

YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC POLICY FORMULATION
AND IMPLEMENTATION: A CASE STUDY OF THE NATIONAL YOUTH
POLICY OF GHANA.

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Declaration of Authorship

I, (Jones Adu-Gyamfi) hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely mine. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

[Thesis word count: 74,052]

This thesis is dedicated to my late father, Richard Adu Gyamfi

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ABSTRACT

The African Youth Charter requires African countries to formulate and adopt an integrated national youth policy to address youth concerns. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Children's Charter also confer on children and young people the right to participate in matters that concern them. This qualitative research adopted a social constructivist approach to examine young people's participation as strategic stakeholders in the formulation and implementation of Ghana's youth policy. The aim was to gain knowledge about the processes that facilitate or hinder young people's participation in the policy process at national level. The study involved the use of semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with 20 stakeholders in the policy process; the study involved 4 policy makers, 3 lobbyists and 13 young people aged 15 – 17 years.

Questions that guided the study were: what is the extent of young people's participation in the policy process; are there barriers to involving young people in the policy process; and what strategies were been used to promote young people's participation in the policy process in Ghana. Findings showed discrepancy in the attitudes and behaviour of policy makers towards young people. For example, on one hand policy makers recognised young people's right to participate but on the other hand they did not seek to involve young people in the policy process. The study identified a number of factors contributing to this discrepancy; from the perspectives of policy makers young people were not matured enough to take part in policy discussions, but from the perspectives of young people the policy process was highly politicised, hence

their non-participation in political activities such as voting meant that they were not considered worth inviting to participate in policy discussions.

The study highlights a difference in the policy processes of developing and developed countries. Whereas in most developed countries the main area of contestation is the policy formulation stage, this study however shows that in a developing country like Ghana the main area of contestation is the policy implementation stage. Also, whereas young people had some level of participation in the formulation of the policy they were out rightly excluded from the policy implementation stage, leaving the young people to question the commitment of policy makers to engage young people in decision-making. In light of the dissonance between the theory and practice of participation, the study argues that to effectively involve young people in the policy process demands the granting of political capital to young people. The thesis concludes with a call for a rethink of the apolitical status usually ascribed to young people.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACC – African Children’s Charter

ACRWC – African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

CRC – Convention on the Rights of the Child

DOVVSU – Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit

GES – Ghana Education Service

GNCC – Ghana National Commission on Children

GNCRC – Ghana NGO Coalition on the Rights of the Child

MOWAC – Ministry of Women and Children’s Affairs

MOE – Ministry of Education

MOH – Ministry of Health

NFED – Non Formal Education Division

NGO – Non Governmental Organisation

NHIS – National Health Insurance Scheme

SED – Special Education Division

SYND – Strategic Youth Network for Development

YAA – Youth Advocacy Assembly

YMCA – Young Men Christian Association

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

In the 2002 United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children (UNGASS), children and young people held their own independent forum in addition to taking part in the rest of the session. Children also hold an annual Junior 8 meeting alongside the G-8 summits. These signal a shift in attitude towards children and young people at the international level, which according to Pupavac (2001:97) is aimed at “creating a new international ethical order”. This may be due to the belief that children’s issues have the potential to unite societies to confront social problems and prevent war (Pupavac, 2001). The link between children’s issues, peace and development was made more succinctly by Kofi Annan (UN Secretary-General 1997-2007) who said “only as we move closer to realising the rights of all children will countries move closer to their goals of development and peace” (UNICEF, 2005:vii).

Hence children’s rights continue to inform the humanitarian activities of many international development agencies. For example, UNICEF (1996) has stated that one of the best ways to reassert humanitarian values is to insist on the fulfilment of the rights of children. It has therefore become fashionable for many Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) to invoke childhood as a “sacred icon of global civil society” (Nieuwenhuys, 2010:294) to justify their interventions. This may also in part be attributable to the belief that childhood is a trope that can be imposed on the entire world (Burman, 1995; Balagopalan, 2002). Consequently, a so-called universal childhood is being propagated across the universe under the auspices of children’s rights treaties.

Children's right treaties have evolved over several decades. In 1924 and 1959 the United Nations (UN) promulgated the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. The world celebrated the International Year of the Child in 1979, and as part of the celebrations Poland proposed that the 1959 Declaration be converted into a convention. Accordingly, the UN set up a working group to prepare a draft Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). After 10 years of negotiations and drafting, the UN General Assembly adopted the Convention and opened it for signature on 20 November 1989. The convention identifies a specific body of rights for children, commonly referred to as the 3 P's: protection, provision, and participation. With its adoption, many countries have instituted legislative changes, e.g. 1989 Children Act of England and Wales, Ghana's Children Act 1998, Child Rights Act 2003 of Nigeria and Zimbabwe, 2007 Child Rights Act of Sierra Leone. Tomàs (2007) has argued that the convention implies an array of important changes to how childhood is perceived, namely the introduction of the idea of children's participation, which was unknown in previous children's rights instruments. She concludes that "the treaty came to endorse, for the first time, the idea that the child should be considered a being in possession of rights and of fundamental liberties" (Tomàs, 2007:3-4).

This thesis focuses on young people's participation in public policies that affect them. According to the CRC children (i.e. below 18 years) have a right to participate in matters concerning them. The study focuses on those between 15 and 17 years. In colloquial language children is used to denote pre-teenage years while young person denotes teenage and pre-adulthood. The justification for selecting 15-17 year olds is given in chapter 6.

Research Statement

The Government of Ghana ratified the CRC in 1990 with no reservations, and proceeded to incorporate the principles in the Children's Act 1998. However, there is lack of knowledge on the extent of children and young people's participation in decision-making, because there is very limited research on children's participation in the country. The only notable research on the subject found is by Twum-Danso (2008) on how to legitimise children's rights in local communities. In the study, she discovered that while many adults outrightly reject children's participation and the principles behind it, she argues that on closer examination it was possible to identify areas in parental attitudes and children's experiences of participation in family and community life. She concluded that there were opportunities for children to express their views and participate in decisions in the family and community.

This raises some questions: Can these opportunities be exported from the family and community levels to the national level? If policy makers, who are also family and community members, are willing to create spaces for children's voices in family and community decisions, can they create similar spaces for children and young people at the national level? This thesis however shows that there are limited opportunities for children's voices to be heard at the national level.

Children and young people's right to participation in Ghana is enshrined in The Children's Act 1998, The Disability Act 2006 and The National Youth Policy. The Children's Act section 11 guarantees that:

no person shall deprive a child capable of forming views the right to express an opinion, to be listened to and to participate in decisions which affect his wellbeing, the opinion of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

Disabled young people are assured of their rights to participation under section 39 of the Persons with Disability Act 2006:

A person or institution which organises a national, regional or district activity, shall as far as practicable ensure that facilities are made available for the participation in the activity by persons with disability.

Following Ghana's ratification of the African Youth Charter, a national youth policy was enacted in 2010. Article 11 (1) of the charter requires State parties to guarantee that "every young person shall have the right to participate in all spheres of society".

Also Article 12 of the charter requires:

Every State Party shall develop a comprehensive and coherent national youth policy.

a) The policy shall be cross-sectoral in nature considering the interrelatedness of the challenges facing young people;

b) The development of a national youth policy shall be informed by extensive consultation with young people and cater for their active participation in decision-making at all levels of governance in issues concerning youth and society as a whole.

The Ghana youth policy has 6 objectives but of significance to this study was the third objective, which seeks to "institutionalise youth participation at all levels of the decision-making process to ensure the nurturing of

democratic culture” (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2010:7). The policy envisages a situation where the views of the youth and their participation in national development are sought. It urges government and other stakeholders to “consciously and consistently involve young people in decision-making” (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2010:8).

The National Youth Authority in collaboration with relevant stakeholders is tasked to develop a national plan of action to outline strategies that will achieve the objectives of the policy. However 2 years after the launch of the policy some stakeholders in the youth policy domain have bemoaned the lack of progress in developing the action plan to implement the policy (see Ezekiel, 2011; Obeng-Yeboah, 2011). Thence, this was an opportune time to conduct research into the barriers and opportunities for young people to be involved in developing the national action plan.

Research Aims and Questions

Against the above background the study aimed to analyse the youth policy formulation and implementation, and explore the efforts toward mainstreaming young people’s participation in Ghana’s development agenda. It also sought to examine the ideas about young people’s participation held by Ghanaian policy makers (civil servants), advocacy organisations and young people themselves. Finally, it was hoped that the study will gain knowledge of the processes that facilitate or hinder young people’s participation in the policy process at national level. The questions that guided the study are:

- What is the extent of young people's participation in the policy process?
- Are there barriers to involving young people in the policy process?
- How can young people's participation in the policy process be enhanced?
- How is young people's participation in the policy process being promoted in Ghana?

Conceptual Framework

The growing acceptance of children and young people's participation has been encouraged by developments from several different directions: increased understanding of the active role that children and young people play in shaping their lives i.e. the sociology of childhood; the empowerment of children; and the children's rights agenda;. These are discussed in detail in chapters 2, 3 and 4 respectively.

Overview of the Ghana Youth Policy

This section presents a brief overview of the contents of the Ghana youth policy. The Republic of Ghana (formerly known as the Gold Coast) covers a land area of 238,537 sq km (92,100 sq m), located on the coast of West Africa. It shares border with Ivory Coast to the east, Togo to the west, and Burkina Faso to the north (See figure below). The country gained independence from Britain on 6th March 1957 with Dr Kwame Nkrumah as Prime Minister and later President when the country became a republic on 1st July 1960.



Figure 1: section of West Africa map showing Ghana (in yellow colour) and neighbouring countries.

The youth policy with the theme *towards an empowered youth, impacting positively on national development* is intended to guide stakeholders involved in youth development programmes and projects in Ghana. The policy has 18 priority areas and is set out in 12 sections: Sections 1 and 2 outline the rationale and overview of the policy respectively. Section 3 defines who can be considered 'Youth' and provides a profile of youth in the country. Youth is considered to be between 15 years and 35 years. Section 4 provides what the government has highlighted as the main challenges facing the youth, that the policy seeks to address:

- *Inadequate or inappropriate training for the job market*
- *Unemployment and underemployment resulting from inadequate and inappropriate training for job the market*
- *Growing incidence of youth involved in violent conflicts (political, social and ethnic) and increasing juvenile crime*
- *High vulnerability to hunger, malnutrition, and diseases.*
- *High incidence of drug and substance abuse*
- *Inadequate recreational and counselling facilities*
- *High vulnerability to sexually transmitted infections (STIs/STDs), including HIV/AIDS.*
- *Inadequate opportunities for youth participation in decision making*
- *Inadequate involvement in activities to protect and conserve the environment to ensure sustainable future*
- *Peer pressure.*
- *Streetism.*

(Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2010:6-7).

The vision and underlying principles and values of the policy can be seen in section 5. This section also outlines the 6 objectives of the policy, which are;

- *Empower and actively involve the youth of Ghana in productive activities for individual, community, and national development.*
- *Enable each Ghanaian youth develop his or her full potential and self-esteem.*
- *Institutionalize youth participation at all levels of the decision-making process to ensure the nurturing of democratic culture.*
- *Enable the youth acquire, share and transfer knowledge, expertise, and experience through domestic and international networking and peer-learning.*
- *Inspire the youth to develop the aptitude for creativity, innovation and self-discovery in improving their quality of life.*
- *Inculcate in the youth a strong sense of self-reliance, patriotism, nationalism, and volunteerism* (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2010:7).

Section 6 outlines the 18 priority areas that will be implemented in order to attain the objectives of the policy. These priority areas are:

1. Education and Skills Training, with the goal of ensuring “the development of a knowledgeable, self-reliant, skilled and disciplined population with the capacity to drive and sustain the socio-economic development of the nation” (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2010:10).
2. To build the capacity of youth in Science, Research and Technology.
3. Information and communication Technology - to provide the youth with well equipped ICT resource centres in all districts.
4. Youth Employment – train and prepare the youth for the job market.
5. Entrepreneurial Development – inculcate entrepreneurial skills training in school curricula, and facilitate access to credit for the youth.
6. Youth in Modern Agriculture, aimed at making agriculture a viable career option for the youth.
7. Gender Mainstreaming – to ensure equitable conditions for both males and females in intervention programmes.
8. The Environment, with a view to providing young people “adequate knowledge and information on environmental issues to help them understand the country’s biodiversity” (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2010:13).
9. Health, HIV and AIDS – to promote responsible sexual practices to reduce HIV/AIDS.
10. Networking and Partnerships, with the goal of linking youth organisations to each other to share ideas.

11. Mentoring – to provide platform and opportunity for youth to interact with role models.
12. Arts and Culture – to promote participation of youth in arts & culture for national cohesion.
13. Governance, Democracy and Leadership - “to inculcate in the youth democratic values and principles for their active participation in governance” (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2010:16).
14. Sports and Recreation, aimed at promoting young people’s participation in sports, recreation and positive leisure activities.
15. Youth in conflict prevention and peace building - to “promote active youth participation in conflict prevention, resolution and peace building” (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2010:17).
16. National Youth Week – to honour youth with exemplary leadership and organisations that have contributed to youth development.
17. Youth and Vulnerability, aimed at providing social protection for vulnerable and excluded youth.
18. Youth, Patriotism and Volunteerism – to promote volunteerism to the youth.

Section 7 specifies 9 youth groups that the policy implementers must give special emphasis and attention to. These are i) youth with disability and health challenges, ii) youth at risk i.e. orphans, those in conflict areas, street youth, and those affected by HIV/AIDS, iii) youth special talents, iv) youth involved in crime, v) pregnant youth and their education, vi) female youth, vii) out-of-school youth, unemployed and under-employed youth, viii) students in tertiary institutions, and ix) school drop-outs.

Sections 8 and 9 detailed the Rights, and Obligations of the Youth on one part, and the Obligations of other stakeholders to the Youth. The policy places obligations on The State, Parents/Guardians, The Private Sector, Civil society Organisations, Religious and Traditional Authorities, International Organisations and Donor Agencies. Section 10 provides the policy’s implementation mechanisms with emphasis on partnership work between the National Youth Authority and other stakeholders and youth groups. Finally, sections 11 and 12

outlines the framework for monitoring and review of the policy. It calls for the policy to be reviewed once in every 5 years.

Structure of Thesis

The study is structured as follows: Chapter 1 provides literature on children's participation; its meaning, purpose and manifestations. The chapter also presents empirical work done in the field of children's participation. Chapter 2 reviews the literature on childhood – what does it mean to be a child or a young person, how childhood was constructed in the past (medieval times up to the 19th century) and how it is constructed in modern times (from 20th century onwards). The chapter then looks at childhood construction in Ghana. Chapter 3 is devoted to the literature on power and empowerment. Following on from this, Chapter 4 outlines the arguments on children's rights – what sort of rights do children have, if any? The chapter examines the proponents and opponents of children's rights, traces the international development of children's rights treaties, and the universality or cultural relativity of children's rights. Some convergence and divergence between the African Children's Charter and the UN Convention on the Rights of Children is also presented. It finally discusses the efforts made to harmonise national law with the Convention and Charter in Ghana. Chapter 5 presents the literature on the policy process. Theories of policy formulation and policy implementation are presented. Chapter 6 illustrates the research methodology used in the study and its ethical implications. Chapters 7 and 8 provide answers to the research questions and also present the findings of the study. Finally chapter 9 outlines a discussion of the findings, conclusions and implications of the research. The chapter also presents the contributions made to the literature.

CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW : CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines both the theoretical literature and empirical research on children's participation. Majority of the literature reviewed was obtained from the ISI web of knowledge index. This index was extensively searched because it represents a "clear standard for international peer-reviewed articles within the scientific field" (Reynaert et al, 2009:519). The International Journal of Children's Rights as the only journal devoted solely to the study of children's rights was also searched. Another source of literature consulted was Sage Journals Online, in particular the Journal of Childhood. Further, "grey" literature of published works by NGOs, government reports, conference proceedings, and briefing papers of research institutes and think tanks that were accidentally found while surfing the internet were used. Internet sites mostly surfed was Google scholar and universities theses sites. Finally snowball sampling of literature was done i.e. bibliographies of articles and books read was manually searched to obtain more literature in order to comprehensively analyse the debate to date, provide overview of the key issues and raise questions surrounding the gaps and concerns that exist in theory and research on children's participation.

The concept of participation emerged in the 1970s as a basic principle of development programming whereby local people cooperate in an externally introduced project with the aim of helping them to acquire the skills, knowledge and experience to take more control over the transformation of their communities or lives (Ackermann et al, 2003). With the adoption of the CRC,

under article 12 this concept was applied to children. As a result many child-focused organisations are now actively creating or seeking to create opportunities for children to express themselves and be involved in decision-making. It is common to see many international non-governmental organisations adopt the language of children's participation with corresponding action plans on how to involve children and young people.

Children's participation has become a critical theme to many organisations due to the belief that a project becomes credible if children's views are sought. In the words of Carr (2007 cited in Gunn, 2008:260) participation has become a "technology of legitimation"; the new challenge for social development (Save the Children, 1995) and the "new norm in child rights practice and policy" (Reynaert et al, 2009:529). According to King (1997 cited in Pupavac, 2001:103) "anybody who challenges the new orthodoxies of children's rights is likely to find themselves accused of heresy".

1.1 Definition of Children's Participation

Children's participation rights as contained in the CRC is perhaps the only radical addition to the discourse on children's rights, since previous declarations did not accord children the right to participate in decisions affecting them. Nevertheless, children's participation is now generally accepted, as demonstrated by the dramatic growth of activities in the field of children's participation (Thomas, 2007). The idea of children's participation is seen as particularly significant in the "creation of a new international ethical order" (Pupavac, 2001:97). Hence children's participation has achieved a "high profile,

with a growing body of literature” (Shier, 2001:107) and a “sustained commitment in government policy” (Cavet and Sloper, 2004:614).

What exactly is children’s participation is still a matter of considerable debate. Croft and Beresford (1992) have noted that participation generates enthusiasm and hostility in equal proportions, and there is little agreement about its definition or scope. According to Matthews et al (1999 cited in Reynaert et al, 2009) there is disagreement on the nature, purpose and form that participation should take. Lansdown (2010) has also bemoaned the lack of clarity about children’s participation in the context of children’s rights, and argues that effective advocacy to promote children’s participation warrants a clear understanding of the concept.

Children’s participation has been described as a continuum of children’s involvement in decisions (Cavet and Sloper, 2004) since the “level of participation will vary depending on the decision being made and the capacity and choice of the child” (Franklin and Sloper, 2006:726). Boyden and Ennew (1997:33) provide 2 definitions of participation: 1) in the sense of taking part in or being present, and 2) in the sense of knowing that ones actions are taken note of and may be acted upon; categorised by Morrow (2000 cited in Veitch, 2009) as latent and active participation respectively. Hart (1992:5) also explains participation as “the process of sharing decisions which affect one’s life and the life of the community in which one lives”. The various definitions offered highlight that “participation has a wide variety of meanings, for different people and in different contexts” (Percy-Smith and Thomas, 2010:356).

1.2 Purpose of Children's Participation

It is argued that participation is a fundamental practice of active citizenship (Clark and Percy-Smith, 2006) and as noted by UNICEF (2003:3) "children have always participated in life: in the home, in school, in work, in communities, and in wars". So what is different in the current emphasis of children's participation? It is suggested that current participation seeks to empower children (Boyden, 1990; Ackermann et al, 2003). Many authors have advocated that for participation to be effective power imbalances must be addressed. For example, Badham quotes a seminar participant who said "participation cannot work until those who hold the power are willing to let it be equally distributed" (Badham, 2004:145).

Similarly, Gunn (2008) argues that the involvement of children in decision-making implies that the power to take decisions is being shared with them. This view is shared by Miller (1997 cited in Bucknall, 2009) who argues that participation implies joint ownership of the decision-making process, the active involvement of all parties and power sharing. Indeed Arnstein (1969) had argued that "participation without redistribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless" (Arnstein, 1969:216). As rightly observed by Hill et al (2004:89) "almost all discourse about young people's participation refers back at least implicitly to notions of power; less often, however, does that involve explicit identification, clarification and deconstruction of what is meant by power and how power operates". Also Reddy and Ratna (2002) argue that for participation to be effective, constructive and positive for children, they need to be empowered (Reddy and Ratna, 2002). Interestingly, there have not been any studies examining whether adults are willing to share decision-making

powers with children, or whether children actually want adults to share decision-making powers with them. Graham and Fitzgerald (2010a) however warn against constructing participation as merely a straightforward case of giving or taking away of power. It cannot be overemphasised that the CRC does not place any obligation on adults to share power with children (Shier, 2001). See chapter 3 for more discussion on power.

1.3 Typologies of participation

Typologies have been developed by a number of writers to illustrate the degree of power shared or transferred in participatory processes. Arnstein (1969) has observed that “since those who have power normally want to hang on to it, historically it has had to be wrestled by the powerless rather than proffered by the powerful” (p.222). Arnstein (1969) presented a ‘Ladder of citizen participation’ (figure 2) to illustrate the different stages of interaction between the powerful and the powerless.

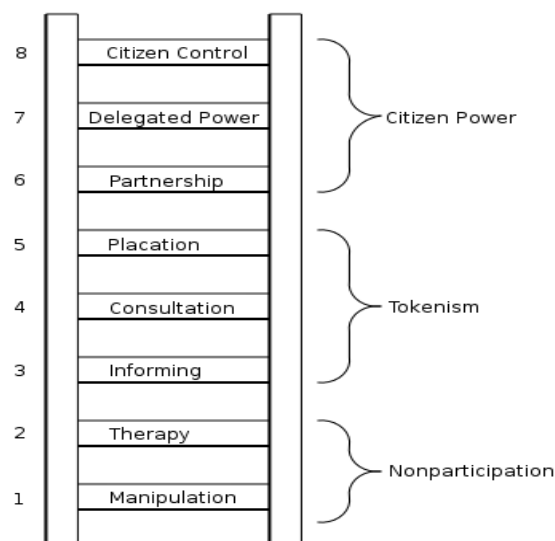


Figure 2: Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation. Extracted from www.logontocare.org.uk/index.aspx?o=1951 on 18/03/11

The type of "non-participation" represented by the lower two rungs on the ladder is seen as attempts to 'educate' participants (Arnstein, 1969). Levels 3 and 4 allow participants to hear and have a voice, but they have no power to ensure that their voice has influence. At level 5 participants advise, but the right to decide is retained by the agency. True participation is said to begin where 'Partnerships' enable negotiation and shared decision-making responsibility (Arnstein, 1969). At levels 7 and 8 participants form the majority in decision-making arenas, or hold managerial power.

Arnstein's work has been adapted by others to produce a variety of typologies which more specifically applies to children. Hart's (1992) 'Ladder of Participation' (figure 3) is most often cited.

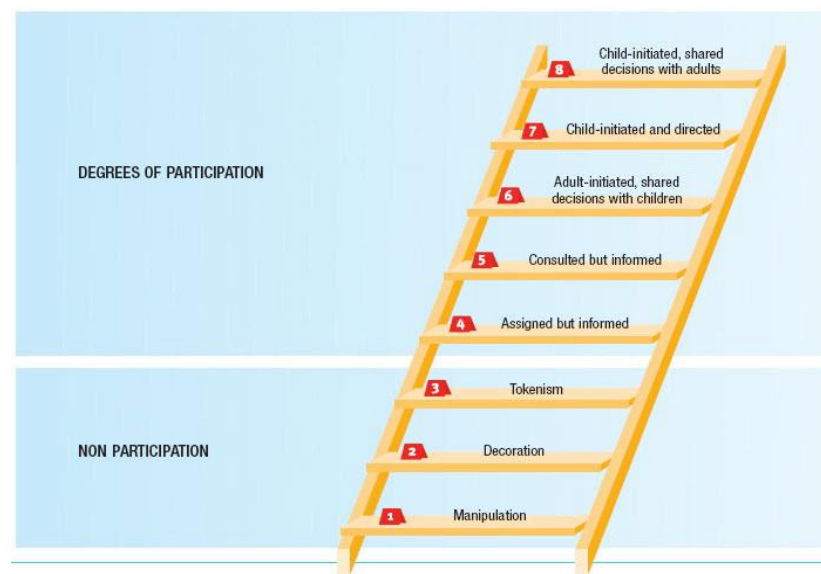


Figure 3: Hart's ladder of Children's participation. Extracted from www.shapeupeurope.net/files/media/media152.pdf on 18/3/11

Manipulation is when children are engaged in issues they have no understanding and thus do not understand their actions. One example is that of pre-school children carrying political placards concerning the impact of social

policies on children. The second step on the ladder – *Decoration* – bears resemblance to manipulation. Hart (1992) gives the example of occasions when children are given T-shirts related to some cause but have little idea of what the cause is all about and have no say in the organisation of those occasions. At this rung adults “use children to bolster their cause in a relatively indirect way” (Hart, 1992:9). *Tokenism* is used to describe instances where children are said to have been given a voice, but in reality had “little or no choice about the subject or the style of communicating it, and little or no opportunity to formulate their own opinions” (Hart, 1992:10). The fourth rung is labelled *Assigned but informed*. Hart (1992) lists a number of requirements that a project must fulfil in order to be truly labelled as participatory: 1) The children understand the intentions of the project; 2) They know who made the decisions concerning their involvement and why; 3) They have a meaningful (rather than ‘decorative’) role; and 4) They volunteer for the project after the project was made clear to them.

Consulted and informed is the level where young people sometimes work as consultants for adults. At this rung adults design and run the project, but children understand the process and their opinions are treated seriously. Hart (1992) described the sixth rung – *adult initiated, shared decisions with children* – as ‘true participation’. According to him, at this level projects are initiated by adults but the decision-making is shared with young people. The *child initiated and directed* rung is where children conceive of and carry out projects. Hart (1992) concedes that it is more difficult to find examples of child initiated and directed community projects. The final and highest rung is *child initiated, shared decisions with adults*. Hart (1992) argues that it is usually only children in their upper teenage years who may be able to achieve this level.

According to Bucknall (2009) Hart's model could be interpreted as suggesting that children need to work their way upwards, graduating from one level to the next. This is criticised by Reddy and Ratna (2002:29) as "a misnomer as it implies a sequence, whereas in reality one level may not necessarily lead to the next level". However, Hart had argued that a child's evolving capacities to participate should not be thought of as "a simple step-by-step unfolding of individual abilities" (Hart, 1992:37). He reiterated that children are likely to work at different levels, at different times and on different projects. Furthermore, he highlighted that levels of participation will vary "not only with a child's developing motivation and capacities, but also according to the particular family and cultural context" (Hart, 1992:5). While he advises that the three lower levels should be avoided, he states also that the top 'rung' is not always appropriate. The ladder, according to him is "a beginning typology for thinking about children's participation *in projects*...and should not be used as a simple measuring stick of the quality of any programme" (Hart, 1992:8 emphasis added). It has therefore been argued that the ladder of participation has limited transferability to decision-making forums (Murray and Hallett, 2000).

Shier (2001) acknowledges Hart's ladder as "uniquely influential, the best-known and longest-established conceptual model" but offers an alternative model – called Pathways to Participation (figure 4) - as "an additional tool for practitioners helping them to explore different aspects of the participation process" (2001:108-109).

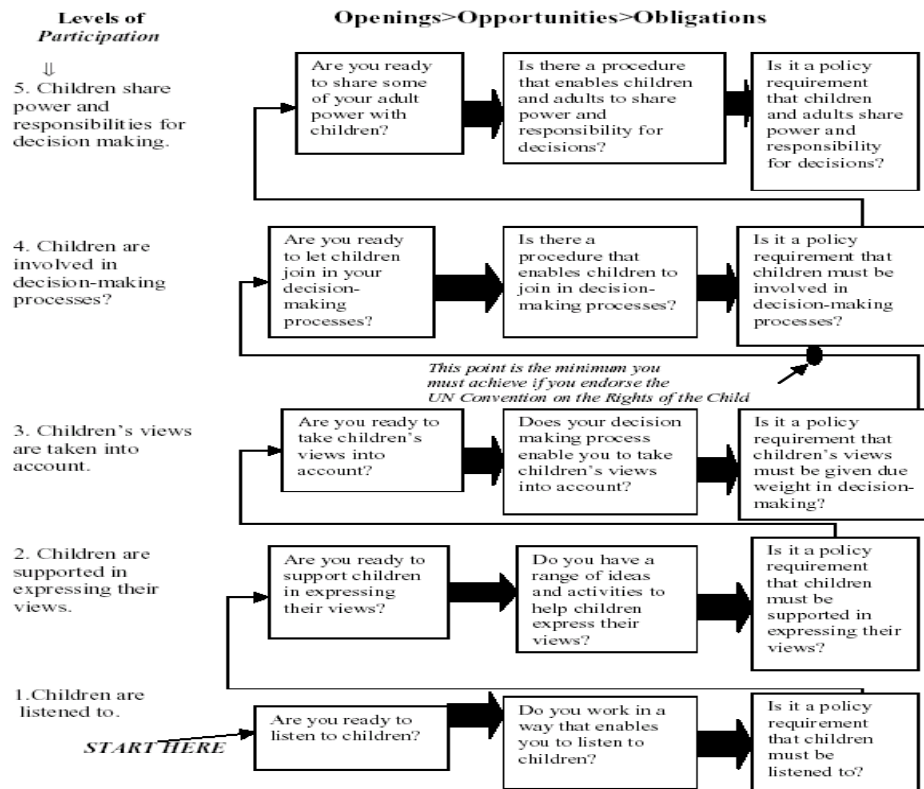


Figure 4: Shier's model of participation. extracted from www.citized.info/pdf/commarticles/Lee_Jackson.pdf on 18/3/11

Shier's model shifts focus from children to an examination of how organisational structures facilitate or constrict children's participation. Shier poses 15 questions that practitioners must ask themselves to assess where they stand, reflect on where they want to get to and what they need to do in order to get there. Shier's model is based on 5 levels of participation, through modes of interaction between adults and children; 1) children are listened to: this level requires children to take the initiative to voice their concerns for the responsible adults to listen to. There is no effort made to obtain children's views if they themselves do not express a view. 2) Children are supported in expressing their views: this level recognises that for some reasons children may not be able to voluntarily express their views as required at the previous level. Hence adults must actively seek and support children to express their views. 3) Children's

views are taken into account: this level argues that “there is no point in enabling children to express their views if they are not going to be taken into account” (Shier, 2001:113). It however acknowledges that “not every decision must be taken in accordance with children’s wishes” (Shier, 2001:113).

Shier (2001) calls for feedback to be given to children as to why their views were not acted upon and also help them to pursue other ways of achieving their objectives. 4) Children are involved in decision-making processes: this level is described as the level “marking the transition from *consultation to active participation in decision-making*” (Shier, 2001:113 emphasis in original). At this level children have seats at the table deliberating options and courses of action to pursue. 5) Children share power and responsibility for decision-making: this is similar to level four, however this level calls for equal number of seats at the decision-making table so children are not outnumbered.

At each level there are 3 stages of commitment: openings, opportunities and obligations. The opening stage is when a worker “makes a personal commitment or statement of intent to work in a certain way (Shier, 2001:110). The opportunity stage is where resources that will enable the worker to discharge their personal commitment are made available to the worker. Finally the obligation stage is when “it becomes the agreed policy of the organisation or setting that staff must operate at this level” (Shier, 2001:110). Thus a particular level becomes in-built into the organisational culture. Sinclair (2004) considers the model useful to practitioners and organisations as it helps them to clarify their purpose by responding to the questions it poses. She however comments that the ladder concept implies that higher levels are better - that a ladder is for

climbing up and one must always aim to reach the top - and points out, this is not always the case, and that different levels of participation are appropriate in different circumstances. Similarly, Lansdown (2001) argues that the boundaries between different levels are rarely clear cut and are far from being mutually exclusive.

In response to the criticisms against the hierarchical nature of the previous models, Treseder (1997) adapted Hart's ladder, discarding the lower three levels and re-arranging the upper five levels in a circular way to reflect 'the different power relations between adult and child in different participatory approaches without privileging any particular approach' (Beddoes et al, 2010:18).

Treseder's model of participation

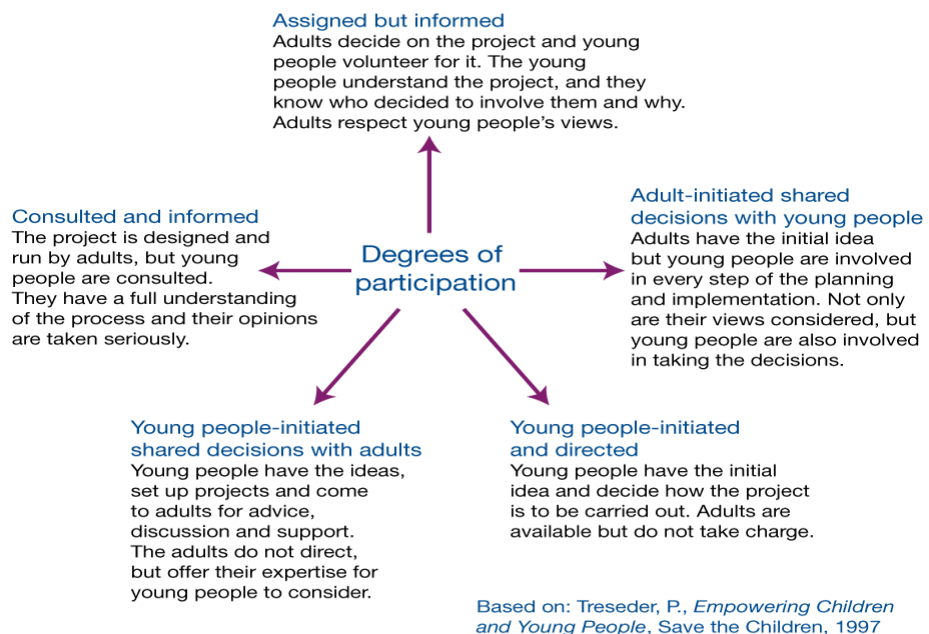


Figure 5: Treseder's model of Children's participation. extracted from www.gtce.org.uk/documents/publicationpdfs/engaging_cyp1010 on 18/3/11

The emphasis of Treseder’s model is ‘equal but different’, i.e. there is no optimum level of participation that must be achieved. Barber (2009:29) considers Treseder’s model as “more pragmatic and accepting of adult involvement in seeking to involve young people”.

Also, in response to the argument that different levels of participation are appropriate in different circumstances Kirby et al (2003) offer a model (figure 6 below) that focuses on the type of participation most appropriate to the circumstances that children find themselves in. According to them, “the model is non-hierarchical, as no level is assumed to be better or worse than another. The appropriate level will need to be determined according to the circumstances and the participating children/young people” (Kirby et al, 2003:22).

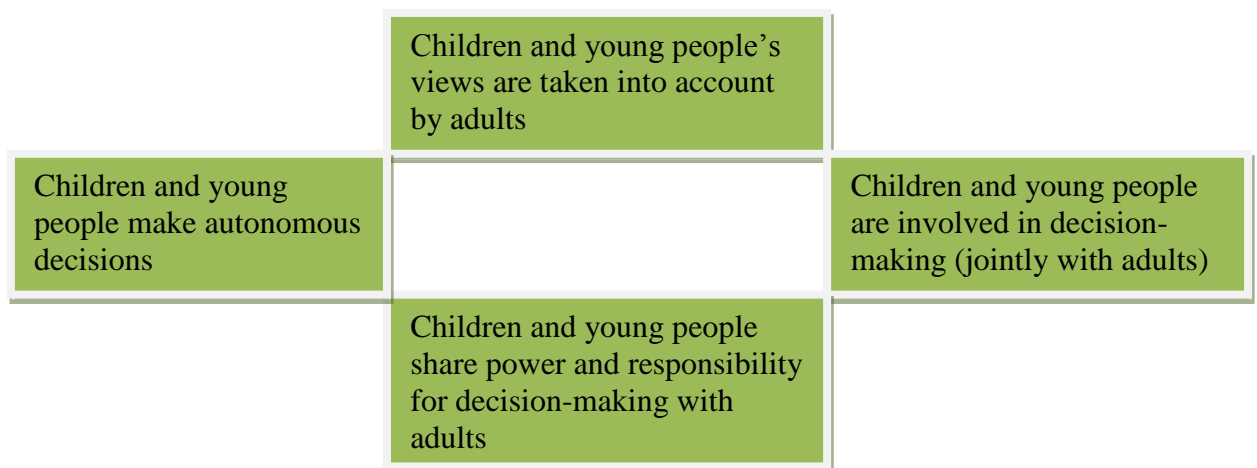


Figure 6: Kirby et al’s model of children’s participation. (Kirby et al, 2003:22).

In the *children and young people’s views are taken into account* domain, Kirby et al (2003) argue that children’s views – whether volunteered or sought by adults – have to be valued, and the views expressed used as one of the sources that adults consider in making a decision. The *children and young*

people are involved in decision-making is the level where children and adults engage in dialogue but “adults still hold ultimate responsibility for deciding the course of action, but children will be involved in steering that” (Kirby et al, 2003:22). At the level where *children and young people share power and responsibility for decision-making*, Kirby et al argue that “adults have commitment to share power and to undertake joint decision-making with children...decisions may be made by negotiation, consensus or voting” (Kirby et al, 2003:23). The last level is where *children and young people make autonomous decisions*. Even at this level Kirby et al (2003) argue that “often the implementation of these decisions will require input from adults and is ultimately dependent on adult structures, responsibility and power” (p.23).

As can be deduced from the models discussed the underlining theme is adults sharing power with children. This highlights that the success of children’s participation is dependent on the role of adults, who can hinder or facilitate the process. Reddy and Ratna (2002) present a model (figure 7 below) that focuses on the role of adults vis-a-vis children’s participation.

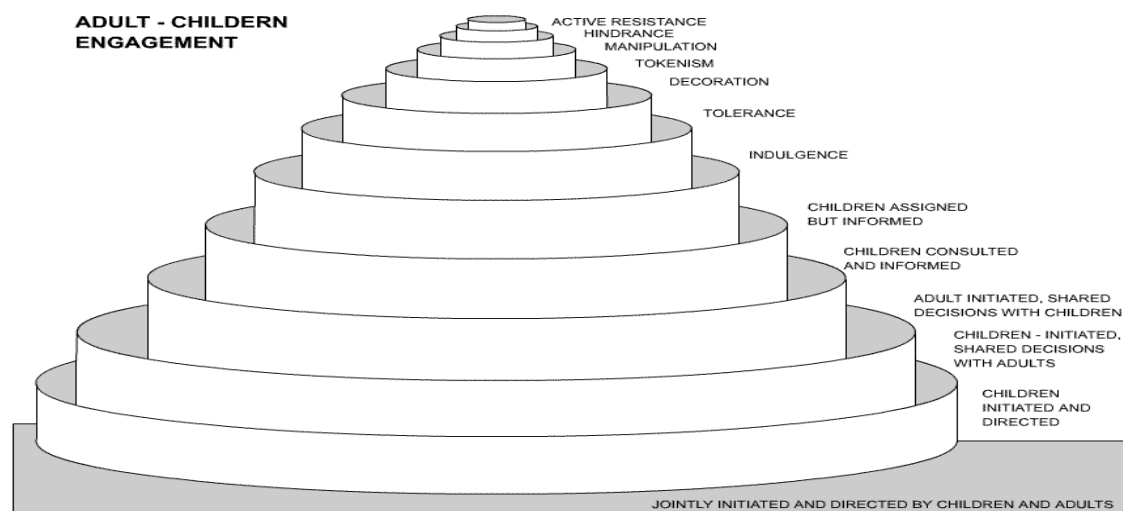


Figure 7: Reddy and Ratna’s model of participation. (Reddy and Ratna, 2002:30).

Reddy and Ratna's model is a modified version of Hart's (1992) ladder of participation. Their model contains 13 roles that adults can play either intentionally or unintentionally in facilitating or hindering children's participation, from active resistance at number one to joint initiation and direction by children and adults at number 13. They also argue that "it is possible that the same group of adults play one or several of these roles with the same group of children or different groups of children at different times" (Reddy and Ratna, 2002:31).

1.4 Benefits/Outcomes of Children's Participation

Numerous arguments have been advanced as to the benefits or potential benefits in support of children's participation. Some authors argue that children's participation results in better decision-making (e.g. Lansdown, 2001; Hill et al, 2004). These authors argue that children have views and ideas that emanate from their knowledge and experiences, which they can bring to the decision-making process, which when taken into consideration can result in better decisions, better outcomes and ultimately happier children.

Lansdown (2001) provides an example from Bangladesh where children under 15 years were laid off from garment industry jobs due to a campaign to end child labour, where those children laid off turned to less appropriate and more hazardous jobs than the jobs they had been sacked from. Plan UK (undated) offers another example of children's participation in decision-making that resulted in better outcome for the children. In this example a children's committee was set up in Honduras to advise the community on issues affecting

the lives of local children. The children highlighted alcohol abuse and its impact on the family as their main concern. They then went to the local mayor with a proposed solution – that all the bars be closed. The mayor agreed that the community should vote on the issue; the community agreed with the children's proposal and the bars were closed. Plan UK (undated) reports that there were subsequent decrease in domestic violence and abuse in the area.

Participation is also espoused as beneficial to children's development (Smith, 2002; Kj rholt, 2002). According to Kj rholt (2002:63) children's participation is "something that contributes to children's positive development of individual identity, competence and a sense of responsibility". Similarly, Cashmore (2003 cited in Fitzgerald, 2009) quotes children as saying that participation helps them develop a sense of belonging in the community, to gain new skills and experiences, to meet new people and friends, and to build a sense of their own capabilities. In a study by Hannam (2001) 94% of 200 students in the UK studied said participatory activities made them feel they can 'improve things'. Similarly as the evaluation of a 5-year participatory programme with street and working children in Kenya concluded "children grew in confidence and self esteem and this in turn enabled them to take greater control over their situation" (van Beers, 2002 cited in Ackerman et al, 2003:19). Hudson (2005 cited in Cox et al, 2010) further provides another example of children and young people who reported feeling they were able to 'make a difference' in their communities after their involvement in community projects.

Ackerman et al (2003) however argue that such reports leave some questions unanswered. For example, what it means in practice for a child to enjoy

increased self-confidence and what have the children become more confident in doing?; what do the children believe they can achieve now, that they could not achieve prior to their involvement, and in what ways have working as part of a group helped them to become more effective in their lives? These are serious questions that need answers because of the ease with which terms such as 'empowerment' and 'self-confidence' are used in the literature on participation. There is an implied but inadequately explored conceptual link between participation and empowerment. For example, Shephard and Treseder (2002:4) argue that "the outcome of any successful participation process will be empowered children". However, Murray and Hallett (2000:15) sound a note of caution arguing that "although participation may allow for the possibility of empowerment, it is not intrinsically empowering".

Fitzgerald (2009) also argues that participation especially within the process of family decision-making, enables children to "learn experientially that participation involves negotiation, choice and compromise, that participation does not necessarily mean getting their wish, and that compromise is often required" (p.16). According to Ochaita and Espinosa (1997) the family is the ideal environment to rehearse children's participation. Such rehearsals, they argue, will guarantee that children will be able to actively participate in other contexts. This reflects Eekelaar's (1994 cited in Morrow, 1999) 'dynamic self-determinism' i.e. enabling children to make decisions gradually, with the overall intention as the enhancement of their capacities for mature well-founded choices. Hence children's participation as practice has the potential to be transformative. As Roche notes:

To be committed to a practice with children and young people in which they are provided with proper information, in which they are able to express their thoughts and feelings on matters in question at an appropriate time and place, in which the various possible courses of action are fully explored with them, and in which their views, whatever their social origins or location are listened to and treated seriously, will be to transform the experience of child and professional (Roche, 1997:57).

Other authors have stressed ethical and moral arguments in support of children's participation (e.g. Flekkøy and Kaufman, 1997) in which participation is seen as providing justice to children. Thus children's participation strengthens the status of children in social and political life (Cairns, 2006) and challenges social exclusion by promoting political awareness that may enable children to confront and overturn practices that exclude them (Cussianovich and Marquez, 2002 cited in Ackerman et al, 2003). Authors who argue from the ethical and moral perspectives contend that children's participation upholds their rights as citizens and as service users to influence the design and delivery of services (Sinclair and Franklin, 2000) and also enables children to introduce new and innovative ideas that translates into relevant and responsive policies (Kirby & Bryson, 2002). An example of children's ability to offer innovative ideas is provided by Plan UK (undated) in which girls consulted after an earthquake in El Salvador proposed that new houses should be built with two bedrooms rather than one bedroom for better privacy; adults had not mentioned this.

It is further argued that children's participation plays a central role in strengthening the accountability and responsiveness of individuals and institutions (Cairns, 2006). The argument here is that children's involvement can help identify standards e.g. what is meant by 'quality' service, from their

perspective, which helps to ensure that organisations are accountable to their users in delivering to these standards (Kirby et al, 2003). However the literature lacks empirical evidence of this often-cited outcome; it has rarely been investigated.

1.5 Concerns/Challenges of Participation

It would seem that a new social economy is developing, in which non-state actors and communities are increasingly valorised as agents in the process of social change. However, the ways in which social capital is being harnessed to promote the health and well being of communities vary, as do the ways in which power and decision-making are distributed among the participants. All too often, children are sidelined in these activities (Matthews, 2003:265).

There are growing concerns as to the extent to which children are taken seriously as participants in decision-making processes, even in initiatives that are intended to promote their participation (Davis and Hill, 2006; Thomas and O’Kane, 2000). In the midst of increasing commitment to involve children in participatory initiatives, paradoxically there is also evidence that participation does not guarantee benefits for children, and that children continue to have very minimal impact on decision-making outcomes (Fitzgerald, 2009). This is echoed by Hill et al (2004) who argue that as one of the most governed groups and highest users of state services children’s views have little, if ever sought, influence on the policy and practice decisions made about them. In other words, whereas many people accept the importance of giving children a say when decisions are being made, available research indicates that children’s influence remains minimal.

A number of similar critiques highlight the gap between the rationale for participation and evidence demonstrating its impact and outcomes; what difference it makes, and for whom (Cairns, 2006; Davis and Hill, 2006; Kirby and Bryson, 2002). Accordingly, Davis and Hill (2006) assert that children's involvement is more often "tokenistic, unrepresentative in membership, adult-led in process and ineffective in acting upon what children want" (p.9). However, it has been argued that participation does not mean children get what they want (Fitzgerald, 2009; Shier, 2001). In the words of Shier (2001:113) "taking children's views into account in decision-making does not imply that every decision must be made in accordance with children's wishes, or that adults are bound to implement whatever children ask for". This is a remarkable statement considering that in the literature some authors regard participation to be 'genuine', 'real', 'meaningful', 'effective', 'authentic' and some other adjectives only when adults grant children's request in the decision-making process.

Another concern is that participation may over-burden children with responsibility for decision-making and thus deny them their 'childhood' (Morrow, 1999) or may lead to exploitation i.e. carrying undue responsibility for the moral and physical reconstruction of their communities (Hart, 2004). An example is provided by Hart (2004) in Nepal, where the children's club is often called to undertake regular street cleaning, and maintenance of public facilities including latrines without any payment under the guise of participating in community development.

1.6 Empirical Literature on Children's Participation

It is worth noting at this juncture that though there are a great number of publications on children's participation, overwhelming majority of literature obtained were non-empirical studies. In other words, theoretical analyses of participation seem to eclipse empirical examination in the publications on children participation. Whereas children's participation is increasingly being recognised in developed countries, little is known about children's participation in developing countries. The overwhelming majority of the literature reflect research from UK (e.g. Thomas and O'Kane, 1999; Faulkner, 2009; Veitch, 2009; Morrow, 1999; Davey et al 2009; Sanders and Mace, 2006; Williams, undated; Franklin and Sloper, 2004; Gunn, 2005 and 2008; Tisdall et al, 2008; Barber, 2009), a few from Scandinavian countries (e.g. Warming, 2011; Kjørholt, 2002; Vis et al, 2010), from Africa (e.g. Twum-Danso, 2008; Fanelli et al, 2007; Mezmur and Sloth-Nielsen, 2009) and Asia (e.g. Williams, 2004 and 2005; Bessell, 2009; Rampal, 2008).

Even in the developed countries it is reported that participation has been slower for disabled children (Council for Disabled Children, 2003; Sinclair and Franklin, 2000). A study by Cavet and Sloper (2004) concluded that participation of disabled children needs further development, as there is little evidence of good practice. Franklin and Sloper (2009) further lament the non-availability of literature on specific factors that could promote disabled children's participation. Reporting on disabled children's experiences of decision-making regarding their care and service development Franklin and Sloper (2006) surveyed 57 social services departments to identify and investigate work concerning disabled children's

participation. They contacted all 150 social services departments in England but 57 reported involving disabled children in decisions.

The study showed that 40% indicated involving disabled children in at least one process i.e. either their care or service development. The least area of involvement for disabled children was child protection conferences, while consultation about play and/or leisure activities dominated participatory initiatives with disabled children. The findings also showed that 44% of the departments reported making changes to services as a result of the involvement of disabled children and young people. However the changes made were in relation to play and/or leisure activities. They concluded that disabled children's participation was not yet embedded and sustained across social services departments; it was patchy and thus required further development. The study was the first to offer a snapshot of disabled children's participation. However, as duly acknowledged by the authors, the study only provided information from the perspectives of service providers excluding the view point of disabled children and their parents.

The review also revealed that the literature is dominated by research either in family decision-making including divorce cases, children in State's care – child protection or looked after children's care planning and reviews (e.g. Kassan, 2004; Fitzgerald, 2009; Erikson and Näsman, 2008; Thomas and O'Kane, 1999; Gunn 2005 and 2008) or on children's involvement in school decision-making (e.g. Cox et al, 2010; Ochaita and Espinosa, 1997; Veitch, 2009). A few researchers have looked at children's participation in health (e.g. Vis et al, 2010; Alderson, 1993), environment (Horelli, 1998)

and in public sphere at the municipal/local level (e.g. Williams, 2004; Fanelli et al, 2007).

Evidence of children's participation at national and/or international level is very rare. Perhaps this is not surprising, given that the most difficult area to assess the impact of children's participation is public policy (Cunninghame, 1999 cited in Williams, 2005). This view is shared by a respondent in a study by Shier who stated that "trying to promote children's involvement in national and local government decisions is less developed; not necessarily because of resistance but trying to find structures and mechanisms to do that in ways that are meaningful for children" (Shier, 2010:33). Furthermore, Shier (2001) argues that at the regional or national level finding a non-tokenistic way of involving children in planning and policy making is extremely difficult to come by. Kirby and Bryson (2002) have noted that in spite of the growing attempt to involve young people in public decision-making, research and evaluation of such efforts is lacking. Pinkerton (2004) adds that evaluation of young people's participation in public decision-making is not easily undertaken. Consequently, children's involvement in the policy process has been largely ignored. As observed by Cleland and Sutherland (1998 cited in Bell, 2008) the principles enshrined in the CRC must also have effect at the level of policy making and implementation.

Zimbabwe has demonstrated that children and young people do have the capacity to participate in national policy processes (Fanelli et al, 2007). In the study Fanelli et al interviewed 2 child representatives out of 3, and also held focus group discussions with 30 adult community volunteers to gather

their views and experiences on Zimbabwe's national action plan for orphans and other vulnerable children. They reported that young people actively shared in the agenda setting and formulation of the plan. However, at the implementation stage, the young people were relegated to community level implementation committees; there were no child representative at the national implementation committee¹.

Pinkerton (2004) reports of children and young people's involvement in the development of the Irish National Children's Strategy in which over 1000 children and young people were consulted over a 12 month period. There were two committees championing the development of the strategy; 1) inter-developmental group made up of 8 members tasked with developing the strategy and supported by 2) cross departmental team also consisting of 8 members. However, none of these committees where decisions were made had children and young people's representation.

A similar result was found by Williams' (2004) study on five South Asian projects in 4 countries (2 projects in India, and 1 each in Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh) on how children and young people influence policy. She undertook a desk-study of the projects and supplemented it with telephone interviews and email questionnaire administration with relevant NGO staff and government actors. The study revealed that young people's influence was more evident at local levels than national levels, and at the agenda-setting stage and no other decision-making stages. Williams' study is

¹ It is important to note that the children's involvement in the policy formulation stage may not be surprising as Zimbabwe has a well-established system of Junior or Child Members of Parliament, Child Mayors, Governors and local councillors (Fanelli et al, 2007; Lansdown, 2001).

among the few studies that have examined children and young people's influence at the policy level, but the lack of fieldwork meant that there were no young people's inputs into the research, which she duly acknowledged.

In eliciting children's perspectives on their experience of participation the University of Sheffield (2010) sent diaries to 15 children and young people but 6 (4 females and 2 males) returned their completed diaries. The study also used focus group discussions with 27 children and young people (17 females and 10 males) aged between 10 and 21 years who were identified as 'hard to reach' (e.g. lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender; children with disabilities and minority ethnic children). Participants narrated diverse experiences of satisfying and unsuccessful participatory experience, but the underlining message as revealed by the children was that participation was merely about consultation and allowing children to have a 'say' while adults made the decisions which did not reflect the views expressed in consultation. Therefore participation was a tick-box exercise. The study is highly commendable for its transparency in providing readers with the demographic characteristics of the sample. However it included a group of young people who were not children i.e. those aged between 18 and 21 years.

Thomas and O'Kane (1999) surveyed 225 looked after children's participation in reviews and planning meetings in 7 local authority areas in England and Wales, followed by a detailed study of 47 children (29 boys and 18 girls) aged between 8 and 12 years. Some disabled children were included in the study but their number was not made known. They interviewed the children's social workers, carers and some parents. The study reported that many of the children were able to deal with the issues involved when they were given information in a way

they understood. Adults in the study distinguished between 'little decisions' such as deciding what to wear or eat and 'big decisions' such as deciding where to live. The adults felt that involving children in the big decisions may be burdensome to children. This was somewhat confirmed by the children who reported that they believed adults should take most of the decisions but also argued for children to have more of a say in the decision-making process. A study by Neale (2002) further revealed that children reject the right to make autonomous decisions and rather valued their input into the decision-making process, acknowledging that what they say need not be the final outcome. In the words of Neale (2002:462) the children "distinguished between participation and choice, recognising that compromises might have to be reached".

This is corroborated by a study by Morrow (1999) in which the children expressed a desire to be included in decision-making, but not to be given full control to take decisions. Morrow (1999) drew on data collected with 730 children (11 – 15 year olds) in 1990 (before UK government's ratification of CRC) and with 183 children (8 – 14 year olds) in 1996/97 (after UK government's ratification of CRC) to explore children's perspectives on their rights and the extent to which they felt they had a say in decision making at the family, school and neighbourhood levels. The children used essay writing (on what children thought their rights should be) and group discussions (on whether children felt they had a say in decision making).

Morrow (1999) revealed that at the home level children bemoaned their lack of autonomy and inclusion in decision-making in everyday issues. They expressed a desire to have their opinions heard but not necessarily wanting full control

over decision-making; they stressed the need for guidance from adults. At the school level, children made reference to the school council as a decision-making forum but bemoaned its powerlessness in taking decisions since discussions had to be referred to senior management to decide. At the local level, the children highlighted that they were not directly consulted in decisions about local services.

Similar findings were identified by Davey et al (2010) in a study of 86 children and young people (44 boys and 42 girls aged between 3 and 20 years) including those with a disability (20 children; 7 boys and 13 girls aged between 4 and 13 years). They held focus group discussions to examine the extent to which children felt they had a voice and influence in matters affecting them at school, home and neighbourhood. The children reported their dissatisfaction with their level of input in decision-making at school. They reiterated that more often “clever, popular, well behaved children who were good attendees tended to be disproportionately represented on school councils” (Davey et al, 2010:19). They also cited the lack of power of the council to take decisions. At the home level, the study reported that as children grew older they were given more say in decisions. However, this was true in respect of children living with their birth families. Those living in children homes were more critical of their lack of say in decision-making. At the community level, the children reported being involved in decision-making through their membership of local councils and youth forums.

The children however questioned the representativeness of youth forums and suggested a more street-based approach to capture the voice of more children. The study can however be criticised for including participants who were not

children i.e. those aged between 18 and 20. There is a slight difference in findings at the community level in the study by Morrow (1999) where children reported no participation and that of Davey et al (2010) where children reported participation through membership of youth forums/councils. This suggests that associational membership could probably promote children's participation.

Veitch (2009) undertook a quantitative analysis of school council meeting minutes over a 2 year period, noting the frequency and range of topics discussed at the council meetings. She then assessed the written responses from the head teacher (who did not attend council meetings) using a range of qualitative methods with the school councillors. The study reported a lack of dialogue in school governance councils; the pupils discussed the issues among themselves while the head teacher took the decision without any reference to the governance council, leaving the children to wonder what the point of their discussions was. Veitch (2009) described this practice as tokenistic. She therefore called for a redefinition of children's participation in the education sector to view children as competent actors. A major flaw in the study is the non-disclosure of the demographic characteristics of the sample. This would have been useful given the increasing concerns about the representativeness of school councils and other participatory initiatives (see Sinclair, 2004; Faulkner, 2009; Davey et al, 2010; Wyness, 2009). The study nonetheless draws attention to the calls to view children's participation as dialogue (see Neale, 2002; Graham and Fitzgerald, 2010a).

The studies on school councils highlight that children's views in school decision-making is not valued. Thus school authorities seem to take the view that

children cannot offer any meaningful opinion in decision making. According to Lansdown and Newell (1994 cited in Morrow, 1999:160) “the school system throughout the UK tends to operate in a formal and authoritarian way which does not encourage children to explore and contribute their ideas for the provision and development of education”. This is in stark contrast to findings from household decision-making where children’s capability to contribute to decision-making is valued and characterised by negotiation (Morrow, 1999; Davey et al, 2010; Mayall, 1994).

As more and more studies call for participatory processes involving adults and children, questions have been raised as to the appropriateness of such avenues in permitting children to talk about issues of concern to them. Gunn (2002) argues that children usually “have to overcome the emotional strain of being placed in the spotlight, especially at large meetings attended by strangers” (p.60). Common processes where decisions affecting children in State’s care are made are case conferences, review meetings and family group conferences, where children are expected to attend and participate. Cashmore (2002) in a literature review on the perception of ‘looked after’ children regarding the extent to which they participate in decisions affecting them reported that the children saw case conferences, reviews and other similar processes to be “intimidating, boring, alienating...frustrating and disempowering experience” (p.840).

Similarly, Murray and Hallett (2000) in their study on participation and juvenile justice discovered that the young people had difficulty speaking in front of adults. They interviewed 98 participants and observed 60 cases of the Scottish

Children's Hearing system and reported that those who were able to speak only made 'monosyllabic or single line contributions'. These findings are not surprising, given that children rarely speak in adult arenas, especially in cultures where children do not easily mingle with adults. The dilemma at stake is how to get the views of children into decision-making forums without putting children in uncomfortable adult forums. As argued by Lansdown (2001) children themselves have ideas and views on how to effectively engage them, which may differ from processes or forums designed for adults. In Spall et al's (1998 cited in Cashmore, 2002) observation, children often disagree with what adults may think are appropriate opportunities for children to express their views. Cashmore further argues that children and young people are "more interested in informal processes based on personal relationships with workers and carers they know and trust than in formal processes such as case conferences and reviews" (Cashmore, 2002:845). Tisdall et al (2008) however caution that children are not a homogenous group, therefore no one approach will be attractive to all children and young people.

Furthermore, the participation literature makes frequent reference to the need to share power with children in decision-making to guarantee effective participation. McNeish (1999) for example, laments the failure of most health and welfare agencies to transfer power and choice, which she considers as "necessarily associated with meaningful participation" (p.194). This suggests that these adult authors have conceptualised participation as power-sharing. The literature is however silent on how children themselves conceptualise participation. Another issue that can be identified from the literature is the non-aggregation of the children

participating in decision-making i.e. children have been treated as a homogenous group. However gender studies in community participation initiatives have revealed that more often it is only men who participate in such initiatives. Could this situation be similar in the children's participation initiatives such that only boys could be actually participating? It is important for studies to classify the gender of participating children in addition to classification according to disability status. Thus who is included or excluded and on what grounds must be questioned.

In a historical study on how widespread children's participation is in Norway from 1985 to 1995, Kjørholt (2002) surveyed 435 municipalities and 19 counties asking the head administrators to provide a list of participatory projects initiated for children during the 10 year period. The study showed that 60% of projects were aimed at young people aged 14 years and over. She also analysed project description texts and concluded that children's participation was widespread in Norway. The study can be criticised for being overly optimistic, uncritical and probably hastily concluded on how widespread children's participation was. As will be seen from the studies of Bessell (2009), and Saunders and Mace (2006) there is a huge gap between policy/text relating to children's participation and participation in practice. These studies are discussed below.

Bessell (2009) reports of a disconnection between policy framework and institutions of governance i.e. while the policy framework suggested that children's participation was valued as a normative principle among policy makers, in practice the attitude of professionals working within the system

hindered the translation of policy into practice. She reported that the professionals had reservations and concern of potential negative outcomes for children. The study was based on interviews with 28 government officials and NGO staff. Adult attitudes have often been cited as barrier to effective children's participation (Lansdown, 2001). These attitudes have been attributed to adult perceptions regarding children's capacity, or unwillingness to embrace participation or a desire to control children (Badham, 2004; Hill et al, 2004). Bessell's study adds to the growing study to unravel the ideas behind adult attitudes. The study does not however include perspectives from children. As highlighted in the study by University of Sheffield (2010) it is important to move beyond practitioner views and seek to understand how children and young people themselves view their experiences within organisations which are associated with them.

Green (undated) undertook a survey of organisations in Northern Ireland to ascertain how they involved young people (identified as 10-25 years) in decision-making. A postal questionnaire was sent to representatives of 386 organisations in a database, of which 130 responded. Green (undated) reported that 10 of the organisations said they involved young people in their management, but how they involved the young people was not disclosed. The study further revealed that majority of the young people involved were the older age group to the exclusion of the younger ones. The study however represented organisation's self-evaluation of their activities with young people since the study did not include the perspectives of young people, who could have shared their experiences of

engagement with the organisations. The study also focused on young people who could not be regarded as children (i.e. those between 18-25 years) and unsurprisingly the study found that this age group were more involved in the decision-making process of the organisations studied.

Saunders and Mace (2006) studied 10 social services departments in Wales to ascertain how these departments obtained the wishes and feelings of children and young people who are involved in the child protection process. The main focus was on how the departments promoted children's participation rather than directly assessing children's experiences of participation in the child protection process. They analysed policy documents, child protection conference minutes and conducted interviews with 10 social workers (9 females and 1 male) and 9 child protection conference chairs (5 males and 4 females). The study revealed that all the social services departments had some provision for children's participation in their policy documents. However, from the analysis of the conference minutes it was difficult to establish how children actually participated in proceedings. Parents appeared to be the main source of information about children's wishes and feelings expressed at the conference. In the interviews, social workers reported that the child protection system and procedures was not child-friendly and that time restraints made it more difficult to involve children. The study concluded that children's participation was strong on rhetoric but weak in reality. As noted by Croft and Beresford (1992) the desire for or a commitment to participation is not sufficient to ensure that it will happen.

1.7 Conclusion

As outlined in the discussions above, many authors have suggested that for participation to be effective, power imbalances must be addressed. One thing that has eluded the promoters of power redistribution is responsibility for outcomes of decisions. Thus who bears the responsibility should the decision made turn out to be disastrous? Almost invariably adults always bear the responsibility. Therefore it can be argued that once adults bear the responsibility for the outcome of decisions, certainly it is in the interest of adults to always exercise the power to take the final decision on issues even if the participating children disagree with the decision. After all, children's participation is also as much about outcomes for adults (Mannion, 2007).

It is evident from the literature review that research on children and young people's participation in public policy making is rare. Studies that have looked at children and young people's participation in policy making have examined local and/or organisational policy making in respect of service development or looked after care planning (e.g. Gunn, 2002; 2005; 2008; Checkoway et al, 2005). Very few studies have examined children's participation in national policy making (e.g. Pinkerton, 2004; Spicer and Evans, 2005). It is hoped that this study will shed more light on children and young people's participation in this neglected area.

The preceding chapter presented a review of the literature on children's participation. The next 3 chapters present the conceptual framework of the study; sociology of childhood, Empowerment, and children's rights.

CHAPTER 2: CONSTRUCTING CHILDHOOD

2.0 Introduction

This chapter provides some explanations to the questions of whether childhood is a stage in life or a relational category. It presents the contested historical situation of children, and the new social studies of childhood (one of the concepts that underpinned this study). The final section of the chapter examines the construction of childhood in Ghana.

Childhood is neither a straightforward entity nor a singular phenomenon (Morrow, 2007) hence attempting to explain it is fraught with many challenges (Johnny, 2006). The concept is said to be both socially and historically constructed (Ariès, 1962; James and Prout, 1997) with variations across centuries and cultures, but the exact evolution of the concept is deeply contested among academics.

2.1 History/Invention/Discovery of childhood

There are many ideas about childhood in past societies (Cunningham, 2005). Nonetheless prior to the 1970s very little had been written about childhood (Hendrick, 1992), and even the few writings were mainly concerned with whether or not such a concept existed at all i.e. whether there was a recognition that children were different from adults. Ariès (1962) is highly credited for providing the starting point for understanding childhood as both a historical and social construct. Ariès (1962) had stated that “in medieval society the idea of childhood did not exist...that it was not until the late 17th century that the concept of childhood began to emerge” (Ariès, 1962:125). On the evidence of artistic representations of children, literary texts, manuals, and children’s style of

dress Ariès argued that the medievals thought of children as simply "little adults". He summarised thus:

In medieval society the idea of childhood did not exist; this is not to suggest that children were neglected, forsaken or despised. The idea of childhood is not to be confused with affection for children: it corresponds to an awareness of the particular nature of childhood, that particular nature which distinguishes the child from the adult, even the young adult. In medieval society, this awareness was lacking. That is why as soon as the child could live without the constant solicitude of the mother, his nanny or his cradle-rocker, he belonged to the adult society (Ariès, 1962:125).

He revealed that in medieval times children entered into adults world at the age of about seven and that they were not perceived to be different from anyone else. Thus suggesting that the status of a person in medieval period was not determined by age or physical maturation but by a person's ability to contribute to production or mingle with adults (Boakye-Boaten, 2010). In the view of Johnny (2006) although children were immersed into the workforce at a young age it should not be taken to mean adults did not recognise the distinct nature of children. According to her, it does show that "children were believed to have the ability to participate in the adult world" (Johnny, 2006:21). Ariès continued that adults began to see children as a source of 'amusement and relaxation' in the 16th century, and that by the 17th century children began to occupy a separate space from that of adults.

Ariès' claim has been a matter of scholarly controversy over the years. He has found scholars who support his claim as well as those who deny his claim. Shahar (1993) agrees with Ariès that children from an early age were not cut off adult society, stressing that living conditions in medieval houses gave little

opportunity for privacy, whether for adults or for children, and that in the outside world children were immediately part of a society in which the ages mixed, but also stresses her disagreement with Ariès' claim that childhood did not exist in medieval times. She argued that medievals rather saw children as being less developed in their mental and moral capacities than adults (Shahar, 1990). Shahar's argument about privacy is however rejected by Hanawalt (1986:44) who argues that "there was greater privacy in medieval houses than scholars imply, and that there was also almost an obsession with securing privacy". Shavit (1989) also supports Ariès' thesis noting that before the 17th century a child was not given a distinct recognition since there were no separate schools established or books specifically written for children. She further argues that the early marriage of people meant that they left childhood at a tender age and joined the workforce.

Farson (1974) also concurs with Ariès' claim that the concept of childhood is exclusively modern. According to him, the modern family had become intolerant and oppressive to children unlike their counterparts in the middle ages who embraced children without any distinction. These authors sought to understand the particularity of the present childhood by comparing and contrasting it with the past. To them past societies were more nurturing to children while present societies are oppressive to children, which they attribute to changes in practices toward children. According to Cunningham (2005):

crucial to Ariès was the development of the idea that children should have an education, which Ariès saw as part of a 'moralisation of society' promulgated by reformers in the 16th and 17th centuries; children came to be subjected to a sort of quarantine before they were allowed to join adult society. Parents were taught that they had a duty to ensure that their children were sent to school (Cunningham, 2005:5)

In the boom of the industrial revolution child labour was believed to teach children numerous economic, social and moral principles therefore very few voices were raised in opposition to the practice (Hendrick, 1997). However, by the close of the century some people (referred to as reformers) began to challenge child labour in the factories. These reformers were appalled at the scale, intensity and brutalisation of children (Hendrick, 1997) and therefore argued that factory work was an unnatural practice for such young and innocent members of society, and held that children should be protected from the harsh realities of the adult world (Johnny, 2006).

The reformers argued that children were fragile creatures of God who needed to be safeguarded and reformed, stressing that school must work with the family to carry out the task of reforming these fragile creatures of God. They also highlighted the physical and moral dangers of children's work in their campaign to abolish the practice. Of significance was their referral to the "damage to children's bodies through long hours, debilitating temperatures, polluted atmospheres and beatings" (Hendrick, 1997:41) and drew analogies between slaves and that of factory children; at a time when the anti-slavery movement was at its peak. The agitation of the reformers resulted in the passage of the Factory Act 1833 in England, which declared that the period of childhood ended at the age of 13. The Act also limited the working hours for children between 9 years and 13 years to 8 hours, and prohibited the employment of those less than 9 years. As the first Act to give some sort of legal protection to children, it is accredited for beginning the legal process of giving children a distinct space to occupy from that of adults (Tomàs, 2007).

Contributing to the discourse on the discovery or invention of childhood, Postman (1982) agrees with Ariès that childhood is a modern phenomenon but attributes its rise to technological change but not a moralisation of society as stated by Ariès. According to Postman (1982) childhood evolved between the 16th and 18th centuries as a consequence of the invention of the printing press. He argued that the printing press allowed the dissemination of written words and therefore the need to learn to read. Adults who had learned to read took charge of regulating children's reading, and made demands on children to learn to read.

Accordingly, this process was institutionalised through mass schooling (Wyness, 2006). Johnny (2006) adds that mass schooling created a separate space for children while providing them opportunities to develop their cognitive abilities but also imposed a vision of childhood purity and innocence upon children. For Ariès the change in the idea that schooling was for only children rather than for people of all ages set the stage for the separation of childhood and adulthood. Moreover, as schooling spread and became extended, childhood lasted longer (Cunningham, 2005).

Other writers in the 1970s about childhood as a social condition included: Lloyd deMause (1974), *The History of Childhood*; Edward Shorter (1976), *The Making of the Modern Family*; and Lawrence Stone (1977), *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500 – 1800*. DeMause's book centres on parent-child relationships as a factor in history. He argued that the central force that changed history is neither technology nor economics, but by what he called 'psychogenic' changes in personality occurring because of successive

generations of parent-child interactions. He noted three ways in which such interactions took place viz: *projective reaction* – adults use children as a vehicle for the projection of their own unconscious, i.e. children become the repository of all the adults' unacknowledged bad feelings and fears about themselves (Cunningham, 2005). *Reversal reaction* - adults use children as a substitute for an adult figure important in their own childhood i.e. the parent becomes a child, and the child becomes a parent. Cunningham (2005) notes that in this interaction parents look for love from their children. *Empathic reaction* – adults empathise with children's needs and attempt to satisfy them.

For deMause (1974), the key to successful parenting is the ability of the parent to regress to the psychic age of the child, and he believed that each generation of parents were better at doing this than their predecessors. He categorised parent-child relations into six modes namely: 1) the infanticidal mode – when parents resolve their anxieties about caring for their children by killing them; 2) the abandonment mode – when parents began having pity on children but still did not want to care for them, therefore abandoned them at wet nurses or monasteries; 3) the ambivalent mode – when children were kept at home but with little or no emotional connection to their parents; 4) the intrusive mode – when parents became interested in children but the interest was to control the child's behaviour and subdue its will; 5) the socialisation mode – when parents began to train and guide children into proper paths; and 6) the helping mode – when parents acknowledged that the child knows better than the parent what it needs at each stage of its life, empathised with and fulfilled children's expanding needs.

In short, deMause emphasises that parent-child relations steadily got better, stating that “the history of childhood is a nightmare from which we have only recently begun to awaken. The further back one goes, the lower the level of child care, and the more likely children are to be killed, abandoned, beaten, terrorised, and sexually abused” (deMause, 1974:1). De Mause’s work has also become a matter of scholarly controversy. His work has been found wanting or supported by other historians who have assessed it using empirical historical evidence. But it is beyond the scope of this thesis to present such arguments².

Edward Shorter’s (1976) book, *The Making of the Modern Family* concentrated on mother-baby relationships. He claimed that ‘good mothering’ was an invention of modernisation, especially capitalism. He too like Ariès compared the past with the present. He noted that in traditional society, mothers viewed the development and happiness of infants with indifference (similar to deMause’s ambivalent mode), whilst in the modern society mothers place the welfare of their small children above everything else. According to Shorter, mothers ignored their babies’ cries, treated them roughly and constricted their movements through swaddling and gave their children to wet nurses. The net result was children’s early death, with mothers often resigned to their children’s squalling, usually fatal convulsions and fevers (Wyness, 2006). Wyness equates this maternal indifference to modern-day notions of abuse and neglect.

Shorter (1976) agrees with Ariès that the contemporary family was a recent phenomenon. He however disagrees with Ariès on its chronology. Whereas

² For details of the controversies on de Mause’s work see Davis, G (1976) *Childhood and History in America*. New York. Psychohistory Press. Langer, W (1974) ‘Infanticide: a Historical survey’ in *History of Childhood Quarterly*, Vol 1. Shore, M (1979) ‘The Psychogenic Theory of History’ in *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*. Vol 9 issue 5. Demos, J (1986) *Past, Present and Personal: The Family and the Life Course in American History*. Oxford University Press.

Ariès believes the 17th century marked the turning point, Shorter is of the view that the late 18th century marked the transition. Shorter holds capitalism culpable for breaking up traditional society, stressing that as family incomes improved, women could exchange the “grim pressures of production for the work of infant care, and thus begun to take very good care of children at home” (Shorter, 1976:30). Shorter documents this change from about the middle of the 18th century among affluent members of society when child rearing practices changed: wet-nurses began to lose their appeal as women attached themselves more to their babies through breastfeeding. These changes and practices trickled to the working classes, and women over time learned to be ‘good mothers’ and in the process became aware of children as separate entities in need of love, protection and separate treatment.

On the last of the 1970s writers, Lawrence Stone (1977) argued in his book, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500 – 1800* that changes in parent-child relationships were important indicator of overall changes in the nature of the family, with intensified affective bonding of the nuclear core at the expense of neighbours and kin becoming a central characteristic of modern family. Stone identified three types of family namely: *the open lineage family* – from 1450 to 1630, *the restricted patriarchal nuclear family* – from 1550 – 1700, and *the closed domesticated nuclear family* – from 1640 – 1800. Stone argued that in the open lineage family, relationships between parents and children were ‘usually fairly remote’ characterised by sending babies off to wet-nurses and boarding school at the age of about ten. In the restricted patriarchal nuclear family, Stone found a fierce determination to break the will of the child, and to enforce his utter subjection to the authority of his elders and superiors

especially his parents (resonates with deMause's intrusive mode). Also in the restricted patriarchal nuclear family type, Stone notes that corporal punishment, often very brutal was the norm, children were taught to behave with great formality in the presence of their parents, and to defer to them at all times. Finally, the closed domesticated nuclear family saw the evolution of affective relations between parents and children, and a move towards a child-oriented family. For Stone, children progressed from non-affective, ignored or brutalised individuals to that of being protected, respected and loved by their family.

In sum, Ariès and the other 1970s writers, described by Rosenthal (2007) as the evolutionary school of childhood, believed that there had been changes in attitudes to children and treatment of childhood over the centuries. They however disagreed on the reasons for the changes and the timing of those changes. As already stated there are other writers who deny Ariès' thesis and the conclusions of the other 1970s writers. Over the years numerous scholars have made a comprehensive critique of them. It is argued that the writings of the 1970s writers were "methodologically unsound, technically incompetent, and their conclusions wholly mistaken" (Cunningham, 2005:12). Indeed Rosenthal (2007:1) comments "the world of historical was so excited by Ariès' *Centuries of Childhood* that we were blind to its many faults, errors, and shortcomings. We were seduced, and proved susceptible to the blandishments of what we eventually came to realise were those of a false prophet".

Anderson (1980, cited in Cunningham, 2005) also groups Ariès, Stone, de Mause, and Shorter together as 'the sentiments approach' and criticised them for a style of writing in which speculation or even pure fantasy is glossed over

as if it were clearly established fact, and stressed that their method encouraged too much decontextualisation in the sphere of culture, without close examination of economic structures. On the issue of decontextualisation, Houlbrooke (1984) concurs with Anderson, accusing Ariès of ignoring or dismissing as irrelevant much medieval evidence of solicitude for children, and also for repeatedly ripping evidence from its proper context.

Similarly, Pollock (1983) rejected Ariès' thesis that in medieval society the idea of childhood did not exist, and also disagreed strongly with Stone's description of parent-child relationships in the 17th century. Pollock expressed the view that continuity rather than change was the most important fact about parent-child relationships. For example, she found no change in the extent of parental grief over the centuries and no support for the argument that parents before 18th century were indifferent to the death of their infants, whilst parents after 18th century grieved deeply to the death of their infants. This contradicts Stone's argument that because infant mortality was high, parents reduced the amount of emotional capital in their infants. She also rejected the arguments espoused by Ariès, Stone, and deMause that children were harshly or cruelly disciplined. She revealed that brutality was the exception rather than the rule. She reiterates that children require a certain amount of protection, affection and training for normal development, and that parents everywhere try to supply that. Similarly Houlbrooke (1984) has also noted that there is much direct evidence of the reality of loving care in some families and of parental grief in the face of loss of children. This is supported by Cunningham (2005), citing Mark Golden, argues that the weight of evidence seems overwhelmingly to favour the proposition that parents loved their children and desolately grieved for them deeply when they

died. He however adds that children were mourned only because they were perceived to have lived to no purpose, i.e. not having reached adulthood. He seems to suggest that parents rather mourned the loss of the economic value they could have derived from their children.

Ariès has also been criticised for his use of arts as evidence for his thesis. Cunningham (1995) argues that different artistic representations of children throughout the centuries merely demonstrated changes in art and not the way in which childhood was perceived. This is supported by Archard (1993), who notes that Ariès' 'iconographic' argument presumes that art is straightforwardly realistic in its representation of social facts. According to him Ariès ignored the extent to which the changes in paintings were due to general developments in arts rather than simply altered attitudes to the subjects of the pictures. Also artwork is said to have the capacity to create rather than simply reflect social reality (O'Brien, 2003). Archard (1993) further criticises Ariès for what he called *presentism*, i.e. the predisposition to interpret the past in the light of present day attitudes, assumptions and concerns. This criticism can also be extended to the other evolutionary scholars. Indeed, deMause asked "did parents always act much the same as they do today? Did they love and care for their children in similar ways?" (deMause, 1974:iii). Archard (1993) highlights that from the standpoint of 20th century, which understood the difference between children and adults in a specific manner, Ariès judged that the past lacked a concept of childhood. Archard is however of the view that what the past societies lacked was in fact the modern societies' concept of childhood. In other words previous societies did not fail to think of children as different from adults but they merely thought about the difference in different ways from what is known today.

Archard (1993) provided such a conclusion by introducing an important distinction between the terms 'concept' and 'conception'. Relying heavily on Rawls' *Theory of Justice*, he notes that the *concept of childhood* requires that children be distinguishable from adults in respect of some unspecified set of attributes, whilst a *conception of childhood* is the specification of those attributes. [This is examined in detail later]. Hence, to have a concept of childhood is to recognise that children are in some ways different from adults, but to have a conception of childhood is to have a view of what or how those differences are. He concluded that Ariès' claim that past societies lacked the concept of childhood is unsustainable, but that past societies merely possessed a different conception. With this distinction in mind, he states that:

Ariès was personally in favour of modern conception of childhood. This conception is now widely embraced but was signally absent from past societies. The modern conception amounts to a specification of what is seen to be the particular and separate nature of the child and one which warrants its proper separation from the adult world (Archard, 1993:23)

In putting a gender perspective on the debate Gittins (2010) notes that it is erroneous to talk of childhood. She asserts that the discussion should rather be boyhood because it was boys who were first singled out as distinct and different social category: "boys were the first specialised children...they began going to school in large numbers" (Gittins, 2010:44). She revealed that both boys and girls were dressed in similar petticoats until they were 6 or 7 years. However from the age of 7 boys were "breeched and from then on their dress became totally different from girls...they began to wear special suits called skeleton suits" (Gittins, 2010:44). With support from Calvert (1982) Gittins argues that the wearing of the skeleton suits recognised the masculinity of boys long before

they reached maturity. It symbolised a separation of young boys from the mass of women, girls and very small children in petticoats, and placed them in a special category. Hence Gittins argues that it is deceptive to talk of children, when the unit of analysis was only boys.

Moreover, Ariès and the other 1970s writers' claim that children were not separated from adults until the mid 17th century has been disputed by Montgomery (2009) who points out that the legal system before 16th century set age for criminal responsibility, indicating that children were considered morally unaware and different from adults. Shahar (1990) also provides accounts of situations where children were not prosecuted for some crimes including murder because it was deemed accidental since children were believed to be incapable of conceiving an idea to commit murder.

Johnny (2006) postulates that while Ariès does not completely dismiss the notion that medieval society may have had some recognition of the distinct characteristics of children, he (Ariès) maintains that childhood was not valued, given that artistic works did not have a distinct place for them. Nonetheless, Ariès is said to be wrong for reading attitudes to childhood from images that are relevant to theology or arts, but not of childhood (Cunningham, 2005). Cunningham further debunks the idea that childhood was not valued, stating that the impact of Christianity meant that the middle ages accorded more importance to young children. Moreover, Shahar (1990) asserts that most women entrusted their children to wet nurses because it was the prevailing practice, but not because they did not value their children or lacked maternal feeling.

Cunningham (2005) however offers a defence to Ariès by claiming that he (Ariès) has been misunderstood. He opines that the English translation of Ariès' work failed to convey the meaning of the original, for the word translated as 'idea' was in French 'sentiment', which carries with it the sense of a feeling about childhood as well as a concept of it. He continues that Ariès did not claim that there was no affection for children; he attempted to distinguish between a 'sentiment' about childhood and the way adults treated children. Lack of a 'sentiment' meant that from about the age of seven children belonged to adult society. He adds that this did not mean that a child of about the age ten had the same status and role as an adult of about thirty years, but that there was no boundary fence separating off the worlds of adults from children. According to Cunningham most scholars on medieval history have been too content to score an easy goal by disproving Ariès and have avoided the more complex task of identifying the contradictions and changes over time and place in medieval thought and practice to which Ariès was alert even though he was unsystematic in dealing with them.

While Ariès may have somehow been undermined, he remains the most important figure in the history of childhood because he set the ball rolling for discussions on the condition. As to whether childhood existed or not in medieval times, it is now widely acknowledged that children were perceived differently from how they are perceived in the 20th century and beyond.

2.1.1 Childhood from the 20th century and beyond

As evident from the above discussions, the dominant image of childhood from the 17th century sought to provide children with greater protection from the difficulties and harshness of adult life in particular from factory work. However,

Johnny (2006) notes that with the rise of feminism and other movements in the 20th century the institution of childhood was questioned. In the 1960s feminists argued that the subordinate role ascribed to women was not a true reflection of women's nature, but rather the result of patriarchal domination. They debunked the notion that women were dependent, weak and emotional reiterating that these were social constructs used to justify women's oppression.

Juxtaposing the feminists' argument against children, the child liberation movement was established. Child liberationists such as John Holt (*Birthrights*, 1974), Shulamith Firestone (*The Dialectic of Sex*, 1970), Howard Cohen (*Equal Rights for Children*, 1980), Ann Palmeri (*Childhood's End: Toward a Liberation of Children*, 1980) and Daniel Farson (*Escape from Childhood*, 1974), argued that the helpless and vulnerable image ascribed to children was not indicative of children's true nature and capability. Firestone (1970) called for the inclusion of the oppression of children in any programme of feminist revolution. The main claim of the liberationists was that the separation of children and adults worlds was "unwarranted and oppressive discrimination" (cited in Archard, 1993:46).

Holt (1974) considered this unwarranted and oppressive discrimination to be somewhat of a self-confirming ideology. He used the example of a Japanese musician who taught young children to proficiently play the violin, and he compared that with American children who only mimicked rhythm played for them by their teacher. He noted that while Americans were greatly amused by the dexterity of the young Japanese children, they (the Japanese children) were not considered prodigies in Japan. Hence as argued by Johnny (2006:22) when society "places high expectations upon children they will often rise to the

challenge and develop great skills and capacities to respond to the high expectations. By the same token, if society views children as being incompetent, they too may be socialised into viewing themselves in that manner and, as a consequence, their learning will be dramatically stifled". Holt (1974) further argued that children often have the desire to escape from the institution of childhood. He noted that while childhood was often viewed as a protective garden, he was of the view that many children did not experience this protective garden but as a prison from which they wanted to escape. He saw the traditional view of childhood to be oppressive as it denied children opportunities to develop their capacities or exercise autonomy. Therefore he proposed that the rights, privileges, duties, responsibilities of adult citizens be made available to any young person, of whatever age, who wants to make use of them.

Child liberationists further argued that to enable children to emancipate themselves from the oppressive institution of childhood, "they should not only be provided with welfare rights but also agency rights such as the right to vote and work" (Johnny, 2006:22). They contended that while *agency rights* would require an ability to make rational choices, and acknowledged that not all children possess this capacity, they maintain that the same could be said of adults. They also advocated that children as members of a society should be able to shape and influence how that society is organised, therefore children should have their voices considered equally in the formulation of policies (Dwyer, 1998, cited in Johnny, 2006). Although the arguments of child liberationists have not been fully adhered to, at the international level there has been steady progress at granting *agency rights* to children. One such progress is the adoption of the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is argued

that the convention seeks to universalise the experience of childhood. [See chapter 4 for discussions on the international efforts to secure greater autonomy and rights for children].

2.2 Conceptions of Childhood

It is unfair to suggest that all societies have the same conception of childhood, although there are some dominant themes across societies. The preceding discussions have highlighted that even though conceptions of childhood have somewhat shifted through the centuries, most societies now recognise it as a distinct and separate stage in life. Furthermore, scientific findings seem to validate this separation of children and adults, showing that there are both cognitive and developmental differences between children and adults (Stasiulis, 2002, cited in Johnny, 2006). It cannot be denied that children possess some distinguishing features, yet how societies respond to these differences has varied over time, and continue to vary across cultures. In other words, all societies have the concept of childhood, but there are different conceptions among societies. Archard (1993) identifies three areas in which conceptions of childhood may differ. These are 'boundaries', 'dimensions', and 'divisions'.

2.2.1 Childhood Boundaries

Boundary – is the point at which childhood is deemed to end. Archard (1993) notes that a conception may not fix a firm upper limit and thus leave it vague. However many cultures do have an age of majority, often determined by the legal system. Other societies may have formal practices or a division of roles and responsibilities that amount to the setting of a boundary. In the formal practices sphere, some societies have rites of passage (e.g. *dipo* or *bragro* among the *krobo* and *akan* people of Ghana respectively) or initiation

ceremonies that celebrate the end of childhood and the beginning of adulthood. Many of these ceremonies are associated with permission to marry, depart from parental home, and fend for oneself. There are sometimes conflicts between the age given by the legal system, and the age at which some of these rites are performed. For example, in Ghana the legal system stipulates the age of majority as 18 years. However the *dipo* or *bragro* rites of passage is performed between the ages of 12 and 17. For these children, childhood has supposedly ended within the traditional conception, whilst the legal system still sees them as children. Many *akan* people have resolved this conflict by abandoning the *bragro* rites of passage. Christianity is believed to have tremendously influenced the abolishment of this rite, as many converts associate the rites with the worship of lesser gods and idols. However among the *krobo* people the *dipo* rites continues amid mounting tensions.

2.2.2 Childhood Dimension

Dimension – Archard (1993) citing John Locke's *Some thoughts concerning education*, illustrated that childhood may be understood from a number of different angles. He lists some of these angles as: (1) moral or juridical perspective from which people may be judged incapable, in virtue of age, of being responsible for their deeds; (2) metaphysical viewpoint from which persons, in virtue of their immaturity, are seen as lacking in adult reason or knowledge; and (3) a political angle from which young humans are thought unable to contribute towards and participate in the running of the community. He notes that the various dimensions need not converge in defining one consistent and agreed period of human life. Commenting on childhood in Zaire, Tchibinda and Mayetela (1983, cited in Twum-Danso, 2008), allude that

traditionally childhood began at birth and continued until the child attained a degree of economic independence and fully participated in the work of adults, which was normally between the ages of seventeen and twenty. Thus, rather than childhood being intertwined with the notion of age as in the modern Western conception, the landmark for the attainment of adulthood in the Zairean context was economic independence.

Twum-Danso (2008) also adds that marriage and the establishment of a new residence are traditionally two prime indications of adult male status in many African communities. She notes that “to be classified a child means that a man has not achieved the level of economic importance that would permit him to acquire a wife, build his own compound, and become an economically viable agent” (p.401). Similarly, Last (2003) asserts that in pre-colonial northern Nigeria, boys became adults by acquiring a dependant; i.e. by taking a wife whilst girls achieved adulthood on their entry into motherhood. Contrarily Nsamenang (1992) argues that in West African context marriage alone just confers proto-adult status on a person since achieving full adult status requires that a person be ‘married with children’. Twum-Danso (2008) argues that to achieve adult status in many non-western societies is dependent on the following landmarks: independence (defined as the ability to look after yourself and your parents), marriage, and parenthood, and not simply by age. Without achieving these landmarks, she argues, a person may legally be an adult, but will always be seen as somewhat lacking or incomplete. Hence a married teenager with a child can be accorded adult privileges while an adult who is unmarried and childless can be denied some adult privileges.

2.2.3 Childhood Division

Division – Archard (1993) notes that a person's early years (i.e. from birth till adulthood) can be sub-divided into a number of different periods, and the category of childhood can bear different relations to these. For example, Roman law under Justinian (527 – 565 AD) specified three age periods of childhood: *infantia* – when children were incapable of speech; *tutela impuberes* – when prior to puberty, children required a tutor; and *cura minoris* – when after puberty, young people had not yet reached their majority and required the care of a guardian. Archard (1993) propounds that childhood may be understood in two distinct ways: broad and narrow levels. On a broad level, it is a comprehensive term for the stage extending from birth to adulthood. Infancy, adolescence and whatever other terms may be available to a culture are subdivisions of that period. On a narrow perspective, childhood is the stage after infancy but before adolescence. The child 'proper' is then sandwiched between the infant and the young person on the threshold of their majority.

2.3 The Sociology of Childhood

From the discussions so far, it is amply clear that there are multiple views of childhood, which are not mutually exclusive (See Sorin, 2005). However the discipline which has achieved dominance, as providing authoritative and factual knowledge for professionals about children is developmental psychology (Mayall, 2000). Mayall (2000) and other writers such as James and Prout (1990; 1997) have argued that psychological knowledge is relevant but not sufficient, stressing that it is also relevant and necessary to view children and childhood from a new set of perspectives. Through the pioneering work of a number of scholars (e.g. Jenks, 1982; Qvortrup, 1991; James and Prout, 1990 & 1997), it

has emerged that “the study of children and childhood is a political enterprise, not a neutral scientific enterprise” (Mayall, 2000:247). Particularly, Mayall (2000) argues that to define “children as incompetent, inadequate versions of adults, to individualise childhood and to propose childhood as politically neutral is itself a political act” (p.247), while Elstain (1981 in Mayall, 2000) suggests that children should be rescued from their a-political conceptual space, and study childhood as a social phenomenon.

The sociology of childhood emerged partly as a result of the dissatisfaction among some sociologists about the way in which children were portrayed in most of the social science literature. According to Qvortrup (1991), social science research had largely treated children as 'objects of study' to produce correlational results and inform conceptual frameworks, rather than focusing on the subjective meanings of children's viewpoints. The former approach has also been criticised on the basis that the "types of topic chosen and methods used reflect adults' rather than children's concerns" (Laybourn et al, 1996:13). As a result of the dissatisfaction, James and Prout (1990) proposed a 'new paradigm'. This paradigm was to study children as a social group and childhood as a social phenomenon. This new framework adopted the child perspective and advocated the need to study children in their own right and not as individuals on the way to adulthood.

Below are some of the paradigm's key features as listed by James and Prout (1990):

i) Childhood is socially constructed. What it is like to be a child is shaped by the cultural and structural contexts in which children live.

- ii) Children's social relationships and cultures are worthy of study in their own right and not just in respect to their social construction by adults.
- iii) Children are not passive subjects of socialisation, but actively contribute to their own social worlds, as well as the lives of those around them.
- iv) Childhood is not a single and universal phenomenon, but there is a variety of childhoods. Variables such as gender, class or ethnicity affect how children experience their childhood in various societies.
- v) Methods that allow children a more direct voice and participation in the production of data such as ethnography are useful for the study of childhood.
- vi) Proclaiming a new paradigm of childhood sociology also implies engaging in and responding to the process of reconstructing childhood in society.

The practice of adults supposedly speaking on behalf of children was criticised and the child perspective advocated (Alanen & Mayall 2001; Corsaro 1997; James et al, 1998). The new paradigm drew a distinction between 'being' and 'becoming'. Qvortrup (1994) formulated the distinction as between adult 'human beings' and child 'human becomings', whereas Halldén (2005) classifies it as between the 'complete and independent' and the 'incomplete and dependent'. In developmental psychology children are seen as maturing according to pre-determined stages that measure the child's competence of rational and hypothetic thinking (Halldén, 2005). In the same vein, Lee (2001:43) argues that the developmental psychology framework "wove children into a universal human drama of struggle for order". In other words, development psychology presupposes a universal standard in which all children must fit into. However, Andenaes (2005 in Halldén, 2005) cautions against this and argues for the need to contextualise the child rather than talk of a universal abstract child. She

stresses that cultural context should not be seen as something outside the process of development.

The 'being' child is regarded as a social actor in his/her own right, who actively constructs his/her own childhood, and who is capable of expressing his/her views and experiences about what it means to be a child. The 'becoming' child on the other hand is regarded as an 'adult in the making' and who lacks the skills and features of the adult that he/she will become (James and Prout, 1997; Jenks, 1982; Qvortrup, 1994; Brannen and O'Brien, 1995). The 'being' perspective considers children as competent, whilst the 'becoming' perspective sees children as incompetent. Thus adults are competent but children are not. From the 'becoming' perspective children progress from a state of "vulnerability to sophistication, from an earlier lack of skills to a later possession of abilities" (Young, 1990 cited in Uprichard, 2008:305). It could be inferred from this perspective that competence is acquired as one gets closer to becoming an adult, and that competence is necessarily and only an adult characteristic (Uprichard, 2008). This interpretation is quite troublesome for many severely disabled people who may be adults chronologically but may think and act as a child, and who may not have developed the competence expected at adulthood. Since the focus of the 'becoming' child is future oriented the onus of importance is on what the child 'will be' rather than what the child 'is now' (Uprichard, 2008). The 'becoming' perspective is associated with developmental psychology.

In contrast to the developmental psychology framework, the scholars within the new social studies of childhood launched the idea that children were to be seen as 'being' and not 'becoming'. According to Halldén (2005) this view of the child

as 'being' was to serve a dual purpose. On the one hand, it sought to highlight the importance of analysing children as a social group in relation to other age groups. She continues citing Qvortrup (1990), there has always been and will always be a group of individuals labelled children, but stresses that it is important to make the group visible, not hidden away within the family. Secondly, she notes that the emphasis on the child as a 'being' sought to highlight the importance of listening to children's voices. The 'being' perspective stands in opposition to the 'becoming' perspective and regards children as social actors who do not have to be approached from an assumed shortfall of competence (James et al, 1998).

The binary distinction ('being' and 'becoming') have been criticised as unsatisfactory. Accordingly some writers (e.g. Uprichard, 2008; Qvortrup, 2004; Lee, 2002; Green and Hogan, 2005) have advocated for a combined approach that will regard children as both 'being and becoming'. In their book *Researching Children's Experience*, Sheila Greene and Diane Hogan (2005) argue that there is a need for multiple perspectives. They note that children's lives are complex and multi-faceted and require an analysis that is informed by knowledge of biological, psychological and social factors. Hogan refers to the growth of interest in contextual models of child development in developmental psychology, and argues for the need to take developmental perspectives into consideration when doing research informed by the new social studies of childhood. She argues that "the study of children's experiences of their worlds, focusing on their perspectives, and the study of their development, need not be mutually exclusive" (Greene and Hogan, 2005:37). Lee (2002) also argues that we (children and adults) are all interdependent beings who are always in the

process of 'being and becoming' with one another, who are more or less competent at doing certain things throughout our lives. Similarly, Uprichard (2008) adds that looking forward to what a child becomes is arguably an important part of being a child. Therefore by ignoring the future, she concludes that, we are prevented from exploring the ways in which this may itself shape experiences of being a child. Qvortrup further illuminates:

many adherents of the social studies of childhood overlooked that growing up as an individual was inherently and indispensably a part of childhood...in fact, it was not merely psychologists and parents who were looking forward to adulthood on behalf of the child; also children were anticipating adulthood in ways that contributed to forming their childhood (Qvortrup, 2004:269).

The 'being and becoming' discourse acknowledges childhood as a temporal stage in the human life course. Children can and do become adults (i.e. if they do not die midway) and their adulthood is likely to be influenced by how they experienced their childhood. The combined approach sits comfortably with the dynamics of the ageing process (Uprichard, 2008) as it accentuates the 'present' – i.e. children experiencing and living their childhood time, - and also highlight the 'future' – i.e the ageing child and what awaits him/her. For Uprichard (2008) conceptualising children as 'being and becoming' is not only constructive in explicitly addressing the ageing process within childhood itself, it also reflects the ways that children see themselves and their changing world.

It is worth mentioning that the notion of childhood as a social construction has become what Lee (1996) has described as "industry standard". Hence writers and researchers of children and childhood who fail to acknowledge this risk receiving a more critical reception (James and Prout, 1997). With the new social

studies of childhood's exposition of the child as an active social agent, there is a risk of seeing children as the same as adults. Halldén (2005:6) cautions against such a move stressing that "in the effort to give children a voice and the right to speak, we should not ignore the big differences between young children and adults in terms of vulnerability and dependency". She recommends that in using the framework for understanding children's social lives given by the new social studies of childhood, it is important to take the developmental aspects into consideration and see age as an important factor. Additionally, Woodhead and Faulkner (2000:31) have also pointed out the importance of not 'throwing out the baby with the developmental bathwater'. In short the proposers of the combined approach argue that the concept of development is not wrong and ought not to be abandoned, rather the concept should be used sparingly and critically (Skolnick, 1975).

2.4 Childhood in Ghanaian context.

Ghana is a multi-ethnic society; however values and child rearing practices seldom show variations among the different ethnic groupings. Having a child is a defining characteristic of most Ghanaian families, as children are symbols of status, respect and completeness of the nuclear family (Sossou and Yogtiba, 2008). Accordingly Ike and Twumasi-Ankrah (1999 in Sossou and Yogtiba, 2008) note that, a child is the most treasured subject and constitutes the focal point in life in the Ghanaian traditional value system. Hence some Ghanaians view life without a child as meaningless and would do anything to have a child, even if it means marrying more women or having a child out of wedlock (in the case of men) or consulting traditional healers, priests and other deities to facilitate the process of having a child (in the case of women). In the above

scenario, one can see gender disparity in the attempt to have a child. Whereas the men can marry women or shamelessly have a child out of wedlock if it is the wife's 'fault' that they cannot have a child, the women cannot do the same if it is the husband's 'fault'. Having a child is a source of pride and status symbol for Ghanaian men, therefore a marriage without child(ren) stands on a very shaky ground.

Childhood and child-rearing practices in Ghana cannot be well understood without reference to the lineage (descent) system. Lineage determines which household a child spends his childhood, and how inheritance is allocated. There are two prominent lineage systems in Ghana: patrilineal and matrilineal. Patrilineal societies trace descent through males, while matrilineal societies do so through females. When a couple have children, in the matrilineal system, the children trace their descent through the mother. Both sexes of children belong to the matrilineal but only female links determine future generations of the matrilineal. Therefore women have high status in matrilineal societies. With regards to inheritance, in matrilineal societies children can only inherit from their maternal side. Hence a child cannot directly inherit his or her father in matrilineal societies but can contest for inheritance from his or her maternal uncles.

Conversely, in patrilineal societies children can directly inherit their father. In this vein, matrilineal societies place higher premium on maternal uncles than fathers, and it is very common for children to be 'fostered' by their maternal uncles. Maternal uncles also play the leading role in contracting marriage when the child comes of age and is ready for marriage. This does not however mean

that in matrilineal societies fathers are less interested or unloving towards their children. The system of descent and inheritance is very confusing for children born to couples from different lineage systems. A child born to the mother from a matrilineal system and a father from a patrilineal system has dual-lineage and can inherit both parents' families. On the contrary, a child born to the father from a matrilineal system and a mother from a patrilineal system does not belong to any lineage and cannot inherit from any parent's families. Due to this disadvantage the intestate succession law was passed in 1985 to give greater recognition to children upon the death a parent, irrespective of lineage system. The implication of the lineage system in terms of children's participation is that boys are more likely to be involved in family decisions in the patrilineal system, while girls are more likely to be involved in the matrilineal system.

When children are born, it becomes the responsibility of the parents, extended family members and the entire community members to bring up children both in matrilineal and patrilineal descent systems. There exist distinct roles and responsibilities among the male and female members. Females are responsible for household chores while males are responsible for other 'heavy' chores such farming and hunting or fishing. Social patterns are developed around "communal and organic philosophy for protection and survival" (Boakye-Boaten, 2010:108). Citing Valentine and Revson (1979) Boakye-Boaten argues that traditional Ghanaian society is "tightly organized, communal in nature, with kinship systems in extended families whose members made up a network of relationships that carried benefits and obligations to each other" (Boakye-Boaten, 2010:108). Through tales and myths, elders teach children the moral ethical codes of behaviour and social relationship. Children are perceived as

human beings in need of guidance, direction and assistance. Boakye-Boaten (2010) notes that children are trained to perpetuate the existence of their family. It is expected that the child will grow, marry and also bear children, hence according to Sarpong (1974:69) “barrenness is the greatest calamity that can befall a Ghanaian woman”. This accounts for one of the reasons why most Ghanaians will literally do anything to have a child.

Cultural values guide the relationship between children and their parents in the Ghanaian context. Children are socialized to acquire the cultural mores of the society; with respect for parents and other elders as the linchpin of socialisation in Ghana. Children communicate with their parents and any adult in the family and in the community with utmost respect and dignity - a value that is reaffirmed by the African Children’s Charter. Parents and other older members of the community participate in the socialisation of children in all spheres of life. This is why it is often said, it takes a whole village to raise a child in traditional African societies. Respect for parents and other elders as the linchpin of socialisation in Ghana has implications for children’s participation. This is discussed in chapter 8.

2.5 Conclusion

The chapter presented the historical and socio-cultural situation of childhood. The historical study presented has been grouped into 3 broad interrelated categories by Gittins (2010). The first category is concerned with the changing material conditions of families and households (e.g. Shorter, 1976); the second study the emotional and psychological changes in child-rearing practices (e.g. deMause, 1974); and the third category is those who study legal and political

changes in governmental attitudes to childhood (e.g. Montgomery, 2009). These studies bring to the fore different ideas about how childhood was constructed – sometimes by physical and/or sexual maturity, by legal status or chronological age – and highlight that there were profound changes in the middle ages that influenced behaviour toward children but they lack consensus on exactly how the changes impacted on childhood. In spite of their disagreement, most agree that the history of childhood was a history of progress (Cunningham, 2005), a move from parental indifference, emotional withdrawal, from a world of neglect and brutality to that of affection and close bonding of the nuclear family, and that of rights.

The discussions have also highlighted that childhood is not a natural, unified category (O'Brien, 2003), but a temporal and transitory concept whose tenure is largely variable in historical and socio-cultural contexts. For example, Ariès (1962) claimed that in medieval times girls by the age of 10 were considered 'little women' and some were mistresses. In deMause's book an account is given of how a mother described her 2 year old daughter as a "regular sexpot" (deMause, 1974:8). However in contemporary times one would be considered insane and risk long prison sentence for having a 10 year old girl as a mistress. The point being made is that different times and cultures have different ways of classifying who is a child, a classification that has nothing to do with biology or development. Childhood is therefore "an abstraction, a set of ideas or concepts, which define children's nature and the kinds of relations they have with other members of society" (Wyness, 2006:7) and is characterised by sets of cultural values (James et al, 1998).

It is argued that if childhood is a socio-cultural construction then there is no childhood, but rather childhoods (Maybin and Woodhead, 2003). By this argument an important question arises; are children's rights treaties especially the CRC (which is said to present a universal childhood) fighting a lost battle? Can it ever achieve a single, cross-cultural, universal childhood? This will be discussed in chapter four. How societies construct childhood will to a large extent determine if children are allowed to participate in decision-making. If a given society constructs children as rational then they are more likely to be invited to participate. On the other hand if the society views children as vulnerable then children are more likely to be 'protected' from adults and thereby denied the opportunity to participate in adult forums. See Sorin (2005) for more on the 10 constructions of childhood and their implications for adult-child relations.

CHAPTER 3: POWER AND EMPOWERMENT

3.0 Introduction

In Chapter 1 section 1.2, it was argued that the emphasis of children's participation in recent times is seeking to empower children (Boyden, 1990; Reddy and Ratna, 2002; Ackerman et al, 2003) with many activists calling for power imbalances to be addressed to ensure effective participation. In seeking to promote empowerment, the concept of power must be understood. As argued by Mosedale (2003:10) "assessing empowerment requires identifying and mapping power relations". It is also argued that "the answers to questions about power in society are answers to questions about the very nature of politics and the policy process" (Dowding,1996:1-2). As it will be seen in Chapter 5 power is a central concept in the study of policy formulation and implementation. Hill (2009) asserts that the study of the policy process is essentially the study of the exercise of power. Therefore the sources and nature of power cannot be disregarded in this study. In spite of the centrality of power in the policy process and that of empowerment there is continuous disagreement on the conceptualisation of power. This chapter discusses various conceptualisations of power and outlines the conceptualisation that is employed in this thesis.

3.1 Conceptualising Power

Attempts to define power are fraught with difficulties. It is even argued that power is an empty and pliable term and therefore the concept should be abandoned (Latour, 1986 cited in Lukes, 2005). Whilst disagreeing with the call to abandon the notion of power, Lukes however argues that "the search for a single concept of power is illusory...we use the vocabulary of power in countless

different ways in different contexts and for different purposes” (Lukes, 2005:62). Similarly Dahl (1957) noted the unlikelihood of producing a single, coherent and consistent idea of power. Lukes (1974; 2005) has classified the various ways of how power is understood and studied into three categories: the *one-dimensional*, *two-dimensional* and *three-dimensional* views.

3.1.1 *One-dimensional view*

The ‘one-dimensional’ view is accredited to Dahl (1957; 1958; 1961) and Polsby (1963). In his 1957 article titled ‘the concept of power’ Dahl argued that “A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do” (Dahl, 1957:202-203). This is similar to Max Weber’s definition of power as “the probability of individuals realising their wills despite the resistance of others” (cited in Lukes, 2005:26). This is often referred to as the ‘power over’ approach. In this approach power is studied by examining the behaviour of individuals in decision-making situations to determine who prevails in each situation. According to Dahl (1958) power can be analysed after a careful examination of a series of concrete decisions. Hence the researcher is expected to “study actual behaviour, either at first hand or by reconstructing behaviour from documents, informants, newspapers, and other appropriate sources” (Polsby, 1963:121). In the one-dimensional view it is assumed that the situations of decision-making would involve an actual directly observable conflict of subjective interests (i.e. overt policy preferences). According to Polsby “direct conflict between actors presents a situation most closely approximating an experimental test of their capacities to affect outcomes” (Polsby, 1963:4). In this view power is equated to successes in decision-making

(Lukes, 2005). This approach is referred to as one-dimensional because it only looks at the overt exercise of power.

3.1.2 Two-dimensional view

The 'two-dimensional' view, was espoused by Bachrach and Baratz (1970) in response to contest the weaknesses of the one-dimensional view. The focus of Bachrach and Baratz's critique of the one-dimensional view is that there are forces that can prevent potentially controversial issues from generating observable conflicts (they called this the mobilisation of bias). Therefore potential issues that nondecision-making prevents must be identified (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970). They defined nondecision as 'a decision that results in suppression or thwarting of a latent or manifest challenge to the values and interests of the decision-maker' (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970:44). Thus nondecision is the means through which other issues are prevented from being presented to the decision-making forum. In politics individuals and groups can prevent some issues from been discussed for their own advantage. According to Bachrach and Baratz (1970:8) 'when a person or group can consciously or unconsciously create or reinforce barriers to the airing of issues, that person or group has power'.

In the two-dimensional view power is identified by studying the interests (both observable preferences and grievances) of all actors to determine the means through which the potential demands for change have been denied (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970). Like the one-dimensional view, the two-dimensional view also focuses on behaviour i.e. observable conflicts. The difference however is that the two-dimensional view focuses on both overt and covert behaviour. The

overt use of power is identified by examining policy preferences that prevailed, whilst the covert behaviour is identified by observing grievances of the disfavoured group. Researchers therefore have to examine both decision-making (overt behaviour) and non-decision making (covert behaviour).

3.1.3 Three-dimensional view

Lukes (1974; 2005) criticised the methodology of the previous views. It is recalled that the methodology of the two previous dimensions was the identification of observable conflicts in the exercise of power. Lukes argued that it was possible for those with power to manipulate and distort the judgement of other people to the extent that the latter becomes unaware of their real interest. In other words “power involves the concealment of people’s real interests by false consciousness” (Lukes, 2005:13). He defined the concept of power as “A exercises power over B when A affects B in a manner contrary to B’s interests” (Lukes, 2005:37). Thus by shaping, influencing or determining the wants and preferences of B, A is exercising power without the tacit knowledge or consent of B.

Both the one-dimensional and two-dimensional views focus on the examination of observable conflicts. Bachrach and Baratz wrote that ‘if there is no conflict, overt or covert, the presumption must be that there is consensus on the prevailing allocation of values, in which case nondecision-making is impossible’ (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970:49). However, Lukes (2005) maintains that power can also be exercised by preventing the generation of observable conflicts and grievances. According to him:

the most effective and insidious use of power is to prevent conflict in the first place...to assume that the absence of grievances equals genuine consensus is simply to rule out

the possibility of false or manipulated consensus by definitional fiat (Lukes, 2005:27-28).

Hence, it is possible to witness situations where there are no actual, observable conflicts, since that may have been prevented, but in which there may be potential conflicts. According to Lukes, this potential conflict may never be actualised, in which case it becomes a latent conflict. The conflict is latent because subjects are unaware of their own interests (Lukes, 2005). Researchers in addition to examining observable behaviour must also look at social forces and institutional practices that shape people's interests and thus prevent people from knowing their real interests (Lukes, 1974; 2005).

There are a number of criticisms against the three-dimensional view. It is argued that it is naive to assume that the manipulation of people's mind would be made in some observable manner (Mokken and Stokman, 1976). Lukes (1974) was aware of the methodological difficulties in using his three-dimensional view in empirical research. He wondered how can one study, let alone explain, what cannot be seen? (Lukes, 1974). He accepted the criticism against the three-dimensional view by stating in the second edition of his book that 'it was a mistake to define power by saying that A exercises power over B when A affects B in a manner contrary to B's interests' (Lukes, 2005:12). Hence he redefined power as 'the ability to bring about significant outcomes' (Lukes, 2005:86). However, according to Hussein and Ketz (1991) the ability of an agent to bring about any outcome is dependent on their rights and resources. Lukes (2005) also argued that one can be powerful by advocating for and fulfilling other people's interests. He however maintains that power has a third dimension – i.e. the power to prevent the generation of grievances by shaping

people's preferences, cognition and perceptions so as to ensure the acceptance of the status quo. It seems the third dimension operates invisibly and can only be seen in retrospect. Until people realise that what they have been used to for years is actually not in their interests it becomes difficult for the researcher to identify power's third dimension.

3.1.4 Foucault's views on power: a fourth dimension?

Foucault's work is said to reveal the 'fourth-dimension of power' (Digeser, 1992). Foucault introduces the concept of 'governmentality' to the study of power. This concept posits that power is exercised as a deliberate attempt to shape one's actions and that of others. The previous dimensions of power conceive power as domination i.e. 'the ability to constrain the choices of others, coercing them or securing their compliance, by impeding them from living as their own nature and judgment dictate' (Lukes, 2005:85). As the above conception suggests, if power is not coercive, then it requires the compliance of willing subjects. Foucault's work addresses how compliance of willing subjects is secured i.e. power can be used in a way that causes people to discipline themselves without coercion from others. He rejects the notion that power is possessed by some group of people but not others by declaring that 'power is everywhere' (Foucault, 1978:93). The focus of Foucault's work was on power as a source of social conformity and discipline. For Foucault power is not a coercive or negative or repressive thing as described in the three previous dimensional views, but rather power is a positive and productive thing in society. He therefore called for the cessation of the negative descriptions of the effects power. According to him power is relational as it operates through a set of societal practices. In this thesis Lukes' ideas of power will mostly be

employed. In the third-dimensional view of power Lukes (2005) defined power as “the ability to bring about significant outcomes” (Lukes, 2005:86). Therefore young people’s empowerment will be measured by their ability to employ different forms of power to achieve significant outcomes in the policy process.

3.2 Typology of Power

Several authors have different ways of describing the means through which an agent exercises power. Some refer to it as ‘mechanisms of influence’ or ‘forms of power’ (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970) or ‘typology of power’ (Lukes, 2005). Bachrach and Baratz (1970) outline 5 forms of power namely: *influence, manipulation, force, coercion, and authority*.

Influence is an actor without any overt or tacit threat of deprivation against the subject, causes the subject to change a course of action (Lukes, 2005). This can be achieved through inducement or persuasion. Inducement is where a subject’s compliance is achieved by offering a reward. Persuasion is where an actor employs arguments that appeal to the subject to secure compliance. *Manipulation* involves securing compliance without making the subject aware of the intentions of the actor. In this instance power is exercised by deception. *Force* is where an agent achieves his or her interests by applying sanctions to the other actors. According to Bacharach and Baratz (1970) in a situation involving force one’s objectives must be achieved, in the face of others noncompliance by stripping the noncompliant of the choice between compliance and non-compliance. In this case the subject has no choice but to comply.

With regards to *coercion*, the threats of sanctions being applied makes subjects comply (Bacharach and Baratz, 1970). In situations involving *authority* the subject complies because of the recognition of legitimacy of the actor's demand (Bacharach and Baratz, 1970). Actors in the policy process may employ any of these forms of power at different stages of the policy process (see chapter 5).

3.3 Conclusion

Empowering children is often cited as the goal of participation. However the literature is silent on how children's empowerment might be assessed. Projects that seek to empower children show little attempt to define what empowerment means in their own context. It seems empowerment is assumed instead of it been defined or explained. As noted by Hill et al (2004:89);

almost all discourse about young people's participation refers back at least implicitly to notions of power; less often, however, does that involve explicit identification, clarification and deconstruction of what is meant by power and how power operates.

The concept is frequently taken to mean the process through which children assume power or gain control over decisions in their lives. However "power is a bottomless swamp" (Dahl, 1957:201) and the preceding discussions highlight the difficulty in identifying power. The discussions highlight that power is an 'essentially contested concept' (Gallie, 1956 cited in Lukes, 2005) and it is often fused with other terms such as capability, control, domination etc. Dean (2013) argues that it is very hard to generalize power in the social and political sciences taken into account the different disciplines, while Lukes (2005) on the other hand argues that it is impossible to get a single concept of power. As discussed in chapter 1 it is argued that participation is intended to empower children and young people (Boyden, 1990). Advocates of this position report

that participation enables children and young people to develop positive individual identity and a sense of responsibility (Kjørholt, 2002); a sense of belonging in the community (Cashmore, 2003 cited in Fitzgerald, 2009); a feeling that they can improve things or make a difference (Hannam, 2001; Hudson 2005 cited in Cox et al, 2010); and growth in confidence and self-esteem (van Beers, 2002 cited in Ackerman et al, 2003).

The problem with such reports is that 'power' or 'empowerment' is not defined in these studies to enable the reader determine whether the children and young people were indeed empowered. In my opinion, these reported cases of increased self-confidence and self-esteem is erroneously equated to empowerment. There is an implied but inadequately explored causal link between participation, self-confidence and empowerment. Whereas participation may lead to increased self-confidence, it does not intrinsically lead to empowerment (Murray and Hallett, 2000). As noted by Tew (2006) lack of clarity about power has led to the woolly usage of the term empowerment. He continues that some use the term to denote mutual support and collective action, while others use it on a more individualised level to denote situations where people overcome helplessness or discover their inner strengths. While I accept that individuals must have high internal efficacy (other writers refer to this as personal or psychological power) to start the process of empowerment, it is my view also that collective action or discoveries of inner strength are by themselves not empowerment. If such collective action and discoveries are able to achieve change then empowerment has occurred.

Power as a theoretical concept is understood from different theoretical perspectives (Thompson, 2007). Therefore in this thesis, power is situated within a sociological perspective. I conceive power as “*the capacity, held individually or collectively, to influence either groups or individuals (including oneself) in a given social context*” (Smith, 2008:23 emphasis added). Parsons (1969) concurs with such conceptualisation by his definition of power as “specific mechanism operating to *bring about changes* in the action of other units, individual or collective in *the process of social interaction*” (cited in Smith, 2008:20 emphasis added). Within this process of social relations power “may open up or close off opportunities for individuals or social groups” (Tew, 2002 cited in Tew, 2006:40). Power as a social relation implies a relationship between more than one actor, in which the desired outcome is to achieve something either against each other (termed as oppressive power by Tew, 2006) or in concert with each other to promote or protect an interest (termed as cooperative power by Tew, 2006).

More often at the end of the social relation between children, young people and adults is that children and young people acquiesce to adults. A number of factors account for this but in Ghana the findings of this study show that the major factor is the traditional hierarchical arrangement of social relations in which children and young people must respect elders and authority at all times. This makes it impossible for children and young people to deploy cooperative power to challenge or change the status quo. Even if young people are able to deploy cooperative power to challenge the status quo, their views do not prevail as the elders also deploy ‘collusive power’ to continue to exclude and suppress young people. Accordingly, children and young people’s empowerment in the

policy process will be assessed according to their ability to bring about changes in their social relations. The conceptualisation of power as social relations is in tandem with the social constructivist ontology of the study that social relations produce knowledge and the meanings attributed to social phenomena. See chapter 6 for the ontology of the study.

CHAPTER 4: CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

4.0 Introduction

Human rights as a concept is highly contested and its application to children is not without disagreements. There has been intense debate over the years as to whether human rights are applicable to children or not. Some authors argue that not only do children have rights, but also they should possess all the rights that adults take for granted (e.g. Farson, 1974; Holt, 1975). Other authors also argue that it is absurd to think of children as right-holders because of the nature of rights (e.g. Hart 1973). The question that immediately comes to mind is what does it mean to have a right that children do not possess and can therefore not be right-holders?

This chapter examines the arguments for and against children's rights, and also presents the historical development of children rights instruments from 1924 to 2006. The chapter also highlights some of the similarities and differences between the UN convention on the rights of the child, and the African Charter on the rights and welfare of the child.

4.1 Opponents and Proponents of Children's Rights

There are two competing theories about whether children have rights or not – 'will or choice theory' (Hart, 1973) and the 'welfare or interest theory' (MacCormick 1982). The 'will theory' also referred to as 'rationality or agency or competence theory' regards a right as the protected exercise of choice. Thus to have a right is to have the ability or power to enforce or waive the duty to which the right correlates (Archard, 2006). For every right there is a corresponding duty on someone. For example, if A has right to shelter then B has a duty to

provide A with shelter. Therefore for A to have a right to shelter according to the will theory is for A to have the choice of enforcing the duty of the provider (i.e. B) or to discharge the provider from doing so. Critics of children's rights argue that children do not have the power to enforce or discharge duty-bearers; therefore thinking of children as right-holders is superfluous. Minow (1995) has argued that children do not generally fit into the traditional liberal philosophy of rights, which assumes that individuals are capable of making rational and autonomous decisions. Therefore children cannot be right-holders because they are incapable of exercising or even waiving their rights (Hart, 1982). Archard (2006) constructs a summary of the 'will theory' as follows: (1) rights are protected choices, (2) only those capable of exercising choices can be right-holders, (3) children and the severely mentally disabled people cannot exercise choice, therefore they cannot be right-holders.

The 'welfare or interest theory' regards a right as the protection of an interest of sufficient importance to impose on others certain duties whose fulfilment allows the right-holder to enjoy the interest in question (Archard, 2006). On this theory, to have a right to, for example, education is to have an interest in being educated, which is so important that duty-bearers are under an enforceable obligation to provide education. The interest theory holds that rights do not come from human rationality but from the ability and desire of humans to pursue projects (Sorens, 2001). In other words human beings have rights because they have an interest to pursue. The 'interest theory' is summed by Archard (2006) as (1) rights are protected interests, (2) children have interests that adults have a duty to protect, (3) therefore children are right-holders.

Neither theory was able to gain supremacy. As argued by Archard (2006) each theory is more appropriate for certain kinds of rights – the will theory underpins rights that require the holder to actively do things, whereas the interest theory underpins rights that do not require the holder to do anything in order to enjoy the said right. Hence the debate shifted from can children have rights to should children have rights, and if so, what rights should they have? Proponents (mainly from the liberation camp; see chapter 2 for discussions of the child liberation movement) argue that children should have rights in equal proportion to that of adults (Farson, 1974; Holt, 1975; Cohen, 1980). They argued that children as a discriminated group should have all the rights adults enjoy in order to emancipate and improve their condition. In the words of Alanen (2010:7 emphasis added) “children’s rights are not just rights; they are human rights – they are rights that children are entitled to as human beings, *equal to other (adult) human beings*”. On the other hand opponents counter-argue that children should not have any rights, highlighting their non-qualification to have rights. Non-qualification is related to children’s capacity to exercise rights. It is believed that children do not yet have the cognitive capacity to take intelligent decisions, because they are not yet rational and civilised (Walkerdine, 2010).

Indeed developmental psychology tells us that children do lack some cognitive abilities - rationality or intelligence - to acquire and process information, weigh options and their consequences and make independent choices (Piaget, 1977 in Walkerdine, 2010). On the ‘will theory’ such cognitive abilities is a necessary requirement to possess a right, therefore if children lack such abilities then they should not be right-holders. This is echoed by Griffin (2002) who argues that as

young children are incapable of rational thoughts they should not be accorded rights. Sorens (2001) also concurs highlighting that “rationality is what gives human beings rights, and that children lacking certain parts of rationality, do not have the full complement of rights” (p.2). It is generally believed that adults need to acquire certain character traits in order to lead a valuable life (Archard, 2006). To acquire these traits children should not be permitted to make their own choices. Allowing children to take their own decisions could destroy the preconditions for having a fulfilling adult life. It is therefore argued that granting rights to children “encourages a destructive permissiveness that has poor consequences for society as a whole” (Archard, 2006:10).

Other opponents of children’s rights further argue that children are the property of their parents, who have rights over them, therefore children should have no rights at all (Montgomery, 1988). Another criticism against children's rights is that “it fails to recognize the importance of kindness and concern for children, which, while not considered rights, are central to the child's wellbeing” (Gal, 2006:16). The argument is that adults do have moral obligations to children. In this regard, O’Neill (1988) distinguishes between (a) perfect obligations – a completely specified obligations delineating whom they are owed to and what is owed, e.g. adults are obliged not to maltreat children. (b) Imperfect obligations – not specified to whom and what is owed, e.g. adults must show love, care, and kindness to children. Whilst perfect obligations correlate to rights, imperfect obligations do not correlate to rights. Hence Archard (2006) has argued that to think of children in terms of rights is to miss what is morally important about the way in which adults should stand in relation to children.

Opponents of children's rights also cite its creation of conflict between children and their parents (Brennan and Noggle 1997), and for the limitation it places on parental authority (Glennon and Schwartz 1995). It is argued that children's rights have become the bearer of a new movement of protecting children by controlling parenting (Brannen and O'Brien, 1995; Reynaert et al, 2009) and undermining parental entitlements to make decisions for their children (Tang, 2003) - something that has been criticised by some writers as paternalistic (Houlgate, 1979; Rosenak, 1982; Aviram, 1991). According to Pupavac (2001) the recognition of children as right-holders separate from their parents implicitly implies mistrust of parents, and a legitimization of professionals' intervention. She argues that human rights in effect empower external parties to assume the role of moral agents:

Indeed the ultimate rationale for children's rights lies in the delegitimisation of adult moral agency. Rather than empowering children, the effect of children's rights is to empower officials in relation to their parents, families and communities (Pupavac, undated:3)

Proponents of children's rights on the other hand offer numerous justifications to debunk the arguments of the opponents of children's rights. They contend that rights promote respect for children as individual human beings. Freeman (1998) argues that rights do not have to depend on competence or capacity, but on dignity and decency. For Freeman (1998:140) children should have rights simply "by virtue of being children". On the issue of capacity, proponents reject claims that children do not have the capacity to make intelligent decisions. They argue that adults use capacity as a coy to "maintain children in an artificial condition of dependence and vulnerability" (Archard, 2006:10). Similarly, Eekelaar (1992, cited in Gal, 2006) emphasizes the importance of attributing

rights to children in order to respect their growing capacities to make decisions. At the extreme end, Farson (1974) for example, insists that every child should have the rights that are available to adults as this will play an important part in their acquisition of capacity.

Proponents ask how children can be accused of lacking capacity when they are not given the opportunity to demonstrate their capacity. As argued by Archard (2006:11) “children cannot have rights because they are incapable but they are incapable only because they do not have the rights”. Farson (1974) has argued that children will readily acquire capacity if given the opportunity to do so. Cohen (1980) also argues that the line that categorises children as ‘incapable’ and adults as ‘capable’ is arbitrary. In the capacity discourse, there is a presumption that human beings acquire capacity at the age of 18 years (i.e. when one becomes an adult). By Cohen’s argument, one can ask, how do we determine that a 17 years and 11 months old person does not have capacity, but an 18 years old person has capacity? Is a month old difference enough justification for the denial of rights? It can be argued that any threshold used to qualify a person for rights will be arbitrary, but some authors (e.g. Houlgate, 1979) believe that the current age at which a person is deemed capable (i.e. 18 years) is fixed too late. There are many teenagers who have assumed the headship of their families because of diseases (especially HIV/AIDS), wars and other calamities befalling adults in their households (see Pupavac, 2001; Boyden, 1990; Payne, 2009). As Archard (2006) remarks age does not always reliably correlate with competence. There are intelligent children, just as there are stupid adults. Skolnick (1975:38) elucidates adding that “neither youth nor childhood is folly, some children are fools and so are some old men”.

Therefore using age as the determinant of competence unfairly penalises some who are in fact competent while unfairly rewarding those who are incompetent. Accordingly, Houlgate (1979) reckons that those who set the age of majority at eighteen have no basis. This is not an attempt to deny that children differ from adults in respect of competence. Archard (2006) suggests that to overcome this capacity and arbitrariness argument, different rights should be acquired at different ages. He argues that there are different capacities needed for a person to possess different rights, therefore it makes sense to accord rights in stages but not all at once. However, as plausible as Archard's suggestion is, it is not without operational difficulties. It begs the question of which rights are to be given and at what stage? What will the stage entail and how do we determine if a person has reached a stage?

Proponents have argued further that since not all children enjoy a normal environment - in reality children are vulnerable, and their best interests are not always the primary consideration - rights become critical when parental love and care collapse (Fortin 2003; Freeman 1992). In this vein, Minow (1990:303) argues that "to leave the private sphere untouched by law is to abandon children to their own destiny, with high risk of being abused". Proponents have also argued that children should have rights even when those rights are not implemented in reality. This is in response to O'Neill's (1992) argument that since children's rights are constantly been violated, it is pointless to have them. According to Freeman (1983:35) "rights terminology can be inspirational, rather than descriptive; therefore the lack of a statute protecting a right or creating an enforcement mechanism for it does not mean it does not exist". Feinberg (1980)

also acknowledges that there are some rights that are not necessarily correlated with anyone's duty:

Natural needs are real claims if only upon hypothetical future beings not yet in existence. I accept the moral principle that to have an unfulfilled need is to have a kind of claim against the world, even if against no one in particular. For this is but a powerful way of expressing the conviction that they ought to be recognized by states here and now as potential rights and consequently as determinants of present aspirations and guides to present policies. This usage, I think, is a valid exercise of rhetorical license (Feinberg, 1980:153).

From the above discussions, it can be deduced that opponents of children's rights can be located within the 'will theory of rights' whereas proponents can be located within the 'interest theory of rights'. Archard (1993) argues that the debate about whether children ought to have rights has been unending because the debate assumes rights to entail an 'all or nothing' outlook. Some writers have proposed a middle ground – caretaker thesis (Archard, 1993), fiduciary model (Sorens, 2001) – where parents become trustees of their children. Pupavac (undated:2) offers support noting “since children lack the ability to assert their will, inherent to the notion of children's rights is the necessity of advocates to act on their behalf”. Similarly, Freeman (1997:27) also argues that “children have interests to protect before they have wills to assert”. Brighthouse (2002) concludes that whilst children may lack rationality, they certainly have interests worth protecting and thus at least should have welfare rights.

4.2 Children's rights: the international agenda

In 1924 the League of Nations (now United Nations) endorsed the first *Declaration of the Rights of the Child*, (also known as the Geneva Declaration)

with claims to save and protect the 'delinquent and the waif' (Jones, 2005). The document is regarded as the first human rights instrument that deals specifically with children's rights, however it regarded children as being in need of protection, rather than individuals with personal rights (Gal, 2006). For example, the fourth principle of the Geneva Declaration provided that: *The child must be protected against every form of exploitation.*

Over the years, concern for children extended beyond their protection to offering them the benefit of improved education, health and nutrition, due to the recognition that investing in children would be good for everybody through increased productivity (Jones, 2005). Consequently the *Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959)* was promulgated. This Declaration was more detailed and regarded children as subjects to their own legal rights (Gal, 2006). However, Freeman (1983) has described the document as vague, since it is unclear who is obligated under the declaration to provide the rights enumerated in it. Gal (2006) has also criticised both the 1924 and 1959 Declarations as predominantly of a declarative nature, with no enforcement or follow-up mechanism.

The first binding international provisions regarding children are: The *Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)* and the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)*. Article 24(1) of The *Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)* stated that:

Every child shall have, without any discrimination as to race, colour, language, religion, national or social origin, property or birth, the right to such measures of protection as are required by his status as a minor, on the part of his family, society and the State.

Article 10 of the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (1966) also provided that:

Special measures of protection and assistance should be taken on behalf of all children and young persons without any discrimination for reasons of parentage or other conditions.

The Polish government in 1979 proposed that the 1959 *Declaration of the Rights of the Child* be made a binding agreement. Jones (2005) has remarked that this was an attempt to embarrass the West. But Pupavac (2001) reckons it was a move in search of a moral compass at the end of the cold war. The proposal of the Polish government resulted in the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC) which was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 20th November 1989 after nearly 10 years of negotiations. The adoption of the CRC was followed up with the World Summit on Children in 1990 at which delegates adopted the *Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children* and a *Plan of Action* that set out seven major and twenty supporting goals that was to be achieved by the year 2000. Whether these goals were achieved or not is beyond the scope of this thesis.

The CRC has been described as by far the most comprehensive international binding document with regard to children's rights (Freeman, 2000). It is claimed that children were acknowledged as individuals fully entitled to human rights for the first time by the CRC (Detrick et al. 1992, cited in Gal, 2006). The CRC addresses children's specific entitlements, organized according to four guiding principles: non discrimination (article 2), a child's best interests must be a primary consideration (article 3), a child's survival and development must be ensured (article 6) and a child's views must be considered in all matters

affecting the child (article 12). Reynolds et al (2006) accord the child's best interest as the leading principle of the convention, while Besson (2005) considers non discrimination as the most important. Freeman (2000) on the other hand espouses the right of the child to express their views in all matters affecting them as perhaps the most important provision. These guiding principles will be examined in detail later in this chapter.

The CRC has been hailed as flexible and sensitive to cultural differences more than any other human rights instrument (Alston, 1994) and for providing a broad framework of citizenship for children through the introduction of the *participation principle* (Roche, 1999). In this regard, Bell (2008) argues that the CRC seeks to promote children as both *being* and *becoming* future citizens within the universality of human rights. (See chapter 2, section 2.3 for discussion on 'being and becoming'). The CRC is also seen as unique in that for the first time in the history of human rights treaties, it created a mechanism for evaluation and follow-up for member states, which according to Gal (2006) has created a system of 'naming and shaming' of states that do not comply with the letter and spirit of the convention. This 'naming and shaming' may be significant since the CRC is mainly moral in character, with the UN having no powers to penalise countries found of breaching the rights of children (Gadda, 2008).

The Convention is further praised for proposing a 'relatively pragmatic agenda' (Gal, 2006) compared to the arguments of the child liberation movement. Thus unlike the child liberationists who advocated for equal rights and complete self determination for children, the CRC does not treat children as adults, nor does it contain provisions that suggest children are entitled to complete autonomy and

freedom in decision-making. The CRC rather stresses the right of children to *participate* in the decision-making process with due regard for their views depending on their evolving capacity. It does not prescribe the right of children to make their own decisions. This is examined further later in the chapter.

Furthermore, the CRC has been advanced as a powerful tool for challenging existing power relations (Freeman, 1997), because it enables children to express their views. This assertion is however highly over-exaggerated. As argued by Reynolds et al (2006) the invitation to express views underscore the presence of a listener, a higher power, who will decide. Similarly, Federle (1994) makes an interesting comment, noting that although the child is transformed into a rights-holder in discourse, the issue of powerful elites deciding which, if any, of the claims made by children they will recognise is still pertinent. Therefore the convention in effect reinforces existing power relations (Gadda, 2008).

Notwithstanding the many exaltations of the CRC, it has its limitations. It has been highly critiqued for advancing a 'western notion' of childhood (Boyden, 1992; Freeman, 1983; Pupavac, 1997). As a result, there has been an excessive use of the reservation mechanism by many non-western countries, which may inevitably subvert the CRC (Freeman 2002). Moreover, it has been argued that the CRC is not inclusive, and at the same time is too broad or vague (Freeman, 1983). Nonetheless, by its broadness and vagueness, Bell (2008) argues that the CRC pays attention to the significance of family, culture and tradition. More so, King (1994) has suggested that the rights included in the CRC do not have equal value, that some are more worthy of protection than

others, and that some are merely 'manifesto rights'. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child rejects such criticism emphasising that States must have regard for the entire CRC and that there is no hierarchy of rights (cited in Hodgkin and Newell, 2000).

Finally, the CRC has been criticized for its failure to impose responsibilities on children as active members of civil society (Martineau 1997). Freeman (2000) responds to the criticisms against the CRC noting that:

As the current CRC does not go far enough to capture all issues relevant to children, there remained 'new rights to be debated, new features of existing rights to be tested and examined, and new child groups to be emphasized. There is a need for revision, reform and innovation' as it cannot be presumed that the CRC formulation years ago can meet the needs of future children (Freeman, 2000:282).

4.3 Children's Rights: The African Regional Agenda

Children's rights (and human rights in general) have often been quoted as alien to traditional Africa (see Howard, 1984 and Donnelly, 1989). Aidoo (1993) attributes the absence of 'Africanness' in human rights discourse to the scanty research in the area of African human rights. This may be so, as many scholars and commentators refuse to accept the validity of jurisprudence of traditional African systems (Lloyd, 2002). However Mezmur (2008) cautions against the argument that children's rights are new to Africans. He notes that traditional Africa has always respected and continues to respect a number of children's rights. Similarly, Mutua (2002) asserts that an examination of the norms governing legal, political and social structures in pre-colonial African states, demonstrate that the concept of rights informed notions of justice and supported

a measure of individualism³. He cites examples of the *Akans* of West Africa (predominantly in Ghana), and the *Akambas* of East Africa. Among the *Akans*, a person was endowed with both individual rights and obligations. The *Akambas* also believe that “all members were born equal and were supposed to be treated as such beyond sex and age” (Mutua, 2002:73). The belief in these societies is that a person is endowed with certain basic rights.

In post-colonial Africa, some writers erroneously assume that the 1989 CRC was the instrument that brought children’s rights to Africa. Njungwe (2009) for example, writes “before the adoption of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (also known as African Children’s Charter, ACC), the only instrument meticulously protecting children’s rights and legally binding on African states was the CRC” (Njungwe, 2009:5-6). This could not be farther from the truth as two other instruments existed in Africa before the adoption of the CRC. The CRC might have been the legally binding one but it certainly was not the only instrument on the African continent. The instruments on the African continent before the CRC were the Declaration on the Rights and Welfare of the African Child in 1979, and the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights in 1981. Principle 2 of the 1979 declaration called on governments to *review provisions relating to children in their legal codes particularly paying attention to the unequal status of female children in some parts of Africa*. Also principle 3 urged governments to *thoroughly examine cultural legacies and practices that are harmful to normal growth and development of the child such as child*

³ For pre-colonial human rights in Africa, see Abayomi, T (1991) Continuities and Changes in the Development of Civil Liberties, Litigation in Nigeria, University of Tol. Law Review, 22; and Busia, N.K.A (1994) ‘The Status of Human Rights in Pre-colonial Africa: implications for contemporary practices’ in McCarthy-Arnolds, E et al (eds) Africa, Human Rights and the Global System: the political economy of human rights in a changing world.

marriage and female circumcision, and should take legal and educational measures to abolish them. The declaration however had no binding force so was regarded as “policy statements for African States” (Njungwe, 2009:10).

The widespread adoption of the CRC did not stop African governments from promulgating a specific children’s rights instrument for the continent. Indeed many African States felt that the CRC did not adequately address African concerns. Among these concerns were “the situation of children living under apartheid; disadvantages facing the African girl child; the African conception of the community’s responsibilities and duties; and the role of the extended family in the upbringing of children” (Kaime, 2009:131). The reason why African concerns were not adequately addressed by the CRC has been attributed to the under representation of African States during the drafting process (Viljoen, 1998). He notes that only 4 Northern African States participated in the nearly 10 years that the CRC was drafted, compared with 61% of West European countries. Not a single Sub-Sahara African country participated in the drafting process. Consequently, it was difficult to forcefully articulate issues that reflected the African cultural context (Kaime, 2009). In other words, African States had limited opportunity to air their views on the contents of the CRC (Njungwe, 2009).

Against the above dissatisfaction, the Organisation of African Unity (now African Union) adopted the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child on 11 July 1990, which came into force on 29 November 1999. It took 9 years for the charter to receive the requisite 15 State ratifications to become operational. This has led Njungwe (2009:4) to question, “if the specific protection of African

children was so urgent that it necessitated a separate treaty, why did it take so long for African leaders to ratify their own treaty?" It is important to highlight that whereas African states rushed to ratify the CRC, they were very slow or even reluctant to ratify their own charter. A typical example is Ghana, the first country to ratify the CRC (within a month of its adoption) but took 15 years to ratify the ACC. In fact, of the first 20 countries to ratify the CRC 9 were African countries. As at November 2012, the African children's charter had been ratified by 46 of the 54 countries on the continent. Countries that had not ratified the charter are: The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the islands of Sao Tome and Principe, Central African Republic, Djibouti, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, Somalia, Swaziland, and Tunisia. Interestingly the countries that have not ratified the charter have all ratified the UN convention on children's rights except Somalia⁴ and Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (which is not a member of the UN).

A number of speculations have been enunciated for the behaviour of African states towards the CRC and ACC. Nieuwenhuys (2008) speculates that ratification of CRC was regarded as part of the neoliberal package that developing countries had to accept in order to remain part of the international community. Pupavac (1997) makes similar assertion, that States ratified the CRC with the hope that it would enhance their international standing. Cynically, Ngokwey (2004) notes that many African countries rushed to ratify the CRC assuming that ratification could become a condition for development assistance. Nonetheless Ngokwey's cynicism seems to be confirmed by Hammarberg's

⁴ In Somalia, ratification of the CRC has not been possible since the country has lacked an internationally recognized central government since the fall of Siad Barre's regime in 1991 through insurrection that has continued to the present day (as at March 2012).

(1994:69) assertion that the approach of the CRC is “constructive and aid-orientated” and also by Reynolds et al’s (2006:298) exposition that “children’s rights have become a legitimate road to access aid”.

It is also claimed that many African states were not aware of the existence of the ACC in the first place (Mezmur, 2008; Lloyd, 2002). This may be true, as the ACC was drafted by only 2 lawyers. Nevertheless, it begs the question, if the charter was needed how come African states were not aware of it. It is very important to mention that the charter is not opposed to the convention; it clearly states its support for the convention in its preamble:

Reaffirming adherence to the principles of the rights and welfare of the child contained in the declaration, conventions and other instruments of the United Nations and in particular the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Njungwe (2009) adds that the charter is an “African embellishment to the global protection of children’s rights” (p.11). The two pieces of legislation are complementary and both provide the framework through which children’s rights and welfare are discussed in Africa. Consequently the charter has been described as a powerful tool for the enhancement of the lives of millions of African children (Olowu, 2002) and also as the most progressive of the treaties on children’s rights (Van Bueren, 1995).

Furthermore, the adoption of the charter is in tandem with the UN’s recognition of regional arrangements for the protection of human rights (Mezmur, 2008). The 92nd plenary meeting of the UN General Assembly in 1992 noted that regional arrangements for the promotion and protection of human rights may make a major contribution to the effective enjoyment of human rights (see UN

General Assembly Resolutions GA/SHC 362, and A/RES/47/125). The resolutions highlight that each region, with its unique culture, traditions and history is best placed to handle and resolve its human rights situation (cited in Kaime, 2009).

In spite of the accolades attributed to the charter as a powerful tool for the enhancement of the lives of millions of African children (Olowu, 2002) as well as the most progressive of all the treaties on children's rights (Van Bueren, 1995), it has some criticisms. Its silence on the situation of the unborn child has been described as anomalous (Olowu, 2002). Article 22 (2) of the charter has been criticised by Jesseman (2001) as restrictive to a child's freedom of association, which, she regards as important, especially to older children to enable them to participate in group activity. The said article requires *States Parties to take all necessary measures to ensure that no child shall take a direct part in hostilities and refrain in particular, from recruiting any child*. One can argue that Jesseman's criticism is misguided, as she seems to suggest that children's engagement in hostilities is a group activity that must be encouraged.

4.4 Convergence and Divergence between the Charter and the Convention

As alluded to above, the charter is not opposed to the convention. Indeed it uses the language of the convention in greater similarity. This section presents some of the similarities and differences between the charter and the convention. However the analysis is not article by article⁵. The analysis is based on the four

⁵ For such an analysis see Michael Gose (2002) *The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child*. Community Law Centre, University of Western Cape Press, Cape Town. Also Benyam Mezmur (2008) *The African Children's Charter versus the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: A zero-sum game?* SA Public Law. Vol 23, issue 1.

cardinal principles of both the charter and the convention, and other issues that I consider important.

4.4.1 Cardinal principle 1: Non-discrimination

The convention under Article 2 provides that:

1. States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's status.

Article 3 of the charter provides that:

Every child shall be entitled to the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms recognized and guaranteed in this Charter irrespective of the child's or his/her parents' status.

The non-discrimination principle requires that all children are treated equally. However equality does not mean that all children are provided with exactly the same resources. As argued by Van Bueren (1999a, cited in Gal, 2006) inequalities among children must first be acknowledged, and adequate resources provided to disadvantaged children in order to ensure equal opportunities. Nussbaum (2000) articulates this argument better:

To treat A and B as equally well off because they command the same amount of resources is, in a crucial way, to neglect A's separate and distinct life, to pretend that A's circumstances are interchangeable with B's, which may not be the case. To do justice to A's struggle, we must see them in their social context, aware of the obstacles that the context offers to the struggle for liberty, opportunity, and material well-being (Nussbaum, 2000:69).

It is worth mentioning that the charter does not make reference to the 'State' unlike the convention, implying that the obligation to promote equality is binding

on all actors. It also extends the list of grounds on which discrimination is prohibited to include 'fortune'. According to Chirwa (2002) this fits perfectly with the African perception of 'wealth' which goes beyond traditional property such as land and assets.

4.4.2 Cardinal principle 2: the Best Interests of the Child

Under Article 4 of the charter: *1. in all actions concerning the child undertaken by any person or authority the best interests of the child shall be the primary consideration.*

The convention provides under Article 3 that:

1. In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.

A careful examination of the above quoted articles reveals a slight difference. The charter makes the best interest of the child 'the primary consideration' whereas the convention makes it 'a primary consideration'. It has been argued that the charter's insistence on making the best interest of the child as 'the primary consideration' offers better protection for children (Chirwa, 2002; Sloth-Nielsen, 1995; Van Bueren, 1995; Viljoen, 2000). Thus the charter does not permit other considerations to override a child's best interest, which the convention's 'a primary consideration' permits. However, Gal (2006) argues that the best interest principle seems simple to grasp as it relates to the wellbeing of children but also notes that it is very challenging to identify the best interests of the child. Who decides what is in a child's best interest in situations where the child's wishes conflict with other people's opinions? In situations where a

parent's view contradicts the child's views, and the views of professionals working with the family, should the parent's view override the child's view, and should parent's views be overruled by State officials? Neither the Convention nor Charter offers any guidelines in such situations. Therefore the best interest principle is plagued with vagueness and implementation difficulties (Lloyd, 2002; Gal, 2006).

Another subtle difference is that under the charter's provision the best interest principle applies to individuals as well as institutions in making decisions concerning children. However, the convention's provision seems to apply exclusively to institutions.

4.4.3 Cardinal principle 3: Participation

Article 12 of the convention provides the general principle of respect for the child's views. Article 12 obliges:

- 1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.*
- 2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.*

The charter under article 7 provides that:

Every child who is capable of communicating his or her own views shall be assured the rights to express his opinions freely in all matters and to disseminate his opinions subject to such restrictions as are prescribed by laws.

Article 4 (2) of the charter also guarantees that, *in all judicial or administrative proceedings affecting a child who is capable of communicating his/her own views, an opportunity shall be provided for the views of the child to be heard either directly or through an impartial representative as a party to the proceedings, and those views shall be taken into consideration by the relevant authority in accordance with the provisions of appropriate law.*

There is a subtle difference between the charter provision and that of the convention with regards to children expressing views. Whereas the convention requires that the views expressed by children are given serious consideration in line with the age and maturity of the child, the charter does not contain such a phrase. Therefore, it is unclear how the views expressed by children should be treated. Nonetheless, Kassan (2004) has argued that the charter's provision that views of the child 'be heard' places a duty on the person or authority to whom the child expressed a view to indeed listen to such a child, irrespective of age and maturity. The charter however accords the right to be heard to a child who is 'capable of communicating his or her views'. This provision is discriminatory against some disabled children who may be able to form an opinion but may be unable to communicate them. This provision does not recognise that children who are unable to communicate verbally or in writing can nevertheless be able to express an opinion in non-verbal means such as sign and body language, exhibiting different behaviour, finger and eye pointing,

picture exchange etc. The provision in the convention is more inclusive as it requires that children who are capable of forming an opinion to be given the right to express that opinion.

It is worth mentioning that both treaties place a restriction on children's views in accordance with appropriate and national laws. There seems to be apparent tension and contradiction in these treaties. Whereas they call on State parties to amend laws that are at variance with their tenets, they somehow seem to endorse such laws by some of their provisions. The question that arises is, if a national law prohibits children from making their views known, would that law be against the convention or the charter? This argument is however beyond the scope of this study.

Another difference between the charter and the convention in respect of children expressing their views is the arena. Whereas the convention limits the areas that children can express their views to *matters that affect them*, the charter places no limitation on the areas that children can express their views. The charter requires that children are assured the right to express their views *freely in all matters*. It is very ironic that the charter which is supposedly reflecting African culture adopts such stance bearing in mind that children in Africa are rarely given the opportunity to express views even in matters that affect them, how much more to express views in other matters not affecting them.

The participation principle is seen as the most controversial and most challenging among the cardinal principles (Pinkerton, 2004), as it is an expansion of rights beyond protection and welfare. Flekkøy and Kaufman

(1997) contend that the wellbeing of children is invariably dependent on their opportunities to be active participants in decision-making, since such opportunities develop their trust in others and their self esteem.

4.4.4 Cardinal principle 4: Life, Survival and Development

The right of children not only to life, but survival and development is guaranteed under the following articles:

1. *States Parties recognize that every child has the inherent right to life.*
2. *States Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child (Article 6 of the convention).*

Article 5 of the charter reads:

1. *Every child has an inherent right to life. This right shall be protected by law.*
2. *States Parties to the present Charter shall ensure, to the maximum extent possible, the survival, protection and development of the child.*
3. *Death sentence shall not be pronounced for crimes committed by children.*

These articles require State parties to take all measures possible to ensure that not only do children survive but are also developed to achieve their full potentials. A major advantage in the charter for children is its explicit prohibition of death sentence against children, which the convention does not prohibit, at least explicitly. However both the charter and the convention can be criticised for not prohibiting life imprisonment sentence on children.

4.4.5 Public Awareness

Governments that have ratified the charter and convention are obliged to inform the public of their principles and provisions. Under Article 42 of the convention, *States Parties undertake to make the principles and provisions of the*

Convention widely known, by appropriate and active means, to adults and children alike.

This means that government officials and staff at all levels, including local officials must not only be aware of the treaties' existence, but also knowledgeable of their principles and provisions to effectively promote them. The charter on the other hand provides no enshrined obligations for State parties to publicise its principles and provisions. However, as noted by Olowu (2002) the effectiveness of the charter depends on whether it is widely known, understood and applied.

4.4.6 Parental Guidance

Both the convention and charter acknowledge the right of parents to provide guidance and direction for their children. The convention under Article 3 (2) reads; *States Parties undertake to ensure the child such protection and care as is necessary for his or her well-being, taking into account the rights and duties of his or her parents, legal guardians, or other individuals legally responsible for him or her, and, to this end, shall take all appropriate legislative and administrative measures.*

Article 5 (3) of the convention also require *States Parties to respect the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents or, where applicable, the members of the extended family or community as provided for by local custom, legal guardians or other persons legally responsible for the child, to provide, in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child, appropriate direction and guidance in the exercise by the child of the rights recognized in the present Convention.*

Parental guidance is assured under article 9 (3) of the charter; *States Parties shall respect the duty of parents and where applicable, legal guardians to provide guidance and direction in the enjoyment of these rights subject to the national laws and policies.*

The evolving capacity concept contained in Article 5 (3) of the convention has significant implications for children wishing to exercise their rights (Bell, 2008).

Lansdown (2005) reiterates that, the concept is in recognition that:

children in different environments and cultures who are faced with diverse life experiences will acquire competencies at different ages, and their acquisition of competencies will vary according to the circumstances. It also allows for the fact that children's capacities can differ according to the nature of the rights to be exercised. Children, therefore, require varying degrees of protection, participation and opportunity for autonomous decision-making in different contexts and across different areas of decision making (Lansdown, 2005:ix).

She concedes that evolving capacity is a challenging concept, as it relies upon individual competencies and decision-making abilities that children often forfeit until they are judged as having capacity to assume their rights. Bell (2008) clarifies that the evolving capacity concept reflects the notion that children do not instantly become adults once they turn eighteen and that parents are expected to guide their children in developing their capacities.

4.4.7 Definition of a Child

Although both the charter and convention define a child as any human being below the age of eighteen years, there is a proviso in the convention "...unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier". This allows for local interpretation of childhood. However, the charter unequivocally leaves no

space for local interpretations. This has led Twum-Danso (2008) to criticise the charter for adopting a more rigid definition of childhood that does not reflect childhood construction on the African continent. Franklin (1995:8) further points out that the definition of everyone under 18 years as a child “obscures the inherent diversity of childhood and attempts to establish a false uniformity of needs and rights for an evidently heterogeneous group”. [See chapter two for more on construction of childhood].

4.4.8 Customs and Traditions

Many customs and traditions of Africa are often faulted as violations of children’s rights. In reaction to these harmful customs and traditions in African societies, the Charter unequivocally calls for their prohibition under article 21, which reads:

1. States Parties to the present Charter shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate harmful social and cultural practices affecting the welfare, dignity, normal growth and development of the child.

Article 1 (3) also illuminate that *any custom, tradition, cultural or religious practice that is inconsistent with the rights, duties and obligations contained in the present Charter shall to the extent of such inconsistency be discouraged.*

In spite of this elaborate provision, Njungwe (2009) has criticised the charter for merely calling for a sieving of these practices since the practices in conflict with the charter do not necessarily have to be rejected in their entirety, but rather to the extent of their inconsistency. The convention is however silent on harmful cultural practices.

4.4.9 Privacy

The Charter under Article 10 guarantees the child's right to privacy, but subjects it to the right of parents or legal guardians to exercise reasonable supervision over the conduct of the child. This sharply contrasts the provision in the Convention i.e. Article 16, which guarantees the child's right to privacy without the intervention of parental supervision.

4.4.10 Monitoring Mechanism

Both treaties contain an implementation mechanism – Committee - responsible for the supervision and monitoring of the implementation of the treaty provisions. However, the African Committee has broad interpretative and promotional mandates and wide ranging power that would allow the Committee to become useful and positively influence legislation and policies at the national and domestic levels (Van Bueren, 1995; Olowu, 2002). As with the Convention, states parties are obliged to submit reports to the Committee on their national implementation on a 3 yearly basis under the charter and 5 yearly period under the Convention. The African Committee under article 44 of the charter is empowered to receive communications from “any person” relating to any matter covered by the Charter. However, the UN committee can only receive communication from State parties. This has led Olowu (2002) to argue that the requirements under the charter would enhance the opportunity for more effective monitoring of state obligations at both regional and international levels.

4.4.11 Responsibilities of the Child

Under article 31 of the charter, *the child, subject to his age and ability, and such limitations as may be contained in the present Charter, shall have the duty and responsibilities towards his family and society, the State and other legally recognized communities and the international community.*

The most striking distinction between the charter and other children's rights treaties is its allocation of duties to children depending on their evolving capacity. There is no such provision in the convention. Mezmur (2008) reckons it could be contentious when a children's rights instrument expressly imposes duties on them. Nevertheless it has been argued that this is in recognition of the principle that the promotion and protection of children's rights implies the performance of duties on the part of everyone, children inclusive (Chirwa, 2002; Mezmur, 2008; Sloth-Nielsen and Mezmur, 2008). Sloth-Nielsen and Mezmur (2008) further argue that the inclusion of duties for children contemplates a form of active and true participation in societal and communal life instead of a narrow construction of only expressing views⁶.

4.4.12 Corporal Punishment

Article 19 of the Convention requires 1. *States Parties to take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.*

Article 28 (2) also requires *States Parties to take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and in conformity with the present Convention.* Under article 37, (a) *No child shall be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.*

⁶ For detailed analysis of the imposition of duties, see Sloth-Nielsen, J and Mezmur, B.D (2008) A Dutiful Child: The Implications of Article 31 of the African Children's Charter. *Journal of African Law*, Vol 52, issue 2.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child, which monitors implementation of the Convention, has consistently held that the Convention requires prohibition in law of all corporal punishment in all settings, the family, schools, juvenile justice systems and all alternative care settings. In 2006 the Committee adopted a General Assembly Comment on children's right to protection from corporal punishment which aims "to highlight the obligation of all States parties to move quickly to prohibit and eliminate all corporal punishment and all other cruel or degrading forms of punishment of children" (UNGA, 2008:17).

The charter's position on corporal punishment is unclear. Article 20 (c) requires parents *to ensure that domestic discipline is administered with humanity and in a manner consistent with the inherent dignity of the child*. This article can be interpreted as supporting corporal punishment as what is meant by the administration of domestic discipline is unclear. Meanwhile the African committee that monitors adherence to the charter has also not made any comment regarding the interpretation of this article.

4.5 Children's Rights: Universal or Culturally relative

Twum-Danso (2008:391) has argued that the CRC was "adopted partly in an attempt to set international norms and establish a universal standard for the concept of childhood". However the cultural bias inherent both in its drafting and content has led many to question if it can truly establish a universal childhood. Since the adoption of the CRC there have been many debates about whether children's rights treaties are universally applicable in all cultures.

Supporters of universalism argue that children's rights treaties' universal nature is reflected by the fact that most countries have ratified the CRC. However, De Waal (2002 in Twum-Danso, 2008:396) argues that "some states are likely to have acceded to the Convention without their leaders genuinely acknowledging the commitments they were making or simply acceded in bad faith, without a real intention to deliver on their commitments". Similar assertion is made by Lloyd (2002) noting that ratification could merely be a good-will gesture and not a sign of intention and obligation. Also, An-Na'im (1995) argues that government delegates' participation in the formulation and adoption of international treaties, does not mean "there is necessarily sufficiently broad popular acceptance of these treaties, and a commitment to their implementation in respective countries" (p.428).

Twum-Danso (2008) adds that due to the long history of imperialism and colonization, states may be more universal than their societies, as in many countries the gap between the state and its society is significant. She argues that just because a government is prepared to accept a treaty does not necessarily mean its subjects are. It is even claimed that these government delegates/officials have often been "westernised and thus alienated from their own cultural roots and the cultural traditions and beliefs of the people they represent" (Harris-Short, 2003:133). Gadda (2008) also argues that acceptance does not necessarily mean agreement. This is an important point because subjects are the key to effective implementation. As would be seen in the literature on policy formulation and implementation [see chapter five], subjects can present difficulties to the enforcement of policies they disagree with. Therefore, it is necessary to differentiate between governments who sign and

ratify treaties and their subjects, who may be oblivious of the actions of their government on an international level.

Cultural relativists on the other hand argue that since societies and cultures construct childhood in different ways, it is impossible to institute a universal construction of children's rights. As noted in chapter 2, childhood is a relative concept that changes historically, socially, and geographically. Cultural relativists assert that a definition of childhood, which is modelled by western construction, cannot easily be transferred to non-Western communities. This argument is said to be the reasons behind the adoption of the African Children's Charter to address the social and cultural circumstances specific to the region, such as the importance of children having duties and the concept of the extended family (Twum-Danso, 2008).

The relativists' stance has been critiqued as well. It is argued that while the CRC leaves room for different conceptions of childhood, the definition adopted by the African Charter is more stringent. As stated earlier, the Convention and the Charter both define a child as every human being below the age of eighteen; however the Convention adds that "unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier" leaving room for local interpretation, but the Charter's definition leaves no such room. Hence Twum-Danso (2008) argues that this contradicts the very basis on which the Charter was founded, stating:

The ironic point here is that the Charter, which prides itself on reflecting the African heritage and perspective (whatever that may be) adopts an even more Western and rigid definition of childhood than the Convention itself, a document supposedly rooted in modern Western developments and thinking about childhood. This point undermines the stance taken by

relativists who seek to emphasize that it is because of the cultural bias inherent in the Convention that African governments came to adopt a Charter (Twum-Danso, 2008:393)

Nevertheless, it cannot be argued that some provisions in the convention do not reflect western conception of childhood. For example, Vandebroek and Bouverne-De Bie (2006) point out the domineering emphasis of the CRC on negotiation between parents and children as the norm in parenting. However, this model of parenting has been criticised as “a white, western, middle class model that fits a particular group of children more than others” (Reynaert et al, 2009:524). Twum-Danso (2008) calls for a ‘cultural bridge’ between the universalist and relativist stance to “focus on how children’s rights can be made to work for different and disparate communities, and thereby legitimize it in the eyes of local communities in different parts of the world” (p.407).

4.6 Implementing Children’s Rights in Ghana

This section outlines the measures that the country has adopted to implement children’s rights following its ratification of the various treaties discussed above. As already noted, Ghana was the first country to ratify the CRC on 2 February 1990 with no reservations just 3 months after the UN General Assembly adopted the convention. The Government of Ghana after its ratification has set up many institutions and legal instruments to see to the welfare of children in the country. The legal instruments include the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, The Children’s Act 1998, and more recently the Disabled Persons Act 2006 in response to the UN convention on the rights of people with disabilities. It is important to mention that Ghana has not ratified the convention on the

rights of people with disabilities, although the country has signed the optional protocol.

In explaining the reason for its rapid ratification of the CRC, the government has alluded to the measures that were already in place for the welfare of children prior to the adoption of the CRC (Government of Ghana, 1995). For example, basic education, (i.e. from age 6 to 15), was made free and compulsory by the 1961 Education Act. The government also highlights the 1967 Labour Decree, which banned the employment of children below the age of 15, except when employed within their own families undertaking light work of a domestic or agricultural nature. The Decree also placed limits on the type of work that children aged between 15 and 18 were permitted to do. Another reason that enabled the country to rapidly ratify the CRC is the establishment of the Ghana National Commission on Children in 1979 (the International Year of the Child; 10 years before the CRC was adopted) to monitor the welfare of children in the country. With these steps already in place “Ghana had a head start in appreciating the value of the Convention” (Tengey, 1998 in Twum-Danso, 2009:133). Nonetheless, a number of reforms followed Ghana’s ratification of the CRC. These are discussed below.

4.6.1 Legal Reforms

While Ghana acknowledges that there is still much room for improvement, it maintains that significant progress has been made in spite of economic and cultural constraints (Government of Ghana, 2004b). When the 1992 Ghana Constitution was drafted, a few articles from the CRC were incorporated into its provisions, although the constitution does not make explicit reference to the CRC. The Constitution guarantees the following rights to every child:

1. Every child has the right to be protected from engaging in work that constitutes a threat to his health, education or development.
2. A child shall not be subject to torture or other cruel inhumane or degrading punishment.
3. No child shall be deprived of medical treatment, education or any other social economic benefit by reason only of religious or other beliefs.

The Constitution also stipulates that Parliament must enact new legislation to ensure adequate care and provision from parents to their children, and to provide special protection against exposure to physical and moral hazards (Article 28).

Also, a Children's Act was passed in 1998 to bring together all laws relating to children into a single legislation. This statute created a comprehensive legal framework for children that corresponded to the provisions of the CRC in many respects, and repealed or amended several laws that were in contravention of the CRC⁷. According to Woll (2000 in Twum-Danso, 2008) the Act is the most visible outcome of the Convention and one of the strongest examples of the government's commitment to children's rights.

⁷ The Act revised, amended, or repealed the following legislation that contravened the CRC: The Marriage Ordinance 1951 (Amended); The Adoption Act 1962 (Repealed); Labour Decree 1967 (Amended); Maintenance Decree 1961 (repealed); Day Centres Decree 1978 (repealed); Intestate Succession Law 1985 (Amended); Social Security Law 1991 (Amended); Maintenance of Children Act 1965 (Revoked); Maintenance of Children Decree 1978 (revoked); Day Care Regulations 1979 (amended).

In addition the Government of Ghana has enacted 2 other major legislations; The Criminal Code (Amendment) Act 1998, and The Juvenile Justice Act 2003, to ensure that children are protected in accordance with international standards. The criminal code amendment act increased the age of criminal responsibility from 7 to 12 while the Juvenile Justice Act increased the age of a juvenile from 17 to 18. Therefore the death penalty cannot be imposed on a juvenile offender (12-18 years of age). Further, the Juvenile Justice Act stipulates that the maximum sentence a juvenile offender (12-18 years) can receive is three years in a junior correctional centre, upon conviction of a crime normally punishable by death. Hence no juvenile offender can be imprisoned for life in Ghana.

4.6.2 Institutional Reforms

There is a renewed commitment to promote and protect the rights of children in Ghana. In 2001 the government established Ministry for Women and Children's Affairs (MOWAC) with Cabinet status, to ensure the welfare of women and children in the country. It is envisaged that with the establishment of the ministry and the restructuring of the departments under it, the ministry will be in the position to effectively co-ordinate all children and women related concerns. According to the government, the ministry was established to fill administrative lapses, which hitherto had impeded the successful implementation of the CRC (Government of Ghana, 2004b). The ministry is therefore mandated to co-ordinate, monitor and review the formulation of gender and child responsive policies and their implementation within sectors. The Ghana National Commission on Children (GNCC) that was established in 1979 has become a department under the ministry, charged with responsibility for the implementation of policies relating to children.

There was also the establishment of a Women and Juvenile Unit (WAJU now known as Domestic Violence & Victim Support Unit - DOVVSU) of the Ghana Police Service in all ten administrative regions of the country. These units serve as information, support and co-ordination centres supported by a team of civilian staff including clinical psychologists, social workers, counsellors, and legal advisers. The main objective of DOVVSU is to prevent, protect, investigate and prosecute crimes against women and children.

4.6.3 Implementation, Co-ordination and Monitoring

At the national level, since 2001 MOWAC has become the overall government agency responsible for the implementation of CRC, by co-ordinating with all relevant institutions and stakeholders to ensure the protection, development, and participation of children in the country. At the regional level, MOWAC's department - the GNCC - has offices in all the administrative regions in the country, working with their respective District Assemblies to implement the CRC. For the implementation of other specific issues, the relevant governmental sectors such as the Ministry of Health (MOH) and Ministry of Education (MOE) have direct responsibility of ensuring the implementation of all health and education related provisions in the CRC respectively. At the district level, by Section 16 (2) of the Children's Act 1998, a District Assembly is given the mandate to protect the welfare and promote the rights of children within its area of authority. Within the framework of decentralisation, the Department of Social Welfare exists in all districts to investigate and take action on all matters of violations of children's rights.

4.6.4 Publicising the CRC

The CRC has been translated into 6 main Ghanaian languages namely; Ga, Ewe, Twi, Dagbani, Dagare and Nzema. For each language, 1,000 copies of the translated version has been produced and distributed (Government of Ghana, 2004b). Interestingly, but not surprising there has not been any translation into accessible formats (Braille or audio) for disabled people. Between 1997 and 2002, several national, regional, districts and community dissemination programmes have been held by some NGOs. Some of the NGOs involved in the promotion of children's rights have come together to form the Ghana NGO Coalition on the Rights of the Child (GNCRC) to work to improve the welfare of children in the country. These NGOs also act as watchdogs by ensuring that the government fulfils its obligations under the CRC. They submit periodic reports to the UN committee on the rights of children.

4.7 Conclusion

From the preceding discussions the legal framework and institutional mechanisms for the protection and promotion of children's rights in Ghana are very impressive. However since there is very limited research on the implementation of these measures, it is not known the extent to which the measures are really achieving their aims. Also, Twum-Danso (2008) reports of conflict between the ministry of women and children's affairs, and the department of social welfare, which is under the ministry of employment and social welfare. It is not clear from the legal framework which agency has the lead responsibility in protecting children and promoting their rights.

Furthermore, irrespective of the stance taken by opponents of children's rights, and that of cultural relativists, children's rights are now firmly embedded in international law and domesticated in the national laws of many countries. The CRC makes room for some cultural accommodation, while emphasising that cultural practices such as female circumcision and others that are inimical to the health of children should not be allowed to continue under the clout of culture.

It is worth mentioning that more often, when the issue of culture is raised in the literature on children's rights, reference is always made to Africans, Arabs and Asians, as if Americans and Europeans have no culture. Indeed the United States has not ratified the CRC on the basis that some provisions in the CRC are contrary to its culture.

Also, some other non African/Arab countries have felt unable to give their full approval to the convention's provisions and have entered reservations on the grounds that some principles and provisions are not consistent with their cultural context. For example, New Zealand ratified the Convention on 6 April 1993 with reservations concerning the right to distinguish between persons according to the nature of their authority to be in New Zealand, the need for legislative action on economic exploitation - which it argued was adequately protected by existing law, and the provisions for the separation of juvenile offenders from adult offenders. The United Kingdom also ratified the Convention on 16 December 1991, with several declarations and reservations relating to immigration and children in custody with adults, especially asylum seeking children. Harris-Short (2003:133) therefore argues that "despite the apparent agreement of states to the principle of universality, unfounded arguments based

on cultural difference continue to undermine both the normative value and practical utility of international human rights law". It thus seems that the promoters of a universalised childhood through universal children rights are fighting a lost battle.

The preceding 3 chapters have discussed the conceptual framework of the study i.e. sociology of childhood; empowerment and children's rights. It is important to state that the conceptual framework informed the framing of the research questions and the study. Thus the study recognised and valued young people as social actors (sociology of childhood) and looked for opportunities that enable young people's voices to be heard (right to participate). Therefore, in reporting the findings the perspectives of young people are privileged over that of adults. The next chapter outlines a discussion on the processes of policy formulation and implementation.

CHAPTER 5: THE POLICY PROCESS

5.0 Introduction

To a large extent how the policy process is conceptualised influences the questions that the researcher asks about young people in the process (Lintello, 2011). Hence it is useful to outline the various conceptualisations of the policy process. The policy process is a complex political multi-layered process with many actors: individual citizens, pressure/interest groups, civil servants, politicians etc. In the words of a former British civil servant, “policy is rather like the elephant – you recognise it when you see it but cannot easily define it” (Cunningham, 1963 cited in Hill, 2009:15). Page (2006) has decried the lack of a precise definition of what policy is, but considers policy to be “intentions or actions or more likely a mixture of the two” (p.210). Anderson (1975:3) defined policy as “a purposive course of action followed by an actor or set of actors in dealing with a problem or matter of concern”. From these definitions policy is applicable and relevant to almost anything and everything: individuals have their own policies; companies have their policies; group of individuals have their policies etc.

The focus of this study is on public policy defined as a “compendium of statements, laws and other actions concerning government’s intentions for a particular human activity under its jurisdiction” (Miller, 1994 cited in Teye, 2008:6). According to Hogwood and Gunn (1984) a policy can be regarded as a *public policy*, if it was generated within the framework of governmental procedures and organisations. This chapter presents the literature on the

various approaches or models that explain public policy formulation and implementation.

5.1 Actors in the Policy Process

There are many participants in the policy process but these can be categorised into two: official and unofficial actors. Official actors are involved in the process because they are given responsibilities in law and thus have power to make and enforce policies (Birkland, 2005). Official actors include members of the Executive, Legislative and Judicial arms of government. They give public policy legitimacy because they are explicitly mentioned in constitutions of countries (Page, 2006). They are either directly elected or appointed by elected representatives. On the other hand, unofficial actors are those who do not have any explicit duty or legal authority to participate in the policy process but do play a role because they have important interests to protect and promote (Birkland, 2005). Unofficial actors include individual citizens, interest/pressure groups, political parties, think tanks/research institutes, and the media. The actors in the policy process interact with each other in a complex way to advance policy proposals. To understand these interactions, some terminologies must first be understood:

Policy Design is the process of transforming policy through technical analysis and political process to achieve a particular goal (Birkland, 2005). Choices made at the design stage influence implementation, which then influences outcome. In other words, how the policy is thought through and implemented will to a large extent determine its success or failure. The policy process comprises inputs, outputs and outcomes. *Inputs* are the triggers i.e. the things

that go into a political system to achieve a particular policy outcome or goal. These include: perceptions, demand/protests, apathy etc. *Outputs* are the things that policy produces i.e. the effort that government expends to address problems. These include such things as: *Policy Statements* - i.e. the formal expressions of public policy. They include legislative statutes, decrees, and administrative rules and regulations (Anderson, 1975) and the goods and services produced by government (Birkland, 2005). Lowi (1964 cited in Birkland, 2005) suggested three types of policy output: distributive, regulatory and redistributive. Distributive output focuses on policies that are concerned with the allocation of resources or benefits to a particular segment of the population with the cost broadly spread across society. Birkland (2005) argues that since the cost of distributive policies is not deeply felt by another group in society and the process characterised by considerable negotiation, conflict here is minimal. Examples of distributive outputs are infrastructural projects like schools, dams, roads.

Regulatory output focuses on policies that are intended to govern behaviour and business. Regulatory output is further divided into protective regulatory policy and competitive regulatory policy. Protective regulatory policy as the name suggests is “policy that regulates some activity for the protection of the public” (Birkland, 2005:144). An example is the regulation of air pollution or food processing to protect public health. Competitive regulatory policy on the other hand is “policy that limits the provision of goods or the participation in a market to a select group of people or organisations” (Birkland, 2005:144). Example is policies that regulate trades and professions. And finally redistributive output deal with policies that are concerned with attempts to change the distribution of

existing resources or benefits and costs. In other words, redistributive policy “gives a benefit to one group by seeming to impose a discernable cost on another group” (Birkland, 2005:145). Examples include welfare policies, and civil rights policies. Regulatory output and redistributive output are characterised by high level of conflicts among actors since some groups gain at the expense of others. *Outcomes* are the consequences for society, intended or unintended, that flow from action or inaction by government i.e. the negative or positive impacts of policy (Anderson, 1975; Birkland, 2005).

Policy Domain is the substantive area of policy over which participants in the policy process compete and compromise (Birkland, 2005) e.g. environmental policy domain, health policy domain, transport policy domain etc. These domains can also contain sub-domains e.g. mental health sub-domain, water sub-domain. Contained within policy domains is the *Policy Community* i.e. the actors who are actively involved in policy making in a particular domain. These are “small subset of people that could possibly be involved in an issue consisting of experts in studying, understanding, negotiating or explaining an issue” (Birkland, 2005:97). It usually contains “top members of the government and senior bureaucrats of relevant state departments as well as one or two interest groups who interact to take formal policy decisions” (Smith, 1993:60). Membership of policy community is variable, new actors and new voices enter as others exit the debate. Multiple access points allow groups in the policy community to go ‘venue shopping’ – a term used by Baumgartner and Jones (1993 cited in Hill, 2009) to describe the situation where groups pick and lobby branch or agency of government that is most likely to give their concerns a sympathetic hearing.

Policy networks are sustainable mutual interactions or associations between and among state and societal actors around policy issues (Teye, 2008). It is argued that due to competing interests in the policy process, policy communities organise themselves in the form of connections, alliances, and coalitions, characterised by mutual dependencies and the exchange of resources between various state and societal actors or between parts of the government (Smith, 1993; Birkland, 2005). There are a number of theories/models within the network approach, which will be discussed later in this chapter. Some authors refer to policy networks as *issue networks* (e.g. Hill, 2009), or *epistemic communities* (e.g. Haas, 1992). Policy network and policy community are closely related ideas or even just semantic difference. Attempt at separating them is very difficult and confusing. Hill (2009) offers some insight into the subtle difference, if any, between these terms. He argues that policy communities are stronger versions of policy networks and that “networks may cohere into communities and communities may disintegrate into networks” (Hill, 2009:58).

5.2 Approaches to Policy Formulation

Policy scholars have outlined many different models for explaining the process of public policy making. This section presents some of the multiple ways of looking at policy formulation.

5.2.1 ‘Stages Heuristics’ and Rational Choice Approach

The rational choice approach posits that policy formulation is based on a careful ranking of alternatives and selection of the option that ensures ‘maximum social gain’ (Dye, 1992). Meier (1991) elaborates a framework that describes five

steps in the policy development process and some of the forces acting on decision makers: *Prediction and prescription* - the process starts when a problem is identified and proposals to solve the problem are mooted; *Policy maker* - the focus shifts to the policymaker, to consider the various proposals put forward. The policymaker is often influenced by interest groups both within and outside government; *Policy choice* - after considering the various proposals, the policymaker decides on the appropriate policy; *Implementation* - once a policy decision is made, it is implemented; and *Policy outcome* - in the final step, the desired outcome is achieved.

In Meier's framework the influence of interest groups is consigned to the stage of considering alternative policy choices. However, interest groups are said to play important roles in other stages of the process as well. The framework is also critiqued for its lack of an evaluation phase, which some authors argue start the process all over again if the desired policy outcome is not achieved (Birkland, 2005; Hill, 2009). Meier's framework is referred to as the linear model of the policy process. The framework seems to suggest that policies always achieve their desired outcomes, but this may not be so. Hence the need for an evaluation phase.

Grindle and Thomas (1991) offer another framework stressing that the process of policy making is interactive, not linear. Their framework includes an agenda phase i.e. the process whereby problems and alternative solutions gain or lose public attention (Birkland, 2005). They argue that policy development does not begin until policy makers are convinced that the issue is important enough for them to spend time considering. In other words the issue in the first instance

must make it onto the agenda. In this regard, Gerston (1997) outlines three criteria that an issue must satisfy to be on the agenda: It must have sufficient *scope* (a significant number of people or communities are affected); *intensity* (the magnitude of the impact is high) and/or *time* (it has been an issue over a long period). However it can be argued that an issue need not to have existed for a long period of time before it can be placed on the agenda. In this regard what Birkland (2005:101) terms *focusing events* i.e. “sudden events that are...actually or potentially harmful” is a useful example.

Kingdon's (1984) streams metaphor presents a different perspective on how an issue can enter the agenda phase. According to Kingdon a 'window of opportunity' is created for change when an issue causes 2 or more 'streams' to converge. He identifies 3 streams: *problem stream* – encompasses the attributes of a problem i.e. whether its effects are getting worse or better and whether the problem can be solved with solutions available in the *policy stream* – which contains the potential solutions to a problem; and the *politics stream* – encompassing state politics and public opinion. Kingdon (1984:119) argues that “for a condition to be a problem, people must be convinced that something should be done to change it”. In other words public opinion is of great significance in the policy process.

Grindle and Thomas (1991) show that the policy process can be altered or reversed at any stage in its life cycle by pressures and reactions from those who oppose it. Thus policy formulation does not inevitably lead to implementation. The issue may never make it onto the policy agenda, and once the issue is on the agenda, policymakers may decide not to do anything about

it, perhaps due to constraints in the *policy stream*. Unlike the linear model, the interactive model views policy reform as a process, one in which interested parties can exert pressure for change at many points.

Sabatier (1991) described the linear and interactive models as the 'stages heuristics' approach. The approach emphasises the rationality of policy makers and their ability to make the best decisions on policy choices. This approach suggests that policy formulation is a rational process that involves several well defined steps i.e. the decision-maker acquires all necessary information, compares different options and then selects the option that gives maximum gains (Parsons, 1995). It assumes that policy making starts with problem identification, followed by setting and ranking of goals and objectives. Then the various alternatives for dealing with the problem are examined including cost-benefit analysis. Finally, on the basis of this examination the alternative that maximises the attainment of the goals, and is value for money is chosen (Anderson, 1975).

This approach further assumes that state officials are neutral and so their own interests do not influence public policies (Teye, 2008). The assumption that the interests of state officials do not affect public policy is criticised as unrealistic, and that there are evidence that suggest that policy makers usually have some interests that they seek to satisfy (Teye, 2008). Citing Block (1980) he argues that "state managers collectively are self interested managers, interested in maximising their power, prestige and their wealth" (Teye, 2008:42). Similarly Levi (1988) argues that:

Government officials respond to incentives and disincentives.
They are unlikely to undertake policies that are generally

unpopular or that will lose them powerful support. They make deals that keep them in power and maintain revenue, votes, or whatever underlies their power (Levi, 1988 cited in Mooij, 2003:7).

This approach is further criticised for assuming that policy makers are always rational. It has been argued that such rational conceptualisation of policy formulation is unrealistic since policy makers do face a number of limitations to their rationality. Hogwood and Gunn (1984) classify such limitations into 'psychological' and 'organisational'. According to them policy makers often lack the knowledge, skills and value consistency needed for rationality i.e. policy makers are psychologically limited. Organisational limitation is where the rules or procedures of an organisation place obstacles in the way of the policy maker. Anderson (1975) has also argued that policy makers rarely face clearly defined problems, highlighting that problem definition is itself a social construction. Dye (1992) similarly raises an issue with the question of rationality. He argues that rational analysis is about values and preferences, which cannot be adequately expressed in monetary terms.

5.2.2 Bounded Rationality / Incrementalism / Mixed Scanning

In acknowledgement of the argument that policy makers seek to be rational but do not succeed because of bounds or limits to their capacities, the bounded rationality and incremental models were propounded (Simon, 1957; Lindblom, 1959 respectively). Simon (1957) argues that policy makers could and should become more rational in decision making since they often want to be so. According to him "human behaviour in organisations is, if not wholly rational, at least in good part intendedly so" (Simon, 1957:xxiii). Bounded rationality suggests that policy makers behave as rationally as possible within certain

limits, including limited information, limited time and limited human ability to see every pattern of a problem. He suggested that policy makers could improve their rationality by relying on specialist groups for decision making.

Lindblom (1959) rejects the argument that policy makers could and should be more rational. He argues that comprehensive rationality in policy making is not possible, therefore policy formulation proceeds incrementally. He argues further that policy makers “rely heavily on the record of past experience with small policy steps to predict the consequences of similar steps extended into the future” (Lindblom, 1959:79). In other words, policy makers make decisions in relatively small increments, rather than in big leaps. They do so by comparing the successes and failures of previous or existing policies that have been taken to address a problem. Incrementalism as a concept implies “change by small steps” (Lindblom, 1979:517). Thus policy makers consider only some of the alternatives for dealing with a problem, which may differ only marginally from existing policies instead of starting afresh. Lindblom (1959) further argues that “policy is not made once and for all; it is made and re-made endlessly” (p.86) because policies achieve only part of what was hoped for and also produce unanticipated consequences. Hence by proceeding with incremental changes policy makers can avoid serious lasting mistakes in several ways. Lindblom called his approach ‘successive limited comparisons’ (1959:81), however in the literature his approach is commonly referred to as incrementalism.

Dror (1964:154) argues that for incrementalism to hold true, three closely interrelated essential conditions must be concurrently met: *(1) the results of present policies must be in the main satisfactory (to the policy makers and the*

social strata on which they depend), so that marginal changes are sufficient for achieving an acceptable rate of improvements in policy-results; (2) there must be a high degree of continuity in the nature of the problems; and (3) there must be a high degree of continuity in the available means for dealing with problems.

The incremental model can be criticised for its inability to account for abrupt changes in policy or situations where policies are outrightly abrogated, since it is only concerned with marginal changes in existing policy. Dror (1964) also argues that in the absence of any past policies in respect of an issue, incremental change is in fact impossible. He notes that technological and behavioural changes bring about new actions, which, unless ignored, lead to radically new policies. For example, advances in medicine such as IVF and surrogacy has led to laws on embryology in many countries; the internet and advent of social media is pushing the boundaries between privacy and freedom of speech. These demand new policies which incrementalism cannot explain.

Moreover, incrementalism is criticised for its inability to deal with problems that demand bold decisions that cannot be simply met with incremental steps, e.g. decision to go to war (Birkland, 2005). In addition, Boulding (1964 cited in Etzioni, 1967) criticises the incremental approach as a “stagger through history like a drunk putting one disjointed incremental foot after another” (p.387) with steps that may be circular and lead back to where it started, or dispersed steps that lead to many directions at once but leading to nowhere in particular i.e. “action without direction” (Etzioni, 1967:388). Finally, it is argued that practising incrementalism can stifle societal innovations since it implies seeking no more than limited variations from past policies (Etzioni, 1967). Consequently True et

al (1999:103) critique it as “at best, an incomplete explanation of government policy making and, at worst, a misleading one”.

To Lindblom’s credit, he acknowledged that his approach is “remedial, geared more towards the alleviation of present, concrete imperfections than to the promotion of future social goals” (Lindblom, 1965 in Etzioni, 1967:387). Nonetheless he asserts that drastic policy change or carefully planned big steps is not ordinarily possible (Lindblom, 1979). He thus reinforces Smith’s (1973) claim that incremental policies are much easier to implement than ambitious non-incremental ones. He responded to criticisms that incrementalism is not suited for dealing with complex problems by arguing that “complex problem solving means practising incrementalism more skilfully” (Lindblom, 1979:517). He however failed to provide any methodology or strategy for such skilful practice. Nonetheless incrementalism is highly regarded in the study of public policy. According to Dror (1964:155) “although Lindblom’s thesis includes a number of reservations, these are insufficient to alter its main impact as an ideological reinforcement”. Parsons (1995) also described Lindblom’s work as a “classic text in policy studies...perhaps the single most important contribution to the formation of a theory of the policy making process” (p.22).

The Mixed Scanning model was propounded by Etzioni (1967) combining features of bounded rationality and incrementalism. He criticised the rational approaches as ‘utopian’, ‘unrealistic and undesirable’, and the incremental model as ‘conservative’ (Etzioni, 1967:385,386). Etzioni argues that since it is not possible for policy makers to get all relevant information needed for a rational decision, they scan through the problem and make detailed examination

of important areas and apply incremental procedures to other less important areas that do not need rapid changes. This is similar to Dror's (1989) proposition that policy making involves value judgement, bargaining and negotiations.

Mixed-scanning is defined as "a hierarchical mode of decision-making that combines higher order, fundamental decision-making with lower order, incremental decisions that work out and/or prepare for the higher order ones" (Goldberg, 1975 cited in Etzioni, 1986:8). In the exploration of mixed-scanning, Etzioni (1967) distinguishes between fundamental and incremental decisions. According to him, fundamental decisions set the context for incremental ones, and are "made by exploring the main alternatives the actor sees in view of his conception of his goals...but details and specifications are omitted so that an overview is feasible" (Etzioni, 1967:389-390). It is very difficult to comprehend the distinction between fundamental and incremental decisions; it seems to depict the 'chicken and egg' situation. Although Etzioni reiterates that incremental decisions are set on fundamental ones, he also states that "fundamental decisions are frequently 'prepared' by incremental ones in order that the final decision will initiate a less abrupt change" (Etzioni, 1967:387). He leaves observers confused about whether the final decision is fundamental or incremental.

In a later article, he attempted to answer how a fundamental decision could be distinguished from an incremental decision (Etzioni, 1986). He outlined that one way of differentiation is to look at *relative size*. As a rule of thumb he used 10 percent or less change i.e. if a decision results in less than 10 percent changes

to budget, then it could be described as incremental, whereas a more than 10 percent change would be a fundamental decision. It is worth noting that this 10 percent rule is difficult to substantiate as many policy decisions do not result in changes to budgets. Another way to differentiate between fundamental and incremental decisions outlined by Etzioni (1986) is “checking for a nestling relationship” (p.10). He argued that “if an incremental decision requires or draws on a contextual decision, this is the fundamental one” (p.10). He did not elaborate on what ‘nestling relationship’ means or what a ‘contextual decision’ is. He thus seems to introduce more concepts to confuse rather than clarify.

5.2.3 Ideas Based Approach

We miss a great deal if we understand policy making solely in terms of influence and bargaining, to the exclusion of debate and argument (Majone, 1989, cited in Teye, 2008:30).

According to John (1998) it is impossible to imagine politics without ideas. The ideas based approach argues that policies are significantly shaped by ideas that can provide solutions to public problems (John, 1998) and that the adoption of a particular policy is determined by the quality of arguments that lobbyists present to policy makers (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993). Consequently, the role of ideas brokers is crucial. As Haas (1990 cited in Parsons, 1995) rightly observed without people to carry ideas into the policy process an idea is unlikely to be influential. The acknowledgement that ideas are increasingly regarded as important in the policy process and the need to have ideas brokers heralded the growth of think-tanks in the 1970s and 1980s (Parsons, 1995).

Clarifying what is an idea is complex and often confusing. However, John (1998) offers some respite. According to him ideas can be “statements of value

or worth; they can specify causal relationship; they can be solutions to public problems; they can be symbols and images which express private and public identities; and ideas can be world systems and ideologies” (John, 1998:144). Notwithstanding the difficulties in the precise definition of an idea, its advocates contend that it is important in public policy because it is the ideas that actors bring to the debate that influence policy change. For example, Haas (1992) argues that the diffusion of new ideas can lead to new patterns of behaviour that can prove to be an important determinant in policy coordination. Contrarily, Hall (1989 in Parsons, 1995) while recognising the importance of ideas also argues that there are other important factors which can make or mar the progress of ideas. Hall outlines three factors that are required for new ideas to influence policy making: (1) the idea must have a good fit with prevailing circumstances, (2) it must be seen to be in the interest of dominant political interests; and (3) it must be judged feasible administratively.

Some scholars are however sceptical of the adequacy of the idea based approach. Teye (2008) argues that the assumption that policy makers usually take ideas from individuals is overly optimistic. Echoing Hall’s second factor, above, Teye (2008) reiterates that policy makers sometimes only accept ideas that are in consonance with their own interests. Other scholars also argue that changes in government and international policy may stimulate policy changes rather than ideas per se (Howlett and Ramesh, 2002).

5.2.4 Policy Network Approach

Groups are not just important...they define the policy process...the different types of relationships between group representatives, bureaucrats, politicians and other participants in decision-making account for the various ways in which political systems process policy (John, 1998:67,78).

Rhodes (1986; 1988 and later with Marsh, 1992; 1994) is credited as a pioneer of the policy network approach (John, 1998). The approach posits that decision-making involves many different bodies that depend on each other, and thus form a close dependant relationship within a policy domain. Out of this dependence policy networks emerge. In other words policy networks exist when there is an exchange of resources between various state and societal actors or between parts of the government (Smith, 1993; Birkland, 2005). The network approach understands the policy process to involve a diversity of mutually interdependent actors. It suggests that the policy process is shaped by interdependent interests of both state and societal actors (Smith, 1993; Carlsson and Sandstrom, 2008). According to John (2001) the network approach is more realistic, because it captures the complexity of the policy process. Likewise, Teye (2008) argues that the realisation that state actors are not neutral makes the network approach appropriate for analysing policies in developing countries where the interests of state actors cannot be ignored.

The policy network approach rejects the claims that politicians and bureaucrats are the sole generators of policies. Wilson (1980 in Teye, 2008) has argued that government policies cannot be fully understood without analysing the impact of interest groups, and that the mere presence of interest groups and the networks between state and societal actors shape policies (Smith, 1993; Carlsson and Sandstrom, 2008). Whilst accepting that interest groups are much more important in the policy process, Birkland (2005) however disputes that their mere existence necessarily guarantees them a voice in policy making. He argues that some groups are more powerful than others, and the power of a

group depends on the resources available to the group. Hence groups that are able to provide specialist knowledge and information that policy makers draw on to take decisions are more likely to have an advantage in ensuring that their definition of the problem and proposed solution is taken into account. Groups that are also able to make financial contributions to parties and candidates during elections are more likely to be taken serious. As rightly observed by Sabatier (1988:143 emphasis in original) “while belief systems will determine the *direction* in which any political actor will seek to move governmental programs, *its ability to do so* will be critically dependent upon its resources. These include such things as money, expertise, number of supporters and legal authority”. Indeed Lindblom (1979) has bemoaned the disproportionate power and influence of businesses in politics.

The claim that policies usually reflect the interest of most powerful groups is contested. Nordlinger (1981, in Teye, 2008:42) argues that “the executive often chooses policy options that satisfy its own interests even when its preferences diverge from the demands of most powerful groups in civil society”. Similarly, Smith (1993:51) echoes his reservations:

The policies that emanate from the state do not reflect the demands of groups or classes but are the result of how the state actors perceive their interests...how they perceive particular problems...consequently, state actors can propose policies which counteract the interests of most powerful groups in society.

This raises questions regarding the role of government in a network. Smith (1993) and Rhodes (1997) treat both government and societal actors as having more or less equal power in the network. Government is said to be ‘guiding the networks’ albeit with very limited control. Conversely, Kickert (1995) while

emphasising what he calls 'co-governance', also recognises the special powers that government possesses, due to its control over resources and legitimacy. Government is therefore said to be managing or steering networks from a distance (Kickert, 1995). Teye (2008:79) however rejects this argument, asserting that "governments do not only steer networks from a distance, but also actually take part in the interactions within networks in order to achieve their own interests". Likewise, John (1998) asserts that networks are a means whereby governments can increase their autonomy.

The policy network approach has been criticised for placing too much emphasis on cooperation whilst ignoring power differences and conflicts. According to Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1999) conflicts are inevitable as groups compete with each other for members and grant funds, or even for credit in policy successes. Moreover it is argued that this approach only focuses on relationships between top state officials and leaders of groups during elite circles policy making, while ignoring micro-level inter-personal and informal relationships (John, 2001). It should be pointed out that the nature of relationships in policy networks is contested. Whereas McPherson and Raab (1988, in Marsh and Smith, 2000) see networks as based on personal relationships between known and trusted individuals, Knoke (1990) and Marsh and Rhodes (1992) argue that it is the relationship between the positions and roles that individuals occupy that is crucial, rather than the individuals per se. Knoke (1990) and Marsh and Rhodes (1992) seem to downplay interpersonal relationships in networks.

5.2.5 Advocacy Coalition Framework

This framework was propounded by Sabatier (1988) and later developed with Jenkins-Smith (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993; 1999). An advocacy coalition is a group of “people from a variety of positions (elected and agency officials, interest group leaders, researchers) who share a particular belief system – i.e. a set of values, causal assumptions and problem perceptions – and who show a non-trivial degree of coordinated activity over time” (Sabatier, 1988:139; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1999:138). These beliefs, which Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith called *policy core beliefs*, include agreements over basic cause of the problem, its seriousness and the instruments to employ to solve the problem. According to them agreement over policy core beliefs is the principal glue that holds a coalition together, and coalitions seek to translate those beliefs into public policy “by influencing the behaviour of multiple governmental institutions over time” (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993:212).

The framework holds that advocacy coalitions and informal relationships, both within and outside political institutions, shape public policy and that groups are the sources of policy ideas. In other words, interest groups set the agenda, formulate policy and try to influence the executive to adopt such policies. It is assumed that various competing coalitions use different strategies to influence policy makers. Sabatier (1988) argued that conflicting strategies from different coalitions are mediated by policy brokers, whose main concern is identifying reasonable compromise to reduce intense conflict i.e. they are “more concerned with system stability than with achieving policy goals” (Sabatier, 1991:153). The resulting policy may therefore reflect the goals of the group that is able to use the best strategies to influence policy brokers.

According to the advocacy coalition framework, policy formulation and policy change in particular, is instigated by: (1) the interaction of competing advocacy coalitions within a policy subsystem; (2) changes external to the system (e.g. changes in socio-economic conditions, impact of policy decisions from other systems); and (3) the effects of relatively stable system parameters (e.g. constitutional rules, socio-cultural values and social structure). A policy subsystem is the “actors from a variety of public and private organisations who are actively concerned with a policy problem” (Sabatier, 1988:131). As discussed earlier in this chapter, some scholars call policy subsystem, policy community. Members in the coalition are said to act together because of their shared belief systems to manipulate the rules of various governmental institutions to achieve their shared beliefs (Sabatier, 1988; 1991; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993; 1999).

In addition, Sabatier believes that the policy process is dominated by elite opinion. Thence, the impact of public opinion in the process is at best modest (Sabatier, 1991; 1993). He argues that non-elites have “neither the expertise, nor the time, nor the inclination to be active participants in the policy subsystem” (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993:223). The framework is credited for synthesising different approaches into a coherent and robust theory and for providing a way of ‘mapping’ the fluid and interactive phases of the policy process (Parsons, 1995). However it is not without criticisms.

Schlager (1995) and Schlager and Blomquist (1996) have criticised the advocacy coalition framework for its implicit assumption that actors who share similar core beliefs will act in concert. They described this assumption as

dangerous, arguing that a shared policy belief is not sufficient to guarantee a concerted action. According to Schlager (1995) institutional heterogeneity may even create coordination problems:

The institutional differences among a legislator, a journalist, a director of a material interest group, and an academic may very well limit their ability, and their willingness, to cooperate with one another, even if they share similar beliefs (Schlager, 1995:263).

In addition, Schlager and Blomquist (1996) argue that political actors engage in the policy process not primarily to respond to a perceived problem but also to advance their own political interests and careers. Similarly, Parsons (1995) questions whether beliefs (rather than greed, self-interest, or power) are actually the 'glue' that holds advocacy coalitions together. He argues that bureaucrats are not just neutral servants, but also have values and interests which they use to shape policy. In a later work Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1999) acknowledged that by focusing on shared policy beliefs, the advocacy coalition framework neglected the interest of individuals and organisations.

5.3 Approaches to Policy Implementation

Between the passage of legislation and its actual implementation lies an entirely different political arena that has a great effect on the execution of policy (Scott, 1969, cited in Smith, 1973:198)

It is argued that at the implementation stage policies may be abandoned or significantly altered to meet the demands of interested parties (Smith, 1973; Parsons, 1995). Some scholars have disputed the idea of an implementation stage in the policy process (e.g. Anderson, 1975). To such scholars the policy

process is a continuum. As expressed by Anderson (1975:98) “policy is being made as it is being administered and administered as it is being made”.

For ease of understanding however, many other scholars make a distinction between policy formulation and policy implementation phases (e.g. Parsons, 1995; Birkland, 2005). Implementation is an ambiguous concept (Hill, 2009) encompassing the “actions by public or private individuals (or groups) that are directed at the achievement of objectives set forth in prior policy decisions” (Van Meter and Van Horn, 1975:447). Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) mostly regarded as the ‘founders’ of implementation research, define implementation as “a process of interaction between the setting of goals and actions geared to achieve them” (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973 in Parsons, 1995:464). In short, implementation is the process whereby relevant agencies put into effect policies enacted by the government. This section outlines some of the approaches to the study of policy implementation.

5.3.1 Top-Down Rational Approach

The ‘top-down’ approach sees policy as being introduced at the ‘top’ by politicians and senior government officials and transmitted down a hierarchy to those implementing it at the ‘bottom’ i.e. street level bureaucrats, a term coined by Lipsky (1980) to describe the actors at the lowest end of the implementation chain such as teachers, social workers, police officers etc who implement policies at the point of contact with a policy’s target population. Pressman and Wildavsky (1973 in Parsons, 1995) outlined that implementation can only be effective when: goals are clearly defined; there are adequate resources and an effective chain of command exists. The crux of their argument is the idea of ‘implementation chain’, stressing that distance in the cooperation of agencies

required to work together to implement a policy, will more likely result in *implementation deficit*. Pressman and Wildavsky's argument seems to mirror that of Hood's (1976, in Hill, 2009) discussion of 'perfect administration' where availability of resources and political acceptability would invariably result in 'perfect implementation'. Van Meter and Van Horn (1975:461) add that "implementation is most likely to be successful when goal consensus of the policy is high".

Contributing to the discussion on factors that could enhance policy implementation, Sabatier and Mazmanian (1979) and Sabatier (1986:23-25) specify six conditions for effective policy implementation:

- Policy objectives should be clear and consistent;
- Causal assumptions embodied within the policy must be correct;
- Legal and administrative structures must be sufficient to keep discretion within bounds;
- Implementing agents must be skilled and committed;
- There must be support from interest groups and other 'critical sovereigns';
- There must be no major socio-economic upheavals or disturbances.

From the various factors or conditions enumerated for successful implementation, the overarching emphasis is on clear unambiguous policy objective. After all, as argued by Birkland (2005) if policy makers fail to provide a coherent mutually compatible set of goals, implementation is likely to be difficult as agencies and people charged with putting the policy into action may pursue different goals. Hill (2009:199) however argues that "policies are deliberately made complex, obscure, ambiguous or even meaningless" hence it

becomes extremely difficult to identify a coherent mutually compatible policy objectives; a policy could have conflicting objectives. Indeed Sabatier (1986) recognised this flaw and declared that “the emphasis placed on clear and consistent policy objectives was a mistake...as experience has confirmed that very few programs meet this criterion. Instead, the vast majority incorporate a multitude of partially-conflicting objectives” (p.29).

The top-down approach is also criticised for its misleading assumption that the ‘bottom’ is necessarily in a compliant relationship with the ‘top’. Goggin et al (1990, cited in Birkland, 2005) cite instances of ‘strategic delay’ – where local level implementers seek to slow implementation in order to develop ways to adapt policies to meet local needs and demands. However, Sabatier and Mazmanian (1979) reject the argument that street level bureaucrats can practice ‘adaptive’ implementation, whereby policy makers are forced to acquiesce to the preferences of street level bureaucrats and interest groups. They highlighted a number of legal and political mechanisms for constraining the behaviour of street level bureaucrats. For example, they argue that policy makers normally have some ability to select one set of implementing officials over another, and provide appropriate incentives and sanctions. While conceding that hierarchical control - in the sense of tightly constrained behaviour - was impossible, they (Sabatier and Mazmanian, 1979) also argue that the behaviour of street level bureaucrats could be kept within acceptable bounds.

5.3.2 The Bottom-Up Approach

This approach posits that policy outcomes largely depend on the interests and decisions of street level bureaucrats. Governments have the power to enact its

preferred policy outputs, but the most important influence on outcomes is said to likely emerge from the interaction between street level bureaucrats and their clients on the ground. Lipsky (1980) argued that street level bureaucrats enter the service with some semblance of idealism; however time, resources, pressure and other constraints put them in a position where they create coping mechanisms, including the exercise of discretion. Since strict hierarchical control is not possible, street level bureaucrats are able to change stated policies, albeit unintentionally. According to Lipsky (1980:xii emphasis in original) “the decisions of street-level bureaucrats, the routines they establish, and the devices they invent to cope with uncertainties and work pressure effectively *become* the public policies they implement”.

The bottom-up approach is criticised for not paying much attention to the ability of top government officials to shape the behaviour of local policy implementers. Kaufman (1973 in Elmore, 1979) confidently asserts “if leaders exert but little influence on the actions of subordinates, then one of the axioms of democratic government ceases to apply...democracy in the modern state presupposes that changing a handful of officials in high places will ultimately change the actions of thousands of employees throughout the system” (p.609).

5.3.3 Bargaining and Negotiation Approach

Just as top-downers are in danger of overemphasising the importance of the centre vis-a-vis the periphery, bottom-uppers are likely to overemphasise the ability of the periphery to frustrate the centre (Sabatier, 2007:23)

This approach was propounded in opposition to both the top-down rational and the bottom-up approaches. It is contended that decisions that may not have

been agreed at the formulation stage are bargained over at the implementation phase. Parsons (1995:469) argues that “whether the mode of implementation is top-down or bottom-up, those on the front line of policy delivery have varying bands of discretion over how they choose to exercise the rules which they are employed to apply”. The approach sees implementation as structured by conflicts and bargaining. However, there is disagreement on how to manage such conflicts. Whereas Dunsire (1978 in Teye, 2008) argues that an effective implementation process will have methods and systems for controlling such conflicts so as to bring about compliance, Bardach (1977 cited in Parsons, 1995) argues that since no system can perfectly deal with the conflicts that often characterise implementation processes implementation becomes “a game of bargaining, persuasion, and manoeuvring under conditions of uncertainty” (p.470).

Barrett and Fudge (1981) argue that ‘bottom’ implementers are not simply in a compliant relationship with the ‘top’. For them policy implementation depended on a much more subtle and complex process of bargaining and negotiation between agents from both ‘top’ and ‘bottom’ each with their own values, preferences and sources of power (Barrett and Hill, 1984). They argue that implementation can be top-down to the extent that central government sets laws to constrain the power of those below, as well as bottom-up to the extent that “lower level actors take decisions which effectively limit hierarchical influence, pre-empt top decision making, or alter policies” (Barrett and Fudge, 1981:25). They conclude by stressing the need to consider implementation as a policy/action continuum in which an interactive and negotiation process takes

place over time between those seeking to put policy into effect and those upon whom action depends to make the policy materialise (Barrett and Fudge, 1981).

This approach is praised for being relatively free of prior assumptions about hierarchy or the direction of power in a policy domain (Barrett and Hill, 1984). It is however criticised for being too general such that the implementation process becomes so fluid and indistinct that analysts are left with little concrete to focus on (Jordan, undated).

5.4 Conclusion

There have been many models or approaches or even metaphors (as John, 1998 and Dowding, 1995 prefer to call them) of the policy process. This is perhaps due to the desire of many policy scholars to generate an ever elusive grand unifying policy theory. It is evident that no one perspective is better than the other since each explains different things within the policy process. As amply asserted by Parsons (1995:xvii) “no one theory or model can capture or explain the complexity involved in the web of decisions”. Accordingly De Leon (1999) advises that it might be better to devote attention to a series of mid-range theories.

The Advocacy Coalition Framework (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1999) and the Policy Network Approach (Rhodes, 1997; Marsh and Rhodes, 1992) are the most widely used models in policy research. These approaches tend to focus on analysis of inter-governmental relationships at formal policy making circles, and ignore interpersonal relationships between street level bureaucrats and societal actors. They tend to adopt the top-down model of implementation and choose a policy domain or subsystem as a unit of analysis (Sabatier and

Jenkins-Smith, 1999). Sabatier (1986) argues that 'bottom-uppers' primary concern is not the implementation of any particular policy per se but rather focus on understanding the nature of interactions among actors in a policy domain.

John (1998) advises policy researchers to choose an approach or theory to situate their analysis. However, the choice of a theory is said to be driven by the questions posed and answers sought by the analyst (Jordan, undated). Weale (1992, in Jordan, undated) suggests that if the analyst seeks to find out if policy intentions were transformed into tangible outputs, or if the outcomes of the policy match its goals, then a top-down perspective is advisable. This study was situated in the 'policy network theory' of policy formulation as the study sought to examine how young people as a group interacted with politicians and bureaucrat to produce the national youth policy. In terms of policy implementation, the study was situated in the 'top-down' perspective as it sought to find out if the youth policy's objective of institutionalising youth participation at all levels of decision making in Ghana was actually been implemented.

The theories discussed in chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5 are represented in the diagram below to illustrate how the concepts combined and operationalised in the study.

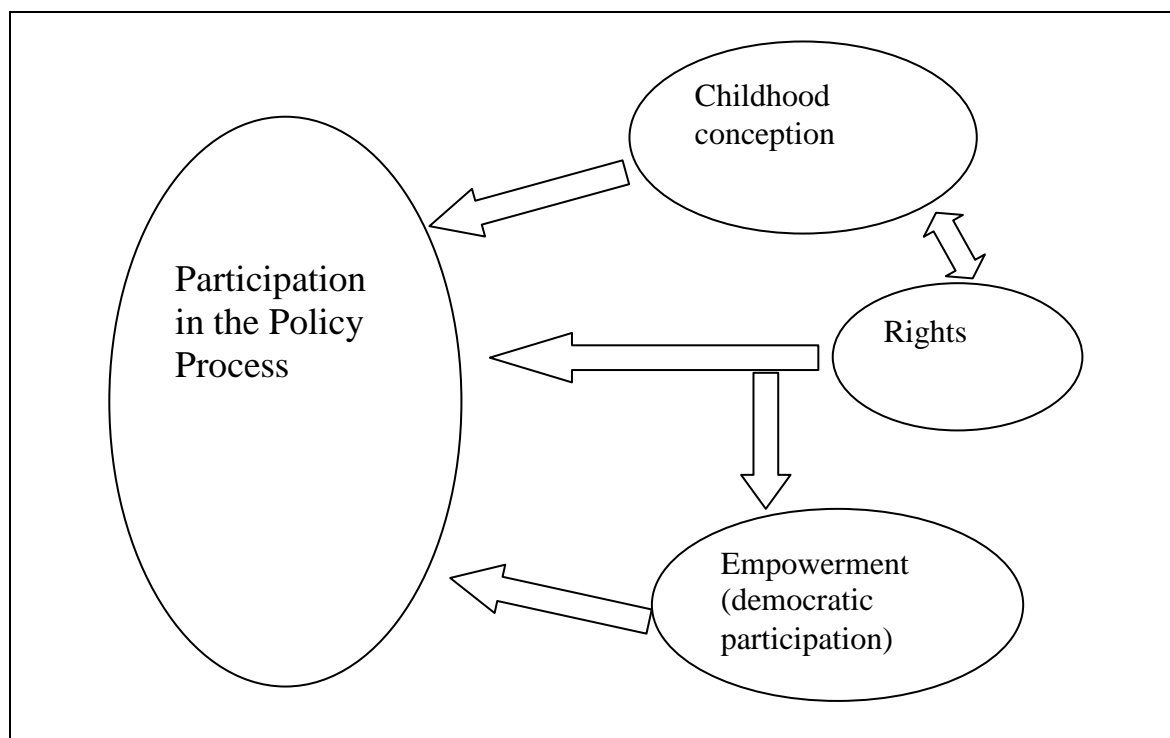


Figure 8: matrix of the conceptual frameworks

The diagram illustrates that young people's participation in policy-making is to a large extent determined by whether they are defined as matured or immatured (i.e. conception of childhood), and also by the recognition or not of their rights to participate in decisions affecting them. To recognise or not recognise the right to participate is also influenced by the construction of childhood (hence the double edged arrow between childhood conception and rights in the diagram). Thus in a given society young people may be classed as immature and therefore unable to offer anything meaningful in policy making. In such societies young people's right to participate may not be respected. The study found such a situation in Ghana, which is presented in detail in chapter 8. The matrix further illustrates that for young people to overcome the immaturity tag and the non-recognition of their right to participate, they must be empowered to exert pressure on policy-makers and politicians, which may come in the form of

young people participating in the democratic franchise i.e. possessing and exercising voting rights. See section 8.2.3 for details of such argument.

CHAPTER 6: RESEARCH DESIGN

6.0 Introduction

Every empirical research has implicit and at times explicit design that logically connects data to research questions and conclusions (Yin, 2009). The research design is a blueprint for the research dealing with at least four problems: what questions to study, what data are relevant, what data to collect, and how to analyze the results (Philiber et al, 1980 cited in Yin, 2009). Its main purpose is to help avoid a situation where the evidence does not address the research questions (Yin, 2009). This chapter presents the methods and approach of the study. It outlines the methodology that was followed, how data was collected, analysed and interpreted. It further provides details of the philosophical approach that guided the study. It explains the choice of a qualitative research framework, the rationale for the specific strategy of inquiry chosen 'case study', the sampling strategy and the data collection instruments. Data analysis techniques, ethical considerations and researcher reflexivity are outlined in the final section.

6.1 Philosophical Stance

It has been argued that the worldviews or set of beliefs that researchers bring to their project inform the conduct and writing of their study (Creswell, 2007), as such good research practice requires that these beliefs are explicitly made known in the writing of a study. This study was based on constructivist ontology and interpretivist epistemology. According to Blaikie (2000 cited in Grix, 2002) ontological assumptions are concerned with what is believed to constitute reality. A person's view (claimed or

assumed) about the nature of reality can be categorised as objective or subjective. Objectivism is the belief that reality exist outside ones knowledge and experience, whereas subjectivism is the belief that reality exist only through ones experience i.e. one needs to experience it to know it.

Constructivist ontology holds that social phenomena and their meanings are not only produced through social interaction but are also regularly revised (Bryman, 2001). According to Crotty (1998:42) constructivism is the “view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted with an essentially social context”. To the constructivist truth or meaning is constructed with the mind, not discovered. In constructivism the researcher does not start with a theory to prove or disprove, but rather generate theory or pattern of meaning (Creswell, 2007).

Epistemology according to Blaikie (2000 cited in Grix, 2002) is the possible ways of gaining knowledge of social reality i.e. how what is assumed to exist can be known. Grix (2002) explains further that epistemology focuses on the knowledge gathering processes, and how reality should be represented or described. Interpretivist research acknowledges that there may be multiple explanations for actions. Within this paradigm, research as much as possible relies on the participants views of the situation (Creswell, 2007) therefore the researcher is required to grasp the subjective meaning of social action (Bryman, 2001). It also requires the researcher to recognise that his/her own background and experiences shape the

interpretation of what is found (Creswell, 2007). This study was based on the view that knowledge is constructed between people hence the research participants' interpretation of their experience is of significance in the creation of knowledge (Greene and Hill, 2005). As noted by Kagan (1984 cited in Greene and Hill, 2005) a person's interpretation is the most important product of an encounter, to the extent that if researchers are unable to access the content of a person's experience then they have an incomplete account of what causes people to act the way they do (Greene and Hill, 2005). Researchers can gain access to the content of people's experience if only they give participants the opportunity to tell their story. Nonetheless Greene and Hill (2005:7) caution researchers to be mindful that "people are prone to all sorts of biases in reporting their views and experiences to others".

Another reason for this study's inclination towards constructivism was influenced by James' (1990 cited in Greene and Hill, 2005) argument that researchers begin their study with their own experience, since others' experiences can be understood only in these terms. This seems to echo the view held by Greene and Hill (2005) that the notion of an objective researcher is a myth; that researchers cannot in some way neutralise themselves. Walliman (2005) has also argued that in the social sciences the researcher is part of a society and culture and can therefore not be a neutral observer. Citing Weber (1949) to buttress his argument, Walliman noted that there is absolutely no objective analysis of social phenomena and that "all knowledge of cultural reality is always from a particular point of view" (Walliman, 2005:207). Greene and Hill (2005) therefore urge

researchers to scrutinise and take account of their position as enquirers. This is in tandem with constructivism, where the researcher is positioned as a co-producer of the data (Charmaz, 2006). According to Kitzinger (2004 in Silverman, 2006:129):

constructionism disputes the possibility of uncovering 'facts', 'realities' or 'truths' behind talk, and treats as inappropriate any attempt to vet what people say for its 'accuracy', 'reliability' or 'validity'.

Hence the result of a constructivist/interpretivist study is analytic interpretations of both the researcher and research participants. This resonates with Denzin's (1994 in Simons, 2009:118) assertion that "there is only interpretation in the social sciences". It is worth mentioning that due to the constructivist ontology of the study, where relevant and appropriate the first person pronoun, I is used.

6.2 Methodological Approach

Due to the exploratory and open-ended nature of the research questions, a qualitative framework was preferred. As argued by Duncan et al (2009) it is advisable to choose a qualitative research approach when one is unsure of what answers to expect and also when one wants to maintain an open realm of response. Cook et al (2001 cited in Dunne, 2008:58) have noted that qualitative research questions "tend to inquire less about 'whether' or 'how much', but more about 'what', 'how', and 'why'". This matches the research questions, which aim at finding out why young people are not involved in the policy process, what is being done to promote their involvement and how their involvement could be embedded. It is also argued that qualitative research is particularly useful when exploring little known about phenomenon (Creswell,

2007). As highlighted in chapter 1 young people's participation in policy processes have been given little attention, hence a qualitative methodology was an appropriate choice for the study to explore this under-researched area of interest. As children and young people's participation is not an established phenomenon in Ghana, it would have been extremely difficult or perhaps impossible to undertake a quantitative study. Also at the outset of the study I did not know of efforts to promote young people's participation in policy formulation and implementation and therefore could not have studied the phenomenon quantitatively. Thence it was imperative to undertake an exploratory study to identify what was being done to promote young people's participation in the policy process in Ghana.

Qualitative research offers numerous strategies of inquiry. However since the emergence of the sociology of childhood, research has reflected the view of children as autonomous social actors who can be active participants in the research process, rather than as passive respondents (James and Prout, 1997). Researchers are encouraged to *research with* children and young people rather than *research on* them (Christensen and James, 2008). This, it is argued is intended to give children and young people more power in the research process and enable them to define the research agenda and prioritise what is important to them (Gunn, 2002). Many researchers using this framework tend to favour ethnography with more participatory methods (e.g. diary completion, story writing, drawing, photography, video recording and focus group discussion) as the preferred methodology (Fanelli et al, 2007; Faulkner, 2009; Veitch, 2009; Morrow, 1999; Davey et al, 2009; University of Sheffield, 2010).

However, other researchers have reported problems with participatory methods. For example, Lindow and Morris (1995 cited in Gunn, 2002) note that participants' may be more interested in their personal lives than that of academics or policy makers. Gunn (2002) further argues that it takes time to develop relationships, set agendas and strive for equality of power as these are not straightforward processes. Gunn's point is shared by Kirby's (1999) conclusions that participatory research takes more time and resources; young people have to be trained, supported and financially rewarded for their work. To this end, researchers are warned against using participatory strategies if support and resources, including financial compensation are not available (Gunn, 2002; Kirby, 1999).

Moreover, other researchers (e.g. Punch, 2002; Thomson, 2007 cited in Holland et al, 2008) have questioned the need for a special child-friendly participatory methods if children are competent social actors, as espoused by the sociology of childhood. To this end Kirk (2007) argues that allotting children special methods construct them as 'other' in methodological terms, and this has the potential to diminish their position as actors capable of engaging in methods used with adults (Punch, 2002). Therefore, although this study is about young people's participation and partly anchored in the sociology of childhood, ethnography and participatory strategy was not used. As argued by Wolcott (1999 cited in Creswell, 2007) a good ethnography requires prolonged stay at the research site. As would be explained in the section on ethical considerations (i.e. section 6.7.1) I could not have stayed at the research site for long even if I had undertaken an ethnographic study.

Also the resources needed (i.e. money, time and appropriate support, including training of young people to enable them become active researchers) were not available. Moreover, I do not believe the study could be truly participatory since young people were not involved in setting the research questions or choosing the methods used, and were also not involved in the analysis and interpretation of the findings. In essence, I retained control of the research process. For the above reasons, I share the view of Kirk (2007:1259) that “participatory methods may perhaps be more useful for service development than academic research”.

6.3 Research Method

According to Punch (2005) the choice of a suitable qualitative strategy of inquiry is heavily informed by the research questions and goals. Qualitative research offers numerous strategies of inquiry, however Miles and Huberman (1994) argue that all qualitative research strategies have some shared features:

they allow for multiple interpretations of the data; they engage with a given field or life situation with the aim of achieving a holistic overview of the context; they seek to capture data on the perceptions of the local actors from the inside, and they elucidate the ways in which people in particular settings come to understand, account for, take action, and otherwise manage their day-to-day situations (Miles and Huberman, 1994:6-7).

For this study an ‘embedded single case study’ design was employed.

According to Yin (2009) the case study is an appropriate method when;

- The researcher seeks explanations to ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions
- The researcher cannot manipulate relevant behaviours and
- The study focuses on contemporary real-life events other than abstractions.

Yin (2009) proposes that case study can be 'single or multiple' 'holistic or embedded' and he outlines five rationales for selecting a single case study design: (1) when the case is critical - to enable a researcher test a well-formulated theory i.e. a single case can be used to test whether the theory's propositions are correct; (2) when the case is revelatory – to enable the researcher study a previously inaccessible phenomenon to reveal useful information; (3) longitudinal case – studying the same case at two or more different points in time; (4) representative or typical case – a single case can be used if it is representative of many cases, with the view that lessons learned can be informative of all the other cases; and (5) when the case represents an extreme or unique case. Simons (2009:3) has also argued that “the primary purpose of undertaking a case study is to explore the particularity, the uniqueness of the single case”.

The decision to undertake a single case study for this research can be located in the 'revelatory' and 'unique' rationale. As noted previously young people's participation in the policy process is generally understudied. Previous studies that have purportedly examined children and young people's participation in policy making have actually not done so. There is no identifiable 'policy' in those studies. Instead those studies looked at children and young people's participation in decision-making forums like child protection conferences, divorce proceedings, care planning and reviews etc (e.g. Kassan, 2004; Fitzgerald, 2009; Erikson and Näsman, 2008; Thomas and O'Kane, 1999; Gunn 2005 and 2008). Also some of those studies included young people over the age of 18 years, therefore not subject to the provisions of the convention on children's rights. It is hoped that this study will reveal some of the barriers to

young people's participation in the policy process and how these barriers can be overcome.

Another reason for the choice of a single case study is partly found in Yin's (2009:53) caution that "the conduct of multiple case studies can require extensive resources and time beyond the means of single student or independent investigator. Therefore the decision to undertake multiple case studies cannot be taken lightly". This view is shared by Mukherji and Albon (2010) who also add that single case study is a useful tool especially if one is a small-scale researcher with limited resources. Finally, undertaking a case study is in consonance with convention in policy evaluation researches. According to Stake (1995:95) "all evaluation studies are case studies".

Whether a case study is 'holistic' or 'embedded' depends on the unit(s) of analysis. According to Yin (2009) the holistic is where the case has a single unit of analysis, whereas the embedded has sub-units of analysis. For this study a single case (Ghana's Youth Policy) was the primary focus. However to facilitate understanding of how young people's participation is being promoted, several sub-units are also given attention, including the policy implementing agency (National Youth Authority); advocacy organisations (Strategic Youth Network for Development; Young Men Christian Association); and young people (disabled, non-disabled, females and males). Yin (2009:52-53) reiterates that "the sub-units can often add significant opportunities for extensive analysis, enhancing the insights into the single case". This reflects the views of Simons (2009) that qualitative case study values multiple perspectives of stakeholders and participants.

6.4 Sampling Strategy

A purposive sampling strategy was used to identify participants in the study. According to Mason (1996:93-94), purposive sampling involves “selecting groups or categories to study on the basis of their relevance to your research questions”. While there is no prescribed number of participants in qualitative study, some researchers have sought to recommend a maximum. There are however wide discrepancies in the recommendations in relation to sample size. For example, Fielding (1996 in Teye, 2008) suggests 40 as the median sample size whereas Kvale (1996) recommends between 10 and 15. Also Polkinghorne (1989 cited in Creswell, 2007) advocates participants from 5 to 25. Morse (1993) advises researchers to “sample until repetition from multiple sources is obtained. This provides concurring and confirming data, and ensures saturation” (Morse, 1993:230). However, when data is saturated is also intensely debated. Whereas Morse (1993) considers saturation to be the point of repetition from multiple sources, Charmaz (2006) cautions against confusing saturation with the simple repetition of described events, actions, and statements. According to her saturation occurs “when gathering fresh data no longer sparks new theoretical insights” (Charmaz, 2006:113).

However it can be argued that when the researcher is no longer getting new insights then it means there is repetition from the freshly gathered data. Relatedly, Dey (1999) has argued that saturation is another unfortunate metaphor used to confuse researchers. Rapley (2011) also argues that there are no hard and fast rules on when to stop collecting data. He notes that the ideal situation would be to stop when the researcher has explored all questions and issues that fieldwork raise. He nonetheless admonishes:

Given the nature of academic timelines and your willingness to devote your time to a single phenomenon, you'll never be able to answer all your questions, to follow up all the potential leads that your analysis raises. What is central is that the key ideas and claims have been thoroughly thought through and investigated (Rapley, 2011:286).

The target population sampled were policy makers (civil servants), lobbyists/advocates, and young people (between 15 and 17 years). The sample for the young people was based on the assumption that younger children cope less with participation than older children (Pinkney, 2011) and also younger children may not understand policy issues. It is however acknowledged that age is not an accurate determinant of capacity (see sections 2.3 and 4.1 for further discussion on age and capacity). Settling on the lower age limit of 15 years is in accordance with the definition of youth as contained in Ghana's Youth Policy, while the upper age limit of 17 years is in line with the CRC conception that anyone 18 years and over is an adult. In this study there were 4 policy makers/implementers, 3 lobbyists/advocates and 13 young people. In total 20 people were interviewed for the research (see table below).

Age (years)	Female	Male	Total
15	1	0	1
16	1	3	4
17	2	6	8
Key informants	0	7	7
Total	4	16	20

Table 1: distribution of study participants

The key informants were selected from organisations involved in the youth policy domain. A key informant is someone "who is considered to have some

depth of knowledge concerning the research problem and who is willing to talk” (Broshenka and Castro, 1983 cited in Teye, 2008:99). As the key informants were from different organisations, slightly different interview guide was used for them. For example, key informants from the policy’s implementing agency were asked about how young people were engaged in the formulation of the youth policy. Whereas key informants from the other organisations were asked about how they were lobbying the implementing agency to involve young people in the implementation of the youth policy. The graph below illustrates the organisational association of the key informants.

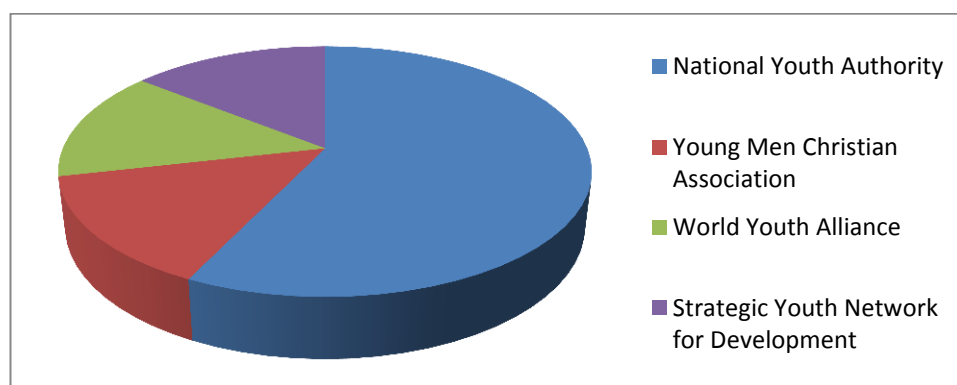


Figure 9: distribution of key informants by organisation

The key informants were selected on the basis of their knowledge about the youth policy or their participation in the formulation of the youth policy. Those at the National Youth Authority were selected because they were actively involved in the formulation of the policy or were involved in setting up the projects from which the young people for this study were selected from. The other key informants selected from SYND, WYA and YMCA were selected because they had written articles or granted media interviews criticising the implementation of the youth policy (See Ezekiel, 2011; Obeng-Yeboah, 2011). I believed they had

some knowledge to share with me, hence their selection to participate in this study.

The 13 young people sampled were engaged in 2 participatory projects⁸ i.e. youth advocacy assembly and curious minds (see table below).

Age (years)	Youth Advocacy Assembly	Curious Minds	Total
15	0	1	1
16	3	1	4
17	2	6	8
Total	5	8	13

Table 2: Distribution of young people according to age and project

The young people were drawn from these 2 participatory projects because the National Youth Authority had identified the projects as platforms to promote youth participation in decision-making. The young people were all in secondary schools but had different social-economic status. However, it is difficult for me to ascertain the social-economic status of all the young people, as I visited only a few of them in their homes; some in the city and others in the village. Also I did not ask questions relating to their social-economic status as I did not deem it relevant for the purposes of this study. Of those that I visited, I observed that some of them were from 'affluent' areas (including those in the village) while the others could be described as living in 'poor' areas (including those in the city). Although it was not my aim to assess the impact of the young people's social-economic status on their participation, it is worth mentioning that for some of the young people living in the 'poor' areas their participation in the projects would have been limited if they had not been paid an allowance for their attendance at

⁸ Description of the 2 participatory projects is given in chapter 7 section 7.4.1

meetings. See section 8.3 for details. There were no disabled young people involved in the participatory projects at the time of the study. Therefore I consciously sought to include the views of disabled young people who were previously involved in the projects. However the disabled people identified were involved in the project when they were in their early 20s and therefore beyond the target population of the study.

6.5 Data Collection Methods

With regards to data collection instrument, interviewing is suggested as the most appropriate and widely used method of data collection (Charmaz, 2006) because it is relatively economical in terms of time and resources (Silverman, 2006). Therefore interviewing was the main method employed in the study; one-to-one interviews were held with policy makers and adult advocates, and group interviews, often referred to as focus group discussions were held with young people. Data was collected from young people in groups (between 3 and 5) because although interviews are interactional in nature (Rapley, 2004) there is a hierarchical relationship with an asymmetrical power distribution between the interviewer and the interviewee (Kvale, 2006 in Creswell, 2007). Therefore the presence of peers in group discussion can alter the power distribution and give children and young people increased confidence to communicate their views (Hill, 1997 cited in Gunn, 2002). Creswell (2007) also argues that focus groups are advantageous when interviewees are similar and cooperative with each other, or when time to collect information is limited. He however warns that care must be taken to ensure that no one person dominates the session. As this study did not seek information on personal and/or familial issues, group interviews with young people was considered appropriate. According to

Kaplowitz (2000 in Patton, 2002) non-controversial and highly impersonal issues are good topics for focus groups. There were no problems in recruiting members for the focus group or even holding the focus groups as the young people were already an existing group participating in the projects. All that I had to do was to select those aged between 15 and 17 years aside for the research. The primary data used for this study was collected by the researcher in Ghana between 28 November 2011 and 11 February 2012. Data was obtained in two different locations in Ghana (i.e. Accra, the capital city, and Cape Coast in the Central Region). The research took place in these locations because the National Youth Authority is located in Accra, whilst the two participatory projects studied were located in Cape Coast.

Scheduling meetings with some of the key informants was exceptionally difficult. There were instances when some officials failed to keep their appointments, and I had to re-schedule on numerous occasions. In order to make judicious use of my limited time, I travelled to the Central Region to interview other people on days that I had no appointments in Accra. I held 3 group interviews with young people. The first 2 interviews with a membership of 3 and 5 were quite less challenging as no one individual dominated the discussions. The final group interview was more challenging as some people wanted to dominate the discussions but other members of the group challenged them. The dialogic nature of focus groups enabled the young people to debate issues among themselves contesting each other's views. For example, while some young people said the youth policy is available electronically and that anyone who so desired to have a copy could download it from the internet. Other young people contested this view arguing strongly that it was the responsibility of the National

Youth Authority and for that matter the government to print and distribute copies of the policy to young people. They contended that not all communities in Ghana have access to the internet to download copies. They argued and challenged each other's views frankly and laughed together, which I believe was facilitated because they were an existing group, knew each other very well and therefore did not feel intimidated by each other.

An interview guide was developed prior to commencing formal interviews. The use of an interview guide is commonly recommended to give some structure and directions (Creswell, 2007), help the interviewer to relax and not worry about forgetting to ask certain questions (Dunne, 2008). It also enables different people to be interviewed in a more systematic and comprehensive way (Patton, 2002). In developing the interview guide Creswell (2007) recommends a minimum of 5 open-ended questions. The interview guide used in the study had 6 open-ended questions (See appendix 2). It is argued that open-ended questions "allows the interviewee the freedom to talk and ascribe meanings while the interviewer engages in active listening" (Silverman, 2006:110). Finally, the open-ended interview guide allows the interviewer to follow up on aspects of interviewee answers (Rapley, 2004). Yin (2009) recommends a pilot test to refine and develop relevant lines of questions. However, Miller and Glassner (2004 cited in Silverman, 2006) argue that it is insufficient simply to 'pre-test' an interview guide by asking questions of a few respondents since people's cultural worlds are more complex and variable. They instead call for a more systematic observation before any interviewing takes place. As I am familiar with the context for the study and have had some discussions with some of the advocacy organisations involved in the study, a 'pre-test' was not undertaken.

Interviews were recorded on a small digital voice recorder. Rapley (2004) argues that recording facilitates interaction as the interviewer is not so engrossed in note-taking. However, Glaser and Holton (2004) argue strongly against recording interviews, suggesting note-taking instead. While it is acknowledged that processing recorded interview transcripts can be very tedious, constant note-taking may distract the interviewer from what the interviewee is saying and may therefore miss some salient points made by the interviewee (Dune, 2008). Hence interviews were recorded. Also playing back the recorded interviews enabled me to pick on things I had missed in order to go back to the interviewee for further clarifications or seek explanation from other subsequent interviewees.

The study adopted the data triangulation technique by using a combination of data sources (interviews, official documents and informal conversations) with the effect that the strengths and weaknesses in each source are compensated when used together (Bryman, 2001). Triangulation refers to the process of using multiple data collection methods, data sources, analysis, or theories to check the validity of the findings (Fitzpatrick and Boulton, 1994). Triangulation has however been questioned as a validation tool. Denzin and Smith (1998) argue that the use of multiple methods, or triangulation, reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question. To them, triangulation is not a tool or a strategy of validation, but an alternative to validation. They further argue that the combination of multiple methods in a study is a strategy that adds rigor, breadth, and depth to any investigation.

Meeto and Temple (2003) also point out that it is wrong to assume that the use of different methods will automatically enhance validity. In this regard, Hammersley and Atkinson (1995 cited in Teye, 2008) argue that even if the results from different data sources tally, there is no guarantee that the inferences involved will be accurate. Bloor (1997 in Seale, 1999:59) concurs with this argument by arguing that “even if all the different methods employed converge on the same thing, apparently agreeing with each other, how can we know that they are correct?” The use of triangulation in this study was motivated more by the desire to bring to bear all necessary dimensions of the problem (Meeto and Temple, 2003), instead of merely cross validating one method against the other. As Devine and Heath (1999:49) rightly argue “triangulation can be used effectively to explore the dynamics of complex social phenomena, highlighting the multi-layered and often contradictory nature of social life”. To this end the use of triangulation can deepen understanding (Seale, 1999).

6.6 Data Analysis Strategy

Data was thematically analysed by following constructivist grounded theory procedures: initial coding and focused coding (Charmaz, 2006). Recorded interviews were personally transcribed by the researcher to enable familiarisation with the data. This is in consonance with Darlington and Scott’s (2002) advice to researchers to transcribe the interview themselves as it stimulates engagement with the phenomenon being researched. Transcript of the interviews were then coded. Coding is the process of “attaching labels to segments of data that depict what each segment is about. Coding distils data, sorts them, and gives us a handle for making comparisons with other segments of data” (Charmaz 2006:3). The labels can be attached to words, phrases,

sentences or entire paragraphs (Miles and Huberman 1994) to reduce data into manageable chunks to aid the organization, retrieval, and interpretation of data (Dunne, 2008).

In a comparison of manual versus electronic coding Basit (2003:143) concluded that the choice depended on the “size of the project, the funds and time available, and the inclination and expertise of the researcher”. Saldana (2009) argues that in studies with multiple participant interviews electronic coding is vital and indispensable. Accordingly, interview transcripts were coded with Atlas.ti6 computer software (Scientific Software Development, 2004). There is some disagreement about the amount of data to code after data collection. However Saldana (2009) advises novice researchers to code anything and everything that is collected during the fieldwork. In coding interview transcripts, Charmaz (2006) advocates for a detailed line-by-line initial coding. Other writers of grounded theory argue that such detailed coding is not always necessary and suggest paragraph-by-paragraph coding (Saldana, 2009). The advice offered by Saldana was adhered to in this study by undertaking paragraph-by-paragraph coding i.e. I coded the entire response of an interviewee to a question, and also created 2 paragraphs if the response contained multiple meanings or contradictory views.

Saldana (2009) outlines 29 different but not mutually exclusive ways of coding and argues that determining a coding method is influenced by the paradigm or theoretical approach to the study. In consonance with the constructivist/interpretivist paradigm of this study, and to honour young people’s voice and ground data analysis in their perspective (as espoused by the

sociology of childhood and children's participation rights), *in vivo* codes were predominantly used at the initial coding stage. Initial coding as the name implies is when interview transcript is initially broken down into discrete parts. *In vivo* codes use "direct language of participants as codes rather than researcher generated words or phrases" (Saldana, 2009:48) in order "to preserve participants meanings of their views and actions" (Charmaz, 2006:55). According to Friese (2012) *in-vivo* codes are very useful at the beginning of coding when the analyst is gathering ideas. The initial coding generated 155 codes. While there is no minimum or maximum number of codes to generate in the literature, Friese (2012) cautions against generating too many codes as this could "lead to a dead end when using software to analyse your data" (Friese, 2012:94). She recommends generating between 120 and 300 codes.

At the second cycle coding stage focused coding was used. Focused coding searches for the most frequent codes developed at the initial coding stage to develop "the most salient categories" and "requires decisions about which initial codes make the most analytic sense" (Charmaz, 2006:46,57). The goal is to "develop a sense of categorical, thematic, conceptual, and/or theoretical organization from your array of first cycle codes" (Saldana, 2009:149). At this coding stage it became increasingly difficult to continue using *in-vivo* coding as I kept generating more descriptive codes that stuck to the data corpus. Friese (2012) has argued that it is non-sensical to collect many *in-vivo* codes without developing them further. Consequently I merged all codes with the same meaning and renamed codes that could fit together under a different name in order to move the data from descriptive level to abstract level (Charmaz, 2006; Friese, 2012). For example, initial codes like adolescent reproductive health,

sanitation, drug trafficking, teenage pregnancy were merged together and renamed issues of concern.

Atlas.ti6 software was used to create categories and sub-categories. In using the software to create categories I first created code families in the code manager. For example, I created the code family/category 'self interest' with sub-categories such as exposure, financial reward and skills development. Another code family/category 'altruistic desires' with sub-categories championing women's empowerment, youth mouthpiece and patriotism was also created. The 2 categories 'self interest' and 'altruistic desires' were subsumed into the theme 'motivation to participate' (see the figure below).

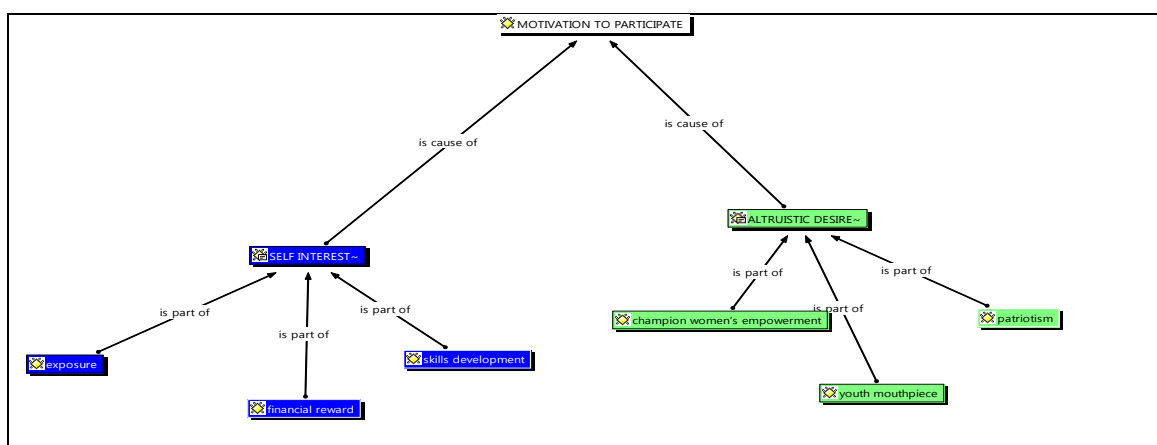


Figure 10: display of theme, categories and sub-categories generated from Atlas.ti 6 network view.

The focused coding generated 65 codes. This chimes with Friese's assertion that at the end of second cycle coding, "smaller student projects may contain around 50 to 70 codes" (Friese, 2012:105). In generating codes and even the entire research process, thoughts do occur to researchers, which they are encouraged to write down, known as Memoing. Memos "reflect the researcher's internal dialogue with the data at a point in time" (McCann and Clark 2003 in Dunne, 2011:118). According to Charmaz (2006:72) memos are "informal

analytical notes” which the researcher produces during the research process. She explains that “when you write memos, you stop and analyse your ideas about the codes in any – and every – way that occurs to you during the moment”. In this sense, memoing can help the researcher reflect on the phenomenon under exploration, improve personal writing voice, spark new ideas and identify gaps in the analysis (Charmaz, 2006). Memos can be textual as well as diagrammatic (Dunne, 2008). I found it easier to write textual memos than a diagrammatic representation. Memos were written in Atlas.ti6 in the form of an analytic journal.

6.7 Ethical Considerations

As argued by Yin (2009) the study of a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context obligates the researcher to follow ethical practices of the highest standard.

6.7.1 Negotiating Access

The study began by seeking permission from the Head of the organisations to be involved in the study. I wrote a letter requesting access to the (1) National Coordinator of the National Youth Authority [NYA], (2) Executive Coordinator of Strategic Youth Network for Development [SYND], (3) National General Secretary of Young Men Christian Association [YMCA], and (4) The Producer of Children and Youth in Broadcasting; Curious Minds. Whereas I received prompt response from YMCA and SYND granting access, NYA and Curious Minds did not respond to my request. While I was still in London I sent a friend in Ghana to follow up NYA and Curious Minds for me but without any success. However through the friend’s follow up I got the mobile phone number of the Producer of

Curious Minds. I phoned him when I arrived in Ghana, reminded him of my letter requesting access and also requested to meet him for further discussions. He told me he was busy at that moment but he would call me later. He did not call. I phoned him again three days later and he told me he was 'out of town', he would contact me on his return. All my subsequent calls to him were not answered.

Nevertheless I gained access to Curious Minds without his knowledge and consent, through a third party. What happened was after an interview with one of the key informants we were having a general discussion about how I was finding things in Ghana and as we talked I spoke of my frustration in getting access to some documents and organisations, and I mentioned Curious Minds as one project that I was struggling to gain access to. I mentioned Curious Minds specifically because he had mentioned it earlier in his response to a question. Then he said he knew one of the facilitators of the programme and could link me to him. He called the facilitator in my presence and pleaded with him to assist me with my research. I arranged to meet him and as it is often said 'the rest is history'.

Although NYA officially did not respond to my letter of request, I was granted access, which left me thinking and asking why they did not write back to inform me that they welcome my request. I understood their actions later in the fieldwork; this will be discussed in the findings and discussions section. On my arrival I contacted one of the Administrative Secretaries at the National Youth Authority whom my friend gave as the person to contact during his follow up. The Secretary then introduced me to one of the Deputy National Coordinators.

As we engaged in rapport building he asked about my background i.e. my home town, schools/colleges that I attended. Soon as I told him of my home town he asked if I knew the Paramount Chief of the area and I responded that the Chief is my maternal uncle. He told me he knew my home town very well because he was posted there when he first began working with the national youth authority. He warmly welcomed me and also introduced me to 2 Metropolitan Coordinators who were in charge of the projects that were promoting young people's participation. Even though formally the Youth Authority did not respond to my request, I had access to the organisation and even interviewed one of the Deputy National Coordinators albeit through third party interpersonal routes. These experiences highlighted the value of informal and personal contacts over formal requests in negotiating access to organisations in some cultures.

6.7.2 Consent

Since the study did not seek to elicit sensitive personal or familial information, parental consent was not sought. Instead consent was sought directly from the young people and other participants. Seeking consent directly from the young people was intended to recognise them as active and competent social agents. According to Mayall (2002) viewing young people as having agency is recognition that young people are capable of reflecting upon and making decisions about issues of concern to them. Nonetheless there was an occasion when I had to seek parental consent for two young people to be involved in a group interview. The group interview had been scheduled to take place on 24th December 2011 and because of the Christmas festivities there were many entertainment activities at the beaches. The 2 young people lived in a village, about 15 miles from the city, where we were having the group interview. They

had been banned by their father from going to the city during the Christmas festivities. When they informed their father of the group interview, he refused them permission thinking they were using it as an excuse to attend a beach party in the city. I and the Metropolitan Coordinator travelled to the village to re-assure their father that they were not going to a beach party but would be participating in a research project. It did not take long to persuade the father as he knew the Metropolitan Coordinator. At the end of the group interview I ensured that the young people boarded a minibus to the village, called their father in two hours time to check that they had arrived and thanked him for his cooperation.

Participants were not required to sign consent form agreeing to participate; consent was regarded as an ongoing verbal process (Thomas and O’Kane, 1998) such that they could withdraw their participation anytime they wished without having to give reasons. Simons (2009) has argued that asking participants to sign a consent form is insufficient for good ethical practice and in some contexts inappropriate. Some researchers who have conducted studies in Ghana have considered it inappropriate to ask participants to sign consent forms (Twum-Danso, 2008; Boakye-Boaten, 2006). It is worth highlighting that these researchers are of Ghanaian heritage. Boakye-Boaten argues that in Ghanaian culture any agreement that requires signature “connotes a level of seriousness, bureaucratic and often misconstrued with trustworthiness” (Boakye-Boaten, 2006:121). In seeking informed consent, participants were informed of the nature of the study, its aims, how data will be stored and used. This is in relation to Kellett’s (2005) argument that informed consent is not simply a question of informing participants about the research and asking them

to sign a consent form. I had an information sheet and consent form (see appendix 1) that I required that only those who wished to be identified by excerpts of their interview responses must sign. I gave the form out before any interviews began. I observed that some participants just signed the document without reading it first.

6.7.3 Confidentiality and Anonymity

Access and consent is tied to the wider issue of confidentiality and anonymity (Cree et al, 2002). Confidentiality involves protecting the privacy and trust of participants to enable them to freely share their experiences with the researcher while taking steps to disclose to others when harm/abuse/fraud is made known to the researcher. Confidentiality and anonymity obligate the researcher to ensure that no harm befalls any research participant. Since this study did not seek personal or sensitive information, it was not expected that participants will make any disclosures. It was however acknowledged that sensitive organisational information could be obtained during data collection, in which case confidentiality was to be highly maintained. As it turned out during general conversation with some key informants sensitive personal and political information were disclosed. Duncan et al (2009:1694) have noted that “the nature of qualitative methods and the way in which researchers and participants interact creates a space that invites disclosure of personal intimate information”. To help deal with such challenges Kirk (2007) asserts that it is good practice to inform participants about the limits of confidentiality and about how and when such limits come into play. Honouring confidentiality means being alert to the issues that participants wish to keep private. According to Simons (2009:106) it

is about acknowledging that “not all information obtained in interview or discovered about the person in the case becomes public”.

Anonymity is where real names of research participants and research sites are not disclosed in reports in order to protect their identity and prevent any potential harm. Walford (2005) has however challenged the principle of anonymity arguing that it is useful for research sites and participants to be known so that other researchers can verify the validity of accounts. He strongly argues that it is impossible and undesirable to ensure anonymity. Kushner (2000 cited in Simons, 2009) also questions the essence of anonymity. He argues that denying identity is an ethical issue which according to him is as damaging as naming people in reports. Moreover, Silverman (2006) argues that some people may actually want to be identified in research reports and feel let down if their identity is concealed. In view of these assertions, participants in the study were explicitly asked to sign a consent form if they wished to be named in the report. However I realised that asking participants to sign a disclosure form does not take away the dilemma inherent in the triad of consent, confidentiality and anonymity.

As previously stated some participants signed the form without reading it; some also signed after reading it, supposedly agreeing to be identified in the report but told me not to quote what they have said in my report. Why did they sign the document if they did not want to be identified? I also realised that those who did not want to be identified were those who worked with the National Youth Authority (a government agency). It seems they were not happy to be identified when they have said something that was in the political sphere.

6.7.4 Payment for Participation

Participation in any research is thought to be voluntary and therefore devoid of any undue influence and/or coercion. Hence it is presumed to be unethical to offer financial rewards as inducement to participation. Macklin (1989) argues that it is ethically inappropriate to pay research participants because it violates ethical requirements that research participation is altruistic. She further argues that paying participants coerces them to participate even when they would like to withdraw from the study. But how does a researcher deal with research participants who demand financial payments for their participation? Indeed Arnstein (1969) reported of a situation where some community residents demanded a fee to participate in research interviews.

Before I arrived in Ghana for data collection I did not think of any financial payment to the interviewees. I only thought of some refreshments and travel cost for the young people who will attend the focus groups. However during the data collection I did not need to provide the refreshments and travel cost as the young people were already an established group that met regularly. Therefore I met with them on their usual meeting days. I encountered the issue of financial payment during a meeting with one of the Metropolitan/District Coordinators who was also in charge of a youth advocacy assembly, and thus a gate-keeper. He demanded GH¢200 (i.e. £100) from me before he will grant me an interview and also for his time in arranging for me to meet the young people. He described the payment as “motivational fee”. As we discussed the ethics of such a payment he queried how beneficial my research was for him personally such that he will “waste” his time and phone credit for me.

As we continued the discussion I kept asking myself, who else could give me access to the young people that I needed for my study. I realised that he was the only one as he was the project manager (gate-keeper) to the project, so I paid the GH¢200. By implication, the decision to pay or not to pay a research participant is dependent on how important the participant is to the study. If the participant is pivotal for the success of the study, or if the participant cannot be easily substituted for a voluntary participant, then the researcher has no option but to pay “motivational fees”.

6.8 Researcher Reflexivity

In accordance with the constructivist paradigm of the study I outline my personal context and how I believe this context might have impacted the research process. Measor and Sikes (1992) have argued that the researcher’s personal context impacts on the research process and also highlight that failure to recognise the researcher’s role in the research process has both methodological and ethical ramifications.

I am a Ghanaian citizen, born and educated in Ghana from primary school to the completion of my undergraduate Social Work degree. I came to the United Kingdom to pursue postgraduate studies at the University College London, where I obtained a Master of Science degree in Development Administration and Planning. After this degree I worked as a Social Worker in Children’s Services for five years before embarking on a PhD study. I have lived in the United Kingdom for 10 years but with intermittent travels to Ghana. This makes me both an insider and an outsider: I am an insider because of my Ghanaian citizenship and familiarity with the customs and traditions of Ghana, while I

could be classified as an outsider because I have been 'westernised' having had western education and living abroad for 10 years. It is argued that "insider researchers" (i. e. those who study a group to whom they share a sense of belonging) are more likely to be accepted by the respondents and thus have access to information that would not ordinarily be given to "outsider researchers" (Teye, 2008). It is counter argued that "outsider researchers" are also more likely to be objective with the information obtained and less likely to distort information as they may not overlook what an "insider researcher" may consider normal (Mohammad, 2001). However, Mullings (1999) argues that these assumptions are often over-stated, and that the advantage of being an "insider" or "outsider" is dependent on the background of the respondents. My position as insider/outsider had some benefits and difficulties in the research process, which are explained below.

A researcher's status (i.e. age, gender, education, class, etc) in relation to research participants has an influence on the quality of data produced (Mohammad, 2001). Cormode and Hughes (1999) argue that researchers face different methodological and ethical challenges when researching participants with varied social statuses. My experiences in the field corroborate Cormode and Hughes argument. While giving all the key informants and young people due respect, I also wanted to exhibit equal power relations with them. However, I experienced different power relations with them; some of them considered me to be too young and in some interviews referred to me as "young man", and exerted more control of the interview process and my access to documents. For example, one key informant did not want to be interviewed in his office because it was too hot and his air conditioner had broken down. I suggested to him that

we could have the interview in my air-conditioned car but he wanted to be interviewed in the open where he could have fresh air. However that meant that there were so much noise in the background and he was frequently interrupted by colleagues passing by. He even called one of his colleagues to sit with him during the interview, although the colleague did not answer any of the questions posed. I could not challenge the presence of his colleague as I did not want to offend him. The interview with him had been re-scheduled twice previously so I was even grateful that he availed himself.

Some other key informants that I was very close in age with saw me as equals and negotiated the interview process on equal terms with me. For example, I was driving to meet with one key informant for an interview at his office when he called me that for some reasons he has to leave the office. Where I was coming from and where he was going he wanted us to meet half-way. We therefore met at the World Bank resource centre in Accra where he booked a room for the interview. On the other hand, the young people perceived me to be a privileged Ghanaian because of my residence abroad (i.e. I have acquired a 'been-to label') and my level of education. The young people were in secondary schools aspiring to continue to university if they obtained the required grades, hence they saw me as a resource person to talk to about university education. Also as I was older than the young people they gave me so much respect and referred to me as 'senior man'. In a nutshell, the power relations that I had with my respondents changed from one group to the other, although I had wanted to maintain equal power relations with them.

As I conducted interviews with the respondents there were occasions when I was seen as an outsider and other occasions when I was considered an insider. The interactions with top state officials at the National Youth Authority could be portrayed as a situation where a young researcher is studying the actions of government elites. As argued by Cormode and Hughes (1999) getting information from such people can be quite difficult. Nonetheless my background had both negative and positive effects in getting information from these elites. Some of the officials were suspicious of my presence and wondered if my research was purely for academic purposes.

I was asked on many occasions whether I was affiliated to UNFPA. I was thus treated as an outsider, who could have interest in getting information for an international organisation. For example, when I requested access to the evaluation reports of the youth advocacy assembly, I was told it was confidential and that non-employees are not allowed to access it. This affected the quality of information that I was able to obtain on issues such as the gender, ethnic, educational and other characteristics of the young people involved in the project. Nonetheless, I was able to obtain information from some elites by virtue of my ethnicity. To these elites, my ethnicity made me an insider. Being an insider meant that they trusted me and gave me information that they would not usually have given out. This however presented some ethical issues for me because I encountered many instances where they would disclose information to me but also implore me not to record or disclose that information.

My positionality with the young people was very different to that of the adults. The young people mostly regarded me as an insider and thus were not

suspicious of me. They were actually interested in my research and were very enthusiastic to share what they have been doing with me. I was even invited to be a participant-observer at one of their live radio sessions, where I was introduced to listeners as a 'special guest'. It is thus evident that the insider-outsider distinction is not a stable description. Indeed the context that I found myself in determined whether I was regarded as an outsider or an insider. Ordinarily, as a Ghanaian returning to Ghana to conduct research I could be presumed to be an insider. However, as the above experiences indicate, it is wrong to make such a presumption.

Also, the very nature of the research presented some access problems which I did not anticipate. The study was concerned with how the government was complying with its obligations under international treaties. Given the issues explored in the study, it is quite possible that some respondents may have given inaccurate responses to present a positive or negative image of the government's commitment to fulfilling international obligations. This is quite important given the politics surrounding the youth policy in Ghana (see chapter 7). My access to the youth authority could have been hampered by this politics as I am a member of a political party that is opposed to the government's handling of the youth policy. My political affiliation could have been known by the leadership of the youth authority, and given the feud between the political parties; the leadership might have decided not to grant me access. This is highly speculative but I find it difficult to understand why the authority did not respond to my request, and I had to gain access through my personal third party contacts. I hasten to add that I undertook the research solely from an

academic perspective with no intention of skewing the results for political activism.

6.9 Summary of research design

<i>Level of decision</i>	<i>Choice</i>
Ontology	Constructivism
Epistemology	Interpretivism
Methodology	Qualitative
Method/strategy	Single case study (Ghana Youth Policy)
Data collection techniques	Individual and group interviews, official documents, and media reports
Unit of analysis	Young people, civil servants and lobbyist/advocates
Organisations studied	National Youth Authority; Strategic Youth Network for Development; Young Men Christian Association
Subject of study	Promotion of Young people's participation in policy making
Theoretical/Conceptual framework	Sociology of Childhood; Children's Rights; Empowerment
Timeline	28 November 2011 – 11 February 2012
Data analysis strategy	Thematic Analysis following Constructivist Grounded Theory, and using Atlas.ti6 computer software

6.10 Network View of Data

Below is a network view of the data analysed, generated from Atlasti.6 computer assisted data analysis programme. These are presented and discussed in details in the next 3 chapters.

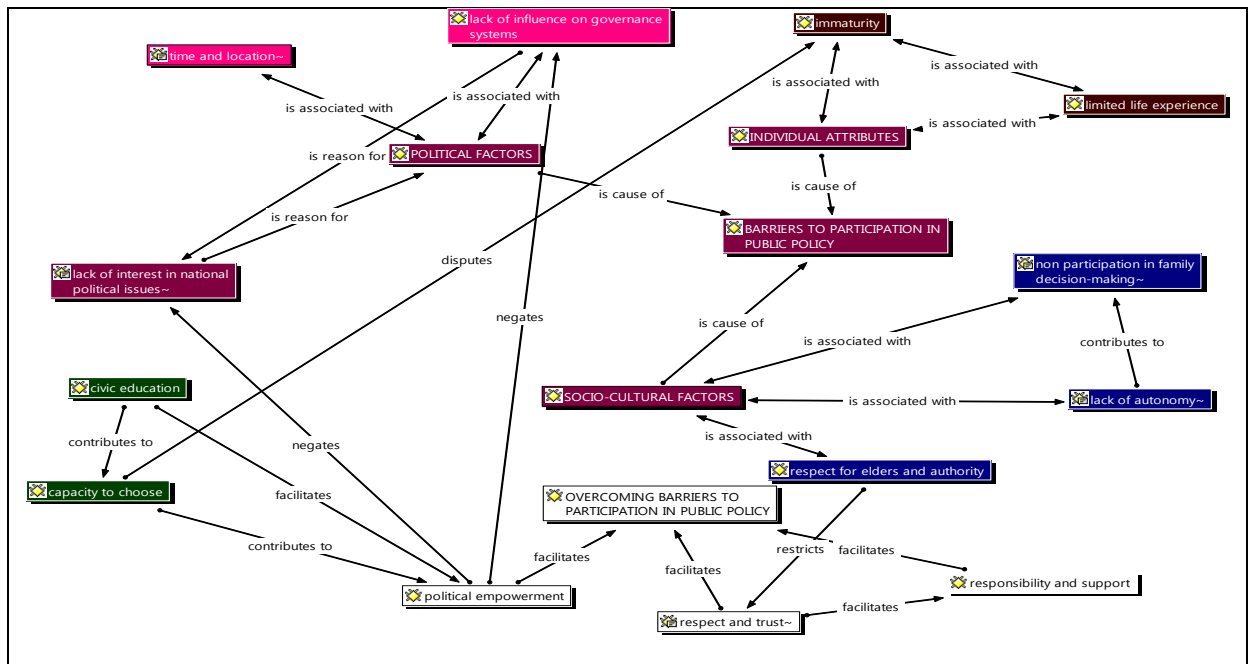


Figure 11: Display of Network View of Data

The arrows describe the relationship between the various themes, categories and sub-categories. For example, the sub-category 'capacity to choose' has a relationship disputing 'immaturity' of young people. The argument was that if young people can choose what they believed to be good for them then they cannot be deemed immature. Also the sub-category 'political empowerment' has a relationship that negates young people's 'lack of influence on governance systems'. In this relationship the argument was that if young people are granted the right to vote then they will no longer lack influence on governance systems. The relationships depicted in the network are discussed in chapters 7 and 8.

CHAPTER 7: YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION IN THE YOUTH POLICY PROCESS

7.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the interviews and focus group discussions; individual interviews were held with 7 male adults and 3 focus group discussions were conducted with 13 young people. This chapter explores answers to the research question 'what is the extent of young people's participation in the policy process?' and 'how is young people's participation in the policy process being promoted in Ghana'? The first section outlines an overview of the policy formulation process to indicate the extent of young people's involvement in the formulation of the youth policy. The second section describes the strategies initiated to promote young people's participation in the implementation of the youth policy.

The key findings and themes that emerged from the data are (1) young people had limited participation in the formulation of the youth policy, (2) young people have limited knowledge and access to the youth policy, (3) there is a secrecy about the policy's implementation action plan, and (4) young people are not participating in drafting the policy's action plan. In presenting the themes interviewees are identified with excerpts of their interview data. The individuals identified have given written permission for them to be identified with excerpts from their interviews. Also in presenting the data, comparison and references are made to the literature, especially UNESCO's (2004) guidance on how to engage young people in the formulation of national youth policies.

7.1 Limited participation in formulating the youth policy

Ghana's effort at formulating the national youth policy was heavily influenced by the requirements of international governmental bodies. According to a senior management official of the National Youth Authority:

Ghana is a member of the UN system, AU and ECOWAS, and being a member of these organisations obligates us to have youth policy to provide the framework for the development of young people. Ghana for that matter had no option but to make sure we obliged to these institutions. Attempts at developing the youth policy started in the late 1990s, when the government drafted a national youth policy in response to the 1995 UN world action plan for youth (Deputy National Coordinator).

Ghana's approach to the formulation of the youth policy reflected the incremental approach to policy formulation (Lindblom, 1959; 1979). Incrementalism posits that policy makers rely on the record of previous policies and make minor adjustments to future policies i.e. "change by small steps" (Lindblom, 1979:517). The youth policy was originally drafted in 1999 but the policy could not be launched for implementation as many criticisms were levelled against it for not actively involving young people and other youth organisations in the drafting of the policy. For example, one of the respondents in this study commented that among the criticisms levelled against the policy was that "it had no action plan for its implementation" (Chibeze Ezekiel, Executive Coordinator of Strategic Youth Network for Development).

With a change in government on 7th January 2001 (from the National Democratic Congress, NDC to the New Patriotic Party, NPP) the 1999 draft policy was abolished and the process of formulating a new youth policy that will engage more young people and youth organisations began. As emphasised by UNESCO (2004), the importance of engaging young people cannot be

underestimated. In formulating the new youth policy the deputy national coordinator reiterated that the youth authority was guided by the provisions in the 1999 policy, a further demonstration of incrementalism in the formulation of the youth policy. According to him:

We looked at the criticisms that were made against the 1999 policy and we consulted with the youth to improve the policy so that all stakeholders will accept it.

7.1.1 Consultation by Invitation

The process of formulating the new policy started with the comprehensive consultation of different youth groups, including those out-of-school, those in-school, universities, and other youth associations, government ministries and departments. However a proviso for the consultation was that groups should register with the National Youth Authority in order to be invited for consultation. The National Youth Authority is mandated under the National Youth Act 1974 to register all youth organisations in the country. According to the Deputy National Coordinator, with the reservoir of youth organisations registered with the youth authority it became easier to involve young people in the formulation of the policy. He noted that the youth authority used the registered organisations to hold what was called 'youth rallies' where young people were given the opportunity to brainstorm what they thought should be incorporated into the policy.

A number of young people in a focus group discussion confirmed their participation in the youth rallies.

I had the opportunity to have a look at the draft policy and if there were some things that were not addressed or not in the document that I think should be considered, I made it known at the conference (Osei-Nuamah, member of Curious Minds).

However, from the perspectives of the young people who reported participating in the consultation process, the process was perceived to be dominated by members of the youth wing of registered political parties.

The study found that the requirement of youth groups and organisations to register with the Youth authority resulted in some groups and organisations' exclusion from participation in the formulation of the youth policy. As commented by a key informant:

We were not consulted as we had not registered with the authority. We have now registered, so now they invite us when they are having consultative meetings (Chibeze Ezekiel, Executive Coordinator of Strategic Youth Network for Development).

A similar view was shared by Mohammed Harmis (Country Director of World Youth Alliance, Ghana Chapter) that his organisation was not invited to any of the consultation exercises simply because his organisation was not registered with the youth authority.

There was general consensus from participants in the study (with the exception of those from the youth authority) that the youth authority did not undertake a wide consultation exercise with young people. In the focus group discussions the participants suggested the youth authority should have advertised widely on TV, radio and newspapers about the consultation exercise, and should have also gone to high schools to solicit the views of more young people instead of narrowly writing to invite organisations to comment on an already drafted policy. Furthermore, with the invitation to youth organisations to contribute to the formulation of the policy it is more likely that the respondents would have been the managers, who are adults. As commented by a young person:

The NYA simply invited youth groups to the rallies but if you look at the people who came to the rally I will not say they are youth. The NYA has forgotten that these organisations are not managed by young people so if you invite them it is old people who will come (Patrick Acquah, member of Curious Minds).

7.1.2 Over-politicised Policy Process

The study also found that the process of formulating the youth policy in Ghana was highly over-politicised, which affected the morale of some young people and youth organisations to contribute to its formulation. It was argued in chapter 5 that politics is an integral part of policy-making (Dowding, 1996; Mooij, 2003; Hallsworth, 2011) since policy is not made in controlled environment with neutral policy-makers. Therefore some 'politics' is expected in the formulation of the Ghana youth policy, but the study found that the youth policy formulation was highly over-politicised to the extent that it took over 10 years for the policy to be launched. The policy was accorded different status depending on the political party in office. For the sake of clarity the year in which the policy was drafted will be tagged to the political party in power. In reviewing the 1999 NDC youth policy the NPP government, assumed office on 7th January 2001, involved the youth leaders of the various political parties in the country. However in reviewing the 2008 NPP youth policy, the NDC government did not involve the youth leaders of the other political parties. This resulted in a situation where the youth of the opposition parties boycotted the launch of the policy by the Vice-President, arguing that the policy was an NDC document and not a national one. This politicking affected enthusiasm in the policy's formulation. As commented by a key informant:

I lost interest in the policy and stopped attending any meetings about it. The NDC and NPP were more interested

in scoring political points so they can say to young people we have a policy for you so therefore vote for us.

Another key informant also noted:

Why must it take more than 10 years to draft one policy and even this current policy has been rejected by the opposition parties? Who knows what they will do if they win the next elections?

According to UNESCO (2004:4) “a youth policy which does not reflect the views, concerns and desires of all young people within their community, will soon fade away through lack of support”.

7.1.3 Time and location

The final factor that led to young people’s limited participation in the youth policy formulation was time and location. The study found that young people had less opportunity to participate in the policy-making because the time and venue of the consultation exercise were unfavourable for them. Hence any participatory effort must ensure that the location and time of the events are favourable to young people to ensure their optimum participation. Young people reported that the time when the consultation exercise (i.e. youth conference and rally) took place was not favourable as they were in school:

Most of us attend boarding school and we could not leave campus without exeats so we could not take part in the youth rallies (Emmanuel Sampson, member of Curious Minds).

Also the young people noted that because the policy consultation exercise only took place in the capital areas/district councils it inhibited their ability to contribute to the policy process. In focus group discussions a young person noted that:

we had to board vehicles to go and express our views. Those without money could not have the opportunity to go and express their views (Edwin Asan, member of Curious Minds).

Hence the young people were of the view that the National Youth Authority should have held the youth conference and rally during the school holidays or should have gone to individual schools to enable more young people to contribute to the formulation of the youth policy.

7.2 Limited Knowledge and Access to the youth policy

Findings from the focus group discussions suggest that the policy is not known to many young people due to difficulties in accessing the policy document. Of the 13 young people involved in the focus group discussions 5 stated that they had knowledge of the policy. However when asked to state what they knew of the policy they said they were present at the launch of the policy by the country's Vice President on 12th August 2010. Apart from their physical presence at the launching of the policy they could not state in any detail the content of the policy. See excerpts of group interview below.

JAG: have any of you heard of the national youth policy?

BM, EEA & ES: yes please.

JAG: you have all heard of it. What do you know about it?

ES: I was there when it was launched by the vice president. What I know is it entails what government plans to do for the youth.

EEA: the policy was launched in August 2010 at Elmina castle. I think the youth policy is about helping the youth in the country.

BM: I was not at the launch but I know it talks about the plans for the youth and what they expect from the youth.

There was a marked difference among the young people involved in the two projects studied with regards to their knowledge of the youth policy. Whereas all the 5 members of the Youth Advocacy Assembly did not even know of the existence of the youth policy, out of the 8 members of Curious Minds 5 knew of the existence of the policy. The difference in knowledge about the policy could be due to the different focus and area of operation of the 2 groups. While Curious Minds operates in all the 10 regional capitals in Ghana, the Youth Advocacy Assembly operates at the district level in 3 regions and therefore more concerned with local youth development. Members of Curious Minds have access to, and interact with policy-makers and politicians at the regional and national level, hence were invited to the launching of the policy. However the Youth Advocacy Assembly does not have access to such policy-makers. Therefore in the formulation of the youth policy members of Curious Minds had the opportunity to contribute at the youth rallies and invitations to meet the National Youth Authority, whilst members of the Youth Advocacy Assembly did not have such an opportunity. In effect knowledge about the youth policy was facilitated by proximity to policy-makers.

7.2.1 Limited access to the youth policy

The study found that access to the youth policy was fraught with difficulty. According to the metropolitan coordinators at the Youth Authority there were limited printed copies available to be distributed to young people. Some members of Curious Minds noted that they have been told to download a copy from the authority's website. The limited availability of the policy is hindering young people's knowledge of the policy.

But for some of us joining Curious Minds we would not have known about the youth policy. How can you read something

that you don't know about or have access to? I had access to download a copy from the internet. But ask yourself, how many young people have access to the internet apart from those of us in the cities (Justine, member of Curious Minds).

7.2.2 Promoting the youth policy

Another issue pertaining to knowledge and access of the youth policy was the methods used in promoting the policy to young people. In an effort to promote the policy to the general public the National Youth Authority launched a national campaign dubbed 'Better Ghana Youth Caravan Project' "to sensitise the youth and also create awareness on the dangers of drug related issues, conflict and HIV/AIDS" (ghana.gov.gh/news, accessed on 12/2/12). This is a nation-wide tour from district to district to promote the tenets of the youth policy. However the young people and other key informants expressed concern about the methods used in the dissemination effort. They described the tours as political campaign platforms.

Better Ghana was the slogan of the NDC in the 2008 elections in which the NDC won. The country is preparing for the December 2012 presidential elections and the NDC is campaigning on the achievements of their Better Ghana Agenda and because they want to win votes from the youth the government is using the youth authority. They call it youth caravan tour but all they are doing is campaigning for vote (Charles Smith, member of Curious Minds).

According to some key informants the caravan tour is frequently led by the political appointees at the national youth authority and other political appointees at the district level such as the district chief executive⁹. Consequently young people who do not share the visions and policies of the NDC government or those who do not vote tended to stay away from the tours, as the tour was

⁹ The district chief executive (DCE) is the representative of the president and the administrative/political head at the district assembly. The occupant is nominated by the president but the district assembly will have to confirm the nominee by 2/3rd majority. The president appoints 1/3rd of the membership of the assembly.

perceived to have become political rallies. This issue run through all the focus group discussions held, as the young people stated that although they were aware of the caravan tours they had not attended any yet because they do not know how beneficial it was to them since they do not vote.

Government has not created enough awareness about the policy among young people. They need to bring more young people on board, by moving from community to community to talk to young people about the policy. Going with politicians in a caravan will not create the needed awareness. As someone who does not vote I don't see the need to go to the caravan tours to listen to promises. The policy should be made readily available so that we know for example that in this sector this is what the government will do for the youth (Patrick Acquah, member of Curious Minds).

The final issue with the promotion of the youth policy is the language used to write the policy. Ghana is officially an English speaking country but there are numerous other Ghanaian languages. The policy is currently only available in the English language, and many young people were of the view that that was a hindrance to the knowledge of and access to the policy.

The policy is also written in only English but we live in a heterogeneous society whereby we have all kinds of languages in Ghana. Is the policy only for people who can read English? We need the document in other languages and formats for the blind and deaf (Maclean Anaman, member of Curious Minds).

7.3 Limited participation in implementing the youth policy

As part of the implementation strategy the youth policy under section 10 required the establishment of a Youth Stakeholders Forum comprising various youth groups. The article states that:

the National Youth Council shall facilitate and institute a Youth Stakeholders Forum that will play an active role with all identifiable youth groups at national, regional and district levels in the implementation of this National Youth Policy.

Consequently number of youth groups committed themselves to this worthy cause and established the National Youth Stakeholders Forum to interact with policy makers at the national level. According to the deputy national coordinator the national youth stakeholders forum was intended to:

serve as a pilot exercise that was to be replicated at the regional and district level to ensure the comprehensive engagement of young people from the national to community levels.

However, the National Youth Stakeholders Forum could not be replicated across the country, as the national one was dissolved under circumstances that are not so clear. There are different views about the dissolution of the stakeholders forum. According to the deputy national coordinator the stakeholders forum was dissolved on the completion of its task. However other key informants are of the view that the stakeholders forum was dissolved due to internal power struggles between officers of the National Youth Authority and the young people from the various youth groups. The key informants suggested that the youth authority was unhappy that the National Youth Stakeholders Forum was chaired by representatives from the youth groups, while the youth groups were also unwilling to have a chair from the youth authority. They believed a chair from the youth authority could compromise their stand in relation to the authority. There was a perception that some members of the stakeholders forum were co-opted by the youth authority with invitations to attend international conferences, support in fund raising and other incentives to antagonise the leadership of the stakeholders forum. This led to internal wrangling and as a result the national youth stakeholders forum was dissolved.

However, another group of youth development organisations has been formed (known as the Coalition of Youth Development Organisations in Ghana) to have a united voice to input into the implementation of the youth policy. Nonetheless from my observations this organisation does not command the same status as that of the National Youth Stakeholders Forum. The Ministry of Youth and Sports has instituted its own implementation team with oversight responsibility for ensuring effective implementation of the youth policy. The team has representations from (1) the deputy minister for youth and sports, (2) Ministry of local government and rural development, (3) Ministry of education, (4) Ministry of youth and sports, (5) National youth authority, and (6) Office of the president.

One interesting observation about the Ministry of Youth and Sports' implementation team is that there is no young person or representative from any of the youth groups in the country on this implementation team, which is straight forwardly against the spirit and letter of the youth policy that seeks "to institutionalise youth participation at *all levels* of the decision-making process" (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2010:7 emphasis added). With the dissolution of the stakeholders forum and the non-representation of young people on the new implementation team, young people are not actively participating in the policy's implementation committee.

7.3.1 Secrecy of the Action Plan

Young people's limited participation in the implementation process is further compounded by secrecy about the policy's implementation action plan. The study found that there was confusion about the existence or non-existence of the action plan. Whereas the youth policy explicitly states in section 11.3.1 that *the national youth council in collaboration with relevant stakeholders has*

developed the national action plan for the implementation of this policy, the district and metropolitan coordinators of the national youth authority reported that they were not aware of the existence of the action plan. According to UNESCO (2004) national youth policies should be integrated into a country's overall development plan. Without such integration the formulated policy is bound to be futile and an inefficient exercise. As emphasised by UNESCO (2004:22) "youth policies need to be related to and coordinated with sectoral policies and relate to the overarching objectives for national development". An action plan will outline in greater details how the formulated youth policy is to be implemented and incorporated into the national development plan. UNESCO (2004:24) asserts that an action plan is "a strategic and holistic document incorporating all the major stakeholders and should clearly define the specific actions to be undertaken, when they will be undertaken and by whom in order to meet the priorities of the policy".

In focus group discussions the young people commented on the non-availability of the action plan, as below:

It is lamentable that the youth authority cannot clear the cloud surrounding what should have been a simple issue but for whatever reason has become a mystery, the existence or not of an action plan for the implementation of the youth policy (Emmanuel Osei, member of Curious Minds).

we are told there is an action plan for the implementation of the policy but no one has seen a copy. It should be made available so that we know for example that in this sector this is what the government will do for the youth (Patrick Acquah, member of Curious Minds).

The over-politicisation of the youth policy process affected the willingness of some key informants to talk about it. There was reluctance on the part of some

key informants at the National Youth Authority to talk about the action plan. For example, the Deputy National Coordinator stated:

we have worked on the action plan with an indicative budget. It is only left with some fine tuning. When everything is done it will surely come out.

This response suggested that the action plan has not been fully developed yet, but when questioned about the statement in the youth policy that the action plan was fully developed, he declined to comment. Other key informants from the National Youth Authority were also reluctant to answer any question relating to the action plan, explaining that they did not want to comment on political issues.

According to UNESCO “national youth policies must be translated into local youth policy if it is to respond in a way that is flexible and appropriate to the particular needs, wants and culture of a specific population” (UNESCO, 2004:24). UNESCO further emphasises that to effectively translate national youth policies into local youth policies it is essential to include local and regional agencies in the development of programmes in the action plan. This does not seem to be what is happening in the development of the action plan in Ghana. Although the Deputy National Coordinator said they did not want to sit in Accra (i.e. the Capital City of Ghana) and think of activities that can be done in communities, it appears that is exactly what is happening. This is due to the assertion of 2 metropolitan coordinators that the action plan is being developed in Accra, which would be sent to them for implementation. They bemoaned this development and argued for each district or metropolitan area to develop its own action plan to make it relevant to the young people in their catchment area.

In spite of the reluctance to answer questions on the development of the action plan, the study found that 15-17 year olds were not involved in the development of the action plan although some of them were 'consulted' during the formulation of the policy. The study could not confirm whether there is an action plan or not for the implementation of the youth policy because of the secrecy about the action plan. What is however evident is that the study's population (i.e. 15-17 year olds) were not involved in the development of the policy's implementation strategy. In an answer to a question on how the authority was involving this age group in the development of the action plan, the Deputy National Coordinator stated:

looking at their ages they are either preparing for the Junior High School examinations or may be entering Senior High School. It is inappropriate to burden them with such things. They should be left alone to concentrate on their studies.

He reiterated that the young people being involved in the development of the action plan are mostly from the universities and the youth wing of the political parties.

7.4 Promoting young people's participation in implementing the youth policy

The study found that in spite of the secrecy of the action plan for the youth policy, the Youth Authority was actually implementing aspects of the policy. This section presents the strategies the youth authority was using to promote young people's participation in policy-making and public decision-making in the country. The Youth Authority has different strategies at different levels in the country. The strategies are (1) advocacy at the local level, (2) broadcast media

at the regional level, and (3) governance and use of communication technology at the national level.

7.4.1 Advocacy

The Youth Authority has set up a youth advocacy assembly at the local/district level for young people to engage with local politicians and street-level bureaucrats to influence decision-making at the local level. Membership is open to all young people aged between 15 and 22 years, and in junior and senior high schools. At meetings the advocates discuss youth concerns and pass a resolution for the relevant government department to consider and take appropriate action. However there was perception among the advocates that they did not have the power or authority to implement their resolution. They reiterated that more often some of the relevant institutions rejected their resolutions without offering any explanation as to why the resolutions could not be implemented (see excerpt of focus group discussion below).

CA: getting many decision-makers to be interested in issues concerning the youth and sending petitions to the decision-makers for implementation is sometimes frustrating. If they don't like what we suggest they just dump it.

JEA: I concur with what she said and also add that we were instrumental in sending information to decision-makers that helped them to put a stop to some negative activities in the municipality such as child prostitution and drug smuggling. But when we passed a resolution on some sanitation issues we did not hear anything about that from the municipal assembly.

BPA: actually when we identify a problem and present to the Metropolitan Chief Executive and others they take action. I remember when we identified a structure that was being used for child prostitution the authorities accepted our resolution and demolished the structure. But they did not accept our resolution that the place should be turned into a small park for children.

SM: yes we were so passionate about the children's park but we did not have the power to get it done. I believe that if we were the people taking the decision we would have constructed the park.

CA: yes they did not accept all the resolutions but they could have given us some explanations.

According to the young people, they are given travel and refreshment allowance of ¢5 (£2) for their attendance at youth advocacy assembly sessions. There was the view that the long term sustainability of the advocacy strategy was uncertain as the Youth Authority was struggling with funds for the project. As suggested by a key informant:

without the funding from our sponsors the youth advocacy assembly is likely to collapse as the authority does not have adequate resources to continue with the project (Mensah-Etsibah, Director of Organisations and Programmes at the National Youth Authority).

According to him it was expected that the district assemblies would integrate the youth advocacy assembly into their strategy of involving young people but the district assemblies have been reluctant to sponsor the project. One metropolitan coordinator stated:

further to the success of the advocacy assembly in reducing child prostitution we approached the metropolitan assembly to fund the project but they said they did not have funds for that.

Another metropolitan coordinator had some success with district assembly funding. He reported that his local assembly funded the advocacy assembly in his district but only for one year. The district assembly reviewed the project and concluded that:

the youth advocacy assembly had no strategic importance to the district assembly. But the youth advocacy assembly was instrumental in busting a drug smuggling syndicate that was using children and young people as couriers at a fishing harbour.

7.4.2 Broadcast Media

At the regional level the Youth Authority is promoting young people's participation through the use of broadcast media, in particular radio. The Youth Authority in conjunction with the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation has

established a radio talk programme called Curious Minds in all the 10 regional capitals of Ghana. The young people are aged between 8 and 25 years who are in primary school, junior high school, senior high school and university. To facilitate greater inclusion the programme is run twice a week; one is in English and the other one in a local language.

Members of Curious Minds meet regularly to examine current events affecting the youth and choose an issue for discussion during the live on-air show. Policy-makers and politicians are invited to the programme to share ideas with young people. Other young people also contribute to the discussions through phone-in segment. However, the young people in this project were also unhappy about level of seriousness given to them and the non-influence of their discussions in decision-making, as depicted by the excerpts below.

PA: Our politicians don't come when we invite them to the studio but they are always scrambling to appear on the other shows. During the debate on the duration of senior schools, we invited the minister of education to our programme but he did not come and we did not receive any apologies. I don't think our politicians take what say here seriously.

MJA: It's true, what we discuss here does not matter to our politicians. All of us in this studio and young people in other Curious Minds programme argued against changing the duration of secondary education but they did not listen. They changed it to 4 years and 2 years later they have brought it back to 3 years causing inconvenience and confusion for students.

EA: initially we argued against changing it to 4 years but when the changes were made then we said okay let the new system operate so we can compare the 2 systems. But a new government came and decided they didn't like the changes so reversed to the old system. They have not listened to the views of the young people who have been affected by the changes. We just talk and they do what they please and we have no power to force them to listen to what we are saying.

7.4.3 Governance and Information Communication Technology

At the national level the Youth Authority was promoting young people participation in governance through the establishment of a national youth parliament to accord young people the opportunity to influence national policy decision and inculcate in young people democratic values and principles. As would be seen in chapter 8 young people's non-participation in governance systems is identified as a barrier to their participation in public policy processes. Accordingly establishing the national youth parliament is a very laudable idea in creating new spaces to involve young people in political activities and governance systems.

However, some young people are concerned about the membership of the youth parliament.

The national youth parliament is made up of only representatives of the various youth parliaments that have been established in the universities and polytechnics. What about those of us in high schools? (Maclean Anaman, member of Curious Minds).

As membership of the youth parliament is limited to polytechnics and universities, 15-17 year old young people who are mostly in junior high school and senior high school are thus excluded from the national youth parliament. The exclusion of the 15-17 years age group from the national youth parliament adds credence to the perception of the young people from the focus group that because they are not yet voters they are not taken seriously in national development dialogues. It is worth mentioning that all students at tertiary institutions are eligible to vote, therefore they are a constituency to be pleased unlike students in junior and senior high schools who are predominantly ineligible to vote.

Also, some key informants are fearful that membership of the youth parliament would be dominated by members from the youth wing of the political party in power. The quotes below illustrate this fear:

leadership elections in tertiary institutions though it is meant to be non-partisan, have become highly influenced by the political affiliation of the candidates. The political parties see the student leadership contest as an avenue to groom future leaders, therefore the political parties clandestinely sponsor some of their youth members to contest the student leadership elections (Reginald Crabbe, Secretary of YMCA, Accra).

People are nominated to the youth parliament. They don't contest to be elected by young people. My fear is that the youth parliament will become an appendage of the youth wing of the political parties (Chibeze Ezekiel, Executive Coordinator, SYND).

7.4.3.1 Information Communication Technology

Through the use of the internet the Youth Authority is promoting young people's participation in the discussion of parliamentary business. The Youth Authority has established an electronic platform on its website to collate views of young people about issues that are of interest to young people that are being discussed by the National Parliament. The collated views are then presented to the respective parliamentary committee for consideration.

As this platform is internet based, there is no age limit on who can input onto the platform. Therefore children, young people and adults can make use of the facility. However the electronic platform is only available to people who have access to the internet and as internet access is currently available only in the urban areas in Ghana, young people in rural areas' participation in the discussions on the platform is more likely to be hindered.

7.5 Conclusion

The preceding presentation indicates that to a very large extent 15-17 years old young people (defined as minors by the African youth charter) have not been active participants in the formulation and implementation of the youth policy. This is primarily due to their invisibility in political activities, as participation in the youth policy process was dominated by political considerations such that youth groups that do not share the government's ideology were excluded from the process. Furthermore, the limited consultation offered to 15-17 year old young people had a strong urban bias and consultations were held in only English language. Consequently, those unable to speak or understand English, disabled young people and young people in rural areas were not involved in the policy process. The success of the policy is however dependent on effective and adequate representation (UNESCO, 2004).

It is conventional to develop an action plan to implement youth policies (UNESCO, 2004). Countries such as Bahrain, Dominica, India, Kenya, Pakistan, Malaysia, South Africa and Uganda have publicly launched action plan to implement their youth policies (Angel, 2005). However, the action plan for the implementation of the youth policy in Ghana is shrouded in secrecy. The national youth policy of Ghana is due to be reviewed in 2015 but with the secrecy surrounding the action plan, I am wondering what indicators will be used to measure the effectiveness of the policy. As noted by angel (2005:42) it is important for youth policies to "define specific results indicators to enable results to be measured". In spite of the secrecy about the action plan, Ghana has fulfilled its international obligation to have an integrated and comprehensive youth policy. Youth policy in some countries in Europe, e.g. UK is a collection of

pieces of sectoral policies that have not been put together into a single and integrated document called national youth policy, which countries were encouraged to do as part of the World programme of action of youth to the year 2000 and beyond (UN, 1995).

Also, the model of participation accorded the minors in the formulation of the policy were ad-hoc consultations and there are no ongoing processes that bring these minors and policy makers together for continued dialogue in addressing the needs and aspirations of this group of young people. The Youth Parliament was an effort to establish formal ongoing dialogue. However, these minors were excluded from membership of the youth parliament. More so, the focus of the participation efforts has a strong urban bias. The advocacy, broadcast media, youth parliament and ICT were all operating in the major cities. Young people in the rural areas and small towns are again excluded from participating in the policy process. Also, even in the urban areas the study could not confirm if the strategies actually led to increased participation. To do this would have warranted data on the number of participants in the initial stages and the number of participants currently involved. However, this was beyond the scope of the study.

Relating the model of participation used to promote young people's participation in the implementation of the youth policy to the typologies of participation discussed in chapter 1, it seems that the situation in Ghana depicts the *assigned but informed* domain of Treseder's model (1997) where adults decide on the projects and young people volunteer for the projects. [See page 21 for Treseder's model]. The projects i.e. advocacy, broadcast media, youth

parliament, and internet platform were all initiated by adults with young people volunteering for the projects.

Finally, the National Youth Authority by virtue of its dependence on government funding and political orientation has been vulnerable to political interference and thus denying young people an independent and effective youth advocacy mechanism. As already mentioned the top echelon of the authority is staffed with members of the ruling political party and it can be argued that this is not likely to change as the convention has been that successive governments staff the authority with members of their political parties.

CHAPTER 8: BARRIERS TO YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION IN POLICY

8.0 Introduction

As discussed in chapter 7 young people's participation in the formulation and implementation of the youth policy was very limited. The study identified a number of reasons accounting for such limited participation. This chapter outlines the barriers to young people's participation in the formulation and implementation of public policy generally. The chapter explores answers to the following research questions; (1) are there barriers to involving young people in the policy process? and (2) how can young people's participation in the policy process be enhanced? The first section of the chapter is devoted to outlining the barriers to young people's participation, while the second section looks at overcoming the barriers. The final section presents young people's motivation to participate.

8.1 Barriers to Young People's Participation

These have been grouped into three factors: individual attributes, socio-cultural factors, and political factors.

8.1.1 Individual Attributes

These are factors inherent in young people that are perceived to limit their capacity to contribute to national development process. The individual attributes identified in the study were perceived immaturity and limited life experience.

8.1.1.1 Perceived Immaturity

The study found that young people were perceived to lack the maturity required to participate in public decision-making. They were thought of as mentally and

emotionally immature and are therefore incapable of making logical arguments in policy debates. As commented by a key informant:

There is a belief that 15-17 year old young people are not matured yet, that this group of young people cannot take decisions for themselves, how much more contribute to government policy? (Mohammed Harmis, Country Director – World Youth Alliance, Ghana).

Mohammed's statement has a cultural underpinning that will be discussed later under socio-cultural factors. The young people also gave their opinion on why they are not involved in public decision-making;

I think they see the youth to have small brains, our thinking is not as the adults. But we should be allowed to say what we want to say even with our small brains (Bernard Mark, member of Curious Minds).

I also think we are seen as children and as we say children only think about themselves. So they think our thinking is shallow, we can't think of things that will benefit others (Edwin Asan, member of Curious Minds).

It is believed that young people talk non-sense and cannot think seriously. They fear that young people will be arrogant if given the chance to sit with the elders. The young person might think that he is one of them and may do things not expected of him. As the proverb says a matured child could dine with the elders, but I don't think our society considers teenagers as matured children (Sophia Mensah, member of Youth Advocacy Assembly).

The maturity or immaturity of children and young people is a subject of much controversy. As discussed in chapter 4, section 4.1 making rational and autonomous decisions is the mark of maturity and this group of people are regarded as lacking that ability (Hart, 1982).

8.1.1.2 Limited Life Experience

Some key informants stated that young people are not involved in policy-making because they lack the experience and knowledge base needed for evidence-based policy-making. In other words young people lack the practical knowledge

and work experience that is needed as the evidence to inform policy debates, a point illustrated by the remarks below:

15-17 year age group do not have much life experience even though their theoretical knowledge base can be quite appreciable. They can go and read about certain things but their limited life experience will limit their ability to contribute to decision-making as they do not have any anecdotal evidence to guide their decisions (Deputy National Coordinator of National Youth Authority).

Other key informants corroborated this statement. For example, Reginald Crabbe (Secretary of Young Men Christian Association) argued that;

we want to promote youth participation in decision-making but we are looking at areas where they have experience so that they can share their knowledge and experiences in order to enrich the decision made. We cannot say let's involve them in road construction policy for example. That would be non-sensical since the young people have no experience in road construction.

8.1.2 Socio-cultural Factors

The second barrier to young people's participation is categorised into socio-cultural factors. These are practices embedded in Ghana's social structure that limit the capacity of young people to contribute to public policy processes. Socio-cultural ideologies to a very large extent determine children's perception of themselves and that of adults. The socio-cultural factors identified in the study are respect for elders; lack of autonomy; and non-participation in family decision-making.

8.1.2.1 Respect for elders and authority

It was reported by some young people that their participation in the formulation of the youth policy was limited due to their inability to challenge the limited scope of the consultation exercise because they did not want to be seen as disrespectful. In focus group discussions a young person commented that:

some of us were tagged as disrespectful and culturally immature simply because we tried to challenge officials about some of the things been discussed at the youth conference. I believe they deliberately avoided those of us tagged as controversial whenever we raised our hands to make a contribution. I think this contributed to the small number of young people seen towards the end of the 3 day conference because they did not see the point of being there if you are not given the chance to talk (Osei-Nuamah, member of Curious Minds).

Although some other factors could have contributed to the dwindling number of young people by the end of the conference, it is important to highlight that the young people believed respect for elders limited their ability to challenge officials. As argued by Sophia Mensah often the elders “fear that young people will be arrogant if given the chance to sit with the elders” and may disrespect them because “the young person might think that he is one of them”. This perhaps implies that the upper rungs of some of the participation typologies discussed in chapter 1 may not be applicable in Ghana. Respect for elders and authority is further discussed in chapter 9, section 9.1.2.

8.1.2.2 Lack of autonomy

In chapter 2 dimensions of childhood was discussed i.e. the points at which a child could be considered different from an adult and it was noted that one of such points is autonomy (being responsible for ones deeds). If a person does not have the capability, for whatever reasons, to take important decisions in their life then such a person has not attained ‘personhood’ in Ghanaian culture. Children and young people are dependent on adults (mostly their parents) for all major decisions about their lives: to marry, choice of school or college, pocket money etc. For this reason they are seen as lacking the capability to take decisions for themselves. Consequently, if they are unable to take such

decisions for themselves then they cannot contribute to national decision-making and to the governance of a country. As noted under section 8.1.2 children and young people are perceived to lack life/work experience to bring to discussions on national issues. Some key informants argued that young people do not have the required experience primarily because they are not given the autonomy to take decisions for themselves. For example, Mohammed Harmis (Country Director, World Youth Alliance) commented that;

I do not think that many parents in Ghana will allow their 15-17 years old son or daughter to go and look for work even if the young person wants to work.

Hence as young people are culturally deemed to lack autonomy to take important decisions in their life, they are also perceived to lack the capacity to contribute to evidence based policy-making.

8.1.2.3 Non-participation in family decision-making

As argued by Ochaita and Espinosa (1997) the family is the ideal place to practice participation in decision-making. However the preceding discussions indicate that the lack of autonomy and respect for elders do not only inhibit children and young people's participation in policy-making but also in family decision-making. It is common knowledge that in most countries children and young people are routinely not consulted when decisions are made in the family and community levels, hence the phrase 'children are seen but not heard' (UNAIDS, 2004). The young people reported that public policy-makers, who are also family and community members, often transfer their attitudes at home to the work place. Consequently they (policy-makers) design policies for children and young people as a group without considering the necessity of consulting

them. Other key informants made similar comments about the transfer of attitude;

Even in our family lifestyle a father does not consult his children before making decisions for them so once they get into office they transfer the home attitude into office by deciding what they think the youth need. They don't even ask whether the youth like it or not, they push it down your throat (Chibeze Ezekiel, Executive Coordinator SYND).

8.1.3 Political Factors

The final barrier to young people's participation in policy-making is categorised as political factors. These are factors inherent in the political organisation of the country that inhibit young people's participation in policy. The factors identified are political upheavals and violence; and lack of understanding and influence in governance systems.

8.1.3.1 Political Upheavals and Violence

Ghana has endured a number of political upheavals since independence and returned to democratic governance in 1992 (see section 9.1.1 in chapter 9 for more on political upheavals in Ghana). Although the country has had 6 successful elections, campaigning for these elections have not been without violence and death. There are several reported stories of violence and death at political campaign platforms orchestrated by political opponents. The violence and risk of death do not enable parents to encourage their children to participate in political activities, as illustrated by the quotes below:

the frequent political violence has resulted in a situation where families do not want their children to attend political rallies in order not to put themselves at risk (Metropolitan Coordinator at the National Youth Authority).

in selecting young people for the young advocacy assembly some parents did not agree to their children's participation because they do not want their children to be involved in dirty

politics. I had to personally go and meet some parents to explain to them that the youth advocacy assembly was not about getting their children into politics (Metropolitan Coordinator at the National Youth Authority).

Also when a young person shows interest in political issues he or she is not encouraged to develop that interest. A 15 year old girl reported that she loved watching 'talking point' (a political discussion programme on TV) but her father disliked it so whenever the programme was on air the TV channel was changed to watch movies. Her father always retorted:

what do you know about politics or why are you interested in politics, you don't even have a vote (Justine, member of Curious Minds).

8.1.3.2 Lack of Influence on governance system

The study found that children and young people were perceived to lack understanding and influence in governance systems and therefore cannot contribute meaningfully to public decision-making. According to the regional secretary of YMCA;

Young people are not so informed of the issues at the table, and they don't know the right tactics to engage duty bearers in order to meaningfully influence decisions (Reginald Crabbe)

The young people however stated that their perceived lack of understanding of governance system is directly related to their non-participation in the exercise of democratic franchise. As commented by a young person:

In national policies the government is looking at pleasing voters to ensure a renewal of its mandate to rule the country. Since 15-17 years old people do not vote the government does not see the need to please us because we have no direct influence in whether a government stays or goes out of power (Clara Annan, member of Youth Advocacy Assembly).

Thoughts that children and young people are apolitical are well established (Save the children, 2012; Wyness, 2001). Therefore to involve young people in political activities and governance systems require creating new spaces for young people and allowing them to vote. Clara's statement generated a lot of discussions on whether the voting age should be reduced. As can be seen from the interview guide and focus group protocol (appendix 2 and 3) there was no question on voting but from the discussions at the focus group, other interviewees were asked whether the voting age should be reduced. See section 8.2.3 for discussions on the voting age.

8. 2 Overcoming the Barriers to Young People's Participation

This section outlines how the research participants thought the barriers to young people's participation in policy-making could be overcome. Some of the measures reported by the young people and key informants are respect and trust; responsibility and support; and political empowerment.

8.2.1 Respect and Trust

It was argued under the barriers to participation that unidirectional flow of respect from children and young people to elders and authority and their perceived immaturity was a hindrance to young people's participation. Unsurprisingly the young people reported that to enhance their participation policy-makers must show respect for their personhood and consider their views as worthy of solicitation whether what they have to say would be meaningful or not. In other words they reject the argument in section 8.1.1.1 and 8.1.1.2 that they are immature and have limited life experience hence they would not have anything meaningful to contribute to policy making. They argued that policy makers must appreciate their unique knowledge base, their strengths and

complement their shortfalls by dialoguing with them, explaining decisions and actions in a respectful way. According to the young people:

the idea that children should be seen and not heard should be discarded. They should trust our knowledge and give us a chance (Emmanuel Samson, member of Curious Minds).

well for me I think it is a matter of respect. They have to respect our very being and our human rights. They must listen to us even if we talk non-sense (Sophia Mensah, member of youth advocacy assembly).

8.2.2 Responsibility and Support

The study found that when young people are given appropriate responsibility and witness their influence on community action they are encouraged to participate. The young people reported that giving them the opportunity to assume responsibility for undertaking certain tasks increases their participation in projects. For example, leaders of the youth advocacy assembly reported that their participation increased dramatically to the point where they did not want to miss a meeting after they were given responsibility for collecting evidence of child prostitution and the involvement of children in drug trafficking. They also reported been involved in the discussion of what was to be done with the evidence collected, which resulted in a decision to demolish a dilapidated building that was been used as a brothel for child prostitution at night. According to a young person:

in most situations if they give us leadership positions we can demonstrate our competence as we did in the child prostitution case. We can do more in other cases if our elders give us the chance and support us (Sophia Mensah, member of youth advocacy assembly).

As noted in the above quote, related to been given responsibility, is the issue of support to discharge that responsibility. Young people need support if they are to successfully participate in what is predominantly an adult dominated sphere.

Policy formulation is a process that takes time and as identified in the barriers to participation in policy formulation most young people have limited knowledge of the process. Therefore young people require support to learn about the process and to join in. The young people in this study identified financial resources, training and culturally appropriate communication skills as some of the support they require. As argued by Baaba Ashun (member of youth advocacy assembly) “our politicians should train us and involve us in their activities so that we can learn from them”. Other key informants reiterated that without support young people cannot really change what is essentially an adult establishment. In this regard, Reginald Crabbe (Secretary of Young Men Christian Association) argued that;

it is important that we as adults support to build the voice of young people, a voice that would be listened to. We need to train young people who are able to identify issues, frame them appropriately and adopt the right tactics and approaches in engaging duty bearers.

8.2.3 Political Empowerment

In chapter 7 it was argued that there was an overwhelming domination of the youth wing of political parties’ involvement in the formulation of the youth policy. It was also argued that the ongoing participatory initiative (i.e. the youth parliament) is the exclusive preserve of youth of voting age. It is therefore not surprising that the young people in this study identified that their surest way to participate in public policy formulation is to possess political capital (i.e. the ability to vote and be voted for in either local or national elections). They contend that their enfranchisement would compel politicians and policy makers to engage with them as they would have an influence in the governance systems in the country.

As argued earlier it is generally acknowledged that politics plays a crucial role in the formulation of public policies (Hill, 2009; Birkland, 2005), conversely policies also produce politics (Pierson, 1993). Tacitly therefore one cannot effectively be involved in policy formulation without involvement in some politics of a sort. The young people in the focus group discussions unanimously argued that the voting age should be reduced to 15 years. Other key informants agreed with the views of the young people about the voting, whilst some key informants disagreed.

The young people strongly believed that they would be more involved or engaged in national or local policies if they had the power to determine who ruled at the national and local levels. In other words if young people possessed political capital they would become a constituency that a government must please and canvass to seek their mandate. All the young people involved in this study argued for a reduction in the voting age to 15 years. There was however disagreement among the adult participants in the study; some supported the call for lowering the voting age, others argued to maintain the status quo. In supporting the call to lower the voting age, the Deputy National Coordinator argued that;

it is logical because if you want to involve 15-17 year old people in decision-making at the national level, exercising their franchise will give them greater impetus.

Mohammed Harmis (Country Director – World Youth Alliance, Ghana) disclosed that his organisation has been lobbying through the African Union to get African governments to lower the voting age to 15 years to reflect youth participation as captured in the African youth charter. The African youth charter states under

Article 11 that *every young person shall have the right to participate in all spheres of society*. The charter defines a young person as one between the ages of 15 and 35 years, hence denying 15-17 year olds the opportunity to partake in voting is a violation of their rights under the African youth charter.

The key informants who disagreed with the call to lower the voting age argued that 15-17 years old young people do not understand the rudiments of politics and the issues raised. They called for a period of civic education for young people since they do not yet understand the issues on offer, believing that civic education can help 15-17 year olds to make informed choices when they turn 18. For example, Chibeze Ezekiel (Executive Coordinator, Strategic Youth Network for Development) argued that;

the assumption of voting is that matured people make well-informed decisions and since people mature at 18 years voting should remain at 18 years when they can understand the policies and proposals of candidates.

Mohammed Harmis counter-argued that:

Well understanding the issues you do not have to be older. Even there are many older people who do not understand the issues yet they vote. In any case voters do not understand or agree with all the policies of candidates before voting for them. Some vote for a candidate because they like some of that candidate's policies and I think 15 years old people have the mental capacity to like or dislike some policies. At the age of 15 they enter secondary schools where they think about abstract concepts and make practical sense of these concepts. Therefore they are wise enough to be civically competent (Mohammed Harmis, Country Director – World Youth Alliance Ghana).

Also the argument about the immaturity of 15-17 year old young people highly undermines the spirit of youth participation. Seeking to promote youth participation in public policy and denying young people the opportunity to vote

on the presumption that they are immature is superfluous. If voting to choose a candidate is a matured task that cannot be done by 15-17 year olds, then how can they contribute to debates and discussions about policy options, which require negotiation skills and intellectual acumen? It can be concluded that if 15-17 year old young people are not matured to vote then they are not matured to participate in deliberations about policy options. However such arguments are flawed bearing in mind that voting was once the exclusive preserve of men aged 21 and over. Could it have been argued that 18-20 years old people were not matured to vote or that women at whatever age were not matured to vote? Just as it was argued by feminists and the women suffrage movement that the denial of voting rights to women was the result of patriarchal patronage, it can also be argued that the denial of voting rights to young people is as a result of 'gerontocratic' patronage. As argued by an adult informant;

giving 15-17 old the right to vote and be voted for in elections will be chaotic. Just imagine a parliament full of teenagers or that teenagers become mayors and ministers, they will think they are now equal or superior to their elders and may disrespect them.

This resonates with the discussion on socio-cultural factors, discussed in section 8.1.2 that respect for elders and authority inhibits young people's participation. Whereas some of the adult informants use respect for elders and reverence to authority as a reason to deny young people the opportunity to fully contribute in the political sphere of society, all the young people involved in this study believed that empowering them to actively influence and shape the political sphere is the surest way to ensure their participation in policy making and implementation.

However, the CRC excluded children and young people from politics on the basis that “the very status of a child means in principle the child has no political rights” (cited in Wyness, 2001:198). Nonetheless, with the African Youth Charter calling on African governments to respect the right of every young person to participate in all spheres of society, young people’s demand for enfranchisement is not without merit.

8.3 Motivation to Participate

In spite of the barriers to young people’s participation (as discussed previously) young people in the focus group discussions expressed that they actually want to be involved in the policy process. The young people involved in Curious Minds and Youth Advocacy Assembly speak highly of their involvement. Their motivation to participate in the 2 projects can be categorised into altruistic desires, and self interest. There was however a marked gender difference in their reasons for participating in the projects. This observation was made by comparing the actual words used by the young people. It was observed that the motivations given by the young people reflected gender stereotype of masculinity and femininity. Masculinity emphasises wealth acquisition and ambition, while femininity stresses caring and nurturing roles (Hofstede, 2001). Whereas the motivation given by the girls could be categorised into altruistic desires (feminine traits) that of the boys were self interest (masculine traits). See table below.

Motivation for participating	Boys	Girls
Self interest	Exposure	
	Skills development	
	Financial reward	
Altruistic desires		Patriotism
		Youth mouth piece
		Champion women's empowerment

Table 3: Young people's motivation to participate

8.3.1 Altruistic Desires

This is where the young people participated to represent a cause or for the benefit of other young people rather than themselves. Some of the reasons under altruistic desire are championing women's empowerment, patriotism and youth mouthpiece.

8.3.1.1 Championing women's empowerment

The young girls argued that because girls and women have been marginalised for too long they wanted to take the opportunity accorded them in the project to showcase what given the opportunity girls and for that matter women can do.

According to Clara Annan (member of youth advocacy assembly);

girls' empowerment is very important to me so I actively sought leadership position in the assembly. I did not want the boys to lead everything and I'm glad I was selected as the chair. I hope I did an excellent job to demonstrate that girls too can be good leaders.

8.3.1.2 Patriotism

The young girls reported wanting to be part of the project in order to help solve some of the problems facing their local area.

I'm being patriotic. I wanted to address the problems that we were facing, I wanted to voice them out to the public so that something can be done about the problems. Once I help to solve some problems in my district I am helping to solve problems in this country (Baaba Ashun, member of youth advocacy assembly).

Another young person stated;

nobody pays for our participation. It is a voluntary job. We are happy that as young people we are making inputs into decision-making to help make this country a better place for all of us. I love my country, that is why every Saturday I come to this radio station to talk to my fellow youth (Justine, member of Curious Minds).

8.3.1.3 Youth mouthpiece

The young girls reported taking part in the project as a representative of young people in the metropolis and through that demonstrate the capacity of young people.

Our participation in the project will benefit other young people and the elders can see that the youth too can do something good (Justine, member of Curious Minds).

Another young girl commented that;

you know the district assembly does a lot of things in this area, and being a member of the youth advocacy one can tell what the youth in this area want to the district assembly officials. As the Chair of the advocacy assembly I met with the metropolitan chief executive several times to discuss what the youth wanted in the metropolis (Clara Annan, member of youth advocacy assembly).

Thus the young girls saw the project as an avenue to demonstrate their competence to adults and also represent the interest of young people.

8.3.2 *Self-interest*

Self interest is where the young people participated for their own benefit i.e. what they stood to gain from their participation. Exposure, skills development and financial reward were some of the reasons reported by the young people.

8.3.2.1 Exposure

The young boys reported taking part in the project because it will make them well known. As noted by a young person in the broadcast media:

being on radio exposes you and your skills to other people and with such exposure you'll never know where it will lead you to (Maclean Anaman, member of Curious Minds).

James Annan (member of youth advocacy assembly) also reported that his motivation for being a member of the youth advocacy assembly was;

to be exposed to the workings of the district assembly and local politics. I am interested in politics so I wanted other people to know me through the advocacy assembly.

8.3.2.2 Skills development

Related to the exposure motive, the young people also reported taking part in the project in order to develop relevant skills for the job market.

I would like to work in broadcasting. So when I heard that the programme was about talking on radio I was very enthusiastic about it. I believe the curious minds programme is preparing me to work in the media. Here I am the technical man taking care of the machines during live sessions (Charles Smith, member of Curious Minds).

8.3.2.3 Financial reward

Finally some of the young people reported taking part in the project because of the financial allowances that were paid to them. According to Barnabas Yin (member of youth advocacy assembly);

I would not have been a member of the advocacy assembly if I did not receive any money. The money was a source of motivation for me because I had to travel to attend meetings.

8.4 Conclusion

The chapter examined the difficulties faced by young people in their quest to be involved in formulating policies that have an impact on their welfare. It was argued that young people's diminutive figures and life experiences is equated to their mental capacity and are thus thought of as not having any significant knowledge to contribute to policy discussions. The young people however rejected this assertion and called for a respect of their right to participate in decisions/policies that affect them irrespective of their life experiences.

Young people's right to participate as contained in the Convention on the rights of the child; African Children's Charter; Ghana Children's Act 1998 and the African Youth Charter is not premised on young people having significant knowledge about the issues at hand. Their participation right is premised on their 'evolving capacity' i.e. their maturity and understanding. It was discussed in chapter 4, section 4.4.6 that evolving capacity is itself a very challenging concept to determine (Lansdown, 2005). The presentation also highlight that the young people are highly motivated and want to contribute to policies that of interest to them. It is therefore the responsibility of policy-makers to let young people understand or have knowledge of policy options so they (young people) can express their views about those options.

CHAPTER 9: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

9.0 Introduction

This final chapter outlines a discussion of the research findings and conclusions made. The chapter is interspersed with discussions linking the findings to the theories discussed in previous chapters. The final segment of the chapter outlines the contribution made to the literature, the limitations of the study, recommendations and areas for further research.

The study was aimed at examining the extent to which young people were involved in the formulation and implementation of the national youth policy of Ghana, and to explore the efforts being made to promote young people's participation in the public sphere in the country. The study found that to a large extent young people played a limited role in the formulation and implementation of the youth policy, among other factors due primarily to the over-politicisation of the policy process in Ghana. [See chapter 7 for the factors]. The study also found that young people's participation in the public sphere was been promoted through the establishment of advocacy networks, use of broadcast media, internet and youth parliament. From the perspectives of the young people, the solution to overcoming their limited participation in the policy process is the granting of voting rights to young people.

9.1 Discussion of research findings

9.1.1 Overly-politicised Youth Organisation in Ghana

It was argued in chapter 8, section 8.1.3.1 that political upheavals in Ghana contributed to the barriers to young people's participation in the public sphere. This segment presents a brief recap of the upheavals and how they shaped youth organisation in Ghana. This is important in order to understand why the

civil servants at the Youth Authority were reluctant to comment on the action plan for the implementation of the youth policy, as alluded to under section 7.3.1.

From independence in 1957 until 1992 Ghana experienced 5 coup d'états in 1966, 1972, 1978, 1979 and 1981. With every change in government the name, focus and management of the youth authority also changed, as each new government sought to gather the support of the youth through the Youth Authority. Youth organisation therefore became a centralised ideological entity that served the political interest of the government in office. The frequent changes in management of the Youth Authority has become a convention, such that even with the return to democratic rule in 1992 every new government changes the management of the youth authority by appointing its own party members to head the organisation. The frequent changes in government led to further marginalisation of young people in policy formulation since the military governments ruled by decrees.

Also, Ghana is so sharply divided along political party lines such that almost everything is seen through a political lens. Although the country is a multi-party democracy the NPP and NDC dominate and they are bitter opponents who compete to undo and/or malign each other. This attitude of undoing or maligning each other was exhibited in the formulation of the youth policy such that it took more than 10 years for the policy to be formulated and launched. As adumbrated previously, the youth policy was initially formulated by the NDC government in 1999 but the NPP government assuming office in January 2001 refused to implement it. The NPP government drafted a revised policy in 2008.

However, the NPP lost the 2008 general elections to the NDC. Having returned to office in January 2009 the NDC also refused to implement the 2008 policy because “the policy was not in line with the vision and ideology of the NDC” (Sekou Nkrumah, Former National Coordinator at the National Youth Authority) although many observers in the youth policy domain agree that the 2008 policy was an improvement on the 1999 policy (Hoetu, 2010).

The over politicisation of the formulation and implementation of the youth policy resulted in a situation where the civil servants at the youth authority were very reluctant to comment on the policy. Even political appointees at the youth authority whose comments do not support the government’s views were dismissed. For example Sekou Nkrumah (Former National Coordinator 18/5/2009 – 22/7/2010) was dismissed for granting an interview to Joy FM (a private radio station) in which he said he was not impressed by the government’s decision to reject the 2008 policy and called on the youth across the political divide to press on government to adopt the policy.

It has been argued that politics and the process of making policy are intricately linked, hence attempts to ‘professionalise policy-making’ i.e. separate politics from policy-making is unrealistic (Dowding, 1996; Mooij, 2003; Hallsworth et al, 2011). According to Mooij (2003:9 emphasis in original) “policies act *on* people, but also *through* people”. This highlights that the policy process is essentially about mobilisation, pursuit of interests and ideas, and interactions between people, in which ones success depends on their resources and power (see chapter 5). It seems that in the formulation and implementation of the youth policy the civil servants exercised less power compared to the politicians, and

perhaps found themselves haplessly towing the lines of the politicians in office. This sharply contrasts research on policy formulation and implementation in Nigeria (another West African country) by Aminu et al (2012) in which civil servants were found to have “a way of constituting obstacles or frustrations in the way of policies formulated by the political officials” (Aminu et al, 2012:57).

9.1.2 Socio-Cultural barriers to participation

The study found some socio-cultural practices that affected young people's participation. These were respect for elders and authority, and gender bias. As discussed in chapter 2, Ghana is a 'gerontocratically structured society' where adult-child relations is structured on the basis of age. Culturally required behaviour (i.e. respect) flows 'bottom-up' from lower age to higher age. Ghanaian culture stresses reverence and deference to elders and authority at all times, as causing an adult to 'lose face' (embarrassed) is considered disrespectful. Tacitly therefore children and young people acquiesce to 'adulthood' and thus cannot challenge or disagree with decisions made by adults which they are not in favour of. This pattern of cultural life is influenced by a belief in ancestor worship (Salm and Falola, 2002). It is believed that ancestors can either punish or reward the living. It is also believed that elders are the conduit of communication with the ancestors. Hence respect and reverence to elders could engender rewards for a meaningful life. The implication of this hierarchical arrangement is that children and young people can only dominate and receive respect from those younger than themselves, but must show utmost obedience and respect to those older than themselves.

At the family and community level it is not appreciated or encouraged for children and young people to disagree with adults when decisions are being taken. It is therefore common for children and young people to keep quiet rather than say something that adults would not approve of. According to Hofstede and Hofstede, (2005:87) “a child who repeatedly voices opinions deviating from what is collectively felt is considered to have a bad character”. By such cultural ideology any participatory effort that includes both adults and young people together may be counter-productive and thus likely to fail.

With regards to gender imbalance, there seems to be an issue in both the youth advocacy and broadcast media projects. There were a greater number of males participating in the projects than females. The dominance of males in the projects affected the sample size of the study as more males were selected. Amadeo et al (2002) in a study of 16-19 year old young people found that males had higher levels of civic knowledge than females. It is therefore important for a gendered analysis of participating children to be undertaken. In chapter 1 it was argued that gender studies helped to unravel that under the guise of community participation more men were actually participating in community decisions than women. It seems that this trend could be continuing under the guise of children’s participation where more boys could in fact be participating than girls. A gendered analysis of children’s participation is important more so “since girls’ and boys’ possibilities to emerge as public, political actors are strongly and differently tied to their structural positions in their families” (Gordon, 2008:32).

Under the barriers to young people's participation in chapter 8, section 8.1.3.1 it was highlighted that a 15 year old girl's desire to develop interest in political issues was opposed by her father. This confirms Gordon's (2008:34) argument that "girl's perceive their parents to be significant barriers to their activism in the public sphere". According to Watts and Gesson (2006 cited in Gordon, 2008:34) "parents play a central role in encouraging their kids to become civic-minded and even politically active". Reddy and Ratna (2002) also argue that parents can play a facilitative or inhibitive role in children's participation. This means that for any participatory initiative to be successful the tacit approval of parents is required.

9.1.3 Role of Adult Allies

The study also found an important need for adult allies in promoting children and young people's participation, especially in the public sphere. It was argued in chapter 8, section 8.1.3.1 that parents worry about the safety of their children during political rallies and as a result were reluctant to allow their children to participate in political activities. However the intervention of the metropolitan coordinator of the national youth authority allayed the fears of some parents and they allowed their children to participate in the youth advocacy assembly. This suggests that the presence of adult allies or mediators is important in seeking to promote young people's political activism. Adult mediators were found to be particularly important in promoting girls political activism in a study by Gordon (2008) in which "adult allies buffered the impact of parental worry on girls by serving as a crucial interface to concerned parents" (p.48). The importance of adults in promoting the voice of marginalised children and young people was again highlighted in a study by Gunn (2002) in which it was recommended that

to widen participation “young people should be supported by appropriately trained adults...to identify areas for change and formulate a strategy to pursue these” (p.219). This means that those who argue for higher levels on the participation ladder where children and young people exercise the power to take decisions or engage in their own projects without adult interference, may in effect restrict the participation of girls as it has been established that without adult mediators their participation may be inhibited. As argued by Lansdown (2010):

children and young people’s relatively powerless status mean that they can only sustain participation where there are adults to facilitate the process...autonomous activity on the part of children is not, in most instances, a realistic goal (Lansdown, 2010:16).

9.1.4 Cost of Participation

There were 2 ways of involving young people in the youth policy process; 1) ad-hoc consultations through youth conferences and youth rallies, and 2) on-going dialogue through the youth parliament and virtual internet platform. However as emphasised previously the youth parliament excludes 15-17 year olds, and the virtual platform is open to only young people who have access to the internet. In Ghana internet access in homes is very limited, so most young people will have to visit commercial internet cafes and pay in order to make their views known on the platform. The cost of making their views known is likely to deter many young people from utilising the platform. The platform also has a strong urban bias as internet access in rural areas in Ghana is virtually non-existent. As highlighted in chapter 7 some young people reported that they did not attend the youth conferences and rallies because the events took place in the cities where they were expected to pay their own transportation cost. These suggest that young

people are less likely to engage in any participation initiative that results in them bearing the cost of participation. It is therefore important that such initiatives are made more accessible such as bringing the initiative closer to where young people are.

9.1.5 Participation at local and national levels

It was argued in chapter 7 that young people were limitedly involved in the formulation of the youth policy but have been excluded from the development of the implementation plan. There was also disparity in young people's participation at local and national levels. Whereas there were young people involved at the local level (through the youth advocacy assembly and broadcast media), at the national level their participation is non-existent. This corroborates the findings of Fanelli et al (2007) in their study of youth participation in Zimbabwe's orphans and vulnerable children's policy, where young people were involved in consultations but in the implementation of the policy young people were missing from the implementation committee at the national level. However at the local level Fanelli et al (2007) found that there were young people on the community level implementation committee. Williams (2004) in her study of 5 Asian countries also found that young people were more involved at the local levels than at the national level. These studies suggest that it is easier to involve young people in local issues than national issues. Some of the reasons for the difficulties in involving young people at the national level have been discussed in chapter 8.

9.1.6 Associational Membership

The study further found that associational membership increases the chance of participating in policy formulation. The National Youth Authority exclusively consulted organisations that it had registered during the formulation of the youth policy. This meant that young people who were not members of the registered organisations were not given the opportunity to contribute to the formulation of the youth policy. A similar finding was made by Ngai et al (2001) during their study of youth participation in China's youth policy. They found that the Communist Youth League was dominant in the formulation process and was regarded as "the center for youth participation in policy formulation" (Ngai et al, 2001:258), therefore young people who were not members of the Communist Youth League or any other youth organisations had little chance to participate in the Chinese youth policy. The difference between this study and that of Ngai et al is that their study focused on young people 18 years and over, whereas this study focused on young people under 18 years. Another study by Quintelier (2008) also found that young people's membership of voluntary organisations promote their participation in political activities, as they develop relevant skills such as speaking in public, working in groups and listening to other people's views. These findings suggest that young people must form or join recognisable associations and other youth groups to improve their chances of being involved in policy consultations and other political activities.

Whilst this study and other studies (e.g. Vromen and Colin, 2010; Percy-Smith, 2006; 2010) call for more informal structures, Lintello (2011:5) argues that "formalised ongoing processes which bring youth and decision-makers together have significant advantages over informal ad-hoc consultations". Similarly

Sinclair (2004) argues that organisations need “to move beyond one-off or isolated consultations to a position where children’s participation is firmly embedded within organisational cultures and structures for decision-making” (p.116). However the experience of the National Youth Authority and that of the National Youth Stakeholders Forum as reported in this study indicates that “bureaucratic organisations with traditional hierarchies may face difficulties when initiating and sustaining participation” (Gunn, 2008:260).

Also, Percy-Smith (2006; 2010) has critiqued formal structures, and instead argues for participation to be rooted in children and young people’s everyday environments and interactions. Accordingly the formation of young people’s voluntary organisations could enhance ongoing dialogue between young people and policy-makers as it would be policy-makers being invited to young people’s space instead of young people being invited by policy-makers to adult’s space. This could help sustain participation, as it would be an opportunity to bring adult policy-makers and young people together around joint concerns (Percy-Smith and Thomas, 2010). Furthermore, such community based youth associations could provide spaces for young people to “contest the status quo and devise alternatives...help to develop traits of good citizenship in young people, since young people who are involved in such community groups are less likely to be involved in antisocial activities” (Flanagan, 2004:726).

9.1.7 Disconnection between principle and practice

Policy-makers can either facilitate or hinder opportunities for young people to be involved in the policy process (Bessell, 2009), therefore their views about young people’s participation could not be overlooked in this study. Generally it was

found in this study that policy-makers were in favour of involving young people in the youth policy process. It was accepted that young people have the right to participate in issues affecting them. However there was an expectation that young people will have some experience or evidence on which to base or support their arguments. Whilst in principle policy-makers accepted young people's rights to participate, in reality they believed that young people do not have anything meaningful to contribute to policy discussions. This finding is supported in a study by Shier et al (2012) on how children and young people influence policy-makers in Nicaragua. They found that children and young people were more likely to be influential if they had 'knowledge and capability' to convince policy-makers. Other studies have reported a disconnection between policy-makers normative acceptance of children's participation and how their attitudes hindered their practice of children's participation (see Bessell, 2009; Saunders and Mace, 2006. These were discussed in chapter 1).

9.1.8 Young people's motivation

The study found that young people are strongly motivated to participate in the policy process. It identified 2 categories of reasons for young people's engagement, which were self interest and altruistic desires. Vromen and Colin (2010) had similar findings in their study of young people's views on youth participation in Australia. The ages of the young people who participated in Vromen and Colin's study were not disclosed, hence it is not known if their study included young people under 18 years. They found 3 motivations for young people's participation namely 1) learn new skills and obtain information, 2) social benefit i.e. develop new friendships and 3) give something back i.e. contribute to bring about improved outcomes for young people and the

community. Vromen and Colin's first 2 motivators (i.e. learn new skills and social benefit) can be likened to this study's self-interest category, while the third motivator (i.e. give something back) can be classed as an altruistic desire. (See chapter 8, section 8.3 for details). This finding unsurprisingly means that young people are less likely to participate in initiatives in which they are not motivated. Hence by understanding what motivates young people to engage in policy-making and other decision-making forums, participatory opportunities that emphasise young people's interests and motivations could be created in order to sustain their participation. According to Vromen and Colin (2010:107) young people are more likely to be "attracted to opportunities that look interesting and that highlight what's in it for participants".

9.1.9 Young people and political capital

The young people in this study showed a strong desire to be involved in conventional politics and thus called for the lowering of the voting age to 15 years. This suggests that the young people have interest in politics and want to engage in democratic governance. According to Mayo (2001:285) "even relatively young children can develop a genuine appreciation of democracy and a sense of their own competence and responsibility". It was argued in chapter 1 that children's participation is aimed at promoting children's citizenship and empowerment. The sociology of childhood as discussed in chapter 2 also stresses the importance of viewing children and young people as agents in their own rights. This includes considering them as political agents instead of the apolitical status normally ascribed to them (Wyness, 2001; Save the Children, 2012).

In chapter 4 it was further argued that granting children rights promotes and recognises their status as citizens. It is also argued that political rights are fundamental to the concept of citizenship (Lintello, 2011; Tonge and Mycock, 2010), hence the denial of political rights to these young people implies their exclusion from processes that have significant impact on their lives and for which they should be involved as empowered citizens. Gunn (2002:186) argues that “citizenship implies group participation through the ballot box”. However voting as a civic responsibility for young people has been overlooked. As argued by Tonge and Mycock (2010) the non-participation of young people in voting undermines democracy. This is supported by Lecce (2009:134) who argues that “democracy is inseparable from voting”.

A few countries have reduced their voting age to 16 years to enable more young people to participate in the governance of their country. In Austria, Brazil, Cuba, Nicaragua, Isle of Man and Jersey (British territories), Ecuador and Somalia voting starts at the age of 16 years. In Norway and Israel 16 year olds can vote in local elections. In Sudan, Indonesia, East Timor and North Korea 17 year olds vote in all elections. Malaysia and Singapore have their voting age set at 21 years, whereas voting begins at 15 years in Iran (White, 2013). Other countries e.g. UK has had a consultation exercise on whether to reduce the voting age to 16 years. In the UK consultation, 64% of 16 and 17 year olds were in favour of lowering the voting age, but all the adults (i.e. 18+) in the consultation opposed lowering the voting age (Youth Citizenship Commission, 2008). In this study all the young people called for lowering the voting age but there were disagreements among the adults; some were in favour, others were against lowering it.

The different ages at which people are allowed to vote reflects the discussions on the social construction of the concept of childhood in chapter 2. For while in Iranian and Somalian societies 15 and 16 year olds are matured to participate in democratic citizenship, even 20 year olds are not considered matured enough for such roles in Malaysian and Singaporean societies. Although in Indonesia the voting age is set at 17 years, anyone below 17 years who is married can vote (Ananta et al, 2005). This resonates with the argument in chapter 2 that getting married marked the end of childhood in some societies therefore the UNCRC's definition of children as those below the age of 18 years was a misnomer. Also the fact that 15 and 16 year olds are able to vote in some countries while 20 year olds do not vote in some countries reflect the relative nature of rights (see chapter 4, section 4.5 on the cultural relativity of rights).

9.1.10 In school versus out-of-school young people

The young people participating in both the youth advocacy assembly and curious minds were attending school. Although the youth advocacy assembly was open to all teenagers the mode of recruitment, which was done through schools, and the medium of communication i.e. English language meant that by default the youth advocacy assembly became the exclusive preserve of only teenagers in school. Curious Minds is a bit different as the programme aims to reach out-of-school young people as well. The programme is held in 2 languages; English and Twi. The Curious minds young people involved in this study were all found to be in school. In a study by Guerra (2002) it was found that the children and young people participating in municipal governance and budgeting were only those in school. In the study children between 9 years and 15 years and in school was the recruitment criterion of the project. The findings

of this study and that of Guerra's (2002) raises the question of what opportunities are available for out-of-school young people to participate in the policy process. Further research is needed in this area.

9.1.11 Young people's voice and power

The study found that young people's voice did not necessarily grant them power to influence decision-making. The projects were conceived as a 'safe space' for young people to discuss issues affecting the youth and present a resolution after their discussion. However the study found that the young people's discussions and resolutions did not influence policy outcomes. In effect the young people had the voice to discuss issues of concern to them but did not have power to influence policy decisions about those issues. This suggests that the ultimate aim of participation, which some authors (e.g. Ackerman et al, 2003; Boyden, 1990) have argued is to empower children and young people is unlikely to be achieved if their expressed views are always disregarded. This finding is similar to findings in other studies (e.g. Veitch, 2009; Wyness, 2001) where participatory projects are conceived of as spaces for children and young people to discuss issues that are of interest to them but decisions about those issues are taken by adults, often without regard to the expressed views of children and young people, leaving children and young people to question the value of their participation.

Perhaps these findings are unsurprising given the argument in chapter 3 that power is exercised in a network of relations (Foucault, 1979) in which the success or failure of an actor is dependent on their status and resources (Hussein and Ketz, 1991). In terms of stratification children and young people

have lower social status compared to adults in most societies. Similarly, they have very limited use of what Bachrach and Baratz (1970) described as 'mechanisms of influence' or 'forms of power' i.e. influence, manipulation, force, coercion and authority. Influence is achieved by rewarding an actor; young people lack the resources to undertake this act of inducement. Manipulation is achieved through deception, which young people are unable to do because adults set the scope of their involvement. Force is also achieved by the application of sanctions. Once again young people cannot sanction adults when their expressed views are disregarded by adults. Similar to force, coercion is the threat to sanction, which young people do not possess the means to threaten sanctions. Finally authority is achieved through recognition of the legitimacy of demand. Young people's demands are often perceived to lack legitimacy, and if their demands are adhered to, it is regarded as a favour done for young people. Due to the above factors (i.e. status and resource limitation of young people) it is not surprising that young people bemoan their lack of power in participatory initiatives.

This suggests that theorising children's participation as empowerment is flawed. In the relational nature of power children and young people cannot be more empowered than adults. In this vein children's participation should be conceived of as adults given recognition to children and creating opportunities for children and young people to dialogue with adults (Graham and Fitzgerald, 2010a; Wyness, 2012), and informing children and young people of the parameters of their influence on decision-making in order to avoid disappointment and disillusion when their opinions are not accepted (Shier, 2001; Spicer and Evans, 2005).

9.2 Theoretical Application: Young people and policy network theory

Tisdall and Davis (2004) have argued that the literature on the policy process could enhance understanding of children's participation, but this has been under-utilised in studying children's participation. Faulkner (2009) also argued that "the literature on interest groups holds valuable insights that can be applied to groups of young people involved in ongoing decision-making projects" (p.92). In chapter 5 it was argued that interest groups can be divided into 'insider group' (regarded as legitimate and consulted regularly by policy-makers) and 'outsider groups' (not regarded as legitimate and not consulted regularly). Grant (1989; 2000) further divides 'insider groups' into 3 categories: 1) prisoner groups – they depend on government for funding therefore unable to break away from government control, 2) high-profile groups – they persuade government by appealing to public opinion, and 3) low-profile groups – they work behind the scene.

All these groups were evident in this study. The National Youth Authority and the National Youth Stakeholders Forum could be regarded as prisoner insider groups due to NYA's dependence on government for funding and staffing, and also due to NYSF's dependence on NYA for resources to function effectively (see chapter 7, section 7.3). Curious minds can be regarded as a high-profile insider group because of their media work in bringing issues to public attention. The youth advocacy assembly could be considered a low-profile group as it operates at the local level and often its activities are not known to the general public. Outsider groups found in this study were the Strategic Youth Network for Development, World Youth Alliance, Ghana and the Young Men Christian Association. These are considered outsider groups because they have not

registered with the National Youth Authority and therefore lack legitimacy. As already noted only organisations registered with the National Youth authority were consulted during the formulation of the youth policy.

According to Maloney et al (1994) policy-makers ascribe legitimacy to a group based on the resources available to the group and what the group has to offer. Howlett and Ramesh (2002) argue that a group's most important resource is knowledge, specifically knowledge that other groups do not have. If policy-makers need such information then that group is more likely to become a core insider. However, that "interest group has to be able to deploy certain political skills before it can be accepted as an insider group. It has to show civil servants that it can, and is prepared, to talk their language; that it knows how to present a case, and how to bargain and accept the outcome of the bargaining processes" (Grant, 2000:9). In other words, interest groups must act appropriately in the eyes of policy-makers to gain legitimacy. Acting appropriately implies playing by the 'rules of the game' as determined by civil servants and politicians (Faulkner, 2009). This is particularly important when linked to the establishment and dissolution of the National Youth Stakeholders Forum. The forum was a core insider group because it possessed knowledge about the views and expectation of young people that it could offer the National Youth Authority in developing strategies and programmes for the implementation of the youth policy. However, due to it not acting appropriately i.e. not accepting the conditions of the National Youth Authority it lost its status as an insider group and was subsequently dissolved.

The literature on interest groups emphasise that interest groups must have a number of resources at its disposal in order to effectively influence policy-makers (Sabatier, 1988; Howlett and Ramesh, 2002; Birkland, 2005). Apart from the knowledge resource that the National Youth Stakeholders Forum had, it did not have any other resource that was useful to the National Youth Authority. This applies to many other youth groups that seek to influence policy-makers. Also, the National Youth Stakeholders Forum was fundamentally weak due to its prisoner-insider group status; it was entirely dependent and tied to the very institution that it sought to influence. The National Youth Authority spearheaded the establishment of the forum, provided a meeting room to the group and offered refreshments during meetings. Accordingly, when some members of the National Youth Stakeholders Forum began not to 'play by the rules of the game' and went to the press, the National Youth Authority pulled the plug on them. This is consistent with Grant's (1989) exposition that insider groups do have to reassuringly act in ways pleasing to policy-makers in order to continue to maintain their status as insider groups.

A study by Faulkner (2009) of an interest group consisting of 10 young people between 14 and 21 years set up by a city council to feed into policy making on youth issues, found that the group had to demonstrate that "they were trustworthy group who could be relied upon to act appropriately" (Faulkner, 2009:96) i.e. conform to adult expectation and know that in political processes there is an acceptable way to behave. Faulkner (2009) also found that the group was weak in relation to the city council due to its reliance on the city council for its budget and facilitator. Consequently the group was ineffective in influencing the council's youth policy. The difference between Faulkner's

findings and this study's findings is that Faulkner's interest group was not disbanded because they acted appropriately but this study's interest group was dissolved for acting inappropriately. In effect they were expected to be "compliant young people to participate" (Gunn, 2008:259). This could also explain why young people are often not engaged in the public sphere since they are expected to conform to the status quo rather challenge it.

There are often 2 contradictory criticisms against children's participation i.e. the question of representativeness, and whether children assimilate into adult roles by their involvement. On one hand the participating children are expected to represent the interest of other children and be a voice for children. On the other hand adults expect the participating children to 'play by the rules and act appropriately'. If the participating children try to be themselves, adults accuse them of insolence and may replace them, whereas if the participating children 'act appropriately' they are criticised for becoming more 'adult-like' and unrepresentative of children. However, this highlights that the success of any participation activity depends largely on the role of adults, who can facilitate or inhibit children's participation. Therefore, for young people to engage effectively in the public sphere adults must make adjustments to accommodate them.

9.3 Implications of the study

The study predominantly draws the attention of policy-makers to shift from their focus on formal structured participatory mechanisms to informal structures where young people are already grouped and familiar with each other. This requires that policy-makers search for the 'right places' in seeking to promote young people's views on the policy process. The 'right places' include schools,

youth clubs, social networking sites/online forums, and other community based youth groups.

Also, policy-makers need to be aware of the 'myth of community' whenever community consultations are held. It has been argued in this study that inviting young people to adult forums in the community would not encourage young people to talk due to some socio-cultural factors. Policy-makers need to hold separate consultation events for young people.

The study further calls for a rethink of the apolitical status ascribed to young people. The study has shown that young people yearn to participate in the governance of their country and therefore consideration should be given to their right to vote. This would ensure that politicians and policy-makers maintain regular dialogue with them, giving them the opportunity to discuss their concerns, seek support and commitments to their issues. Giving young people the franchise may empower them to shape and actively influence the policy process and eventually bring about significant outcomes in their lives.

In addition, the study has implications for children's participation in theory and practice. It was identified that adults are needed to effectively support children to participate in the public sphere (see section 9.1.3 on the role of adult allies). This presents a challenge to the upper rungs of the participation ladders (discussed in chapter 1) where children take control and run their own projects devoid of adults. This however cannot in practice be attained, therefore there is the need to advocate for adults' active involvement in efforts to promote children's participation.

9.4 Contribution to Literature

This study has added to the growing study of the phenomenon of children and young people's participation. As discussed in chapter 1 children's participation has been well established and researched predominantly in western societies. Unfortunately as the literature review showed very little research have been done on children's participation in Africa relative to other societies. More precarious is the paucity of research on children's participation in Ghana. A significant contribution is that this study is one of the first to shed some light on children and young people's participation in a non-western context, and the first to examine children and young people's participation in the policy process in Ghana. The study thus adds to our understanding of children and young people's participation in non-western societies. As there are currently no reported studies of the use of broadcast media to promote children and young people's participation in western societies, western societies can also adopt this strategy to promote children and young people's participation.

This study provides a challenge to the increasing theorisation of children's participation as empowerment; this theorisation is flawed. The study has shown that in the relational exercise of power (Foucault, 1978) children and young people cannot be empowered to gain control or significantly influence decisions that affect their lives, because they are unable to deplore any of form of power (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970) against adults when their views are ignored by adults who are in control of decision-making.

Embedding the study in Policy Studies has also made a contribution to the literature by bringing teenagers into the policy process, from which they are mostly excluded. Although there are increasing efforts to involve the youth in

development processes, those at the lower end of youth definition (i.e. 15-17 year olds) are still often excluded. The findings suggest strongly that the 15-17 year olds have more commonalities with adults, in terms of their desire to be included in governance systems. This study urges policy-makers and politicians to re-think about teenagers and politics, and realise that young people are not disinterested in politics.

Furthermore, whilst there is a global push to advocate for the voice of children in decisions affecting them, children's participation has been affected by different cultural interpretation of the concept of childhood itself. As observed from the literature reviewed in chapter 1 much of the research on children's participation focus on children between 5 years and about 14 years. This is probably so because in reality for many children in developing countries childhood effectively ends by the age of 14 (Hart, 1997; Mayo, 2001). This has resulted in a 'research deficit' on 15-17 year olds; for they are not generally considered children so they are excluded from childhood research, and they are also not considered adults hence excluded from adulthood research. This study contributes by bridging the 'research deficit' gap.

It is argued that there are similarities and differences in the policy processes of western and non-western countries (Horowitz, 1989). However, the literature reviewed in chapter 5 on policy processes is dominated by writers from the United States, Britain, and a few Scandinavian countries. Scholars on policy processes from developing countries are rare. This study does not only contribute to our understanding of policy processes in developing countries, it also highlights a difference in the policy processes of developing and developed

countries. The study confirms Horowitz's observation that "participation in the policy process are fewer in developing countries than in the West, and in some sectors of the society are hardly participant at all" (Horowitz, 1989:199). Thomas and Grindle (1990) also argue that in most developed countries the policy formulation stage is the main area of contestation. This study however shows that in Ghana the main area of contestation is the policy implementation stage. Perhaps this is unsurprising, for as more interest groups become aware of the policy they may seek to influence how it affects them.

Finally, the study challenges the notion that young people and in particular young non-voters exhibit low political efficacy. It found that although the young people are currently non-voters they actually have high levels of political efficacy. Political efficacy refers to "people's beliefs in their ability to understand and participate effectively in governance" (Coleman et al, 2008:771). It is directly related to citizens' perception of how responsive political institutions are to them as actors in the political process. According to Easton and Dennis, for individuals to be politically efficacious they must "construct a psychic map of the political world with strong lines of force running from himself to the places of officialdom" (cited in Coleman et al, 2008:772). There is a distinction between 'internal' and 'external' efficacy. Internal efficacy refers to people's confidence in their own capacities to understand politics and show interest in it (Sheerin, 2007). External efficacy refers to people's views and experiences of how political institutions and political actors respond to them i.e people's perception of trustworthiness of politicians, their responsiveness, and believe whether voting can make any difference (Sheerin, 2007).

Low political efficacy results in low participation in political establishments. Due to declining levels of youth participation in elections some authors have argued that young people have become disinterested in politics (Adsett, 2003; Vrcan, 2002) and are thus “turning their backs on democratic institutions” (Forbrig, 2005:7). It is argued that young people who are non-voters are more likely to be disinterested in politics as compared to those that vote (Russell et al, 2002; Institute for Conflict Research, 2006; Print et al, cited in Sheerin, 2007). The young people in this study contradict this claim in the literature. In spite of their non-voting status, through their advocacy work, their use of broadcast media to reach out to political institutions and actors, and their use of the internet platform to contribute to parliamentary debates they demonstrated their interest in politics.

9.5 Limitations of the study

The very nature of the research topic presented some limitations. The study was examining a controversial issue in Ghanaian politics. Coincidentally the study was undertaken in the year of a general election (both presidential and parliamentary) and the issue of the youth policy was a major campaign topic among the parties in their efforts to woo the youth to vote for them. Therefore, officials of the National Youth Authority were reluctant to talk about the youth policy. As already explained the National Youth Authority is a government department with politically appointed senior management. It is worth adding that the National Coordinator (i.e. Chief Executive Officer) of the national youth authority was also contesting in the elections as a parliamentary candidate for the ruling party. Given the nature of the issues I was exploring and the time of the study I did not get the full cooperation of the youth authority. It is possible

that some respondents may have given incorrect or biased responses. As argued by Newman (2000) in researching sensitive issues, some respondents may present a positive image of themselves instead of answering truthfully. To counter this bias the study involved different groups of participants (lobbyists, young people and bureaucrats). This helped to greatly enhance the credibility of findings. In some instances similar results were obtained from the different sources. For example, statements by the young people and lobby groups that the action plan for implementing the youth policy was not available. On other occasions, the results from the different sources were different, in which case further investigations were undertaken. For example, statements from the National Youth Authority's top officials that the action plan was only available to organisations that had registered with the National Youth Authority. However, interview with one of the registered organisations contradicted the claim that the action plan had been given to registered organisations. This prompted further investigation with officials of the National Youth Authority at the local level, who reported not seeing the action plan.

The over-politicisation of the youth policy in Ghana meant that I found myself in a situation where I had nowhere in particular to turn to for answers to some of my questions. This meant that not all the objectives of the study were attained. For example, one of the objectives of the study was to examine young people's involvement in the development of the action plan. However, with the secrecy surrounding the action plan the study was unable to identify the extent of young people's involvement in the action plan. Had I had the full support of the national youth authority to undertake the research, and had the political terrain been different (i.e. non-election year) perhaps the results might have been

different. The action plan for the implementation of the youth policy may have been made available to me, and also the officials may not have been reluctant to answer questions asked.

The study was also limited in its absence of the views of politicians. Political will is needed to push the participation agenda forward. Views of politicians would have helped to establish whether they would engage more with young people if the young people were voters. In the study design I sought to interview ministers in charge of youth and the political appointees at the national youth authority but I did not receive any response to my requests.

Furthermore, the perspectives of female key informants and parents could not be obtained, so the study cannot be generalised as representing the views of adults in the country. As shown by table 1 in chapter 6 at section 6.4 the key informants in the study were all men so the views expressed reflect male perspectives. Due to gender experiences females could express different views but this could not be obtained due to the lack of female leadership at the organisations involved in the study. Also, parents have been reported to play critical roles in children's participation (Reddy and Ratna, 2002).

More so, it is worth pointing out that as the study was not a nationwide study the findings cannot be generalised as representing the views of all young people in Ghana. The study had a strong urban bias as it was undertaken in only two urban areas. Therefore, the views of young people in the rural areas were not captured in the study. Even in the two urban areas studied the findings cannot be generalised as representing the views of all or most young people, due to the small sample size used in the study. In spite of this limitation the study has

provided insights into young people's views regarding their participation in the policy process.

Finally, the study did not include disabled young people, therefore their perspectives and experiences of participation could not be captured. The study initially sought to include disabled young people but the disabled people identified were beyond the target population, and therefore not included in the study. The findings of the study are thus limited in its application to disabled young people.

9.6 Areas for further research

It was argued in section 9.1.2 (socio-cultural barriers to participation) that parents can play facilitative or inhibitive roles in their children's participation, especially girls' participation. A gendered analysis of the role that parents play in facilitating or inhibiting their children's participation is needed. For example, there is a need to explore whether parents play a facilitative role for boys and inhibitive role for girls. This question could not be answered in this study as the study did not include the views of parents. It is an area for further research.

Also as the study did not capture the views of politicians, adult females, out of school young people, disabled young people, and young people in the rural areas; these are areas for further research to unearth what opportunities are available for these groups of young people to participate in the policy process. A study of politicians and adult female perspectives would help to unveil their attitudes to involving young people in the policy process.

Furthermore, it has been 3 years since the policy was launched and likely to be reviewed in 2015 if the requirement in the policy is adhered to. The policy calls for a review every 5 years. It would be worth exploring the opportunities that would be available for young people to be involved in the review and evaluation of the policy not only to question what had been done but also the difference that children and young people's involvement achieved (Pinkerton, 2004).

A comparative analysis of national youth policies is needed to help understand how different countries are discharging their international obligations in respect of adopting integrated youth policies. Although 155 countries of the UN are reported to have adopted a national youth policy (Angel, 2005) there are limited studies reporting the process of the formulation of the policy and evaluation of the implementation of the policy, to enable a comprehensive comparison with Ghana. Reporting on the process of formulating Sri Lanka's national youth policy, Angel (2005) notes the many opportunities given to young people to participate in the process. In Sri Lanka, they used suggestion boxes placed in public spaces to enable more people to contribute their ideas. The policy makers also set up a facebook page and youth forums to collect ideas from young people. In addition to English language, the authorities solicited views of people in many other local languages. This sharply contrasts the situation in Ghana where people were invited to participate in the policy formulation at forums run in only the English language, thereby limiting the involvement of those who were unable to speak English. Nonetheless, the process of formulating the youth policy in Ghana was more youth-centred when compared to Poland, where the youth policy was entirely drafted by academics with no active participation of young people in the process (Angel, 2005). Also reporting

on China's youth policy formulation, Ngai et al. (2001) argued that youth participation in the policy was facilitated through the communist youth league with members aged from 14 to 28 years. Although Ngai et al's study does not reveal how the 'facilitation' took place, they argued for a review and enlargement of the existing channels for youth participation in China. More research is needed from the other countries that are reported to have formulated national youth policies.

9.7 Recommendations

Due to the over-politicised nature of youth organisation in Ghana it is recommended that the National Youth Authority should be made an independent institution to focus on building the capacity of young people in the country rather than being an appendage of the government in office. In this vein it would be better if the senior management of the authority are not political appointees. An independent authority would enable the officials to focus on protecting and promoting the interest of young people and not be afraid to question politicians or challenge practices that may not be in the interest of young people.

Also, the young people in the study have shown an interest in being involved in democratic governance. It is therefore recommended that the membership of the national youth parliament should be extended to young people in junior and senior high schools. Additionally consideration should be given to granting 15-17 year olds the right to vote in both local and national elections in Ghana.

Finally, it was argued in chapter 1 that children and young people often find adult participation forums intimidating or boring and prefer to have their own

space where adults play supportive roles instead of directive roles. It was confirmed during the formulation of the youth policy that in gerontocratic societies respect for elders and authority inhibits young people from fully engaging in formal consultation forums where both young people and adults are mixed together. Therefore, it is recommended that young people should be supported to establish their own associations or youth groups. This could make it easier for policy-makers to identify and engage them in their own space.

These recommendations are very practical to implement, but what is required is the will to implement them. The Chief Executive of the National Youth Agency in England is not a political appointee, highlighting that it is possible to de-politicise youth organisation. It is also possible to extend membership of the youth parliament in Ghana to 15 years old young people. This is in view of the fact that membership of the youth parliament in the UK is open to young people from the age of 11 years. Furthermore, the example of 15 and 16 years old young people in Iran and Somalia voting in national elections underscore that these young people are capable of engaging in the exercise of democratic franchise.

9.8 Evaluating the study

Janesick (1994) has argued that the trinity of reliability, validity, and generalizability must be questioned since such concepts psychometricise and decontextualise individuals. Guba and Lincoln (1994) also argue that a fundamental principle of constructivism and interpretivism is that meaning is contextualised, and reality is socially constructed. Consequently, concepts such as validity, objectivity and reliability are not appropriate for constructivist

research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). They propose the use of 'trustworthiness' to evaluate the rigour of constructivist research. Patton (2002:575) argues that trustworthiness is about "being balanced, fair and conscientious in taking account of multiple perspectives, multiple interests and multiple realities". According to Erlandson et al, (1993:132) "trustworthiness is established in a constructivist inquiry by the use of techniques that provide truth-value through credibility, applicability through transferability, consistency through dependability, and neutrality through confirmability".

This study achieved trustworthiness by applying the above constructivist techniques. (a) credibility refers to the accuracy of the data. Patton (2002) encourages researchers to disclose any personal and professional information that may have affected data collection. This was done under section 6.7 ethical considerations and 6.8 researcher reflexivity. Also, the use of triangulation of multiple methods with different range of participants enabled individual viewpoints to be cross-checked against others in order to obtain a rich picture on young people's participation. (b) transferability refers to the degree to which the findings can be justifiably applied to other settings. Shenton (2004) has questioned whether findings from a single study are truly transferable to other settings and argues that such attempts disregard the importance of context, which is a key issue in qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that it is the responsibility of researchers to provide sufficient contextual information to enable readers to determine if such transfers could be made to their situations.

This study has provided adequate contextual information and the factors that impinged on the study. Therefore, I leave it to readers to determine the transferability of its findings to their situations. (c) dependability refers to how well the study can be replicated. This study has provided an audit trail of the research process, e.g. sampling procedure, tape recording of interviews, interview protocol, negotiating access etc. These were outlined in chapter 6 to indicate the dependability of the study; (d) confirmability is about whether the findings reflect the experiences and ideas of research informants rather than the preferences of the researcher (Shenton, 2004). This study used triangulation of a range of participants and in-vivo coding in data analysis to reduce the effect of researcher bias. Miles and Huberman (1994) also argue that to enhance confirmability the researcher should outline his or her predispositions and beliefs underpinning methods adopted in the study. These were outlined in section 6.1.

9.9 Concluding Remarks

From Aries' (1962) argument that childhood did not exist in earlier centuries to Holt's (1970) and Farson's (1974) claim that children were an oppressed group that needed to be liberated, the perception of children and young people have undergone tremendous changes over the centuries. The quest to recognise children as a distinct group worth protecting due to their vulnerabilities led to the promulgation of children's right treaties beginning in 1924. Earlier declarations of children's rights were criticised for only seeking to protect children from exploitation (Gal, 2006). Efforts to enable children to play an active role in their own protection resulted in the passage of the 1989 convention on the rights of the child, which for the first time gave children the right to have a say in

decisions concerning them. Children have thus moved from a state of invisibility to stakeholders, where decisions made must be in their best interest.

Adults however determine what is in the 'best interest' of children. More often adults also have an interest to protect when such 'best interest' decisions are made, which could result in a situation where the decisions made satisfy adults more than children or young people. This is more so in the sphere of public decision-making by political actors and institutions that have adult stakeholders to satisfy. As found in this study, young people stated that they are primarily not involved in national decision-making because they do not vote and thus are not a constituency to be satisfied. Adult key informants however stated that young people were not involved because they were immature, inexperienced and may become disrespectful towards elders. It can be seen that the reasons given by the adult key informants were meant to protect adults' interest and not to promote children's interests. The argument that young people are immature and inexperienced is flawed when considered in line with article 14 of CRC, which guarantees freedom of thought and conscience, and the exercise of right consistent with the evolving capacities of the child.

Also, in this study whereas young people called for their enfranchisement now, most adult key informants suggested a period of civic education for young people before been allowed to vote. From the sociology of childhood perspective (discussed in chapter 2) while the young people considered themselves as 'being' (i.e. citizens now), the adult key informants regarded them as 'becoming' (i.e. citizens in-waiting); depicting another tension in applying the 'best interest' principle. According to Wyness (2001) citizenship is

a precondition for political participation. However, children are given recognition as citizens when they leave childhood.

It was argued in chapter 2 that the stage at which childhood ends is culturally determined, nevertheless politically and legally most countries have adopted the age of 18 years to mark the end of childhood. It was however argued in chapter 4 that the adoption of 18 years as the age of maturity and assumption of competence is fixed too late (Houlgate, 1979). Therefore, in the citizenship discourse and political participation, I concur with the argument of the young people in this study that young people have the capability to engage in the exercise of democratic franchise at an earlier age than 18 years. I disagree with the argument that young people do not understand electioneering and therefore need a period of civic education. This is in view of a study by Amadeo et al, (2002) of 14-19 year old young people in which it was found that young people “have a fairly strong grasp of most of the basic tenets of democracy, including those factors likely to strengthen and weaken it” (p.77).

Also, Torney-Purta et al, (1999) found that civic education does not necessarily create political interest among students. Haste (2013) has further argued that knowledge alone is not enough to predict future activism. Young people need avenues to practice democracy in order to create political interest that may transcend to adulthood. As noted by Sloam (2012b) young people’s initial experiences of democratic engagement are more likely to persist into their adulthood. Haste (2013) has argued that democratic school climate is more likely to promote the engagement of young people as adults. Young people in Ghanaian schools participate in school-democracy whereby they elect their

student leaders such as Senior Prefects, Dining Hall Prefects, Entertainment Prefects, Student Representative Council Presidents etc. Candidates for these positions campaign to their fellow students to outline what they will do if voted for. It is the same democratic principle at the national level which these young people can understand and participate in. As argued by Flanagan (2003):

The social incorporation of younger generations into the body politic and the development of habits that sustain the system are rooted in young people's experiences of membership in the institutions of their communities and the exercise of rights and fulfilment of responsibilities in those institutions (Flanagan, 2003:257).

In recent years the emphasis of democracy in Africa has been on good governance. However, Save the Children argues that:

Good governance is not necessarily the same as governance that is good for children...children's well-being does not automatically follow nor equate to adults' well-being (Save the Children, 2012:5)

It is therefore important that young people's engagement in governance is actively sought so that they can vote for candidates whose manifestoes/programmes are children and young people focused. Amadeo et al (2002) have argued that as young people prepare to become adults, politics becomes more salient to them as they strive "to make decisions about beginning careers, establishing families, entering military service, finding their own housing or other life transitions" (p.109).

More so, granting voting rights to 15-17 year olds would be consistent with article 21 (3) of the universal declaration of human rights, and article 25 of the international covenant on civil and political rights. The said articles state that:

The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by *universal and*

equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures (Article 21 (3) of Universal Declaration of Human Rights, emphasis added).

This declaration applies to 15-17 year olds as well, as Article 2 of the declaration also states that:

Everyone is entitled to *all* the rights and freedoms set forth in this declaration, *without distinction of any kind* (emphasis added).

The international covenant on civil and political further requires that;

Every citizen shall have the right and opportunity, *without distinction of any kind...*to vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by *universal and equal suffrage* (Article 25, emphasis added).

Finally, it was argued in chapter 1 that the emphasis of children and young people's participation is to empower them as citizens. It has also been argued that voting is fundamental to citizenship (Gunn, 2002; Lintello, 2011; Tonge and Mycock, 2010). It was further argued in chapter 5 that the policy process is a political enterprise (Dowding, 1996; Mooij, 2003; Hallsworth et al, 2011). Therefore, it is my thesis that to effectively enable young people to participate in this enterprise they need to possess and exercise political capital (i.e. vote). As argued by Sloam (2012a:5) "if young people do not vote, politicians are less likely to take their interests seriously". Lecce (2009:136) concurs by arguing that "since the young are so disproportionately powerless relative to the elderly, law and policy-makers have very little incentive to take young people's interests and preferences seriously". Therefore, the continued exclusion of 15-17 year old young people from the public sphere and in particular from enfranchisement raises serious questions of social justice. These young people have interests to promote and protect, and in order to promote these interests young people

should be given voice and power to elect those who govern them. It is only then that their rights to participate in public decision-making will be protected.

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APPENDIX 1: INFORMATION SHEET AND INTERVIEW CONSENT

My name is Jones Adu-Gyamfi, a PhD student at the Department of Social Work, Royal Holloway University of London. I am conducting a research on ‘Young People’s Participation in Policy Formulation and Implementation’.

Your contribution will help to produce a picture of young people’s current contribution to policy making in Ghana. Interviews will be kept strictly confidential and will be available only to my supervisors at Royal Holloway, University of London. Excerpts from interviews may be made part of the final research report, but under no circumstances will your name or any identifying characteristics be included in the report. However, if you wish that you are identified with excerpts from your interview then your wish will be duly respected.

I would like to emphasise that your participation is entirely voluntary, therefore you are free to withdraw at any time without having to give reasons for your withdrawal, and also free to refuse to answer any question that you do not wish to answer.

If you have any questions about this project please contact me at jones.adu-gyamfi.2010@live.rhul.ac.uk or telephone 0244940457. The research is being supervised by Dr. Frank Keating at Royal Holloway, University of London. You can contact my supervisor at frank.keating@rhul.ac.uk or on telephone +44 1784414964 should you have any questions.

Please complete the attached consent form if you wish to be named in the report.

Many thanks for your co-operation,

Yours sincerely,

Jones Adu-Gyamfi

CONSENT FORM

Name of study: Young People's Participation in Policy Formulation and Implementation.

Name of researcher: Jones Adu-Gyamfi

Please complete this form if you wish to be named in the final report.

I read the information sheet about this study (YES /NO)

I had the opportunity to ask questions (YES /NO)

I received satisfactory answers to my questions (YES /NO)

I understood that I was free to withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason (YES NO)

I agreed to participate in this study (YES /NO)

I confirm that I would like to be identified with excerpts of my interview in the final report.

Signed:

Name:

Date:

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Project/Organisation:

Name of Interview:

Position of interviewee:

Date, Time & Place of interview:

Questions;

Q1. How were young people involved in the formulation of the youth policy?

Q2. How are young people being involved in the implementation of the youth policy? i.e. development of the national plan of action.

Q3. Why do you think policy makers do not engage with young people?

Q4. What strategies do you use to engage policy makers (or young people)?

Q5. How can dialogue between policy makers and young people be enhanced?

Q6. Do you think the participatory policy objective of the youth policy is attainable? Explain

APPENDIX 3: FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

Project/Organisation:

Date, Time & Place of interview:

Questions;

Q1. What do you know about the youth policy?

Q2. What role are young people playing in the implementation of the youth policy?

Q3. Why do you think policy makers do not engage with young people?

Q4. What issues do you discuss in your engagement with policy makers?
What does such engagement mean to you?

Q5. How can dialogue between policy makers and young people be enhanced?

Q6. Do you think the participatory policy objective of the youth policy is attainable? Explain