However, the opportunity for children to learn from adults, as explained by Kweku (Quote on page 181) will depend on the child showing respect to adults. In that regard, a child who is very opinionated and insists on the individual right as advocated by the UNCRC may end up not having an opportunity to learn a useful skill which is important to his settings such as how to take care of a cocoa tree.

Western values often stress assertiveness in children. This value seems to have been imported into article 12 of the UNCRC to encourage child participation globally. However,

[35] The response by the participant also drew attention to another important aspect of childhoods in Ghana which have not been researched fully namely children's play. This is particularly important because it is generally agreed that children learn many skills from playing. The lack of research on African children's play could be because the dominant discourse has been on African children's work and the humanitarian crisis thereof

among participating parents, these were traits that were not supported in children when they engaged with adults and were a sign of bad parenting or an unruly kid. That notwithstanding I observed NGOs working to protect children in the community to raise the need for child participation in decisions and for parents to respect the individual rights of children, even though parents seemed not to understand why this should be the case.

Thus, by insisting on child participation, NGO field officers per parents' responses were inadvertently setting children up against parents. Indeed, not just parents but all adults in the community who expect children to be subservient. There was a potential that the NGO intervention to protect children would rather lead to a situation where adults will withdraw much-needed care and assistance that they offer children. In any case, participating parents seem not to worry much about the ideals and principle of UNCRC and its counterpart Act 560 (the local, national law on children) due to lack of dissemination on these documents.

Participating parents had very little to no knowledge on Act 560 or the UNCRC. This was because they did not have official channels for information on the law although NGOs occasionally educated them on it. However, when asked if they were aware that children under the age of 18 who partook in work were illegal in Ghana, responses indicated that participating parents were aware of parts UNCRC or Act 560 although they were not necessarily aware that they were referring to these documents. Most parents indicated that the channels through which they were likely to hear the laws are from informal sources such as at church, Parents Teacher Association (PTA) meetings and when NGOs come to the village. A man explains how he gets information on child protection laws.

> *At the last meeting we had with officials from KooKopa, an NGO official came to talk to us about how to properly care for children. They emphasised that it was wrong for children to work on the cocoa farms when I asked what about when school vacates,*

and children are home with us the official said it wrong for them to work even when they are away from school …. This was very new to me (Kofi 45years FGD).

The quote from Kofi shows that NGO officials were mostly seeking to implement their childhood intervention at all cost without a pause to consider the meaning of children's work in the cultural context in which they operate. The rationale behind local knowledge on childhood was often treated as ill-informed or substandard and was not sought by NGO field officers. Reflecting on the style of the NGO officials when they interact with local parents, it was obvious participation, which is so prominently espoused in NGO reports at best was practised at a tokenistic level.

In an informal conversation, an NGO informs that

When we meet with them at the workshops, we educate them on the importance of child protection, and we help them to know that if they keep their children in school and stop them from working on the farms the children will have a bright future. We also educate them on child rights to education, to play and to express an opinion. (Fred 32 years, NGO field officer)

NGO field officers, in reality, used a top-down educational approach which infantile adults who were old enough to be their parents (see photos on pages 133-4). This relationship could also be a reason why rural parents from my observations seem to be interested only in the material benefit of the workshops and not the idea of child protection that the program was about. The educational approach described in the quote was also used by other NGOs and other child protection agencies and was void of any form of contribution from parents on expectations on childhood.

6.2.2 Cultural meaning of children's work vs schooling

The work of children was the main issue of contention between parents and NGO officials. Thus, perspectives on children's work culture as was expected differed with both parents and

NGO field officers. Parents saw children working as a cultural sign of maturity, industriousness and skill acquisition which will benefit children in the future and not an illegal practice known as child labour, while NGO officials saw it as exactly that. As a result, during data collection, it was common to observe children selling on the market, working on farms or contributing to household chores which freed useful time for parents to engage in economically productive work.

Interactions with participating parents showed that children enrolment in school was high when they were very young. This could be because children are probably not strong enough to participate in physical work. However, when children were old enough, parents seem to decide whether children should work or go to school by assessing which of the two options had the best potential of ensuring the possible future of children. While most parents will empathically say that schooling is good for the future of their children a probe into the whereabouts of children of participating parents showed that most of the older ones (but below 18) were engaged in some form of trade or were working on cocoa farms a situation parents seem to have no regrets about. The reality was that the quality of available schools was not good enough to ensure that children will have the required passes to continue to higher education (but were good enough to serve as a "keeping" place for younger children). Also, the long wait needed for education to be useful seems to be an inhibiting factor for parents to commit their children to formal schooling when they could learn a skill and be gainfully employed.

These observations were buttressed in a focus group discussion when a participant suggested that schools in the community make children lazy. A woman who seems to be reasonably knowledgeable about child rights because her child is a member of the Child Rights Club in the local school to my surprise supported the idea that children should help their parents by working on farms and at home, she explains that

> *It is important …for example lets take household chores, children need to learn how to handle such things from infancy, so they can take care of themselves when the parents are not around and also for their future. Also working on the farms teaches them the cocoa business, which is a useful skill necessary for life in this community. if they go to school and they come back and sit around doing nothing they will surely become lazy and create a lot of problems for us* (Naana woman 42 years FGD)

Household chores when it conflicts with school hours are classified by the International Labour Organization (ILO) as child labour. This had been communicated to participating parents at workshops by NGO field officers; however, the response from the woman above shows that household chores were expected of children by parents. A man further emphasises the importance of children's work

> *But then how do people learn a skill if they do not work with someone who has expertise in that field. I think that they (children) must be allowed to work because it is a form of preparation for their future. If a child wants to become a farmer in future he must learn the skill through working on the farms... that is how my Auntie taught me how to make Kente (traditional cloth) by learning and working with her and now I make money by making Kente. I don't think it is wrong for children to work with their parents*

Participating parents referred to children working on farmlands as "skill training" and saw it as essential to child protection and survival. Parents seemed to be more concern about developing the agency of children for them to be in a position to fend for themselves. They reasoned that this could be done through practical work for children to contribute to their welfare.

These responses indicate that parents may continue to involve children in work, although they have had engagement with the NGO intervention. Parents believed that the local knowledge of childhood is what will protect children in the reality of their locality. Local knowledge on childhood, therefore, was a huge inhibitor on the sustainable and real success of the intervention been implemented by the NGO field officers. However, local knowledge of childhood seems to be ignored mainly by NGOs deliberately. This is because they had to present a coherent front, which is in line with the intervention goals. The shunning of local perspectives leads to blocked opportunities to learn about what was relevant to rural parents when it comes to childhood construction in the rural cocoa growing area

6.2.3 NGO Officials ignorance on local reality and knowledge on child protection

Throughout my association with the NGO field officers, there was a focused effort to promote Western child protection and development approaches. They seemed to be either ignorant on local knowledge on childhood, or they deliberately refuse to acknowledge it and the reality of families in the community. There was also this attitude and a deep certainty that rural parents are incapable of caring for and protecting their children from being proper adults. Thus, the plight of children in the community was seen as a consequence of the inadequacies of local knowledge on childhood. NGO field officers did not put up any effort to look into the culture and local knowledge available on childcare. Callaghan (1998 p. 33) further notes that what is also ignored when it comes to the plight of African children by Western-influenced child protection professionals, is the "broader historical and geopolitical activities that have contributed to the impoverished contextual reality of the (African) continent.

The contextual reality of participating parents demanded that children ought to be active and up-and-doing. There was a need to train children to exercise their agency and to utilise their resources and strength for their welfare; this was seen as a status symbol and maturity and a necessity of life. Also, the lifestyle of families demanded this training. During

data collection, I observed that after the harvest season, some parents might travel to distant markets to sell their farm products, these involved parents leaving home the whole day sometimes weeks. During these times, any protection that can be given to children by parents is withdrawn; thus children who have been shielded from engaging in farm work and practical domestic chores may become more vulnerable due to their parents' absence.

Extended family obligations and expectations also demanded that children in the community ought to be able to take up some amount of work. Due to extended family structures and commitments, parents often travelled to attend funerals and naming ceremonies of extended kin, which also demanded them to be away for weeks. Thus, training children practically through work to survive in the absence of parents was important to parents, and I realised in our interactions that parents could not fathom why this important training should be labelled as illegal by child-focus NGO staff.

NGO field officers influenced by international documents on childhood and international funders' aims; ignore local values on children. They project a negative impact on the development and formative years of children who engage in work to those who do not. In so doing, they ignore the skills that these working children gain through their activities and how these can be used to protect the children themselves when there are no adults around, or where children have to take care of junior siblings.

The analysis of data also revealed that there is a fundamental difference in values that the various actors perceive as important to childhood. These differences were an important pointer of what should be inculcated in childhood interventions to make them sustainable among locals. Values that participating parents' hold dear needs to be translated into childhood interventions which were lacking in the current intervention. The following paragraphs will discuss some perceived opportunities to learn that NGO field officers missed

by their insistence on the practice of Western construction of childhood in a traditional agrarian rural community.

6.3 Blocked opportunities to learn

Ideological differences: Knowledge of childhoods does vary. The generalised construction of a singular childhood carried and intensified by global text although may have good intentions cannot exist in reality in developing countries due to the substantial amount of resources required for this realisation. Thus, for NGOs working in communities with different ideology on childhoods to be effective, the rationale behind local knowledge on childhoods must be understood, and parts of it incorporated in NGO program on childhoods without that, the ideals of the UNCRC and national laws influenced by the UNCRC will be difficult to be realised. An insistence on children not working will probably mean families that need the extra income from children's labour will suffer economically. Also, children might not be able to acquire any skills which parents see as essential to survival. This will further deepen their poverty, especially where children are not guaranteed a better future with the inferior quality of formal education available in rural communities; particularly where the halving of poverty in recent times in Ghana cannot be traced to an increase in formal education.

Collective Action: Grassroots mobilisation should be the aim of NGOs and government agencies. The idea that rural parents are illiterate, and thus, they should be told what to do should be discarded. If local parents are genuinely made to participate in child protection programmes, they can own such programmes and sustain it. In such instances, rural parents can form committees to sustain child protection using local knowledge on child protection which is more meaningful to them and funding from international organisations can be used to enhance this initiative for different ways of caring for children to be heard, not curtailed. Also, where local parents have practical and beneficial ways of protecting their children, this

should not be outrightly abandoned by childcare professionals as low standard or illegal, but rather should be incorporated in child protection programmes.

Active learning and emancipatory knowledge: An essential element in the activities of child-focused NGO staff should be an awareness of the socio-political structures underpinning practices and realities in rural Africa. At the research site, it was obvious the child protection narrative by NGOs did raise expectations that are, in most cases, exaggerated and not sustainable. For example, where parents are constantly told that children fail in life because they are made to work, this inversely means that children will do well when they stop working and go to school, which might not necessarily be the case. Thus, NGOs working in rural areas of Africa should be sensitive to the kind of information that they disseminate. They should be aware of the knowledge that can emancipate parents from old ways of protecting children by offering directives that are workable in the communities they operate in.

Child protection policies must be in tandem with realities of rural communities: Extreme poverty and the lack of assistance from governments to families and children in rural areas of Ghana means parents who are in most cases peasant farmers have to scrape a living through any means possible. Thus parents may want to help their children gain skills that can assure them sustenance by making sure they acquire economically useful skills. This may include obligating children to contribute to family income through work. In this instance, providing resources for women will perhaps lead to improved lives for children. Wrigley-Asante (2012) suggest that where credit is made available to women, children are the end beneficiaries. This will perhaps reduce children's work and increase child protection rather than insisting on children's right.

6.3.1 Chapter summary

This chapter has shown that ignorance or rejection of competing associations such as local knowledge on childhoods by child-focused NGOs may result in the implementation of interventions, which are not sustainable. Most local NGOs in developing countries implement interventions guided by international documents and policies, particularly the UNCRC they often report success due to the application of best practices or failures due to the unyielding attitude of locals. This study by researching a child-focus intervention on child rights in a rural community has revealed that the intervention from the perspective of participating parents may have little impact on improving the situation of children at the research site.

The chapter has revealed that the reason for the shallow impact is because child-focus NGOs ignore cultural and structural reality, which have a significant effect on local childhoods. NGO field officers, therefore, must learn to modify and incorporate some aspects of local practices in their interventions if they intend to have an impact beyond measurable achievements. Finally, like Paul Feyerabend, it is my conviction that the only way donors can develop new and sustainable approaches in childhood construction is when they try something new, i.e. a meaningful translation of local knowledge into childhood interventions. Finally, there is certainly no proof to believe that efficiency and the best practices of childhood in one context, when applied in another context, will yield the same preferred results, neither is there a guarantee that locals will translate these best practices into their lives. Thus, in trying to effect a change, it is essential to come to terms with culture and context.

Chapter Seven: A final note on activities of childhood brokers

This study has demonstrated two main points. Firstly, in trying to effect a change in the situation of children in rural communities, rural mechanism for solving rural problems should be identified and enhanced instead of it been discarded. Thus, donors as far as they give out funds should be responsible for funding decisions[36]; however, they must refrain from setting targets for the funds, in order to avoid exerting external influence on decisions and expectation hence rejecting the real concerns of the locals.

On a cursory look, child-focus NGOs and local farmers may look like fortune hunters, but they are not. A careful analysis of interactions and the data shows that both social actors are victims of a development structure, which is not created for handling, identified local level problems under local control. The best these local social actors could do under the circumstances is to mirror expectations which run parallel and are in line with already existing structures initiated and controlled by the international organisation and nation-states.

The structures supported by these juggernauts of institutions as revealed by the study as planned development. This idea posits that development, including that of children, can be implemented in a linear systematic way. This systematic way rejects local knowledge and realities but implements external ideals. Thus, by engaging with rural farmers, this study tried to elicit an alternative to the planned development system from rural parents. Rural parents were allowed to voice their views on constructing a child in the reality of their settings, and to articulate their challenges.

The choices of parents for childhood development suggested that the bottom-up approaches might not be the best way to go. Parents in chapter five of this dissertation espoused the idea of children working instead of going to school they hoped for a child who

[36] For example extremist and terrorists local groups should not be funded

could learn a skill which could be beneficial in the short term instead of gaining abstract knowledge which may not yield results in the foreseeable future. In chapter six, they suggested the need for children to be diligent learners of traditional values and norms. In my opinion, development agents and researchers should not dismiss the understandings of the local people of themselves as fanciful or ideological, since they will have access to some kind of knowledge that is not available to them. Their responses, however, suggest that local people while they can best explain their situation; may also need expert knowledge to collaborate with them to enhance their suggestions. When left alone, they will probably opt for projects that may not be realistic, or which are likely to be a failure before its inception due to lack of experience.

Secondly, this study has also shown that child-focus NGOs or brokers are important for advocacy. Through their activities, they draw attention to and direct resources to areas of childhood that need attention. Their activities of publishing childhood in crisis among other things lead to the formulation of legal structures and in some cases pressure on governments to ratify international standards on child protection such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). These international standards lead to the creation of childhood intervention programs, which are implemented by NGOs.

Interactions with NGOs in this study has further shown that with the implementation of such intervention, NGOs translate international policies into local arenas and hope these policies will become the way of life of social actors in these localities. The results of such translation are often uncertain because the reality of local arenas is often shaped to fit intervention goals or NGO perceptions and not vice versa. Thus child-focus NGOs in their constant search for project funding present proposals to international funders with a tuned reality where the priority of the communities they work with fit perfectly into the needs of the programs of international cocoa buying firms, to stop child labour on cocoa plantations.

In this regard, successful NGO field officers are the ones who produce reports that NGO superiors or funders expect.

This study has further informed that the situation presented in proposals to international funders is in most cases a veneer cover of the reality on the ground. Child-focus NGOs and local cocoa farmers interact (knowingly or unknowingly) to present a front that children working on cocoa plantations are the pressing challenge for both local parents and NGOs. The study reached this conclusion because participating NGO field officers knew why the farmers came to the workshops (i.e. for whatever free things they could get). However, the officers seem to accept this representation from farmers as far as they present themselves at workshops and portray the part of a bottom-up group working to end child labour on cocoa plantations.

In the end, the international cocoa buying firms get a local partner with the perfect need aligned with their aims, and the local partner gets a project. The ability to craft out such a situation judges the legitimacy of the NGO field officer and the NGO itself. A seemingly win-win situation is therefore created, where cocoa buying firms can have the authority to say that the cocoa beans for their chocolate products are free from child labour, and local farmers, on the other hand, can have some resources through the running of projects. In sum, a successful intervention is where farmers get some free things, funders get their reports, and the local NGO runs the intervention.

The study has also revealed that a successful NGO intervention report often indicates that targeted communities are benefiting from the project goals. However, observation at the field indicates that these claims are often visible success but may not be representational. The reality is that development buzzwords that fill reports are often not achieved by NGO field officers. For example, NGOs do not end-up empowering children to demand their rights to

basic schooling and participation in decision-making; neither do they allow participation of rural parents in suggesting the aims of the intervention to tackle effectively local problems.

To identify local challenges of local people, international donors could use the services of ethnographers and anthropologists. These trained people can determine structures within local communities that are capable of handling local problems. However, if local challenges are not the focus of interventions, Farmers, for instance, can refuse to support interventions that do not address their needs by rejecting its trapping such as printed T-shirts and allowances that come with it; this may cause development funders to attend to farmers perspectives on childhood construction.

Listening to the perspectives of local actors will cause international donors to do things differently. Like Feyerabend, it is my conviction that the only way donors can develop new and sustainable approaches in childhood construction is when they try something new by truly involving local knowledge on childhood in their programmes. As Michel Callon has shown in his classic article Domestication of the Scallops and the Fishermen of St Brieuc Bay, this study concludes by stating that there is certainly no proof to believe that efficiency and the best practices of childhood development in one context, when applied in another context, will yield the same preferred results. Thus in trying to effect a change, there should be more emphasis on knowing instead of doing; and to accept failure and uncertainties as the real learning opportunities to be studied and not to be discarded.

7.1 Further research

Global text on childhood development mainly focuses on protecting children from abuse, particularly work. These documents portray children from developing countries as losing their childhood to work and not having enough time to learn and play. Much research has covered the nature of children's play in developed countries, particularly in Western Europe and the Scandinavia. However, field observations from this study indicate that although rural

children had to work, they did play while working. Future studies can focus on children's play, work, and learning in rural communities of Africa to see how this contribute to adult life.

Figure 2 Source Author: In this picture; children play behind the researcher. They had been sent to collect water from a nearby well. However, they pause to play for a period before continuing the trip. Occurrences like this made me wonder whether African children miss out on play and learning because they work as portrayed by global text or this form of play is not considered because it is laced with work

Appendix

In case of reply the number and date of this letter should be quoted

Our Ref. MOG,CSP/HG.7/7/01/V.2

Your Ref. .....

Tel/Fax No. 0302688181/688188

REPUBLIC OF GHANA

MINISTRY OF GENDER, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL PROTECTION
P. O. BOX MBO 186
MINISTRIES – ACCRA

16TH FEBRUARY, 2018

RE: REQUEST TO CONDUCT ACADEMIC RESEARCH STUDY AT YOUR INSTITUTION

We refer to your letter dated 29th January, 2018 on the above stated subject.

The Hon. Minister has granted you approval to conduct an academic research study at the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection.

Kindly contact the Acting Director, Department of Children for assistance.

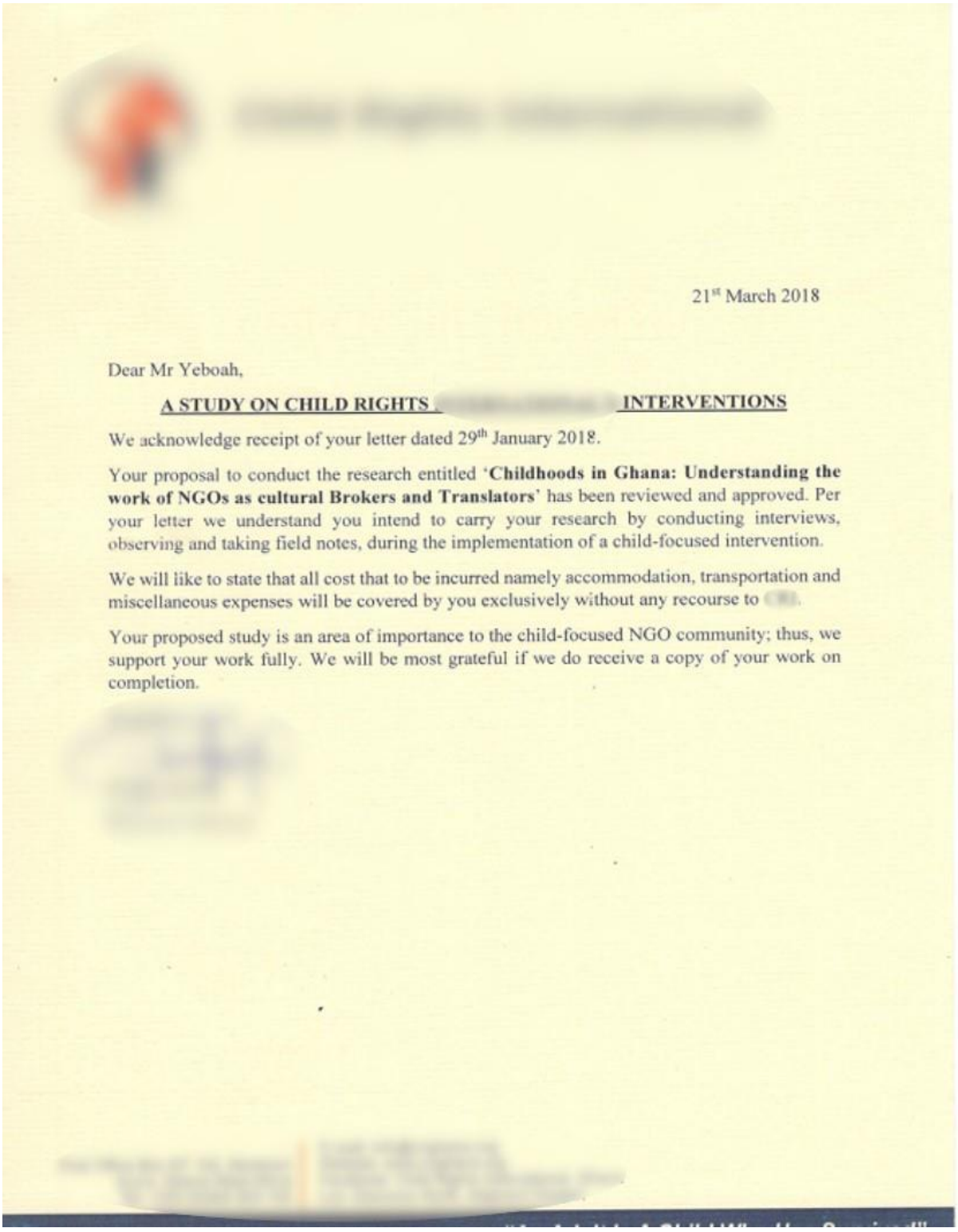
Thank you.

EFUA ANYAÑFUL
CHIEF DEV. PLANNING OFFICER
for: **MINISTER**

SAMPSON ADDO YEBOAH
DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED SOCIAL SCIENCES
HJ 420
HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY
KOWLOON BAY HONG KONG

Cc: **AG. DIRECTOR**
DEPARMENT OF CHILDREN
ACCRA

Figure A. Permission letter from the Ministry of Gender Children and Social Protection, Ghana



21st March 2018

Dear Mr Yeboah,

A STUDY ON CHILD RIGHTS INTERVENTIONS

We acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 29th January 2018.

Your proposal to conduct the research entitled '**Childhoods in Ghana: Understanding the work of NGOs as cultural Brokers and Translators**' has been reviewed and approved. Per your letter we understand you intend to carry your research by conducting interviews, observing and taking field notes, during the implementation of a child-focused intervention.

We will like to state that all cost that to be incurred namely accommodation, transportation and miscellaneous expenses will be covered by you exclusively without any recourse to

Your proposed study is an area of importance to the child-focused NGO community; thus, we support your work fully. We will be most grateful if we do receive a copy of your work on completion.

Figure B permission letter from the participation NGO

PARTICIPANT CONSENT AND INFORMATION SHEET

This information sheet hopes to seek your participation in a research study conducted by Sampson Addo Yeboah (Ba. Psychology with Sociology, MPhil. Health Promotion and Development) Mr Yeboah is a PhD candidate at the Department of Applied Social Sciences at Hong Kong Polytechnic University. The response from your participation will contribute to the realisation of my doctoral thesis. You were selected as a possible participant because your expertise and work with child-focused NGOs as the Head/Field Operations Staff will be valuable to the research topic.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

My research aims to follow the network of activities of a child-focus NGO in order to understand the realities of the implementation of childhood programmes in a local community.

2. PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate in the research, two separate occasions will require your involvement. Firstly, you will be involved in an interview on the subject matter. The second will be member checking, where I will meet you to validate whether your opinions in interviews have been captured accurately. Both meetings will be audio taped, transcribed and analysed. Both events may last a minimum of an hour. The interview will be in a place that is most suitable for you.

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The questions that will be asked in interviews and the activities of the researcher (such as observation) to the best of my knowledge are not sensitive and may not affect you in anyway. However, if at any point you feel uncomfortable and wish to stop the study you are free to do so.

4. POTENTIAL BENEFIT TO SUBJECT AND/OR TO SOCIETY

The research is not designed to benefit you directly as a participant. However, information gained will go a long way to contribute a better understanding of the realities of the implementation of a child-focused intervention and thus contribute knowledge to its discussion and how it can be enhanced.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

No remuneration will be made to participant in this research study. However, transportation and other associated costs incurred by you as a result of availing yourself to research, will be reimbursed to you. There will be no loss of rights or penalty to you if you decide to stop participating in the study

6. CONFIDENTIALITY/ANONIMITY

Any information obtained in this study that can be traced or identified to you will be anonymised. All names will be coded in the transcription, making it impossible to follow the identity of you as a participant. Transcribed data will be marked with alphabets that correlate with a participant list stored separately on another storage device. Hard copies of transcription notes, field notes and photographs will be kept under lock in a personal safe. Similarly, in the text of published work, pseudonyms will be used with no reference to your name.

All data collected will be stored. A personal laptop with a secure password will be used. Data will be backed up on an external hard drive, which will be stored in a secure place. After transcribing, recorded data will be erased.

The findings of this study are solely for academic purpose. This means the final dissertation will be made publicly available through Pao Yue Kong Library of Hong Kong Polytechnic i.e. the facilitator of the research. Also, the researcher will publish a number of scholarly articles from the study results. In all cases, no references will be made to you.

All data both hard and soft copies of transcription and other related material will be completely destroyed and deleted from the laptop after five (5) years

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Participation in this study is voluntary and you are at liberty to participate in it or otherwise. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without facing consequences. You may also refuse questions which you may not like and still stay in the study. However, the researcher may withdraw you if there is a tangible reason for such action.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact:

Principal investigator

David Herold Kurt: (Assistant Professor Department of Applied Social Sciences, Hong Kong Polytechnic University)

Email Address: david.herold@

Co-investigator

Sampson Addo Yeboah (B.A. Psychology/Sociology; MPhil Health Promotion and Development)

Email Address: sam.a.yeboah@

Yeboah_sampson@

9. RIGHT OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

As a voluntary participant in this research study, you have the right to withdraw at any time. This will not attract any penalty or a waiving of any of your legal claim, rights, or remedies because of your participation or non-participation.

As a participant, you also have the right to request access to and make correction of the personal data supplied for the project

10. SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

This to certify that the research has been explained to me the participant by Yeboah Addo Sampson in a language I understand (English Twi/Ga-Adangbe/Other) and I was given the opportunity to ask questions, these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name_____
__

Signature/Date/Place_____/_____/_____

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