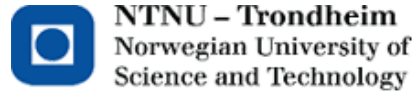


NORWEGIAN UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (NTNU)



NORWEGIAN CENTRE FOR CHILD RESEARCH (NOSEB)



MASTER THESIS

**THE PRACTICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE IN A SELECTED  
PRESCHOOL IN ACCRA, GHANA: PERSPECTIVE OF CHILDREN, TEACHERS  
AND PARENTS**

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE  
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY DEGREE IN CHILDHOOD STUDIES, NOSEB, NTNU.

JUNE 2012

**SOWAH OBED ADJEI**

## **DECLARATION**

I do hereby declare that except for references cited and duly acknowledged, I hereby declare that the views expressed here are the product of my own research.

---

*Sowah Obed Adjei*

*June, 2012, NTNU*

*Trondheim, Norway*

## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my loving and caring wife Mrs Emma Norkor Sowah, my little angel Naa Omany Adjeley Sowah and to my parents; Mr Erasmus Sowah and Mrs Charity Sowah.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

If it had not been the Lord on my side, where will I have been today? On this note, I am wholeheartedly grateful to God who made everything possible toward the successful completion of this research and my studies in Norway. My path to MPhil goal has only been possible with moral, spiritual, emotional, technical and physical support of several people from diverse walks of life.

Special thanks go to my supervisor Professor Randi Nilsen of the Norwegian Centre for Child Research (NOSEB), NTNU, for her time, comments and for been critical of this work. These gave the thesis the academic touch. It is also an honour to thank all the lectures and staff of NOSEB especially Associate Prof. Anna Trine Kjørholt, Associate Prof. Verbjorg Tingstad, Associate Prof. Tatek Abebe and Line Hellem the administrator, for their kind gesture, tuition, and administrative assistance during my studies at the centre. I also want to acknowledge Dr. Elizabeth Asare of the University of Education, Winneba and Dr. Joseph Agbenyega at the Monash University, Australia for giving me literatures to support this project. Another thanks goes to Prof. Tora Korsvold whose organized visit to Barnehage (Kindergarten) in Norway gave me insight into this work. Again, I want to thank the Norwegian Government through the Quota Scheme for awarding me a scholarship to study here in Norway, also to the office of International relation, Anette Moen and the entire staff for helping me throughout my stay in Trondheim.

I have some special words of thanks to my friends who help me during my study here in Norway. These goes to the Wilson's family who created a 'home' away from home here in Norway; to Mrs Matilda Agoe, whose encouragement, guidance and support from the initial to the final level, has made it possible for me to see the completion of my thesis; to Christabel & Anane kwarteng, who has been a source of inspiration; to my only relative in Trondheim, Anas Nii Amarh, who kept me on my toes in order not to derail my focus; to the Adjei and the Kpeglah family, who took me as a brother and a friend. To my Bosses, Boabang and Johnny whose pieces of advice sought me through my studies successfully.

Finally, I am highly indebted to my Family in Ghana especially to you my wife, Mrs. Emma Dowuona for your great love, encouragement and unflinching support in my academic career.

You believe in me and decided to shoulder the entire marital burden alone while I strove to become an academia. You deserve a huge bunch of thanks. I will also love to mention my parents Mr & Mrs Sowah, not forgetting Aunty Rosemary Nee Okpey who made tremendous contribution towards my education. My siblings, Abiso, Gaso, C-Connie, Ak, Astwei and Eraso, this work is for you all.

## ABSTRACT

Over the past decades, early childhood education and care have been hidden from public awareness but has now become a current issue on the international agenda, in Africa, as well as in Ghana. However, knowledge about and analysis of children everyday life experience and their perception about the practices in their early childhood institution have received less attention especially in Ghana. Considering the cultural settings of Ghana, children are hardly consulted to provide their own account of matters that concern them rather their significant adults are used as their proxy raters. It is against this background that the study aims to ‘listen to the children’s voices’ and to place their views alongside the perceptions of their significant adults. The study draws inspiration from the Social Studies of Children and Childhood and the Liberationist thesis under children’s rights and position children as right-holders and social actors who are active participants in their own lives and in the society in which they live. Therefore, this study involved children as the principal informants alongside their significant adults.

As a qualitative study which is ethnographic inspired, data were collected using multiple participatory methods such as participant observations, focus groups discussion, drawings and semi-structured interviews. The fieldwork was conducted in a selected preschool in Accra with ten children as the main informants as well as six teachers in the same institution. In addition, six parents of the children in the institution were interviewed as part of the adult informants.

The study revealed that the reasons for attending early childhood institution are; children were seen as the future insurance for their parents; economic as well as promoting school readiness. The features that determine parents and teachers understanding about “high quality” ECEC is the component of the curriculum, the nature of the school environment and the attribute of the teachers. The study also reveals that in their everyday lives in the school, the children integrate responsibilities, academic work and play. It also came to light that the parents and teachers emphasize academic work as the main form that preschool should take as against play but the children suggested otherwise. As an institution, it is confronted with different challenges and these were identified by the informants and they suggested various solutions to help curb some of these challenges.

## Table of Contents

DECLARATION .....	ii
DEDICATION .....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT .....	iv
ABSTRACT.....	vi
LIST OF ACRONYMS .....	ix
INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.1 An Overview .....	1
1.2 Problem statement.....	5
1.3 Aims of the research .....	7
1.4 Research questions.....	7
1.5 Methodology .....	8
1.6 Significance of the study.....	8
1.7 Outline of thesis .....	9
CHAPTER 2 .....	11
THEORITICAL PERSPECTIVES AND CONCEPTS .....	11
2.1 Introduction.....	11
2.2 The Social studies of children and childhood .....	11
2.4 Children and childhood.....	18
2.5 Childhood and Play.....	20
2.6 Early Childhood .....	22
CHAPTER 3 .....	24
METHODOLOGY .....	24
3.1 Introduction.....	24
3.2 Qualitative research methodology .....	24
3.3 Methodological justification of the study .....	25
3.4 Choice of informants and Sampling technique .....	25
3.5 Background Characteristics of respondents sampled for the study.....	26
3.6 Methods used in collecting data.....	27
3.7 Field notes.....	31
3.8 Issues from the field.....	32

3.9 Data transcription and analysis .....	36
CHAPTER 4 .....	37
STUDY CONTEXT.....	37
4.1 Introduction.....	37
4.2 Brief description of Ghana.....	37
4.3 Demographic Characteristics .....	38
4.4 Brief Political History .....	38
4.5 Economy .....	39
4.6 Education .....	39
4.7 Early Childhood Education and Care.....	40
4.8 The Capital City – Accra .....	42
4.9 Child-related Policies and programmes .....	44
CHAPTER 5 .....	46
DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION.....	46
5.1 Introduction.....	46
5.2 Brief description of Management types of ECEC Institutions in Ghana .....	46
5.3 Why Early childhood Education and Care (Preschool) .....	49
5.4 Parents and teachers understanding of “High Quality” ECEC .....	58
5.5 Everyday life of children in the preschool - “Kindergarten childhood” .....	64
5.5 Play versus Academic work.....	74
5.6 Free Play matters to children .....	80
5.8 Challenges faced by children, teachers and parents.....	85
CHAPTER SIX.....	92
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS .....	92
6.1 Introduction.....	92
6.2 Summation of the study. ....	92
6.3. Concluding Remarks.....	98
6.4 Limitation of Study .....	99
6.5 Recommendations.....	99
REFERENCES .....	101
APPENDICES .....	113



## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

ADEA	Association for the development of Education in Africa
ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
DSW	Department of Social Welfare
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECCD	Early Childhood Care and Development
EFA	Education For All
FCUBE	Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
EFA	Education for All
GES	Ghana Education Service
GNCC	Ghana National Commission on Children
GSS	Ghana Statistical Service
LEAP	Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOWAC	Ministry for Women and Children Affairs
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NHIS	National Health Insurance Scheme
OECD	Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development
OXFAM	Oxford Committee for Family Relief
PTA	Parents Teachers Association

UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

***”If you want children to keep their feet on the ground, put some responsibility on their shoulders”***

(Abigail Van Buren)

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 An Overview

Early Childhood Education and/or Care/Development<sup>1</sup> is an area of concern whose time has arrived on the international agenda, in Africa, as well as in Ghana for some time now. For many years, children in their early childhood had been that of an ‘invisible child,’ with their educational institution hidden behind the ‘education family’ and disconnected from the recognition of its ‘older siblings,’ like primary, secondary and tertiary education (Pence 2004). However, the world conference on education for all (EFA) held in Thailand, the rapid ratification of the United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and the World Summit for Children held in New York over the past few years, began to move early childhood ‘out from the shadows’ to a place of recognition in its own right on the international stage (ibid). Today, there is a major transformation taking place in the lives of world’s young children since the education and care in early years came to the forefront of public awareness. Education, which was once a privilege of a minority is now recognized as a universal entitlement, with every young child’s right to education reaffirmed by the UNCRC General Comment 7. The General Comment offers a broad interpretation of children’s right to education in early childhood, as beginning from birth and closely linked to their right to development. It also acknowledges the special vulnerability of the very young to poverty, discrimination and other adversities that can compromise their rights and undermine their capacities and well-being(UNCRC, General comment 7, 2005). All governments are therefore encouraged to work towards fulfilling the rights of the very young through comprehensive policies, laws, programmes, practices, and professional training and research (UNICEF, 2008).

Early Childhood Education in Africa and for that matter Ghana, is based on the holistic based approach. This means that to support robust growth, policies and programmes must address more

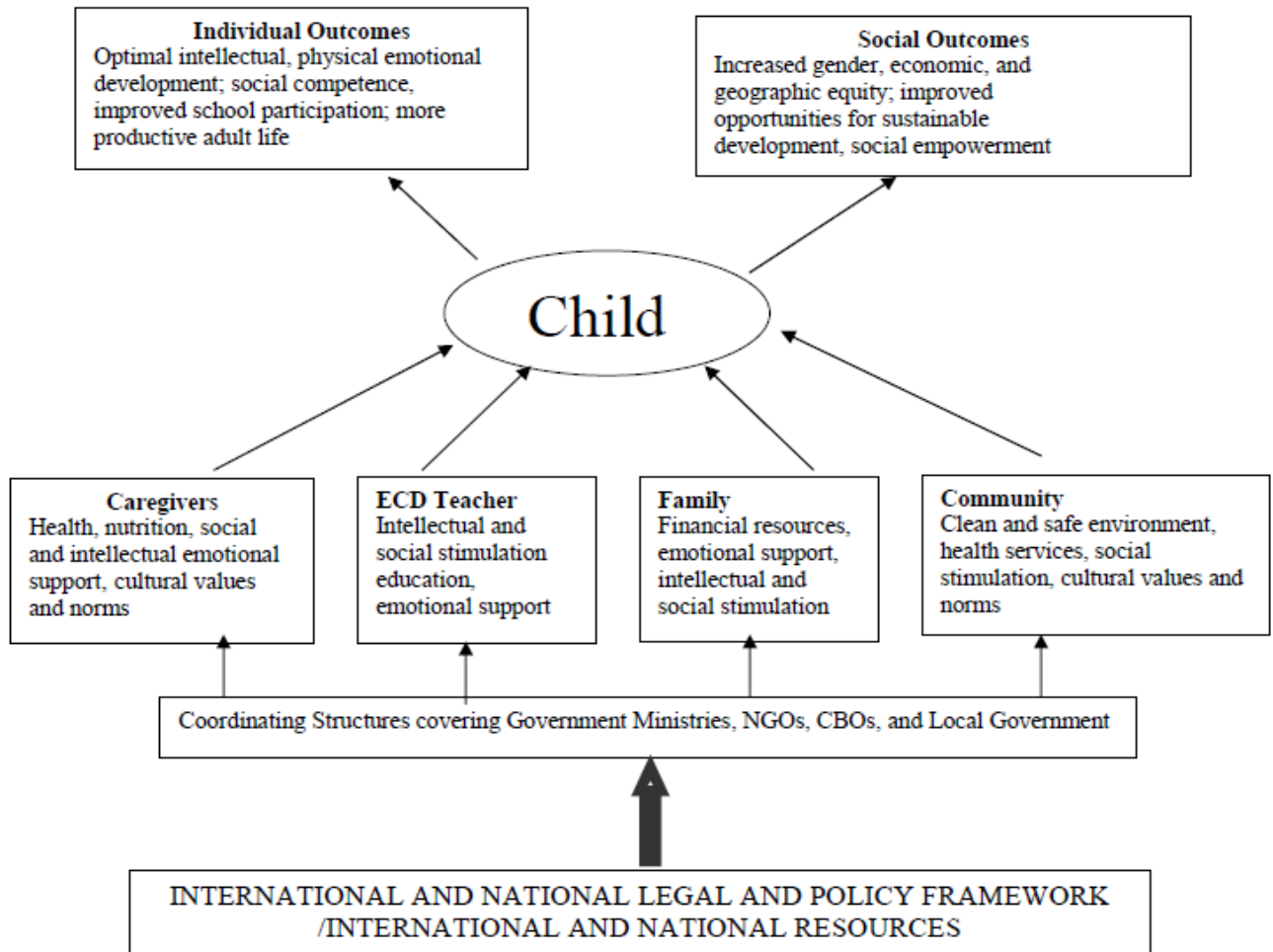
---

<sup>1</sup> There are various acronyms used to refer to the services provided to children in their early childhood. These include: Early Childhood Care and Education/ECCE by UNESCO, Early Childhood Education and Care/ECEC by OECD, Early Childhood Care for Development/ECCD by Consultative Group and Early Childhood Development/ECD by World Bank, ADEA. The study employs the term Early Childhood Education and Care/ECEC to ensure consistency. However, if I am citing directly from documents, I follow whatever acronym is used in the original document.

than the child. Africans recognise that children grow in a context of caregivers, families, communities, and national/regional policies (UNESCO, 2010)

The diagram below attempts to highlight this holistic approach to ECEC in African context.

**Figure 1; Holistic based Approach to ECEC in African Context**



**Source:** Sackey, 2009.

One fundamental principle of this holistic approach is that ECEC programs and policies should be synchronised with Africa’s circumstances, if they are to be relevant (UNESCO, 2010).

The Ghanaian policy therefore reflects the holistic development of the child. It actually aims to address issues like health and nutrition, basic care, learning, preschool, family and community empowerment to ensure that the young child has the best start to develop to his or her fullest potential (Chawla-Duggan et al., 2010; MOWAC, 2004). The policy has been established to ensure Ghana meets the tenets of international conventions she has ratified such as the UNCRC and the African Charter for the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC). Apart from the formulation of national policy and assignment of oversight responsibilities to other ministries and departments, the involvement of government in ECEC services has been negligible in terms of infrastructural provision, revenue allocation and monitoring of services (Sackey, 2009). This is not peculiar to Ghana but African in general. ADEA (2000) observed that ECEC in most African countries had low priority in government policies and most of its initiatives are limited and unevenly distributed. They observed that these programs suffer from inadequate funding and a lack of coherence, coordination, sustainability and long-term policies (as cited in Sackey, 2009)

In Ghana, the practice of Early Childhood Education and Care occurs in various forms that differ from or not in full conformity with the holistic approach as stipulated by its policy. This is due to the multiplicity of contextual factors that dictates the nature of the practice leading to a discrepancy between expectations and realities on the ground (ibid). Early Childhood Institutions is one of its various forms and form only a segment of the broad Early Childhood Education and Care. These institutions come in various types such as day care centre, day-nurseries, crèche, community based care, kindergartens, preschool among others. Preschool<sup>2</sup> services in Ghana, being public or private, is either attached to a primary and a Junior high school or wholly independent of it. They are usually made up of three main classes namely; crèche (0-2 years), nursery (2-3 years) and kindergartens (4-5 years). The present level of care and education offered to children in preschool is a direct consequence of many events from the nation's past which will be discussed in the next section.

---

<sup>2</sup> Preschool is used interchangeable with Early Childhood Institution in the study.

### 1.1.1 Historical Overview of Preschool in Ghana

The development of preschools in Ghana has its roots in pre-colonial education. Before the colonization by Western European Countries, the indigenous people of Ghana and Africa at large had traditional forms of informal childcare and education which takes place at home and supported by the entire community (Laryea, 1983; Prochner & Kabiru 2009). The young children stayed at home playing under the supervision of older siblings or an adult, mostly grandparents who did not go to farms or work outside the home. The child learned by direct instructions, ceremonies, observing other members of the family and participating in daily activities as they grew. Right from infancy, children were taught through lullabies, songs, games, riddles and storytelling. This early education transmitted important aspects of the culture and values, such as sharing, belonging, mutual dependence, social responsibilities, obedience, respect for the elderly, cooperation, fear of God and the ability to relate to other people (ibid).

However, after the establishment of schools, young children followed their school enrolled siblings to the school compound. In an effort to solve the problem of the loitering of the young children on the school premises, the Basel Mission in 1843 attached kindergarten to the formal primary schools (Sackey, 2009). This allowed children between the ages of 3-5years to participate in training programs before entering into primary school. It must be noted that the initial schools outside the home environment excluded childcare services for younger children below the age of three years. The children at the time were not doing any serious learning at school. Aside moral and religious lessons that were taught mechanically to them, the children were engaged much more in play activities than in academic work<sup>3</sup> (personal communication, Mrs. Nee Okpey, 2011). These kindergartens were referred to as “Abodzokpo” a Ghanaian language (ewe), which literally means “hopping grasshoppers” which is an indicative of the play nature of the children in the school (Laryea, 1983).

The kindergartens were therefore provided from the needs-based approach and not an integral part of basic education. With the expansion of education in the then Gold Coast in the 1920s, more kindergartens were established by other missions and private individuals. In other non Christian communities, Muslim merchants, who migrated through the Northern part of Ghana,

---

<sup>3</sup>Accademic work as used in the study is engaging in a classroom activities such as arithmetic, literacy, reading, dictation among others that prepares the children for standardized test/exams.

also established centres known as Koranic school and were attended by children between two and six years of age (Sackey, 2009). By 1930, the first formal declaration to address early childhood education came in the form of the Gold Coast Colony Education Department Schedule of 1930 (Rivera, 2009). The subjects of instruction listed included games and physical activities, spoken English, singing and arithmetic (Morrison, 2009).

Despite these developments by religious institutions, it was not until after independence of Ghana in 1957 that the government got itself involved with early childhood education and care activities in the country. Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, who became the first president and prime minister of the newly independent nation acknowledged the importance of early childhood education and its effects, and implanted this idea in his government (Rivera, 2009). His education in the United States and knowledge of the civil rights movement proved to be extremely influential in his leadership, as he believed children to be the future of the nation hence the need for early childhood education and care to be significant (ibid). Government directives on ECEC were only given after 1960, mainly in the form of acts, decrees, reports of special commission and laws that focused more on social welfare and cognitive aspects instead of the holistic development of the child (Boakye et al., 2009). Currently, a major considerable progress has been made in early childhood provision during recent years. The current policy (MOWAC, 2004) which was initiated in 1993 and promulgated in August 2004 addresses the holistic development of the child. The government reformed education policy in 2004 has also integrated Kindergarten into the educational system of free and compulsory basic education in all public schools.

## **1.2 Problem statement**

Majority of today's rising generation are spending large part of their early childhoods not in their own homes with their own families but in some form of child care institution. In Ghana, the lived worlds of these children in these institutions are hardly delved into by researchers. When it comes to issues concerning their lives, their caretakers are often used as a source of information because these children are portrayed to be irrational, incomplete human being, and immature probably due to the cultural settings. The Social studies of childhood emphasizes that children must be studied in their "own rights" (James & Prout, 1990). This implies that in studying or



describing children and their life's conditions, one need to use children as the unit of observation and as informants. They should be the ones to inform adults about their situations and how they feel about it. To the best of my knowledge, not much work has been done especially in Ghana to get children's views on their early childhood institutional experience.

Secondly, according to Nsamenang (2009 p. 136):

Important interest groups, nation states themselves, and powerful international organizations such as OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation), UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund), the World Bank and other UN organizations, sustain and proselytize throughout the world forms of ECD that are functional in Europe and North America as the right way to make progress with young children.

This assertion by Nsamenang echoes an existence of a "gold" standard used to measure all forms of ECEC across the world. This dominant ECEC therefore assumes that children can learn a universal culture which is Eurocentric and this denies the recognition of African way of handling its young children (ibid). The place for children in the western world is limited to school, play and leisure without due regard to the duties and responsibilities<sup>4</sup> borne in society (Ennew & Milne, 1989 as cited in Abebe, 2008 p.10). Their place in childhood is also reflected in their daily lives in preschool which is full of play, and without carrying out any duties or responsibilities at the center. However, since children in Ghana are trained from early age to perform certain roles in the family based on age, gender and maturation (Twum-Danso, 2009), their daily lives in preschool also reflects some of this responsibilities. The study therefore looks at the everyday lives of the children in the selected preschool.

Finally, the traditional early childhood institution which can be seen from the history of preschool in Ghana, has more time for free play, has largely disappeared in most preschools in Ghana. Preschool children now spend far more time being taught and tested on literacy and maths skills than they do learn through play and exploration. Latest research in Early Childhood

---

<sup>4</sup>Responsibility as used in the study is a duty or obligation to satisfactorily perform or complete a task that one must fulfill, and which may have a consequent penalty for failure.

Education and Care in most countries indicates that, on a typical day, children in most kindergartens spend four to six times as much time in literacy and math instruction and taking or preparing for tests than in free play (Miller & Almond, 2009). Mayall (2000) describe this phenomenon as “scholarisation of childhood”. The study therefore intends to explore the various perceptions on play and academic work as the main practice in the preschool by listening to the views of the three main stakeholders on the issue thus, the children themselves, their parents and their teachers.

### **1.3 Aims of the research**

In the context of Accra, Ghana, the purposes of the thesis are:

1. To explore children, parents and teachers reasons or the need for attending early childhood institution (Preschool).
2. To explore parents and teachers understanding of a “high quality” preschool
3. To understand the everyday lives of children in the selected preschool.
4. To explore parents, teachers and children’s perspective on play and academic work as the main practice in the preschool.
5. To identify challenges facing teachers, parents and children in the preschool.

### **1.4 Research questions**

The main research question the study seeks to answer is: What sort of views and perceptions do children, parents and teachers hold about the practice of Early Childhood Education and Care in the selected preschool? This question could be answered through the under listed sub-questions which were formulated based on the objectives of the study.

1. What are the children, teachers and parent’s reasons for attending ECEC (preschool)?
2. What are the everyday practices of children in preschool?
3. What are parents, teachers and children’s perspective about the main practices of play and academic work in the preschool
4. What does the “high quality” preschool means to parents and teachers?
5. What are the challenges that the children, parents and teachers face in the preschool?

## **1.5 Methodology**

The overall methodological perspective of this thesis is based on the philosophy and the tenets of the New Social studies of childhood. This approach argues that in order to understand children and childhood, researchers have to give voice in matters that affects them. For this reason, qualitative method research methods which is ethnographic inspired was employed in my fieldwork. According to James and Prout (1990), ethnography is particularly a useful methodology for the study of childhood since it allows children a more direct voice and participation in the production of sociological data. Since part of my objectives is to dive into the everyday lives of the children in the preschool and also to understand their perspective on some of the practices carried out in the preschool, I gave them the chance to tell their own story. I employed specific methods like participant observation, focus group discussion, drawings and individual interviews. My fieldwork took place in Ghana for a period of two months in a selected preschool in Accra. My informants were children in their early childhood, teachers and parents.

## **1.6 Significance of the study**

There is a need for pragmatic and innovative ideas in finding solutions to issues which affects children in their everyday lives since children and childhood have been changing over the past years. As noted by Pence 2004, children in their early childhood had been that of an ‘invisible child,’ and their preschool education has been hidden behind the ‘education family’ for many years. In Ghana, these children are hardly consulted on matters that concern them but rather their significant adults like parents and teachers acts as their proxy raters. This research is underpinned by the Social Studies of Childhood and the liberationist thesis which sees children as right-holders and therefore competent social actors and active participants in their lives (James et al. 1998). The children are therefore involved in the research process and given a direct voice in order to understand their worldview. As a result, this research will contribute to the growing body of literature in Ghana that advocate for seeing children as units of research and incorporating their views in research.

Secondly, most early childhood education and care policies and programs are based primarily on western ideologies and do not consider the Africans circumstance in raising its own children (Nsamenang, 2009). Based on the fact that children and childhood is socially constructed, this

research will contribute to the notion that socio-cultural values of Ghana and Africa in general must be taken into account when policies are being enacted by international organizations. In the Ghanaian culture, children are trained from an early age to participate in self-care, routine duties and other responsibilities and this forms part of their preschool experience. This study will therefore contribute to the global ECEC knowledge waves by presenting the Ghanaian settings.

In nutshell, these findings could be relevant for policy makers to update their knowledge about the field of ECEC in the African settings, and also getting the children's perspective alongside their significant adults. This could help the Government of Ghana, Ministry of Education, media houses, MOWAC, local NGOs, and the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA) to identify opportunities and challenges for the enforcement of legislations and policies related to ECEC, and also in designing preschool curriculum.

## **1.7 Outline of thesis**

The thesis is organized into six chapters with sub-sections as follows:

**Chapter one** provided an introduction to the thesis by looking at the background of the study, statement of research problem, aims and objectives, methodology and the significance of the study.

**Chapter Two** focuses on the key concepts and the relevant theoretical perspective which served as a guide to the study. The main theory which served as a guide to the whole research process is the Social studies of children and childhood, and the theoretical discussions under children's right. The main concepts include the competent actor and agency perspective, children and childhood, play, early childhood, care and education.

**Chapter Three** presents the methodological framework of the study. It covers issues such as methods used in data collection and the analysis of data. The field relation and research role with my informants and the ethical considerations during the research is also discussed.

**Chapter Four** presents the context of the study. It gives an overview of Early Childhood Education and Care in Ghana. Among other issues covered under this chapter include a brief description of Ghana by looking at the political history, geographical and demographic features.

The main economic structure and policies relating to children is outlined. The chapter also gives a description of the study area and brief information on ECEC in Ghana.

**Chapter Five** presents the results of the study. It presents analysis alongside discussions on various themes such as the reasons for Early Childhood Education and Care, what high quality ECEC meant, play versus academic work, free play matters to children and the challenges confronted by the children, teachers and parents on the preschool understudy.

**Chapter Six** which is the final chapter provides a summary of the thesis and concluding remarks. It presents a summary of the findings of the research, limitations of the study as well as recommendations for policy and further research.

## CHAPTER 2

### THEORITICAL PERSPECTIVES AND CONCEPTS

#### 2.1 Introduction

Theories are important in every research study because they serve as a guide to the phenomenon under study and helps in generation of ideas. The importance of it is acknowledged by Nilsen (2005) who argues that theories help to lift the empirical experiences in serving the important task of providing insight and understanding. This means that theories are used to think through a research phenomenon to enhance understanding. This study made use of some theories and concepts and since people perceive or interpret concepts differently. It is therefore of great importance to explain or clarify how these theories and concepts have been used in the study.

This chapter presents key concepts and theories that are relevant to my study. Based on my objectives as well as the research questions some concepts appear obvious to clarify such as children as competent actors with agency, participatory rights, children and childhood, childhood and play, and early childhood, education and care. The overarching theoretical perspective of this thesis is based on the ideas and tenets of the social studies of childhood (James, Jenks & Prout, 1998; James and Prout, 1990; Jenks 1996; Qvortrup, 1994) and the various theoretical discussions under Children's right (UNCRC, 1989).

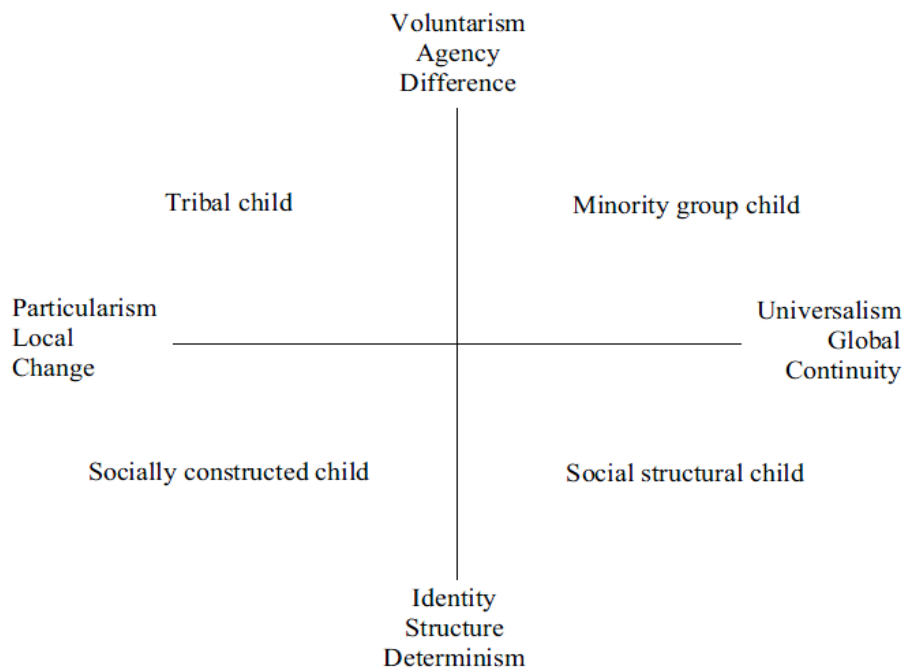
#### 2.2 The Social studies of children and childhood

The proponents of this paradigm criticize the dominant framework which is dominated by socialization and development theories for their conception and approach in the study of children and childhood. The dominant framework sees and value children as what they will 'become' rather than what they are. James and Prout (1990), state that the key concepts that run through the dominant framework in their study of children are 'rationality, 'naturalness' and 'universality'. It must be noted that these approaches to a large extent ignored the 'agency' of children which in this sense includes the lived experiences of children in their everyday lives. The Social studies of childhood draws inspiration from a wide range of disciplines and gives a methodological direction as to how children should be studied. This relatively new 'paradigm' has increasing concerns for children's agency as an issue when researching children and

childhood. Their approach in studying children emphasized that children are active beings whose agency is important in the creation of their own life world (Qvortrup, 1994). Some of the tenets of the new paradigm, as indicated by James and Prout (1990) include; understanding childhood as constructed based on ideas of a society. These ideas vary with time and space in different societies. Secondly, children are actively involved in the construction of their social lives. In view of this, Qvortrup (2009) argues that children should be seen as active subjects and not as passive objects of the various structures and processes. Ethnography has been pointed out as a particularly useful methodology in the studies of children because it allows children’s voices to be heard in research.

In the approach to studying children and childhood, James et al., (1998) identified four main approaches. These are; studying children as socially constructed, tribal child approach, the minority group approach and the social structured child approach. The figure below illustrates the four approaches

Figure 2 : A map showing the theoretical field of the social studies of childhood



**Source:** James et al., (1998 p. 206)

In studying children as socially constructed, James et al., (1998) argued that to describe childhood, or any phenomenon as socially constructed is to suspend belief in or a willing reception of its taken-for granted meaning (ibid). This means that, what childhood entails are constructed knowledge and ideas pertaining in societies and varies at place and time. This idea of childhood being a social construction suggests a variety of childhoods. I will throw more light later on this point. In the tribal child approach, James et al., (1998) argued that children should be seen as essentially different from adults both in terms of conceptualization and methodology. It laid emphasis on the uniqueness of local childhood. They emphasize that children must be seen as autonomous beings in the societies where they live and their worlds should be independent of adults, having their own rules, rituals and folklore (ibid).

The minority group approach, studies children as group who are subject to discrimination and are marginalized just like women and some ethnic minority. The approach is universalistic, differentiated and global because it suggests that in all societies, children are marginalized and exploited at various levels at various degrees (Abebe, 2008). This approach seeks to challenge the existence of power relations between children rather than confirms it (James et al. 1998). Finally, the social structural child approach sees childhood from the structural point of view. The approach believes that childhood at various places is manifested through the various political, social and economic structures pertaining at the places where it lives. This means that in studying children and childhood, one must consider the context where the children live. James et al., (1998) explained that in this approach, the constancy of the child is important and acknowledged; children are seen as constituting the base components of societal structure. This means that as a structural form, children today will move out of childhood and it will still remain for the next generations.

The application of the theory to my study helps with the choice of methodological approach that is useful in studying children and childhood. I took the four approaches into consideration while researching about the everyday lives of the children in the preschool. The theory gave me the opportunity to present the children's perspectives on issues that affect their lives and not only relying on adults perspectives.



### **2.2.1 Social actor and agency perspective**

The Social Studies of Childhood, among other vital concepts, have emphasized the notion that children ought to be viewed as social actors with agency. The UN committee on Children's right noted that the respect for young children's agency is frequently overlooked, or rejected as inappropriate on the grounds of age and maturity (Woodhead, 2006). They observed that:

In many countries and regions, traditional beliefs have emphasized young children's need for training and socialization. They have been regarded as undeveloped, lacking even basic capacities for understanding, communicating and making choices. They have been powerless within their families, and often voiceless and invisible within society. As holders of rights, even the youngest children are entitled to express their views... (General Comment 7, in Woodhead, 2006)

Children in Ghana are no exception to the above view. However, they must be considered as competent social actors who influence and contribute to their own lives (James et al, 1998). James and Prout provided a definition of what children's as social actors with agency might embrace: 'Children are and must be seen as active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and the societies in which they live and that children are not just the passive subjects of social structures and processes' (James & Prout, 1997, p. 8). This means that children are active agents in their own life course and anyone interested in understanding them and how they handle their unique circumstances need to focuses on their agency, their life worlds, and their daily life experiences which includes their interactions with each other and with adults of various kinds, their strategies and tactics of action (James et al., 1998).

In this study, the everyday lives of the children in the institution who decides to take certain actions on their own will be put in the perspective of a child who is a social actor exercising agency. Clark and Moss (2001) carried out a study which reveals young children competence and their agency. They sought the children's perspective about their early childhood settings and the findings were used to help design changes to their building and outdoor space. The research describes how the children reflected on 'what it means to be in this place', and how their

reflections informed the architect's brief and were incorporated into the design of the new building and play areas for the children.

In as much as children are being viewed as competent social actors in the new paradigm, scholars in this field do not reject outright the role that structures play in the lives of children (Giddens, 1984; Kjørholt, 2004) They argued that recognizing the agency of the child is not the same as necessarily rejecting the fact that structures beyond their control influence their lives. This means recognizing the agency of children does not in any way mean "autonomy" for children independent from the structural contexts where they find themselves (Kjørholt, 2005a). In the field, I observed that the school has a structure that influences the extent to which the child can exercise its agency. The school timetable for example has only 30 minutes break with the rest of the time full of academic work and this is followed strictly by the children without any complaints though they wish there will be sufficient time for free play.

### **2.3 Children's Rights perspective**

Rights are said to be entitlements or valuable commodities which we do not have to grovel or beg to get (Freeman 1996). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 states that everyone including children are entitled to all rights set forth in the declaration, without distinction of any kind. This means that rights do not depend on benevolence or benefits and do not allow conditions and exemptions (Bourdillon 2009). The question as to whether children should have rights just like adults have been argued in centuries and there have been two opposing viewpoints in a bid to answer the question. These are the "Care takers" thesis versus the "Liberationist" thesis.

The caretakers, for example Goldstein, Freud and Sonit are of the view that children are the property of their natural parents and have no rights at all, their treatment are being under the sole discretion of their parents. They believe children have not yet developed their cognitive capacity to make intelligent decisions in the light of relevant information about themselves and the world. They are seen as irrational and incapable of making reasoned and informed decisions. In light of this, the parent or adult caretaker makes decisions on the child's behalf in what will be regarded as its own best interest; what the child might choose when he becomes an adult (Moosa-Mitha,

2005; Franklin 1995). The idea that children cannot make decisions on their own, hence the need to be guided by parents or other forms of authority is not a new idea. John Locke in 1821 argued in his book; *Two Treatises on Government* that people “are all born infants, weak and helpless, without knowledge or understanding” and that “all parents are under an obligation to preserve, nourish and educate the children” (as cited in Geerdink, 2009 p. 4)

The child liberationists for example Franklin, Holt and Farson criticize the above view and suggest that children do reveal a competence for rational thought and do make informed decisions. They hold a basic presumption that all human beings are capable of making rational, autonomous decisions. They argued that, it cannot be justified that for the sake of being a child, a child needs specific rights. This according to them, implies that children are regarded to be human beings that are vulnerable and in need of help, which in reality is an “ideological construct which helps to support the denial of their proper rights” (Archard, 1993 p. 49). In their argument, they claim children should be given all the rights adults have and should even have the right to vote. Farson, for instance, declares that children should have the vote not because they are as able as adults to make an intelligent informed electoral decision, but simply because they are members of society and affected by the decisions of its elected government. Holt also argued that the rights, privileges, duties, responsibilities of adult citizens should be made available for any young person who wants to make use of them since they have an important role in the decision making process (Moosa-Mitha, 2005; Franklin 1995).

Despite the two opposing viewpoints, it still stands that children should have rights and that is the framework of this research. According to Freeman (1992), possessions of rights are important because it accords to us some dignity and respect which constitute our personality. The liberationist claims that achievement of children’s rights must apply to children of all ages, right from early childhood to adulthood and this is the standpoint of the thesis. The United Nations (UN) and the Organization of Africa Unit (OAU) realizing how important these rights are to children designated the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1989 and the African Charter on the Right and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) in 1990 respectively to grants all children and young people a comprehensive set of rights. It is worth noting that unlike the UNRCR, the ACRWC is more localized, based on the African experience and is believed to have been born out of the feeling of Africans that the drafting of the CRC missed important socio-

cultural and economic realities of the African experience (Thompson, 1992). The ACRWC for example, stresses the responsibilities that children owe to their families and society, and their obligation to respect their parents, superiors and elders at all times and to assist them in case of need (Article, 31). This means that Ghanaian children are not only right holders but responsibility bearers.

The minimum necessary rights that children are entitled to has been categorized as rights to provision, protection and participation-commonly referred to as the “3 Ps”. These 3Ps as outline by Franklin (2002) relate to the right to food, water, healthcare shelter and education (provision), rights to protection against sexual abuse, neglect and exploitation (protection) and rights to privacy and freedom of association, expression and thought (Participation). This notion of entitlement challenges conventional understandings of young children as passive beings. Unlike the developmental approach, which stresses that children only gradually become full human beings and need to be protected en route, the Children’s rights approach specifically the liberationist thesis argues for a more radical stance (Penn, 2008). It stresses young children’s capabilities and their activeness in constructing their own world, and it gives them as much voice as possible. This approach puts emphasis on the lives of children as competent citizens, and sees the provision of ECEC services in that wider context (ibid).

### **2.3.1 Participatory Rights as used in the study**

There is no one definition as to what constitute participation rights for children since the introduction of the UNCRC. Participation rights as according to James and James (2008), is to take part in and contribute to a situation, an event, a process or an outcome, although the extent of the contribution and the autonomy with which it is made may vary considerably in various ways. They further explained that the concept has assumed particular significance in the context of childhood studies because in many societies, children’s ability to participate have been limited to clearly defined social spaces, most of which are policed and regulated by adults(ibid). Lansdown (2001) argues that participatory rights “constitutes that we, adults, should be active listeners to what children have to say and to take their opinion into account with all due respects because we need to recognize the value of their own experience, views and concerns” (as cited in Geerdink, 2009 p.5).

Participatory rights as specifically formulated by the UNCRC in articles 12 and 13 have been described as revolutionary compared to earlier rights declarations (Kjorholt, 2010). Based on these rights the Social studies of childhood argued that children are social actors, having rights as citizens and must therefore be allowed to participate in activities that affect their own well-being (ibid). Kjorholt (2010) argued that even though construction of children as competent social actors with rights to participate in and influence everyday life has been apparent in both policy and research since 1980s it is not until recently that these discourses have spread to early childhood education and care (ibid).

The General comment 7 which is specifically devoted to early childhood elaborates three participatory principles as outline by Woodhead (2006):

- The child's right to be consulted in matters that affect them should be implemented from the earliest stage in ways appropriate to the child's capacities, best interest, and rights to protection from harmful experience
- The right to express views and feelings should be anchored in the child's daily life at home, within early childhood health, care and education facilities...
- That all appropriate measures should be taken to ensure that all those with responsibilities towards young children listen to their views and respect their dignity.

This implies that children are to be heard and to have their views given serious consideration, and to play an active role in promoting their own interest in all matters that concerns them. This concept is vital to the study because of the need for the children to participate in the research process by listening to what they have to say about their preschool.

## **2.4 Children and childhood**

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) defines a child as *“every human being under the age of eighteen years, unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier”* (The Convention on the Rights of the Child, Art.1, 1989). The CRC was presented by the UN in 1989 and even though a Human Rights Convention already existed there was a growing understanding that children as a group are in need of special attention and protection. In the Children's Act from 1998, the Ghanaian Government defines a child as *“a person below the*

*age of eighteen years*” (Children’s Act, 1998:6). The concept of childhood has been explained in history by Cunningham (2005) as the *ideas that surround children*. He argued that there is a relationship between childhood and experiences of being a child. To him, if the ideas of being a child change, the child’s childhood experiences also changes. This means that a child’s daily experiences are what can be considered as his or her childhood. For example, if a child goes through any routine form of treatment or practices at home and in school, that can be considered as part of his or her childhood.

The Social studies of childhood claims that the concept of childhood is a social construction which varies across cultures and societies. Hence, its meaning and contents varies across time and space (James & Prout, 1997). As a result of space for children to construct their own childhood, it becomes necessary to recognize that there is not one universal childhood. Rather, there are many childhoods (ibid). The ideal childhood in the global north is a childhood viewed as a time for play, learning and being free from adult responsibilities whiles that in the Global south is characterized by work and responsibilities (Holloway & Valentine, 2000). This means that childhood in the Global North is significantly different from that in the Global South.

#### **2.4.1 Children and Childhood in Ghana**

As a social construction, childhood within the Ghanaian context is very relevant to this thesis. Children are perceived as biologically vulnerable beings in need of protection and nurturing and this prescribes the role that parent, schools and the entire community plays (Boakye-Boaten, 2009). Fathers are seen as the bread winners of the family, mothers are in charge of providing the needed nurturing for the children and the schools and the entire community takes up the role of the parents in their absence. This means that the parents, teachers, and community in general complement each other in a child's education and care. This can be seen in our Ghanaian proverb; *wotetew abofra na wonnyen abofra* which literally means “A child is brought up not reared”. The child upbringing is premise on the adage that while in the womb the child belongs to the mother; once delivered, it becomes the property of the entire community (Sackey, 2009). It is therefore the responsibility of the entire community to ensure that the child grows to be productive and responsible in the society which is in line with the African collectivism. The community elders for example give moral and ethical instructions to the children so that they can

understand the needs of the community and its traditions (Salm & Folola, 2002). As a result, preschool practices are therefore expected to conform to the culture by ensuring that the children are brought up and not reared (Sackey, 2009). Twum-Danso (2010) explained that children are brought up in a manner that will ensure that they know their place in the societal structure and do not go beyond their boundaries when interacting with their parents and other adults. Children, at a very young age are encouraged and expected to contribute to household subsistence by helping with task such as caring for younger siblings, running errands, caring for small livestock cleaning and guarding crops (Quarshie, 2010). Between the age of seven and thirteen, they gradually begin engaging in almost all the task carried out by adults although in a more limited sense depending on what is occupying their time and the physical capacity they have to achieve as much as adult (ibid). Twum-Danso (2010) summarized childhood construction in Ghana into four main positions namely;

- childhood as a period of obedience and respect to the elderly
- childhood as never ending phenomenon
- childhood as a period of parental control and ownership
- Childhood as a period of dependency

## **2.5 Childhood and Play**

The conceptualization and definition of play have been debated over the years and a unified conclusion has still not yet been achieved. According to Fromberg and Bergen (2006), this might be due to the fact that play is a relative activity with shifting functions and forms in different settings and among different individuals and different age groups. Play has been argued by the Pellegrini and Smith (2005) has something that children and young people do. Froebel (1986) also saw play as children's unfolding understanding of the unity and interconnected nature of the universe. A common characterization of play is that, it is inner directed with the activity been more important than its end (Pellegrini & Smith, 2005)

Play is a universal language of childhood-something that all children have in common, and which makes their world quite different from adults (Montgomery 2008). Childhood can be understood as children's capacity for play, their enthusiasm for play and the importance attached to being allowed to play. It is argued that children differ in the games they play, not at least

according to their age and gender, but all children play (ibid). Lancy (2007) for example argues that play is a cultural universal since children are observed playing in every society studied by anthropologist (as cited in Montgomery 2008). Children have a right to free time for play (UNCRC, General Comment 7), for pursuing their own interests in the absence of adults. The activity they engage in during free play provides them with an optimal experience, excitement, fun, joy and light heartedness (Sutton-Smith, 1997). Children view 'free time' as time outside the immediate control and supervision of adults (Mayall, 2000). However, adult domination of time, at home and especially at school, means children often have to argue for free time to play (Mayall, 2000).

Play has become one of the children's cultures studied by anthropologists. They referred to play as "the work of childhood" (Montgomery 2008). They challenged the notion of play as meaningless or unimportant and have claimed that play truly aids children reach important developmental goals (ibid). They also identified in their study that though children play in every society, there are variations in how they play. Children in the Global South for example have limited time for play than those in the Global south. The reason being that, Childhood in the Global south unlike that of the North, is characterized by some duties and responsibilities such as work (Abebe, 2008; Bourdillon, 2006), and this occupies much of their time and hence limited time for play.

The importance of play cannot be ignored due to its educational value. Some scholars assert that certain skills in life could be seen in children's play. For instance, a child who plays with a doll is seen as doing that as a form of learning to take care of younger siblings, and eventually becoming a mother and a boy with a toy bow and arrow is learning the skills he will need later on to be a hunter. (Rossie, 2005 as cited in Montgomery, 2008). My fieldwork experiences also prove this point, as the girls in the preschool, during their break time engaged in a play called *nkutonkuro* (miniature form of food preparation). In this game the girls use empty tins and cans to practise cooking just as it is done by mothers and older sisters. It is further argued that children's play should not be seen as an imitation of what adults do but their creativity should be acknowledge as they play (Montgomery, 2008). Miller and Almond (2009) also added that children who engage in complex forms of play have greater language skills than non-players,



better social skills, more empathy, more imagination, and more of the subtle capacity to know what others mean.

## **2.6 Early Childhood**

The definitions of early childhood vary in different countries and regions, according to local traditions and the organization of primary school systems. In some countries, the transition from preschool to school occurs soon after 4 years old. In other countries, this transition takes place at around 7 years old (UNCRC, General Comment 7, 2005). In Ghana, 6 years is the transition to primary school though most children transition takes place at a later age. Due to the multiplicity of the concept, the committee on children's right proposes a working definition of early childhood as the period below the age of 8 years. The Committee wishes to include all young children: at birth and throughout infancy; during the preschool years as well as during the transition to school (ibid). The Early Childhood Care and Development Policy in Ghana also considers the first eight years period of been a child as early childhood.

In spite of the Chronological age set for Early childhood, the period must be understood in the context of social and cultural dimension instead of seeing it as universal process of developing towards a taken for granted state of maturity (Woodhead, 2006). Based on this, Woodhead (2006) argued that children's development might most accurately be described as "naturally cultural" which he explained that the most significant feature of any child's environment is the people with whom they establish close relationships - their parents, care-givers, siblings, peers among others (ibid). These people give meaning and direction to the young child's experience and introduce the child to the cultural practices in the community. Early Childhood Education in African context recognizes the importance of this relationship and brings everyone on board to see the holistic growth of the child. Nsamenang (2009) argued along this line when he emphasized that policies, programmes and curriculum for ECEC in Africa must be indigenized to the African way of life in order not to miss out of the global ECEC knowledge waves. Most recently, Rogoff (2003) conducted a study which elaborates the socio-cultural model with direct application to early childhood education. She found that development is naturally social and cultural, and also found differences in the way children are inducted into the communities of learners in India, Guatemala, Turkey and USA (as cited in Woodhead 2006). This means that

early childhood in Ghana is different in many ways to other countries in the world and must be understood in its own context.

The field of Early Childhood<sup>5</sup> has not been standardized due to the convergence of diverse disciplines in the understanding of related concepts such as care, education and development (Faour, 2010) and moreover, the multiplicity nature of the concept of early childhood (UNCRC, 1989). Some of the definition put forth by development oriented organizations, public policy institutions, academics and childcare professionals have contained some variations which, although minor, could have implications for service delivery (Sackey, 2009). UNICEF for example uses the terminology Early Childhood Development, Survival and Growth (ECD-SG) and the World Bank, Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) to lay emphasis on health, nutrition and protection for younger children (usually below 5 years) as they focus on development and care as seen in their definition (Faour, 2010). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) employed the term Early Childhood Care and Education (ECEC) and Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) respectively, to focus more on education for older children (usually 5-7 years) in their early childhood (Sackey, 2009). The OECD definition is close to the aim of my research as it gives priority to education than the care component of it, hence the use of the term Early Childhood Education and Care in the study.

The concept of care as used in this study entails the provision of supportive services for children. This includes the provision for the basic needs to make their life comfortable. Education on the other hand is used here to mean the process of acquiring or imparting general knowledge to young children to prepare them to enter into the formal educational stream/system. The OECD (2001) explained that the term “care” and “education” is an inseparable concept. They argued that, in practice the division is not too clear, as there are opportunities to learn in settings labeled care and educational settings also provide some sort of care for children.

---

<sup>5</sup> Early Childhood is capitalised and used here in the study to mean an area of profession and discipline in order to distinguish it from early childhood as the early period (0-8 years) in one's life.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The Chapter describes the methodological approach of my study. Methodology refers to the choices we make about cases to study, methods of data gathering, and forms of data analysis- in planning and executing a research study (Silverman 2005). It is a way of discussing methods theoretically. Methods on the other hand has been defined as a coherent set of rules and procedures which can be used to investigate a phenomena or situation within a framework dictated by epistemological and ontological ideas (Kicthin & Tate, 2000, p.6). There is no correct answer to which method is best to conduct effective research with children. The choice of method depends on the research problem and whichever method a researcher employs should take into consideration ethics and consent. The methodological approach must favour children and young people and their primary interest, to understand them better, and add to existing research knowledge (Fraser et al., 2008).

The chapter deals with the research design, data sources, choice of informants and sampling technique, methods of data collection, reliability and validity of the data as well as the various ethical issues that were deemed relevant for the study. The choice of methodological approach used in the study was informed by my research questions.

#### **3.2 Qualitative research methodology**

This study employed a qualitative approach, as it seeks subjective meanings of individuals and processes in specific contexts (Saks & Allsop, 2007). The approach is descriptive in nature and involves the collection and analysis of data that gives meanings to people's everyday lives and experiences in settings where they live (Frazer et al., 2009). Proponents have argued that qualitative approaches in social research provide the opportunity for researchers to have access to valuable types of data, which are richer in meaning and provide an in-depth understanding into the lives of people and their subjective experiences (Silverman, 2011). The approach relies on the reason behind various aspects of behavior. Simply put, it investigates the "why" and "how"

of human behavior, not just what, where and when, hence, required a smaller but detailed and focused group.

Childhood Studies have stressed the usefulness of qualitative research approaches due to the much emphasis on various means through which children can interpret their experiences (Frazer et al., 2009). These approaches centre on understanding how people view their world through various techniques which allows individuals to explore their feelings as well as enabling the researcher to gain in-depth understanding at the same time (Limb & Dawyer, 2001).

### **3.3 Methodological justification of the study**

Every method used in a research is selected to achieve the research aim, objectives set by the researcher, and to answer the research questions. Before I started the fieldwork, I kept in mind that the process of research has no single prescribed path so I triangulated many methods in most cases to attain the best possible results using my own judgement as a researcher on the field. Ennew and Boyden (1997) argued that this technique has been found to be very effective since the use of more than one method facilitates cross checking information on the same issue or topic obtained through different methods, perhaps from different sources. The approach is more flexible and reflexive so that the researcher is less likely to become stuck in particular sets of assumptions (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The methodology for this study was also informed by the view that children are competent social actors who have right to be listen to and have a say in matters that affect their lives (James et al., 1998; Kjørholt, 2005). With the parents and teachers, I used an in-depth Interview which is semi structured in nature to seek their perspective on the childhood settings their child attends or children they teach respectively. This tool was employed because it has the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

### **3.4 Choice of informants and Sampling technique**

Since the purpose of the study was to describe and interpret themes in the informant's perception on the topic and not to study a representative sample of the population, a small but carefully chosen sample is important for the purpose of data collection.

In this research, the target population constituted children, parents and teachers in the selected institution in Accra. Due to the limited time and resources at my disposal for the fieldwork, I chose a sample size of 22 informants comprising of 10 children, 6 teachers and 6 parents for the in-depth interview. Secondly, two focus group discussions (FGDs) comprising 5 children each were organised for both sexes at different times. In addition, the same 10 children were chosen for the drawing task.

In choosing the sample, I used purposive sampling techniques (Maxwell, 1997) to select the respondents for the study. With this technique, a particular settings, persons, or events are deliberately selected for the important information they can provide that cannot be gotten from other choices'' (ibid). I used the technique to select the children after 4 weeks of participant observation in the school with them. There were three classes in all, thus the crèche (0-2yrs), nursery (2-3yrs) and kindergarten (3-5yrs). Even though the participant observation took place in all the three classes the sample were selected from the Kindergarten class because they were quiet older and has the ability to express their perspective so clearly. It must however be noted that though the school-going age in Ghana is 6yrs most of the children in the early childhood institution I did my research have grown pass the school-going age. I purposively selected 10 children who were very active, open and willing to chat with me from the class. With the parents, I employed this technique to select 6 of them who were very friendly and showed interest in my work after I was introduced to them. The parents selected may or may not be the parents of the children used as my informants. As regards the teachers, there were 6 of them in all, 2 for each class, all of which I used for the study.

### **3.5 Background Characteristics of respondents sampled for the study**

The experiences of people are influenced by some background characteristics such as age, sex, and their occupation and educational level as well as certain influential people in their lives as in the case of children. It is against this background that this section attempts to give a concise description of major background characteristics of the respondents sampled for the study that were considered during the study.

With regard to the age of the children sampled for study, the UNCRC General Comment 7 working definition of early childhood, which is a person below the age of 8 years, was adopted.

The children who formed my total sample were between the ages of 5-7years and were of both sexes. Also the parents who were sampled for the study were aged 30 to 55 years and they were only females. The teachers were also females between the ages of 35 to 50 years.

The Occupation and level of education of the parents, teachers and even the children was not a major factor in determining the respondents in the sample selected for the study. The most important factor I considered in choosing the parents was that the person should be living with and providing care to the child. With the teachers, they should be providing care and education to the children selected for the study.

### **3.6 Methods used in collecting data**

The various methods of data collection which are ethnographic inspired employed in the study includes the following:

- Participant observation
- Focus group discussion
- Drawings
- Individual interview (Semi-structured)

#### **3.6.1 Participant Observation**

As noted by Atkinson and Hammersley (1994), the social world cannot be studied without being part of it. It was therefore important to participate in the daily lives of the children and to observe and study them at the same time. Robson (2002) explains that in participant observation the observer seeks to become some kind of member of the observed group. Going by the four typology of observation; complete observer, observer as participant, participant as observer, and complete participant (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994), I assumed the role of participant as an observer in the field. This means that I observed as well as participated in all activities and in the process tried to establish close relationship with the children. I observed through participating in their activities like games, eating lunch with them, singing rhymes with them, walking together with some of the children to and from school, among others. To be a participant observer with children requires that one is able to deal with them on relatively equal footing and have the

ability and desire to listen to them (Fine & Sandstrom, 1988). I did the participant observation in all the three classrooms but concentrated more on the kindergarten class since my informants will be chosen from that class. I adopted the ‘ignorance’ of age attitude as suggested by Solberg (1996) and focused on what the children were doing rather than their being. The focus of my participant observation was on the children’s daily activities at school. It was in my interest to observe how they enjoy their free play, their enthusiasm towards academic work, the school environment, and the availability of food and drinking water for the children. These were the main focus of my observations even though other things which were of interest came up in the course of my fieldwork. During the process of participating in their activities, I always seize the opportunity to ask them about their early childhood practices among others. My main aim for using this method was to reduce the power relations that exist between me and the children and to come out with important data from the children as suggested by Fine and Sandstrom (1988). In addition, the method enabled me to identify my ideal informants for the study.

### **3.6.2 Focus group discussion**

In addition, focus groups were employed to allow for a variety of responses and openness on views, which would not otherwise be revealed in individual interviews. This is particularly useful for exploring attitudes and feelings and to draw out a precise issue about a group of people that may be unknown to the researcher. It is characterized by non-directive style of interviewing, where the prime concern is to encourage a variety of viewpoints on the topic in focus for the group (Kvale & Brinkmann 2008). Groups by nature give participants, especially, “children space to raise issues they want to discuss”. (Fraser et al., 2009. p167).

I divided the children (informants) into two and organized two focus group discussions thus each group consisting of five children. The two groups had their discussions on different days. The children were so happy and participated in the discussion though not as I anticipated. The discussion was conducted on the playing ground under a mango tree (shade) when their other classmates were in the classroom with their teachers. Getting the full concentration of the children during the discussion was not easy. One other thing I did realized was that some of the children tend to follow what a colleague in the group said without actually giving their own view. I acted as a moderator to keep the group within its bounds of our discussions. The main

purpose of this discussion was to get the children's perspective on some themes prepared for the fieldwork. These questions were my guide throughout the discussion. However, other issues came up which were outside my research questions. Part of my focus was to find out what they find interesting about being in school. I also sought their opinions on some of their daily practices in school. The discussions were audio-taped with notes as well. Some of the children were empowered by the discussion and were able to make contributions in their own words while being stimulated by thoughts and comments from friends in the group.

### **3.6.3 Drawings**

Drawing is a participatory research tool which I employed in the study to serve as a background for the individual interview which will be described in the next session. Drawings have been used as an avenue for young children to express their views and experiences, allowing them to play an active role in the research process (Clark & Moss, 2001). It allows them to explore a topic without having to answer direct, individual questions which they might feel uncomfortable speaking about. According to Ennew et al. (2009) children's drawings are particularly useful when children cannot or do not want to, express themselves by talking or writing.

I used this method with the selected children for the study by giving them A4 sheets each to draw what they find interesting in their school (task 1), what they like (task 2) and dislike about being in school (task 3). I issue and collect each A4 sheet after each drawing task. This exercise was done in their classroom when their colleagues were at morning assemble. I spread the children over in the classroom so that they may not copy what other children are drawing. I also made them understand that there are no wrong or correct answers and that they should draw whatever they feel like drawing. The children were very happy to use this method and felt control of the research as they draw some pictures of so many things which I found difficult interpret myself because it wasn't clear to me. Later, during the individual interview, I asked the children about their drawings and they explained to me what each drawing meant to them. Ennew et al. (2009) emphasized on children interpretation of their own drawings instead of adults interpretation. This opened up for the in-depth interview with the children bringing out their feelings and perception about their school settings.



### 3.6.4 Individual Interview (Semi structured)

In-depth Interviews were used to understand the phenomenon from the respondent's point of view. It characteristically involves a researcher asking questions and having a dialogue with the people (Gudmundsdottir, 1996). Kvale and Brinkman (2009) explained that, an interview is a conversation that has a structure and purpose (ibid). To guide the conversations, a semi-structured interview guide made up of different themes was developed to give me focus and direction, prior to the fieldwork, but certain adjustments were made when the actual fieldwork began. All my interviews were conducted in *Ga*, which is my local language as well as my informants. I employed this method on all my informants; the children, teachers and parents.

With the children, the interview began on their various drawing task they drew. I asked each child to explain to me what their drawings meant to them and this opened up for the in-depth interview with the children bringing out their feelings and perception about their school practices. Talking to children and hearing what they have to say is very vital in the research process. According to Christensen and James (2000 p. 7) is only through listening and hearing what children say and paying attention to the ways they communicate with us will progress be made towards conducting research with, rather than simply on, children. Solberg (1996) argued that the place in which a researcher conducts an interview with a child informant may influence the level of participation of the child in the conversation. I therefore factored this into consideration and conducted my interview with the children on their playing ground under a mango tree (shade). The children likes sitting under this tree as they engage in various games under it.

With the teachers and parents, I usually have informal conversations with them at the beginning of every interviewing session. I introduced myself to them and explained to them the purpose of the interview. I also asked them how they are faring and how their day has been among others. In addition, I did inform them of their right to opt out anytime they wanted to or not answer questions they were not comfortable with. The informal conversation helped in building trust and confidence among us. It was quiet difficult with my first interview with the adult. As a new researcher I was not sure of which question on my interview guide to ask first and how to frame it and present it to them. I was so careful in choosing my words in order not to be seen as

disrespectful and “put them off” being mindful of the cultural setting. During the interview, I began with general questions such as their childhood experiences among others. I waited for them to finish with whatever they have to say about it, and then follow up with specific ones, using the information on the general question they answered as a lead. I ask them to clarify or explain further what they meant by any statement I didn’t understand or to verify I understood it well. Though they addressed most of the questions I asked, they wandered away from the questions at times and I have to pop in to bring them on track. For example, most of my informants tend to tell me about their problems they are encountering in bring up their children or the lack of motivation to teach the children so that I will inform the “whites” to come to their aid. After my first interview, my skills of interviewing developed with subsequent ones hence interview is a craft, to be learned through practice (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009). Concerning the place of interview, I interviewed the teachers in their staff common room and with the parents; I interviewed them in the comfort of their homes. I had an interesting time and learnt a lot from my informants as they were willing to co-operate with me. After each session of interview, I thank my informants for agreeing to talk to me, their time and cooperation.

### **3.7 Field notes**

During the field work, I took notes of certain things which could not be captured by my audio recorder. The purpose was to put down in writing all that I observed on the field and also during my interviews and group discussions. Since most of these writings could not be done in the field, I only scribble some few lines that would remind me of what I had in mind. Most of the notes were written when I had returned from the field. As much as possible, I did my best not to get the children I was observing distracted. Non-verbal communication cues and events that caught my emotions were also written down and this was aimed at reflecting on how this had influenced my perceptions. For example, the children showed different facial expression when the school bell rang for break time and break over and this was recorded. For some of the things I wrote, I was not too sure how important it was going to be for the study but its relevance was known later during the analysis and discussion of the data.

### **3.8 Issues from the field**

#### **3.8.1 Field relations and my research role**

This sub-section describes my role as a researcher and my relations with informants during the fieldwork. The role a researcher takes on the field is important to the kind of information the researcher seek to acquire. During my fieldwork, I assumed the role of an adult “friend” as suggested by Fine and Sandstrom (1998). With the “friend” role, I interacted with the children in the most trusted ways possible without having any explicit authority over them. Fraser et al., (2004) argued that it is important to build friendship, as it establishes a rapport between the researcher and children, as well as encouraging response and trust with regard to confidentiality. With this role, the children treated me like a friend, one who is different from their colleagues because they knew I was older. They treated me like a friend who they could easily confide in and seek advice. They knew that I had the time to listen to them. I tried to develop this friendly relationship with the children right from the day I was introduced to them at their morning assembly. For instance, I asked them to call me Obed instead of calling me ‘*papale*’, which literally means Sir. Although it was difficult for them, I insisted it was Okay for me. In Ghanaian culture, it is required for children to call adults together with their titled which shows a sign of respect to the elderly.

In addition, I adopted the role of an “incompetent adult” as suggested by Corsaro (1996). With this role, I behaved like a novice who does not know anything when engaging them in a conversation. Therefore my role as a researcher was that of an incompetent adult, novice as well as a friend. The children were uncertain about my role as researcher even though I explained to them. But after several times of interactions, these children gained confidence in me and begun opening up. I was invited to join in their games, conversations and some shared jokes with me as well as stories about their lives. Most of them were fascinated that I could play some of their games and could even teach them a different way of going about it.

#### **3.8.2 Dealing with validity and reliability of data**

A good research finding depends entirely on its validity and reliability. Katchin and Tate (2000) argued that the researcher undertaking a study should always try their best to ensure the validity

and reliability of the collected data. To them validity “*concerns the soundness, legitimacy and relevance of a research theory and its investigation or practice*” (Kitchin & Tate, 2000 p.34). In other words validity is the truthfulness of the data collected or how relevant the data is for the research questions. In the research, I employed more than one method in collecting my data. This was done to prevent the total dependence on only one method which has limitations and this ensures that the data used in the study has higher degree of validity. Ennew and Boyden (1997) argued that more than one method is required in a good social research because different methods give light to different areas of the same reality, hence, giving a better understanding.

The way the research questions are imposed or formulated for specific purpose can also influence the validity of the data (Kvale, 1996). In light of this, I ensured that my informants understood the research topic, aims and the research questions very well. I made sure the research questions were so easy to understand. The data collection method I choose were designed to meet the needs of the research questions and the objectives of the study to ensure that that the data used are of a higher degree of validity.

Reliability is concern with the consistency of research findings as to whether a research finding is to be trusted (Tingstad, 2007). In other words, the extent to which the same result will be produced in similar circumstance by different researcher at different times. Kumar (1999) argued that it is not possible to control all the factors affecting the reliability of a study in qualitative research. Such factors include the informant’s mood, the nature of interaction, wording of questions and the physical setting. In light of this, I ensured that my informants were either in a very relaxed mood or I created a relaxed atmosphere before the interview was conducted. I achieved this by starting each interview session with informal conversations that was not related to the study but to make them comfortable. Also, since the setting in which the interview takes place play a role in the reliability of a study. I conducted the interview and the focus group discussion with the children under the Mango tree on their playground because I realized the children love that environment. The children felt so comfortable to answer the questions and it avoids distraction from other children and teachers. This was however not completely successful as other children kept peeping in at one time or the other. With the parents, the interview was conducted in the comfort of their homes where they felt so relax to answer the questions whiles the teacher, in the staff common room where they normally take their breaks.

### **3.8.3 Ethics**

Research ethics are guidelines to protect the informants, the researcher as well as those whom the research findings will impact upon (Frazer et al. 2009). When it comes to children the ethical and moral aspects are especially important to bear in mind (Christensen & James, 2000). The reason had been that children are a group that are more vulnerable and in need of adult protection. It is therefore very significant to consider ethical issues during, before and after doing research with children. According to Fraser et al (2009), ethical considerations in research are of importance in two ways; it guides the researcher against any form of abuse of rights of the participants and it also protects informants. In this research, the following ethical issues were considered; informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity.

Informed consent means the informants enter the research project voluntarily, understanding the nature of the study and the danger and obligations that are involved (Einarsdottir, 2007). In view of this, I made sure I had the consent of all the people who matter especially the children. First, I presented an introductory letter from my university together with a written letter explaining in summary the objectives of my research to the Principal Development Officer of social welfare department (see appendix). I was then given a permission letter for the proprietor and teachers in the school for their approval. In the case of the parents, the teachers introduce me by informing them of my mission in the school. After the selection of my informants, I was able to make contact with their parents to throw more light on the objectives of my research and if they will like their child to be a participant in the research. With the children, I introduced myself again to them during the focus group discussion and the individual interview though I had been introduced to all of them. I informed them on what the whole study was about as Ennew and Boyden (1997) stated that for children to participate meaningfully, they need information about the reasons and the consequences of what they are doing. Again, I assured all the children that, participation was voluntary and that they had the exclusive right to pull out of the study at any time they deemed fit (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Though the children gave their consent, I was looking out for nonverbal actions and gestures that indicate otherwise for them to withdraw from the study.

Confidentiality was one of the ethical issues that were so crucial in this research. The reason been that children in their early childhood form majority of my informants and moreover the authoritative nature of the preschool makes it very crucial. The confidentiality of my informants was assured and held in high esteem. I assured my informants that the information will remain only between us. This I believe gave my informants the necessary confidence to open up and respond to the various issues the study sought to achieve. To accomplish this, the research informants were made anonymous. I made them understand that under no circumstance were their names going to be mentioned. Again I made it clear to them that even if a name must be mentioned in the research; it was not going to be their correct names. I saw the relief on most of the faces of my informants when I again told them that I was not going to mention the particular institution and even the town where the research took place. After telling them all these, they gained confidence and trust in me and were willing to participate in the research.

#### **3.8.4 Field experiences and challenges**

Some challenges were experienced during the field work. The first of these challenges has got to do with balancing power relations between the children informants and myself. In a cultural setting like Ghana where respecting adults means a lot, the children from the onset could not feel comfortable around me no matter how hard I tried. As time elapsed, some of the children were able to break such barriers of shyness but even that, with caution. I wasn't able to carry out my interviews right away when I entered into the field because the children may be forced to give responses that will please me which may not be their true perspectives. I dealt with this challenge through various means; I assumed the role of an adult "friend" and a "incompetent adult" as suggested by Fine and Sandstrom (1998) and Corsaro (1996) respectively. With these roles, I interacted with the children in the most trusted ways possible without having any explicit authority over them. This role also comes with its own challenges. Being a novice in research, establishing friendship with the children was not easy as I anticipated. Acceptance into the group at the initial stage was a challenge primarily because of the cultural settings. I had to go the extra mile of sometimes participating in the games, eating together with them, sitting on their chair with them in the classroom, offering reward in the form of pencils and sweets, all in an effort to promote acceptance and develop trust.

The time allocated for the fieldwork was another challenge. Before the fieldwork, getting permission from the gatekeepers took more days than previously anticipated. Moreover, building trust in the children also took me several weeks leaving just a few weeks for the interviews. Considering the time constraint, I would have gained more insight in my fieldwork because towards the end I had gained more confidence and enjoying my experience.

Another major challenge was with language. Translation of some of the interview questions into the local language (Ga) in a way the children will understand was a big challenge. It was difficult to find some words in the local language that would give clear and straight forward questions without cues which will lead the children to respond in a particular way. A typical example was trying to get the right wording to explain “high quality” preschool for the children to understand the phrase was very difficult. The children could not get the understanding well unlike the teachers and the parents. I couldn’t therefore explore their perspective on what “high quality” preschool meant. Even in transcribing, the same problem came up. The original texts in the local language sometime lose their meaning when translated into English.

### **3.9 Data transcription and analysis**

Transcribing and analyzing the data is an important stage of the research process and the researcher who takes his or her time to do it might benefit a lot (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The reason is that the researcher will be reminded of the social and emotional aspect surrounding the data. The data from the focus group discussions as well as the interviews were transcribed from the local language to English. All the audio recordings were listened to over and over again and transcribed into details. The transcriptions were divided into responses from children, teachers and parents. Thus the data was organized into three main groups. This was aimed for easy identification between what the children’s, teachers and parents perspectives on various issues. The data was then analyzed qualitatively to give a deeper understanding of the issues under consideration. The data analysis process started right from the field as I reflect upon the research objectives and questions, and through the methods used in collecting the data (ibid). With the drawings, the children gave out the interpretations of what they have drawn instead of using my own interpretations. These enable me to get the meanings of what they want to communicate to me.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **STUDY CONTEXT**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the background to the study area and an analysis of various policies designed by government to protect and ensure that the best interest of children in Ghana is held paramount. The aim of this chapter is to present a pictorial view of the local context, an overview of Early Childhood Education and Care in Ghana, and to give an overview of provisions made by government to ameliorate the challenges confronting children in the country.

The chapter is divided into three main sections: the first section presents the profile of Ghana: a description of the physical, economic, political and demographic characteristics. The second part look at early childhood in Ghana and the final section looks at the various policies directed specifically at children in the study area.

#### **4.2 Brief description of Ghana**

Ghana, a country on the West Coast of Africa, is one of the most thriving democracies on the continent. It has often been referred to as an "island of peace" in one of the most chaotic regions on earth. It shares boundaries with Togo to the east, la Cote d'Ivoire to the west, Burkina Faso to the north and the Gulf of Guinea, to the south. The recent discovery of oil in the Gulf of Guinea could make Ghana an important oil producer and exporter in the next few years (Ghanaweb, 2012). The country covers a total area of about 239, 460sqkm of which land forms 230,940sq and water represents 8520sq (Travelbolg, 2012). This implies that most parts of Ghana are accessible by land. The capital city is Accra and that is where the seat of government is located.

Geographically and administratively, the country is divided into 10 regions, which are further divided into 138 administrative districts, municipal and metropolitan assemblies. In line with the decentralization policy of government, district, municipal and metropolitan assemblies were established in 1998 and are charged with implementing national policies at local level, contextualized to suit local priorities and needs (GSS, 2005). There are diverse ethnic groups in Ghana and each with its own unique culture and language. Therefore there are about 46 different



languages in Ghana (GSS, 2000). However, the medium of instructions in schools is the English language. Citizens of Ghana exercise the right to freedom of worship enshrined in the 1992 constitution making Ghana a country of diverse religious groups. The climate of Ghana is tropical but temperatures vary with season and elevation. There are two main seasons in the country which are the Wet and Dry seasons. Apart from the northern part of the country the two rainy seasons occur from April to July and from September to November. Annual rainfall ranges from about 1100 millimetres in the north to about 2100 millimetres in the southeast ([www.ghanaweb.com](http://www.ghanaweb.com)).

#### **4.3 Demographic Characteristics**

The result released by the Ghana statistical service from the 2010 population and housing census puts Ghana's population at 24, 658,823 of which males form 12,024,84 representing 48.8% and females constitute 12,633,978 representing 51.2% (GSS, 2010). The proportion of Ghana's population aged less than 15 years is 43%, whereas the youth (15-24years) constitute more than 18% of the population with 64years and older proportion being 5.3%. In Ghana, all persons under the age of 18years constitute the age category at which one can be described as a child and much of the population falls within the category. This indicates that Ghana has a young population consisting of large number of children and a small number of elderly persons. This calls for policies and interventions that support children. The young age structure also implies a high dependency ratio which puts pressure on persons of working age (15-24years) (GSS, 2004). Infant and child morbidity and mortality continue to be a challenge in spite of government's effort to improve on health care delivery for Ghanaians. Available data suggest that infant and under five mortality rates stood at 50 per 1000 births and 80 per 1000 births respectively in 2008 (GSS et al, 2009).

#### **4.4 Brief Political History**

Ghana was formerly known as Gold Coast and is the first country in the Sub-Saharan Africa country to gain independence. Ghana gained independence on 6<sup>th</sup> of March, 1957 from British Colonial rule and on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 1960 the country became a republic in the Commonwealth of Nations. The first political party formed in Ghana was the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) and it was formed in August, 1947, but it was the Convention People's Party (CPP) that

won independence for Ghana. Upon her attainment of independence, Ghana joined the Commonwealth. Ghana was among the 32 independent states that signed Africa Union charter in 1963. Ghana is also a member of United Nations and it is the first country to have ratified the UNCRC.

Ghana is a constitutional and democratic nation with multi-party democracy. In April 1992, a constitution allowing for multi-party democracy system, leading to a democratic rule was established. This constitution allow the people in the country to elect a president and parliamentarians into government every fourth year. It also allows power to be distributed among the three main organs of government which are the presidential, the parliamentarians and the judiciary.

#### **4.5 Economy**

Ghana is endowed with several natural resources such as gold, cocoa bauxite and timber and this forms the bulk of her foreign exchange earnings. Agriculture is the leading economic activity, followed by services and the industry. It contributes 34% of the gross domestic product (GDP) and employs about 50% of the population (GSS, 2008). The leading export commodities are cocoa, gold, and timber. In recent times, the economy has employed non-traditional commodities such as pineapples, bananas, yam and cashew nuts. Tourism is also gaining much prominence as a foreign exchange earner (Ibid).

Despite the country's efforts to provide for herself, it still relies heavily on international agencies like the IMF, World Bank and donor countries for financial and technical assistance. Ghana opted for debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) program in 2002 and so benefited largely from multilateral debt relief. However, she has since opted out of the HIPC initiative. Inflation which increased from 18.1 % in December, 2008 to 20.6 % in April 2009 has declined further to 14.23 % as at February, 2010 and it is likely to decline further to a single digit within the year (GSS, 2010).

#### **4.6 Education**

There is a legal framework for the full development of children, backed by the 1998 Children's Act. In fulfilment of the right to life, development and survival, and non discrimination against

children, section 8 of the Children's Act of Ghana stipulates that all children are entitled to free compulsory basic education. Dubbed the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE), it provides an avenue for the children to have educational rights and ways for the child to develop to full potential. The Act also includes regulations on formal education and apprenticeship in the informal sector. The 1992 Constitution, which is currently in use in the country, indicates that basic education should be free and compulsory to all children of school age. Ghana has made great improvement in her educational system since independence. Successive governments had worked on improving education in the country. The first education Act in 1961 made primary education free and compulsory for every child of school going age – for six years they should have access to education. The 1992 constitution of Ghana section 28 extended the free education beyond primary level to include junior high school. In 2004, the free education was extended to include kindergarten education in all public schools in the country. Broadly, Formal educational system in the country is delivered through a number of institutions, ranging from crèche through to kindergarten, primary, junior high school and to the tertiary institution which includes universities, polytechnics, and teacher training colleges among others. There have been tremendous improvements in the educational system in Ghana. However, some problems still exist. For example, drop outs among children, non-attendance, high cost of education, poor infrastructural facilities among others. With the introduction of programmes such as capitation grant, free uniforms, exercise books and school feeding programmes, further improvements are likely to be seen at the basic school level which will improve children's welfare in Ghana.

#### **4.7 Early Childhood Education and Care**

One aspect of education that Ghana has recently started well is the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC). The Ministry in charge of Education provides for the inclusion of ECEC into the mainstream of basic education. To improve upon the sector, a university, 15 teacher training colleges, the Ghana National Association of Teachers, and some private practitioners are giving training in ECEC (Boakye et al., 2009). Moreover, a National ECEC coordinating committee with a mandate to advice MOWAC on ECEC issues has been inaugurated, an ECCD secretariat has been established at MOWAC, and a full time secretariat have been appointed and currently working (ibid). Based on the Children's Act, 1998, the government has come out with a

comprehensive ECEC policy in 2004. This is to provide a good start in life for all children in line with the global goal of providing a World Fit for children (Ghana’s Second Periodic report to UNCRC Committee, 2005).

The major issues captured in the policy include an operational definition of ECCD; a rational; policy goals; objectives and targets; institutional arrangements; roles and responsibilities; implementation strategies; and cost and financial implications (Boakye et al., 2009; MOWAC, 2004). Ghana adopted the broad definition of the consultative Group on Early childhood Care and Development and titled it ECEC policy as Early Childhood Care and Development Policy (ECCD Policy). The ECCD is defined in the policy as the timely provision of range of services that promote the survival, growth, development, and protection of young children (0-8). The rationale behind the policy is to provide framework for the guidance of government, as well as other relevant sector ministries, district assemblies, companies, families, the private sector, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and development partners for investing in, and effective implementation of ECEC programs(ibid). The Government has brought most governmental ministries on board to raise the quality of Early Childhood education in the country. The table below presents the various governmental ministries in the country and the aspect of Early Childhood Education and Care in which they have been assigned role and responsibilities.

**Table 1: Government Ministry and the role and responsibility assigned to it**

GOVERNMENT MINISTRY	IN CHARGE OF
Ministry of Education	Teacher’s salaries, training centres, training facilities and preschool curriculum. They ensure smooth transitions from preschool programs to formal schooling.
Ministry of Health	Health and nutrition technical input, immunization and other child care services, parent education programs
Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare	Child protection and care services, registration, and regulation of ECCD centres
Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development	Programs to ensure that District Assemblies establish child care centres

**Source:** MOWAC (2004).

There has been remarkable improvement in early childhood education in Ghana over the years. The table below shows the trend in terms of number of children enrolled alongside their Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER).

**Table 2: Kindergarten Enrolment in Ghana, by School Year**

	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
No. Of Children enrolled	687,643	778,109	1,065,963	1,142,784	1,262,264	1,338,454	1,440,732
GER (%)	54.6	60.1	85.3	89.0	89.9	92.9	97.3

**Source:** Ministry of Education 2010 review report in UNICEF 2011.

The reason for this tremendous improvement in the enrolment rate might be primarily the government's policy of making kindergarten education free and compulsory.

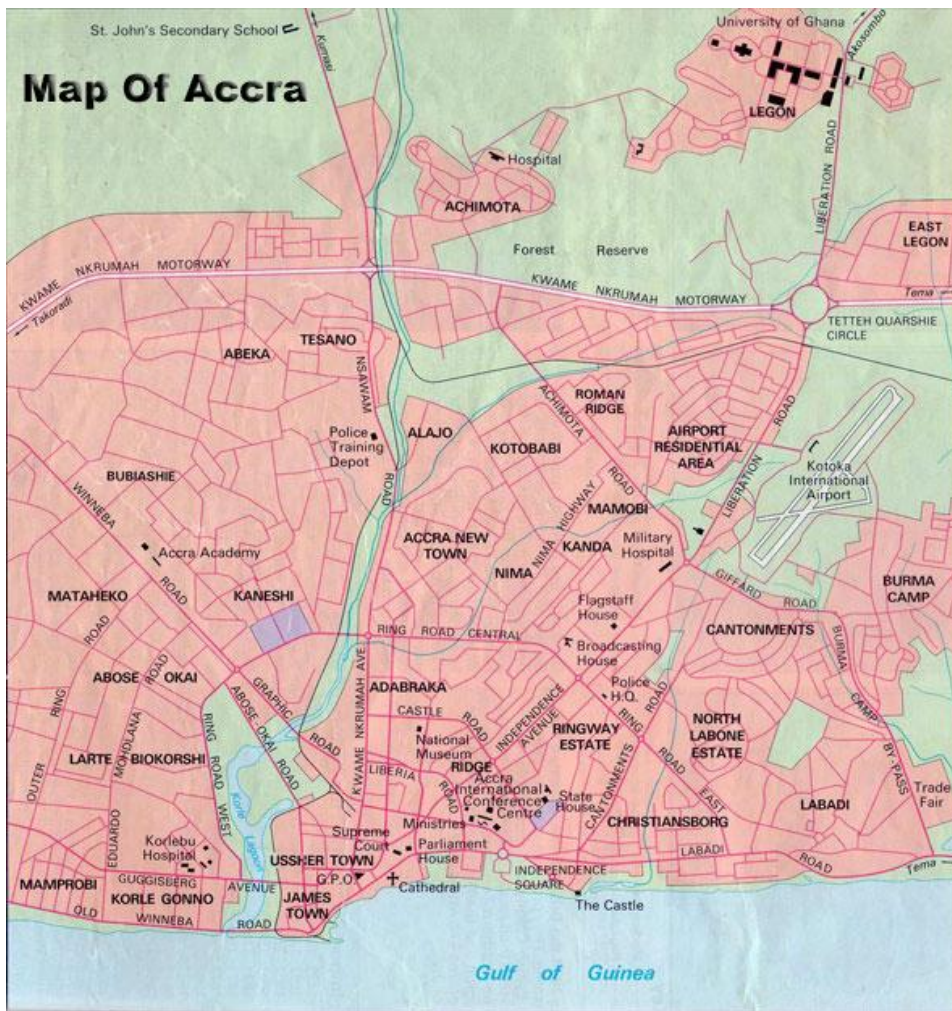
#### **4.8 The Capital City – Accra**

Accra is the capital and largest city in Ghana with a population of nearly four (4) million people according to the 2010 National population census (GSS, 2012). Accra is today one of the most populated and fast growing Metropolis of Africa with an annual growth rate of 3.36. Accra population, like that of other urban centres is a very youthful one with 56% of the population under the age of 24years. The need to protect children as well as the youth in this city can therefore not be overemphasized (Ghana Districts 2012).

The city of Accra has a total area of 200km<sup>2</sup> and it lies in the Savannah zone and features a tropical savannah climate. There are two rainy seasons. The average annual rainfall is about 730mm, which falls primarily during the two rainy seasons. The first begins in May and ends in mid-July. The second season begins in mid-August and ends in October. Rain usually falls in intensive short storms and gives rise to local flooding where drainage channels are obstructed. There is very little variation in temperature throughout the year. The mean monthly temperature ranges from 24.7 °C (76.5 °F) in August (the coolest) to 28 °C (82.4 °F) in March (the hottest) with annual average of 26.8 °C (80.2 °F). As the area is close to the equator, the daylight hours are practically uniform during the year (Ghana Districts 2012). As a primate city, Accra is the

administrative, communications, and economic center of the country. It has several tourists attractions such as the National Museum of Ghana, the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences, the National Archives of Ghana, and Ghana's central library, the National Theatre, Accra Centre for National Culture, the National Sports Stadium among others. Being a largest city, Accra has so many towns which includes Tesana, Dzorwulo, Nungua, James town, La, Osu, Darkuman, Chorkor, Lartebiokorshie and Teshie, the study was carried out in one of these towns.

**Figure 3 :** Map Showing the Study Area



**Source:** [www.heritageinvestmentshotelghana.com](http://www.heritageinvestmentshotelghana.com)

#### **4.9 Child-related Policies and programmes**

The Government of Ghana has initiated a number of policies and programmes that directly or indirectly impact on the issue of children's welfare. These policies and programmes come after the country's ratification to the United Nations Convention and Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC). Ghana is obliged to meet the tenets of these international Conventions and Treaties it has ratified and has therefore come out with child related policies and programmes to fulfil its obligations. Some of these Policies and programmes include the Children's Act 1998. This Act aims to protect the rights of children especially their right to life, development and survival. The Act deems paramount the welfare of children and obliges any court, person, institution or other body to make the best interest of children a primary consideration in all matters that concerns them. Number 560 of the Act enjoins the district assemblies and other decentralized departments to facilitate the establishment of day care centre and other ECEC institutions.

Secondly, is the development of an Early Childhood Care and Development Policy (ECCD) which aims to promote the survival, growth and development of all children (0-8 years) in Ghana. The programme seeks to promote nutrition as well as reduce the infant and under five mortality rates, even it still faces challenges like inadequate logistical support. Considering the high levels of poverty in Ghana, and the several attempts being made to reduce it, this policy initiative is considered an opportunity to invest in young children as a means of addressing the problem. This will, in the long run, result in an improvement in the standard of living of Ghanaians (MOWAC, 2004).

In addition, the government of Ghana introduced an Education Capitation Grant in 2005 and expanded nationwide to all schools in 2006. The aim was to improve enrolment and retention in schools particularly for children from poor households by providing grants to cover tuition and other levies that were previously paid by parents (GSS, 2009). The capitation grant covers all basic education including two years of Kindergarten education in all public schools. The school feeding programme introduced in 2004 has also helped to increase enrolment as well as retention rates by providing children from Public Kindergarten to Junior High Schools with a meal daily at school.

Furthermore, The Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) is another programme which was introduced in March 2008 to provide cash transfers to extremely vulnerable households, including those with orphans and vulnerable children. The National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) was established in 2003 to provide equitable health insurance for all citizens in the country including children in their early childhood. This came to replace the “cash and carry” system where one needed to put cash down in order to receive health treatment. The introduction of the programme has improved maternal health and reduced infant mortality rate in the country (GSS, 2009).

Even though Ghana has made substantial progress in developing policies and programmes with a strong child focus there are still some loop hole in its implementation. There is still much to be done to reach the poorest and most vulnerable especially those in their early childhood in terms of effectively implementing key policies and programmes towards them.



## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, I present the analysis of the data collected in the field as well as discuss some important themes in the data in relation to the research objectives and theories used in the study. Seeking the children's views is very cardinal to this research as the study positions them as competent social actors who are experts in their own world (Clark & Moss 2001; James & Prout 1990). This is a way of giving them a voice and studying them in their own right as advocated by the Social studies of childhood. The chapter starts by looking at the management types of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) institution in Ghana, the general conditions of the preschool I chose for my fieldwork and the reasons for choosing that management type of preschool. I will then move to analyze and discuss the main themes of the study. These are; the various reasons for ECEC (preschool); parents and teachers understanding of "high quality" ECEC; the everyday life of the children in the preschool; the perspective on the form that ECEC should take in terms of play and academic work and conclude by looking at the challenges faced by the children, teachers and the parents, and their suggested solutions in the preschool understudy.

#### **5.2 Brief description of Management types of ECEC Institutions in Ghana**

ECEC in Ghana are provided by both the public and the private sector. In the public sector, the schools receive all their funding from the state or local authorities and their services are supposed to be 'free of charge', which include tuition, materials and feeding in some areas. By contrast, the private sector which includes private organizations, individuals and religious bodies are both privately managed and funded by these individuals and organizations with very little influence from the state. The state influence on these private institutions is in the area of the school curriculum.

The costs of service provided by these private institutions are borne fully by the parents of these children (Tooley et al., 2007). The private institutions charge higher fees and are able to provide

better conditions and opportunities which enrich the children's learning experiences to a larger extent than in the state institutions (Asare, 2004). For instance, there are more play facilities both in numbers and types, providing better indoor and outdoor environment with better organized play spaces which creates enough room for children to move about to explore their environment (Asare, 2005).

### **5.2.1 General Conditions of the Preschool understudy**

I chose a private early childhood institution which is a preschool for my study and this is due to the recent influx of private preschools in the city of Accra which are designed purposely to attract the lower class in society. During their consultative meetings on the development of an ECD policy for Ghana, it was pointed out that, the high concentration of private preschool in urban communities like Accra means that children from poor household will be denied entry (GNCC, 2002 as cited in Sackey, 2009 p.22). However, the Oxfam Education Report noted that, for developing countries in general, the notion that private schools are servicing the needs of a small minority of wealthy parents is misplaced because a lower cost private sector has emerged to meet the demands of poor households (cited in Tooley et al., 2007 p.391).

The state of the private preschool I chose for my study was not in no better condition than the public preschools available in the City. The school is built with cement blocks. The whole school buildings are three classrooms, a staff common room and a proprietor's office. It is fenced with vertical pieces of wood and has two gates, one in front of the building serving as the main entrance and the other on the right side of the building. The building has design blocks with holes in the front and back of each of the classrooms which serves as windows to each classroom.

The school is painted with orange and white emulsion paints. It has a relatively small playing ground compared to other private preschools. The school has a big mango tree that provides shades for the children, especially during sunny days. There is a special uniform for the children in this school unlike the state owned schools that wear the same kind of uniform all over the country. The girl's wears striped green and white skirt with a plain white top while the boys wears plain green shorts with striped white and green shirts. The medium of instruction and communication in the school is English but the local language (Ga) is used alongside when the

need arise. There are three classrooms for the children namely; crèche (0-2years), nursery (2-3years) and kindergarten (3-5years). These ages for the various classrooms are the official age but the children in the school I did my fieldwork have grown pass these age groupings. Children in the crèche are between the ages of 1-3years, nursery 3-5years and kindergarten 5-8 years. This is in line with the observation made by Akyeampong et al., (2007) that though the official age for children to start primary school in Ghana is 6years, the mean age at which they start school is 7.5years. This estimated age includes late entries, old-age entries and repeaters due to non-performance (ibid).

The total number of children in the school is 110 out of which 52 were girls, revealing a fairly balance enrollment of boys and girls. This was normally not the case as more boys were enrolled than girls but the recent campaign for girl child education has really got down to the people and most girls are now enrolled in schools. The school has a proprietor, and 2 non-teaching staff who serve as cooks in the kitchen. The teachers in the school were 6 and all of them were females. This confirms the assertion that the field of early childhood education is challenged by gender bias worldwide and assumes that only women are suited to caring for the young ones (Jalongo et al., 2004). All the teachers in the school were untrained with the exception of 2 of them who were trained. The child-teacher ratio in the kindergarten class is 24 children per teacher and that of the nursery and the crèche was about 15 children per teacher. This is within the requirement of Ghana Education Service (GES) and the Department of social welfare (DSW) regulation that the kindergarten class and both the nursery and crèche should not exceed 1:35 and 1:25 respectively (Asare, 2005). The fees the school charges per term is GHC 80 (NOK350) which looks quiet moderate compared to other private school in the area which charge from GHC 150 (NOK500) and above. The floor of the classroom is cemented unlike the school compound. The school has no electricity and standpipe to provide water for the children. The teaching, learning and play materials in the school were few. These included black boards, chalk, crayons, exercise books, syllabus and football. However, the school had considerable form of First aid kit containing paracetamol, cotton wool, detol antiseptic, gention violet, plasters and penicillin ointment. The school has a bell which is hanged on the door of the kindergarten classroom. There was only one toilet available which is for the teachers. The children especially those in the kindergarten class

use the chamber pot which is placed in a carved wooden structure. There were about eight chamber pots serving as toilet facilities for the children.

### **5.3 Why Early childhood Education and Care (Preschool)**

This section focuses on children, teachers and parents perspectives on the reasons for Early Childhood Education. From the data gathered in the field, several reasons for ECEC came up but the most salient reasons will be discussed. These include children as future insurance, economic reasons and the promotion of school readiness.

#### **5.3.1 Children as Future Insurance**

Children's serving as future insurance for their parents is the main reasons why most parents in my research send their children to the institution. They believe that when the child obtains a good foundation from the institution then it is more likely they will grow up to be responsible and pay back to their parents the investment made in them. All my informants gave this reason for ECEC. One of the parents said;

*I send my child to school so that he will learn to read and write and become a renowned person in future in order to make life comfortable for both of us some day (Manfio<sup>6</sup>, 38 years).*

This view was expressed by other people. Atswei, 35 years old also stated that;

*I send my son to school because he is all that I have in life. If I invest well in him, then I know one day I have someone to look after me.*

Some of the teachers also shared the same view as one of them commented;

*The children are in school to learn and become renowned persons in the future and by so doing, we the teachers and their parents will be happy. The parents especially will realize that the money they spent on them have not been wasted as they will end up enjoying the fruit of their labour when they aged (Pat, 48 years).*

---

<sup>6</sup> Names of informants used in the study are not real names because of ethical reasons

Surprisingly, most of the children shared in that view as they gave several comments in relation to them serving as future insurance for their parents. When I asked the children; why are you in school? One of them said;

*I am in school so that I will help my mother and my father when they are old. I will be a doctor and make them happy* (Judah 7years boy).

Another child also expressed similar view;

*My mum and dad want me to be in school to learn hard so that one day I will build a house and buy a car for them* (Asheley, 5 years girl).

The above statements implies that parents send their children to preschool with the hope that they will learn to read and write quickly and through that become a “great” person in future. This according to them will make life comfortable for them. This corroborates with the old-age security hypothesis which postulates that "in setting where parents face uncertainty about their ability to support themselves during old age they rear children in the expectation of receiving assistance from the children in later years” (Jellal & Wolff, 2002 p.2). It implies that when they build the foundation of the child very well by accessing quality early childhood services, is more likely for the child to come out successfully in his or her academic endeavor, gain better job and earn good income to support the parents in their old age. In her article, *Reciprocity, Respect and Responsibility: The 3Rs Underlying Parent-Child Relationships in Ghana and the Implications for Children’s Rights*, Twum-Danso (2009) explained this phenomenon by looking at the parent-child relation in Ghana as a form of reciprocity where children grow up very much aware that what their parents provide for them is based on the belief of a pay-off. She explained that by bringing forth a child and taking care of him or her during his childhood a parent is issuing a contract, which they expect to be paid back once the child becomes an adult and he or she is in the position to do so. My experience as a child and growing up in the township makes me understand that children are normally brought up with the idea that they will grow up and cater for the parents who will be very weak by then. At a very young age, my parent’s always showed my school fees and other expenses to me, making me aware that they are providing everything I needed now for me to succeed in life and that I should not forget the sacrifices they have made

for me and also do the same when they are old. This can be seen in our Ghanaian proverb which literally states that, the parents has a duty to look after their children to help them grow their teeth, while the children also has a reciprocal duty to help their parents lose their teeth when they are old. The fundamental principle underlying reciprocity is the expectation that, at the long run everyone should be treated fairly (ibid).

A study by Agyei-Mensah (1997) compares the extent to which parents expected their children to support them in their old age as against the parents taking care of themselves in their old age, by way of personal social security in three settlements in Ghana. His findings portrayed a correlation between the socio-economic development of the area in which the parents live and the degree to which they look up to their children as old age security. He reported that though the percentage of parents looking to their children for their future insurance has generally fallen from the three age cohorts (1950, 1960, and 1970) he used, it was still high in James town which is located in Accra and shares the same socio-economic status as the town the fieldwork for this study was undertaken. This may be due to the fact that most of the jobs available in these towns are in the informal sector and these jobs do not make provision for social security for the workers after retirement. Moreover, the lack of any form of social welfare system in Ghana for the aged may be a contributing factor (Twum-Danso, 2009). This idea of children serving as future insurance may be very dicey. The reason is that children may be unable to repay what have been invested in them. This may occur through early mortality preventing the child from reaching his or her peak in life or they might simply not succeed in acquiring sufficient level of income (Jellal & Wolff, 2002). Moreover, due to globalization and industrialization, the Ghanaian community is gradually changing from extended family to the nuclear family system. This could explain the gradual change in the trend; from parents looking up to their children in the future to making personal savings for their old age (Agyei-Mensah, 1997).

### **5.3.2 The economic reasons**

In this section, I will present the various economic reasons<sup>7</sup> that were given by the three stakeholders (parents, teachers and children) on the need for early childhood education. From the

---

<sup>7</sup> Economic reasons have been used here in the study to mean reasons that are financially rewarding or that are concerned with worldly necessities of life (especially money).

data gathered, the parents and the children gave most of the economic reasons for ECEC unlike the teachers. One of the parents said;

*How will I be able to help my husband to feed the family if I don't send my child to school? I do that so that I will be able to work and help in the subsistence of the family (Esther, 33 years).*

Another parent gave a similar reason;

*I am the sole breadwinner of the family and if I don't send my daughter to school to be free to work then it means we will all go hungry (Ayorkor, 38 years).*

Mercy, a 35 year old parent also added;

*This institution is really helping some of us who don't have relatives around to keep our children. I just wonder how I will get money to feed myself and my child if she should be with me at home till she starts primary school.*

This was the situation of several others as they are either single parents and therefore carry the financial burden of the entire household or work to contribute to the household by supporting the insufficient income their husbands earn. Some of them also expressed concern for not having relatives around to hold their child for them to work hence the need for the institution.

Few of the teachers also share in the same view as one of them stated;

*Most of the parents bring their children to school to get the opportunity to work, so in the morning you see parents dropping their children in the school on their way to work and picking them up on their way home after work (Felicia, 35 years)*

In Ghana, women's role in the economy have not been limited to the home alone in the traditional sense but spans through all sectors of the economy with their contribution felt most in the agricultural and services sectors (Amu, 2009). Their participation in the labour force has contributed to household incomes and in educating their children. Most women work to either

supplement the earnings of their husbands or because they are the sole breadwinner of their family. Female headed households are widespread and becoming an increasing phenomenon in Ghana and Africa at large (Amu, 2009; Evans et al., 2009). In the city of Accra where I did my fieldwork, female-headed household accounted for about 33% of all households (Amu, 2009). This means that more and more women are becoming the backbone of the family in terms of being the sole breadwinners and as such their economic independence is vital to the survival of the family (ibid). In the township most women work in the informal sector and do not enjoy any maternal leave benefits. It therefore means that there will not be any source of income if they don't send their children to the preschool to be free to work. In contrast, the few who finds themselves in the formal sector enjoys a maternal leave of only three months with salary unlike most part of the Global North where mothers can enjoy a maternal leave of about a whole year. This might be the reason which causes parents to send their children to school at early stages in order to concentrate on their work for the survival of their household.

From the above analysis, it can be argued that ECEC enables more women to participate in the labour market which can help boost the entire Ghanaian economy. The OECD (2006 p.12) noted that “because economic prosperity depends on maintaining a high employment population ratio, the wish to bring more women into the labor market has been a key driver of government interest in expanding ECEC services” (ibid). This might be the reason for the recent expansion of early childhood services by the Ghana government over the past seven years and the government reformed education policy to integrate Kindergarten education into the educational system of free and compulsory basic education.

The children also gave various economic reasons during the focus group and the individual interview. When I asked the question; why are you in school? Nii Lante, a 5 year old boy commented; *I am in school so that I can learn and become a rich man, I want to become a doctor and help my mum and dad.* Another child, Petra, 6 years old girl expressed similar view as she stated; *I am in school so that one day I will be a president, get money and buy whatever I want.* This was the view of several others as they mentioned jobs like nursing, accountancy, teaching and many others. It can be said that children perceive education as a pathway out of poverty, a key to white-collar jobs. They are of the opinion that when they learn in school they will end up acquiring white-collar jobs and hence become rich. Bourdillon (2006) suggested that



it is right for children to be in school as education is a means of minimizing poverty and inequality. In Ghana, “many children have since the past few decades lacked access to some basic needs as worsening economic conditions necessitated gradual withdrawal of government subsidy in the provision of social facilities, amenities and services” (UNICEF, 2009 p.5). As a result of this, many households have less income to adequately provide food, education and other basic needs for children, having to meet these needs at costs that are beyond their average incomes (ibid).

From the reports, I also realized that the children look up to the “well to do” persons in their environment to emulate them due to how the society perceives the lives of these people. They believe that been in school will make them just like these personalities. Omanyee, a 7 years old girl asserts that; *I am in school because I don't want to be poor; I want to be rich like Ozoloo, buy a big house and a car and live happily* (Omanyee, 7 year old girl). A conversation that ensued between me and Anunyam, 6 years old boy also shares a similar view. The conversation that ensued between us goes like this;

Obed: *Why are you in school?*

Anunyam: *I am in school to learn so that I will be like teacher Pat when I grow up*

Obed: *Why do you want to be like teacher pat?*

Anunyam: *I want to teach school children and get some money and buy some of her car and drive everywhere I go.*

The above questions and answers indicate that the children look up to the lives of these people to emulate them, just because they perceive emulating their lives will be financially rewarding to them. Anunyam mentioned teacher Pat's name because she is the only one who has a car among the other teachers in the school and want to be like her to get one in future. Ozoloo's name was also mentioned because he is a famous and well known business man in the township and the children know him so much because he has posh Benz car and a magnificent house in the township which makes him stand out. Many of these children live in poverty and see the happy life that the few elites in the society enjoy and they therefore believe that through education they will emulate these models. However, Evans et al., (2009) argued that some renowned personalities receive more attention from children than most parents and are more likely to

influence children than their own parents. I believe children were very selective in their choices just because they are competent social actors (James & Prout, 1990) who are very knowledgeable of their local community where they live.

Some of the children also believe that it is only through education that one can leave the country and enjoy the pleasures in the global North. One of them said; *my mother wants me to be in school to learn hard so that one day I will travel and take her to abrokyiri. I want to feel the good weather and meet the whites. I also want to get a lot of money there* (Asheley, 6 years old girl). Nii Anunyam, a 6 years old boy also added; *I am here to study hard so that one day I will sit in the airplane and go to abrokyiri and enjoy life there. I will get a lot of money, buy cars and build houses.* Several others made similar comments of their hope about travelling one day to “abrokyiri” which is abroad if they will learn very hard in school. They have learnt from their parents and others or have probably watched about life abroad on the television and this has filled up their imagination. The out-migration of professionals for example is all over the news in Ghana and Africa at large and this has created a perception about the country and the continent as not a good place to live. The children hold on to this belief as they see education as a pathway to move out of the country and enjoy pleasures of life. It is surprisingly to see how in recent times, young people abandoned their certificate and professional jobs to migrate to abroad when they get the least opportunity to seek greener pastures. This corroborates with the assertion that, the worsening of economic circumstances in Africa has forced the best educated Africans to seek economic opportunities in Europe, the Middle East, and even North America (Evans et al., 2009). Crush (2006) also observed in his study that “more nurses from Malawi are in Manchester than in Malawi, and more Ethiopian doctors are in Chicago than Ethiopia” (cited in Evans et al., 2009, p. 267). The teachers in the school emphasized this as they cite me as an example of a student who was serious with his study whiles in Ghana and that has ended me in abroad. The children hold the perception that, there are greener pastures in abroad and is only through education that one can get there and hence the requirement to speak the Whiteman’s language which is English.

### 5.3.4 Promoting school readiness

Early childhood education promoting school readiness was the reason given by few of the teachers and the parents but none of the children mentioned this as a reason. When I asked the question; why the need for ECEC (Preschool)? One of the parents narrated a whole story about her experience;

*During our days we did not really have preschool to prepare us for primary school. I remember having to pass a test to make sure I was ready for school. I was asked by the headmaster of the school to stand straight and use my right hand to touch the tip of my left ear across my head. I was refused admission for three times in a year but succeeded in the following year when I finally could touch the tip of my ear at ease. This was when I started elementary school but now the preschool is preparing the children for school (Adjeley, 45 years.).*

Her story indicates that previously in Ghana when early childhood institutions were very few or merely nonexistence, readiness for school was based on passing the above physical entry “test” which is based solely on physical maturation and not on chronological age. In the local context, this was seen as a test one had to pass to be considered ready for school. Kagan and Rigby (2003) argued that this traditional view of school readiness implies that early childhood institution and communities did not have any role to play in promoting school readiness. According to Maxwell and Clifford (2004), Children are not innately “ready” or “not ready” for school. Their skills and development are strongly influenced by their interaction with their families, preschool, communities and their early environments before coming to school (ibid). The preschool was therefore a very important element in preparing the child for elementary school. In Ghana, preschool children in the kindergarten class undergo a final examination in their final term in the Kindergarten to determine who successful go through to elementary school. The children who fail remain in the class till the next final exams.

A 45 years old parent by name Abiso also emphasized;

*The preschool is really helping our children improve and very confident to start school. They learn so much from the school and they often shares whatever they have learnt in school with us. They greet us when they come back from school before they enter the room to change their*

*clothes. They recite the alphabets and numerals with ease. This is not the same with other children around who does not go to preschool; you ask them questions and they feel shy to answer or even run away. The preschool is making our children very confident to start schooling.*

The above view by Abiso indicates that the preschool makes the children very confident and relate to other children easily making it easier for them to start school. This is in line with the argument raised by Young and Mustard (2009) that ECEC programs encourages children to explore and facilitates their social interactions with others and this increases their intelligence.

The teachers also believe that the sort of training they are giving the children will prepare and give them a good foundation for future academic pursuits. One of the teachers asserts that;

*Pre-school provide children with a good academic start in life putting them ahead of others who do not have this exposure (Cairo, 39 years). Another teacher shared similar view; Preschool is very important because the children learn how to “learn” and this makes their future learning very enjoyable and successful (Mrs Glover, 38 years old).*

From these statements it can be argued that children who experience quality preschool arrive in school with an advantage over those without such experience. Some studies undertaken in the global north indicates that early education correlates highly with improved school readiness, probability of on-time enrollment in primary school, lower grade repetitions and dropout rates and improved academic performance overall (Young & Mustard, 2009). In Sub-Sahara Africa which Ghana is no exemption, one of the main objectives of ECEC as argued by Jaramillo and Mingat (2009) is to prepare children for entry into primary school. However, this reason is not limited to my informants alone but among policy makers and researchers. Duncan et al., (2007) argued that early childhood programs and policies that promote academic skills as a foundation to be built upon for school success have been gaining popularity among most nations. The Head Start reform in United States for example, focuses on building early academic skills and emphasized that “on the first day of school, children need to know letters and numbers. They need a strong vocabulary. These are the building block of learning and this nation must provide them” (Duncan et al., 2007 p. 1429). Ghana has also taken up this approach of preparing children

for school and the resultant effect is the government education policy in 2004 which has brought up many preschool institutions all over the country (UNICEF, 2011).

#### **5.4 Parents and teachers understanding of “High Quality” ECEC**

This section looks at parents and the teachers understanding of what is meant by “high quality” ECEC. With recent number of children attending some form of early childhood education, researchers have tried to identify features that determine high-quality ECEC. However, defining what constitute a high-quality ECEC has been a challenge for educators and researchers due to their emphasis on different features (Yamamoto & Li, 2011) and its subjective nature. This section looks at the parents and teachers view of what constitute high quality ECEC. Exploring parent’s view on this issue is was very critical since they make various important decisions about sending their children to school. The teacher’s views were also sought since they act as caregivers in these institutions. Getting the right wording to explain “high quality” for the children to understand the phrase and to give the required response was a challenge hence they were not included (see challenges).

##### **5.4.1 The School Curriculum Matters**

The parents and some of the teachers made reference to what is being taught in the school as what constitute high quality ECEC. All the parents interviewed and some of the teachers mentioned that the school should emphasize on teaching and not otherwise. One of the parents asserts that;

*A high quality preschool must emphasize on teaching and making sure the children understand elementary arithmetic like additions, subtraction and multiplication. Not a place where children are left on their own to play whiles they can play at home (Astwei, 49 years).*

Similarly, Manfio, 38 years old parent commented;

*High quality preschools are schools that charges in dollars and makes sure the children speak English and always make teaching a priority.*

The statements above indicate that the parents want their children to be taught and not allowed to play. To them, schools that lay more emphasis on teaching than playing are of “high quality”. This corroborates with the findings of Sign and Gupta (2011) that children’s play has been

restricted due to the pressure on them to achieve academic excellence and keep pace with their school demands. The teachers and the parents also believe that learning in the mother tongue can impair learning the English language later in life. Children should therefore be taught in foreign language (English) so that they will be able to go “international” and not be limited to the four corners of the country. However, research suggests that many benefits can be gained if a child begins his or her education in the local language (UNICEF, 2000). Though the Ministry of Education requires that the local language be used as medium of instruction in early childhood institutions (Asare, 2005), most private institutions emphasize on the English language. Chawla-Duggan et al., (2010) observed that parents in Ghana support schools that are highly curriculum-centered and focus on English-only policy as opposed to mother tongue education at the early years. In my view, the Ghanaian language should be emphasized in preschools since that identifies us as Ghanaians. Abandoning the local language and focusing solely on the English language is seen as Eurocentric.

Additionally, most of the parents specified that the school should lay emphasis on teaching the children good etiquette and manners especially to be respectful and obedient to the elderly. One of the parents said;

*I consider a school to be of high quality when the children are taught to be respectful and obedient to the elderly. Such children usually greet elders at all time when they meet them (Manfio, 38 years).*

Cairo, 39 years old also emphasized;

*I will teach my child to be respectful and obedient to the elderly when she is with me as culture demands in our society so I expect a preschool of high quality to do this in my absence. At their age it is important to know these things now in order for them to behave themselves well in the midst of adults*

The above quotes indicate that with a high quality preschool, the parents expect that the school must emphasize on basic etiquette and manners since the children at their early formative years spend most of their time there. This confirms the assertion that parents are likely to act upon their child rearing ideals by selecting a particular preschool for their children’s enrolment that they

believe will help them realize their child rearing goals (Yamamoto & Li, 2011). In the Ghanaian culture, children are trained from a very early age that they must respect and obey all elders, be humble towards adults, and take their advice (Twum-Danso, 2009). Among the Gas where I did my fieldwork, “mothers teach their children from the age of five, the age from which they are deemed to ‘have sense,’ how to talk to older people and which language to use. From that age any signs of disrespect in language or action towards an older person will incur severe admonishment or punishment” (Twum-Danso, 2009 p. 420). This was evident during the fieldwork because the children in the crèche are taught how to say “please” when they needed something and “thank you” when they receive something. Those in the nursery and the kindergarten are taught how to obey and show respect to the elderly, and how to greet. The teachers demonstrate this example every morning by greeting the entire class for them to respond as soon as the teacher enters into the classroom. These values held by the society are reflected in a Ghanaian proverb which says; *a child who knows how to wash his or her hands can dine with adults*. The focus on respecting all adults receives further support from the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, which stipulates that children have a responsibility to not only work for the cohesion of the family, but also to respect parents and elders at all times and to assist them in times of need (Twum-Danso, 2009). Notwithstanding obedience and respect as two key fundamental cultural values in the Ghanaian society, some argue that these cultural values can destroy the initiative and creativity of the child, who is afraid to confront traditional norms, hence making them unable to speak her mind easily (ibid).

#### **5.4.2 The School Environment Counts**

The school environment was one of the indicators of a high preschool that few of the parents and teachers made reference to. The parents were very particular about the physical environment of the school. One of them commented;

*The school physical environment alone can tell you a lot about the school and that is the first thing I look out for. How is the building like? Is the place organized, safe and clean? I send my daughter to this school because of the high fees the other private schools charges but the environment of the other schools are superb compared to here* (Cairo, 39 years).

From the above comment, Cairo values the school physical environment as paramount in choosing a “high quality” preschool. She wishes she could send her daughter to a nearby private

school which looks more safe, organized and clean but the high fees the charge hinder her from doing so. Some researchers argued that the behavior of the children and the teacher is better if the physical environment is stimulating, safe and well organized (Melhuish & Petrogiannis, 2006).

With reference to the school environment, the teachers mentioned that a good atmosphere in the classroom where the children interact with their peers and also the teacher very well. According to them, this is only possible with small class size and was an important feature they consider for a “high quality” preschool. One of the teachers asserts that;

*we are able to get enough time to deal with each child’s needs if the class is small and I think this is an important indicator of a high quality preschool (Felicia, 35 years).*

Similarly, another teacher said;

*I think the class of a high quality school should not too large for the teachers in the school. This will enable the children to interact very well with their peers and also with their teachers (Rose, 42 years).*

Also, in relation to the class size, a parent said;

*A quality preschool is where the class size is not be too much for the teachers to interact well with the children and pay attention to the particular needs of each child (Esther, 33 years)*

The above quotes explain that a small number of children to teacher ratio (example 5:1) are key indicators of high quality preschools. This was a concern shared by most of the teachers and some of the parents. They explained that when the class size is small, each child will get more individual attention and interact more with their peers and teachers. It means that for the teacher to be responsive to the child’s needs, the teacher to child ratio should be good. This corroborates with the argument raised by Bowman et al., (2001) that if there is any critical component of quality, then it rests in the relationship between the child and the teacher, and in the ability of the teacher to be responsive to the child. In Ghana, some of the public schools have larger classes of about 101 to 120 children in a class with just one or two teachers which make it difficult to control the children (Asare, 2005). Most of the parents in my fieldwork said the large class size in the public institution was also a factor they considered in choosing this particular preschool



for their child. However, though the teacher to child ratio in the school was within the GES requirement, I realized that the two teachers were still not enough since some the children in the crèche needed more attention. The reason was that at some point which was very often, the two teachers get engaged by some of the children at the same time leaving the rest unattended.

### **5.4.3 The Attributes of the teachers in the School**

From the data gathered in the field, most of the parents also made reference to the attributes of the teacher as a very important indicator and to them that makes a preschool of a high quality or not. Manfio, a 38 year old parent stated;

*Teachers of a high quality preschool should be persons who love children and are always ready to attend to their needs. This will make the school a home away from home for the child.*

Almost all the parents and teachers mentioned this attribute of the teacher. They are of the view that the teachers should have the passion and drive for what they are doing. They should be acting as parents in the school and by so doing provide the children with the love and care that they might need from their parent. In the Ghanaian society, the ability of the caregiver to respond or attend to the need of the child when the child cries or feels uncomfortable is very crucial. The parents therefore want to see these characteristics in the teachers who are acting as the caregiver in their absence. Colker (2008 p.3) asserts that been a preschool teacher “is not a career for someone just looking for job working with kids because they are cute and it looks like fun. This is a career that must ignite your passion”. This is was evident during my fieldwork, as I observed the teachers and the unique way each of them relate to the children. Through the data I gathered, it was so clear that some really have the love and passion for the job while others are there because they don’t have jobs at the moment and that was their last resort. When I asked the teachers; what motivates you on the job? They gave different responses to this question, Felicia, 35 years old confessed that;

*Hmm! You talk of motivation. There is no motivation for this job, we are not paid well, and no one even sees and appreciates what we even do. Many do not see our job even as a profession. They think of it as an organized household chore brought under institution.*

This was the view of Felicia and other three teachers as well which implies that their motivation do not come from within them but extrinsic. On the contrary, the other two teachers were very optimistic for the job. For instance, Pat 48 years old asserts that;

*What motivates me about the job is finding myself in the midst of young children. I know that is where my heart belongs and that is more important to me than to make money. I know this is my calling and I feel so good knowing that I am fulfilling my mission on earth.*

This statement shows that these two teachers have the passion for the job and do not seek any monetary rewards to come out with their best.

The interview I had with one of the parents revealed that the daughter always mentioned one of the teachers name at home and always asked the mother to take her to this teacher. According to the parent, the love this teacher shows to their children in the school has made the children love her and cannot forget her. Why is this child mentioning teacher Pat and not the others? It is probably because she is loving and caring. I experienced this scenario in the field, the way this particular teacher handles the children, she laughs and smiles with them and some of the children even invites her to participate in their games during their break time. Colker (2008 p.5) confirmed this when she observed that “young children are shrewd judges of character; they know whether a teacher is authentic, and they respond accordingly” This means that an early childhood institution with a type of teachers who have passion for the job will definitely be of high quality.

Another attribute raised by few of the parents has to do with the teacher’s qualification. One of the parents commented; *with high quality preschool, the teachers are professionals because they go through training so when you leave your child with them, you know she is under good care* (Atswei, 49 years). Another parent gave a similar view; *A preschool that has its teacher with right qualification is definitely of high quality because the teachers will deliver their service very well* (Adjeley, 45 years). The above statement depicts that the parents want their children to be in the hands of professionals who will handle them with care. Prochner and Kabiru (2009) noted that in Africa, most governments do not employ preschool teachers, let alone training them. Large proportions of these teachers are not trained (ibid). On the field, it came to light that only

two of the teachers were trained out of the six teachers and this trained teachers handled the children with some sort of professionalism. A study by Asare (2004) in Ghana revealed that, the ability of the teacher to adopt age appropriate practices in handling children in preschool institutions depended on higher education qualification as well as training. She explained that the specific training given to the teachers equip them with the requisite knowledge, skills and attitudes for that level of the child (ibid).

## **5.5 Everyday life of children in the preschool - “Kindergarten childhood”**

This section looks at the everyday life of the children in the preschool understudy. It presents some of their practices in the institution and discusses the views of the children, teachers and parents on some of these practices. I will start by describing a typical morning, life during break time, after break activities which includes lunch and closing time.

### **5.5.1 Morning Activities**

The normal day for the children in the school begins at 07:00 in the morning. The school is an important part of the children’s life. For most of the children breakfast is taken on their way to the school or in the classrooms when they arrive early in the morning. It is common to see children eating maize porridge or rice water in a small rubber bag as they walk to school. The children especially those in the Kindergarten class normally come to school in groups and they normally engage in play and other activities on their way to school. The young ones in crèche are normally carried on the back of their mothers to drop them off to the teachers. In Ghana, traditionally, childcare is regarded as the responsibility of mothers with only small proportion of fathers providing some assistance in that regard (Nukunya, 2003). I also observe that some of the older children in the kindergarten also assume the role of caring for their younger sibling in the lower classes. They do this by holding their hands and bringing them to school, cleaning their noses especially when it is “running” and attending to them when they are crying. It is usual among the Gas where I did my research that when a girl is the first born then she is expected to look after her younger siblings by providing some sort of care for them (Twum-Danso, 2009 p 432).

I also observed the way the teachers managed the problem of separation between the younger children and their parents. Some of the parents complicate this when the separation anxiety is shown all over their faces to the extent that their child could sense it and cry. The teachers are able to manage this and make the children feel secured and wanted. The teachers do this by talking to the children in a caring manner as the mother leaves; promising them that their mother will come for them very soon. The teachers then take them up and carry them at their back and sing for them or sometimes give them candies. I also observed that some of the children handle this situation in their own way. Some may cling to their mothers and scream whenever their mothers attempt to leave while others who are used to playing with their peers will quickly join a group of their choice.

Once they arrived in school and put their bags in the classroom, there are duties for them to do and they attend to their duties with less supervision from their teachers. The older children especially those in the Kindergarten class sweep the classroom and the school compound. The others who are normally boys water the school flowers, clean and dust the cupboard, their desk and the teachers table and chairs. In Ghana, responsibilities begin very early within the household and by the age of 5 or 6 many children have tasks that are set aside for them to do on a daily basis (Twum-Danso, 2009) and this can be seen in their early childhood settings. The African view on ECEC permits children to enter into adult roles early and to manage their own learning and development and this diverges from the Eurocentric view (Nsamenang, 2009 p.139). Most of the parents agree to the idea that the children perform these activities in the preschool. They argued that it was these activities that have made them responsible adults now. One of them argued; *the children learn not to be lazy but hardworking, I am aware they clean the school compound, classrooms, among other things which are basically the same as household activities they need to know. If they know these things now, it will be for their own good since they will not suffer in the future* (Rose 39 years). The parent understanding for the activities their children undergo is to adequately equip and prepare them for their parenthood. Nsamenang (2009 p.142) argued that the duties that “children performs socializes responsible and pro-social values, develop socio-cognitive and productive skills and eases social integration”.

Most of the teacher's agreed with this view as one of them explained; *the children are not here only to be taught English and mathematics but we teach them practical life skills that will make them responsible and enhance their future adult roles* (Pat, 38 years). The teachers believe that undergoing through these duties brings a lot of benefits to the children and prepares them to face the adult world. This corroborates with the study by Nsamenang (2004) which revealed that children who perform domestic duties demonstrate greater cognitive development than their counterparts who do not undertake such duties. The teachers however emphasized that not all the children in the school undergo these activities. The explained further that they consider the age, gender and maturity of the child. This was evident on the fieldwork when the lower classes (crèche and nursery) were excluded from the morning activities, and watering of the school flowers was limited to the boys in the Kindergarten class. This corroborates with the assertion made by Twum-Danso (2009) that the duties that children in Ghana perform in early ages are based on the age, gender and maturity of the child (Twum-Danso, 2009).

An important issue that needs to be addressed is children perspectives about their responsibilities, as to whether they see it as a burden or something they appreciate. From the focus group discussions and interviews I conducted with the children, it appears they don't see their duties as burden but rather something meaningful preparing them for the future. This is how Omanyee, a 7 year old girl responded to the question; why do you wish to participate in the morning activities in school. *If we like work, it will help us in future.....* Another child commented; *this is the same work I do in the house, is good because one day I will be a good mother in my house* (Richlove, 7 years old girl). Other children also appreciate their responsibilities because they receive praises from their teachers and other people. *When I sweep the compound and it is very clean, the teachers and other people who see me say good things about me* (Akushika, 7 years old girl). From the views above, I argue that children appreciate their responsibilities instead of seeing it as a burden. Discussion about children's responsibilities supports the view that children are active social actors capable of influencing their own world and that of others around them (James et al 1998; James & Prout 1990).

After the morning activities has come to an end, the bell boy under the instruction of the teacher on duty rings the bell for morning assemble at 08: 15am. The children in the kindergarten and the nursery class quickly runs to the Assembly grounds and form two long queues for each class. At

assemble, the children recite the Lord's Prayer asking for God's protection and guidance throughout the day, after which the national anthem is sang and the pledge recited. The teachers then come in to give announcements that will be helpful for them in the day and at exactly 8:30am, the children march to their classrooms singing a marching song.

### **5.5.2 Wednesday mornings – A time of worship.**

Since Ghana is dominated by a large Christian population (about 70%), most early childhood institutions are founded on Christian doctrines. Therefore, in this institution every Wednesdays morning is a time for worship. The children in the kindergarten and the nursery gather together in one class for worship right after the morning assemble. The teachers close the wooden partition that separates the kindergarten class and the nursery class in order to get a large classroom size to accommodate all of the children. During this time, the children are engaged in praises and worship songs to God and they are taught Bible stories in order to build their spiritual life. They are taught these religious beliefs and practices, and that becomes part of them as they grow up. Most parents like Wednesdays so much and cannot afford their children missing school on this day. One parent said; *worship time is very important for my child because he gets to know more about God and can rely on him for his needs because he is GOD, OUR PROVIDER. If he doesn't get to know him from now then he will get frustrated in life* (Emma, 50 years). Similar statements were made by several parents and this indicates that they belief in a supreme God who overseas, guides, provides and protects every individual. This is rooted in the Ghanaian society. This according to the parents must get down to their children so they will focus on Him in times of need.

The teacher's also shared the same view as most of them made reference to the Bible by quoting Proverbs 22:6 which states that "*Train up a child in the way he should go and even when he is old, he will not depart from it*". The Ghanaian society is intensely religious and all aspects of life, including all actions, moral behavior, and thoughts are inspired and influenced from a religious point of view (Agbenyega, 2006). According to Salm and Folola (2002), religion is part of Ghanaian culture and it will be very difficult to separate it from the Ghanaian way of life. This also confirms the assertion that childhood in Africa and for that matter Ghana entails a spiritual component (Boakye-Boaten, 2009). It is because of the recognition of the part religion plays in

school life that worship is compulsorily scheduled on the school timetable for Wednesdays for all public and private schools in Ghana (Agbenyega, 2006) Children are therefore introduced to that aspect of life based on the beliefs and values of the parents and the society in which the child finds himself or herself.

### **5.5.3 In the Classroom - Learning begins**

In the kindergarten, the first thing the teacher does when she enters the class is to greet the entire class for them to respond. In Ghana, greeting is one of the valued cultural etiquette that every person must know from a very young age. The teachers teach this to the children by acting as an example. The teacher then moves from desk to desk to take the children's homework<sup>8</sup> exercise books together with their feeding fee which is GHC1 (approx. NOK 4.0). This money is given to the children by their parents to be given to their teachers as payment for their lunch. Some children give excuses and keep the money for themselves but the rule in the school is "no feeding fee no lunch". However, this is quite different in the crèche and the nursery class. In these classes, the parents or older sibling's always hand over the money to the teacher as soon as they drop them off in the school, while few of the parents bring along cooked food in a bowl for their children and avoids therefore avoids paying the feeding fee.

The teacher then starts her lessons for the day using the syllabuses designed by the Ghana Education Service (GES) as a guide. The teachers are to follow the syllabus as required by the proprietor who will inspect their lesson notes based on the syllabus. Ann a 40 year old teacher said; *if I have my own way, I will look at the spell of the moment to decide what to teach at a particular time and not follow the outline in the syllabus but the proprietor will complain when he sees you teaching something different than expected of you.* The above statement shows that some of the teacher's want to be free in taking decisions as to what needs to be taught at a particular time rather than following a pre-established outline in the syllabus but the proprietor do not allow that. Asare (2005) also noted that about 91% and 57% of the teachers in the private and public centre's respectively use the syllabus provided by the GES to teach. The reason might be because unlike the public institutions, the teachers in the private institutions are accountable to the proprietor who is always around to monitor how things go in the school. The younger ones

---

<sup>8</sup> Homework are class task given to the children by school teachers that are meant to be carried out at home.

in the crèche and nursery are taught rhythms, hymns, action songs, alphabets and numerals by rote. Those in the Kindergarten class are normally taught reading, writing alphabets, dictation, words and their meanings, basic life skills and arithmetic. Engaging in play activities in the classrooms is comparatively more in the crèche and lesser in the nursery but almost non-existent in the kindergarten as that class is perceived as a preparatory class for schooling. The teachers in the Kindergarten class give exercises to the children based on the lessons taught for that period. The children who do not perform well are caned on the hand or buttocks. The teachers also use the cane to discipline the children when they make noise in class, come to school late etc. When I asked the teachers and the parents about their perspective for using the cane, one of the teachers said:

*Some of the children are too lazy to learn and I become afraid because they will start primary one very soon. Though we are aware that the GES prohibits canning in school the only language they understand is the cane. The parents themselves encourage us during P.T.A meetings to discipline their children when they go wrong.*

Manfio, a 39 years old parent also added:

*Using the cane is as old as society, we have all passed through it before and it has made us what we are today. I expect the teachers to discipline my child because it will be in his own good. The child does not know when he is taking the wrong path but when you inject pain at the path he has taken, he will learn a lesson and will not go that way again. Moreover, since they are scared of the cane, they sit up and learn knowing that failure would result in caning (Felicia, 35 years).*

This shows that both teachers and parents see the use of the cane as a normal practice since they were all trained with it. They believe the only language the children understand is the cane and that is when they sit up and put up a very good performance. Some of the teachers and parents justify it from the religious perspective by making reference to the Bible and quoting scriptures such as Proverbs 13:24 “*he who spares the rod hates his son but he who loves him is careful to discipline him*”, Proverbs 22:15 “*folly is bound up in the heart of the child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him*” (NIV Bible).



The parents and teachers believed that if the rod which is believed to be the cane is spared in the classrooms the children will go astray. Almost all the various religions in Ghana support the idea that children should be corrected with the rod in order to turn out well in life. It is therefore a religious duty for the teacher to see to the moral upbringing of the child (Agbenyega, 2006). Though the GES, in the late 1970s partially banned corporal punishment in schools but allowed head teachers or their deputies to administer it to children it is still prevalent in schools all over the country due to the support received from the society about its use (ibid). Nevertheless, the children saw the use of the cane as a challenge (see challenges).

#### **5.5.4 Break Time – Out from the classroom**

At exactly 10 am the bell boy rings the bell for break time. The children run out of their classrooms with some sort of joy and enthusiasm. Almost all the children are engaged in some sort of play during break. They normally play in groups and most often according to gender and age. This supports the assertion by Montgomery (2008) that, children differ in the games they play, not at least according to their age and gender, but all children play. One thing I realized was that the children choose who to play with and sometimes changed their friends in the group occasionally. This indicates that children exercise their agency as to the social group they should find themselves. I refer to agency here in the context in which James and Prout refer to it as “being active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and the societies in which they live” (James and Prout, 1997, p. 8). In their groups, they play different types of games though the school does not have enough play equipments. Most of the Kindergarten girls engaged in a popular childhood game called “ampe”. Ampe is a game regarded to be for girls and is played between girls in groups among two to ten children. It involves jumping, clapping and throwing either your left or right leg out at any point in time. A person or a group of person can win the game when the same leg of the competitors meet or when the opposite legs meet. Hence the number of times your choice of legs occurs determines if you win ultimately or lose out. The Kindergarten boys on the other hand play football and a game called “piloolo” which is a “hide and seek” game where the children gather in a place and small sticks are hidden for them to come out of their hiding and look out for the sticks. The sticks are always short of one and the person who do not get one stays out of the game. This is done until an ultimate winner is attained. Some of the girls between the ages of 4 to 7 years enjoy

playing *nkutonkuro* (miniature form of food preparation). In this game the girls use empty tins and cans to practise cooking just as it is done by mothers and older sisters. The younger ones are usually happily playing with sand, stone and anything they lay hands on. The children don't really need any play equipment to play these games. This corroborates with the assertion by Nsamenang (2009) that due to lack of commercially prepared playing equipments, most African children create their own playthings from objects available in their environment. This is an indication of how competent children are (Prout & James, 1990).

I also realized that some of the children especially those who kept their money and didn't pay for their feeding at lunch join queues to buy food in a nearby food vendor during the break time. Most of these children I talked to did not like the food given to them in the school. One of them said; *I don't like the stew they gave to us, is not like my mother's own, I prefer eating Aunty Theo "Waakye" with the money given to me to pay for my feeding* (Lois, 6 years). The children decision to use the money meant for paying their feeding fee for buying "Waakye" indicates the exercise of their agency by making important decisions in their life. However, some of the children have no choice than to eat the food given to them since their parents pay for their feeding on monthly or termly basis. One of them emphasized; *I like Aunty Theo's food but my mother don't give me any money when am coming to school so I have to eat the food the teacher will give me* (Omanyee, 7 years). This child wishes she could buy some food of her choice but has no money; therefore she has to eat what is provided by the school. It is worth noting that since some of the children do not want to eat the food provided in the school they are forced to divide their play time and use part to eat even though it's not yet lunch time. They therefore end up not having enough time for play.

I also observed the way some of the children in the kindergarten class attended to their younger siblings in the lower class during break time knowing that their parents are not around. They pick their siblings up when they are crying and sometimes beat the other child who made their sibling cry without even finding out what really happened. Some of them gave their younger sibling the food or fruit they have bought during the break. These illustrate the agency of children as purposive social actors knowledgeable of their social environment (Giddens, 1984).

### **5.5.5 Break over – Back to class and Lunch**

At exactly 10:30 am, the bell boy is signaled by the teacher on duty to ring the bell for break over. When they enter their classrooms from break, academic work continues in the Kindergarten class till lunch time which is 12:00pm. The children in the lower classes may engage in some rhymes and take a nap for some time prior to lunch. During lunch, the children are served with the food in the classroom by their teachers and the cooks. Only children that have paid for their feeding are given food at this moment. When served with the food, the children are not supposed to start eating until everyone is served and a corporate prayer has been said. The corporate prayer goes like this; *be present at our table oh Lord, Amen* (field note, July, 2011). The same applies to the nursery and crèche but with some difference. Here when the food is served, the teachers also pick up a plate of the food and stand in front of the children. The teachers then ask them to put their hands together and say the corporate prayer together with her. The teacher after the prayer starts eating the food in front of them and this encourages the children to eat as well. A teacher emphasized that;

*We eat in front of them to inform them that it is edible and most of the children will eat only when they see you the teacher eating else they will play with the food and even end up pouring it on the floor* (Connie, 47 years).

This statement implies that, the young children are taught to learn through observation and this is typical of the Ghanaian society and Africa in general (Laryea, 1983; Prochner & Kabiru 2009). The Ghanaian parent emphasize that the children observe whatever goes on in the household or the community and learn out of it rather than to be asking so many questions. After eating, the children are served with a big bowl of water and soap at the entrance of their various classroom doors door for them to wash their hands but with the crèche, the teachers go round to each child and wash their hands. After lunch, the class continues till 01: 30pm when the children are given homework to do based on the lessons taught for the day. The teachers and the parents shared similar views on the need for homework to be given to the children. Mrs. Glover, a 38 year old teacher explained that:

*Homework keeps the children on track and reminds them of the lessons taught in school. They tend to develop good study habits outside the classroom which will help them in their future*

*studies. Moreover, they learn to be responsible since they know their homework will be inspected every morning.*

The above statement indicates the benefits children derive from homework from the teachers and parents perspectives. From the data collected, it came to light that the teachers used homework to create impression about the preschool, as being concern about the children's academic prospects. Most of them are of the opinion that through homework, the parents get to know what they are teaching their children in the institution. The parents emphasized this point when one of them said; *it is only through homework that we get to know what our children are being taught in school* (Manfio, 39 years). On the contrary, opinions of the children revealed that they dislike homework. One of them stated; *my father beats me when he is teaching me my home work* (FGD, July, 2011). Another child lamented; I don't like homework because is too difficult and when you go wrong, our teacher will beat you. Other children emphasized that homework deprived them of play in the house. After they had finish writing down their homework, the bell boy rings then rings bell around 01:50pm for closing assembly.

#### **5.5.6 Closing Time - Back to their homes**

The children in the nursery and kindergarten classes move out from their classroom jumping and shouting making a lot of noise when they hear the bell rang for closing. They then move to the assemble grounds and form long queue just like the morning assembles. A corporate prayer is said, announcements are given and school closes at exactly 02:00pm. This happens every day with the exception of Fridays where the children go for picking around the school compound before forming their queue on the assemble grounds. The teacher on duty supervises this as the children pick all the rubbish on the compound and drop it in the school bin. When school closes, the children head back to their homes usually in groups as they play by chasing each other and others sing songs taught in the school. The children in the crèche remain in their classroom until their parents or older siblings pick them up. One of teachers in the crèche remains in the class with the children until the last child is picked, and the teachers do this in turns on daily bases. The table below summarized the everyday activity in the kindergarten class

**Table 3: Everyday activities and time frame for Children in the Kindergarten Class**

<b>ACTIVITY</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>TIME</b>
Morning Assemble	Children gather to pray and receive announcement	8:15am – 8:30 am
Classroom activity	Children begin class work based on the syllabus	8:30 am – 10:00 am
Break Time	Children are given opportunity to play outside the classroom	10:00 am – 10:30 am
Classroom activity	Children returns to the classroom to continue class work based on the syllabus	10:30am – 12:00am
Lunch	Children who have paid their feeding fee are given food	12:00am – 12:30pm
Classroom Activity	Children continue with their class work based on syllabus and homework given	12:30pm – 1:50pm
Closing Assembly	Children come out of their class for closing. They pray and receive announcement for the next day.	1:50pm – 2:00pm.

**Source:** Fieldwork July, 2011.

The above demonstrate the everyday lives of my informants in the early childhood institution I did my fieldwork. The children were able to integrate school responsibilities, academic work and play though in varying degrees. Just as Qvortrup (2005) suggested, that there are various varieties or forms of childhood which includes a family childhood, a school childhood, a kindergarten childhood, a leisure childhood and so on, a typical “kindergarten childhood” in the city of Accra is what I have described.

### **5.5 Play versus Academic work**

There is a considerable debate as to the form that ECEC should take and many argue that young children would benefit from structured learning at earlier age whilst others believe that children learn best through play (Penn 2002 as cited in Ansell 2005 p. 143). Those against structured learning argued that children are not at the right stage of development to sit quietly and concentrate on task, and this may de motivate them in relation to education whiles those against play saw it as being rooted western ideals of childhood that stress individuality, autonomy, self

direction and self-esteem (Penn 2002 as cited in Ansell 2005 p. 143). Based on these arguments, I was curious to know the perspectives of my informants on the emphasis on play and academic work as the main form of practice in the early childhood institution I did my fieldwork.

### **5.7.2 Parent's perspective**

In my interview with the parents, most of them believed that the school should be a place for learning and that there is plenty of time for play at home. When I asked the question; *what is your view on children playing and academic work in school?* One of the parents stated:

*Playing!! Why should they be playing, they are there to learn and that's why I always want to see homework given to my children so that I can see how they are doing with their academics (Manfio, 38 years).*

Also, a 39 year old parent by name Auntie Cairo shared asserts that;

*If they will be in school and be playing, it is better that I take my child to a government school where I know I will not be wasting money. They are supposed to be taught to make them prosperous in the future.*

This statement indicates that the parents see playing in school as unnecessary and a waste of resources. Pellegrini (2008) argued that playtime is perceived as a waste of time that could be spent on academic forms of learning in early childhood institution (as cited in Gleave & Cole-Hamilton, 2012 p. 20). Though some of the parents acknowledge the importance of play, they believe that when their children are taught academics in school, they will be ahead of other children in the competitive market, since they perceive the children as their future insurance. This also corroborates with assertion that “the global trend for preschools to provide basic literacy and numeracy through rote learning reflects a felt to prepare children early, to give them a competitive edge in a world of uncertainty, where most are likely to be confronted with poverty” (Ansell, 2005 p. 144). The parents are always in the outlook for their children's academic progress in order to correct any deviations as early as possible since they want the best for them. From the statement made by Manfio above, she always want to see homework from the school to monitor how her child is progressing in terms of academics. Furthermore, most parents

also demand to know the position their children placed in class during their terminal exams. The position of the children in class on the terminal report is very important for the parents. One parents said; *the first thing I watch on the terminal report is the position my child placed in class* (Adjeley, 45years). When I asked a follow up question; why are you eager to know the position? She said; *to know if the teachers are teaching well to my child understanding, if not then I change the school.* This statement implies that the parents always want to see their children performing at their peak irrespective of whatever goes on in the school. To them, if their children are not performing well academically it is because the teachers are not teaching to their understanding and must therefore change the school for their children. It must however be noted that some research has revealed that exposing children to early numerals and literacy provides them with benefits only in the short term. The research compared 50 play-based classes with 50 early-learning centers in Germany and found that by age ten, the children who had played excelled over the others in the early learning class in a number of ways. Those who played were more advanced in reading and mathematics, better adjusted socially and emotionally and excelled in creativity, intelligence and oral expression (Gleave & Cole-Hamilton, 2012).

### **5.7.3 Teacher's perspective.**

The views gathered from the teachers were to a considerable extent similar to that of the parents but the parents emphasize more on the teaching than the teachers did. When I posed the question; *play and academic work, which of them do you emphasized or do you think must be emphasized in preschool and why?* Mrs. Glover, 50 years old pointed out that:

*Academic work must be emphasized because the earlier the children are exposed to reading and mathematics the easier it will be for them to succeed in school.*

Another teacher asserts that;

*The earlier, they say the better. Preschool education is to prepare children for schooling. We are here to build their foundation for schooling. This means is very important for us to teach them the Alphabets, numerals, reading etc to make future learning easy. Preschool to the best of my knowledge should emphasis on academic work than learning. Children can play at home so why play in school? (Rose, 42 years old)*

These statements is an indication that the teacher believes that the earlier alphabets and numerals are “pushed” into the minds of the children the faster they will understand the basics of education and learning and succeed in school. This confirms the assertion made by Miller and Almond (2009) that some kindergarten education has become heavily focused on teaching literacy and other academic skills because of the belief that the earlier children begin to master the basic elements of reading, such as phonics and letter recognition, the more likely they are to succeed in school. However, some researchers asserts that “teaching young children to read, write and to do arithmetic (the 3R’s) in nursery and kindergarten is “misdirected” and that learning to learn, that is learning to be creative and exploratory, should be emphasized instead of giving the children an earlier start in the 3R’s” (Asare, 2005 p.20).

Some of the teachers acknowledged the importance of play and insisted that play must be emphasized and expressed concerns about how the system<sup>9</sup> works and does not allow for play. Emma, 50 years old also said;

*Childs play at school is good to the best of my knowledge but what can we do? The proprietor comes around to inspect our teaching notes. He wants to see what you have taught in class and not the play you engaged the children in.*

Additionally, another teacher also commented;

*The parents hate it when they see their children playing. To them, they have to be taught all the time else they will remove their ward from the school. Why don’t we move in accordance with their dictates and be paid (Felicia, 35 years).*

The statements portrays that though these teachers believe in free play, the dictates of the proprietor and the parents do not allow them to do what they think must be done. Prochner and Kabiru (2009) observed that to satisfy the expectations of parents, preschool teachers often pressure children to learn skills beyond their ability and development. Professor Diane Levin, a long-time researcher in early childhood, confirms these observations, noting that most school principals “are under much more pressure now to push formal academics in kindergarten” (Miller & Almon, 2009 p. 24).

---

<sup>9</sup> The prevailing social order; the establishment.



This pressure I think will be coming from the parents and since the proprietor want to satisfy them to avoid removing their children from the school, they also in turn push the teachers to act as such. During the interview, one of the teachers revealed that the systems even push them to state a good grade on the position in class column on the terminal report for all the children. In her own words:

*My brother, you may be surprised to know that about 10 children will place the first position because that's what the parents want to see to make them happy and keeps their child in the school. Even the proprietor will check these class positions to make sure none of the children performs badly before giving the report out to the parents (Felicia, 35 years)*

I was surprised to know these that even before the exam comes to an end the teachers were aware of the scores and the positions the children will be placed. This is as a result of the system in place. Felicia and Rose were the only trained teachers in the school and have probably learnt the importance of play during their training section. They wish they could engage the children more in play but are afraid they may end up losing their jobs. These teachers made reference to the popular saying that “*all work and no play make jack a dull boy*” and claim that they emphasize more on some of the activities like physical education (P.E), throwing and catching, and other hand-on activities in the class to engage the children more in play. However, some researchers argued that these activities in the classroom that the teachers claim to be play would not provide the same benefits, as the children are under instruction without any kind of peer interaction and self-direction which can only be achieved through free play (Gleave & Cole-Hamilton, 2012). It is worth noting that the private school is a business venture hence, it's a matter of having more children in the school to make money and not the next 10 years consequence. They will do anything that will keep the business moving.

#### **5.7.4 Children's perspectives**

Contrary to the emphasis placed on academic work from the perspectives of teachers and parents, my finding indicated that the children wanted otherwise. The children preferred to play more than to undertake academic work from my observation in the field. For instance, though

their exams comes days before the vacation day, which they call “Our day”<sup>10</sup>. The children were not enthused about writing the forthcoming exam but were rather in anticipation of the “Our day”. One of the children said this with some sort of joy after morning assembly when the week for the exams was announced to them. In her own words; *Heyy!!!! Our day is coming because next week is exams* (Abena, 6 years). This was the expression of several others. They were happy not because of the exams they were about to take but the aftermath.

During the drawing task, I asked the children to draw what they like in school, one of them drew a shaded round figure (see appendix) and the individual interview I had with him revealed that the drawing was football and that was something he likes in school. Surprisingly, none of children drew anything that has to do with academic (book, chalk, pencil etc.). The focus group discussion I had with them also revealed how they love to play than contrary. When I asked the children; *learning in class and playing, which one do you like and why?* They all exclaimed; *I like to play* (FGD, July 2011). Concerning the reasons why they love to play, one of them said;

*I feel so happy when I play but am not happy in the class because teacher Felicia will cane me when I give wrong answers* (Omanyee, 7 year old girl).

The individual interview I had with this girl revealed that she does not understand some of the class work and she is always being caned. This was the plight of several others and this goes to prove the point that the class work may not be development appropriate practice for them at that stage. I also asked these children which of the schools around when given the opportunity they will like to attend and why? Most of them made reverence to a particular International School in the township and the reason being that the school has a big playing ground with a lot of play items like the sea-saw, large number of used outer tyres, merry-go-round, wooden horses for riding etc. One of the children said;

*I like that school very much because when we are going home we see the children very happy playing on the sea-saw and the merry-go-round but we don't have any in our school, only football* (Kofi, 7 year old boy).

---

<sup>10</sup> Our day is the last day in school where the children wears special uniforms and eat special food prepared from home. They are left alone on that day to play all day without any academic work.

This was their concern. The children never mentioned academic excellence as a reason for preferring that school. This revealed that they love to play as against academic work in class. The International School is a private institution which is perceived to be a school for the elite and very affluent persons in the society. They charge high fees and have a big playing ground and enough play materials for the children.

To end up this section, the findings of my research clearly indicate that academic work is emphasized more in the institution I did my fieldwork and the reason is to prepare children and give them a competitive edge for a brighter future, hence the system supports more academic work and less play. Another contributing factor might be that since childhood in the global south is characterized by work and responsibilities and not solely play (Abebe, 2008), the parents and most of the teachers agree to the fact that academic work should be emphasized as a way of occupying the children. However, the discussions with the children prove otherwise as they prefer to play more than to engage in academic work. This result proves the point that children's views are important in matters that affects them since they are in better position to tell what they want in their lives.

## **5.6 Free Play matters to children**

Play is a one of the distinctive features of early childhood and is a fundamental human right for all children regardless of age, gender, culture, social class or disability (General comment 7, para 34 ; UNCRC, Art.31). Through play, children both enjoy and challenge their current capabilities, whether they are playing alone or with others. The value of creative play and exploratory learning is widely recognized in early childhood education. The results from my study revealed that free play really matters to children. Armitage (2004) asserts that children value times spent away from adults and actively seek places that can offer this. He argued that more resources should be allocated to children's free play, but they are instead channeled towards more supervised forms of activities (as cited in Gleave & Cole-Hamilton, 2012). This section will look at various events and scenarios that indicated how free play matters to children. It will also present the children's views on these events and scenarios since their views are paramount in this research.

### **5.6.1 Break time – short period but full of excitement**

I was curious to know if children really enjoy their rights to “free time” of play and to find out the needed resources at their disposal to enjoy this right. I realized that the school timetable has only 30 minutes of free play for the children and the rest of the hours are almost full with classroom work. As noted by Giddens (1984), children live within these structures and are affected by the structural conditions. The children are aware of the limited time for break and are always eager to move out even before the bell rings. Some of the children approached me prior to break time and asked; *please when will break time come because I want to play?* (Field note, July, 2011) I realized they feel bored with the classroom activities and can't wait to move out to play. Though some of these classroom activities are playful in nature, the children still watch out eagerly for break where they will be on their own. I asked these children; why break time to play because you just played (after singing an action song) in the classroom? Richmond, a 7 years old boy said;

*Break time you play the way you like with your friends but in the class you cannot play with your friend because teacher Felicia is there.*

This statement means children want to be on their own, choose the game they want to play and the friends to play these games with. Oksnes (2008) on this note described play as being “instrumentalised” in the sense that it is viewed as a means of learning instead of sometime to be enjoyed by the children (as cited in Gleave & Cole-Hamilton, 2012 p. 19). When the bell is rang by the bell boy, the children quickly jump out of the classroom with great joy and jubilation with their hands up. During this time, some of the children who look very dull in the class and do not even talk when asked questions are very active in their play with other children. The children's agency is exercised during this period as they make decisions on the game to play and who to play with. According to Mayall (2000), children emphasize the importance of friendships with other children and these provide opportunities for the enjoyment of free time to play. To her, during these period children discuss issues and problems with their friends, providing support and a body of knowledge about childhood, child-adult relations and schooling. I also tried to interview some of the children during this period about their play but was not successful as the

children could not concentrate but rather look at their colleagues playing and are eager to join them. This experience gave me a personal feel of how free play matters to children.

When the 30 minutes of break is getting exhausted, the children in course of their playing just watch out to see if bell boy is approaching the bell to ring to announce break over. Their mood changes as soon as they see the bell boy approaching the bell. When the bell is rang, all the excitement of these children goes down. You could see the disappointment in their faces but few keep the smile on showing their contempt of at least having a 30 minutes free play. This is a structure beyond their control (Giddens, 1984; Kjørholt 2004). They have to leave whatever they are doing and move to their classroom.

### **5.6.2 Sacked for school fees – An opportunity to play**

Most parents find payment of school fees very difficult due to financial constraints and therefore make an arrangement with the proprietor to make payment on monthly basis. Though this arrangement for flexible payment of the fees is in place, parents still default in payment and this result in the children in the kindergarten class being sacked home to collect fees. In the nursery and the crèche, the parents or the sibling who brings the children to school are asked to take the children owing school fees back home until the fees are settled. Some parents do come to the proprietor's office to plead for some days to settle the fees but many still default in the paying the school fees of their children. This makes children being sacked home a very common phenomenon in the institution I did my research. One thing that baffled me was that when the children were sacked home for school fees, most of them look happy and I wondered why? The new social studies of childhood view children as not passive people but active subjects capable of constructing their own social lives (James & Prout, 1990). My study reveals that the children put their agency at work in many ways. When children are constrained by structures in society they in most instances find ways of responding to those constraints. The discussion I had with the children and my own observation reveal that being sacked from the classroom means an opportunity for them to respond to the constraints put forth by the school structure and engage in play. They start playing right from the school compound and the rest of the children in the class cannot help but peep through the design blocks which serve as windows and watch their colleague's run-off and play right from the school compound on their way home. One of the

children in the class whose parents have paid her fees in full came to me and said; *Please I want to be sack for school fees because my daddy hasn't paid and Madam forgot to mention my name* (Field note, July 2011). I wondered why she wanted to go home but further discussions revealed that she just wanted to join her friend out there to play. These also indicate how play matters to these children.

### 5.6.3 “Our Day” – A day full of excitement

During the focus group discussion, when I asked the question; *describe your happiest day in school?* Most of the children made reference to “our day” as their happiest day in school. Our day, which is the last day in school or the day the school closes down for holidays is full of excitement for these children. There is no classroom work and the children are left alone to play. The children are allowed to wear their finest clothes from home and their parents prepare special dishes for them to bring to school on that day. The children love this day so much not because of the special clothes they wear or the special food they eat but the free play they engage in throughout the day. The table below illustrate how a typical “Our Day” looks like.

**Table 4: A typical “Our Day” Time table**

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	TIME
Morning Assembly	The children in the KG and nursery gather to pray and receive announcements	08:15am – 08:30am
Free play	The children are left alone to play without any regulations or supervision.	08: 30am – 12:00am
Lunch Time	Children eat their special dishes prepared from home	12:00 am – 12:30pm
Free play	The children continue to play without any regulations or supervision.	12: 30pm – 1:50pm
Closing Assembly	The children gather again to pray and receive their terminal reports for their parents	1:50pm – 2:00pm

**Source:** Fieldwork July, 2011

When I asked a follow up question, why do you like “our day”? One of them said; *I like our day because we play throughout the day, there is no teaching on that day and we do whatever we like. The teachers even play music for us to dance* (Omanyee, 7 year old girl).

Another child said; *during “Our day” we have a long break time and no class work, we normally stay on the compound and leave our things in the classroom* (Lois, 6 year old girl).

This indicates that children really want to exercise their agency and make decisions for themselves provided the structures in place gives them that opportunity to do so. The children were so conscious of “Our day” even though their exams were approaching, they do not talk or even mention it. Lois and others saw “Our day” as a long break time which they were happy about. They imply that they would have more of the break time than the 30 minutes break they experience during normal school days.

I was in the field till the last day of the term when school vacated and I had the opportunity to witness how the children felt during this day. The children totally avoided the classroom on that day. They quickly move out from the classroom when they put their food brought from home down. They stayed outside the class working hard at play either alone or with friends. Miller and Almon (2009) noted that when children are left on their own they invent scenes and stories, solve problems, and negotiate their way through social roadblocks. They know what they want to do and work diligently towards it (ibid). The exercise of their agency was at its peak during this time. I asked some of the children that day, how will you feel if every day in school is “Our day”? They began to answer this particular question with a smile and laughter. One of them said; *It will be very sweet and I will always come to school* (Kofi, 7 year old boy). Another child, Ama, 6 years girl also shared similar view when she said; *wow, to have every day as “our day”. I won’t even go home again.* These statements show how the child wish the question I asked was a reality for them to live. They all love to play. To conclude on this section, children are right holders to play and leisure, and are social agents whose lives are influenced by authoritative and available resources at their disposal (Giddens, 1984). Children love to have a free time of play away from adults because it means a lot to them but the structures of the school provide them with less resources and opportunities to play.

## 5.8 Challenges faced by children, teachers and parents

Every institution has some form of challenges that confronts it in one way or the other. In this section, I will present some of the challenges that the children, teachers and parents faced in the preschool understudy. Their concern will be discussed in the following order: children, teachers and parents. However, the various suggestions from them as to how best to tackle some of these problems will be discussed.

### 5.8.1 Children's perspectives

During the individual interview and focus group discussion, I gave the children the opportunity to say some of the problems they faced at school. All the children expressed their dissatisfaction with corporal punishment in the school. One of the children lamented; *the teachers cane too much, if you make noise in class you are cane, if you score zero in class work too you are cane* (FGD, July, 2011). When I asked the children to draw what they dislike in school, one of the children drew a long line (see appendix) and the individual interview I had with him revealed that the drawing was a cane and that was something they dislike in school. An individual interview I had with another boy who drew a human figure (see appendix) revealed that the drawing was teacher Felicia. Why did you draw teacher Felicia was the question I asked him. He responded; *"I don't like her because she canes too much"* (Lois, 6 years old girl). Other forms of punishment in the school included kneeling down in front of the class and raising your hands, holding your ears while squatting up and down among others. The children were not happy with these practices as they raised it as a major challenge in the institution.

Another challenge raised by the children was lack of play materials. Almost all the children made reference to a particular International School in the township as a school they will love to attend when given the chance to do so and the reason being that the school has a big playing ground with a lot of play items. One of the children said; *I like that school very much because when we are going home we see the children very happy playing on the sea-saw and the merry-go-round but we don't have any in our school, only football* (Anunyam, 7 year old boy). This was the plight of several others which indicates that the children wish they have these play materials in the school. When I asked the children, "How will you feel if your parents ask you to stop schooling here and start the International school you mentioned?" One of them said with



excitement; *I will go. Please kindly tell my parents for me because the children are always happy playing* (Asheley, 5 year old girl).

During the focus group discussion, it also came up that the children feel at home and at ease when they speak in the local language than the English language which was a requirement for them to speak in. When I selected the children for the focus group, one of them looked straight into my eyes and asked; *please are we going to speak Ga or English* (Nii Lante, 6 year old boy). When I said Ga will be used, Nii Lante and the rest were so happy and during the focus group discussion it came up that they understood things better when the local language is used. This confirms the assertion made by Odonkor (2007) that language barrier is a major problem facing the Ghanaian education system. Some of the children also said they need fan in the classroom since they sweat in class due to lack of ventilation. Others said they don't have exercise books, pencils, crayons, shoes and school bag for school and this was a challenge for them.

The children were able to provide solutions to some of the challenges they encounter when I sought their view as advocated by the Social Studies of childhood (Prout & James 1990; James et al., 1998). They mention that they will like to have playing materials like the see/saw, merry-go-round among others just like the nearby International school. Another thing of concern to these children was the need to stop canning in the school. One of them said; *please tell teacher Felicia to stop canning us. She cane too hard* (Rich love, 7 year old girl). To them, they will prefer to kneel down than to be given strokes of the cane on the palm or buttocks. Others requested that they have school uniforms and shoes for school since theirs are old and are being laugh at by their colleagues.

### **5.8.2 Teachers' perspectives**

With regards to the challenges faced by the teachers, their comments and reaction during the interview revealed a lack of satisfaction with their job. They indicated that one major problem they faced is unstable and inconsistency in their salary which is caused by non-payment of school fees by the parents. The proprietor depends on the school fees to pay the teacher's since that is the main source of his income. One of the teachers said;

*Non-payment of school fees by parents is what makes our job very difficult because the proprietor is unable to pay us our salary in full at the end of the month. We don't blame him because we know this is not his fault but the parents* (Mrs. Glover, 50 years).

All the teachers raised the same issue as a problem. The teachers further explained that some of the parents prefer to bring their ward to a private school and instead of making the payment of fees a priority they rather spend the monies in organizing extravagant funerals, naming ceremonies and festivals. To the teachers, they are the most affected because their salary will either delay or be given in bits over the month.

The teachers also expressed their dissatisfaction with the lack of allowances and incentives. They were not satisfied with the way their profession is being handled as they compared theirs to other professions. One of the teachers lamented; *even when it is Christmas, we don't receive anything from the proprietor or the parents to show appreciation for the good work we are doing. Anyway, even the state does not even recognize our efforts, is only nurses they see as hardworking* (Felicia, 38 years). These have been a general problem for teachers (especially public school) in the country as they frequently go on strike for pay increments. This confirms the assertion that female-dominated profession tends to be characterized by inadequate pay and preschool is no exemption (Jalongo et al., 1994).

Low morale is one of the challenges the teachers faced. Irregular attendance of the children is a major cause of this challenge as one of the teachers lamented; *it is very difficult to teach a class where the children's attendance is irregular because you cannot move at a pace you want and you always have to go back and forth to get those absent involved* (Glover, 35 years). The irregular class attendance by the children I realized in the field was first caused by lack of payment of school fees. Some of the parents spread the payment of the fees over the term for easier payment and when the payment for a particular month is exhausted the child is sacked home for the payment for the next month.

Parents misbehavior is another challenge as one of the teachers complained that; *some of the parents talk to us as if we are entirely responsible for the child's academic performance and because of that they don't help the child at home with their homework and they don't show up at*

*Parent- Teachers Association meetings to help share views on their children welfare* (Mrs. Ablorh, 38 years). The teachers expressed that the parents hold a perception that, they the teachers are responsible for the children academic success and therefore do not assist in anyway aside paying the school fees and bringing them to school. The teachers explained that this discourages them. The parents insisted that children are given homework to do at home but they don't assist them in doing it. When we call for Parents-Teachers Association (P.T.A) meetings for us to discuss issues about the well-being and academic success of their children they simply do not show up, all because they think it is our entire responsibility for the children academic success.

As to how best to provide solutions to the challenges raised, the teachers recommended that government and bodies in charge of education should pay more attention to preschool education since they are the foundation on which the entire education ladder is built. They suggested that the government focus should not only be on public preschools but should also monitor the private schools to ensure they meet any standard set for its operation. One of the teachers commented; *providing preschool curriculum is not enough, the government must encourage teachers in both the public and private sectors to work harder at their job by providing incentives* (Glover, 45 years). The teachers explained that with the government and the ministry of education does not improve the conditions of service of teachers and aim at attaining high quality preschool, then the future of the country may be affected adversely. Although the government had a part to play in ensuring the quality of early childhood education in the country is high, the teachers also acknowledged the fact that they also had a role to play. They pointed out that some of their colleague's teachers have negative attitude like absenteeism, laziness among others towards the profession. In playing their role and duties, one of the teachers suggested; *Before we bring the government on the scene, I think we have to be honest by organizing ourselves well. We need to see the children we are handling as our own and that passion or compassion can also play a role as a teacher to make sure we give out our best* (Pat, 38 years). This indicates that in order to improve upon the quality of education in the country, the governments as well as the teachers have a role to play.

### 5.8.3 Parent's perspectives

With regards to the parents, one major problem they faced is their inability to finance their children's education. They mentioned a lot of expenses they normally incur apart from paying their school fees. This includes paying for their feeding, school uniforms, books, pencils and crayons. They are also required to buy a number of toilet rolls, soaps, towel, and pampers every month for the school especially for the children in the crèche. One of the parents commented;

*I feel so bad when my son is being sent home for school fees but what will I do? After I manage to pay the fees it does not end there. Uniforms, books, exam fess..... The teachers always take money from us by making us pay for so many things meanwhile my job is not paying enough (Esther, 39 years).*

Another parent who is a single parent also lamented;

*I find it so difficult to pay my rent, electricity, water and even pay for the school fees of my children. I do all this alone without any support from anyone. As soon as I earn some money it all vanishes away by paying for all this bills. Hmm!! What will I do? (Emma, 50 years)*

This was the plight of some others especially single parents. From the above statement it is very obvious that low income generating activities made it difficult for parents to meet their children's basic needs and education. This corroborates with the findings with Chant and Jones (2003) that in Ghana, families that are hard pressed in terms of resources find it very difficult to keep their children in school. A study by Motola (2004) in Kenya documented many hardships that single women faced in raising their children because of their low earning capacity. She noted that many of these children drop out of school due to lack of school fees and other supplies (cited in Evans et al. 2009).

I was curious to know why in the face of all these challenges, parents try their possible best to send their children to a private institution while the public is almost free and can curtail these problems. Responses from the interview indicate that the perceived low quality of public education is one of the major reasons. One of the parents commented; *why should I send my child to a public school if I want a future for him? I will prefer to sell the cloths I wear in order*

*to pay for a better tuition* (Cairo 40 years). This indicates that most parents have lost hope in government owned institutions which is “free” of charges and therefore prefer to sacrifice what they have to pay for their children to be in a private institution. Moreover, some of the parents also mentioned that their Jobs are not paying enough and that is the reason their children are not in the best of private schools they would have preferred. I also realized that most parents just want to send their children to a private institution just for prestige without taking into account the quality of that institution. One parent said; *I prefer to go hungry and be respected for having my child in a private institution* (Manfio, 35 years). This statement indicates that some parents just take pride in the fact that they have their children in the private school. However, it can also be inferred that the parents wants to sacrifice and give the children the best of education.

Another Challenge raised by some of the parents was the need to incorporate the local culture and traditions in the classroom. One of them said; *I remember when we were young. Our grandparents often gather us together in the evening by the fire side and tell us riddles and the Ananse<sup>11</sup> stories which instill in us the morals and traditions of the society. They narrate to us about the origin of the community and some Legends in our society but this is missing among the current generations due to formal education in the classrooms* (Emma, 50 years). This indicates that it is a concern for some parents to bring back what is “African” back to Africans. Emma believe that there are a lot of lessons to be learnt from the Ananse stories which can built the children up morally. Nsamenang (2009) argued that school curricula should be indigenized to factor the African experience and hence the uniqueness early childhood in every society.

As to how best these challenges could be solved, the parents suggested that the government should ensure high quality in public preschools in the country. They believe that when those standards are raised they will patronize those schools since that are “free of charges”. They also suggested that the government can also support these private institutions in terms of finance and this can reduce or eliminate the payment of school fees while the quality of education is still assured. Some of the parents also recommended that the school feeding program that is going on in most public schools should be introduced in the private schools to ease part of their financial burden. Others also suggested that some practices that identified us as Ghanaians like the Story

---

<sup>11</sup> Ananse is simple a spider who is portray as a culture hero or a cunning trickster or a greedy person who must pay for his actions with shame and punishment.

telling and riddles must be brought back to the classroom to teach our children the morals and traditions of the community since they spend most of their early childhood period in the classroom. However, some of them do acknowledge that they also have a part to play to ensure quality in their children education. Manfio, a 38 year old commented; *they are our children and we must start it first before we invite any other people in to support us. I have always been to Parents Teachers Association (P.T.A) and I get disappointed at the way the parents patronize it. We want the best for our children yet we don't want to get involved in the affairs of their education.* This implies that to ensure quality in preschool education, both the parent's teachers agree that they all have a role to play.

## CHAPTER SIX

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

#### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the overall summary and conclusions of the study. It describes the main findings of the research and how they relate to the research questions and objectives set out. It also ends with a concluding remark, and also makes some recommendations in the area of further research and ways to enhance the welfare of children in Early Childhood Institutions in Ghana. The limitations of the study are also discussed.

#### 6.2 Summation of the study.

This study looked at the perception that children teachers and parents hold about the practice of Early Childhood Education in a selected institution in the Teshie Township. The aim of the study was to understand the reasons for early childhood education and care by seeking the views of the children, teachers and parents. Furthermore, it sought to explore parents and teachers understanding of “high quality” ECEC. It also looked at the form that ECEC should take in terms of play and academic work and finally, the challenge that was confronted by the three stakeholders on the issue is outline. The main theoretical perspective guiding the study was the Social studies of childhood and the theoretical discussions under children’s right. The New Social studies of childhood places emphasis on children’s agency and competence as well as studying children present conditions through their interpretation of and responses to their environment (Qvortrup, 1994). The theory acknowledges children as competent social actors and must therefore not be considered as passive subjects who are victims of structures in society. This means that children voices must be allowed in research and their opinion given due weight since they are experts in their own work (Clark & Moss, 2001). Therefore, issues on children and their agency are worth of studying in their own right and perspective devoid of adult perspectives (Prout & James, 1990). However, the exercise of children’s agency can be hindered by structures beyond their control (Giddens, 1984; Holloway et al., 2000).

The children’s right perspective based on the arguments raised by the liberationist thesis also guided this study. They emphasized that children are right holders and do reveal competence for

rational thought and do make informed decisions. They hold a basic presumption that all human beings are capable of making rational, autonomous decisions. These rights are stipulated in the UNCRC and the ACRWC. The main articles in the UNCRC that have been used in the study were article 12, 31 & General Comment 7. Article 12 talks about children participatory right which asserts that children should be given the rights to express their opinions about issues concerning them. Article 31 emphasized on children's right to play and leisure while the General Comment talks about children's right to education as beginning from early childhood. The ACRWC was also very relevant to this study especially article 31(a) which states that the child shall have responsibilities towards his or her family and society. Children in the study were not only right-holders but responsibility-bearers as stipulated in the ACRWC. The study made use of qualitative methods. The approach was necessary in order to gain in-depth knowledge of what was being researched considering the objective of the study. I used participant observation, focus group discussion, drawings and individual interviews to obtain information from my informants. In light of the research questions and objectives, the next section looks at the major findings and conclusions that were made.

### **6.2.1 Why Early Childhood Education and Care**

In recognition that people do the same thing for different reasons, the study sought to explore the reasons for ECEC by seeking children, teachers and parents' perspective. The study revealed that children are sent to Early Childhood institution for three major reasons that is to serve as future insurance for their parents, various economic reasons and to promote school readiness. Under the future insurance, the parents and few of the teachers hold the perspective that parents send their children to ECEC institution to build a strong foundation making them more likely to come out successfully in their academic endeavour, gain better job and earn good income to support their parents in their old age. The children also gave similar reasons in that regard. They perceive being in school as a way to support their parents in their old age when they are weak and they are strong. This phenomenon has been explained by Twum-Danso (2009) by looking at the parent-child relation in Ghana as a form of reciprocity where children grow up very much aware that what their parents provide for them is based on the belief of a pay-off. The fundamental principle underlying reciprocity is the expectation that, at the long run everyone is treated fairly.



With the economic reasons, unlike the teachers, most of the parents and the children gave this reason for ECEC. It was revealed that parents send their children to the institution in order to have time to work since some of them do not have their relatives around to care for their children. According to the parents they carry the financial burden of the entire household because they are single parents or work to contribute to the household by supporting the insufficient income the husband earns. The Children also believed that being in school will serve as a pathway out of poverty as they mention many white-collar jobs they desire to have. It came to light that the children look up to people in their environment to emulate them due to the perceived “wealthy lives” of the people. Some of them also perceived being in school in school will to serve as a channel to leave the country and enjoy greener pastures in the global North.

Early childhood education promoting school readiness was the reason given by most of the teachers and few of the parents but none of the children mentioned this as a reason. A story told by one of the parents about a physical entry test they need to pass before entering elementary school reveal that ECEC is replacing that test by preparing children for elementary school. The teachers are of the view that the training they are giving the children will prepare and give them a good foundation for future academic pursuits. They further explained that children who experience quality preschool arrive in school with an advantage over those without such experience.

### **6.2.2 Parents and teachers understanding of “high quality” preschool**

As a result of recent debate over what high quality meant and the subjective nature of it, the study sought to explore parents and teachers perspective about their understanding of “High quality” ECEC (Preschool). The results of the study revealed three main features namely; school curriculum, the school environment and certain attributes of the teacher as constituting high quality ECEC. With reference to the curriculum, most of the parents and few of the teachers specified that the school curriculum should lay emphasis on teaching English and basic arithmetic like additions, subtraction and multiplication. It should also emphasize on teaching the children good etiquette and manners especially to be respectful and obedient to the elderly. This is very relevant in the Ghanaian society and especially among the Gas, the community where I did my fieldwork. With the school’s environment, the parents were very particular about the

school physical; environment. They mentioned that the place should be neat and well organized. Most of the teachers and few of the parents on the other hand were much particular about the need for a good atmosphere in the classroom where the children interact well with their peers and the teacher as a resulting from small class size. Most of the parents in my fieldwork said the large class size in the public institution in the country was a factor they considered in choosing a private institution for their ward. With the attribute of the teacher, the parents are of the view that the teachers should have the passion and drive for what they are doing. They should be acting as parents in the school and by so doing provides the children with the love and care that they might need from a parent.

### **6.2.3 Everyday life of Children in the Preschool.**

The everyday lives of the children in the institution were explored and the findings revealed that the normal day for the children in the school began at 07:00 am and close at 02:00 pm. The children in the Kindergarten class commenced with morning activities like sweeping, dusting, cleaning, watering flowers as soon as they arrived in school. Children taking on responsibilities in Ghana begin very early within the household and by the age of 5 or 6 many children have task that are set aside for them to do on daily basis (Twum-Danso, 2009) and this can also be seen in their early childhood settings. Ghana being religious society, Wednesday mornings is a period set aside for worship which deviates from the normal routine in the mornings. This is the time for worship and was very important for the parents, teachers and the children. The reason being that the Ghanaian society is very religious and the children are introduce to this aspect at a very young age based on the beliefs and values of the parents and the environment they find themselves. The study also pointed out that the first thing a teacher does when she enters the classroom was to greet the entire class for them to respond as a way of teaching them one of the most cherished etiquette in the Ghanaian society. Unlike the crèche and the nursery where learning or academic work is quiet flexible, it was very intense with the Kindergarten class. Children who do not perform well in this class are canned in order to keep up with the class. The parents and the teachers are of the view that canning is a way of putting children on their toes and backed by scriptures from the Holy Bible.

The time table which was based on the syllabus is followed strictly and allows only 30 minutes free play for the children. During this free play, the children engage in various games according to their age and gender. The girls normally play “ampe” and the boys “piloolo” in a group of four or more. They choose who to play with, which indicates that children are “active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and the societies in which they live” (James and Prout, 1997 p.8). The study also revealed that some of the children keep their feeding fee to buy food of their choice during this period. Some of them provide some sort of care to their younger siblings by holding their hands and bring them to school, cleaning their noses, giving them food during break and attending to them when they hear them cry. This is usual among the Gas where I did my research that when a girl is the first born then she is expected to look after her younger siblings by providing some sort of care for them (Twum-Danso, 2009). The analysis of their everyday life in the preschool indicates that the children are able to integrate responsibilities, academic work and play.

#### **6.2.4 Play versus Academic work**

Play and academic work is identified as the main practices in the Early Childhood Institution aside certain responsibilities carried out by the children. The study therefore explores teachers, parents and children’s perspectives about the emphasis on play and/or academic work in this institution. The analysis point out that though some of the parents and the teachers acknowledge the importance of play for the children, they think academic should be emphasized in preschool. The reason was to prepare children early, to give them a competitive edge in the world of uncertainty, where most are likely to be confronted with poverty considering the Ghanaian economy (Ansell, 2005). The parents are therefore in the watch out for their children’s academic progress as most of them demand to know the position their children placed in class during their terminal exams. The study revealed how the parents and the proprietor are on the teachers to ensure that they emphasize on teaching than playing with the children. Positions in class on terminal reports are manipulated in other to satisfy parents that their children are performing well in school. Contrary to the emphasis place on academic work from the teachers and parents perspectives, my finding indicated that the children wanted otherwise as they prefer to play more than the academic work. In the morning assemble when the week of their exams were announced to them, the children were very happy not because of the exams they were about to take but the

aftermath of the exams which was “Our day”, a day of free play. The parents and most of the teachers agreed to the fact that academic work should be emphasized but discussion with the children proves otherwise. These results illustrate the point that children’s views are important in matters that affects them since they are in better position to tell what they want in their lives.

### **6.2.5 Free Play matters to children**

Play being a distinctive features of early childhood and is a fundamental human right for all children, the study looked at how children enjoy their free time to play and the results indicates that free play really matters to children. The school time table has only 30 minutes of free play and the children are aware of the limited time so they are always eager to move out even before the bell rings to make use of the limited time at their disposal. The contrast change in their mood when the bell rings for break time and break over reveals that play really matters to them. When the children are sacked home for not paying their school fees, they see this as an opportunity to play. This was a way of exercising their agency by responding to the constraints placed on them by the school structure (Giddens 1984; Kjørholt, 2004). They start playing right from the school compound before going home and the rest of the children in the class cannot hold it but to peep through the design blocks which serve as windows and watch these other children play. This indicated that though the children are constrained by the school structures, they exercise their agency with the least opportunity they get at their disposal. “Our day” which is the final day in school where the children are left alone to play is a day full of excitement for the children. During this day, the classroom is ignored as they stay outside and enjoyed the day to the fullest by playing. The exercise of their agency is seen at its peak during this day.

### **6.2.6 Challenges faced by children, teachers and parents**

Since every institution is confronted with some sort of challenges, the study sought the opinions of the children, teachers and parents about some of the challenges they faced with the institution. The analysis of the data revealed out that children were dissatisfied with the punishment in the school though the teachers and the parents did not see anything wrong with it. The lack of play materials were also a challenge for them since they watch other children in a nearby school playing with the see-saw and merry-go-round that their school has provided. The study also revealed that the children feel at home and at ease when they talk in the local language than the

English language they were required to speak. With the teachers, the study showed that the major problem they face is non-payment of school fees by the parents. This affects them in the sense that they tend to have unstable and inconsistency in their salary. Most of the teachers were not satisfied with their job due to lack of morale, allowances and incentives. Parent's perception about the teachers in the school as solely responsible for their children education was also a challenge for them. The parents feel reluctant to assist their children in their academic pursuits aside paying school fees. They don't attend PTA meetings and do not even help their children with their homework. With the parents, the study revealed that a major problem they face is their inability to finance their children's education. Despite this challenge, parents prefer to send their children to private institutions due to the perceived poor performance of public schools and the pride of having their children in a private institution. The children, teachers and parents however, gave various suggestions as to how these challenges could be solved.

### **6.3. Concluding Remarks**

It was evident from this study that children's perspective about some of the practices in the early childhood institution is significantly different from that of the teachers and the parents. An example is the perception towards play and academic work, and punishment. Unlike the teachers and the parents, the children want more time for free play than the stipulated 30 minutes on their time table and even wish for more play materials in the school. They also dislike homework and being punished at school. These results prove the point that children's views are important in matters that affect them since they are in a better position to tell what they want in their lives. Incorporating young children's perspective about the early childhood institution have been used as a catalyst for change in the United Kingdom (Clark & Moss, 2001). There would be a totally different early childhood environment in Accra and for that matter Ghana if children are given the opportunity to be valued as social actors with agency and hence listening to what they have to say about their world.

Secondly, it can be drawn from the study that Ghanaian children are highly valued for the duties and responsibilities that they perform and this can be seen in their everyday life in preschool. Their duties and responsibilities begin very early within the household and by the age of 5 or 6, children have tasks that are set aside for them to do on a daily basis according to their gender,

size and competencies (Twum-Danso , 2009). The emphasis on respect for the elderly, greetings and reciprocity of care are some of the values cherished in the Ghanaian culture. This therefore means that when drawing early childhood policies, programs or curricula for preschool, it is crucial to consider the importance of these cultural values before they are enacted and enforced. This is important because early childhood is a social construct (Woodhead, 2006) which means children in a particular society, understands the culture and its traditions prevailing in that society. ECEC Policies, programs and curricula should not assume that children can learn a universal culture (Nsamenang, 2009).

#### **6.4 Limitation of Study**

The procedure followed in this study was useful in exploring children, teachers and parents perspectives about Early Childhood Education and Care as practiced in a selected institution. However, the choice of data collection process followed cannot be said to be without any limitation. Ideally, in order to get the true picture, a large number of the children, teachers and parents in the study area should have been studied over a greater length of time. This is a weakness of a qualitative method in general and hence the findings could not be generalised to the entire population. Moreover, due to the limited time (only 6 weeks) and resources (lack disposable camera, video camera etc) the study might have missed some data which will probably come to bare if I had enough time and the resources at my disposal. Finally, there were some problems with availability of secondary data. For instance, it was not possible to get related studies using children in early childhood institution as informants at the municipal and national levels in Ghana. Despite the foregoing limitations, the strength of the present study cannot be override. This study has researched children's perspectives by using a wealth of research methods in order to enable the children not only to be involved in the research but also to participate as the main informants. It also provides some useful insights into children's, teachers and parent's perception about the practice of Early Childhood Education and Care in Ghana.

#### **6.5 Recommendations**

The government should set a minimum standard for all Early Childhood Institutions in the country which include good ventilations and toilet facilities. All private institution must be registered and certified to operate.

Secondly, Comprehensive programs that meet the holistic needs of the children should be developed and made accessible. These programs should take the African circumstance into consideration.

Thirdly, in order to bring the children's perspective into bear, the State should ensure that school time table have enough periods for free play and also play facilities that the children can engage with during this period. Also, minimal form of punishment should be employed to discipline the child.

Fourthly, due to the prevalence of single-headed household in the Ghanaian community, there is a need to develop policies and programs targeted at expanding the economic opportunities of single mothers.

In addition, there should be a sustain effort to inform and sensitize parents and teachers as well as children on the UNCRC and ACRWAC and the need to make some changes to traditional conceptions about the child. The children in particular need to be made aware of their rights right from their early childhood and be encouraged to be assertive in accessing these rights. The public and particularly the children should be sensitize about the importance of staying in the home country to develop their nation and not write-off their nation as hindrance to progress hence the need to seek greener pastures abroad.

Finally, there were various issues that caught my attention in cause of the study which I think it can be further researched. It will be interesting to do a comparative study on private and public ECEC in the township with the focus on policy and practice. A further research can look at children's experiences at home and that of the ECEC institution. In addition, it would be worthwhile to replicate this research in other Towns or regions in Ghana most especially in the Northern region due to cultural and ethnic difference.

## REFERENCES

Abebe, T. (2008). Trapped between disparate worlds? The livelihoods, socialization and school of rural children in Ethiopia. *Childhood today*, 2(1).

Abebe, T. (2008). *Ethiopian Childhoods: A case study of the Lives of orphans and Working Children*. Ph.D. Thesis, No. 42, NTNU.

Abebe, T. (2010). Beyond the 'orphan burden': understanding care for and by AIDS-affected children in Africa. *Geography Compass*, 4(5), 460-474.

ACRWC (1999). Accessed at [www.africa-union.org](http://www.africa-union.org) on 01/06/12

Agbenyega, J. (2006). Corporal Punishment in the Schools of Ghana: Does Inclusive Education Suffer? *The Australian Educational Researcher Journal*, 33, 107-122. ISSN: 0311-6999.

Agyei-Mensah, S. (1997). *Fertility change in Time and Space perspective: Lessons from three Ghanaian Settlements*. PhD dissertation. Trondheim: NTNU.

Akyeampong K., Djangmah J., Oduro A., Seidu A., & Hunt, F. (2007). *Access to Basic Education in Ghana: The evidence and the Issues*. Accessed at <http://www.create-rpc.org> on 23/04/12.

Amu, N. J. (2009). *The Role of Women in Ghana's Economy*. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Ghana.

Ansell, N. (2005). *Children, Youth and Development*. London: Routledge.

Archard, D. (1993). *Children: Rights and Childhood*. London: Routledge

Asare, E. (2004). Influence of teacher characteristics on provision of opportunities for children in selected early childhood Institution in Accra, Ghana. *Journal of Research and development in Education*, 4, 1-12.



Asare, E. (2005). The Influence of Curriculum model and physical environment on the experiences of children in selected early childhood institution in Accra, Ghana. *Journal of Research and development in Education*, 5, pp19-31

Atkinson, P. & Hamersley, M. (1994). Ethnography and participant observation In: N.K. Denzin and Y.S Lincoln (eds), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Boakye, J.K.A. Estse, S. Adamu-Issah, M. Moti, D.M. Matjila J.L Shikwambi S. (2009). ECD Policy: A comparative Analysis in Ghana, Mauritius, and Namibia In: Garcia, M, Pence, A and Judith L. Evans (eds.). *Africa's future, Africa Challenge: Early childhood Care and development in Sub-Saharan Africa*. The World Bank, Washinton, pp.169-185

Boakye-Boaten, A. (2009). Changes in the concept of childhood: Implications on children in Ghana. *Journal of Afroeurpean studies*. Afroeuropa 3 (1).

Bourdillon, M. (2006). Children and work: a review of current literature and debates. *Development and change*, 37 (6), 1201-26.

Bourdillon, M. (2009). Children as Domestic Employees: Problems and Promises. *Journal of Children and Poverty* 15 (1), 1-18.

Bowman, B., Donovan, M.S., & Burns, M.S. (2001). *Eager to learn: Educating our preschoolers*. Washington DC: National Academy Press.

Boyden, J., & Ennew, J. (1997). *Children in focus: a manual for participatory research with children*. Stockholm: Radda Barnen.

Burr, R., & Montgomery, H. (2003). Children and Rights. In M. Woodhead, & H, Montgomery (Eds.). *Understanding Childhood: An Interdisciplinary Approach*. Chichester: John Wiley/Open University Press.

Chant, S. & Jones, G.A (2003). Youth, gender and livelihoods in West Africa: Perspectives from Ghana and Gambia. In: *Children's Geographies* 3(2), 185-200.

Chawla-Duggan R, Kafui, E., Vrinda, D. (2010). *Early Childhood Care and Education in Ghana and Maharashtra*. EdQual Policy Brief 9 - November 2010. Accessed on 01/06/12 at <http://www.edqual.org/publications/policy-briefs/edqualpb9.pdf>

Christensen, P., & James, A. (2000). *Research with children: Perspectives and practices*. London: Falmer Press.

Clark, A., & Moss, P. (2001). *Listening to young children: The Mosaic approach*. London: National Children's Bureau for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Colin, T. (2006). Initial Early Childhood Teacher Education: A look at some Research, some policy and some practices. *New Zealand Journal of Teachers' Work*, 3 (1), 24-32.

Colker, L. (2008). *Twelve Characteristics of Effective Early Childhood Teachers*. Naeyc publication. Accessed at <http://journal.naeyc.org>

Corsaro, W. (1996). Transitions in early childhood: the promise of comparative, longitudinal ethnography. In: R. Jessor, A. Shewder, & A. Colby (Eds.). *Ethnography and human development: context and meaning in social enquiry* (pp. 419-456). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Cunningham, H. (2005). *Children and Childhood in Western Societies since 1500*. Edinburgh Gate: Pearson Education Limited

Duncan, G.J., Dowsett, C.J., Claessens, A., Magnuson, K., Huston, A.C., Klebanov, P., Pagani, L.S., Feinstein, L., Engel, M., Brooks-Gunn, J., Sexton, H., Duckworth, K., & Japel, C. (2007). School readiness and later achievement. *Developmental Psychology Journal*, 43 (6), 1423-1446.

Einarsdottir, J. (2007). Research with children: Methodological and ethical challenges. *European Early Childhood Research Journal*, 15(2), pp197-211

Ennew, J., Abebe, T., Bangyai, R., Karapituck, P., Kjörholt, A.T. & Noonsup, T. (2009). *The right to be properly researched. How to do right-based, scientific research with children*. NOSEB: Black on White Publications.

Evans, J.L, Matola, C.E & Nyeko P.T (2009). Parenting Challenges for the Changing African Family In: Garcia, M, Pence, A and Judith L. Evans (eds). *Africa's future, Africa Challenge: Early childhood Care and development in Sub-Saharan Africa*. The World Bank, Washinton, pp. 117-133

Faour, B. (2010). *Mapping Early Childhood Services and Programmes in Arab Countries*. Paper presented at the Regional Consultative Workshop on Advancing the ECCD Agenda in the Arab Region.

Fine, G. & Sandstrom. K. (1988). *Knowing Children: Participant Observation with Minors*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

Franklin, B. (1995). *The handbook of children's rights*. London and New York: Routledge.

Fraser, S., Lewis, V., Ding, S., Kellet, M., & Robinson, C. (2009). *Doing reaseach with children and young people*. London: Sage.

Freeman, M. (1992). The limits of children's right. In M. Freeman, & P. Veerman (Eds.). *The Ideologies of children's rights* (pp. 29-46). London: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.

Freeman, M. (1996). The importance of a children's rights perspective in litigation. *Butterworths Family Law Journal*, 2(4), 84-90.

Froebel, F (1986). Pedagogies of the kindergarten In: Isenberg & Jalongo(eds). *Major trends and Issues in Early Childhood Education, Challenges, controversies, and insights*. New York: Library of Congress Cataloguing-in-Publication data. 1997

Fromberg, D.P & Bergen, D. (2006). *Play from birth to twelve. Contexts, perspectives and meanings* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.

Geerdink, C. (2009). *Participatory rights in children in EU: A comparative analysis on the involvement on decision-making of children at home, school and community*. Accessed at [http://www.equityforchildren.org/imagenes/userfiles/CA\\_Geerdink\\_i453528, BA ES Thesis\[1\].pdf](http://www.equityforchildren.org/imagenes/userfiles/CA_Geerdink_i453528_BA_ES_Thesis[1].pdf)

- Ghana Statistical Service (2003). *Ghana Child Labour Survey*. Accra: Ghana Statistical Service.
- Ghana Statistical Service (2004). *Ghana Demographic and Health Survey 2003*. Calverton, Maryland: GSS, NMIMR and ORC Macro.
- Ghana Statistical Service (2005). *Socio-economic and demographic trends analysis*. Volume 1. Accra: Ghana Statistical Service project funded by UNFPA.
- Ghana Statistical Service (2008). *Ghana Living Standard Survey (4)*. Accra: Ghana Statistical Service.
- Ghana Statistical Service (2009). *Ghana Demographic and Health Survey 2008*. Calverton, Maryland: GSS, NMIMR and ORC Macro.
- Ghana Statistical Service (2010). *National Population Census*. <http://www.statsghana.gov.gh/>. Retrieved 08-05-2012
- Ghana Statistical Service (2012). *National Population Census*. <http://www.statsghana.gov.gh/>. Retrieved on 10/06/12
- Giddens, A. (1984). *The constitution of society: outline of the theory of structuration*. Cambridge: Polity press.
- Gleave, J., & Cole-Hamilton, I. (2012). *A world without play: a literature review*. Accessed at <http://playengland.org.uk/> on 20-05-12.
- Gudmundsdottir, S. (1996). The teller, the tale and the one being told: The narrative nature of the research interview. *Curriculum Inquiry* (26), 293-306.
- Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (2007). *Ethnography: Principles in practice*. London: Routledge.
- Holloway, S. L., & Valentine, G. (2000). Children's geographies and the new social studies of childhood. In S.L Holloway & G. Valentine (Eds.). *Children's geographies: playing, living, learning*. London: Routledge, 1-26.

Jalongo, M. R., Fennimore, B.S., Pattnaik, J., Laverick, D. M., Brewster, J., & Mutuku, M. (2004), "Blended perspectives: A global vision for high-quality early childhood education", *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 32 (3), 143-155.

Jellal, M., & Francois-Charles W. (2002). Insecure old-age security. *Oxford Economic Papers* 54, pp.636-648. Oxford University press.

James, A. & Prout, A. (1990). A new paradigm for the sociology of childhood? Provenance, promise and problems. In A. James, & A. Prout, (Eds.) *Constructing and Reconstructing childhood: contemporary issues in the sociological study of childhood*. London: Falmer Press.

James, A. & Prout, A. (1997). *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood*. London: Falmer Press.

James, A., Jenks, C., & Prout, A. (1998). *Theorizing Childhood*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

James, A. (2007). Giving voice to children's voices: practices and problems, pitfalls and potentials. In *American Anthropologist*, 109(2), pp. 261-273.

James, A. & James A. (2008). *Key concepts in Childhood Studies*. California, USA: Sage.

Jaramillo, A. & Mingat, A. (2009). Early Childhood Care and Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: What should it take to meet the development goals In: Garcia, M, Pence, A and Judith L. Evans (eds). *Africa's future, Africa Challenge: Early childhood Care and development in Sub-Saharan Africa*. The World Bank, Washinton, pp. 51-69

Jenks, C. (1982). Introduction: constituting the child. In C. Jenks (Eds.). *The Sociology of Childhood. Essential Readings* (pp. 9-24). Batsford Academic and Educational Ltd.

Jenks, C. (1996). Constituting childhood In: *Childhood*. London: Routledge

Kitchin, R., & Tate, N.J. (2000). *Conducting research into Human Geography. Theory, methodology and practice*. Harlow: Prentice Hall.

Kjørholt, A.T. (2004). *Childhood as a social and symbolic space: discourses on children as social participants in society*. Published Ph.D Thesis. Trondheim: NTNU.

Kjørholt, A.T. (2005b). The Competent Child and the right to be oneself: reflections on children as follow citizens in s day-care centre. In A. Clark, A.T. Kjørholt, & P. Moss (Eds.), *Beyond Listening: Children's Perspectives on Early Childhood Service* (pp. 175-189). University of Bristol: The Policy Press.

Kjørholt, A.T. (2010). Rethinking young children's right to participation in diverse cultural contexts. In: Kernan, M., & E. Singer. *Peer Relationships in Early Childhood and Care*. New York: Routledge. 38-48.

Kumar, R. (1999). *Research methodology. A step by step guide for beginners*. London: Sage.

Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*. California: Sage.

Kvale, S. & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *Interview: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*. London: Sage.

Laryea C.M. (1983). Memorandum on Preschool Services in Ghana. Paper presented at Nursery and Kindergarten teachers conference, Accra. Ghana. 25<sup>th</sup> May 1983.

Limb, M., & Dawyer, C. (2001). *Qualitative Methodologies for Geographers: Issues and Debates*. London: Arnold.

Maxwell, J. (1997). Designing a qualitative study In; L. Bickman & D. J. Rog (Eds.) *Handbook of applied social research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. pp 69-100.

Maxwell, K., & R.M. Clifford. (2004). Research in review: School readiness assessment. *Young Children* 59 (1): pp 42–46.

Mayall, B. (2000). *The sociology of childhood in relation to children's rights*. The International Journal of Children's Rights, 8, pp 243–259

Melhuish, E., & Petrogiannis, K. (2006). *Early Childhood Education and Care: International perspectives*. New York: Routledge.

Miller, E., & Almond, J. (2009). *Crisis in the Kindergarten: Why Children Need to Play in School*. MD, College Park: Alliance for Childhood.

Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs (2004). *Early Childhood Care and Development Policy, 1-37*. Accra, Ghana.

Montgomery, H. (2008). *An introduction to childhood: Anthropological perspectives on children's lives*. Wiley- Blackwell

Moosa-Mitha, M. (2005). A difference-centered alternative to theorization of children's citizenship rights In: *Citizenship Studies*, 9(4), 369-388.

Morrison, J.W. (2009). Early Care and Education in Ghana. *Childhood Education Journal*. Vol 77, pp 214-215.

Nilsen, R.D. (2005). Searching for analytical concepts in the research process: learning from children. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 8(2), 117-135.

Nsamenang, B (2009). (Mis) Understanding ECD in Africa : The force of Local and Global Motives In: Garcia, M, Pence, A and Judith L. Evans (eds). *Africa's future, Africa Challenge: Early childhood Care and development in Sub-Saharan Africa*. The World Bank, Washinton, pp. 117-133

Nukunya, G.K. (Eds.) (2003). *Tradition and change in Ghana: An introduction to culture*. Accra: University Press.

Odonkor, M. (2007): *Addressing child labour through education: A study alternative/complimentary initiatives in quality education delivery and their suitability for cocoa farming communities*. Draft submitted to ICI March, 2007.

OECD (2006). *Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care*. Accessed at [www.oecd.org/dataoecd/14/32/37425999.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/14/32/37425999.pdf) on 25/04/12.

OECD (2001). *Starting strong: Early childhood education and care*. Accessed on 05/06/12 at <http://ecr.sagepub.com/content/1/1/21.full.pdf+html>

Pellegrini, A. D., & Smith, P.K. (2005). *The nature of play: Great apes and humans*. New York: The Guilford press.

Pence, A. (2004). *ECCD policy development and implementation in Africa*. Paris, France: UNESCO Education Sector.

Penn, H (2008). *Early Childhood Education and Care in Southern Africa: A Perspective Piece*. CfBT Educational Trust.

Prochner L. & Kabiru M. (2009). ECD in Africa: A historical perspective In: Garcia, M, Pence, A and Judith L. Evans (eds.). *Africa's future, Africa Challenge: Early childhood Care and development in Sub-Saharan Africa*. The World Bank, Washinton, pp. 117-133.

Quarshie, N. E. (2010). *Perception of the phenomenon of street children: A qualitative study of students and shopkeepers in Accra, Ghana*. Unpublished Master Thesis, NTNU.

Qvortrup, J. (1994). *Childhood Matters: Social Theory, Practice and Politics*. UK: Ashgate publishers Ltd.

Qvortrup J. (2002). Sociology of Childhood: Conceptual liberation of children. In F. Mouritsen, & J. Qvortrup (Eds.), *Childhood and Children culture* (pp. 43-78). Esbjerg: University Press of Southern Denmark.

Qvortrup, J. (2009). Childhood as a Structural Form. In Qvortrup, J., Corsaro, W.A. & Honig, M. S. (eds.) *The Palgrave Handbook of Childhood Studies*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave McMillan, 21 – 33.



Rivera D. (2009). An Analysis of Early Childhood Education in Ghana. Case Studies in Global Justice. Access at <http://eportfolios.ithaca.edu/drivera2/docs/mlkdocs/LearningProposalFina.pdf> on 09/05/12

Robson, C. (2002). *Real World Research*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing

Sackey, M. M. (2009). *An Examination of Preschool Services in Selected Communities in Tema Municipality (Ghana)*. PhD. dissertation presented to the faculty of the College of Education of Ohio University.

Saks, M., & Allsop, J. (2007). *Researching Health: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods*. London: Sage.

Salm, S. J. & Folala, T. (2002). *Culture and customs of Ghana*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Sign, A. & Gupta, D. (2011). Context of childhood and play: Exploring parental perceptions. *Childhood Journal*. Accessed at <http://chd.sagepub.com/content/early/2011/10/18/0907568211413941>

Silverman, D. (Eds.) (2005). *Doing Qualitative Research*. London: Sage.

Solberg, A. (1996). The challenge in child research: From 'Being' to 'Doing'. In J. Brannen & M. O'Brien (Eds.), *Children in families: research and policy* (pp. 53-65). London: Falmer.

Sutton-Smith B. (1997). *The ambiguity of play*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

The Republic of Ghana (1998). *The Children's Act*. Accra: Government of Ghana, 1-40.

Thompson, B. (1992). Africa Charter on Rights: A Normative Break with cultural Traditionalism. 41 *International and Comparative Law Review*, no. 2 pp.440. In African Child Policy Forum (2006) UNICEF Children and Youth Polls in Eastern and Southern Africa

Tingstad, V. (2007). New technologies, new methods? Representing children in online and SMS ethnography In: *Nordicom yearbook 2007: children, media and consumption. On the front edge*. Pp127-143.

Tooley, J. Dixon, P. Amuah, I. (2007). Private and Public Schooling in Ghana: A census and comparative survey. *International Education review*, 53, 389-415.

Twum-Danso, A. (2009). Reciprocity, Respect and Responsibility: The 3Rs Underlying Parent-Child Relationships in Ghana and the Implications for Children's Rights. *International Journal of Children's Rights*, 17, 415-432.

Twum-Danso, A. (2010). The construction of childhood and the socialization of children in Ghana. Implications for the implementation of Article 12 of the CRC. In B. Percy-Smith & T. Nigel (Eds.), *A handbook of children and young people's participation: Perspective from theory and practice* (pp. 132-136). New York: Routledge.

UNCRC (1989). Accessed at [www.unicef.org/crc/](http://www.unicef.org/crc/) on 15/04/12.

UNCRC, (2005). Implementing Child rights in Early Childhood. General Comment No. 7. New York, United States.

UNESCO (2010). Early Childhood Care and Education regional report on Africa. Accessed at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001894/189420e.pdf>

UNICEF, (2000). *Defining Quality in Education*. A paper presented by UNICEF at the meeting of The International Working group on Education. Florence, Italy.

UNICEF, (2008). *The child care transition: Innocenti Report Card 8, 2008*. Florence, USA: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.

UNICEF, (2009). *Global study on child's poverty and disparities*. Accessed at <https://sites.google.com/site/ghanachildpovertystudy> on 15/04/12.

UNICEF, (2011). *Evaluation of UNICEF's Early Childhood Development Programme with focus on the government of Netherlands Funding (2008-2010): Ghana Country Case Study Report*. New York.

Woodhead, M. (2006). UNESCO EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007 early childhood care and education 'Changing perspectives on early childhood: theory, research and policy. *International Journal of Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood*, 4(2), 5-48.

Yamamoto, Y. & Li, J. (2011). What makes a high-quality preschool? Similarities and differences between Chinese immigrant and European American parents' views. *Early childhood research quarterly*, 27(2), 306-315.

Young M. E & Mustard F. (2009). Brain development and ECD: A case for investment In: Garcia, M, Pence, A and Judith L. Evans (eds). *Africa's future, Africa Challenge: Early childhood Care and development in Sub-Saharan Africa*. The World Bank, Washington, pp. 71-91.

### **Other Internet Sources**

The Republic of Ghana (2005). *Supplementary Report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child*.<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/AdvanceVersions/CRC.C.GHA.Q.2.Add.1.pdf>. Retrieved on 10/07/12

Travelbolg (2012). <http://www.travelbolg.org/Africa/Ghana/fact-geog-ghana.html>. Retrieved on 13/07/12

Ghana districts (2012). <http://www.ghanadistricts.com/region/?r=1> Retrieved on 15/07/12

Ghanaweb (2012). [http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/country\\_information/](http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/country_information/) Retrieved on 13/07/12.

## **APPENDICES**

### **LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 1: Holistic Based Approach to ECEC in African Context

Figure 2: A map showing the theoretical fields of Social Studies of Childhood

Figure 3: A map showing the study area - Accra

### **LIST OF TABLES**

Table 1: Government Ministry and the role and responsibilities assigned to it.

Table 2: Kindergarten Enrolment in Ghana, by school year

Table 3: Everyday activity and time frame for children in the kindergarten class

Table 4: A typical "Our day" time table

**NORWEGIAN UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**  
**NORWEGIAN CENTRE FOR CHILD RESEARCH (NOSEB)**  
**INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PARENTS, TEACHERS AND CHILDREN**

**PARENTS PERSPECTIVE**

Why do you send your child to preschool?

What are other reasons do you think parents send their child to preschool?

What were the factors you considered in choosing a particular school for your young child?

What comes into mind if we talk of high quality preschool?

What do you look at to consider a particular preschool as high quality?

What kind of training do you expect your young child to be given in school?

What do you think about your child's engagement in play at school?

What about academic work?

What do you think should be emphasized and why?

What are some of the challenges that you face about the preschool your child attends?

What do you think can be done about these challenges?

What do you think you can do in your own way to help solve these challenges?

## **TEACHERS PERSPECTIVE**

What are the reasons for early childhood education (preschool)

Why do parents send their young children to school?

What role do you play as a teacher?

What makes you happy or motivates you on the job?

What makes you sad on the job?

Could you please describe the activities the children engages in when they come to school

Why would you engage the children in play?

Why do you engage them in academic work?

Which of them do you emphasize and why?

Which of them do you think preschool education should emphasize and why?

What comes into mind when we talk of “high quality” preschool?

What do you look out for to consider a particular preschool as high quality?

What are some of the challenges you face in the preschool?

What do you think can be done to solve these challenges?

What do you think are the obstacles that prevent some families from sending their young children to school?

What do you think can be done to solve these challenges?

What can you also do to help solve these challenges?

## **CHILDREN PERSPECTIVE (INTERVIEW/FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION)**

Why are you in school?

What do you enjoy most or like in school?

What do you dislike in school?

What makes you cry when you are in school?

What are some of your things you do when you come to school?

Which of these activities do you like best and why?

What are some of the play activities you like?

What are some of the classwork work activities you like?

Which of them do you like best and why?

Could you please describe what you do in a day at school?

Do you miss home when you are in school and why?

Why will you prefer to be at home?

Why will you prefer to be at school?

What are the things you want to make you happy in school?

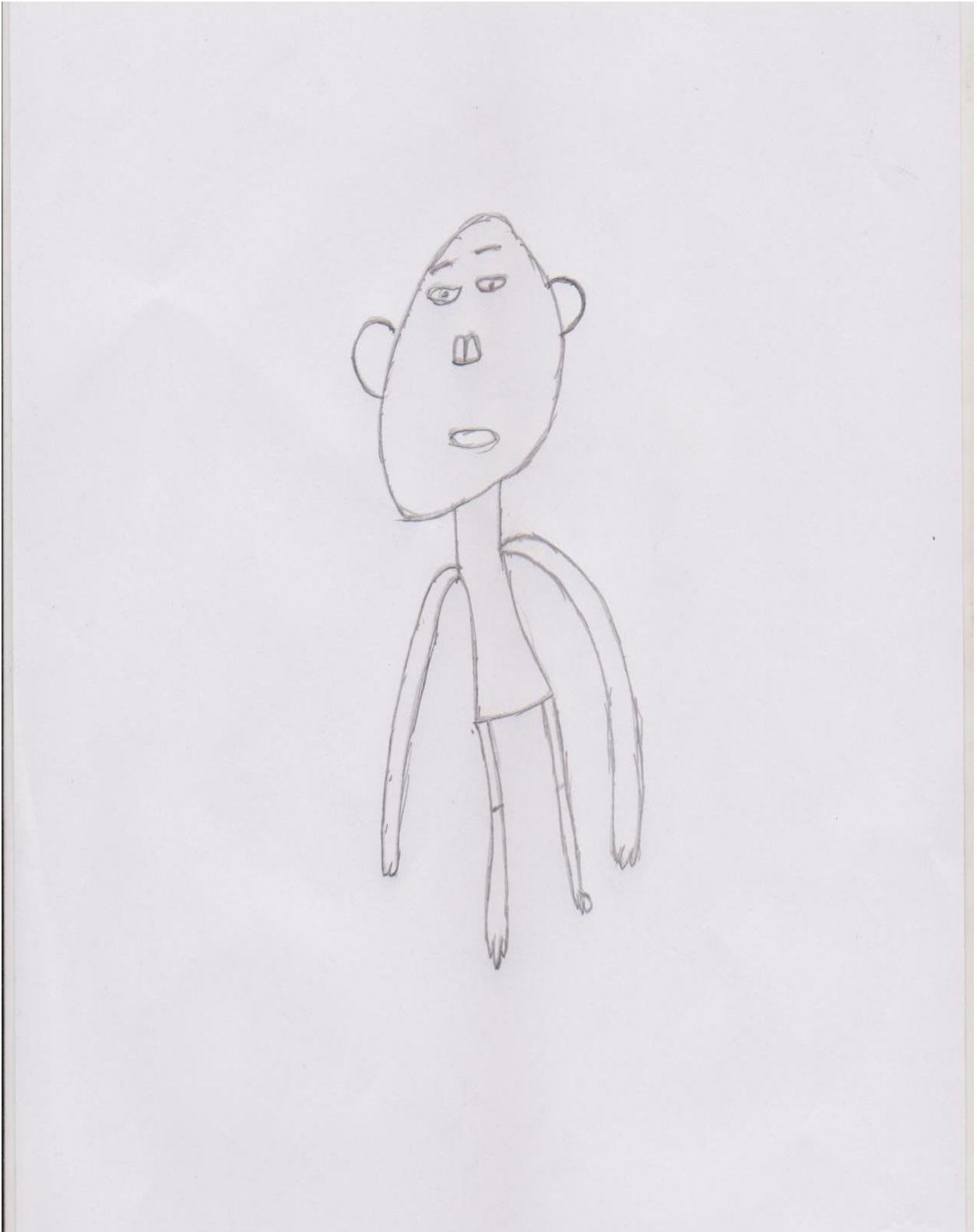
## **DRAWINGS**

Draw what you like best in school

Draw what you dislike in school

Draw the things you do in school.

**Dislike – 7 year old girl drawing**





**Dislike – 6 years old boy drawing**



**Like – 6 years old boy drawing**





NORSK SENTER FOR  
BARNEFORSKNING

THE NORWEGIAN CENTRE  
FOR CHILD RESEARCH

To whom it may concern

Our consultant:  
Line Hellem  
Senior Executive Officer  
Telephone no.: +4773596357  
E-mail: line.hellem@svt.ntnu.no

Dated:  
2011-06-07

Our ref.:

Your letter dated:

Your ref.:

#### LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

We hereby confirm that Obed Adjei Sowah, born 7 July 1982, is a student in the programme *Master of Philosophy in Childhood Studies* at Norwegian Centre for Child Research, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Norway. He will undertake his fieldwork and data collection from 20 June to 13 August 2011 in Ghana, on the topic:

*Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC):  
Perspective of Ghanaian Children, Parents and Teachers*

We would be grateful for any assistance given to him during this process. This includes granting interviews, assisting him in making appointments, handing out materials and making information accessible to him. We ensure that the information collected is treated confidentially, and that the fieldwork bears no costs on the institutions and persons visited.

Yours sincerely,

Anne Trine Kjørholt  
Supervisor,  
Director of Norwegian Centre for Child Research



NORWEGIAN CENTRE FOR  
CHILD RESEARCH  
NTNU, N-7491 TRONDHEIM

Line Hellem  
Senior Executive Officer

NOSEB is organized as part of

The Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) and NTNU Social Research Ltd.

Address  
N-7491 Trondheim  
Norway

Location  
Universitetssenteret på Dragvoll  
Pavilion C, Loholt allé 87

Tel. +47 73 59 62 40  
Fax +47 73 59 62 39  
Org. no. NO 974 767 880 (NTNU)  
Org. no. NO 986 243 836 (NTNU Social Research Ltd.)

Page 1 of 1

*In case of reply the  
Number and date of this  
Letter should be quoted*

Our Ref. No:

Your Ref. No: ... ..



REPUBLIC OF GHANA

**Department of Social Welfare  
Post Office Box MB. 230  
ACCRA-GHANA**

**Tel: - 021-684536  
021-684543  
021-684552  
021-684547**

**Fax:- 021-663615**

**E-Mail:- [dsocwel@yahoo.com](mailto:dsocwel@yahoo.com)**

29<sup>th</sup> June, 2011

**LETTER OF INTRODUCTION  
OBED ADJEI SOWAH  
MPHIL STUDENT**

The above-named, is an MPhil Student at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology pursuing a course in Childhood Studies.

He has the recommendation of the Department of Social Welfare to visit your early childhood development centre to interact with relevant individuals at the Centre for purposes of gathering data that would aid him in writing his thesis.

ALOIS K.K. MOHL  
PRIN. SOC. DEV'T. OFFICER

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

Picture taken on the field

