

**DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT:
AN EXPLORATION OF THE VIEWS OF PUPILS AND
TEACHER TRAINEES IN GHANA**

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DECLARATION

This thesis is as a result of my investigation and research and it has never been accepted in its substance for any degree.

ABSTRACT

The aims of the research are to: (a) find out how the views of pupils could be used to improve schools in Ghana in a more democratic direction; and (b) to explore the views of student teachers on what role their teacher training should play in promoting greater democracy in schools. Pupils are often considered to be the key stakeholders in education. However, rarely are their voices seriously taken into account in policies devised to improve teaching, learning and achievement. There are numerous international and comparative studies on democratic education that contain empirical evidence that listening to pupils, encouraging their participation and giving them more power and responsibility (that is greater democratisation), can enhance school effectiveness and facilitate school improvement. However, there is a dearth of studies on democratic education which focus on sub-Saharan African countries. This study contributes to the knowledge in this geographical context.

Based on a flexible qualitative study in the Ashanti Region of Ghana, using a multi-method approach in six basic schools and two colleges of education, the study found that there is no clear policy, and neither are there structures to promote democratic practice in basic schools. Schools and colleges of education are highly regimented and authoritarian. Pupils want teachers to listen to their views and allow them to actively participate in decision-making in their schools.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my dear wife Mavis, my lovely children

Celeste, Dasia and Jed.

To my parents Dorothy Achiaa and George Mensah Bonsu for their support and
prayers throughout my school days until now.

To my mother-in-law Martha, who has been looking after the children and
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BECE	Basic Education Certificate Examination
CRDD	Curriculum Research and Development Division
ESP	Education Strategic Plan
ESR	Education Sector Review
FCUBE	Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education
GES	Ghana Education Service
GoG	Government of Ghana
HDR	Human Development Reports
JHS	Junior High School [Formerly Junior Secondary School (JSS)]
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MoE	Ministry of Education
NCTE	National Council for Tertiary Education
OAU	Organisation of African Unity (now African Union AU)
SHS	Senior High School [Formerly Senior Secondary School (SSS)]
SRC	Student Representative Council
SWOT	Strengths-Weakness-Opportunities-Threats
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WAEC	West African Examination Council

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

There is a saying, in my Ghanaian language (Ashanti Twi) that literally means ‘not everyone has been adult before but everyone has been a child before’. This could be interpreted in different ways. It may tell adults to be sympathetic about the mistakes and mischief of childhood. An alternative view implies that all adults have gone through childhood experiences and are therefore fully equipped as authorities to make proper decisions for the children under their care. The irony here is that many adults may recognise some of the “unpleasant” experiences they have gone through in childhood, and may wish that they had had a chance to contribute to some of the decisions taken on their behalf, but they still repeat the same pattern for their children. This has become an unbroken cycle of reproduction in a society that needs a rethink in this changing world. However, this kind of treatment of children appears to be changing as Margaret Mead argued:

Even very recently, the elders could say: “You know, I have been young and you never have been old.” But today’s young people can reply: “You never have been young in the world I am young in, and you never can be.” (Mead, 1970:28)

This calls for a dialogue between the old and the young, so that they can learn from each other to make societies better, rather than adults perceiving children as adversaries.

Rudduck and Flutter (2004) point out that the traditional exclusion of young people from the process of social dialogue and decision-making is based on an outdated view of childhood which fails to recognise young people’s capacity to take initiatives and to

reflect on issues affecting their lives. Childhood is classified within the generational order as inferior to adulthood. How children live their lives is heavily structured by what adults want of childhood (Mayall, 2000). Mayall (2000) argues that defining children as inferior objects essentially of adult socialisation depersonalises children. Children are often denied the right to participate in the structuring of their childhood. According to Meighan and Siraj-Blatchford (2003) this sociological perspective of the child uses the structural functionalist view. The images used by people who take this view stress that pupils are like clay being moulded to make a pot in order to fit a particular function in the society. Pupils in school are therefore seen as things being processed in a factory (school), and often having no rights. The question that comes into play with most adults in the functionalist view is that 'why should you consult the clay about the type of pot it is to be made into?'(p15). Meighan and Siraj-Blatchford (2003) point out that this type of view produces an education system that tends to stress the activity of schools in training and selecting children so that they fit into some necessary slot in a relatively harmonious society.

Sociological analyses of childhood give us a broader view on how adults perceive children. However, different societies vary on the ways of bringing up children which is a key responsibility of the adult. The process of child rearing is duly informed by the socio-economic conditions as well as the cultural and religious practices within a particular society. Harber (1997) cited the example of the northern part of Nigeria which is predominantly Hausa culture within the context of the Islamic model of upbringing of the child. This model emphasises a hierarchical ordering of the society in which the role

of the citizens is seen in terms of loyalty, obedience and dependence on those in authority. Hake (1972) found that adults in northern Nigeria mainly use fear to control youngsters, relying substantially on physical punishment to induce respect, humility, obedience and submission. These kinds of practices could be found elsewhere in Africa even in the 21st century. As a child growing up in the 1980s and 90s in Ghana, the situation was pretty much the same and little has changed since then, although in theory corporal punishment has been discouraged in schools but not within homes. Some parents can physically abuse their children with anything they can lay their hands on in the household if their children misbehave or upset them, and would have no brush with the law enforcement agency unless there is a serious injury. This is an acceptable norm for many societies; children do as they are told by their parents or adults, even if they disagree, and anything less than that is classified as disrespectful and disobedient to adult authority. Harber and Davies (1997) argue that these kinds of authoritarian relationships between adults and children continue to exist due to the traditional political cultures and child rearing patterns.

Furthermore, children are continuously subjected to strict disciplinary codes due to adult insecurities and constantly threatened by ‘fear’ of the shift in the status quo (Meighan and Siraj-Blatchford, 2003; Harber, 2004; Harber and Davies, 1997). These kinds of ideologies had been projected over the centuries; ‘let not the children have what they want’. John Wesley’s statement in the 18th century epitomised this ideology:

Break their wills betimes; begin this great work before they can run alone, before they can speak plain, or perhaps speak at all. Let him have nothing he cries for, absolutely nothing, great or small. Make him do as he is bid, if you whip him ten times running to effect it. Break his will now and his soul will live and he will bless you to all eternity (cited in Meighan, 1994:92).

This view of John Wesley is very extreme and we should not take it literally but the emphasis should be put on the essence of disciplining the child. Probably this would be classified as an outmoded view in many parts of Western societies, but in the developing world the ideology underpins the philosophies of most childhood institutions especially religious ones. Yet:

...much of so-called 'discipline' is founded on unusual and extra-ordinary behaviour patterns which prepare children for nothing much. The result is either a rejection of adult authority as meaningless, or a blind acceptance that it is adults or others who tell you what to do, and you need not work it out for yourself (Davies cited in Meighan, 1994:76).

What makes it difficult for children is when they see adults doing what they have asked them not to do. Adults can be rude and humiliate a child and then expect that child to be polite in return. "It is not surprising that discipline is fragile in these circumstances, as pupil perceives double standards, and is not sure what is the 'correct' adult behaviour" (Davies et al., 2005:33). Harber (2004) argues that in preparing young people to fit in a democratic society, discipline should be built from within 'self-discipline' but not externally controlled.

Children play a very important role in the socio-economic activities within their families in Africa and therefore it is quite shocking the kind of ill treatment they receive from some adults. Oppong (1973) in a study in northern Ghana spelt out the daily contributions of children to their families:

Children begin to learn to help in house and farm at a comparatively early age, from five years onwards, tasks usually being commensurate with their ability and size. Their services are in many cases indispensable, for by carrying out the more monotonous, time consuming tasks such as bird-scaring, cattle herding, baby-tending, water-carrying, they give their parents and guardians leisure to pursue their specialist activities; to attend market or just to do more arduous chores (p51).

However, even with these enormous responsibilities upon children, they are less likely to be listened to. They have few choices and, many times, are forced to do things against their will. Childhood in Africa and many developing countries is like ‘modern day slavery’ where the only route to freedom is to become an adult. Personally, I believe that this is childhood exploitation rather than training as some parents would claim. It is time to review our notions of childhood with a view to change and reform.

In light of evidence of worldwide abuse and oppression of children, the United Nations Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1989. The convention aims to protect the fundamental freedoms and human rights of children (Davies et al., 2002). Twum-Danso (2008) contends that the convention was adopted in an attempt to set international norms and establish a universal standard for the concepts of childhood and child and a universal approach for protecting all children around the world. The UNCRC is the world’s most rapidly ratified having been accepted by all except the United States and Somalia. This convention was expected to have a tremendous impact on the lives of children. However, two decades after its inception, this has not happened in many parts of the world. In a survey of 2,272 pupils in the UK and Northern Ireland, over 75 per cent said they had not heard about the convention and almost all the rest had heard only ‘a bit’ about it (Alderson, 2000). According to Pagano

(1999) Ghana was the first nation to sign the UNCRC in 1989, yet throughout my schooling in that period and teacher training in the late 1990's I never heard about the UNCRC and only a bit about human rights in general. Nevertheless, Article 42 of the convention states that: "All adults and all children should know about this convention. You have a right to learn about your rights and adults should learn about them too" (Davies et al., 2002:145). The question that remains to be answered is 'why are nations quick to sign this convention but slow to educate the public about it and even slower to implement it?'

A committee on the Right of the Child set out to review Ghana's provisions for the implementation of the convention, and the 15th Session Geneva May-June 1997 reported the following findings. They point out that factors and difficulties impeding the implementation of the convention are economic difficulties and certain traditional practices and customs prevailing particularly in the rural areas hamper the effective implementation of the provision (Lacroix, 1997). They recognised that in Ghana, culturally, it is felt more appropriate for abuse and neglect to be dealt with at family and community level. Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child states that:

No one should hurt you in anyway. Adults should make sure that you are protected from abuse, violence and neglect. Even your parents have no rights to hurt you (Davies et al., 2002:144).

Nonetheless, Lacroix (1997) argues that, despite Ghana's record on its child protection law, Article 41 of the 1960 Criminal Code recognises the right of a parent or any other person *in loco parentis* to inflict reasonable corporal punishment on a child below the age

of sixteen. The Article states that ‘A blow or other force may be justified for the purpose of correction as follows’:

A father or mother may correct his or her legitimate or illegitimate child, being under sixteen years of age, or any guardian or person acting as a guardian, his ward being under sixteen years of age for misconduct or disobedience to any lawful command (Lacroix, 1997:12).

This confirms the point I made earlier about parents or adults causing harm to children and having fewer consequences with the law and the fact that, to date, countries are yet to fully realise the provisions of the UNCRC (Twum-Danso, 2008). Twum-Danso (2008) further argues that the cultural bias inherent both in its drafting and content has led many to raise questions over the convention’s relevance to certain communities and is central to understanding its limited implementation. However, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child in 1999, which takes into consideration the virtues of the African cultural heritage and the histories and values of the African civilisation (OAU, 1999 and Lloyd, 2002), does not support the abuse of the child whether by parents or at school.

Article 11 (5) states parties to the present Charter shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that a child who is subjected to school or parental discipline shall be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the child and in conformity with the present Charter. (OAU, 1999:5)

The UN General Assembly has declared its support for regional agreements to promote and protect human rights; such treaties are best placed to consider and resolve contextual human rights situations while upholding cultures and traditions relevant to the region (Lloyd, 2002). The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (African Children’s Charter) was adopted by the 26th ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads

of State and Government of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), now the African Union, on July 1990 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. It entered into force on 29 November 1999 after 15 member states of the OAU had ratified it (OAU, 1999; Lloyd, 2002 and Chirwa, 2002). Chirwa (2002) contends that it is a global and regional binding instrument that identifies the child as a possessor of certain rights and makes it possible for the child to exercise those rights in domestic or administrative proceedings. There are several Articles in the charter that recognise children's voice as important and adults should act in the best interests on their behalf:

Article 4: Best Interests of the Child

1. In all actions concerning the child undertaken by any person or authority the best interests of the child shall be the primary consideration.
2. In all judicial or administrative proceedings affecting a child who is capable of communicating his/her own views, an opportunity shall be provided for the views of the child to be heard either directly or through an impartial representative as a party to the proceedings, and those views shall be taken into consideration by the relevant authority in accordance with the provisions of appropriate law. (OAU, 1999:3)

Article 7: Freedom of Expression

Every child who is capable of communicating his or her own views shall be assured the rights to express his opinions freely in all matters and to disseminate his opinions subject to such restrictions as are prescribed by laws. (OAU, 1999:4)

However, despite theory, the practice is far behind, as listening to the views of the child is still culturally problematic. African children have traditionally been expected to be polite, deferential and quiet until asked to speak by adults (Pryor et al., 2005). Pryor et al. (2005) point out that children expressing their views and negotiating with adults has been problematic in Ghana. There is a fine line between what is acceptable and not acceptable from a cultural standpoint, sometimes a child being assertive can be misconstrued as rude. It makes it difficult to explain why African countries were quick to ratify the

UNCRC, which took one year to come to force, and then it took almost ten years for the African Children Charter to enter into force (Lloyd, 2002). In 2002 there were 27 out of 53 countries that had ratified the African Children Charter; Ghana had not by then (Lloyd, 2002). Ghana ratified the charter in 2005 and by March 2010, 45 out of 53 countries had ratified it (African Union, 2010). There are not many studies in Ghana regarding children's rights and this research intends to rekindle the debates on how children should be treated, particularly in schools.

According to Mayall (2000) the sociology of childhood has begun to shape adult understanding of the images of childhood and how this varies across time and across societies. Children's views need to be considered seriously as they move from being 'objects of adult work, to being competent, contributing social actors' (p248). Yet there are great barriers that need to be overcome. Mayall (2000) argues that adults would have to drop the notion of the children as:

incompetent, unstable, credulous, unreliable, emotional. Implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, we adults ascribe to adult the opposite virtues: that they are competent, stable, well informed, reliable and rational (Mayall, 2000: 246).

In turn, children's own subordination to adults leads them to adopt whatever schemes and machinations they can in order to assert their rights; these schemes include wheedling, lying, demanding, refusing, and these tactics themselves reinforce adult prejudices (Mayall, 2000). In the process of rethinking the issue, what we need to consider is what kind of citizens a society wants and the consequent nature of education which takes place in families, in communities and in social institutions like the school (Moos, 2004).

1.2 Rationale of the Study

The sum of human knowledge and complexity of human problems are perpetually increasing; therefore every generation must overhaul its educational methods if time is to be found for what is new (Russel in Meighan, 1994:95).

Two big questions often asked in education research are: ‘what are we educating for in schools?’ and ‘what kind of citizens do we want to produce after schooling?’, and from these we can develop our formal education system in such a way to meet the demands of what we hope for in this fast advancing world. Akyeampong (2007) in his address to the Commonwealth Education Council points out that Ghana has made some strides in its educational development over the past 50 years, where about as many as ten education reforms have been introduced. Each of the reforms has its own implications for the economic and development agenda for the country. He was of the opinion that access to all levels of education has improved significantly. However, completion rates remain a problem, especially at the Junior and Senior Secondary level where low completion rates deprive the country of much needed educated youth prepared for work and for further education and training (Akyeampong, 2007).

While reforms and changes in curriculum are being effected, the key stakeholders, pupils and their teachers, are rarely consulted on what might improve their schools and the teaching and learning process. All too often pupils’ views can be routinely excluded from research, even in the areas where such knowledge is vital (Wood, 2003). Rudduck et al. (1996) argue that what pupils say about teaching, learning and schooling is not only worth listening to but provides an important foundation for thinking about ways of improving schools and other education reforms. In many schools, however, it is

acknowledged that most pupils still lack the power to influence the quality of their lives (Rudduck and Flutter, 2004). Yet Article 12 of the UN 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child states that ‘whenever adults make a decision which will affect you in any way, you have the right to give your opinion, and adults have to take it seriously’ (Davies et al., 2002:144).

Research has been growing on the topic of pupils’ voice with some significant studies in recent times (Rudduck et al., 1996; Rudduck and Flutter, 2004; Mitra and Gross, 2009). However, most of this research has been done in developed countries. There are few studies of education in Africa that promote consideration of pupil voice in schools and student participation in decision-making. Reflecting back on my experiences as a pupil and as a teacher in Ghana and considering the available literature for my doctoral studies, I realised that children in Ghanaian basic schools have got little chance of expressing their views on issues concerning their schools, which should be a grave concern for a democratic country.

There is a current surge of western type of democracy in Africa, some of which has resulted from international agencies attaching strings to their funding: ‘no democracy no funds’ (Harber, 1997). Much has not been asked about whether the citizens of these new democratic societies in Africa are able to cope with this type of western construct multi-party democracy. Therefore, in several African countries, former military leaders have been elected as presidents; there are examples in Ghana, The Gambia and Nigeria. In these situations, their country's citizens may continue to live in oppression without

freedom of speech, with ongoing human rights abuses, under the so-called democratic governance (Gyekye, 1996). Citizens of these countries need to be educated about their rights and how to take redress if they are being abused.

In addition, citizens of a democratic country should have the knowledge and skills to decide for whom they want to vote during elections. Harber (1989) contends that democracy assumes choice between candidates, parties, policies etc. Yet choice based on ignorance is no choice at all. If a voter does not possess the basic knowledge to choose between political alternatives then no conscious choice has taken place. Voting in a democratic society therefore assumes informed choice by the electorate rather than voting based on whim or on factual misunderstanding. To what extent does this describe the situation among young citizens in Ghana?

The near universal ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in the 1990s by 179 countries has triggered increasing global consensus that young people need to participate fully in decisions concerning their own education (Cox et al., 2010; Jorgensen, 2004). There have been many studies into appropriate ways of promoting children's involvement in decision-making in schools. In their edited book on *Children as Decision Makers in Education: Sharing Experiences Across Cultures* Cox et al. (2010) note that while most of the UK-based chapters refer to schools, many of the contributions from developing countries refer to NGO actions and other non-formal sites of education. This study, which is set in Ghana, seeks to find ways that children can be part of decision-making processes in schools.

Since 1992, Ghana has had five consecutive four-yearly democratic multi-party elections which were successful and peaceful. Through these elections Ghana has achieved two peaceful transitions of government from one political party to the other, something that never happened before in the post-independence era. Yet in all the policy documents that were reviewed, education for democracy was not directly mentioned in any of them. When a policy maker at the Ministry of Education was asked about any knowledge of such policies, he seemed lost about what it means to have education for democracy (Agyemang, 2007). After some of the concepts of education for democracy were explained to him, he remarked "this is something we need to be thinking of". This therefore, indicates a starting place for creating awareness for education for democracy, but it is apparent that promoting democracy in the sense of providing pupils with experience of democracy through schooling is not a direct or explicit aim. This study deals with Ghana in terms of its educational system, and how far it is progressing through schools and teacher education towards the building and sustaining of democratic values among its young citizens for a wider democratic society.

1.3 Aims of the Research

The aims of the research were:

- To find out how the views of pupils and teacher trainees could be used to improve schools in Ghana in a more democratic direction.
- To find out the extent democratic education could be harnessed for school improvement.

- To investigate the views of pupils on how the basic principles of democracy (equity, participation, rights and informed choice) could be promoted within school practices.
- To explore the views of teacher trainees on what role their teacher training should play in promoting greater democracy in schools.

1.4 Research Questions

The aims of the study were turned into appropriate research questions in order for knowledge to be constructed:

1. What are the connections between democratic education, pupils' voice and school improvement?
2. What are the views of pupils and teacher trainees on school improvement in Ghana?
3. What are the views of pupils and teacher trainees on how schools might be changed in a more democratic direction?
4. In the light of 1, 2 and 3 above, what are the views of teacher trainees as to the role teacher education should play in preparing teachers for greater democracy in schools?

These questions are framed to guide the research to enable the aims of the study to be fulfilled. At the beginning of this research these questions remained open in order to be modified when additional questions unfolded. In addition, according to the type of design and the research approaches that were chosen in making meaning out of these questions, there might be several sub-questions arising in order to clarify or tease out

some issues. Punch (1998) points out that research questions are central, whether they are pre-specified or whether they unfold during the study. Research questions enable us to determine the type of data that will be needed for the study and this will be discussed in Chapter Six. The next section explains my role as a researcher in this study.

1.5 The Position and Role of the Researcher

Researchers serve as the direct tool for data collection; hence, it is important that their roles and positions are spelled out in the study. It is therefore an essential component of any objective scholarly study that researchers are aware of their own position within which they interact with the research processes, data collection, analysis and interpretation of findings (Dei et al., 2006). This study is a qualitative study and the advantage of human beings gathering data in qualitative inquiry is the ability of humans to interact with the situation, respond to environmental cues, collect information at multiple levels simultaneously, perceive situations holistically, process data as soon as they are available, provide immediate feedback and request for clarification of data, and explore typical responses (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). However, qualitative researchers do carry personal values, beliefs, experience, and biases which tend to shape their perception and role in the research processes and if not monitored, may considerably influence the outcome of the study.

Dei et al. (2006) argue that social science researchers should be ready to challenge the notion of positivist objectivity which contends that the researcher reports the absolute truth and has no gender, no race and no position of personal interest. Therefore, ‘pure

objectivity' as defined by the positivist school, does not exist in the historical and social knowledge. It is therefore important for researchers to know and acknowledge who they are, where they come from and what brings them to a particular research project. I therefore proceed to talk about myself and what brings me to this study.

I am Ghanaian-born and lived in Ghana for 24 years before coming to the United Kingdom for further studies. I was one of the products of Ghana's 1987 Education Reform Programme that has defined the education system until now, although there are several reviews of that reform. Some of the objectives of that reform programme were to reduce the length of pre-tertiary education from 17 to 12 years, increase access to education at all levels, particularly at the basic and senior secondary education, pre-vocational and general skills training. I did love the concept of that reform as a child at that time when the reform started in 1987/88 academic year. This meant that I could go through pre-university education quicker and had the options of pursuing further studies at the university or polytechnic or the various professional training colleges (for example teaching and nursing). I went to teacher training college after my pre-tertiary education and qualified as a teacher in Ghana at the age of 21 which is a good age to start a career. However, through all those years of education I witnessed some teachers who were products of the previous education system, using a quarter of lessons complaining about the new structure of the education system, especially the reduced years and branding us (students) 'good for nothing'. Teachers also complained of the falling standard of education, although they were in charge and it was their responsibility to raise the standards.

I felt that things should be done differently when I qualified as a teacher and was posted to a town seven miles away from the second largest city in Ghana to teach Science and Mathematics in a Junior Secondary School (JSS). I related to the students very well because I was young and had gone through this system of education. I even allowed the students to call me by my nick name “Daasebre” which is an Akan word and a title of a king literally meaning “you deserve many thanks than we can express”. In my three years in that school I worked hard, always going the extra mile in teaching and also initiating sports and entertainment programmes as we did in teacher training college. That paid off with students doing well in my subjects in the final national examination, the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) organised by the West African Examination Council (WAEC). But that could not be said of the overall school results where most of the students passed all subjects taken but the results were not good enough to take our best students to top class Senior Secondary Schools in Ghana.

There was a group of top ranking Ghana government officials who were from the town I was teaching in and they made it their priority to support our school and other schools in that area. The reason behind their action was that they wanted to produce highly qualified individuals who could work in their various government departments in the future, because at the time they rarely found in their offices someone from their area who could make it to the top. These officials therefore provided free note books and resources such as past questions and paid for extra one hour classes after school for all children. They provided funds for the whole school trip to Lake Bosomtwi, the only natural lake in

Ghana which is in the Ashanti Region. They also flew selected best pupils in a chartered flight to Accra, the capital city, for a tour of the parliament, government departments and other tourist attractions. There was a scholarship package for all pupils who could attain a distinction at final national examination BECE and further their education at a top class Senior Secondary School, and a cash donation incentive for all subject teachers whose pupils obtained grade 1 (excellent) in their subject. By their courtesy, our school featured in a children's story time programme in a national television programme named 'By the Fire Side'. Teachers in our school responded by organising early morning classes for final year pupils from 6:30 am before the start of the normal school hours at 8:00 am, paid one hour extra classes after school and independent night studies from 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm. The night studies are not common for basic schools in Ghana.

I was seriously involved in the organisation of all these extracurricular classes as the coordinator; the senior teachers preferred to give these roles to what they termed as 'fresh blood' young and new teachers. Throughout my three years in that school and with all these efforts we did not achieve the desired overall examination results as expected. After one of the results had been released in my third year, I was a little emotional about it, after all the effort and hard work. Therefore, during one of the night studies, I intuitively pulled all the children together in one big classroom and asked them to tell me what had gone wrong in that school and the reason behind their under-performance. My initial plan was to let some steam off with them but I was surprised about what they told me. I therefore listed all of their views for the attention of the headteacher and the staff. In one of our staff meetings I requested to speak about my meeting with the children and as I

started to speak about my findings, the immediate reactions from some senior teachers were to stop me from presenting the findings. They managed to convince the headteacher that I did not get any permission from the staff or the headteacher and therefore I had allowed the children to talk about them. They did not allow me to present the voices of the pupils which included teachers' unhelpful attitudes and negative comments to pupils during lessons, some of them mere myths which could be corrected. Some of the children in that school had a belief the school had been cursed by a 'powerful river goddess' in that town and therefore no matter how much they learnt, they were not going to pass very well in the final exams. Yet my own colleagues could not swallow their pride and listen to what the children were saying, so that we could deal with the most serious matters as well as the more trivial ones. Moreover, on the same issues of under performance, four teachers and two headteachers had been transferred from our school to other schools by the request of the community and influential government officers.

This account of my teaching career in Ghana is not the main reason for this study, but as I reflected over my professional development in this study the experiences of those days came vividly to me. This study could be classified as insider and outsider research. Phillips and Schweisfurth (2006) contend that researching in your national context while studying elsewhere can be considered as insider and outsider research as the lens has been adjusted through the process of studying in another country. As I study in the United Kingdom, I have been exposed to different ways of working in education, as well as opportunities to read works by authors from different national contexts and to compare my perspective with students from other countries. As a reflective practitioner, my

exposure to outsider context and other reading materials has helped me to understand how things are done elsewhere and how schools are presently in Ghana. Phillips and Schweisfurth (2006:49) suggest that it is impossible for the international student to resist the comparative impulse and manage to maintain their original perspectives on educational issues without starting to question what they originally perceived as ‘normal’. I believe therefore, with the benefit of my insider view and my educational experiences in the UK, it will be researching on how good practices elsewhere can be adapted in my own national context.

1.6 Outline of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into ten chapters. In this chapter, I explored the background of the study which points out that children are often considered inferior to adulthood. Therefore, pupils’ views are ignored in decisions that affect them both at home and at school. Pupils are also maltreated and physically abused internationally despite the UNCRC, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and various country specific Children’s Acts. This study starts with the rationale that promoting democratic practices in schools will help education for democratic citizenship, while children participate in decision-making at schools. This may also help in reduction of violence in schools as pupils learn to negotiate with adults on things that affect their learning. The context of this study is Ghana and the current political situation has been briefly discussed. The aims of the study and the research questions have been outlined. My position as a researcher has been stated and followed up with brief career reflections in Ghana.

There are four chapters for the literature and theoretical reviews, most of the relevant studies and papers consulted are from the late 1960's to early 2011. Most of the literature is Western, however much effort was made to explore a few studies related to this field in Ghana and Africa as a whole. Chapter Two reviews the literature on 'Democracy'. The various notions and conceptions of democracy are explored. Further themes that emerge from the literature are 'democracy' and 'development', the emergence of democratic governance in African nations and education for democracy. Education policies in Ghana are also reviewed to determine any democratic element. Chapter Three explores the literature on pupils' views on schooling for school effectiveness and school improvement. There are further discussions on typologies of pupils' voice. Chapter Four critically reviews the literature on the role of teacher education towards democratic schools. Further discussions focused on indicators of democratic schools, pupils' participation in decision-making, equity and rights in schools. Barriers to democratic practices in Ghanaian schools are also discussed. Chapter Five sets out the theoretical framework of the study by reviewing existing theories that have some influence in the education system in Ghana. The theory influencing this study is political democratisation theory.

Chapter Six provides the research design and the methodology of this study. The chapter also provides detailed reports of the data collection processes and data analysis procedures. Chapter Seven discusses the findings on pupils' views for school improvement. The findings confirm that pupils' views are important for school improvement. However, pupils' views on schooling and school improvement issues need to move beyond the data stock pile, for greater democratic participation in schools.

Chapter Eight therefore discusses pupils' democratic participation for school improvement. This chapter establishes the nature of basic schools in Ghana whether democratic or authoritarian and explores ways towards more democratic practices. In Chapter Nine the discussion on findings focused mainly on research question 4: the role of teacher education in preparing teachers for greater democracy in schools. The views of teacher trainees and qualified teachers are explored in this chapter.

Chapter Ten presents a summary of findings in relation to the research questions. The theoretical and practical implications related to the findings are explored. This chapter further discusses future research as a follow up to this study and outlines various recommendations for various stakeholders in the Ghana education system.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW: DEMOCRACY

2.1 Introduction

The literature review was guided by using the basic procedures of literature search in Bell (2010) *Doing your research project: a guide for first-time researchers in education*. Bell (2010) points out that literature search involves ‘defining the parameters of the study and refining and focusing keywords which will allow you to identify relevant sources’ (p83). According to Hart (1998) a literature review is important because it enables the researchers to acquire understanding of their field of study, existing research, methodology and the key issues relating to the subject of study. Hart therefore, points to some key questions that will guide this review of the literature:

What are the origins and definitions of the topic?
What are the major issues and debates about the topic?
What are the key theories, concepts and ideas?

(Hart, 1998:14)

This chapter explores the notion of democracy and models of democracy. What kind of citizens do we want in increasingly global democratic societies? What role does democracy play in national development? This chapter further discusses the shift of African countries towards democratic governance and how those democracies could be maintained or sustained in relation to education. An overview of the Ghana Education System is presented to explore any link between democratic discourses and education policy. The role of formal education in fostering democratic citizenship and school improvement is discussed.

2.2 What is Democracy?

There is a global movement towards the democratisation of political systems in various countries in the world (Davies, Harber, and Schweisfurth, 2002). However, the concept of democracy is contentious, subject to varying interpretations within different historical, cultural and geo-political contexts (Pryor et al., 2005; Harber and Trafford, 1999). Democracy derives from the Greek word *demos*, meaning “the people” and *kratain*, “to rule” as opposed to the rule of the few or the one (Rust and Laumann, 2001). This means that democracy is a form of government in which the people rule, in contrast to monarchies and aristocracies (Held 1996). Rust and Laumann (2001) echo the broadness of democracy as much more than the rule of the people. They believe democracy to be a way of life, a body of principles, ideals and values which is constantly expanding in scope and depth of meaning. Therefore, Davies (1999) argues that democracy is not a single definable entity but the broad term for a set of political processes towards the ends of justice, prosperity and peace. The issue to raise here is what are these principles, ideals, and values that underpin the meaning of democracy?

Davies et al. (2002) contend that in defining democracy there should be four basic principles which should be accepted as fundamental to democracy:

- Rights: a set of entitlements which are protected, and common to all individuals;
- Participation: involvement of individuals in the decision-making process;
- Equity: fair and equal treatment of individuals and groups;
- Informed Choice: the tools to make decisions which are based on relevant information and reason (p5).

Held (1996) made an assertion that could be used to summarise the key concepts in democracy saying:

Democracy has been defended on the grounds that it comes closest among alternatives to achieving one or more of the following fundamental values or goods: political equality, liberty, moral self-development, the common interest, a fair moral compromise, binding decisions that take everyone's interest into account, social utility, the satisfaction of wants, efficient decisions (p3).

What Held provides here includes examples of what Davies et al. discuss as 'rights, participation, equity and informed choice'. Liberty amounts to exercising individuals' legal rights such as freedom of speech, the right to vote, and others. Political equality is an indication of equity while common interest, binding and efficient decisions are characteristics of participation. But, according to Held (1996), there are also questions that need to be asked on 'moral self-development and a fair moral compromise' in many contemporary democracies: does the modern capitalist economics consider these values in their democracies? Why do the rich continue to get richer and the poor become poorer? There have been potential areas for disagreement from ancient Greece to the contemporary world on some of the issues in democracy.

On the other hand, different cultures and languages have their own interpretation and understanding of democracy. Poulsen-Hansen (2002) points out that some political scientists have found more than 40 definitions of democracy, and more than 100 countries claim to be democratic. This suggests how particular interpretations of democracy are inseparable from culture. Yamashita and Williams (2002) provide the Japanese word for democracy as 'Minsyusyugi', literally meaning leadership by the people. They argue that there are some aspects of democracy in Japan but it is in a form that would not be recognised by the West. The Japanese tradition of decision-making is based on consensus (p278). The Akan word in Ghana for 'democracy' is

“kabinamenkabi” which literally means ‘mutual dialogue’. This concept is similar to decision-making based on consensus where everybody is entitled to contribute his or her opinions on a matter which is of significance in a society. According to Adeyemi and Asimeng-Boahene (2001) democracy has long existed in most areas of pre-colonial Africa and it was known as ‘village democracy’ (p3). They argue that traditional African democracy was based on a constant search for consensus through dialogue and open discussion. Gyekye (1996) points out that:

In traditional African societies, the will of the people is usually expressed formally in the councils of the chiefs and in other assemblies where people are free to express their opinions. Matters are never settled until everyone has had a chance to speak; and to carry out any programme requires the sanction of the whole clan or group. They would talk and talk until they arrive at consensus. This method of conducting affairs by free discussion is highly valued and it is democratic (p111).

From my point of view, this model of traditional ruling can be compared to the parliamentary system but there are several issues to be considered. This is because most Ghanaian towns and villages are ruled by chief and elders who are elected to power by king makers of the royal family through merit by their inheritance system, not necessarily by the popular vote of the people in that community. The issues of equity, justice, and human rights are to be considered. For example, apart from the Queen Mother, there are few members of the councils of chiefs, who are women. There are other personal examples where I have witnessed assemblies in villages in Ghana where some individuals were not allowed to make their point in decision-making because they were considered as drunkards or useless in that society. Yet some traditionalists I consulted argued that this practice is not far from what is being done in the western world since it is a legal requirement for persons making a statement to be 'compos mentis'. Also, decisions

reached by consensus are arguably better than the parliamentary system where majority carries the vote and many times minority input is neglected. Therefore, democracy seems not to be the exclusive ‘property’ of the west since it has long been in existence in many non-western countries depending on the local interpretation of the concept (Adeyemi and Asimeng-Boahene, 2001:16).

In my previous study on the perception of teacher trainers and trainees on democracy, most of the respondents' responses on democracy were influenced by the local interpretation of the term democracy, which is 'mutual dialogue'. Mutual dialogue here means a situation whereby everybody has the right to give their opinions in conversation involving a group of people or only two people. Most of the explanations given by the students only contained one of the basic principles of democracy, the right to participate in decision-making. For example, here are some of the views by both teacher trainers and trainees:

Democracy is a way of ruling where the people who are ruled are involved so much in decision-making. It has to do with hearing the voices of the ruled so that decisions are not taken by only the rulers (Tutor - City Training College).

Student A: A system of government in which the leaders take into consideration the views of the followers.

Student B: A system whereby ruling of the country is in the hands of both the government and the citizens.

Student C: A system of government whereby views of the majority are considered (Group interview - City Training College).

(Agyemang, 2007:44)

Democracy is dialogue and “dialogue from the Greek means ‘dia logos’: reason flowing between us, reaching a new common reason which is greater than the individual reason we each possess” (Jorgensen, 2004:121). Jorgensen further argued that the concept of

dialogue is not only an acceptance of differences, but taking a departure from these differences and considering them as fruitful for the joint enterprise. However, Fayemi (2009:104) points out that there are intense debates among scholars of democracy, which can be placed into a continuum that ranges from minimalist to maximalist approaches. Scholars with a minimalist conception of democracy define democracy as just electoral systems:

- A system in which parties lose elections
- A method by which decision-making is transferred to individuals who have gained power in a competitive struggle for the votes of the citizens
- A system wherein one administration can be replaced by another without bloodshed, through elections.

(Fayemi, 2009:104)

On the other hand, scholars with the maximalist conception argue that elections are the minimum procedural requirement for democracy. Therefore, definition of democracy must not be limited to only elections, but to some extent broad guarantees of basic civil rights, such as freedom of speech, association and assembly (Fayemi, 2009:105). A maximalist scholar like Larry Diamond, defines democracy as:

... not only a civilian, constitutional, multiparty regime, with regular, free and fair elections and universal suffrage, but organizational and informational pluralism; extensive civil liberties (freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom to form and join organizations); effective power for elected officials; and functional autonomy for legislative, executive and judicial organs of government (Diamond, 1988: 33).

Fayemi (2009) argues that for a system to be labelled as democratic it must meet these minimum conditions: respect for human rights and the rule of law; collective deliberation, choice and participation; representative and accountable government. In this study I argue that the conditions outlined above by Fayemi are values and ethos that can

be learned and experienced through regular practices in the formal education system. These discussions point out that the word democracy is multiply constructed and there is no single absolute definition. However, universalist writers such as Amartya Sen and Lynn Davies argue that there are fundamental values and principles of democracy which should be found in every democracy which are similar to those ideas expressed above by Fayemi.

Citizens of democratic societies have to be aware of at least a few concepts and different models of democracy. In this study, I do not wish to give a detailed discussion of these models but to give a brief account of some key relevant concepts of democracy.

2.3 Models of Democracy

Held (1996) contends that models of democracy can be divided into two broad types:

Direct or participatory democracy (a system of decision-making about public affairs in which citizens are directly involved) and liberal or representative democracy (a system of rule embracing elected 'officers' who undertake to 'represent' the interests and/or views of citizens within the framework of 'the rule of law') (p6).

These two conceptions of democracy may be further labelled 'classical'-democracy as a form of popular power and 'contemporary'-democracy as a representative system of political decision-making (Carr and Hartnett, 1996). Carr and Hartnett (1996) further argue that 'classical' and 'contemporary' conceptions of democracy do not refer to any particular democratic theories or correspond to any given political reality. They are best understood as 'ideal type' constructs: purely formal categories which help to classify

various ideas about democracy in terms of their core values, their key features and their common assumptions.

Carr and Hartnett (1996) point out that these concepts of democracy draw our attention to what kind of education is required in classical and contemporary democratic societies. The common assumption of classical democracy is grounded in developing individual capacities in order for them to participate in the life of their communities and contribute to the good of that society. The main aim of education is to initiate individuals into the values, attitudes and modes of behaviour appropriate to democratic citizenship and conducive to active participation in democratic society (p43). This type of education seeks to empower its citizens to participate in the processes of decision-making and changes in their society. Carr and Hartnett (1996) contend that at the beginning of the twentieth century, because of the sheer size and complexity of modern industrialised societies, the classical concept of democracy was regarded as 'utopian'. Therefore the classical conception was rejected by long established democratic societies such as Britain and the US and replaced by a more 'realistic', contemporary conception.

Contemporary democracy is currently common in many developed and developing nations. The key features include: 'regular election, universal suffrage, the existence of rival political parties, representative system of government, a centralised leadership, a free press and independent judiciary' (Carr and Hartnett, 1996:43). In this concept education prepares citizens of such societies for their future roles as producers, workers and consumers. Contemporary democratic societies operate in the knowledge based on a

market economy therefore producing a two tier-education system, one for the minority political elite and one for the majority labour force. Such societies regard political ignorance and apathy of the masses as essential to social stability and therefore make little effort towards political education or consciousness (Carr and Hartnett, 1996). Perhaps this explains why schools and classrooms are predominantly authoritarian and promote exaggerated, unhealthy competition among students (Harber, 2009).

Although the contemporary democratic model is widespread among many developing democracies, I am strongly convinced that the model of education system provided by this concept, will not help prepare citizens for democratic citizenship which will propel a nation to a fully fledged democratic state. Even many developed democracies favour the contemporary model with political parties increasingly pursuing party ideologies rather than responding to the views of the citizens. It has been argued that this has generated voter apathy and disillusion among citizens and therefore parties are struggling to win elections with an appropriate majority (Crick, 1998). MacBeath (2004) further argues that it is not hard to find evidence of widespread erosion of public trust in representative democracy. Democracy in Ghana is based on the notions of representative government. The adult population chooses governments by voting in free and fair elections (Harber, 1989). How do children interpret or form their own meaning of democracy? How do they develop democratic skills to be effective in a democratic society? There is a need to create awareness and a democratic culture among citizens of contemporary democratic societies. Although the idea of democracy appears to be plural, the aim of its expansion

should not be imposition of western models on the rest of the world but to give a set of values and principles that will form a universal reference point (Meyer-Bisch, 1995).

2.4 Democracy and Development

Human development is defined by the UNDP in the 1990 Human Development Report (HDR) as:

a process of enlarging people's choices. In principle, these choices can be infinite and change over time. But at all levels of development, the three essential ones are for people to lead a long and healthy life, to acquire knowledge and to have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living. If these essential choices are not available, many other opportunities remain inaccessible. But human development does not end there. Additional choices, highly valued by many people, range from political, economic and social freedom to opportunities for being creative and productive, and enjoying personal self respect and guaranteed human rights (UNDP, 1990:10).

The key concepts of this definition capture most of the ideology behind the six millennium development goals (UNDP, 2010b). They, however, further argued that human development has two sides: the formation of human capabilities such as improved health, knowledge and skills - and how people make use of their acquired capabilities - for leisure, productive purposes or being active in cultural, social and political affairs. In this concept of human development, income is clearly only one aspect that people would like to have; however, it is not the sum total of their lives. Development must, therefore, be more than just the expansion of income and wealth. Its focus must be people (UNDP, 1990). Therefore Sen (1999) argues that economic development is not enough as focusing only on the growth of Gross National Product (GNP) or some other indicators of overall economic expansion is insufficient. Instead we also need to look at the impact of

democracy and political freedoms on the lives and capabilities of citizens. The UNDP has been influenced by the ideas of the economist and Nobel prize winner Amartya Sen and has included in the HDR for 2010, for example, quantified indicators of ‘empowerment’ which are political freedom and democracy, human rights violations, press freedom, journalists imprisoned, corruption victims, democratic decentralisation and political engagement (UNDP, 2010:164-167). This indicates that the UNDP now has an explicit model of political development where the goal for all countries is the attainment, sustainability and consolidation of democracy as a key ingredient of human development.

Sen (1999:4) argued that democracy is in itself an important form of development in that, in a democracy, citizens are able to express their fundamental freedoms. Sometimes the lack of freedoms relates directly to economic poverty, which means that individuals have no freedoms or political will to satisfy hunger or tackle malnutrition, or receive treatment for curable diseases, or be adequately clothed or sheltered or to enjoy clean water or sanitary facilities. He, however, contends that democracy is development for two distinct reasons: (1) The evaluative reason: assessment of progress has to be done primarily in terms of whether the freedoms that people have are enhanced; (2) The effectiveness reason: achievement of other aspects of development is thoroughly dependent on the free agency of people (Sen, 1999:4). Sen points out that the achievement of both democratic government and human rights in a country is a form of development in its own right and that it is also necessary for the attainment of other forms of development such as poverty reduction, economic growth and social provision. This is an argument now accepted by the United Nations who, in their annual UNDP Human Development Reports, makes

their support for democracy as both a goal and means of development very clear. For example, in discussing the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals and Targets, the 2003 Report notes that one policy cluster that can help countries break out of their poverty traps is to 'Promote democratic governance and human rights to remove discrimination, secure social justice and promote the well being of people' (UNDP, 2003: 4).

According to Sen (1999) the purpose of development is to improve human lives by expanding the range of things that a person can be and do, such as be healthy and well nourished, knowledgeable and an active citizen. So, development is about removing obstacles to what a person values and can do in life, obstacles such as illiteracy, bad health, lack of access to resources or lack of civil and political freedoms. In Sen's words it is about increasing human capabilities and removing barriers to these capabilities. He is cautious that 'democracy does not serve as an automatic remedy of ailments as quinine works to remedy malaria' (p155). However, people must positively take the opportunities available in democratic society as the basic feature of freedoms in general depends on how much people exercise their mandate. Moreover, when people exercise their political and civil rights it helps draw government attention to major disasters such as famines and demands appropriate action. Sen argues that rulers have the incentive to listen to what people say if they have to face criticism and seek their support in elections.

The next section explores the widespread moves towards democratic governance in Africa in quest of nations seeking national development and to enable their citizens to exercise their fundamental freedoms and also to participate in defining national goals.

2.5 Towards Democratic Governance in Africa

Most African countries were under military rule or single party regimes until the early 1990s. About two thirds of them had military governments of one type or another, some having been subjected to several military coups and counter coups. A few examples are Ghana, Togo, Nigeria, Sudan and The Gambia (Mazrui and Mazrui, 1998). The others as pointed out by Mazrui and Mazrui (1998) were “... either *de facto* one-party states, after ‘voluntary’ dissolution of opposition parties or *de jure* one-party states through acts of parliament which made opposition parties illegal” (p95).

Africa has been the scene of some of the most dramatic political changes since the end of the cold war. Some form of pluralism has been introduced or reintroduced to over thirty out of the fifty three countries in Africa. The era has witnessed the departure from power of the older and first generation of political leaders such as Julius Nyerere, Felix Houphouet-Boigny, Kamuzu Banda, and Mobutu Sese Seko – most of them clinging to power until their death, and the emergence of new leaders with no roots in the anticolonial movements such as Jerry Rawlings, Blaise Compaore, Yoweri Museveni, Yaya Jammeh and Meles Zenawi, and leaders with no roots in the military such as Frederick Chiluba, Bekuli Muluzi, Nicophere Soglo, Abudulaye Wade, Laurent Gbagbo and John Kufour (Gyimah-Boadi, 2004:5). However, while there has been genuine

progress in terms of freer elections, more political choice, greater constitutionalism, a more active civil society and greater freedom of the media in a number of countries, some countries remain authoritarian. Even some leaders with no military background have turned to become worse dictators, a recent example is the chaos and thousands of people being killed in Ivory Coast as a result of Laurent Gbagbo's refusal to hand over power after electoral defeat. In 2009 the Mo Ibrahim Foundation even declined to award its annual prize of £3 million for good governance in Africa (Tran, 2009). This award is given to democratically elected leaders who have left office in the previous three years. They could not award it to anyone including Ghana's John Kufour who led Ghana peacefully for eight years and handed over power to the opposition party when his ruling party was defeated in a closely contested election in December 2008. This gives an indication that there are gaps and shortcomings towards democratic governance in the so-called democratic states in Africa.

Democratic elections are now being held in most countries in the West African sub-region but the craze for power by some politicians continues to threaten the stability of these countries. For example, Ghana shares its border in the west with Ivory Coast, one of the most peaceful countries in Africa in the post-colonial era but recently turned into chaos and violence due to political wrangling. Beyond Ivory Coast are Liberia and Sierra Leone, well known conflict areas that are gradually returning to democratic rule and normalcy. On the eastern border of Ghana is Togo which had been ruled by one head of state for many decades (President Gnassingbe Eyadema). The country turned into turmoil in 2005 when the president died and the military installed his son as president. Arguably,

Ghana is the only country among them which has had stable democratic governance for a substantial period: almost two decades. As it will be argued later, it will be difficult to have sustainable democratic governance in these regions unless the education system produces citizens who can stand up for their rights, among whom are future leaders who will respect the rule of law and be honest to their constitutional mandate or term of power. The next section discusses the changing aspirations of Ghana as a state and as a people towards democracy and its implication for democratic citizenship.

2.6 National Aspiration towards Democracy and Democratic Citizenship in Ghana

Ghana was the first sub-Saharan Africa country to gain independence from Britain in 1957. The two main goals for the independence movement in the 1950's were *freedom* and *justice* (Gyima-Boadi, 2010). This was indicated boldly at the base of the Coat of Arms of Ghana designed after independence (see Figure 2.1 below).

Figure 2.1 The Coat of Arms of Ghana



(Source: Ghana Government, 2012)

The Ghana Coat of Arms is found on all official government letterheads. It symbolises government sanction and it is found at important Government sites like the courts and government offices. The Ghana Coat of Arms is composed of a shield, divided into four quarters by a green St. George's Cross, rimmed with gold. The following are the symbols in the quarters and their meaning: *Crossed linguist staff and ceremonial sword on a blue background*: position top left-hand quarter, represents local administration. *A heraldic castle on a heraldic sea with a light blue background* position: top right-hand quarter, represents national government. *A cocoa tree*: position bottom left-hand quarter, represents the agricultural wealth of the country. *A mine shaft*: position bottom right-hand quarter, represents the mineral wealth of the country. *A gold lion*: position in the centre of the green St. George's Cross, represents the continuing link between Ghana and the Commonwealth. *Black five-pointed star rimmed with gold standing on the wreath of red, gold and green colours*: position on top of the shield, represents the lone star of African freedom. *Two eagles, around their necks hang black star medals suspended from a ribbon of national colours - red, gold and green*: position supporting the shield on the left and right hand side, signifies a protector with strength, very clear and attentive eyes keeping watch over the country. *The motto Freedom and Justice* is found under the shield and represents national aspirations (Ghana Government, 2012).

The symbols described in the coat of arms signify the embodiment of Ghana, a nation with great wealth, culturally rich and a leading nation for the liberation of Africa from colonial rule. According to Berry (1995) Ghana enjoyed economic and political gains unrivalled elsewhere in tropical Africa after independence with relatively high per capita income, low national debt, and sizable foreign currency reserves. The economy was

dependably based on the production and export of cocoa, of which Ghana was the world's leading producer; minerals, particularly gold; and timber. The education system was relatively advanced, and its people were heirs to a tradition of parliamentary government. Berry (1995) points out that, Ghana's future after independence looked promising, and it seemed destined to be a leader in Africa. However, a few years after independence Ghana's economy severely declined and its reputation became damaged because of instability of governments. The Kwame Nkrumah-led Convention People's Party (CPP) government abandoned the Westminster-style parliamentary democracy constitution inherited from Britain after just three years. Nkrumah discarded the notion of freedom and justice within which he fought for independence and introduced changes that ultimately broadened the president's constitutional authority to detain persons without trial, nullify court decisions and sack judges. In 1964, Ghana became a one-party state, and Nkrumah declared president for life. All opposition parties were banned. After Nkrumah's removal by a military coup in 1966, Ghana laboured for the next thirty years under a succession of military juntas interspersed with momentary civilian governments (Gyima-Boadi, 2010).

Nkrumah's quest for African liberation did not last. Instead of empowering the people he had delivered from the clutches of colonial powers towards the national aspirations of democratic self-governance based on freedom and justice, he opted for policies that would keep him in power for good and this resulted in political and economic quagmire for years until the restoration of democracy in 1992. Table 2.1 below outlines the chronological political events of Ghana after independence.

Table 2.1 Post-Independence Chronology of Principal Political Events in Ghana

1957:	Ghana Achieves Independence.
1960:	In an election and Constitutional referendum, Ghana becomes a republic and Nkrumah becomes president. He declares Ghana a one-party state and bans all opposition parties.
1966:	National Liberation Council (NLC), composed of the military and the police, overthrows Nkrumah.
1969:	NLC holds elections to return the country to civilian rule. Kofi Busia of the Progress Party, heir of the UP, wins the election.
1972:	National Redemption Council (NRC), led by Colonel I.K. Acheampong, overthrows Busia.
1975:	NRC transforms itself to the Supreme Military Council (SMC). Acheampong becomes SMC chairman.
1978:	Acheampong resigns and Lt. General Fredrick Akuffo becomes SMC chairman.
1979:	Akuffo lifts ban on political parties and announces elections.
1979:	Flt. Lt. Jerry Rawlings and the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) overthrow SMC, but do not cancel elections.
1979:	Hilla Limann wins election.
1982:	Flt. Lt. Jerry Rawlings and the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) overthrow Limann.
1992:	Voters pass the 1992 Constitution to allow for a return to democratic rule.
1992:	PNDC becomes National Democratic Congress (NDC). Rawlings wins the first multi-party election in Ghana's Fourth Republic.
1996:	Rawlings wins re-election. For the first time since Nkrumah, an elected official served a complete term.
2000:	John Kufuor of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) defeats John Atta-Mills of the NDC. For the first time in Ghana's history a party hands over power in a free and fair election.
2008:	John Atta-Mills of the NDC beats Nana Akuffo-Addo of the NPP. Ghana has its second peaceful turnover of power.
2010:	President Mills announces the creation of a Constitutional Review Commission to address problems in the 1992 Constitution.
2012:	John Atta-Mills dies on power, his Vice President John Mahama sworn in peacefully as President
Source: (Fox et al., 2011: iv)	

As shown in the above table Ghana has made great strides in democratic governance since the return to constitution rule and multi-party democratic elections in 1992. The Electoral Commission (EC), established in 1993 by statute in accordance with the

provisions of the 1992 Constitution, has played a key role in Ghana's most notable achievement, the progressive improvement of electoral management and the increasing acceptance of election results as fair by Ghanaians and international observers. Ghanaians have now established that democratic elections are the best way to resolve disputes over who should run the country and what policies they should implement (AfriMAP, 2007). In addition the success story in Ghana politics post 1992 has been largely due to the importance of institutions outside the formal structures of elections and political parties in deepening and protecting democracy. Pluralisation of the media has played a major role in strengthening political participation in Ghana and also sensitisation of the public about their roles in the changed aspirations towards democratic governance. All kinds of political opinion are now freely expressed, and the use of local languages on radio especially has widened participation in political debates (AfriMAP, 2007). There have been great success stories in Ghana recent political history but the value system is that of contemporary model of democracy tie with minimalist conception of using elections to decide who rules the nation.

The National Commission on Civic Education (NCCE) has also played a fundamental role in the sustenance of democratic rule in Ghana. The National Commission for Civic Education is an independent, non-partisan governance institution, set up under Article 231 of the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana. The Commission works to promote and sustain democracy and inculcate in the Ghanaian citizenry the awareness of their rights and obligations, through civic education. The Commission was established in 1993 under the National Commission for Civic Education Act, 1993 (Act 452). Since its

inception the commission has implemented several programmes and public education campaigns to sustain and increase awareness of constitutional democracy among Ghanaians for the achievement of political and social stability for an equitable economic growth, and integrated development through civic education (NCCE, 2010). However, the focus of the NCCE work has been the adult population who are expected to exercise their voting rights during elections than to promote democratic practices in various micro institutions such as schools. As the literature reviewed in the following chapters will attest, young people need to be taught and experience a degree of democratic citizenship at school if they are to be future custodians of national aspirations of democracy and development.

Despite the great success of democratic elections in Ghana, recent assessments of democratic governance depict that democratic political culture is underdeveloped and formal democratic institutions and processes give inadequate voice to poor and marginalised groups (Gyima-Boadi, 2010). The effective participation in the making and implementation of public policy has been limited to a powerful president and small political elite who has succeeded in capturing the presidency through fairly competitive elections, and with it control of the public resources that the constitution places under control of the executive branch (Fox et al., 2011; Gyima-Boadi, 2010). There are concerns about politicians' use of language that could fan ethnic tensions, especially at election time. The support for the two main parties, the New Patriotic party (NPP) and National Democratic Congress (NDC), precariously splits along ethnic lines. There is also a concern that in Ghana the parties and their candidates are often more interested in

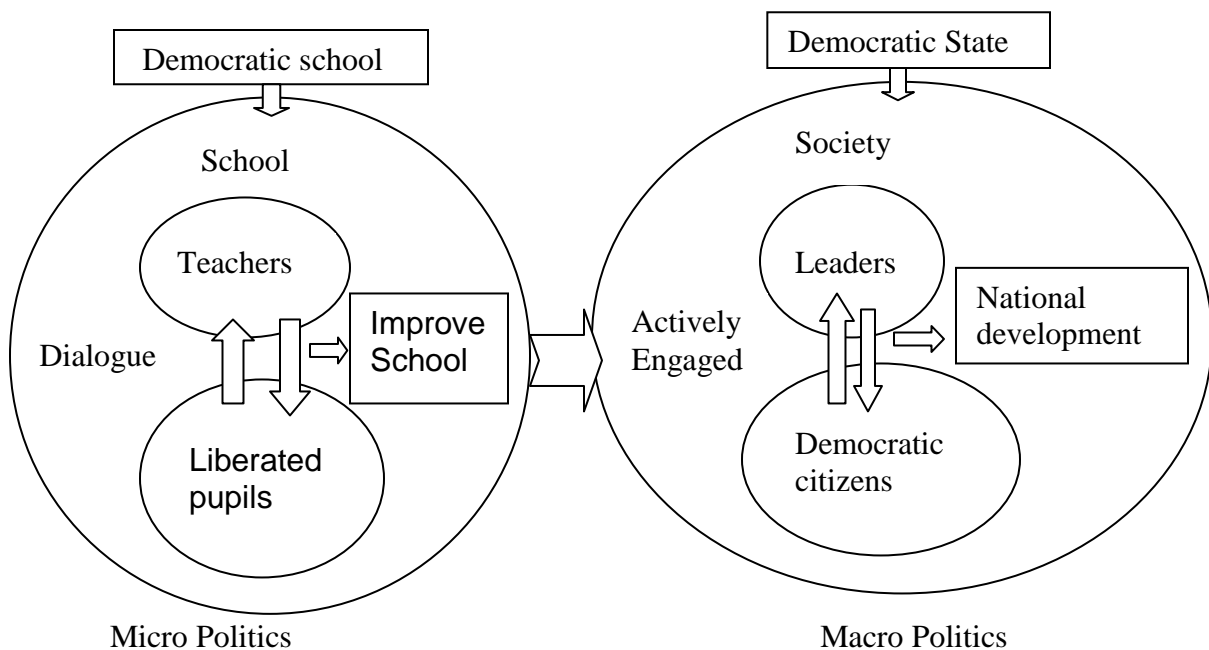
personal attacks than in issue-based politics (AfriMAP, 2007). As indicated in Table 2.1 the findings and recommendations of the Constitutional Review may be able to address the problems that are constitutional. NCCE for the past two decades has performed creditably in the delivery of quality civic education for democracy, however formal education has greater potential than is being utilised in educating pupils towards democratic citizenship.

The assumption underpinning this study is that schools are a good place to start the process of democratisation because this process will not only produce democratic citizens but also help improve schools generally. Sen (1999), in his theory, argues that democracy is directly proportional to development because when citizens are given their fundamental freedoms and rights, it frees their capability to achieve. People can freely and actively engage in the democratic process which will bring about national development and social justice as they challenge leaders or bring their attention to issues. Governments or political leaders will listen because they know their people are well informed and can make choices based on sound arguments. In addition, blatantly ignoring the electorate will have consequences on their quest for re-election (Sen; 1999).

However, the question of how pupils can obtain or learn the political capabilities that empower them to function more effectively in a democratic state and society and therefore have the 'voice' to be able to participate in deliberative democracy certainly has important and complex implications for formal education. This raises the key issues of how schools are, and should be, structured and organised along democratic lines, taking

into account that democracy is best learned in a democratic setting (Mncube, 2008). In this ideal model, particularly in terms of the distribution of decision-making power, participation is encouraged; freedom of expression and sense of justice and fairness prevail in order to help to produce citizens who are fully capable of functioning in a democratic state (Mncube, 2008). Democratic citizenship requires ‘double democratisation’ of education (micro) and society (macro) (Davies et al., 2002). Mncube (2008) argues that a more democratic development of society requires a democratic system of education; conversely without a more democratic system of education, the development of a democratic society is not likely to occur. Figure 2.2 shows that institutionalising democracy at the micro levels will have internal impact such as school improvement and will also have a major impact at the national level where national development will be imminent.

Figure 2.2 The impact of democracy in schools



How far are Ghanaian basic schools developing democratic values and ethos among their citizens and the future generation? Gitonga (1987) contends that:

Other things being equal, the amount or degree of democracy in any given society is directly proportional to the degree of acculturation of the people in democratic values, attitudes and beliefs. For democracy to exist, survive and prosper, it requires that the people be bathed in and drenched with the democratic ethos (p22).

This thesis limits its scope to the formal education sectors or the schooling system, with some focus on teacher training. Southern African countries like Botswana, Namibia, and the Republic of South Africa are examples of countries that embarked on various education reforms to promote democracy after the collapse of the authoritarian regimes. Harber (1998) argues that in South Africa there was the need for such reforms because:

Under apartheid, schooling aimed to create a compliant citizenry that would accept its lot in life, whether this meant whites not questioning the injustice of their privileged and protected position or Africans accepting the inevitability of their separate and second-rate provision (p18).

As South Africa has attempted to do, there is a need for young democracies in other parts of Africa to adopt models of democratic education that might help to fight some of its predicaments. To what extent then, is education for democracy present in Ghanaian education policy?

2.7 Overview of the Ghana Education System and the Policy Rhetoric on Democracy

The only form of society which facilitates the continued evolution of human species is a democratic form of society and furthermore the development of such a society is dependent to a large degree on the democratisation of schools and schooling (Dewey in Meighan, 1994:101).

Dewey hits the nail on the head because, one could argue, proper national development is only possible in a democratic environment (Touraine, 1997). This is because, as argued by Sen (1999), in democratic societies people are given opportunities to contribute to the discussions on national development. Hence, the assertion shows how significant it is for Ghana to democratise its educational system in order to develop its young democracy. The history of education in Ghana dates back to 1592. Over the centuries education has had different goals, from spreading the Gospel to creating an elite group to run the colony. Since Ghana gained its independence in 1957 the education system, then modelled on the British system, has undergone a series of reforms. The reforms in the 1980s in particular geared the education system away from the purely academic to be more in tune with the nation's manpower needs. The present structure of education, which starts at the age of 4 years, consists of: 2 years kindergarten (pre-school), 6 years primary, and 3 years Junior High School, 3 years of Senior High School and 4 years University or courses at other tertiary institutions. The first 11 years form the basic education and are free and compulsory (MoE, 2011).

Ghana is one of the developing countries striving hard to achieve the MDGs through its education system. The Ministry of Education (MoE) affirmed this through their mission statement:

As one of the key sectors contributing to national development, the mission of the Ministry of Education is to provide relevant education to all Ghanaians at all levels irrespective of gender, ethnic, religious and political affiliations (MoE, 2001).

This means that the MoE is to ensure they fulfil the right of every citizen to be educated.

Article 38 of the Ghanaian constitution requires government to provide access to Free

Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) and, depending on resource availability, to Senior Secondary, Technical and Tertiary education and life-long learning. MoE launched FCUBE in September 1995 with the goal of improving access to quality basic education over the 10 years to 2005. Its four broad strategic objectives were to:

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning
- Improve management for efficiency within the education sectors
- Improve access and participation
- Decentralise the education management system

(ESP-MoE, 2003:4)

These objectives equally apply to the whole education sector.

According to the Education Strategic Plan (MoE, 2003), the mission statement takes account of national goals; it underpins the work of the Ministry and its agencies and acts as a foundation for sectorial planning. In fulfilment of this mission, the ministry provides the following services:

- Basic education for all
- Education and training for skill development with emphasis on science, technology and creativity
- Higher education for the development of middle and top level manpower requirements
- Facilities to ensure that all citizens are functionally literate and self-reliant.

In providing these services the ministry is guided by the following values:

1. Quality education
2. Efficient management of resources
3. Accountability and transparency
4. Equity

(MoE, 2001 and MoE, 2003)

The goals for the education sector outlined above do not emphasise democracy per se in achieving them but I think most of the aims and values expressed are underpinned by the basic fundamental principles of democracy. They used some of the discourse of democracy without necessarily making clear links to education for democracy. As indicated by the values of the MoE, equity, accountability and transparency are all relevant to democracy. For example, in order to manage available resources efficiently there is the need for democratic leaders who will involve people in decision-making for greater participation and transparency. Education Sector Review (ESR) in October 2002 provides an education sector "SWOT Analysis" (Strengths-Weakness-Opportunities-Threats) that may be able to help ascertain some of the intentions of the MoE. The table below matched 'strengths' against 'opportunities' that is respectively where they are doing well and the need for improvement.

Table 2.2 SWOT Analysis

<i>STRENGTHS</i>	<i>OPPORTUNITIES</i>
<i>Access to and Participation in Education and Training</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>General increase in physical access: increase in number of pre-school, primary, junior and senior secondary schools</i> • <i>High and increasing enrolment in basic schools</i> • <i>Large reduction in illiteracy achieved 1992-2000 through non-formal education</i> • <i>University enrolment quadrupled in the last decade</i> • <i>High demand for tertiary education</i> • <i>Strong tradition and history of high quality tertiary education provision</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Transform high enrolments into high completion rates</i> • <i>Build on literacy achievements to establish national campaign with the assistance of NGO's, civil societies and mass media to work towards eradicating illiteracy</i> • <i>Extend distance education to improve access for all</i> • <i>Build achievements and performance to extend access to tertiary education</i> • <i>Develop an open university system</i>

<i>Quality of Teaching and Learning</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Distance education programmes to provide further professional training for teachers in service</i> • <i>Higher levels of commitment are being realised in 'untrained teachers' devoted to rural deprived areas</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Extend distance education to improve the quality of teaching staff, and education (to reduce the financial burden that study leave payments place upon the education system)</i> • <i>Use an "OUT-OUT-IN" system whereby such pupil teachers will be provided with in service training during vacations and transferred to teacher training colleges during their last year subject to performance</i> • <i>Use ICT more effectively to promote access to quality education at all levels</i>
<i>Educational Planning and Management</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Generally agreed that community/school partnerships have improved inputs leading to teacher effectiveness and improved pupil performance</i> • <i>Annual consultative panel meetings provide opportunities for meaningful participation of development partners (DP) in the education process</i> • <i>The Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) process is well established and working well at central levels</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Extend these relationships towards community involvement in the operation, management and financing of schools</i> • <i>Extend DP participation to other areas (private sector, community based organisation-CBO, NGO's, faith based organisation-FBO)</i> • <i>Decentralise the MTEF process in line with forthcoming revised Education and Local Government Service Acts with regions acting as 'the arms of the MoE</i>

[Adapted from Education Sector SWOT Analysis, building on the findings of current education sector reviews, reports and the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS)-MoE, 2003: 8].

This table presents a range of issues that are not specifically democratic education but there are several issues that can be linked to education for democracy. Among these are: greater access to education for individuals at all levels, participation of stakeholders and development partners in the education sector, community and school relationships, and decentralisation of education management and planning. These issues raised here can be linked to the fundamental democratic principle of 'equity' and 'participation'. The three

headings provided in the SWOT analysis table form part of the ten policy goals for the MoE. Although these policies exist in the operational goals of the MoE, they are not there specifically to promote education for democracy but the overall aim of national development. In all the documents that were analysed, education for democracy was not directly mentioned in any of them.

Regardless of policy rhetoric the education system in Ghana is still run from the top to bottom in a centralised approach where a national curriculum is prescribed for teachers. Here, most teachers are not consulted on what goes into the various syllabuses and at the end of some specific years they have to complete teaching them in order for the pupils to sit national examinations. Teachers' performances are judged without taking into consideration the kind of conditions and environments in which they teach. This, in my view, has resulted in the continuous use of rote learning in many schools. Fisher et al. (2000) point out that schools and colleges often emphasise acquiring knowledge in order to permit success in examinations rather than for wider purposes. At the moment education in Ghana seems to be doing little to deepen, and sustain democracy in Ghana. I therefore, propose a policy that promotes education for democracy for more democratic citizenship in basic schools and teacher education institutions.

2.8 Education for Democracy

The increasing global trend towards democratisation of many governments means that education needs to play a greater role in creating a political culture composed of values and behaviours which are more supportive of democratic political institutions (Harber

and Trafford, 1999). There are now a great deal of international and comparative studies on democratic education (for present purposes schooling), which incorporate the many arguments supporting it (Mncube and Harber, 2010; Mncube, 2008; Davies et al., 2002; Harber, 1997; Schweisfurth et al., 2002). However, studies on democratic education which focus on Sub-Saharan African countries are still relatively few and this study contributes towards filling that gap. While democratic education could be described in many ways, Meighan (2005:37) starts with something that discussion can be generated from. He says:

In democratic education, the learners as a group have the power to make some, most, or even all of the key decisions, since power is shared and not appropriated in advance by a minority of one or more.

He, however, noted that such forms of educational practice are not common even in many democratic countries and often meet with sustained, hostile and irrational opposition. However, there is a great deal of evidence-based research that highlights the benefit of democratic education. There are two particularly relevant arguments supporting more democratic forms of schooling. The first is that this helps to create a more democratic society and the second argument is that more democratic organisation leads to better quality and more effective schools (Mncube and Harber, 2010).

Democratic governance continues to spread among nations and therefore policy makers on education and educational researchers should strive forward in promoting democracy in schools. Rudduck and Fielding (2006) point out that democracy in education is primarily about preparing students for their roles as future citizens. Hart (1992) argues that a nation is democratic to the extent that its citizens participate in decision-making at

the community level. The confidence and competence to be involved must be gradually acquired through practice. It is for this reason that there should be gradually increasing opportunities for children to participate in any aspiring democracy, and particularly in those nations already convinced that they are democratic. Harber (1998) argues that democratic values are learned behaviour and as such, formal education must play a role in their development. Alderson (2000) further argues that babies learn to talk by being spoken to as if they already understand; children become members of democratic societies through practical involvement and experience. There is available research evidence which suggests that learners' behaviour is influenced by the kind of training and learning experiences they go through (Harber, 1995; Harber, 2002; WHO, 1997; Meighan, 1994).

Citizens of a living democracy are not born. We learn the acts of democracy just as we learn sports, history or reading. We learn by experience and by training (Harber, 1995:9).

Reflecting on Harber's statement above, this study begins with the assumption that democracy should be promoted through schooling systems where children will acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes and use them in their societies. Davies suggests that:

If the aims of the school are to turn out active citizens who will participate in the local and state political process, then we know enough about the learning process to state that pupils will learn democracy best by doing it. Lessons on the 'political system' will not have as much effect on actual behaviour as participating in the micropolitical system of the school (Davies, 1994: 46).

I agree with the statement here by Davies but the question is how many government policies on education acknowledge this? Sometimes there may be a mission statement on education by a government that spells out this vision, but the realities on the ground may be different as teachers work hard to meet governmental targets on examinations and the

league tables based on them. According to Schweisfurth (2002), schooling has a potentially powerful role to play in the development of democratic citizenship. Apart from a greater emphasis on education for democracy within the curriculum, a key element will be learning through experience of democracy in general running of the school. Alderson (2000:131) argues that democracy is beyond a set of abstract ideas, citizens of democracy are involved in activities of strong feelings about how to share actions, resources and power fairly or unfairly, through bodies and relationships by playing and labouring together, creating and celebrating, fighting or negotiating, campaigning, organising elections and struggling towards resolutions within intricate emotional encounters. The process of democratization requires the learning of new roles and skills for all concerned. For example, all would need to learn the skills and courtesies of debating matters openly and frankly with mutual respect, to learn proper time keeping in meetings and to judge when discussion of a relatively unimportant matter became a waste of time (Mncube and Harber, 2010).

There is also considerable empirical evidence that links more democratic forms of practice with more effective schools and improved learning outcomes in Europe, America and Africa (Cox et al., 2010; Flutter and Rudduck, 2004; Harber and Davies, 1997). Harber (2010) argues that despite the popularity of research on pupils' views on schooling and the benefits of democratic schooling, genuine pupil participation in serious decision-making is relatively unusual internationally. He points out the existence of a considerable literature that pays attention to democratic education and also evidence that listening to pupils, encouraging their participation and giving more power and

responsibility (that is greater democratisation) can enhance school effectiveness and therefore facilitate school improvement. Harber further contends that the effective school culture includes many of the core values and principles associated with democracy, such as tolerance and respect for others, participating and expressing views, sharing and disseminating knowledge, valuing equity and equality and the opportunity for students to make judgements and choices (Harber, 2010; Harber, 1997). There have been examples of studies that confirm a democratic school structure is more likely to improve schools in a range of outcomes which are both conventional (e.g. examination results) and less conventional (e.g. non-violence) (Harber and Trafford, 1999).

According to Harber and Trafford (1999) a process of democratisation in two schools, one in England and the other in South Africa, resulted in a success as both schools had a noted improvement in terms of examination results and school climate. In Wolverhampton Grammar School (England), a newly appointed headteacher began the process of democratization from a concern about under performance in examinations and in this regard it seems to have been a success. In the process, however, there have been other improvements in the school climate and interpersonal relationships. In particular, the increasing acceptance of rights as well as duties seems to have fostered a greater awareness of issues of equity and mutual respect within the school and on a daily basis issues of rights and mutual respect began to seem more important than examination results. Similar evidence emerged when the situation was replicated in Grosvenor Girls High School (Durban). They created a more ordered environment where everybody involved was encouraged to put their point of view, there was good communication and

the school was 'like a family'. Elected pupils felt that they had learned a lot personally from the experience, in terms of patience, interpersonal skills, organizational skills and the ability to summarize and bring together a range of ideas in order to solve a particular problem (Harber and Trafford, 1999).

Harber and Muthukrishna (2000) in their study of school improvement and effectiveness in three schools in the greater Durban area of Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa, demonstrate a good example of how creating a democratic environment in schools will improve the quality of learning outcomes and behaviour for both students and teachers. They contended that all three schools involved in the study exhibited an orderly, purposeful and calm atmosphere with clean premises and business-like behaviour. Teachers and students were in their classrooms when they were supposed to be and learners experienced a full day's planned curriculum activities every day. Harber and Muthukrishna also point out that the schools were exciting, in that they went beyond the minimum possible level of indicators for functional school effectiveness in their readiness to embrace change in their commitment to implementing a new educational ideology aimed at fostering non-violent and democratic societies. What purposeful and effective democratisation of schooling brings appears to be universal. For example, an empirical study of the practice of pupil democracy in Denmark, Holland, Sweden and Germany (Davies and Kirkpatrick, 2000:82) concluded that 'when pupils had a voice and were accorded value, the school was a happier place; where pupils are happy and given dignity, they attend more and they work more productively'. The following comment by

a school principal in Malmo when asked about school democracy within the Swedish law provides us with an example of how happy they are with the whole concept:

This is a good system and we're very proud of it. So are my parents and their parents before. We've had a tradition in human rights, in labour rights and social democracy. It is very strong for teachers in schools... developing forms of relationships in this in mind of democracy. It's a good country to help them (pupils) learn democracy (Davies and Kirkpatrick, 2000:17).

Awareness of democratic education and what it aims for should be clearly defined in the context of schools and their curriculum, so that we can identify what is not democratic education. MacBeath (2004:22) argues that:

teaching about democracy cannot be, therefore, some theoretical or abstract notion. It can only be grasped when we are mindful of its immediate and long-term relevance to children's, young people's, teachers' and parents' experience of the world as they know it.

According to Aspin (1995) there is a situation where subjects like 'Social Studies' and 'Citizenship Education' are placed in the national curriculum to teach students about their roles in society and how democratic governments function. Aspin argues that this cannot be termed as education for democracy as it is tantamount to indoctrination. To try to educate for democracy by teaching and giving instruction in democratic rules and behaviour is in quite a decided sense, to fail to educate but to indoctrinate. Therefore to try to indoctrinate our young for democracy is to make them unfit as citizens for a democratic society. Hart (1992) argued that many western nations think of themselves as having achieved complete democracy, though they teach the principles of democracy in a pedantic way in classrooms which are themselves models of autocracy and therefore not acceptable. For example, Hart expressed the opinion that in democratic nations like the USA, democracy is generally taught in an abstract and largely historical manner. Courses

on Citizenship or Social Studies need, therefore, themselves to be taught and learnt in a more democratic manner.

Teaching for democracy is a problematic notion in its assumptions about the wider society and in schools since for some students the school may be more a democratic place than in the society in which they find themselves thereafter, or vice versa can also be true (MacBeath, 2004). Hart (1992:7) therefore advocates a holistic approach for education for democracy as schools involve communities and parents in their projects. The aim should be to encourage the participation of the whole family, as the child's freedom of expression and participation in community issues may often be contrary to the childrearing attitudes of the parents.

This is also true for teachers when all their life as students, teacher trainees and even in their teaching experience they have witnessed authoritarian systems of education. For democratic learning to become reality, teachers need to learn more about democracy, democratic attitudes and democratic decision-making in their teacher education (Ekholm, 2004). Democratic education should focus on creating a more democratic and equitable society. The school should become a more democratic space, permitting the development of autonomous citizens with problem solving and critical thinking abilities (Tarrow, Ghosh and Elizondo, 2000).

2.9 Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter various conceptions of democracy were discussed. It has been argued that democracy is often defined as government by the people, but it includes a body of principles, ideals and values which are constantly expanding in scope. Although different cultures have different meanings and interpretations of democracy, there are a set of universal and fundamental principles; rights, participation, equity and informed choice that should form an integral part of every democracy. Classical and contemporary models of democracies were also discussed. The contemporary conception of democracy has been popular in many developed and developing nations. However, the ideals of classical democracies like authoritarian states thrive on political ignorance and apathy of the masses as essential stability and therefore make little effort toward political education or consciousness (Carr and Hartnett, 1996). Sen (1999) and UNDP, in their various Human Development Reports, have argued democracy is a form of development. The UNDP, influenced by Sen's theory, recommended that policies that can help countries out of poverty include promotion of democratic governance, human rights, social justice and the well being of people.

Many African countries have returned to democratic governance since the end of the cold war but have failed to promote education for democratic citizenship in the formal education system. The Republic of South Africa is an exception in terms of promoting pupils' participation and democracy in schools (Hunt, 2011; Mncube and Harber, 2010; Mncube, 2008). The South African Schools Act 1996 states that all secondary schools must have an elected representative council of learners, which must itself elect students

onto the school governing body where they participate as full members. The Act further states that all schools must have a school governing body which includes parents, teachers, learners and non-teaching staff (Carter et al., 2003).

Ghana has been arguably a good example of democratic governance recently in sub-Saharan Africa. However, a review of the education policy in Ghana indicates that little has been done to promote democratic practices in the formal education system. This study will help inform policy and practice with regards to pupils' voice and towards a democratic participation on matters that affect children in school. Finally, it has been argued throughout the chapter that the development of democratic governance globally requires schools to educate for democratic global citizenship. The next chapter explores the literature on how pupils' views are important for school improvement.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW: PUPILS' VOICE, SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPROVEMENT

3.1 Introduction

What are the views of pupils on schooling? How could we solicit the views of pupils in the process of school effectiveness and improvement? These are the sort of questions to explore in the available literature in relation to the first research question.

3.2 Pupils' Views on Schooling

Pupils are often considered to be the key stakeholders in education, however rarely are their voices seriously taken into account in policies devised to improve teaching, learning and achievement (Wood, 2003):

In a climate that respects the market and the consumer it is strange that pupils in school have not been seen as consumers worth consulting. We need to understand more about why we haven't taken account of the views of pupils and why the situation is now beginning to change (Rudduck and Flutter, 2000:75).

Pupils have a lot of interesting ideas about their schools and sometimes I wonder why adults disregard their opinion. They seem to be aware of their position in society and adult perceptions of them and therefore have developed their own way of dealing with it. Rudduck and Flutter (2000) point out that the legacy of public perceptions of childhood has made it difficult recently for people to take seriously the idea of encouraging young people to contribute to debates about things that affect them both in school and out of school. There has been increased recognition within the research and policy communities that children are not invisible, but social actors involved in the construction and

negotiation of social order (Burke and Grosvenor, 2003). Mayall (2000) argues that there is overwhelming evidence that children as social actors still feel controlled by adults and their views are not being heard. Burke and Grosvenor (2003) contend that the school is the first environment after home with which children identify and are socialised into. Schools act as a setting, a source for formal and informal learning experiences, where children learn to be members of a group to engage in social discourse and relations, and to adapt to more formal kinds of trust and rights than experienced in the home. Schooling represents an ordered passage from childhood to adulthood within this social institution of 'intimate strangers', adults in the minority but acting on behalf of parents, control and regulate the activity of the majority, children. In the modern world where we espouse democratic governance, it is duly unfair for the minority to take decisions without consulting the majority. It is therefore vital to explore what school experiences mean to pupils and how they want their schools to be.

Having realised pupils' viewpoints are invariably absent from education policies and the way schools are run, in December 1967, *The Observer* organised a competition for secondary school children in Britain. They were invited to write essays on 'The School That I'd Like' of which the response amounted to some half a million words of different kinds of presentation from pupils on the topic. Blishen (1969) published a selection of entries from the essays which represented the views of British secondary school pupils on schooling in the late 1960s. Blishen (1969) remarked that the essays were full of complaints and criticisms that made him reflect on schools as the image of prison over and over again. 'We imprison the courage and the curiosity of our children' (p14). Pupils

were fed up with the daily routines of schooling and wanted a greater degree of flexibility and a pedagogy that would help them to explore and find things for themselves. Many pupils were against the subjects and the timetables and felt that education should show individuals how to make a living in society.

There are other key themes that emerge from Blishen's study but here are some examples and pupils' views on them: Examination came under fire and was seen as the root of all evil jeopardising pupil-teacher relationships and promoting teacher-centred classrooms. One other theme that emerged from the pupils' views was pupil-teacher relationships of which there were many complaints levelled at teachers. There were constant criticisms of teachers as insulting, rude, cruel and impatient with little time for the opinions of their pupils. There were many contributions on how pupils wanted their teachers to be. Blishen (1969) points out qualities the children wish their teachers had. They should be understanding, patient, should encourage and praise wherever possible; should listen to their pupils, and give their pupils a chance to speak; be open to criticism, be humble, kind, capable of informality, and simply pleasant; should share more activities with their children than they commonly do, and should not expect all children to be always passive recipients of knowledge. They should have a conscience about the captive nature of their audience; should attempt to establish links with parents; should be punctual for lessons; enthusiastic within reason; should not desert a school lightly; should recognise the importance to a child of being allowed to take initiative in school work; and above all should be warm and personal (p131).

One of the issues captured in Blishen (1969) was pupils' negative views about corporal punishment. This might not be relevant in contemporary British society, or many western countries, but still remains an issue in developing countries especially in Africa. The views include the following:

... I object to corporal punishment, but even more to the casual clouts handed out for reasons as unfair as a teacher's anxiety or for a pupil just not understanding. Corporal punishment is brutal and degrading. We boys are thinking, often mature, human beings. I have seen a teacher hit a boy hard and say, 'Don't bully!' – it will only make him bully more. The learning induced by it will be quickly forgotten, and the subjects hated evermore. Moreover, with better-adjusted teachers we become unmanageable as a sort of recompense, and they, too, may resort to corporal punishment. It also produces senseless flouting of school rules... (S. 15; Blishen, 1969:17).

As with Blishen, the Nelson Mandela Foundation (2005) found corporal punishment to be a major bone of contention amongst parents, teachers and learners in rural South Africa. Many principals, teachers and parents see corporal punishment as a normal way to discipline children when all other methods fail. Although it is against the law in South Africa, it was clear from their interviews and other sources that caning still takes place in schools. One pupil researcher wrote about the level of abuse in their school thus:

We have explained earlier that they are cruel and they beat us up, to such an extent that we fail to think, and we lose the desire to learn. ...When testing time comes, we write and fail the test and we get the stick once more, because the only thing they know is to beat us up with the stick. The manner in which they teach us is full of ruthlessness. They rush us when they want an answer. They don't give us time to think. They also call us names, they use your body defects to call you and no one enjoys being called by what he is. Those things are embarrassing, and you can't concentrate, and each time an educator comes in, you know that you are going to be heartbroken. I think that as learners, we do have rights to ask if there is anything we didn't get quite well (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005:118).

These instances are common elsewhere in Africa and from my experience as a teacher in Ghana, whenever I used the cane on pupils I thought it was meant well for them. If I

knew how they felt then it would have changed my perception on corporal punishment. The Nelson Mandela Foundation (2005) as with Blishen (1969), and despite over three decades between the two studies, found that pupils in rural South Africa made many complaints about their teachers, although they had a positive attitude toward schooling. The following is an example:

In my opinion, for our school to be better we need to know what our goal is. Is it to become professionals like teachers and nurses or is it to stay at home and do no good? This school will never improve because teachers here do not know how to teach. Grade 7 learners still do not know how to speak English well. You cannot know something that you have never been taught. We need new teachers in Manyoni. All the current ones must leave because I do not know what they are doing. The only thing they know is how to beat us. (Grade 6 learner at Manyoni Primary School, KwaZulu-Natal – Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005:21).

From these statements, pupils often perceived there were better teachers somewhere, yet the behaviour of teachers is yet to see a serious change in consonance with such research findings whether in Africa or elsewhere. In Ghana there is a similar situation on corporal punishment where the Ghana Education Service has partially banned caning. Only head teachers can administer the cane for serious offences or they can delegate that duty to the deputy head or any senior teacher (Agbenyega, 2006). However, many teachers often disregard this rule and still resort to frequent use of the cane. This was a student's view in a study of basic schools in Greater Accra district in Ghana:

Interviewer: Do teachers in this school cane students during teaching and learning periods?

Respondent: Yes, they punish us when we go against the school rules.if we talk in class, fight or do not learn hard or get some of our sums wrong... They can use the cane on your back or buttocks and sometimes on your fingers... Sometimes you are asked to leave the class to weed on the field while your friends are still learning... They can ask you to kneel down at the front of the class or at the back and raise your hands... Your hands become tired but they will not let you go until they are sure you are tired.

Interviewer: So what do you think of the teachers?

Respondent: I hate some of the teachers because of how they cane... They cane any part of your body they see, your head, your leg, the back of your neck and.... The teachers teach us but they always frighten us with the cane... If they do not want to cane you they will send you outside to go and weed or clean the gutters, school toilet or urinal.

Interviewer: Are girls exempted from the caning?

Respondent: Our teachers do not know who is a girl or boy when it comes to caning...we are all caned the same way. They will hold your dress on you tight and then give it to you... Sometimes your underpants show and your friends will laugh at you...I do not like this and I want to stop school but my parents will beat me and send me back to school...They will even ask the teacher to beat you again if you do not go to school...Some students fear the cane and if they hear that they will be caned the next day they will not come to school (Agbenyega, 2006:116).

This kind of situation is illegal and a very serious and dangerous practice in Ghanaian basic schools. Pupils usually form the habit of getting used to it rather than complain, because nobody will do anything unless these beatings result in severe physical injury, and then parents can sometimes pick the matter up with the authorities.

Burke and Grosvenor (2003) provided an update of Blishen's (1969) work on pupils' views about 'The School That I'd Like'. This time the competition was organised in Britain by *The Guardian* of which about fifteen thousand pupils aged 5 to 18 responded. These pupils presented ideas on how they wanted their schools to be. The majority of entries to 'The school I'd like' 2001 competition mentioned the outside environment of the school and most found it wanting. They wanted to feel proud of their school but many felt embarrassed by their surroundings. Pupils wanted beautiful schools - full of light, airy, with spacious ambience and brightly coloured walls (Burke and Grosvenor, 2003; Rudduck and Flutter, 2004). According to Burke and Grosvenor (2003) children stated clearly in their words and in their design that they wanted more space in their school yards and playgrounds but they also wanted the space to be filled with things: 'objects,

mazes, ponds, swings, gardens, slides and swimming pools' (p45). According to the Nelson Mandela Foundation (2005), pupils in Africa expressed similar sentiments; they wanted better schools with adequate resources and facilities. They needed new classroom blocks, painted old buildings and a beautiful environment with trees and flowers; better toilet facilities, electricity and water supply. The issue of under-developed infrastructure is very serious in Africa, as pupils complain about their cracked buildings and roofing of which they are so scared during heavy rains and thunderstorms.

In terms of what pupils learn at school, children and young people in the competition perceived the curriculum in schools to be too limited and inflexible, restricting their chances of drawing effectively from knowledge and skills later in life (Burke and Grosvenor, 2003). Pupils wanted flexible schooling where you would have time to finish things you were interested in instead of stopping when the bell goes and where opportunities would be provided to do lots of projects and work on real-life problems. A pupil had this fascinating idea about the kind of learning and curriculum the school should offer:

In my ideal school, the whole philosophy that dominates schools now will be dropped. It will be somewhere thriving with different personalities and gifts, where these things can be developed and used to help everyone else. We will no longer be treated as herds of an identical animal waiting to be civilised before we are let loose on the world. It will be recognised that it is our world too. We will cease to be thought of as useless vessels waiting in disciplined conditions to be filled with our quota of information, just so we can regurgitate it all in exams so that our school looks good in the league tables. We will be thought of as individual people. (Miriam, 15, Reading in Burke and Grosvenor, 2003: 63).

These were similar views to those expressed by pupils in Blishen's study, and it would be interesting to know the reaction of adults now, who shared the same views in 1969 when

they were younger, and whether their perceptions have changed. However, the current policy makers in education were children of the past and despite the growing interest in pupils' voice, its impact on policy and practice remains considerably low.

Sherman (1996) in her study of young children's experiences during their first year of schooling proves beyond doubt that pupils should not be underestimated. Sherman argued that whatever school is to us (adults), school can only belong to the children if we listen to their perspectives. Children have a great deal to offer and we must insist that children's views be heard so that this exploration of their opinion can take place. In Sherman's (1996) study, five year old children were able to articulate their views on why they go to school, what they learn at school, rules and routines at school and the role of the teacher and many others. Some of the reasons children stated as to why they go to school were:

When we grow up we need to have some way of getting pennies and so we need to go to school to find out how to do it.

We need to go to school to do some learning and working and if we don't do that then we will never get to bigger school.

Because I need to do work and find out how to do work and then I'll be able to go to the proper work.

(Sherman, 1996:1)

These statements show that children in their early years foundation stage are aware of the purpose of schooling and link them with their future success as adults. They also made statements to the fact that without schooling 'we would be dumb', 'not know how to write', 'not do our numbers', 'not get any money', 'not be able to be a lollipop lady', or 'not be very clever' (p2).

Sherman points out that in this case, the children involved in the study had been in school for just three months and if they could describe these virtues of education, they might have acquired this knowledge through what their parents or older siblings do. If teachers listen to children's views and are aware of their perceptions on schooling, it could help them provide a programme that would achieve the same purpose of schooling which both adults and pupils share.

According to Sherman (1996) children were able to distinguish between what was work and play in their gruelling schedule in a school. What pupils enjoyed most in school included 'playing outside; the Jurassic park launches; when we get to choose; my teacher; seeing my friends' (p34). Pupils were aware of how to make their teacher happy by working hard. Even reception class pupils were bold enough to tell the researcher what they disliked about their school and able to suggest how to improve it. Some children did not like their school because '...the day's too long'; 'I get too hot'; '... they don't have many plays' (p35) and therefore need more play time. Other children complained of pupils hitting and being scared of teachers shouting and suggested that they liked happy teachers.

A study of primary school children in Ireland found that pupils recognised themselves as the most important in the school because they were the basis for the existence of the school and without them there would be no work for teachers (Devine, 2003). As one pupil put it:

We are important to the school cos if there were no children there would be no school ... we're actually more important than the principal cos if we weren't here he would have no work (Grade 5 boy Hillview: Devine, 2003:13).

Devine (2003) points out that pupils generally were of the view that they were not being treated fairly by teachers because they had not been given a voice in what happened in the school.

Rudduck and Flutter (2000) argue that pupils are observant and have rich but untapped understanding of processes and events; ironically, they often use their insights to devise ways for avoiding learning, a practice which can retard their progress over time. We therefore need to find strategies of harnessing pupils' insights in support of their learning. Pupils' accounts of their experiences of being in school can lead to changes that enable them to feel a stronger sense of commitment to the school and the task of learning that can be very productive in pupil attainment. While we often blame pupils for their unruly behaviour in school, adults might have got something wrong then because these children are so innocent and willing to learn in the early years in school. According to Devine (2003), although children wanted to have fun in schools many of them supported school rules. Pupils expressed the view that rules were there for 'self-control' and protection and therefore it would be dangerous not to have them as children would end up in hospital or would be battering the teachers and having fun.

In a study of pupils' experiences from their transition to secondary schools after primary schooling in the UK, year 8 pupils were able to give an insight of their first year in secondary school which more often than not compared primary schooling to secondary

schooling (Rudduck, 1996). Rudduck (1996) contends that problems with transition from primary school to secondary school were inevitable in a sense, as pupils have their own expectations and fears about change. However, after one year in secondary school most pupils seemed to enjoy some of the freedom and benefits that came with it and had these views on primary schools:

You're not tied to one teacher all the time. That's what made lower (i.e. primary) school a bit boring when you had got the same teacher all the time. (Y8, F) (p22).

It's better now. You can go round different lessons. It's more interesting, isn't it. Used to be just sat in one classroom like, listening to one teacher blabbering on about one thing all the time. 'Right. Now we're going to do some English, now we're going to do some maths, now we're going to do some painting'. Used to be boring. (Y8: F) (P: 23).

What appealed to pupils most were the greater flexibility and variety of choices available in secondary schools. Among them were varieties of teachers, lessons apart, to do what they liked during breaks, as well as many sporting activities like trampolining, badminton and football after school. Pupils were of the view that the amount of work had significantly increased in secondary school, with more subjects and homework and failure to attend school regularly could have the terrible repercussion of being left behind.

While pupils enjoy greater responsibility and the adult-like feel in the early years of secondary school, their perception is likely to change a few years later. According to a survey, pupils in Australian high schools repeatedly pointed out that their joy of learning seemed destined to wither in the face of Grade 11 and 12 testing and preparation for college entrance examination (Mitra and Gross, 2009). Pupils in the UK share the same sentiment as the pressure is mounting on year 10 and 11 for coursework, revision and

examination. According to Rudduck (1996) most of the pupils they interviewed wanted to do well in year 11 in order to gain qualifications but had to try hard to manage the demands of their school work, home and social life. The following comments are apt here:

The only time I see my friends out of school is Friday night... basically I have no life and I often think there is no point in carrying on because life is so boring...I'm not too worried about doing my exams but the amount of work involved now is too much and I'm finding it hard to cope. (Y11, F)

I don't think the teachers understand. They all presume that there is nothing else for you to do except their subject. They don't realise there are 11 other subjects from which you also get the same enormous amount of work. (Y11, M).

(Rudduck, 1996:135).

Some of the pupils did show maturity and capability of handling their own affairs by the way they managed their workload. One stated:

I have a strict programme of homework and revision. At 7.00 pm every Monday to Thursday nights I do one and a half hours... On Friday I do one hour as soon as I get home from school and then I do not do anything all day Saturdays or Sundays...This routine means that my school work does not interfere at all with my private life. (Y11, M) (Rudduck, 1996:136).

Making these pupils' views known would be useful to teachers as well as other students who are struggling with managing their workload in both school and at home.

Rudduck and Fielding (2006) point out that the idea of teachers and pupils discussing their work together can generate much anxiety and at first teachers are likely to be anxious about what students might say about them. However, many research studies that seek pupils' views on schooling do indicate that pupils love teachers who are good at their work and treat children very well (Rudduck et al., 1996). Wallace (1996) in a secondary school project indicated that pupils described their ideal teacher as the one

who would consult them, make them feel important and treat them in an adult way. As one put it:

The nicest teachers... treat you like you should be treated, not like a child or unimportant. They treat you like everybody else. They are a lot more close to us than any other teachers. (Y8, F; P: 31)

Pupils seemed to suggest they hate teachers who use tactics like verbal abuse in order to get their attention and promise that such tactics will never work as they are ready to respond positively to teachers that are good to them. While pupils prefer 'nice' teachers they however recognise the power and authority vested in teachers and therefore want teachers that can control and manage their class effectively (Wallace, 1996). In *The School That I'd Like* competition some pupils suggested a very important point where students might get a chance in helping to choose teachers and assessing them.

A book by Kathleen Cushman (2003) on pupils' views of schooling in America was entitled *Fires in the Bathroom*, which signifies the extent students will go to in setting fire to the bathroom waste basket. Pupils were of the view that respect, trust and fairness would lay the foundation for better schooling. Cushman (2003) contends that pupils' insight can help teachers break through the barriers of adolescent culture to transform classroom confrontations for control into partnerships of mutual understanding. Young people's advice for good teachers was that students are willing to pay attention, work hard and behave responsibly if teachers know and care about their material and treat kids with respect and fairness. It is an undeniable fact that pupils have many ideas about schooling. However, while there is growing interest in pupils' voice, what is yet to be seen is using these voices to transform the image of schooling in the twenty-first century.

If schools are to be successful vehicles for learning in the twenty-first century, it is vital that pupils are involved in determining their nature, design, organisation, ethos and use, or even if they are needed at all (Burke and Grosvenor, 2003).

For all too often, adults in education have shown complete disregard for pupils as discussed earlier on; they are clay to be moulded, if you give pupils a chance to comment there will be chaos, let them do what we wish for them. However, having explored pupils' views on schooling these have shown that they are aware of the hidden agendas. Pupils, even as young as five years, recognise the main aim of schooling is getting a better job in the future and acquiring skills and knowledge for life. However, it is evidently clear that they are fed up with rigid routines in schools and the pressure of examination and testing, and pupils are unhappy about the way that some teachers treat them. They are fully aware of the status quo and do not want to undermine it but, at the very least, they want in their school teachers someone that can understand them and treat them respectfully in their own rights. Pupils generally complained of all forms of abuse from verbal assault to corporal punishments which exist in schooling in many nations. Pupils also demonstrated that they are not just about complaining but have ideas that when listened to, their schools will be better places for teaching and learning. The next section explores school effectiveness and improvement research and how pupils' voice could be used for school improvement.

3.3 School Effectiveness and Improvement Research

School effectiveness as research paradigm is based on the measurement of outcomes and quantifying differences between schools. The main aim of school effectiveness research is to judge whether differences in resources, processes and organisational structures affect pupil outcomes and if so, in what way (Harris, 2001: 8). Harris (2001) points out that effective schools are structurally, symbolically and culturally more tightly linked than less effective ones and therefore operate more as an organic whole. This has therefore led to many school improvement programmes that focussed on promoting structural and cultural change in schools (Hopkins and Harris, 1997; Harris and Hopkins, 2000). The school effectiveness literature takes the outcomes of schooling as limited and measurable whilst school improvement is more concerned with internal change processes (Hopkins et al., 1994; Fidler, 2001). Hopkins et al. (1994) further argue that while school effectiveness and school improvement research are different in their core concepts, beliefs and theoretical orientations, there is evidence that their interests are beginning to merge.

Hopkins et al. (1994) categorised school improvement work as ‘organic’ or mechanistic’. The ‘organic’ work suggests broad principles or general strategies within which schools are likely to flourish while ‘mechanistic’ work provides direct guidelines and is highly specific in the strategies it prescribes. There has been a tremendous growth and interest in school improvement research over the past three decades (Harris, 2002). The emergence of school improvement recently from the shadows has had a powerful effect on education reforms, policy and practice in many western countries (Harris, 2002 and Hopkins, 2005).

According to Harris (2002) there have been many school improvement initiated projects and interventions in the UK and other educational systems as politicians and the wider public expressed concern about educational standards. Some of these changes and interventions were in things like:

...how subjects were organized, how grade levels were clustered together into different school types, or how groups of students were divided between different schools or integrated within them according to ability, gender or race (Hopkins, 2005: Vii).

However Rudduck and Flutter (2004) argue that despite waves of curriculum reforms, schools have not changed as much as we might have expected. Perhaps there is something that the school improvement movement has completely disregarded or failed to take notice of; 'pupils' voice'. Rudduck et al. (1996:3) make the point that it will be useful for those bent on school improvement to start by inviting pupils to talk about what reduces their motivation and engagement and what makes some give up and others settle for minimum risk, minimum position, even though they know that doing well matters.

3.4 Pupils' Voice and School Improvement

While there is growing interest in both pupils' voice and school improvement, it is necessary to put them together and tease out how pupils' voice can be used for school improvement. The focus here is not on the school improvement genre in its entirety, as it is huge, but on defining school improvement and what role pupils can and do have in making their school a better place. Most often than not, pupils' voices are excluded from school improvement work and rarely are pupils given the opportunity to be involved in or informed on school improvement efforts (Harris, 2002). However, there has been a

persistent notion that it is important to listen to the views of pupils in the field of school improvement simply because pupils are the expert witness with something to tell us about their experience (Rudduck et al., 1996 and Fielding, 2001).

According to Hopkins (2005) there are two senses in which the phrase ‘school improvement’ is generally used. He considers the first to be the commonsense meaning which relates to ‘... general efforts to make schools better places for pupils and students to learn’ (p2). The second as follows here, is a more technical sense in which school improvement is used:

School improvement is a distinct approach to educational change that enhances student outcomes as well as strengthening the school's capacity for managing change. School improvement is about raising student achievement through focusing on the teaching-learning process and the conditions which support it. It is about strategies for improving the schools capacity for providing quality education in times of change (pp2-3).

Having this definition in mind, Harris (2002) simply described school improvement as a process of changing school culture. He points out that the school is the centre of change and teachers as an intrinsic part of the process of change (p10). Therefore, teachers need to examine and change their own practice in the process of school improvement. It was also noted that attention should be given to school improvement that focused on changing school culture rather than structures. According to Cuban (1984), despite the infrequent and episodic changes in education by educators in the previous decades, they never really affected or even addressed the core of how teachers taught. The structures of schools largely remain oligarchic, being controlled by the senior teachers, with some input from governors, yet we expect children to develop values for justice and democracy but not to expect it for themselves (Burke and Grosvenor, 2003). It throws into doubt how far

educators are committed to the process of change for which they expect school improvement to occur.

Barth (1990) provides a set of assumptions for school improvement that support the change of school cultures by creating conducive learning and teaching environments that impinge on both external and internal relationships within schools. These assumptions are:

- Schools have the capacity to improve themselves, if the conditions are right. A major responsibility of those outside the school is to help provide these conditions for those inside.
- When the need and purpose is there, when the conditions are right, adults and students alike learn and each energises and contributes to the learning of the other.
- What needs to be improved about schools is their culture, the quality of interpersonal relationships, and the nature and quality of learning experiences.
- School improvement is an effort to determine and provide, from without and within, conditions under which the adults and youngsters who inhabit schools will promote and sustain learning among themselves.

(Barth, 1990: 45)

These assumptions emphasise that young people need to collaborate with adults (teachers) on school improvement projects with outsiders like government, politicians, parents and the wider public helping to create conditions for success and growth in the educational attainment of pupils and job satisfaction for teachers. However, as argued earlier, despite the increase of evidence-based studies that show the contribution that pupil voice can make to school improvement, little is still required of pupils at school level development and change. Rudduck et al. (1996) argues that where pupils get a chance to become active participants in the process of improvement and development the gains are highly significant.

According to Le Riche (1995) politicians, educationalists and taxpayers among others consider it as money well spent if pupils attend school regularly, develop good traits and a sense of good order, while also acquiring confidence, self-discipline and self-respect. Therefore, they are bent on introducing measures that they think will achieve such goals, even in the face of disapproval from both teachers and pupils. They recognise the fact that schools' effort to embark on a change in culture is highly dependent on inter-relationships within schools and that of external agencies is crucial for school improvement. While teachers complain about the lack of their involvement in policy making and curriculum development, pupils complain about how teachers have completely disregarded their views on matters affecting them in school. However, it has been established that listening to the voice of the pupils, their suggestions and criticisms, is one way to improve the quality of life in schools and at the same time help to reduce absenteeism (Le Riche, 1995). Le Riche further argues that schools need to be happy, stimulating, caring places with a community spirit where pupils feel that they can approach school staff without fear.

Rudduck and Flutter (2000) contend that school improvement is about improving the conditions of learning in schools by changing organisation structures, regimes and relationships. Le Riche (1995) argues that there is no point in getting pupils into schools if the conditions are not right. There should be the right atmosphere, relationships, pedagogy and available resources to meet the needs of the pupils. Schools should therefore be places that attract pupils and where they experience a sense of belonging.

There is the need to find ways of harnessing pupils' views in support of their learning.

Perhaps we might begin by asking pupils these significant questions that are rarely asked:

How do you learn best?
What helps you to learn?
What gets in the way of your learning?
Why do you find it more difficult to learn certain things?
Do you learn better through a particular style of teaching?
What encourages you to work harder at your learning?
How do you know if you succeeded in learning something?

(Flutter and Rudduck, 2004: 4)

Flutter and Rudduck further argue that identifying these key questions has profound implications for our efforts at school improvement, for unless we look at experiences of teaching and learning through the eyes of young learners:

We may be wasting our time and energy wrangling with issues that may, from an outside perspective, appear to be real, 'solid' concerns but which are, in fact, illusions (p6).

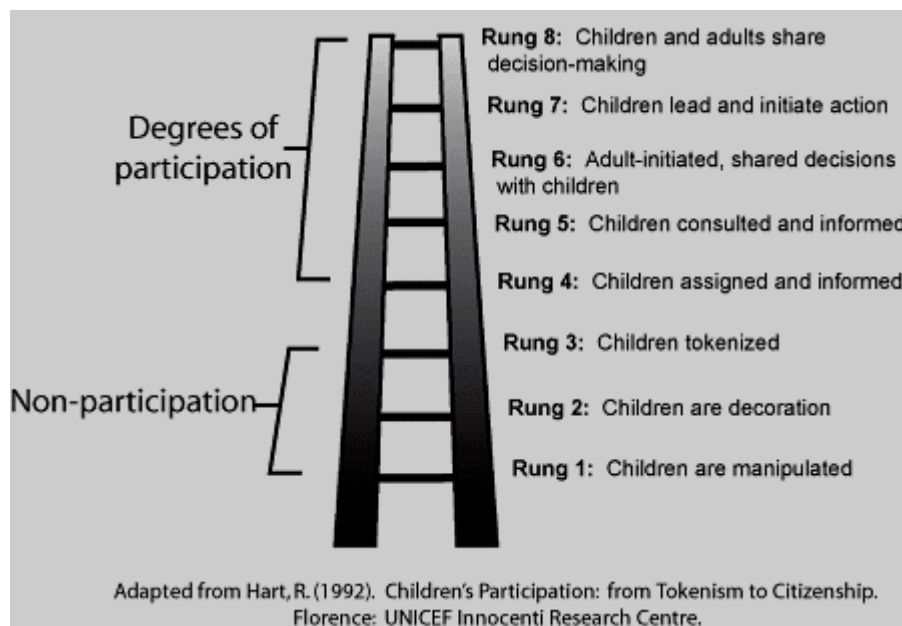
Pupils' accounts of their learning experiences in schools can lead to changes that enable them to feel a stronger sense of commitment to the school and to the task of learning which can lead to higher levels of achievement (Rudduck and Flutter, 2000). While we make an effort to listen to pupils' views, it should not end there; pupils should be given opportunities to actively participate in making their schools better. I therefore move the next discussion towards various types of pupils' voice that encourage student participation or vice versa.

3.5 Typology of Pupils' Voice and Participation

Hart (1992) developed a 'ladder of participation' that widely represents the level of participation of children in their schools (see Figure 3.1). In these levels instances such as manipulation (adults decide what is going to happen and children are asked if they

agree), decoration (adults decide what is going to happen but children take part by performing) and tokenism (adults decide what is going to happen but children are involved in matters of lesser importance), were described as non-participation. Whereas situations where children are informed and consulted, listened to and are allowed to initiate programmes, were described as degrees of participation.

Figure 3.1 Ladder of Participation

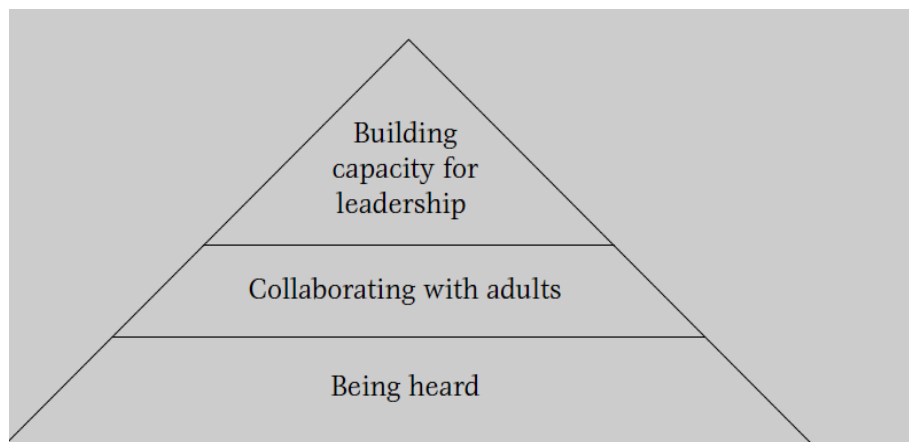


Taking pupil voice seriously is currently popular but Rudduck and Fielding (2006) warned that one of the perils of popularity is 'surface compliance'. Most schools may jump into taking pupils' views on board without thinking through why they want it and how it might suit their overall school development and improvement initiatives. Though they will organise and listen to pupils' views, those views will not be developed to

promote further pupil participation. There are several other frameworks of pupils' voice and participation that have been influenced by Hart's work.

Mitra and Gross (2009) made it simpler by categorising pupils' voice into three parts where institutions will be placed in terms of how they work with and use pupils' views. Figure 3.2 below represents the pyramid of student voice developed by Mitra and Gross.

Figure 3.2 Pyramid of students' voice



(Source: Mitra and Gross, 2009: 523)

The base of the pyramid - 'being heard' - is the most common and most basic form of pupil voice. At this level, teachers or researchers listen to pupils to learn about their experiences in school. Research seeking pupils' opinion on educational change efforts indicates that giving pupils a voice in such reform conversations reminds teachers and administrators that students possess unique knowledge and perspectives about their schools that adults cannot fully replicate without this partnership (Mitra and Gross, 2009). Here, little or no feedback is expected and adults decide on what they will do with the pupils' views. For example, there are a number of studies that solicited pupils' views

on schooling without necessarily doing something about it (Blishen, 1969; Burke and Grosvenor, 2003).

The next level is 'Collaborating with adults'. At this level, pupils work with adults on how to improve their school, including collecting data on school problems and implementing solutions. Mitra and Gross (2009) point out that it is at this level that most of the recent research in developed countries on student voice has been conducted and has led to many academic improvements. There are a number of benefits that this level of pupil voice can produce, creating better conditions for learning in classrooms and thereby strengthening pupil-teacher relationships (Flutter and Ruddock, 2004; Mitsoni, 2006). Mitsoni (2006) argues that children want to carry out projects and present their outcomes to the whole class. Pupils like to discuss things as one girl in the study said: 'I get bored when we don't have the opportunity to say our opinions' (p164). Young people also like to talk about what and how they are learning. Pupils' participation in staff meetings can even change the tone of conversations, including reducing unprofessional behaviour such as openly showing hatred to colleagues (Mitra, 2003).

The final (and smallest) level at the top of the pyramid, 'Building capacity for leadership', is the least common form of student voice and includes an explicit focus on enabling the youth to share in the leadership of the student voice initiative. At this level, students can serve as a source of criticism and protest in schools by questioning issues such as structural and cultural injustices within schools (Mitra and Gross, 2009). According to Mitsoni (2006) one of the principles that students say strengthens their

engagement is being treated as responsible, reliable and important individuals. All students want to be given responsibility and to feel they are being noticed; opportunities for students to teach other students or to share their work with their fellow students are popular: students like the role of the teacher and it is a signal that responsibility is being handed to them. In an interview with American and Australian high school students, Mitra and Gross (2009) recognise a shared sense of frustration among students for not only being largely ignored on school improvement issues but the paradox of the adult world paying little attention to them now but anticipating that they take the reins of a democratic society in the near future. Pupils identify that by listening to their views and allowing them to contribute to their micro-level community such schools go beyond school improvement and help them to acquire skills and knowledge for democratic citizenship in the future. Fielding (2001) argued that providing youth with opportunities to participate in school decision-making that will shape their lives and the lives of their peers, and increasing pupils' voice in schools, offers a way to re-engage students in the school community.

Fielding and Moss (2011), influenced by Hart and their own work, proposed a six-fold typology of student voice work in their *Radical Education and the Common School*:

1. Students as a data source: staff utilise information about student progress and well-being
2. Students as active respondents: staff invite student dialogue and discussion to deepen learning/professional decisions
3. Students as co-enquirers: staff take lead role with high-profile, active student support
4. Students as knowledge creators: students take lead role with active staff support

5. Students as joint authors: students and staff decide on joint course of action together
6. Inter-generational learning as participatory democracy: shared commitment to/responsibility for the common good.

(Fielding and Moss, 2011: 75-78)

These frameworks from the first to the sixth will help schools to improve in some ways while preparing pupils for democratic societies. However, these typologies will still remain idealistic for many nations despite students' voice being popular recently. This study seeks to start Ghanaian pupils from the first using the student as a data source to inter generation learning as participatory democracy. The general discourse on student voice is inter-connected with these strands changing views of childhood, human rights, democratic schools, citizenship education through participation, consumerism and a concern for school improvement (Lodge, 2005).

3.6 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter explored the literature on pupils' views on schooling and how these views could be used for school effectiveness and improvement. Pupils' voice research started in Britain more than half a century ago. Blishen (1969) captured the views of British secondary school pupils through 'The School That I'd Like' competition in 1967 organised by *The Observer*. As far back as in the late 1960's, pupils demonstrated that their views were very important for teachers' conduct, professional development and how schools should be organised and buildings decorated. There has been an increase in the popularity of pupils' voice research recently with a repeat of 'The School That I'd Like' competition by *The Guardian* (Burke and Grosvenor, 2003). In this chapter, pupils'

views on schooling have been captured from many empirical studies from different countries; for example Britain, Ireland, America, Australia, South Africa and Ghana (Blishen, 1969; Sherman, 1996; Rudduck et al., 1996; Burke and Grosvenor, 2003; Devine, 2003; Cushman, 2003; Mitra and Gross, 2009; Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005; Agbenyega, 2006). Many of the studies from the developed countries are specifically designed to explore pupils' views on schooling. There are few studies in Africa about pupils' views on schooling and even the examples given above were not particularly designed for pupils' voice but have captured views of pupils on issues like corporal punishment and the poor state of school buildings (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005 and Agbenyega, 2006).

The argument presented in this chapter is that pupils' views are important for school improvement. However, despite the popularity of pupils' voice research, pupils are routinely excluded from decision-making in their schools. There were brief discussions on school effectiveness research and school improvement research. The main interest was the link between pupils' voice and school improvement. There is enough evidence to suggest that when school authorities have genuine interest in pupils' views and are willing to work with them, schools will improve. However, according to the various typologies of pupils' voice, pupils in Ghanaian basic schools cannot be placed at the bottom of the Mitra and Gross (2009) pyramid 'Being heard' because they are rarely listened to. Further, teachers in Ghana do not use pupils' views as data source for their well-being or progress work (Fielding and Moss, 2011). Perhaps the model that will have the best description in the Ghanaian context is Hart's (1992) ladder of participation,

where pupils' voice work could be in the non-participation rungs of the ladder where pupils are manipulated, decorated and tokenised.

This study attempts to link pupil voice to school improvement and at the same time developing democratic education in Ghana. One of the ways to increase the level of pupils' participation is to promote democratic practices in schools. In order for pupils to achieve this through education, teachers should be trained in a democratic way, so that they will have the necessary skills and knowledge to facilitate these desired outcomes. This will be expanded in detail in Chapter Four on teacher education and democracy in schools.

CHAPTER FOUR

LITERATURE REVIEW: TEACHER EDUCATION AND DEMOCRATIC SCHOOLS

4.1 Introduction

There are many kinds of studies that suggest that while democratic education does its best to prepare pupils to be effective citizens of democratic societies, it also goes a long way toward improvement and effectiveness of schools (e.g. Hart, 1992; Harber, 1997, 1997b; Davies et al., 2002; Schweisfurth et al., 2002; Mncube and Harber, 2010; Cox et al., 2010). However, teachers need to be trained democratically before they can also teach democratically in schools. The literature will be reviewed on the role of teacher education for more democratically organised schools while exploring the links between democratic schooling, student participation, school effectiveness and improvement as interconnected strands.

4.2 Democracy and Teacher Education

Teacher education institutions have often been characterised as authoritarian establishments whether in developed or developing countries (Davies et al., 2002). As with schools, power over what is taught and learned, when, where and how it is taught lies with staff and educational authorities rather than students. This, then, has been transmitted into the schools in which teachers are trained to teach. Meighan (2005:9) describes authoritarian education thus:

Authoritarian systems of learning, in their various forms, have one person, or a small group of people, making and implementing the decisions about what to learn, when to learn, how to learn, how to assess learning, and the nature of the imposed learning environment. These decisions are taken in

course planning committees and accreditation boards often long before the learners are recruited as individuals or meet as a group.

Meighan (2005) considers the current model of schooling as ‘bully institutions’ as they are centred on domination. He classified every item from a national curriculum, pedagogy, through to assessment system and inspectorate as bully oriented. The successful pupils of these authoritarian schools grow up to become bullies in dominant authority positions as assertive politicians, teachers, civil servants and other professionals, while the majority of the less successful learn to accept the mentality of the bullied, the compliant and dependent mind-set of people who need someone to tell them what to do (see Figure 5.1 in Chapter Five).

Harber (1997) further argues that teacher education fails to break the cycle of authoritarian schools → authoritarian teacher training → authoritarian teacher → authoritarian schools because there is concurrence between school experience and the structures and processes of teacher education. For instance, there are 41 teacher training colleges in Ghana that train teachers for basic education; all these colleges are boarding institutions. According to Akyeampong and Stephens (2002) the lives of teacher trainees at the teacher training colleges in Ghana are much regimented. They engage in routine college chores such as weeding compounds and fetching water (some colleges do not have pipe-borne water at their location), under strict supervision by tutors and prefects. Dull (2004:310) affirmed this in a study at Peki Teacher’s Training College in the Volta Region in Ghana. She described the three-year experience of teacher training in Ghana as characterised by strict discipline. After rising at 5:00 am to do “‘projects’”: cutting grass, sweeping, farming, etc., teacher trainees attend morning religious services, classes from

7:10 am to 2:00 pm - each year students take a pre-determined set of courses five days a week - afternoon projects, evening study periods (“preps”), and “lights off” at 10:30 pm. Teacher trainees also wear uniforms on and off campus and are prohibited from wearing jewellery or having “fashionable haircuts (and other weird haircuts)”. They must obtain an exeat (permission) to go to nearby villages or other destinations and some complained that they were not even allowed to accompany visitors to the bus stop when their guests were leaving.

These regimes can be compared in some ways to that of the military (Harber, 2002) and are likely to produce rigid teachers who will leave and treat children as objects, not fellow human beings, replicating their own experiences in their teaching. Akyeampong and Stephens (2002) trace the origin of authoritarian teacher training colleges from the fact that most colleges were started as missionary institutions with a culture of strict discipline to train ministers, catechists and later teachers, while others were originally started as traditional secondary schools and later converted into training colleges, but have maintained the organisational and cultural characteristics of the secondary school system. They point out that training colleges in Ghana look very much like secondary schools infrastructure-wise and in their instructional practices.

Akyeampong and Furlong (2000) point out that one of the most serious problems with basic teacher training in Ghana is the quality of instruction where approaches to teaching and learning have been largely teacher centred. As they put it:

This method of teaching has become an entrenched culture and change-resistant because new approaches are perceived as more time consuming. Moreover, it favours the examination culture that requires regurgitation of text book knowledge without sufficient demand on thinking and application of skills (p32).

This type of didactic pedagogy could be a significant obstacle to democratic education in the teacher training colleges in Ghana. Teachers are very important agents of democratic change and without them being trained democratically, they cannot teach democratically. Therefore, the views of teacher trainees will partly be the focus in this research on how they want their teacher training to shape towards democratic principles, and how that can inform their teaching and practice in their would-be schools. And also what will their attitudes be towards pupils' views on school improvement. Teachers set the ethos of the school and with children spending up to a third of the day, five times a week, in the school, the effect of the tone and ethos on them is enormous. Hence, teacher education also needs to change in order to reflect the desired type of democratic education.

The matrix below gives the overall summary of the state of teacher education in Ghana about how democratic or undemocratic they are from my previous study (Agyemang, 2007). This matrix used certain indicators of the daily practice in teacher training institutions against the four basic principles of democracy: equity, rights, participation and informed choice.

Table 4.1 Basic Principles of Democracy Against Certain Indicators

	Equity	Rights	Participation	Informed Choice
Teaching Methods	All students are taught equally irrespective of gender or age, insofar as they are in the same class. In practice, trainees have concerns like teachers showing favouritism in class with regards to gender and ethnicity.	Students have the right to ask questions during teaching and learning. But these rights are entirely controlled by the teachers and some do not encourage questions from students. Students have no rights in suggesting the kind of teaching methods they like.	In the teacher training colleges students are actively involved in some lessons and particular subjects like Mathematics. At the university most teachers use lecture method but a student in Technical and Vocational Education department claimed they are involved in lessons.	Students have no chance in choosing teaching methods they like. Teachers do not give reasons for using a particular method of teaching.
Student/Teacher Relationship	Some teachers relate with students as co-equals. Students reported few gender imbalances. Most teachers want to maintain the status quo by keeping a distance between them and students.	Students have the right to see their tutors on academic and welfare issues. Sometimes teachers intrude into the privacy of students. In some colleges female students are banned from male teachers' houses at certain times. It can contravene or protect rights: supervision or sexual abuse?	Teachers and students work well and cooperate fully during games and sporting activities. Teachers do not work with students in curriculum issues.	Few teachers negotiate or set clear conditions for students within which their relationship should be kept.
Governance	Not all individuals are involved in decision-making. In some mission teacher training institutions students are not treated equally when selecting prefects.	Students have the right to elect their prefects. Students have the right to choose programme of study and modules.	The S.R.C is sometimes involved in a few decisions regarding student social activities and planning menu for the dining hall (especially in the training colleges).	Students have no choice in most of the administrative decisions. They are just informed.
Rules and Regulations	Rules and regulations apply to everybody.	Students have the right to accept or refuse these rules and regulations but refusing means rejecting an offer of admission to the university or any of the training colleges	Students do not take part in making the rules and regulations.	There is no informed choice here as most of the R&R are brought in from the Teacher Education Unit in the GES. Some colleges paste the R&R on the notice board.

Discipline	Everybody is entitled to fair hearing in disciplinary issues. Sometimes principals in the training college can give severe punishment to students without going through the disciplinary committee.	Some of the punishments contradict human rights e.g. in a college students were given one week internal suspension with hard labour for not attending morning devotion. They were made to wear all white clothes to dig a blocked drainage. There is no appeal process.	Few students are part of the disciplinary committee and they are often intimidated, so most of them agree with the judgements that please the teachers.	Most of the training colleges do not have student handbooks where issues of disciplinary procedures are explained.
Curriculum	Highly centralised at the training colleges. All the teacher trainers undergo similar sets of training in their various colleges.	Teacher trainers and trainees can hardly influence a developed curriculum to meet their individual needs.	Students play no part in developing the curriculum. Few teacher trainers participate in curriculum development.	Students have limited options to choose a degree of specialisation. Information supplied where they have a choice.
Assessment	All students are entitled to present course work as part of their assessments. Training college students are supposed to write 2 national exams: Promotional exams at the end of 1 st year and final exam at the end of 3 rd year. The same papers for all teacher trainees.	Students who fail in any of the papers in the promotional exams are excluded without a second chance. Students have the right to choose a topic for their project work (dissertation).	Few tutors negotiate with students when to take tests and quizzes and also when to submit assignments.	Students are aware of any assessments required of them. At the university lecturers sometimes organise short tests and quizzes without informing the students. This is to force the students to come to lectures all the time.
Daily Activities	In the training colleges every student is subjected to the same daily routine activities which are compulsory.	Students in the training colleges do not enjoy freedom of movement since they are restricted.	Students have to participate in most of the activities on campus but many of them are against their will.	Students in the training colleges are informed about the activities but they have no choice (e.g. going to dining hall is compulsory)

(Source Agyemang, 2007:73-75)

This matrix is a reflection of teacher education in Ghana in terms of democratic practice. It therefore raises questions as to how such would-be teachers can help in the formation of democratically organised schools in Ghana while they themselves have little knowledge or practice about democratic education. The next section explores the notion of democratic schools.

4.3 What is a Democratic School?

It is difficult and contentious to describe a democratic school. However, we can often begin to picture a democratic school by asking questions like: what are the characteristics of democratic schools? What would you look for if you were visiting a democratic school? (Carter, Harber and Serf, 2003). MacBeath (2004:21) points out four basic characteristics of a democratic school as:

- Relationship and how we treat and value each other;
- The equal value of all people, irrespective of gender and backgrounds;
- Respect and understanding of differences between people;
- Rights and responsibilities in a democratic society.

MacBeath argues that identifying these values within school has to be understood from the local context to the wider global community in which young people are expected to value democracy and to become world citizens. Schools, as an integral part of the community, should be an obvious venue for fostering young people's understanding and experience of democratic participation (Hart, 1992). There is therefore the need for structures and processes within the school organisation that help pupils to acquire knowledge, skills and value for democratic citizenship. There is therefore the need for framework indicators that should signpost democratic schools.

Davies (1995:108) defines an ‘indicator’ as “an item of information relating to school practice which reveals the extent to which wider goals are being addressed and met. It is a sign, a symbol, an operationalising of values”. She then provides a list of indicators that could be used as a checklist to assess the progress of a democratic school:

Structure:

- Presence of a School Council
- Number of (a) elected positions, and (b) rotating positions in the school
- Presence of system of grievance procedures
- Presence of student newspaper or bulletin

Decision-making:

- Number of decisions taken by School Council actually implemented
- Number of people involved in major decisions
- Proportions of rules decided by the student
- Instances of group decision-making

Practice in democracy:

- Number of questions raised by students during a lesson
- Number of people using grievance procedures
- Instances of pupils choosing to work co-operatively
- Instances of open negotiation and compromise over running of school
- Presence of real or mock elections or referenda

Autonomy and taking responsibility:

- Number of students voluntarily using library or resource centre
- Number of students suggesting work to be done
- Number of students and staff organising extra-curricular activities
- Community work, community change

Preparation for active citizenship:

- Staff knowledge of contemporary political scene, structure and leaders
- Students’ knowledge of above
- Students’ confidence and ability to express opinion
- Number of students articulating their concerns

(Davies, 1995: 110)

The above list provides a suitable guide for this enquiry but some items on the list may not be applicable in Ghana. However, in my previous studies, teacher trainees were able

to provide a list of indicators for a democratic school, although they have little or no known experience in democratic schooling. They outlined the ideas below as some of the indicators that should be visible in a school:

- There should be cordial relationships between leadership and those who are ruled, that is relationships among staff members, among students, teacher/student, teaching/non-teaching staff, and school/community.
- Students are able to take decisions on their own, accepted and acted upon by the teaching staff.
- A situation where students are not confined to particular activities and they do not live in fear.
- When school authorities do not impose issues on students (non-autocratic authority).
- A situation where everybody plays their role to make the system work (no discrimination).
- Use teaching methods where students are allowed to ask questions.
- The atmosphere within the school set up, how happy the students are.
- Students' commitment to their training and the general philosophies of the institution and teacher commitment as well.
- If students are able to choose their leaders.
- When students have a say in what goes into the syllabus.

(Agyemang, 2007:49)

These comments show further understanding of some teacher trainees in Ghana of what a democratic school might look like. Unfortunately this rich knowledge is not likely to be replicated in their practice after teacher training since there is no clear cut policy in the Ghana education system that promotes the practice of democracy in basic schools, although there is a subject called Civic Education in the basic school curriculum. Students are also unlikely to experience democratic organisations and relationships in their teacher education.

Critically reflecting on these indicators provides us with clear links between developing a democratic environment or culture within schools and school effectiveness and

improvement. Democratically run schools can facilitate these improvements: rules are kept better since students are involved in making them; there is a more effective and frequent communication system; students take responsibility therefore reducing teachers workload; there is improved behaviour and self-discipline; there is greater confidence and discussion and leadership skills of pupils and the general climate of the school becomes friendlier (Davies, Harber and Schweisfurth, 2005). We can therefore describe a democratic school as a school where students have a voice and these voices are structured and organised in a meaningful way, in order to promote student participation in their own learning and contribute to creating a suitable atmosphere, conducive for effective teaching and learning. I therefore explore structures for student participation in decision-making in schools in the following discussion.

4.4 Student Participation in Decision-Making in Schools

According to MacBeath (2004) there is now more emphasis given to pupils' voice and therefore the collection of pupils' views through interviews and questionnaires has become a stock in trade of effectiveness studies, primarily as a data source. He, however, argued that we need to move beyond these limited views of pupils for more collaborative practice where students will be involved in the process of change in their schooling experience. Dalin (2005) points out that the school should be full of activities; a meeting point for people of all ages, and its members should have a role in decision-making and take responsibility for implementation. Dalin further argued that the role of students has to change dramatically by bringing them into the school development work, both at the classroom level as well as at the school level.

Students need to experience the change process and learn the skills of solving problems. These are the hallmarks of democratic schools and Powell (2001) terms such schools as 'reinvented schools'. Powell (2001) contends that in schools that have overcome arrested development we find students who talk openly together, are vocal and meaningful and are negotiating their education in part with their teachers and administration. Such schools happen when students and teachers have common and shared interests, freedom of interaction, beneficial and equitable participation and mutual social relationships. The conditions and environment in which children grow up are changing and understanding of this background is essential if school development is to be appropriate to their interests and motivation for learning (Dalin and Rust, 1996).

Hart (1992) refers to the term 'participation' as the process of sharing decisions which affect one's life and the life of the community in which one lives. He argues that participation is the fundamental right of citizenship and therefore it should be the means by which a democracy is built and a standard against which democracies should be measured. While there are fascinating experimental schools throughout the world, there are only a few nations where the practice of democratic participation in schools has been broadly adopted. The reason being, that schools as the primary socialising instrument of the state are concerned with guaranteeing stability; and this is generally understood to mean preserving very conservative systems of authority (Hart, 1992).

Yamashita, Davies and Williams (2010) considered existing research on the impact and benefits of student participation and they identified numerous benefits that come with student involvement in decision-making as follows:

- Students in more democratic schools were happier and felt more in control of their learning.
- If students gave feedback on teaching, this had the twin effect of teachers' practice improving and students gaining in awareness of the learning process.
- Participation enhanced skills of communication and competence as learners.
- The participation of students in interviews for new staff gave them a feeling of ownership as well as leading to better appointments and enhanced school organization.
- Student involvement in the planning of curriculum and teaching methods again helped in the development of curriculum, assessment and pedagogy.

According to Yamashita et al. (2010), students demonstrated their ability in many studies by involvement in governance issues, developing school mission statements, school development plans, departmental reviews, school facilities, new buildings and safety rules. Students were also involved in programmes of change, engaging with contractors or meal providers. They point out that the intellectual and other inputs of students are usually evaluated in terms of personal benefits in relation to improvements in self-esteem, or decision-making skills. As a result, there is little attempt to assess and provide critical reflection on the quality of student contributions and real value of the assumed benefits for others. Yamashita et al. further argue that giving students a voice should not be

presented as doing them a favour, but their inputs should be appreciated as a highly valuable, specialist input into educational decision-making.

4.5 Structures for Student Participation

Students may often feel that they have a lot to contribute to the improvement of teaching and learning but they are not sure how to proceed and tend to remain silent unless a visiting researcher provides a one-off outlet for comment (Rudduck and Fielding, 2006). As MacBeath (2004) earlier on noted, student voice has been used primarily as a data source and most of the published students' views are as a result of research studies. However, having in mind all the benefits of student participation and the impact of their views in schools and in their societal contributions, there have to be genuine structures in place in the daily practice and organizational structures in schools that reinforce student inputs. These are examples of structures that should be created within the administration of educational systems that promote student participation (e.g. school boards, student representative councils, parent advisory groups) (Davies, 1999). Davies (1999:132-133) contends that before these structures can be put in place certain basic questions should be asked such as:

What version of the working of democracy is preferred or fore-grounded? Is democracy conceived of as predominantly representative or participative? That is, are schools more like micro versions of the wider polity with student and teacher representation on various committees or boards of governors, or are there processes by which every member of the school is able to make a contribution or has a say in their own learning?

She, however, points out that obviously there can be combinations of those, for example, with class Circle Time feeding into lines of representation. Perhaps, it is instructive to examine whether the process of decision-making is limited to the 'majority vote' concept

or whether there are systems by which all students and teachers review continually the school's mission, a set of rules, or a code of conduct.

School councils are one of the most useful structures or entry points toward student participation. School councils, when well organised, achieve all the hallmarks for greater democracy in the micro-politics of the school (Inman and Burke, 2002). According to School Council UK:

A school Council is a representative group of students who have been proposed and elected by their peers to represent their views and raise issues with Senior Managers and Governors of their school. A School Council can also propose and take forward initiatives and projects on behalf of their peers, and be involved in strategic planning and processes such as the School Development Plan, governing body meetings and staff appointments (School Council UK, 2006).

The objective of a student council embodies empowering students to be involved in the decision-making process within an education setting where they play an active role in making their school a better place and develop life skills through participation (School Council UK). Electing a representative from each class who will solicit views from their peers to take to the council meetings could be linked to democratic citizenship within the wider polity where they would vote in adult elections for Members of Parliament or Local Councillors in future. Alderson (2000) argues that school councils are a key practical and symbolic indicator of respect for children's rights. There are other useful methods for pupils to contribute to school policy and to raising standards and councils are likely to work better when linked to systems such as class circle times before and after council meetings. Yet only councils provide a formal, democratic, transparent, and

accountable, whole-school policy forum. Inman and Burke (2002:6) point out some of the benefits of effective school councils for pupils and schools. These include:

- Contributing to good relations and discipline and promoting social inclusion
- Giving expression to children's rights
- Providing a democratic experience and promoting democratic skills.

According to Inman and Burke (2002) school councils flourish most effectively in the context of a wider democratic ethos and structure within schools with the genuine intention of pupils' participation.

In the UK, 90 per cent of secondary and 65-75 per cent of primary schools have school councils, though they vary greatly in their powers and responsibilities (Harber, 2010). Rudduck and Flutter (2000) point out that many schools may rely on their school councils but they will only work well if they are the centre and symbol of school-wide democratic practice. Some studies of school councils in UK schools (Davies, 1998; Davies and Yamashita, 2007) found that pupils took on responsibilities, their behaviour improved and relationships with teachers and the wider community strengthened. Pupils were able to deal with truancy on their own and reduced the number of student exclusions. A recent students' voice project in Portsmouth City, UK (Carnie, 2010) works on a five strand students' voice strategy: students' involvement in governance, management and school improvement; peer support; developing a listening culture; students having a say in their learning and students' involvement in the community. The first strand focuses around development of effective school councils, the involvement of students in school governing bodies and the creation of a cross-city students' council. At the beginning of

the project, 40 per cent of the Portsmouth schools had school councils and this increased to 90 per cent at the end. There has been annual celebration of Student Voice Day in Portsmouth since 2003. It has also been reported that student involvement in decision-making has led to many changes in schools across the City of Portsmouth.

Student representative councils are common in Ghanaian senior secondary schools and teacher education colleges and universities, but not primary and junior secondary schools (basic schools) (Pryor et al., 2005). However, Pryor et al. (2005) provide us with a study of school councils in some Ghanaian schools. The councils were an unusual development arising from the enthusiasm of headteachers involved in an exchange programme but not policy initiated by the Ghana government or international intervention. It began after three of the headteachers from a group of twenty were given the opportunity to travel to the UK. While in Britain they were attached to primary schools and given a series of activities to help them reflect on the management issues confronting them in Ghana. One of the headteachers attended a school council meeting in the UK and decided to establish one in her school after returning. They were asked to lead a workshop on school councils after which almost half of the group decided to set up a school council in each of their schools in Ghana. The pupils were particularly enthusiastic and collaborated with the headteachers to establish the school council. The findings suggest that across the three schools everybody within the school community benefits from having the council. All the headteachers seemed to see their council as an aid to administration which has improved their personal relationship with the children. There were financial gains from the council as some volunteered to work instead of paying a contractor. Teachers agreed there were

some ways the council made lives easier and were all in favour of the council in principle. The council looked after the compound and there were improvements in attendance. Children were able to lobby through the councils which resulted in the reduction of corporal punishment in the three schools. Alternative structures exist in some schools and various countries that are similar to school councils.

In some places instead of school councils they use the term 'School Parliament' where it is similar to a school council but differs in some of their practices. School parliaments replicate how government conducts business in schools with elected Members of Parliamentary representatives from each class. The parliament themselves elect the speaker and various ministers or spokespersons in charge of various issues such as sports and environment. Harber (1997) points out an example in Tanzania, where the whole student body vote for the president and Members of Parliament for the council, while the president is entitled to appoint ministers for the school. Ministers could deal with specific areas like sports, environment and entertainment.

Davies and Yamashita (2007) in their study of school councils in London secondary schools found that there were other innovations in some schools - a teaching and learning committee and behaviour panel that could be applicable elsewhere. The initiative gave students insight into teaching which helped classroom processes to improve and teachers were very positive about these groups. The students on the teaching and learning committee received training on systematic lesson observation and were able to conduct lessons observation in their schools and provide feedback to teachers. The behaviour

panel identified sites of classroom disturbances through lessons and observation and surveys, and then were able to work directly to mediate with specific problematic students and set targets for improved behaviour. There are other similar initiatives and projects in developing countries that were linked to community participation.

4.6 Community Participation for School Improvement

It has been argued earlier that if parents themselves do not have voices and are not listened to it will be extremely difficult to promote pupils' voice in their communities and for that matter schools (Hart, 1992). There are many initiatives in both developed and developing countries that aim to put adults and students together to work towards better school, for example, pupil representatives in the school governing bodies (Cox et al., 2010; Mncube, 2008). Cox et al. (2010) point out that there has been increasing recognition globally about the need to involve children in decision-making with regards to their own education since the UNCRC came into force in 1990. Researchers, policy makers, international and national non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and educational institutions have been searching for ways to improve children's participation in decision-making.

One example of pupil participation in decision-making is the participatory school governance programme in Zambia (Chiwela, 2010). The participatory school governance programme was promoted by the People's Action Forum (PAF), a non-profit NGO in Zambia who thought the exceptional centralisation of decision-making in education greatly inhibits the degree to which parents, local communities, teachers, civic leaders,

district education authorities, civil society groups and children can influence management and the decision-making process and take legitimate steps to improve the quality of education. The aim of the programme is to transform power relations creating an open or democratic environment in which voices of parents, school authorities and children are given equal weight (Chiwela, 2010:60-61). According to Chiwela, through this project, the PAF found and confirmed that children have something to say about their schools and how they should be managed. They therefore encouraged participatory policies in educational provision and school improvement to give a space for greater enhancement in children's participation in decision-making. However, the obstacle to children's participation is the fear of 'anarchy' should this be allowed to happen and also cultural attitudes in Zambia or elsewhere where children are brought up to believe they should remain silent when adults are discussing issues, and therefore the child may be hesitant to speak while adults are uncomfortable with the child who expresses an opinion.

In Ghana, activities to encourage pupils in decision-making in the basic schools are very minimal. Basic schools are governed by School Management Committees (SMCs) which include the headteacher, teachers' representatives, community and parents' representatives. No pupils are involved, and neither do they consult pupils in their activities. On the other hand there are NGO's activities which have proven to be successful. For example Manful (2010) describes the role of the media in bringing pupils' views across to the nation. According to Manful (2010), a project was started in 1995 after the association of women communicators and journalists organised the International Children's Day of Broadcasting in Ghana. The children involved formed a club and were

given the opportunity to present a programme on children's issues during a 30 minute slot on a state radio with adult supervision. The programme included a panel discussion (children) on a topic selected by the club and also a live phone-in from other children to express their opinion on the topic of discussion. Manful points out that through the live phone-in radio programme, the club have created a platform where politicians and experts including speakers of Ghana's parliament and heads of government departments have interacted directly with children all over the country. This has led to the influence of child centred programmes in the media with an avenue where children can express their views on civil issues. However, despite the success of this programme, education authorities have not drawn any useful lessons that could be adapted in schools.

Furthermore, on the pupils' participation in developing countries, Bhattarai (2010), reports of the establishment of children's clubs by many organisations in Nepal since the late 1980s. The initial reasons for these clubs were to address environmental issues through establishing plantations and receiving education on conservation. Currently, most children's clubs in Nepal have protection of children's rights as their objective. Clubs are not formed around a particular school but the leadership of clubs are usually academically good students from the schools in the catchment area of the club. Children are trained and acquire leadership skills by negotiating with teachers what is right for children. They can also speak to parents and find out why their children are not in school. Clubs were also more engaged in community activities such as cleaning of the village. I believe that such activities will even make parents and community leaders realise that their children are not

in school just for the books but to learn something that will be worthwhile for the whole society. Bhattarai (2010:53-54) lists the major activities of one of the clubs as follows:

- Every child of school age goes to the school campaign
- Promoting children rights
- Cleaning school/village campaign
- Regular meetings (monthly)
- Children's savings
- Wall newspaper publication

They negotiate with teachers on issues affecting children especially on corporal punishment and also parents about the behaviour of their children. Clubs published stories of uncompromising teachers and parents and they have succeeded in reducing dramatically the number of cases that need disciplinary actions in schools (Bhattarai, 2010). These clubs in Nepal are doing very well to protect the rights of pupils while contributing to the good of their society. Could that be said of Ghana? In the next section I discuss pupils' rights and equity in Ghanaian basic schools.

4.7 Pupils' Rights and Equity in Schools

There has been much global effort towards the right of children for and in education and also promoting equitable access to education while eradicating gender disparities. In addition to the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, there have been resolutions and conferences such as 1990 World Education Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand; Dakar Framework for Action, and the UN MDGs (Phillips and Schweisfurth, 2006). Some of these earlier works underpin the MDGs endorsed by 189 world leaders at the UN summit in September 2000 and passed as resolution at the UN General Assembly in 2001 which is a commitment to work together to build a safer, more

prosperous and equitable world (UNDP, 2010b). Two of the MDGs directly related to Education for All (EFA) and these are:

- **Goal 2 Achieve universal primary education:** ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling.
- **Goal 3 Promote gender equality and empower women:** eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005 and in all levels of education no later than 2015 (UNDP, 2010b).

As discussed in Chapter Two, many countries including Ghana, are doing very well in getting pupils to school. In England, parents are sometimes fined or sent to jail if their children (under sixteen) fail to go to school (Harber, 2004; 2009). However, what happens in schools remains problematic in an overly authoritarian set of school structures globally. The international organisations have not limited their commitment to access to education. They have also made resolutions on what should be done and taught in schools even before the UNCRC and the MDGs were introduced.

UNESCO has convened conferences in order to draw recommendations from international leaders as to what should be included in the public education system. Examples of such conferences are ‘Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace’ and ‘Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms’ (1974 in Paris), Declaration on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy (1995 in Geneva) (UNESCO-WER, 2000). The following are some of the declarations made in 1995:

We the Ministers of Education meeting at the 44th session of the international conference on education...
Strive resolutely:

- To base education on principles and methods that contribute to the development of the personality of pupils, students and adults who are respectful of their fellow human beings and determined to promote peace, human rights and democracy.
- To take suitable steps to establish in educational institutions an atmosphere contributing to the success of education for international understanding, so that they become ideal places for the exercise of democracy and learning about the diversity and wealth of cultural identities... (UNESCO-WER, 2000: 79).

These declarations are in existence but questioning as to whether or not they are in practice is difficult to state because although Ghana took part in these conferences and declarations, little did teachers and children know about these.

In a study of rights and equity in 48 Basic Schools in Ghana, commissioned by the Curriculum Research and Development Division (CRDD, 2001), the schools included were both public and private. Some of these schools were located in urban communities and the rest in rural areas. The respondents included pupils, teachers, head teachers and officers from the Ghana Education Service Offices. The main findings of the research revealed that there were no clear-cut policy documents on rights and equity issues. The document on Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) and the research report on Synthesis of Research on Girls Education in Ghana outline strategies and activities to address various forms of inequity between girls and boys in education. The girl child happens to be the main focus and no specific mention is made of the child in general and the boy child in particular.

According to the CRDD (2001), most pupils did recognise the child's rights to freedom of religion and privacy and freedom of correspondence. The majority also agreed to the fact that children had the right to association and freedom of speech and expression so long as it did not disturb others. Most pupils however found school language policies

forbidding the use of local languages appropriate. Children have no avenues within the school system to seek redress for the violation of their rights. The majority of teachers could not tell correctly the effects of rights violation and discrimination on the growth and development of pupils in Basic Schools. Caning, counselling, suspension and dismissal were the main modes for managing pupils who flouted regulations in schools. Caning was the most pervasive method and the only offence that was recorded. Girls who become pregnant may be dismissed, while their responsible boyfriends may be suspended. Teachers dominate all classroom activities providing few opportunities for group work and pupil-to-pupil interaction. The study suggested that the main ways for improving Rights and Equity Education in Ghana is through the development of instructional materials and training for teachers in the area. Teachers' exposure to rights and equity issues is through the mass media or material they read. Their ability to handle equity and rights education is hindered by insufficient knowledge and reference materials.

Corporal punishment has become entrenched in Ghanaian schools so that it is irresistible to change yet it contravenes article 19 of the UNCRC that states:

No one should hurt you in any way. Adults should make sure that you are protected from abuse, violence and neglect. Even your parents have no right to hurt you (Davies et al., 2002:144).

As a teacher in Ghana I did not know these conventions, and I would not be surprised even if teachers currently teaching in basic schools are not aware of them because they can passionately defend their stand on corporal punishment. According to Agbenyega (2006) corporal punishment still persists in Ghanaian schools which teachers defend on three themes as effective punishment for learning imperative, moral imperative and

religious imperative as the overall aim of keeping discipline in schools. However, Agbenyega (2006) argued that corporal punishment should not be used as a disciplinary tool because no evidence suggests that it has produced better results academically, morally or that it improves school discipline. Yet teachers interviewed were adamant and not ready to abandon the cane because it is a useful companion in their profession. The following lends weight to the point:

Interviewer: How do you address learning problems in your school or class?

Respondent: Actually, we have a lot of lazy students here who wouldn't like to do anything nor improve no matter how hard we try... the only option is to push them a bit with the cane.

Interviewer: Don't you have any other ways to help these students achieve academic success?

Respondent: All those teaching methods we learnt hardly work. One thing you should understand is that the African child is brought up in a culture that uses canes as a form of push for children to learn and follow instruction. If we do not enforce the same practices, our schools will experience reduced academic standards.

Interviewer: What is the view of Ghana Education Service on this issue?

Respondent: These days GES is complaining of falling standards of education... it is because of their controversial policies on corporal punishment...Gone are the days when we were in school...how dare you? ...You have to know your times by heart and memorise all formulas before the next school day otherwise cane will eat your flesh... We can't just do away with it.

Interviewer: How would you justify the use of the cane in your schools?

Respondent: Certainly, it is really helping our students. If a student fails to do his homework, just give him few strokes of the cane, the next day he will do it...they are really scared of the cane and knowing that failure would result in caning; they sit down and learn

(Agbenyega, 2006:114-115).

If teachers have this mentality it will take much effort and time to expunge the traditionalist mindset and introduce a more conventional approach that promotes students' rights. Directors of Education who participated in the interview were also asked to comment on the use of corporal punishment in the schools.

Interviewer: The teachers indicated that they use corporal punishment to discipline their students: what can you say about that?

Respondent: This is a violation of the Ghana Education Service policy on punishment; the policy on corporal punishment allows only the Head Teachers to administer it to students and in rare cases the Head Teacher can deputise a teacher to administer it. Corporal punishment can only be used in extreme cases for example, when a student steals and the number of lashes to be given is specified for all Head Teachers.

Interviewer: Now that this practice is entrenched in schools what are you doing about it?

Respondent: There is a punishment policy now before parliament and if passed teachers who violate the directives would be brought to book.

(Agbenyega, 2006:116-117)

Such teachers need to be encouraged to try and experience the practices within democratic school settings in order to be convinced. Perhaps, more expensive educational exchange programmes with different countries could be used because it will be difficult finding a model of democratic schooling in Ghana. I therefore proceed to discuss barriers of greater democracy in Ghana.

4.8 Barriers of Greater Democracy in Ghanaian Schools

Democracy is sometimes similarly opposed because of the equation with *freedom* and anarchy (Davies, 1999). Davies et al. (2005) point out that discipline in school is very important in the whole world and therefore teachers fear that they cannot control pupils if they are allowed to exercise their rights. More often than not, democracy is mistaken to be indiscipline and 'laissez faire'. There is also the fear that if democracy is introduced into schools, the students will take advantage or demand many rights or even riot (Davies et al., 2002). However, Davies (1999) argues that like should be compared to like as democracy is different from anarchy and laissez faire.

Some religious practices pose a major concern for education for democracy, especially in schools. The fundamental principle of democracy under threat here is the ‘right’ of individuals. Under some religious beliefs, while some groups of people are denied their rights, others suffer human rights abuses. Some religious groups never allow women to be their leaders indicating that women are considered to be subordinate in such societies. Therefore any form of education that teaches something different from their views will cause a reprisal. Here is a statement made by a lecturer in the Gambia College:

Religion does not allow intermixing of girls and boys. I cannot entertain any version of democracy that counteracts that (Schweisfurth, 2002).

This statement shows how religious beliefs are deeply rooted in some societies in Africa and I think it is not different from Ghana’s situation. Furthermore, Osler and Starkey (1998) argue that human rights may be violated under the banner of religious justifications. For example, article 5 of the universal declaration of human rights states that no one shall be subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. However, according to my BPhil research (Agyemang, 2004) on Ghanaian teachers’ perceptions’ of caning, all the teachers interviewed acknowledged that they have caned children before and most of them justify their actions by quoting The Bible (e.g. *Spare the rod and spoil the child. Proverbs 23: 13*). The question is do the teachers know about these universal declarations of human rights? Can the teachers use their religious beliefs on innocent children who might not be part of their religious group? Democratic teacher education in Ghana should aim at addressing these issues.

4.9 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter presented a literature review on the role of education for democracy in producing future citizens and also transforming schools to effective schools. The first part of the discussion focused on the role of teacher education towards democratic schools and democratic citizenship. It has been argued that teacher education in both developed and developing countries are authoritarian institutions and therefore they need to be changed to break the cycle of authoritarian schools. Studies like Akyeampong and Stephens (2002) and Dull (2004) have shown that colleges of education in Ghana are highly regimented. That implies that any effective democratic school should start from teacher education where teacher trainees have some experience in democratic practices and principles.

Further discussions centred on characteristics and indicators of democratic schools. The argument that runs through this study is that democratically run schools facilitate school effectiveness and improvement. This is because in democratic schools pupils are encouraged to participate in decision-making. It is therefore, necessary for schools and wider communities to establish structures that will promote genuine pupil participation. School councils are examples of such structures that provide pupils with democratic experience. There are other community-wide approaches like student clubs in Nepal and a participatory school governance programme in Zambia (Bhattarai, 2010 and Chiwela, 2010). Further discussions centred on pupils' rights and equity in schools and also greater barriers to democracy in Ghanaian schools. The next chapter discusses the theoretical framework of this study.

CHAPTER FIVE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

5.1 Introduction

The first section of this chapter reviews the human capital theory and the political modernisation theory and their influence on the current formal education systems both globally and in Ghana. The latter part of this chapter discusses the political democratisation theory which this study proposes for more effective schools towards school improvement and more democratic societies.

5.2 Theoretical Review

There are several theories in educational research that explain the outlook and structure of the present formal education system or schooling. Most of these theories consciously or subconsciously are based on the sociological viewpoint of the child in the society which has been explored in Chapter One. Phillips and Schweisfurth (2006:69) point out that:

education is perceived as a key social institution that can affect the values and behaviours of individuals, shaping the citizens and workforce of the future, and therefore impacting on national development.

They therefore argue that in that process, there are various theories that have been developed underpinning the various ideologies. Such theories include the human capital theory, the modernisation theory and the liberation theory (Phillips and Schweisfurth, 2006; Harber, 1997).

The human capital theory is based on the notion that investing in human beings is a way of increasing economic development and productivity of a nation and this is done through

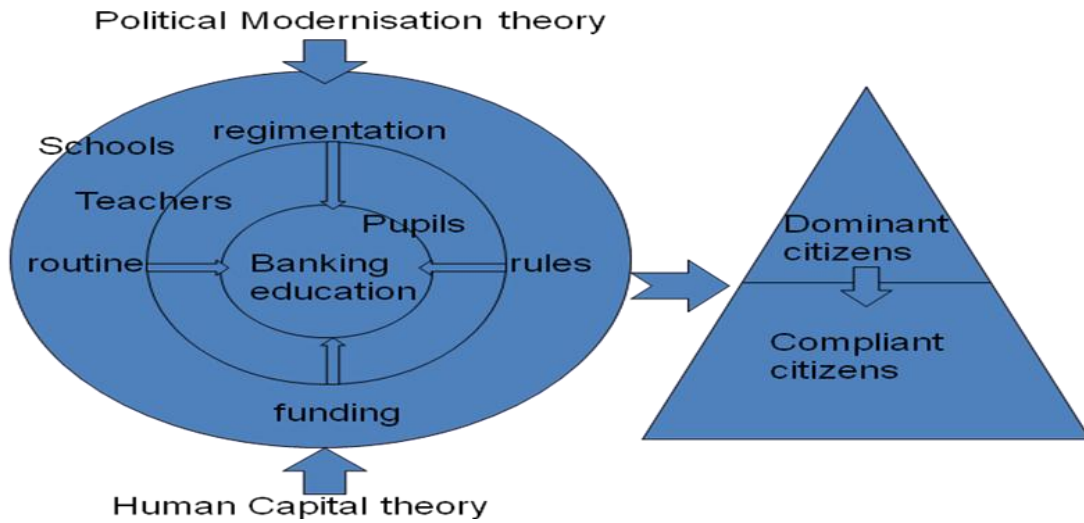
education (Phillips and Schweisfurth, 2006). The theory argues that public investment in primary education increases literacy among individuals which benefits the state in terms of basic productivity. On the other hand, high public spending on higher education is discouraged while promoting cost sharing by the ultimate beneficiary, the individual. This is because tertiary education brings highest returns to the individual, through the potential of getting a high paying job (Phillips and Schweisfurth, 2006). What the theory fails to consider is the higher earning professionals like doctors who give much back to society. The human capital theory has had a great influence in many developing countries like Ghana in terms of education policy. There is a Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) programme in Ghana to promote access for education in fulfilment of the 'Education for All' agenda. However, there has been much cost sharing at tertiary institutions, especially universities, which will affect the widening participation agenda and therefore reproduce educational inequality.

The political modernisation theory is 'based on the premise that development is conditional upon members of a society holding modern values' (Phillips and Schweisfurth, 2006). The presence of these values among citizens facilitates working behaviours and personal priorities that enhance the economic development of a nation. It is crucial that the citizen must understand the ways in which bureaucratic rules and impersonal judgement replace treatment based mainly on personal qualities, on family ties or friendship and connections, for the modern polity is 'suffused with bureaucratic rationality' (Inkeles, 1969:1122). Schooling is seen as contributing to the mass development of modern values such as bureaucratic skills because that is an integral part of school routines. As Inkeles and Smith put it:

School starts and stops at fixed times each day. Within the school day there generally is a regular sequence for ordering activities: singing, reading, writing, drawing, all have their scheduled and usually invariant times. Teachers generally work according to this plan... The pupils may have no direct knowledge of the plan, but its influence palpably pervades the course of their work through school day and school year. Thus, principles directly embedded in the daily routine of the school teach the value of planning ahead and the importance of maintaining a regular schedule (Inkeles and Smith, 1974:141).

The political modernisation theory therefore aims at developing the modern citizen by providing required bureaucratic skills, values and behaviours through schooling rather than democratic ones (Harber, 1997). Figure 5.1 shows how the different theories discussed above influence policies and practices on schooling and produce two societal strands. The figure depicts what goes on in schools as production lines, with their quality assurance (political modernisation theory) and the cost of production (human capital theory). Pupils are like raw materials being processed by teachers, the workers, through the process of banking education. The end product is the pyramid (social inequality) with the top part ruling elite (e.g. assertive politicians) and the base of the pyramid majority labour force who are politically passive (Carr and Hartnett, 1996; Meighan, 2005). The theories discussed have influence on schooling internationally about the role of schools on the formation of future citizens. I therefore discuss in the next section, how schooling shapes the formation of the child and some of the fundamental philosophies behind schooling as they are presently in Ghana and elsewhere.

Figure 5.1 Theoretical representation of schooling as production line



(source: author)

5.3 Schools As They Presently Are

The unique challenge and opportunity the school has got is that it is (or ought to be) the future laboratory of our society. What goes on there should not only prepare students for today, but for their lives in a fundamental new society. At present, the school mainly prepares for yesterday (Dalin, 2005:27).

The deeper question to begin with is what are schools for? Sherman (1996) points out that to each of us, there are distinct memories of schools, the institution that seemed to occupy our childhood. In responding to the question ‘what is school?’ she asked:

Is it meant to help us gain knowledge of what it really means to live? Is it meant to introduce children to the basic skills which will make them into useful and productive citizens and workers? Does school teach complacency and uniformity to our children, or are children allowed and encouraged to think creatively? Is school really for children as they exist in childhood, or is it simply a vehicle to take them into adulthood? (Sherman, 1996: i).

These are arguably the basic aims which schooling or mass education seeks to achieve but Sherman seems to pose questions to them because there is an ongoing debate about actual practices in schools that may or may not have positive impacts on pupils. Moos (2004) contends that schools aim to influence the behaviours and cognition of young people to make them capable citizens in any particular society. It is not only through exposition to the content of school subjects that students find their way to adult life but also through their daily routines in which they work during school days.

Moos (2004) also argues that the essential functions and practices of the educational system have not changed over the years. In the context of sociological analysis, most societies expect schools to perform three tasks, they must 'socialise', 'store' and 'allocate' children. Socialising children means that schools must educate or bring up children in ways that make them fit for, and fit into, the society in which they are going to live. They must be competent and willing to enter the workforce, the public sphere, the culture and private life of the society at hand. Allocating children means that schools must guide pupils into their 'proper' place in the workforce and in a particular society. This is done by testing them in final examinations, and on that basis, giving them a grade that points them to the way to go from there. Storing children and youths means that schools must be a safe and secure place for children to spend their days before they can be given into custody of parents or, at a much later stage, into the custody of the labour market. Children and youths cannot be trusted to be on their own. These are the ideologies that underpin schooling or formal education; while some are more overt, some remain a hidden agenda.

Harber (2009) further contends that ‘school is the default position, a given good’. He argues that, despite overwhelmingly positive support for schools by the public, international agencies, the media, politicians and many in education, there are many profound 20th century educational thinkers and practitioners who think otherwise about the nature and effect of schooling. Goodman, for example (1962) argues that the schooling system exists for its own sake, offering millions of people employment in a very large market for textbook manufacturers, building contractors and graduate Schools of Education in America and various countries. In adding his views about schools acting as ‘storing children’, he points out that the schooling system plays an important role as a large and expensive baby-sitting service, given that in many families both parents are working and it also helps in keeping the unemployed off the streets by ‘putting them in concentration camps called schools’. Goodman continues to argue that schooling is often a form of brainwashing where a generalised global view is opted for without the consideration of any alternative viewpoint. This is because what schooling seeks to achieve is orthodoxy, consensus and conformity rather than creative thinking, curiosity and initiative among children which should be the hallmark of education. Yet in the rapidly changing world, socially and technologically we expect these children to be parents for tomorrow, future scientists and custodians of the democratic societies.

John Holt (1969) in his *How Children Fail* points out that children begin life with a remarkable capacity and eagerness for learning, but unfortunately schooling does its best to quench this fervour by what schools do to them and make them do. Children spend

most of their time in school five days in a week and many hours in a day. These days are filled with dull, repetitive tasks that make little or no claim on their attention or demands on their intelligence. Holt argues that the focus of schools has been the ‘right answerism’ about guessing what the teacher or examination regards as the right answer rather than processes of learning and the spirit of enquiry. Schooling places much emphasis on routines of teaching and testing, accepting and rejecting. Consequently, schooling has proved highly resistant to making the necessary fundamental changes (Hemming, 1980). Therefore, the process of teaching and learning has become what Freire (1968) terms as *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Freire used the term ‘banking education’ to describe the authoritarian educational system, based on a mechanised view of consciousness. Banking education isolates the learner from the content and process of education. It assumes that the teacher knows everything; the students know nothing. The teacher narrates, prescribes and deposits information which the student then must mechanically receive, memorise and repeat. This transfer of information becomes an emblem and instrument of oppression that inhibits inquiry, creativity and dialogue. Hemming (1980) points out that, the weakness of the system is that more often than not, issues of individual development are totally ignored. He argued that what is required in school is to focus on personalised education to meet the needs and aims of learners, rather than governments and other stakeholders in education.

Mass formal education has also been the tool through which governments push their hidden and overt agendas. Much of education is like ‘fossilised accidents’ too - sometimes there are not very good reasons for government policy or practice but once

they have been made or done, people stop asking questions and just keep repeating them out of tradition and inertia. One example is Ghana where in 1987 the government embarked on educational reform that presented a new structure of education comprising of 6 years' primary school, 3 years' junior secondary (replacing 4 years' middle school) and 3 years' senior secondary (replacing 7 years' secondary school). The reform also included comprehensive curriculum reforms with a new content of education with emphasis on vocational and technical subjects for all children up to junior secondary (Akyeampong, 2007). This reform was purely economic, emanating from the World Bank as in that period Ghana was classified as 'a star pupil' in the structural adjustment programme (Langevang, 2008). However, children were given a false hope about the technical and vocational aspect of the curriculum. I was a primary school pupil at that time; we were told the junior secondary would equip us with skills in carpentry work, metal work and building work that would be useful for the world of work even if our education terminated at the Junior Secondary School. We were taught a new song for route marches during open days and Independent Day Celebrations to educate the public about the reform. The following are the lyrics:

Children of the Land, gather courage
JSS (Junior Secondary School) has come to save all
Only handle the tool with care
And the psychomotor skills shall flow
Children of the Land, gather courage
JSS has come to save all.

It was such a beautiful song but using myself as an example after going through this system of education, I ask, do I possess the skills they were preaching about? The answer is 'no' but in theory I can name some carpentry and building tools and list their functions. The system still remains solidified in an academic oriented curriculum that insists on

passing exams, and those pupils who terminate their education after junior secondary are not adequately prepared for the world of work. Although there have been reviews and subsequent educational reforms (Akyeampong, 2007), people have stopped asking important questions about that reform and stick with their old ways of doing things. Formal education systems are influenced by a particular period but when other things change, they often stay the same.

Many countries do recognise the importance of education in the development of socio-economic structures. Therefore, there are many reforms that are pushed through in various countries in order for education to meet the economic needs of nations to compete globally. However, the interests of some governments, even those which are democratic, have not centred on the kind of values and goals to be promoted within schools but rather on questions of access, funding and examination results (Harber, 1997). While the structures of modern societies keep changing to meet the demand and challenges of the 21st century, the end product of schooling or mass education has rarely changed since its inception in the late 19th century.

Western types of schooling were invented from 19th century social theories and practices which gave rise to institutions such as workhouses, factories and prisons. They were developed to solve social and economic problems (Lawton, 2001). According to Lawton, what such institutions had in common was:

the need for a large number of ‘inmates’ to be controlled by smaller number of supervisors. In all cases there were two features in common: strict discipline and hard labour. And to make the task of the supervisors possible certain practices and rules became customary, for example silence, strict control over time (marked by

bells, sirens or hooters) and restriction of space (sitting in rows ...) and movement (such as marching in lock-step) (Lawton, 2001:1).

The main purpose of formal education was therefore to socialise young people into the norms and behaviours required of workers in large-scale bureaucratic institutions, such as factories and offices. Therefore, schools enforced values that suited the functioning of these bureaucratic institutions and the maintenance of the social order. Some of the values are:

obedience, abiding by the rules, loyalty, respect for authority, punctuality, regular attendance, quietness, orderly work in large groups, working to a strict timetable, tolerance of monotony, ability to change readily from one situation to the next and ignoring of personal needs when these are irrelevant to the task at hand (Harber and Davies, 1997: 49).

This model of schooling was then imposed through colonialism in other parts of the world and has been perpetuated in the post-colonial era simply because it has suited the interests of post-colonial governments (Harber, 1997). I have come to realise that the Ghanaian education system is still holding on to the practices that were embedded in the colonial education system in order to produce students of their like. The products of that education system are now the leaders and policy makers and therefore accustomed to those ideologies of maintaining the status quo.

Education is also increasingly based on the market model. Advocates see it as a commodity that one can sell to students because it leads to employment and human capital wealth. Schools and colleges are seen as 'production centres' where students are 'produced' (Mckernan, 2007). Phillips and Schweisfurth (2006) point out that education is observed as public good and therefore deserving of allocation of public investment. This is all because there is the assumption that there is a positive relationship between an

educated population and national development in all its forms. These assumptions underpin in particular the economic benefit of the human capital theory where education increases the employment skills, productivity and the earning power of individuals and therefore contributes to economic growth.

According to Akyeampong (2007), Ghana in the past 50 years has, on average, introduced one form of educational reform in every five years in response to a competitive market driven by the global economy. However, he argues that how the country utilises the knowledge and experiences from these reforms will determine the extent to which education and economic development will interact to achieve Ghana's goal to become a middle level income country by 2020. However, the Nelson Mandela Foundation (2005:141) argues that while 'education is a good in itself', it is a 'precondition for, though it may not be a guarantee of, wider economic and social development'. Yet, education is widely regarded as a 'weapon' against poverty and other forms of underdevelopment (Phillips and Schweisfurth, 2006). The former South African President, Nelson Mandela, having realised the huge economic and social disparities in South African society especially in the rural communities has, since 1990 facilitated the building of over 120 schools throughout the country in deprived areas. Out of Mr. Mandela's initiative, a foundation was set up and the work of the Foundation in support of rural schooling is based on the idea that 'rural education and its potential for development is deeply connected with problems of poverty in rural communities' (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005: viii). Despite this, the Nelson Mandela Foundation (2005:142) is cautious that 'For many, education cannot compensate for much deeper

economic and social inequalities – it is not a ladder out of poverty, it simply confirms one's status in life'. That is to say that, despite the human capital theory, education can be socially reproductive rather than investment for all. The Nelson Mandela Foundation also captured pupils' views on some aspects of their schooling which I have referred to in Chapter Three.

All too often, the benefits of mass education or schooling to society are highlighted while the negative contributions to society are ignored. Harber (2009) argues that schooling reproduces inequalities in society. Children from poor families attend poor schools and then often end up in poor, low status jobs or employment. It is only a small number of children from poor backgrounds that are successful in climbing up the ladder of social status. For example, in Britain, most of the political elite are the products of expensive private schools (Harber, 2009), while in Africa, political leaders send their children to foreign top schools or utilise expensive private schools to help retain the privileged positions of their families (Boyle, 1999). It is further noted that schooling not only reproduces society fundamentally as it is, but by the actions and inactions of educators, it can make the lives of individuals worse and harm society in general (Harber, 2004; Harber, 2009). Harber (2004) argues that the dominant model of schooling globally is authoritarian with pupils having very little say in what is learned, when, where or how. Moos (2004) therefore suggests that we must engage in research and discussion on the quality of school life, relationship between pupils and teachers, between teachers and school leaders and the link to local and national communities.

Harber (1997) points out that since there has been a return to democracy, from the 1990s, education should aim at democratic development that emphasises the importance of political culture and political socialisation. He, however, defines the two in these terms:

Political culture is the pattern of values and attitudes about politics held by a population which influences the ways in which a society's political institutions operate. Political socialisation is the process by which these values and attitudes are learned from various agencies such as the family, the mass media and the school (Harber, 1997:28).

Unfortunately, the kind of attitudes and values learned in Ghanaian schools may not be democratic. This study develops this theory in order to search for modern ways to inculcate values of political socialisation that reflect the current political culture in Ghana which is democracy.

5.4 Political Democratisation Theory

The political democratisation theory proposes a genuine political education for democracy where there is an attempt to create critical consciousness of political process by open, unbiased discussion, and analysis of a range of evidence and opinions. The aim of such education is not to indoctrinate pupils to specific kinds of political party ideals but to help them decide their political opinions for themselves on the basis of informed choice (Harber, 1997:37). The basis of this theory is that of the liberation theory by Paulo Freire, a renowned Brazilian educationist. Freire was opposed to, what he saw as knowledge transmission and banking education, which keeps intact the established status quo by oppressing pupils in schools. Freire (1968) promotes education for 'conscientisation' that develops critical consciousness, critical thinking, so that learners, as creative and active agents, can reconstruct or transform their societies. The key ideas

that constituted Freire's liberation theory are freedom, democracy and critical participation. Thus, he rejects the teacher-student dichotomy, suggesting that a deep reciprocity be inserted into our notions of teacher-student and student-teacher relationships (Freire, 1968).

However, Harber (2010) contends that throughout the history of schooling there has been a conflict between education for control in order to produce citizens and workers who were conformist and politically docile on the one hand, and those who wanted to educate for critical consciousness, individual liberation and participatory democracy on the other. While the latter approach has been popular among some policy makers and educational practitioners, the original purpose of schooling for control and compliance is deeply embedded in the dominant authoritarian model of schooling globally which is highly resistant to change (Harber, 2010). The question is: how long can we continue to do that before the time bomb explodes especially in the developing countries that have not made any particular effort for children's participation in their schooling? Democracy is inevitable, people will continue to fight for their rights and demand participation in decisions that affect them. The current revolution in the Arab nations in 2011 is an example. These recent trends of issues like the Arab spring have existed for more than half a century. As Mead put it:

The voiceless and the oppressed in every part of the world have begun to demand more power. Fourth-grade children conduct sit-ins and undergraduates claim the right to choose their professors. A profound disturbance is occurring in the relationships between the strong and the weak, the possessors and dispossessed, elder and younger, and those who have knowledge and skill and those who lack them. The secure belief that those who knew had authority over those who did not has been shaken (Mead, 1970:5)

The earlier political leaders forget their hidden agenda and actively involve citizens in the democratic process for the better as it might prevent unnecessary unrest and violence. Political democratisation in schools begins with empowering pupils' voice and participation and decision-making in schools.

5.5 Theorising Pupils' Voice

In this study, I posit pupils' voice in the context of the political democratisation theory and argue that making use of pupils' views and allowing them to participate in decision-making processes within schools is very important (Cox et al., 2010). According to Taylor and Robinson (2009), pupils' voice is a normative project and it has its basis in the ethical and moral practice which aims to give pupils the right of democratic participation in school processes. Robinson and Taylor (2007:8) argue that at the heart of theorising student voice, there are four core values which should be considered. These are:

1. A conception of communication as dialogue.
2. The requirement for participation and democratic inclusivity.
3. The recognition that power relations are unequal and problematic.
4. The possibility for change and transformation.

They argue that a greater understanding of the core values and their embedding in practice has the potential to enable improvements in schools in relation to some key issues of social justice. Although all the four core values underpin the theoretical framework of this study, more emphasis is paid to the core values (2) and (4) in promoting democratic participation in the practices of Ghanaian schools, while looking out for the transformative effect of school improvement.

In dealing with pupils' participation and democratic inclusivity in schools, there are key questions that should be raised: 'Who participates in pupil voice work? What is the nature of this participation? And in what areas of school life are children and young people able to have a say?' (Robinson and Taylor, 2007:10). The answers are needed for pupil voice work to be meaningful. It has been argued that some schools claim to be listening to the voices of pupils. However, in many instances, they are actually doing so in a tokenistic way (Robinson and Taylor, 2007; Hart, 1992). Robinson and Taylor (2007) maintain that in order to create a school in which there is democratic inclusivity, there needs to be ways of allowing all pupils to participate in school decision-making and making provision for multiple voices to be listened to, regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, behaviour and social class. However, one would have to be cautious as to whether student voice activity is helping the move towards the democratic inclusivity of pupils, or whether it is actually used as a means of control (Robinson and Taylor, 2007:11).

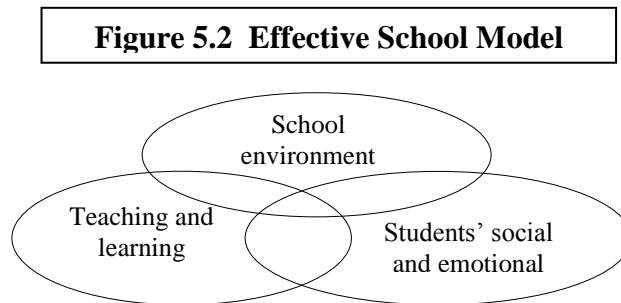
In the transformation effect of pupils' voice, Robinson and Taylor (2007) contend that listening to pupils itself is not sufficient, it is what happens with the information, what is done with it that makes the difference. That is the degree to which pupils' voice work is taken seriously and acted upon by schools. This proposes a move away from the tokenistic practices for which pupils may be given the opportunity to lead a consultation process on matters considered important by the pupils and as a result of their work. They may be able to effect changes in school policy and/or practice. Transformation is an important part of pupils' voice work, and schools need to be prepared to make changes as

a result of pupil consultations. The transformation process does not stop at school as pupils acquire skills and knowledge to participate in the future democratic processes in their nations for national development. These are some of the theoretical assumptions pertaining to this study that pupils' voice works are very limited in Ghana. In exploring some of the benefits of pupil participation, one would need a study like this that teases out practices and possibilities from the Ghanaian context, having in mind the cultural imperative and contextual framework of existing practices and policy implications. The ideals of pupils' voice and democratic participation which will be highly relevant in Ghana are the contributions to school effectiveness and improvement.

5.6 Pupils' Democracy and Effective Schools

Democratic schools can be compared to effective schools as similar in nature or perhaps the same. Most indicators of democratic schools overlap with that of effective schools. Davies and Yamashita (2007:5-6) categorised indicators of effective schools into three elements of school ethos/environment, enhancement of social and emotional competences and teaching and learning. School environment (ethos) is determined by factors within the school such as happiness, trust, feeling involved in decision-making, absence of insult and violence, low incidence of bullying and ability of students to communicate with teachers. The key factors associated with students' social and emotional competences include: communication skills, listening to others, self-esteem, cooperation, conflict resolution skills, negotiation skills, support skills and advocacy, and debate and dialogue skills. In learning and teaching, examples can be drawn from work ethic, teaching methods, expectations, teacher-student relationships, classroom interactions, teacher

support for learning and teacher and student attitude towards homework. Figure 5.2 represents the effective school model by Davies and Yamashita (2007:6).



One of the assumptions pertaining to this study is that democratic schooling leads to effective schooling, and the framework here provides a starting place for the investigation especially in the context of developing countries where there is stringency of resources. Harber and Muthukrishna (2000) argue that judging school effectiveness in the African context like the British-style league table would be nonsensical as schools vary from small, rural farm schools with virtually no facilities or resources other than the staff and pupils themselves, to certain schools in urban areas which can match schools in the developed world. However, the effective school model described above by Davies and Yamashita (2007) could be useful in a variety of contexts even where there is scarcity of resources. Dalin (2005:25) recounts his experience in many countries thus:

My interests in educational innovations led me to studies of educational reforms in all parts of the world, and I have probably more questions now than 30 years ago. How is it possible for a teacher with more than 70 children in the classroom, in the middle of the jungle of Sri Lanka, to perform wonderful project instruction, authentic learning for the children, without any external support and with only the very minimum of local materials?

Dalin therefore questions the motives of what is learnt in schools: the repetitions of what the teacher said, to learn that there is always one right answer, to be obedient and to stop questioning. These practices have existed in schools since the 19th century as argued earlier on in this chapter. However, Indonesian educators knew that this type of traditional instruction imported from (the worst of) western school systems would not be helpful to Indonesia if they want to develop. They therefore introduced *student active learning* as a principle for education and this is something they are still working on (Dalin, 2005:27).

On the other hand, while western nations and some developing countries are rethinking the old ways of doing things and shifting towards pupil democracy and participation in schools, some developing countries (including Ghana) remain adamant or ignorant and have kept to the old ways of educating for yesterday. Dewey in 1903 defined modern life as democracy, ‘democracy means freeing intelligence for independent effectiveness - the emancipation of mind as an individual organ to do its own work’ (Dewey, 1903:193). Dewey argued that until the emphasis changes to the conditions which make it necessary for pupils to take an active part in the personal building up of their own problems and to participate in methods of solving them (even at the expense of experimentation and error), the mind is not really freed (p201). In this era, where we need to build effective schools as well as developing pupils for democratic citizenship, the roles of pupils have to change dramatically by actively involving them in school effectiveness and improvement work, both at the classroom level as well as at the whole school level. Pupils need to experience the change process, acquire problem-solving skills,

communication skills, and leadership techniques and also learn to be members of a group. It is by participating in the change process in the '*democratic school laboratory*' that they can gain the security and strength to face an uncertain future (Dalin, 2005).

5.7 Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter, the theoretical framework was discussed by reviewing the existing theories: human capital and political modernisation, and their influence on formal education systems globally. Human capital theory has influenced how much governments invest in education.

While there is more interest in basic education, higher education has suffered a loss of funding. The implication is, not everybody will be able to afford higher education especially in developing countries therefore causing social inequality. Political modernisation theory has been responsible for most of the practices and functions of schooling recently. However, the functions of schooling have not changed from the 19th century social theories since schools were invented in the West. Therefore, the quest for schools producing modern citizens has led to the current nature of schooling which is still authoritarian in some instances while perpetrating violence.

This study proposes a reconsideration of the political democratisation theory which has been argued for some time now, and is becoming popular, but its impact on national policies is very low. What Dewey said in the early 20th century is still relevant in the early 21st century that 'modern life is democracy'. Therefore I argue in this study that the

modern citizen should learn and acquire modern values that are democratic. Formal education has a major role in the democratisation of modern citizens and therefore pupils' voice and participation should be encouraged in schools. The additional benefit of this democratic citizenship in schools is school effectiveness and improvement as argued in previous chapters. The next chapter discusses issues of research design and methodology.

CHAPTER SIX

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will focus on how the study was designed in order to construct knowledge from the research aims and the research questions. According to Creswell (2009) when planning a study, researchers need to think about the philosophical positioning (paradigm) that they bring to their research project, the strategy of inquiry relating to this paradigm and the specific methods or procedures of research that translate the approach into practice. Therefore, the next section explores the paradigms of this research. Further discussions will be centred on research design, methods and approaches for data collection as well as strategies for data analysis.

6.2 Research Paradigm

Dominant approaches to educational research rarely examine the philosophical underpinnings, specifically epistemological and ontological assumptions, in relation to the research process (Le Grange, 2002:36).

This section is a response to Le Grange's comments above and sets out to explore the philosophical underpinnings relating to the development of this research on education for democratic citizenship in Ghana. This research begins with the assumption that democracy should be promoted within schools and teacher education institutions, so that these trained teachers will be able to impart to children values, knowledge and skills that will enable them to practice democracy in their societies. The ontological issue here is whether democracy exists in our societies and in what ways democratic values should be learned by citizens. According to Le Grange (2002:36) 'democracy is a polysemous

term. It is a complex area of human understanding that cannot be reduced to a simple, fixed, unambiguous definition'. Le Grange's view is similar to what has been raised in Chapter Two - that there is no simple definition for democracy.

The context of this research is based in Ghana. Since this study deals with education for democracy that is political in nature, it is necessary to bring into perspective a brief political history of Ghana. After independence in 1957, Ghana suffered many political setbacks in relation to democracy. The leadership of the country from 1957 to 1992 were mostly military juntas since all the constitutionally elected governments were toppled by coup d'états. During these years, many people suffered human rights abuses and different levels of atrocities. According to Gyekye (1996), the record of African governments in the post-colonial era in matters of protecting and promoting the human rights of the citizens of their state has been very poor. He continued to express that:

There have been notorious and innumerable violations of human rights and lack of respect for human lives. Besides political murders, deprivations of civil and political rights have included detention without trial, sequestration of people's property, and state (or governmental) expropriations of individual and communally held land (Gyekye, 1996:149).

Some of these problems mentioned by Gyekye continue to exist in the midst of the fast changing democratic governance in Ghana. There are situations where the government in power uses judicial powers to witch-hunt their opponents under the vile propaganda of the 'rule of law'. African writers such as Gyekye and Fayemi have argued that there are so many problems with western multi-party democracy gaining ground in Africa, and therefore there should be African theory of democracy. Fayemi argues that:

An African theory of democracy must not only be a reflection of both traditional and contemporary African socio-cultural and ontological realities, but must also entail a critical avoidance of some misconceptions and inadequacies inherent in liberal democratic theory (Fayemi, 2009:120).

These debates have been centred on political systems, however little can be said about developing theories that will help political education and socialisation of young citizens in order to sustain democracy in Africa. My concern in this study is not with democracy as a political system, but rather with how democratic values can be reconstructed within social practices such as schooling. There should also be awareness that social practices in the western world will not be the same as those of Africa and therefore it is important that people's views are explored in social research on what is applicable to their context. For example, the notion of adults listening to children and involving them in decision-making might be problematic in Ghana. According to Pryor et al. (2005) African children have traditionally been brought up to be polite and quiet until asked to speak by adults. However, they argue that if the ideal is one of participatory democracy, then pupils should learn at school to question, to speak out and to debate.

However, before this stage of design, there are a further set of assumptions to be reflected upon and made explicit - assumptions about knowledge that will inform the study. There is the need to consider what 'theory of knowledge' (epistemology) will be adopted in the study. As shown in the previous chapters most of the sources of knowledge and theories that inform democratic education are mostly Western. There has also been some degree of interest of democratic education in post-apartheid South Africa. This study is empirical research into democratic education in Ghana which will contribute to the body of

knowledge in this field in sub-Saharan Africa. Recapping the four-fold research questions will help identify what kind of paradigm relates to this study for which data will be collected and transformed into knowledge. Ranson (2004) indicates that the research questions help to enable an investigation to be planned.

1. What are the connections between democratic education, pupils' voice and school improvement?
2. What are the views of pupils and teacher trainees on school improvement in Ghana?
3. What are the views of pupils and teacher trainees on how schools might be changed in a more democratic direction?
4. In the light of 1, 2 and 3 above, what are the views of teacher trainees as to the role teacher education should play in preparing teachers for greater democracy in schools?

Punch (1998) concluded that research questions:

- Organise the project, and give it direction and coherence.
- Delimit the project, showing its boundaries.
- Keep the researcher focused during the project.
- Provide a framework for writing up the project.
- Point to the data that will be needed.

(Punch, 1998: 38)

Considering the final point, research questions enable us to determine the type of data that will be needed. They also help in relating to epistemological positions and the type of design that will be used. How do we conduct research in relation to education for democracy? Every piece of empirical research involves the collection of data, either quantitative or qualitative. Ranson raises crucial questions thus:

Is knowledge regarded as hard, observable, tangible, convertible into quantifiable units, which suggests a quantitative methodology to collect measurable evidence? On the other hand, is the knowledge softer, more subjective, and deriving from insight and interpretation that requires a qualitative methodology to collect evidence of the meanings revealed in experience? (Ranson, 2004).

Reflecting on issues raised by Ranson above those that were raised in previous chapters, researching democracy will involve approaches that collect data on people's perceptions, experiences, practices and systems. Considering the development of this research, which is promoting education for democracy in Ghanaian schools and teacher education institutions, the design will be qualitative. For the qualitative researcher, multiple realities exist in a given situation: the researcher, those individuals being investigated, and the reader or the audience interpreting the study. The qualitative researcher needs to report faithfully these realities and to rely on the voices and interpretation of informants.

The qualitative paradigm is not a single entity but an umbrella term, which encompasses enormous variety. Some of the varieties and ideologies in qualitative research that may inform this study directly or indirectly are:

- Constructivism
- Hermeneutic/Interpretive Theory
- The Critical Theory Tradition

6.2.1 Constructivism: This is but one of many labels used to denote the current state of qualitative research (Robson, 2002). Robson (2002) points out that the constructivist researcher considers that the task of the researcher is to understand the multiple social constructions of meaning and knowledge. Hence, they tend to use research methods such as interviews and observation to help them to acquire multiple perspectives. In this research, I used both interviews and observation as the methods of data collection.

6.2.2 Hermeneutic/Interpretive Theory: social and educational research focuses on social practices. It assumes that all human action is meaningful and hence has to be interpreted and understood within the context of social practice (Usher, 1996). Usher argues that to explain the social world, we need to understand it, to make sense of it, and hence we need to understand the meanings that construct and are constructed by interactive human behaviour. In terms of placing my research within this tradition, making a meaning out of democracy by those being researched falls within the assumptions of the interpretive and hermeneutics. For instance, I have decided to use interviews and observations for the research methods, therefore whatever the respondents say or do has to be interpreted within the context and the theoretical perspective of the study.

6.2.3 The Critical Theory Tradition: This approach is ‘critical’ in the sense that it challenges both the positivist/empiricist and hermeneutic/interpretive traditions of social research. The term ‘critical’ refers here to detecting and unmasking of beliefs and practices that limit human freedom, justice and democracy (Usher, 1996:22). Usher (1996) contends that neither positivist research nor hermeneutic/traditions has an interest in research that changes the world in the direction of democracy, freedom and justice. Habermas (1972) therefore has isolated a third type of ‘knowledge-constitutive interest’, which he links with critical science, that is, an emancipatory interest. The knowledge interest involves the unmasking of ideologies that maintain the status quo by restricting the access of groups to the means of acquiring knowledge and raising consciousness or awareness about the material conditions that oppress them (Usher, 1996:22). Even though this study of developing democratic education in Ghanaian schools is academic

oriented, its aims are embedded within the principles of critical science theory which is emancipatory. By investigating democratic practices in Ghanaian schools and interviewing pupils and teacher trainees about what should be a democratic school, it creates the sense of awareness among them. Alternatively, this study could have been more emancipatory if an action research approach was to be used, but since this is a PhD study and I am now based in the UK it is less practicable. However, the strategies of data collection were designed in such a way as to involve the participants in certain aspects within the process of knowledge making. I therefore focus the discussion for the next section on research design.

6.3 Research Design

‘Design is concerned with turning research questions into projects’ (Robson, 2002: 79).

Robson points out that it is a crucial part of any enquiry, but it is often overlooked without any real consideration of the issues and possibilities. There is the need for a design or a structure before data collection or analysis can commence in any social research (de Vaus, 2001). de Vaus (2001) argues that a research design is not just a work plan. A work plan details what has to be done to complete a project but the work plan will flow from the project’s research design. He therefore contends that ‘the function of a research design is to ensure that the evidence obtained enables us to answer the initial question as unambiguously as possible’ (p9).

How the knowledge will be produced to answer the research questions requires the researcher to construct an investigation, a context of inquiry, which will allow the evidence to be generated, analysed and formulated as knowledge.

6.4 Methodology

In this study, a flexible qualitative design is used for the research processes with a multi-methods approach. Stephens (2005) recounts his experience of researching in a number of African cultural settings and argues that qualitative research methodology is a more suitable way forward than quantitative methodology. He further, suggests that researchers should be culturally sensitive and work as much as possible in the natural settings to conceptualise meanings in order to avoid impositions from elsewhere. This therefore requires a greater degree of flexibility concerning research design and data collection over the duration of the research project. Stephens further points out that in terms of methods, this indicates, for example, a preference for participant observation rather than experiments under artificial conditions, and preference for informal and less standardised interviews rather than for more standardised and formal ones (Stephens, 1998 and 2005).

According to de Vaus (2001) a qualitative approach will consist of different elements and different methods of data collection may be required for the different elements; a survey of students might be appropriate, observation of classrooms and staff meetings might also be worthwhile, while interviews might be a good way of gaining information from participants. An analysis of school records and archives could provide useful information about the historical context within which the school operates. de Vaus's statements here

provide a range of data collection strategies which could be used for this project. The study was a qualitative design where interviews were conducted on samples of pupils and teacher trainees. Sampled pupils were asked to write open-ended essays on how they would like to improve their schools. There were observation sessions conducted in the sampled schools and teacher training institutions.

6.5 Methods of Data Collection

Taking into consideration the aims of this project and the research questions, both secondary and primary data collection strategies were used. For the secondary data collection some evidence could be drawn from my previous MPhil thesis where I have already reviewed relevant education policies from Ghana. With regards to research question 1, available literatures have been explored in establishing the connections between school improvement and democratic education, putting some emphasis on pupils' views on schooling.

The strategies for primary data collection started with in-depth study observation of whole institutions of one basic school and one teacher training college (further details on selection and sampling to follow). The unique nature of observation as a research process offers researchers an opportunity to gather 'live' data from naturally occurring social situations. In this process, researchers understand the context of the study, to be open minded, to see things that might be unconsciously overlooked, to see things that participants will be reluctant to talk about in an interview situation (Cohen et al., 2007). Robson (2002) further contends that what people say may differ from what they do and

therefore observation provides a reality check. The other reason for the observations in this study was also to locate entry points to more democratic practices in Ghanaian schools and teacher education institutions.

Furthermore, mock school council meetings were held in six schools in Ghana, since school councils do not exist in basic schools in Ghana. I called them mock school councils because it is my own decision as a researcher to help pupils experience democratic practice within the school context. Schools involved in the research were not under any obligation to continue the council meetings after the study unless authorities thought it would be useful for them. Pupils were able to experience the decision-making process by electing representatives to represent them at these council meetings. The number of pupils elected for the mock school council depended on the number of classes in each year group from year 4 to year 6 in the Primary Schools and year 7 and year 8 in the Junior High School (JHS). At the time of my fieldwork in May/June 2010, the year 9 pupils had left school after completing their national Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) and hence they could not be covered.

Group interviews were then conducted with pupils in the six selected basic schools in Ghana (Basic School is six years Primary School and three years Junior High School). The interviews were conducted after the council meetings but pupils involved were not necessarily the councillors. Teachers helped me in the selection process. In each school, I conducted three group interviews (4 pupils in each group) and two individual interviews with teachers. In addition, eight pupils (volunteers) from each school wrote an open-

ended essay on their ideal school and how it could be achieved. In all the selected schools informal observations and diary notes were kept (Bell, 2010).

6.6 Sampling

This study is qualitative and the collection of data involves semi-structured interviews, ‘purposive sampling’ was considered appropriate. In purposive sampling researchers handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgement of their relevance to the study (in being typical, for example, or exemplary). In this way, they build up a sample that is satisfactory to their specific needs (Cohen and Manion, 2007). de Vaus (2001) argues that since cases are used for theoretical rather than statistical generalisation, there is little point in selecting samples because they are in some sense representative of some wider population. Nonetheless, there is still the need to use strategic selection of samples in order to identify the research context, which has particular characteristics.

In the context of this research, all the schools and colleges used were selected from the Ashanti Region of Ghana. This region was chosen for two reasons: firstly Ashanti Region is located in the middle belt of Ghana with Kumasi, the second largest city in Ghana as its capital. It serves as a transportation link to various locations in Ghana. Despite the strategic positioning of Kumasi in Ghana most of the educational researches are done in the southern part of Ghana where most of the universities dealing with education are based or the northern part of Ghana where the most deprived areas are (for example, Stephens, 1998; CRDD, 2001 and Pryor et al., 2005). The second reason is my insider

knowledge of the Ashanti Region as I have lived there from birth, through stages of education to the teacher training level and then worked as a teacher for three years. I bring into this study the perspective of the insider/outsider lens as I have been studying in the UK for almost a decade. Four of the basic schools in this study were picked from the city because of the typicality of the population in which one can find every ethnic group in Ghana represented in various suburbs. Two of the basic schools were picked from a rural township, to take into consideration the rural-urban differences that exist and to ensure some balance of representation. The Regional Manager of an Education Unit helped me to select the schools by giving me options to choose from. I presumed that those schools might have been high achieving and well-organised schools in order to be recommended by the Regional Manager. A College of Education was selected from the city and the other was picked from a rural township. Below are brief descriptions of the schools and colleges involved where pseudonyms have been used to represent them.

United Primary School: This school is in the city, one of the best schools in the Ashanti Region in terms of resources. It is located in a University Campus. Half of the pupils are children of university staff who do not pay fees, whereas the rest of the students are private and pay fees. The school seems to have better resources than all the other schools I visited and situated in a beautiful environment. I selected this school myself because a friend pointed out some good practices which would be of interest to the study. They have more than 1800 pupils. They have eight classes in each year group and therefore 24 pupils were elected to represent each of the classes from year 4 to year 6 for the mock school council meeting. The process could be described as democratic sampling because

in each class the pupils nominated two candidates to be voted for and the winner is by simple majority. The two main school prefects, the Boys Prefect and the Girls Prefect, had already been nominated and voted for by their respective classes.

Wisdom Primary School: This school is located near the city centre and attached to a college of education as their practice school. It is a very popular school with a population of 1100 pupils. They have three classes in each year group and therefore elected 2 pupils from each class, plus 2 school prefects for the school council. At the same compound but with a different headteacher, is the **Wisdom Junior High School**. It is another practice school for teacher trainees. Most pupils here are products of the Wisdom Primary School but pupils from the Wisdom Primary do not have automatic rights to be admitted. It is a very popular Junior High School (JHS) with 527 pupils. In this school, they had three classes in each year group. Two pupils were elected from each class in year 7 and year 8 for the school council. There were 12 representatives plus 2 school prefects.

Advanced Junior High School: This school is located in one of the densely populated suburbs of the city with people from diverse backgrounds. It was started as a private school by a church but later adopted by the government. They have a small compound and the school is surrounded by numerous local vehicle mechanics' fitting garages. The student population was 337, three classes per year group. Two pupils were elected to represent each class in both year 7 and year 8 that is 12 representatives plus 2 school prefects.

Adom Primary School and Adom Junior High School are schools based on a rural township about 35 minutes drive from the city. They are sister schools adjacent to each other with different headteachers. The primary school feeds the junior high school. These schools were recommended to me by the Regional Manager of Education Unit which presupposes that they might be good performing schools. Pupils' level of English speaking was good unlike typical rural schools in Ghana. Both schools had total population of around 800 pupils. Adom primary had two classes per year group. Two pupils were elected to represent each class, that is, 12 representatives and 1 school prefect; the other prefect had already been elected. Adom JHS had three classes for year 7 and two classes for year 8. They elected two representatives from each class, totalling 10 pupils, plus 2 school prefects for the school council.

Colleges of Education: Two colleges of education were selected, one of them in the city and the other rural. I have used pseudonyms for both of the colleges; the one in the city **Royal College** and that of the rural area **Akwaaba College**. I know Royal College very well and it was used for my previous research, and I wanted to know whether there had been changes in terms of democratic practices since I visited in 2006. Akwaaba College was located in a rural township about 45 minutes drive from the city. For the colleges of education, their locations do not represent where the teacher trainees come from. In Ghana, all the public teacher training colleges of education are boarding institutions where trainees come from various places for their teacher education. However, from my insider knowledge the rural teacher training college was picked because sometimes they have different ways of doing things since most of their resources fall short compared to

their city counterparts. The teacher training colleges in Ghana are three years post-secondary which is currently awarding 'Diploma in Basic Education'. According to my previous studies, one of the respondents had an experience in a rural training college where first year students were paired with the third year students. In this case the first year students are supposed to serve the so called 'seniors' by fetching water and sometimes washing their clothes for them while it is not like that in the other colleges in the city (Agyemang, 2007). Traditional values are also likely to be more prominent in rural areas (Harber and Davies, 1997).

Table 6.1 Tabular Representation of Respondents

Institutions	School councils No. of members	Interviews No. of respondents	Open-ended essay No. of respondents	Total
United Primary	24	12 (3 groups of 4)+2	8	46
Wisdom Primary	20	12 (3 groups of 4)+2	8	42
Adom Primary	13	12 (3 groups of 4)+2	8	35
Adom JHS	12	12 (3 groups of 4)+2	8	34
Wisdom JHS	14	12 (3 groups of 4)+2	8	36
Advance	14	12 (3 groups of 4)+2	8	36
Royal College		8	6	14
Akwaaba College		6	6	12
Total	97	98	60	255

The data collection processes involved the 97 pupils elected and took part in the mock school council meetings in their various schools. There were 18 group interviews involving a total of 72 pupils, 14 teacher trainees were interviewed individually and also 12 teachers participated in the individual interviews. The open ended essays had 48

pupils participating and 12 teacher trainees involved. The next sections explain why these data collection approaches were used and the various processes involved. I made a conscious effort to balance the gender representation in all cases in the data collection process.

6.7 Data Collection Processes

6.7.1 Whole Institution Observation

Wisdom Junior High School: One of the four schools involved in the study was selected for in-depth whole-school observation. The choice of this school was due to the fact that it is a demonstration school which is used frequently for teaching practice by teacher trainees from the Royal College. I observed keeping in mind indicators of democratic schools (see Section 4.3 in Chapter Four) and other general issues that come across in schools. For example: the place of pupils in the school decision-making, relationships, teaching and learning methods, daily practices in schools and hidden curriculum. Are there any promising good practices of democracy? The observations were unstructured and most of them were an informal observation of events as they occurred. However, I formally observed four lessons in this school. I also checked for school prospectus, punishment books, teaching materials, notices on walls and minutes from any committee meeting if there were any.

Royal College, one of the two teacher training colleges involved in the project, was sampled as a case study for in-depth whole-institution observation. I selected this college because I had much insider knowledge of the practices within this college as I was trained

there as a teacher and wanted to know how much had changed since I left in 1999 and last visited for my previous research in 2006. I observed the daily practices of teacher trainees in the college. I looked for specific things like their contributions to decision-making processes, grievance procedures, teaching and learning methods and relationships. Are there any good practices of democracy? Few lessons were observed formally and most of the observations were informal in order to see phenomena as they naturally occurred.

6.7.2 Mock School Councils

School councils as indicated in the literature review are one of the most useful structures or entry points toward student participation. It is therefore relevant to discover whether a similar structure will work in basic schools in Ghana. Whilst trying mock school councils in all the six schools involved in the study, they were also used as a data collection strategy where pupils' views on school improvement were made known and how pupils could contribute to solve issues. I was also interested in how pupils can use and acquire skills for the democratic process, for example, debating skills, tolerance to other pupils' views and problem solving skills. The qualifying level to be part of the school council starts from year 4 in primary schools and all classes in Junior High Schools. In each school representatives were elected from each class as indicated in the sampling section.

The mock school council meetings did not follow strict procedures of formal meetings with agendas as this was the first kind of meeting most of the councillors had attended.

One school council meeting was held in each school. A set of questions were given to the councillors to engage with while I observed and acted as a facilitator:

- How might school councils improve schools? Who would be on them, how might they be chosen and how would they work?
- If you are in the school council over the next year, how would you improve your school? What would you improve? And how would you do it?
- The council should come out with a minimum of five realistic recommendations on projects they will embark on.

I was present as a facilitator and observer in all the school council meetings. In each council meeting I guided them to elect the chair and the secretary and explained their roles to them. The meetings were very successful and the secretaries of each council provided me with the minutes (written reports) afterwards.

6.7.3 Interviews Process

Robson (2002:272) points out that:

The interview is a flexible and adaptable way of finding things out. The human use of language is fascinating both as behaviour in its own right, for the virtually unique window that it opens on what lies behind our actions. Observing behaviour is clearly a useful enquiry technique, but asking people directly about what is going on is an obvious short cut in seeking answers to our research questions.

The process of interviewing respondents about their past and current experience takes time and requires accumulation of understanding and rapport. Such intricate and embedded phenomena are certainly not accessible by questionnaire or other survey methods (Schweisfurth, 1999).

A semi-structured interview approach was used whereby answers given from the initial questions were followed by probes (Wragg, 1994). These types of interviews allow the

respondents to express themselves at some length, but offer enough shape to prevent aimless rambling (Wragg, 1994). This is what Creswell (1994) terms the researcher “control” over the line of enquiry. A major advantage to this approach of data collection is that it enables respondents to express their ideas on issues and contribute to how these ideas can be developed, rather than imposing an external structure as is the case in closed-question questionnaires (Barnett et al., 1995). This signifies that using interviews to research education for democracy is a step in the right direction by making respondents' views known without undue constraint. The interview process was initially piloted by using telephone interviews of four pupils, two teachers and two teacher trainees in Ghana. This enabled me to check my interview skills and the appropriateness of some of the questions.

The interviews were conducted in their respective schools and colleges. The teachers and teacher trainees' interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis for about 40 minutes on average. There were group interviews for the pupils up to 60 minutes in duration. According to Cohen et al. (2007) interviewing children in groups helps them to interact among themselves rather than give simple answers to adult questions and it is also less intimidating than individual interviews. All interviews were conducted in English but asked participants to feel free if there was something that they could express better in the local language. All interviews were audio recorded. I did not want to waste their time with unnecessary rambling and was fully prepared with all the interview questions and the equipment to be used at hand. Robson (2002) points out that whenever feasible, interviews should be audio-recorded. The tape provides a permanent record and allows

you to concentrate on the interview. The respondents also had the right to refuse the recording. The interview questions were designed in response to the research questions and after consulting appropriate literature on pupils' voice and democracy in education. There were some pre-specified questions which every respondent was asked (see Appendix B for the detailed questions). The questions were followed by some probes depending on answers given by the respondent.

6.7.4 Open-ended Essay Questions

In order to minimise the demerits of interviewing, pupils and teacher trainees were given another way to express themselves freely without anybody controlling them. Cohen et al. (2007:330) point out that an open-ended question can 'catch the authenticity, richness, depth of response, honesty and candour' which are the hallmarks of qualitative studies instead of only ticking numbers and boxes. In the basic schools participants were volunteers from year 4 to 6 who missed out on both the mock school councils and the group interviews. Participants from the colleges of education were also volunteers. Pupils, in their open-ended essay question, were asked to discuss things they most enjoy in school and those they do not. They were also asked to describe their ideal school and how such a school might be achieved. Likewise, teacher trainees were made to reflect on their experiences at the colleges of education and in their open-ended essay were asked to discuss things they most enjoy in college and those they do not. Teacher trainees were also made to think ahead about their teaching career and describe the ideal school they would like to teach in and how such a school might be achieved.

This process of data collection gave other pupils and teacher trainees, who had not been interviewed, a chance to express their views which then formed part of triangulation and rigour of this study. The study aims to reach valid conclusions and therefore multi-method approaches were very useful.

6.8 Strategies of Data Analysis

All the data collected on audiotapes was fully transcribed, respondents were contacted to verify whether some of the statements were a true reflection of their views and made ready for analysis. Vulliamy et al. conclude that:

Analysis seems to involve, primarily, two things: decisions, judgements and choices about what is, or does not appear to be, important or meaningful; and the generation of insights that assist the researcher in the construction of an argument that makes sense of experience - whether recorded on paper, recording tape, or in the mind of those involved, researcher included (Vulliamy et al., 1990: 216).

Data analysis is one of the most difficult aspects of the research process but considering the Vulliamy et al. assertion above, how do these decisions and judgements begin? I believe that the aims and objectives of the research should play an important role in the analysis as well as the research questions. As a fresh researcher, it is very difficult to locate the type of process one is going to use in the analysis of the data. Punch (1998) argues that due to the richness and complexity of qualitative research, there are different ways of looking at and analysing social life, and therefore multiple perspectives and practices emerge in the analysis of qualitative data. This means that there is no single right way to do qualitative data analysis (Robson, 2002).

The type of analysis that was used in this study could be described as content analysis of transcripts. Content analysis can be described as a systematic, replicable technique for compressing many words from written data into a few categories based on explicit rules of coding (Bell, 2010:132). Cohen et al. (2007:475) defines content analysis as ‘a strict and systematic set of procedures for the rigorous analysis, examination and verification of contents of written data’. It is basically the process of summarising and reporting a data set, interpreting and making meanings out of the many words within the text into a lesser content (Bell, 2010; Cohen et al., 2007). All the data from the interview transcripts, open-ended essays, notes from the in-depth observations (including the informal ones and diaries) and minutes from the school council meetings were closely read to identify themes and categories. A coding system was developed in order to determine similar answers. Some of the key codes were determined by the research questions and also from the initial reading of the data by colour coding some key texts. After identifying these codes the data was repeatedly read to attach comments to each of them regarding what the interviewee said about them.

A more critical analysis was made to identify whether new categories would emerge from the observation data. This was done in a more abstract way by exploring some of the principles of democracy and as the key codes for analysis. Some of the fundamental basic principles pertaining to democracy are:

- Rights
- Participation
- Equity
- Informed Choice

(Davies et al., 2002)

The data were tested with these principles in order to determine whether any of the experiences given by the respondents could be classified as democratic or not. A matrix was drawn to show the interrelationships between the fundamental principles and how different actors in schools such as pupils, teachers and headteachers behave and act in their various schools. The matrix will help in drawing conclusions on how democratic schools in Ghana are. It will also help to determine entry points for more democratic practices. The data from the teacher trainees went through the same processes but the findings were analysed separately from the schools.

6.9 Triangulation

The data collection in this study is a multi-method approach known as triangulation (Bell, 2010). Triangulation techniques in social science explain more fully the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint, and thereby using different research approaches to achieve one objective (Cohen et al., 2007:147). Therefore, the focus of this study was to explore the views of pupils and teacher trainees on school improvement and democratic education both at the school level and the teacher education colleges. Methodological triangulation techniques were used; four different data collection strategies to study the schools and three different methods at the college of education level. Cohen et al. (2007:141) argue that heavy reliance on only one method in this type of study will bias or distort the researchers' picture of a particular slice of reality under investigation. Triangulation is very useful in reaching valid conclusions, as in this study findings from the various approaches complement each other and confirm the validity of the data. Osborn (2001) contends that when researching

young people in any method, the presence of researchers in the setting might influence the authenticity of the findings to some extent, therefore such a problem will be minimised as much as possible by using multiple methods.

6.10 Reliability and Validity

According to Bell (2010) all selected data collection strategies in a research study need to be examined critically in order to assess the extent to which they are likely to be reliable and valid. Reliability is ‘the extent to which a test or procedure produces similar results under constant conditions on all occasions’ (Bell, 2010:119). It is obvious that in qualitative research, no two research settings will be under the same conditions at all times. Cohen et al. (2007) regard reliability in qualitative research, the extent of trustworthiness of the collected data and what actually occurs in the natural setting that is being researched. They therefore argue that reliability in this context does not strive for uniformity, as two researchers who are studying a single setting may come up with different findings but both sets of findings might be reliable.

The key to effective research is validity, and therefore it is important for researchers to strive to maximize validity and minimise invalidity in their findings though it is almost impossible for research to be 100 per cent valid (Cohen et al., 2007). Bell (2010:119) points out that the usual definition of validity is whether a particular instrument measures or describes what it is supposed to measure in a study. However, she argued that this is rather vague and leaves many questions unanswered, while Cohen et al. (2007) point out that validity has taken many forms recently. In relation to the qualitative data, Cohen et

al. (2007) state that validity might be addressed through the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participants approached, the extent of triangulation and the disinterestedness or objectivity of the researcher. In this study, apart from the methodological triangulations, I used different kinds of wording with the same meaning in the group interviews and the open-ended essays to explore the views of pupils. For example, in the interviews, I asked pupils about what makes them happy in school and what does not, while in the essays I asked them to write about things they enjoy in school and those they do not. Furthermore in the interviews, I asked pupils about the suggestions they have for the teachers and the headteachers for school improvement and in the essay the additional question was for pupils to describe their ideal school and how such a school might be achieved. These questions were diverse but they were all exploring school improvement issues and they all generated a similar response. One of the main purposes of group interviews was to listen to pupils' views on school improvement issues but teachers' interviews were added to the procedures in order to validate the children's views.

In the children's group interviews, I made it as informal as possible sitting under trees sometimes without proper chairs but on the big roots of the tree and assuring them about their confidentiality and anonymity. Hopefully, this meant that pupils connected to me easily and opened up with a true reflection of their daily experiences in schools. My insider identity also helped me to connect with the teachers as I told them about my background when I qualified as a teacher in Ghana. They did not see me as a threat and therefore did not influence their working behaviour. For instance when passing by a

group of teachers sitting under the shade of a tree, they could call me for a chat about my research. In the teacher training it was a similar experience especially at the Royal College where I was trained as a teacher; they considered me as part of the college. Tutors who taught me during my teacher training were really proud of me, and quite often stopped me when passing by a class to encourage the current teacher trainees. As indicated earlier on, pupils involved in the study, especially the interviews, were provided with feedback after transcription in order to verify the true nature of their responses. All the quotations attributed to the pupils in the discussion of the findings were quoted verbatim without correcting language errors, even when the expression was colloquial or a direct translation from a Ghanaian language into English. This is because I did not want to change the true meaning of their views and the flavour of their spoken language.

6.11 Ethical Issues

According to BERA (2004:4) 'all educational research should be conducted within an ethic of respect for: the person, knowledge, democratic values, the quality of educational research and academic freedom'. My first hurdle was to seek approval of the study from the University of Birmingham, College of Social Sciences Ethical Review Committee. I went through rigorous questioning on research ethics issues and also had to redraft the participants' information sheets and consent form several times before approval.

I had to consider these ethical issues during the data collection processes in Ghana. Firstly, I presented a letter of introduction from the University of Birmingham to the Regional Manager of Education Unit to seek consent and access to the schools and

institutions involved in this research. The Regional Manager helped me with the selection of schools and then provided me with a letter of introduction to the schools. In all the six schools and two colleges, I asked permission from the authorities (gatekeepers) before commencing the data collection. Further, voluntary informed consent was sought from each of the respondents involved in the study and also the parents of the minors involved.

In this study, most of the data collected involved pupils' views on schools which reflected on their personal experiences. Some of the information gathered might also contain stories about teachers, headteachers, principals, and colleagues. It was therefore necessary to assure the participants of their anonymity and confidentiality in this study. de Vaus (2001) points out that most social or education research involves collecting personal information which, if made public, could affect the respondent one way or the other. He further states that:

If participants are confident that their responses are truly confidential (or even better if they are anonymous) we can expect that people are more likely to participate in the study - especially if it is about private matters. We can also expect that if a person feels that their answers are truly confidential they will be more likely to provide frank and honest answers (p87).

Providing assurances of confidentiality is crucial for methodological as well as ethical reasons. Each of the respondents was given assurance of anonymity and confidentiality before the interviews, open-ended essay and the school council meetings. All potential participants were advised that they were free to opt out of the research if they were not happy. One of the pupils elected as a representative for the school council at United Primary withdrew from the studies and had to be replaced through another election.

6.12 Practical Problems and Limitations of the Study

The main practical problem for this project was the amount of travelling and cost involved. This is because the researcher had to travel from Birmingham (UK) to Ghana, for which the airfare was expensive. Since the data collection was made in eight educational institutions, I had to travel across the city to the various institutions and also journey to and from the schools and the college in the rural area during the entire period of my stay in Ghana.

There are some limitations in this study that need to be recognised and possibly addressed in future research. This study is a self-funded PhD project and therefore has limited funds to explore further interesting areas that came up in the data collection process. For example, parents could have been consulted for their views on democratic education but in order to keep the data manageable, I decided to concentrate on pupils, teacher trainees and teachers. Furthermore, this study involved six basic schools and two colleges of education in the Ashanti Region of Ghana therefore some general conclusions within reason can be made, but would have to be cautious of making bigger claims of the findings. Moreover, this study could be replicated in other regions in Ghana and have similar findings since practices in schools and teacher training colleges are similar.

6.13 Summary of the Chapter

The principles of this study fall within the qualitative paradigm. I argued that democracy as a social reality is multiply constructed and therefore there are different notions and

definitions within particular contexts. However, democracy is a universal phenomenon of which there are fundamental values, principles and ethos that should be applicable in various contexts. This study seeks the role of formal education in promoting democratic citizenship in a globalised world. However, these types of study are popular in western literature but limited in developing countries especially Africa.

This chapter further discussed a flexible qualitative study using a multi-methods approach in six basic schools and two colleges of education in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The strategies of data collection were: in-depth observation of two education institutions, interviews with pupils, teachers and teacher trainees and open-ended essay writing. Pupils from each school wrote open-ended essays on how they wanted their schools to improve. Teacher trainees were also asked to write open-ended essays on their ideal school and how it might be actualised. In addition, mock school council meetings were held in the six selected basic schools. The next chapters discuss the findings of this research.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS: PUPILS' AND TEACHER TRAINEES' VIEWS ON SCHOOLING AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present and discuss the findings of the data collected in relation to research questions 1, 2 and 3. The first part of this chapter will report and discuss pupils' general views on schooling based on the findings of the pupils' interviews and the open-ended essay they wrote about schools. The interviews and the open-ended essay questions were designed in such a way for pupils to share their views on things they enjoy most in schools and those they do not, and also how they want their schools to improve. The latter part of the chapter presents reflections of teacher trainees on their school days and their views on how basic schools in Ghana could be improved. As stated earlier in the previous chapter, those views presented here reflect the general perceptions of pupils in the six schools and also teacher trainees in the two colleges of education involved in the study. Not all of the findings have immediate relevance to the question of education and democracy, but subsequent discussions will attempt to draw out links. This granting of voice to pupils is also in line with the general principles of this study, regardless of the themes of their responses.

The sequence of the findings will not necessarily be which questions came first in the interviews but depends on the themes that emerged after rigorously listening to the recorded tapes and also reading over and over again the transcribed interviews and open-ended essays by pupils. Since the interviews were fully transcribed, some of the quotes

by respondents that will be used in this chapter will remain exactly what they said. It is likely some of the quotes may contain grammatical errors, 'Ghanaian English', and some colloquial expressions but this decision was taken in order not to change the meaning of what they said, and to keep the flavour of the spoken language.

These findings will be backed-up by reflections of some pupils' views shared in the interviews and also with the written essays. The names of the schools are pseudonyms as they are indicated in the various quotes.

7.2 Pupils' Views on their Schooling

There is a growing body of research on the topic of pupils' voice; however, most of this research has been done in developed countries. One of the aims of this study was to provide an opportunity for pupils in Basic Schools in Ghana to contribute their views on aspects of their schooling experiences and how those experiences could be improved. Pupils in this study grabbed the opportunity offered them and shared their views through group interviews and open-ended essays on diverse issues, and some are presented below.

7.2.1 Future Employment: This study was the first of its kind in the six schools involved and therefore pupils were excited to share with me, in both interviews and the open-ended essays, what they thought about their schools and schooling in general. All the pupils who participated in the study were very positive about schooling in general. They regarded schooling as a way to a brighter and better future:

I am happy in coming to school every day because we want to achieve our future goals so that we will be better people to serve our country (pupil, Advanced JHS - essay).

When I come to school, I will be learning and it will make me a better person in serving my country (pupil, Advanced JHS - interview).

I feel proud of myself as a person because my parents have sent me to school and I will have a great future (pupil, Wisdom JHS -interview).

I am happy to come to school to learn hard and have a better life in future (Adom JHS - interview).

In a group interview at Wisdom Primary School they were of the same opinion about their future prospects:

Pupil: We have the potentials, so we come to schools to improve on it to become better people in future like some stars like Michael Essien, Tyson Gay and Usain Bolt.

Pupil: As my brother said we come to school to improve our potentials and the main things that make me happy is motivation from the teachers. We know that we are coming to school to achieve our goals in future.

Pupil: Here is a mini-home but we also obtain knowledge and skills like Professor Frimpong Boateng (Popular politician and cardiovascular surgeon in Ghana).

In Ghana, pupils' expectation of schooling is very high. As indicated in the statements above, one even needs to go through the education system to become a sports star. Pupils did believe that it is the knowledge and skills gained in school that will propel them to achieve their future goals:

I come to school to acquire knowledge; the knowledge acquired can send me everywhere (pupil, Advanced JHS - interview).

Acquisitions of knowledge make pupils come to school, if you absent yourself you miss a lot for your future (pupil, Advanced JHS - interview).

We get more knowledge and wisdom in learning, no one is perfect so we can learn more to improve on what we know already (pupil, United Primary - interview).

When I come to school I come to learn new things that I have never heard before and expose me to things I don't know (pupil, Wisdom JHS - interview).

There is a saying that 'knowledge is power' - pupils have greater awareness of what they will learn at school and what will become of it. This confirms what Sherman (1996) reported in her study, that even five-year-olds who have just started school in reception class know the reasons why they are in school and what is expected of them. It is important teachers work with them so that these high hopes will not change for them to become rebels and be highly critical of school (Blisshen, 1969; Burke and Grosvenor, 2003).

Reflecting on what they have said earlier on, their comments suggest a general sense of duty to serve their country with the knowledge and skills acquired while at school. Pupils also spoke about their individual ambitions and career choices and those things that inspire them to learn:

I come to school because I want to achieve my aim; I want to be a doctor (pupil, Adom Primary - interview)

I want to learn hard and have brighter future I want to become a newscaster (news presenter) (pupil, Adom JH- interview)

I come to school to achieve my goal in future; I want to be a Journalist (pupil, Adom JHS - interview).

I sometime see people like the president on television and some children as well. I know that if I learn hard I can achieve the same level as them (pupil, Wisdom JHS -interview).

The economic function of schooling is paramount here as pupils link their success in education to prospects in the job market. Most of the pupils were of the view that their future success depends largely on how well they do in school.

7.2.2 Social Functions of the School

There are other things which pupils indicated they enjoy most at school. Most of the respondents want to go to school to meet their friends and play with them. In a group interview at Adom Primary School respondents talked about activities they enjoy with friends thus:

Pupil:we enjoy ourselves when is break time, we go for break and play with our friends, when is break over we come to the classroom to learn and these make pupils happy in school.

Pupil: Some pupils' friends live far from them so when they come together they play and that make pupils happy in coming to school every day.

Pupil: When we come together, we play all kinds of games

Pupil: When we stay at home, we don't have anything to do, so we have to come to school to see our friends.

The responses here clearly indicate that pupils are aware of the social function of the school as a place where you have the chance to socialise and meet your friends. While pupils play and interact with friends, they fulfil the socialisation aspect of schooling because social interaction, that is playing and sharing with others, helps pupils in their social skills and emotional development. At least, pupils also have some reasons that motivate them to come to school every day. For example, some said:

My friends make me happy, especially those who sit beside me and behind me (Pupil, United Primary - essay)

Sometimes when you are at home, you don't have people to play with but at school there are friends to play with (Pupil, Adom JHS - interview).

At home you feel lonely but when you come to school you make friends with other pupils (Pupil, Adom JHS - interview)

We have a lot of fun at long breaks; we sing and play football (Pupil, United Primary - interview).

Furthermore, to the question of what makes pupils happy in school, pupils like to be with their friends not for playing alone but also for learning and peer tutoring, as some respondents indicated that sometimes when teachers teach and they do not understand, their friends could help them as seen in the following statements:

I am happy when I come to school because when a teacher teach and I do not understand my friends are always there to help me (Pupil, United Primary - interview)

I am happy with mates learning together and sharing common ideas together, I want to work hard to achieve my goal (Pupil, Wisdom JHS - interview)

When I come to school I don't feel shy because there a lot of pupils you can learn with (Wisdom JHS - interview)

However, the fact of this matter is pupils may have to find their own way of doing peer tutoring, perhaps during break times or after school, as I observed that pupils talking to each other in lessons are not acceptable to teachers while group activities are very limited.

Pupils also expressed their deep interest in Physical Education and sporting activities like playing football matches with other schools. They made mention of quizzes, competitions

and cultural practices like dancing ‘Adowa’ and ‘Kete’. ‘Adowa’ and ‘Kete’ are types of traditional drumming and dancing among the Akan ethnic group in Ghana. It seems here that there is plenty for children to come to school for and some pupils made it clear that it is not their choice in missing school. Some said:

I don’t want to miss school because if I miss a lesson, when I am absent from school... I find it difficult to understand what the teacher taught (Pupil, Adom JHS - interview).

I am not happy when I don’t come to school. My friends make me happy; I play football with friends (Pupil, Adom Primary - interview).

When you are financially supported you always want to come to school but if you have to beg for money before coming to school or buying something, you always question, ‘oh why am I in school?’ (Pupil, Advance JHS - interview).

After listening to the interviews over and over again and reading the transcribed version and the open-ended essays from pupils, they articulate views on schooling and yet for these children this was the first time somebody had been interested in their views. These pupils’ views could be incorporated for school improvement. In the next section the discussion will focus on issues that pupils are not happy about in school and thus need to be raised for changes that will help schools to improve.

7.3 Pupils’ Voice about School Improvement

According to Rudduck and Flutter (2000) pupils are observant and have a rich but untapped understanding of processes and events of which, when harnessed, could be very beneficial to schools. Therefore, pupils were asked both indirect and direct questions in order to identify issues or cultures for change in schools for improvement purposes. In the open-ended essays and some parts of the interview questions, pupils were asked to

describe what they enjoy in school and what they do not and what can be done to improve their schools. The questions of what they enjoy in school have been discussed in the previous section. Here, the discussions are focussed on some of the things Ghanaian pupils are not happy about in their schools, most of which could be easily dealt with within their schools, and they have been categorised under the following themes.

7.3.1 Inadequate Facilities and Resources

Most pupils were not happy about the facilities and resources available for them in schools. All the six schools involved in the study had problems with their classroom blocks as pupils complain of overcrowding in less spacious classrooms which contain more than fifty pupils in a class, especially in the city schools. Wisdom JHS and United Primary are among the top performing schools in the city, yet pupils complain that they have to vacate some of the classrooms when there is a heavy downpour of rain. There are similar situations in other schools as the following indicate:

Sometimes when it rains it comes through the window so I don't feel good coming to school on rainy days (Pupil, United Primary - interview).

We have poor infrastructure, poor building which is degrading the good name of the school, this is true because, the building and roofing are very poor. In most cases when it rains we even find it difficult to learn (Pupil, Advance JHS - essay).

The situation was described worse in the rural school Adom JHS:

Our school building is not good, for example if we are in the class and it is raining, it pass through the holes in the roofing and enters the classroom, so it disturb us from learning... wooding pillars supporting the roof on the verandas have broken and nothing supports the roof except the walls. New ones are needed to save the roof from being blown off by a rainstorm (pupil, Adom JHS - interview).

As indicated in the literature review, these situations are common elsewhere in Africa (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005). Adom JHS is the only school to have a library block among the six schools but the children complained that it is also leaking. When I asked the head teacher about the leaking roof in an informal conversation, instead of looking for a solution, she blamed the town folk for causing that problem because it was an NGO that built the Library. When it was time for them to roof the building, the leaders in the town asked them to do it in such a way that they could build another block on top in the future, but they never did.

What is paramount in many Ghanaian public schools is a lack of resources for learning, which most of the respondents pointed out. Pupils have to study ICT in the Ghana national curriculum for basic schools but there are no computers in many schools. Out of the six schools in this study only one had a computer lab, and pupils in that school complained there were not enough computers for each individual pupils. The case of mismatch between pupils' aspirations and the organisation of schooling appeared on many issues. As discussed in earlier sections, many pupils have the desire to achieve but the conditions are not right in terms of facilities and resources. Yet, as discussed in Chapter Two, through the 2015 Education Strategic Plan, the Ministry of Education is to provide facilities to ensure that all citizens are functionally literate and self-reliant. One of the guiding principles associated with service provision is 'efficient management of resources' which does not appear so in these relatively high achieving schools in the study.

Furthermore, respondents spoke about inadequate teaching and learning materials in their lessons and due to the fact that lessons are didactic, lack investigation in practice. In a group interview at Wisdom Primary pupils discussed these issues as seen in the following:

Pupil: we don't have computers to make us understand ICT, if teachers say click the mouse and you can, it help you to understand the lesson. We can't only use the book, if your parent don't have computer, it means that you can't learn anything.

Pupil: here the teaching have been orally and lack of investigation, so if you are teaching soil, we see soil all the time but we need to use equipment to separate the types of soil.....

Pupil: we don't have science laboratory for experiment.

Pupil: we don't have library so that we can go and sit down and read.

We do not have good teaching materials like teachers' ruler, chalkboard and some other more. Sometimes students even take their handkerchief to clean the chalkboard which is very dangerous (Pupil, Advanced JHS - essay).

The issues raised here by the pupils confirmed the findings of Dull (2004), that the autocratic nature of classrooms in Africa is due to lack of teaching and learning materials. 'Teachers for Africa' volunteers contended that provisions of learning resources will help teachers to change from didactic presentation of lessons to democracy. This is because teachers using teaching and learning materials will presumably practice hands-on learning and engage pupils in cooperative activities (Dull, 2004).

In this study, teachers were also interviewed for their views on school improvement and also for the purpose of confirming some of the issues pupils have presented in their data.

Some of the teachers, especially in the city schools, were deeply worried about lack of resources and equipment for effective teaching and learning. They said:

In this school we have more than 50 pupils in each class; we have up to 80 to 90 pupils in each class. I suggest that the government or Parent Teacher Association (PTA) should do something about it by putting new structures so that there should be at most 40 pupils in a class to reduce the burden of teachers (teacher, Wisdom Primary).

In this school we have no computer lab, if you are teaching there are no equipment and facilities to teach effectively. At the moment PTA is putting a structure over there (pointed to new building block) as the computer lab and the MP has promised to deliver computers when the building is completed but it won't be enough. I want parents to contribute more towards the facilities. We are so choke in the classroom, I am teaching over 75 pupils in my class. I wish the number of pupils is reduced because the intake is very great; we need to run two shifts or have more facilities (teacher, Wisdom Primary).

When it comes to the teaching aspects I think we should have more teaching and learning materials to help the children understand better (teacher, Adom JHS).

From my observations, teachers are doing little to resolve these problems. Most of the schools in this study, even the rural schools, are close to senior high schools, colleges of education and universities which all have science laboratories, libraries and computer clusters, and teachers could arrange to pay regular study visits to these institutions but that is not their regular practice. There are also Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) in these schools and most Ghanaian schools but when I probed all the respondents as to whether pupils are invited to PTA meetings in their schools to at least present their needs, they all responded 'no'. Perhaps the education system does not emphasise training pupils to be innovative, problem solvers or independent, but rather producing pupils overly dependent on authorities.

7.3.2 Sanitation and Hygiene

Most of the respondents did not like littered and dirty compounds and yet there are no dustbins in any of the schools to prevent pupils littering the compound. It is the responsibility of the pupils to sweep their compounds and classrooms every morning before lessons, and pupils complained that after sweeping they have no dustpan and brush to collect the gathered rubbish and therefore they have to use their hands to pick the rubbish up, and yet they have no access to water to wash their hands. Some said:

Our sanitation is very poor because we lack dustbins and also we don't have places of convenience such as urinals and toilet places. Student litter around and urinate around the school which makes the environment very dirty..... and it does not promote good health to the body (pupil Advanced JHS - essays)

The whole school is very untidy, every corner is littered with pieces of papers, plastics and waste materials. Aside this, gutters in my school are choked with solid materials; most of my friends have turned their immediate surroundings into refuse dumps (pupil, Wisdom JHS - interview).

While most respondents in the schools in the city talked about dirty and smelly toilets in their schools which make their uniform smell, three schools have no toilet facilities except urinal facilities:

We don't have water flowing through our WC and it makes it difficult when you want to ease yourself. Some pupils also urinate on the floors (pupil, United Primary - interview).

In our class too we don't have washing basin to help us wash our hands (pupil, United Primary - interview).

In this situation contagious diseases can spread like wild fire. Another problem that respondents pointed to was that most of the food items sold in their school were not well

covered and so it is very common to see house flies running over the food items. This leads to an outbreak of diseases such as diarrhoea.

7.3.3 Language Policy and Bullying

In May 2002, Ghana introduced a policy which mandates the use of English language as the medium of instruction from primary one (grade one), to replace the use of a Ghanaian language as the medium of instruction for the first three years of schooling, and English as the medium of instruction from primary four (grade four). Therefore, each of the six schools in the study had a policy that children should speak only English when at school. All the schools displayed boldly a SPEAK ENGLISH sign on their walls. Most of the respondents believed that their school would be judged to be good by outsiders if pupils spoke good English and were concerned about widespread speaking of Ghanaian languages in their school. The dominant Ghanaian language spoken in the Ashanti Region of Ghana where the study took place is Twi (Ashanti). One pupil said:

My school like speaking Twi too much and it is not helpful, the Twi speaking has increased even more than English (Pupil, Wisdom JHS).

Pupils were probed as to why English speaking should be compulsory when it is not their mother tongue? Many of the respondents argued that speaking English will help them a lot not only in school but in the future when they get the opportunity to travel outside Ghana. Some of the pupils also felt that if junior high school pupils could not speak English after being through six years of primary school, they were being lazy and at least they should be able to speak some English. Some of the respondents also defended the English speaking policy to the extreme saying:

When you come to school there is a rule that you should not speak Twi, if you speak and you are beaten (punished) that is your own fault. If you go to Rome to do what Romans do (Pupil, Advance JHS).

Some teachers were concerned about the level of Ghanaian language (Twi) spoken in their various schools. Instead of finding better ways that pupils can learn and speak English, which is the medium of instruction, they prefer to catch and shame all those who are found speaking their mother tongues in school. United Primary is one of the schools in the city that serves the children of university lecturers and private individuals who can afford their fees. One of the teachers, who was a former pupil at the United Primary and now teaches there, expressed her shock that the current crop of pupils could not express themselves in English language very well. She said:

I was a pupil of this particular school and during our time the way we spoke in English and the way we went about our activities were better than now. The standard of education is falling and there should be a great change for improvement in academic performance. Previously in this school there was nothing like speaking of Twi, if you speak Twi a placard with inscription 'I can't speak English' will be hung around your neck for whole day. I don't know whether is the number of pupils here right now, previously we used to have five classes per year group but now we have eight classes per year group (teacher, United Primary).

This teacher reflected on the so called 'good old days' as a pupil when most of them could express themselves in English language. Ironically, she recalled the use of negative reinforcement which is very humiliating to help improve things. When the teacher was probed about some of the things to change or improve in schools, she pointed out that both the curriculum and the syllabus for primary schools in Ghana are too wide. Children are supposed to do eight subjects now but in her time at school, they used to concentrate on reading, writing and maths. Reflecting from this teacher's view, this suggests pupils in

Ghanaian basic schools are missing a lot of fundamentals while being taught many traditional subjects yet pupils are being blamed, humiliated and bullied if they cannot speak English.

As well as the language issue, bullying which is not a common vocabulary for most pupils, does exist in Ghanaian schools. One of the pupils made this statement: *'I dislike the behaviour of some of the students because some of them are very very bully'*. Almost every group interviewed in every school stated 'teasing' as one of the things they hate in school. While pupils want their friends to speak English in schools, they do not tolerate when their friends make mistakes or give a wrong answer in a lesson. Some observed that:

So far as I know, students learn better through their mistakes and errors, but here some students laugh at their colleagues whenever they give wrong answers in a class or make mistake when they speak English language. Due to this student who fall victim do not answer questions in class because they think, they would make mistake to be laughed at (Pupil, Advance JHS- interview).

...is about the pupils in the class, if a teacher ask you a question and you answer the question wrongly they will start laughing at you and teasing you (Pupil Wisdom JHS - interview).

Some of the pupils like teasing, when teachers ask you to give example and you are wrong they start laughing at you (Pupil, Adom Primary - interview)

Sometimes friends and other pupils usually tease. In school some pupils like 'foolish' play and also fight in classroom, so I don't feel comfortable with them (Pupil, Wisdom Primary - interview).

Instead of pupils helping each other in their mistakes, they resort to name calling and taunting which can result in fights. Most of the respondents described such things as

‘teasing’ but they seemed very much like bullying. One pupil expressed the feeling in the following:

What I don't enjoy in school is when I am being teased. If someone makes fun of me, I really become angry and I even go as far as hitting the person. I think if student is corrected of a mistake and not rather teased; it will help a lot especially in school (Pupil Advanced JHS - essay).

According to the respondents, when fights occur teachers do not take their time to ask them what happened but most of the time immediately punish (corporal punishment) the parties involved. Some pupils are aware that you can report bullying to teachers for them to deal with, but they also fear the backlash from their friends who are involved, as seen in the remark:

When pupils tease you and you report to teachers and they are beaten, they will not do it again. If you tell a teacher and they are punished they (bullies) will never talk to you but if you hide it, you don't feel nice (Pupil, Advanced JHS - interview).

The victims of bullying are not limited to low level academic achievers or those who cannot speak English properly but also high achievers who can express themselves very well. One of the girls in Wisdom Primary School who impressed me with her level of English speaking told me that some of the children have named her ‘chichis’ a meaningless piece of jargon of no particular language origin but which the children themselves interpreted as ‘posh’.

7.3.4 Teachers' Conduct

Pupils in the interviews and essays also shared a lot of bad experiences, most of them caused by teachers. Some of the things respondents made mention of is teachers not being punctual to lessons and how they waste a lot of contact teaching hours. Pupils commented that teachers pick and use their mobile phones during lessons. Teachers waste contact hours consciously or subconsciously. The children gave the example that if a pupil shares a joke in a class for one minute, teachers can spend the whole lessons talking about that. This corroborates with the findings in Le Riche (1995) where pupils comment that most often teachers come to classes and do not know how to share a joke to make lessons enjoyable and if anyone tries to share a joke, teachers shout them down. In a group interview at Wisdom Primary, they made these comments about teachers:

Pupil: teachers are 50 percent good and 50 percent bad.

Pupil: teachers sometimes steal our time, they take phone calls, and they go out from school without teaching.

Pupil: teachers are 50 percent good and 50 percent bad, they cannot get it 100 percent good, like sometimes if somebody joke for 5 minutes teachers will talk about it for an hour.

Some of the pupils also complained that some teachers do not arrive on time for their lessons. Children do not like it when teachers turn up late, especially for lessons close to break times:

The teachers do not come to class always and also some of the teachers when we've lesson with them, he or she will not come at right time and to me it affects our studies. For instance some teachers could wait till ten minutes to break time and turn up for their lessons and it doesn't help because at that time students will not understand anything they say because their mind are on what they will be doing during break time (Pupil, Wisdom JHS).

Some of the teachers have got a habit of staying over the stipulated lesson times; they therefore eat into other teachers' lessons or into break time which displeases pupils.

Pupils catalogue a number of issues which bring teachers' professional conduct into disrepute. Teachers use corporal punishment in managing and controlling students. Most respondents hated the way teachers used the cane on them saying:

I don't like teachers who beat too much because some of the students behave well and some too do not. Whenever a student misbehaves slightly in a class, the teacher in turn will beat the whole class and it can hurt us (Pupil, United Primary).

I dislike school because some teachers like beating too much without a cause even if you have reasons, they will tell you receive the canes before complain (Pupil, Adom JHS).

Many of the children live far away from their school, especially the city schools, and they depend on local passenger mini vans and taxis to come to school and if they are late teachers do not listen to any form of explanation but use the cane:

Maybe when you are coming to school and the vehicle you board delays in traffic and you are late to school the teachers will beat you without listening to you (Pupil, Wisdom JHS).

Some of the pupils also reported that they do not live with their parents and therefore those they live with maltreat them and give many chores at home that make them come to school late, and instead of teachers listening to them and helping them out, they worsen the abuse by caning such students. One remarked:

Sometimes we have many chores at home and we know that, you will be punished if you don't come to school early, some pupils are afraid and don't come to school at all if they are late (Pupil, Wisdom JHS).

Interestingly, teachers often do not punish those who absent themselves from school. Therefore, pupils who are often late to school will instead decide to stay away from school and this will encourage school dropout.

Furthermore, on the topic of unprofessional conduct by some teachers, respondents complained of unfair treatment and harassment by teachers, especially in the rural schools. There were some alcoholic teachers too in the city schools. Some pupils commented:

Being harassed and unfair treated by the teachers, I am perpetually unhappy when the teachers will be having problems with our parents at home and take it to the school and insult, discourage, discriminate and humiliate you, even if you don't deserve it (Pupil, Adom JHS).

Some of the teachers also propose to students (sexual relationship) and if you reject their approach, they will beat you hard when you make a little mistake at school (Pupil, Adom JHS).

Another is about the drunken teachers, if someone takes in alcoholic drink, just sit down and look at how that person behaves, speak and even walk. It is a disgrace for the school to have such teachers and for that matter a lot of students fail in their exams (Pupil, United Primary).

A female teacher I interviewed in Advanced JHS was seriously concerned about sexual relationships between male teachers and school girls. When probed whether these kinds of relationships existed and were not just mere rumours peddling, she noted they existed especially in the junior high schools, senior high schools and teacher training colleges where teachers exchange sex for more marks. These findings confirm there are high levels of abuse, both verbal and physical, experienced by children, particularly girls, in schools across Ghana. This finding is in line with research findings from across Africa

(Dunne et al., 2005; Leach et al., 2003). In a democratic country like Ghana, one will expect authorities to investigate thoroughly these kinds of allegations. Perhaps pupils, including some teachers, are not aware of the processes or procedures to complain to law enforcement agencies.

Listening to pupils' views like this could help schools to identify some of the serious concerns and address them as such. I believe that many pupils have had problems with harassment and abuse in schools but were unable to report them because there are no structures within Ghanaian basic schools that pupils can confidently trust to deal with their grievances.

7.4 Pupils' Verdicts on Corporal Punishment

Ironically, pupils have been repeatedly abused by corporal punishment and therefore they view caning as a normal part of schooling which should be maintained. Most of the respondents had a mixed view of corporal punishment. While they do not like to be caned, they do not want corporal punishment to be banned in school.

There were interesting lines of argument in a group interview at Wisdom Junior High School, when I asked whether they liked caning? The following are some of the comments:

Pupil: sometimes yes, sometimes no, because it trains us, the students to learn sense next time.

Pupil: they can use it or they can also advise us rather than beating us, we can say if you beat the child too much you spoil the child. So if the student do something wrong, they can be advised for example to come to school early by waking up early, this is better than beating us.

Pupil: some of the lateness are our fault, so sometimes it is good that they beat us because we don't wake up early.

*Pupil: sometimes there will be a person who doesn't live with his/her parent and you will be doing many chores in the house before coming to school and that cause the lateness and teachers are going to beat them.
(Group interview Wisdom JHS).*

Table 7.1 below shows some of the arguments pupils made when they were probed as to whether corporal punishment should be banned in schools.

Table 7.1 Pupils' Arguments For or Against Corporal Punishment

Arguments for corporal punishment	Arguments against corporal punishment
<p><i>If they don't cane us we would be rotten but I think they should take their time when caning (Adom JHS).</i></p> <p><i>Some pupils also disobey the rules and teachers beat them (Adom JHS).</i></p> <p><i>Sometimes teachers are right to beat us in order to abstain from bad things. Most students are afraid of the canes and is a good way to punish somebody (Wisdom JHS).</i></p> <p><i>They can beat those who are fooling, if a teacher comes to a class without holding a cane, the children will be making noise but if the teacher takes a cane and hit on the table everybody will be silent (Wisdom JHS).</i></p> <p><i>Even though teachers beat us, they do so out of love (United Primary).</i></p> <p><i>I sometimes like it because the cane can serve as deterrent (United Primary).</i></p> <p><i>When we do something wrong and teachers cane us that's fine (Advance JHS).</i></p>	<p><i>I am happy at school when teachers are not too strict on the students; you see there are so many ways of punishing a student not only by beating them. If they (teachers) have the confidence to come to you to let you know what you've done wrong and talk to you that don't do that again, that will help (Advance JHS).</i></p> <p><i>Whenever I come to school the teachers always beat us so we are not happy in school (United Primary).</i></p> <p><i>I don't want teachers to be beating and humiliating us when we don't bring canes to school when they ask us to because we might not have money. All the canes in the cupboard we bought them (United Primary).</i></p> <p><i>I am not happy when teachers beat us when we haven't done anything wrong (Wisdom Primary).</i></p> <p><i>Some of the teachers use the cane everywhere on us palm, back and head but I have learnt that the government want them to beat us on our buttocks (Wisdom JHS).</i></p>

<p><i>When we go wrong our teachers should cane us but not too many (Wisdom Primary).</i></p> <p><i>They should cane but not every day. When you've done something wrong. They should beat us not more than six lashes but they give too many now (Adom JHS).</i></p> <p><i>When the cane is abolished pupils will behave badly but they should beat us according to school rules (Adom JHS).</i></p> <p><i>They can beat those who are fooling, if a teachers come to class without holding a cane, the children will be talking and talking but if the teacher takes a cane and hit it on the table everybody will be silent (Wisdom JHS).</i></p> <p><i>The teachers beat us very well, if you do not do foolish things, they will not beat you (Adom Primary).</i></p> <p><i>I am not happy when teachers cane too hard, they should cane but not too hard, they should know how to do it (Adom JHS).</i></p> <p><i>My opinion is they should not stop beating because we are children, it won't be better but they should not us as they do now (Adom JHS).</i></p> <p><i>When our teachers beat us, we are happy but inside our veins it hurt and make us angry but it tells when a teacher is teaching you should be nice (Wisdom Primary).</i></p> <p><i>Yes, if the Bible says we should be cane but some of the teachers have their favourite and if their favourite get it wrong they don't cane them hard but if they (teachers) don't like you, they beat you as if you are a 'he goat' (Wisdom Primary).</i></p>	<p><i>Teachers sometimes indecently hold girls buttocks while beating them (Adom JHS).</i></p> <p><i>Because teachers can beat a lot pupils are afraid and feel shy to ask teachers even if they don't understand something in a lesson (United Primary).</i></p> <p><i>Sometimes the way they beat us, it will make us dislike schools (Adom JHS).</i></p> <p><i>We don't want caning in school at all, because when they take the cane to punish us, we will be shivering and panicking (Adom JHS).</i></p>
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It is overwhelming how some pupils respect and support caning in Ghanaian school. In the entire group interviews where the issue of corporal punishment cropped up, regardless of their individual views, many of them agreed that there should be caning in school. However, pupils reckoned that the cane should be used only if they have done something wrong and also teachers should be cautious when using corporal punishment. There are

questions that need to be asked to identify why pupils are opting for corporal punishment; something that was discouraged by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989 and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (African Children's Charter) in 1999 (OAU, 1999; Lloyd, 2002; Chirwa, 2002). Perhaps, the Ghana government has failed to educate the children about their rights and also lacks clear policy guidance for teachers (CRDD, 2001). Most Ghanaian pupils have not experienced any alternative practices in schools in other contexts, and therefore may prefer to stick to the 'orthodox' method of disciplining them because it has worked for them over many years and demanded that teachers change their excesses to minimise the negative effect.

This evidence supports Harber's (2009, 2004) arguments that despite the enormous effort to promote Education for All globally, schools fail to protect children once they are there. He argues that one serious threat to pupils is bullying. He points out that bullying can take many forms: 'physical violence, threats, name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, persistent teasing, exclusion from group, tormenting, ridicule, humiliation and abusive comments' (Harber, 2009:116). Comments from these pupils suggest that the biggest offenders of bullying in Ghanaian schools are teachers who indulge in a lot of physical violence, verbal abuse, sexual harassment and humiliation, while pupils involved used teasing, gossiping and name calling.

This study also asked pupils to suggest ideas of how the problems they have raised about schooling could be solved and schools thus improved. The next section reflects on these ideas.

7.5 The School that Pupils would Like

In this study, there were a number of triangulated methods in which pupils' views on schooling were solicited. The methods included interviews, mock school council meetings and open essays. Questions were also designed in order to get some kind of ideas or views from pupils on how to improve their schools. One aspect of the open essay questions asked pupils to describe their 'Ideal School' and how such a school might be achieved. This section discussed briefly, the ideal school pupils would like to go to which is a replication of Blishen (1969) and Burke and Grosvenor (2003) in six schools in Ghana.

Pupils involved in the study were given the opportunity to 'dream' about their ideal school in their essays, while others talked about specific private schools in Kumasi, Ghana, where, if their parents were rich, they would love to go to. The most popular private school mentioned by the pupils is the Angels Education Complex in Kumasi which seems to have modern facilities and school buses to transport pupils to and from school. I happened to visit this institution during my field studies because my uncle is the Assistant Headmaster for the Senior High School. He took time to show me around and discussed their vision with me. It is a large well-built education complex with high quality and modern facilities surrounded by walls, with a complex of houses, Pre-School, Primary School, Junior High School and Senior High School in the same compound. The complex is probably popular because they do a lot of advertisement on radio, television and billboards. Most respondents wanted resources and modern facilities in their ideal

school, for example a school canteen, library, science laboratory and computer rooms.

Some of the points are:

I want the school to be like Angels Education Complex. I want the school to achieve more things, they must have more computers, playing ground, we need school bus, more teachers, more school buildings and libraries (Pupil, Adom Primary - Essay).

My ideal school is Manna International School. It is located at Bremang UGC Kumasi. The reason I like the school is that, they have a school bus, computer lab, Science laboratory and they eat in a canteen. Another reason why I like the school is that, if they pass their examination the teachers of the school took them to visit Accra Airport and so many places (Pupil, Adom Primary - Essay).

These children in the above statements were primary school pupils in a rural area but they are able to compare their school with other schools they know in the city or they might have heard about. They were also able to identify them as their ideal schools probably because things are not the same as they are in their school.

Some of the respondents talked about how they would like their current school to be and described specific classroom features and how teachers and pupils should behave as shown in the following comments:

I want my school to be a model school in Ghana, where everyone is seriously learning and become future leaders in Ghana. I want every classroom of my school to get air conditions and computers (Pupil, United Primary - Essay).

My ideal school would be a school with a spacious and well furnished classrooms and classic modern ceiling fans in all classrooms with white board which make us view images on the board well (Pupil, Wisdom Primary - Essay).

In ideal school at least there should be about thirty students in a class and have a convenient transportation that convey pupils to and from schools. The teachers are very good and students are very humble, lovely and caring, students dress decently. The teachers work according to their time, so when is time for teaching

he/she would be in the class regularly to teach and help the children to find solutions to their problems (Pupil, Wisdom JHS - Essay).

If my school was to have a good assembly hall this can help us rather than standing in the sun for a long period of time which can cause headache. We will also need a computer lab for practicals to make ICT learning easy. We also need a library for research and studies during our leisure time (Pupil, Wisdom JHS - Essay).

There were so many good ideas presented by the pupils in their essays, but unfortunately not all of them can be quoted here. Below is one of my favourite essays written by a year seven or JHS 1 pupil in Advanced JHS.

As a child I always wished for a school of high standard. The question on most minds will be what does a school requires to be classified as a high standard school. Firstly my ideal school should have skilled and well trained teachers. Teachers who are willing to teach to the understanding of every pupil in the school. Those who are ready to explain class works, assignments to student who find it difficult to understand. All teachers who apply to teach in the school should have a well qualified certificate from a renowned training college with a recommendation letter from the principal of that college. Class exercises and inspection of notes should be done by the headteacher. Regular meetings with the teachers to know their problems so that they can give out their maximum best.

Secondly, as the saying goes 'all work and no play make Jack a dull boy' a well established recreational centre may be in the school to help the student break monotony. Funds can be raised by organising funfair which includes parents. Items made by students including those made in their Basic Design and Technology lessons can be displayed and sold to parents. Obviously the money gained will not be enough so proposal can be placed to social funds from parents who are ready to offer their help.

Thirdly it is undeniable fact that a child who reads a lot get to know more and speaks good and eloquent English. A well established library should be one of the key facilities in my ideal school. A modernised library with books, computers and laboratory equipments to help put the things studied into practice must be available. This can be done by negotiating with the Ghana book trust to give books on credit. I know the question on our mind is how to pay the money back. Students can be billed with the amount termly and parents must be made aware of that project so that they would not hesitate to pay because every parent would like his/her child to have a good education.

Last but not the least; my ideal school should give scholarship to motivate students to learn. Scholarship should be given by Parent Teacher Association (PTA) to help the less privilege who are working hard to help them continue studying. I hope with these things and well supervision, I doubt if my ideal school would lack anything and it will be a perfect place for good education (Pupil, Advanced JHS - Essay).

The content of this essay provides many clues to school improvements, for example the provision of well-qualified and dedicated teachers, a recreational centre, library and scholarships as incentives. From my informal observations in the schools involved in this study, there were so many minor problems that could have been resolved in the schools by teachers' initiative but they often request for government intervention which never comes. Empowering students to identify problems in their schools and helping to solve them could be a way forward. For example, in the interviews, pupils felt ashamed of their teachers eating their meals outside on the compound simply because their staff room is too small to accommodate all the teachers, and yet teachers probably do not know how the children feel and continue to enjoy their meals outside without doing anything about it.

Above all, the pupils did not see this platform as a chance to criticise teachers or schooling as a concept but a chance to share the reasons they are in school, the problems they are facing in school and also to dream about their ideal school. Pupils also had opinions on how things could be improved in schools so that they would have their ideal school. Most of the pupils suggested that in order to improve facilities and resources, the school can appeal to the PTA, District Chief Executive for local government and the Member of Parliament for the area to support either in cash or in kind to build a library,

ICT laboratory, classroom blocks, school canteen and places of convenience. Pupils suggested that they should contribute small amount of monies to help them buy dustbins that will prevent littering of the compounds. They also suggested that funds could be raised by writing to corporate bodies to come to the aid of their schools. Apart from raising funds, some respondents suggested one practical step of controlling and managing students thus:

I would also like to see our class sizes reduced to about thirty (30) students per class so that teaching and learning could be effective. This is because with large classes, student control is very difficult. The class sizes could be reduced if more classroom blocks are built (Pupil, Advanced JHS - Essay).

What pupils have not realised is the role they can play internally in solving their numerous problems and therefore potentially promoting school improvement and effectiveness. As discussed in Chapter Three in relation to Mitra and Gross (2009) student voice is the base of the pyramid - ‘being heard’ is the most common and most basic form of pupil voice. At this level, teachers or researchers listen to pupils to learn about their experiences in school. In Ghana, pupil voice is still not common and the findings presented here have really highlighted that teachers, headteachers and policy makers and other stake holders can explore pupils’ views to improve policy and practice. They have to go beyond listening to pupils and promote fuller and more democratic participation.

7.6 Teacher Trainees’ Views on School Improvement

The study also provided teacher trainees with the opportunity to reflect on their school days and suggest ways of improvement. According to Akyeampong and Stephens (2002)

teacher trainees paint vivid pictures of their schooling experiences, particularly of school life and of teacher behaviour and practices. Therefore in this study, in order to solicit the views of teacher trainees on school improvement, respondents were asked to reflect on their schooling experiences identifying those they wanted to change or improve upon when they qualified as teachers. Most of them confirmed what the current pupils said about the unprofessional conduct of teachers.

Most of the teacher trainees interviewed complained about didactic teaching methods during their school days and lack of teaching and learning materials in their lessons, with some saying:

Most of the teaching methods they used especially primary level are very bad, I don't think they [teachers] were not taught when they were in teacher training college but probably out of negligence, they don't want to apply them in their teaching. As a trainee when I go out I wish to change some of these teaching methods and improve education in Ghana (Teacher trainee, Royal College - interview).

What I can say is that the methods of teaching did not help me. I attended private school and they were more interested in the academic performance, that is the exam results but not the social skills of students because of that when pupils from private school go to secondary schools or tertiary institutions they cannot perform very well. All that proprietors [private school owners] want are good grades that will help them increase the population of their schools. At the private schools we were just taught, 'what is?' 'But not how to?' When I become a teacher I will make sure to go by the proper methods (Teacher trainee, Akwaaba College - interview).

Some teacher trainees, however, argued that sometimes teachers are willing to use varieties of teaching methods but lack of resources and teaching and learning materials serve as barriers to effective teaching and learning. Some respondents recounted their experiences in schools with regards to this situation thus:

When I was in primary school there was no ICT facilities and would like them to improve. The thing about government in Africa countries is that technological advancement is very poor (Teacher trainee, Akwaaba College - interview).

I have taught in a rural school before, the materials [Teaching and Learning Materials] to be used were not enough. I realised that years 4, 5 and 6 were combined because of lack of teachers. I was a pupils' teacher [unqualified teacher] at that time. Sometimes teachers were willing but they lacked materials, how can these children excel under these conditions? If there should be a change these children should be given equal opportunities because they are all citizens of Ghana (Teacher trainee, Akwaaba College - interview).

Unfortunately, pupils are treated the same in terms of national examination and baseline assessment, and most of the time in public debates about non-performances, they either attribute this to pupils not working hard or teachers not teaching very well. Harber and Muthukrishna (2000) argue that judging the performance of schools in African contexts like the British-style league tables would be illogical as they vary from small, rural schools with virtually no facilities or resources other than the staff and learners themselves, to certain schools in urban areas matching schools in the developed world.

Respondents also reflected on some of their experiences with lack of facilities and problems with social amenities like power supply and water in their schools and communities as well. One stated:

Talking about amenities in schools like electricity, water and food in schools. In my past years of schooling I have always experience some sort of power cut during examinations period. When I become a teacher I will make sure we provide generator for the school (Teacher trainee, Akwaaba College- interview).

Indeed, frequent power cuts in Ghana are very common, and when it happens during examination time, pupils in boarding schools and even those at home depend on candles with the attendant fire and safety problems. Even schools in rural areas without electricity could use generators to support pupils at night with their personal studies. In rural areas, households usually use one or two kerosene lamps which pupils find difficult to get access to in order to do their homework.

One of the common practices in Ghanaian schools, both public and private, is extra classes. Teachers usually organise extra curricular classes after the normal government stipulated contact hours and parents pay for this extra tuition with the assumption that teachers can cover the whole syllabi for the national curriculum. However, some teachers have been using it for their own interest to make extra income. Some of the teacher trainees who have had bad experiences about this practice were very emotional and passionate about getting it banned when they become teachers. Some declared:

One thing that I will really want to change when I become a teacher even if I don't rise to the position of a headteacher is extra classes. I will make sure to change the extra classes that teachers organise for their students. I have been a victim of that situation where by a teacher will refuse to teach some important topics, just because he/she is re-scheduling on Saturdays or after school hours (Teacher trainee, Akwaaba College - interview).

Ok! What I want us to change is the extra classes that they normally do, it is not every student that has freedom, some stay with their step parents but they are forced to do these extra classes so when they go home they will have a lot of troubles. Pupils have to stay till 5pm in some schools (Teacher trainee, Akwaaba College - interview).

The problems are not limited to the extra classes; teachers also force pupils to buy their pamphlets. One respondent observed:

I don't like how teachers force students to buy their books, they don't realise students come from different economic backgrounds (Teacher trainee, Akwaaba College - interview).

These situations have not changed for many years; the current teacher trainees experienced them and the current pupils are going through a similar experience. In addition to the poor conditions of teaching and learning in Ghanaian schools, teachers sometimes use corporal punishment as motivation for pupils to learn. A teacher trainee recounted his experience which he deems as 'horrible', saying:

I quite remember one of my teachers at the basic level use to have oral dictation with us (we called it mental). The way the teacher use to treat us after the mental [dictation] was something horrible. Actually after giving wrong answer, the way the teacher will use the cane to hit you was something serious. I don't think that was right, personally I don't like cane on that angle. I will say it was really horrible (Teacher trainee, Akwaaba College - interview).

Furthermore, on the teachers' professional conduct, some respondents made mention of teachers who were often absent from school and habitually late for lessons which does not help with the improvement of academic performance. Some remarked:

In the public schools what I realised is that there were lateness in class by some teachers, so it became very difficult for us [pupils], as our colleagues in private schools passed very well but for because of teachers attitude such as lateness and not coming to school, we [pupils] had to work really hard in order to come out with good grades (Teacher trainee, Royal College - interview).

So what I actually experience in the public school is that, the attitude of the teachers towards pupils are not all that good, they come to school late, usually they [teachers] don't come to school because they know that if they go to class or not they will be paid (Teacher trainee, Royal College - interview).

When respondents were asked, if pupils had a chance to say something about teachers' attitudes and behaviours to the headteachers, one of the teacher trainees responded that:

Actually there wasn't such a chance during our time for us to voice our views out, you have to comply, even if you tell the headteacher he/she will snub you because it is not our duty to report teachers to the headteacher, it is education officers job (Teacher trainee, Royal College interview).

Some teacher trainees pointed out that during their school days, they never had the chance to be involved in decision-making. One person said:

During my school days as far back as junior secondary schools many decisions were taking which didn't favour us. The authorities sat down put forward ideas and trying to say that we should comply but we don't benefit from them anyway (Teacher trainee, Royal College - interview).

This therefore corresponds with the present pupils' views that teachers do not involve them in decision-making, as will be discussed in Chapter Eight.

7.7 Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter, the views of pupils in Ghanaian schools have been explored based on content and thematic analyses of the data collected in Ghana. Pupils in Ghana demonstrated that they have high hopes in schooling and most of them said that they are happy to be in school because of their future career and employment. Pupils were aware of the social functions of schooling and were happy to go to school to see friends and play. Generally, pupils were content with the concept of schooling and were not extremely critical of the processes in schools unlike those of some British students in Blishen (1969) and Burke and Grosvenor (2003).

However, when pupils were asked about their views on school improvement and what makes them unhappy in schools, they outlined many issues which are deeply worrying. Pupils wanted improvements in facilities and resources for effective teaching and learning. Most pupils also commented on the deplorable state of their environment and sanitary areas. Further, issues where pupils called for change were attitudinal and behavioural problems of both pupils and teachers concerning bullying. Pupils were intolerant of the mistakes of their peers and made fun and teased each other if they got something wrong in lessons. Pupils' views on teachers indicate serious breaches of professional conduct and the code of ethics of teaching in Ghana. Some teachers were reported as often coming to school or lessons late and wasting a lot of contact curriculum hours. Things that pupils were not happy with in schools include verbal, physical and sexual abuse by teachers. Some teachers interviewed also confirmed these allegations by pupils and defended the act of corporal punishment. Most pupils were in support of corporal punishment as they believed that total outlaw of caning would bring chaos to Ghanaian basic schools. Teacher trainees' experiences in basic schools in Ghana confirm the current practice of teachers abusing their position of trust. The inadequate facilities and malpractices in these relatively high achieving schools shows that Ghana as a country might have failed to produce the kind of schools which help trained pupils to be democratic citizens.

The argument here flowing from the literature review is that listening to pupils' views could help schools improve in many areas as has been discussed in this chapter. This study does not seek to make pupils' views more important than those of teachers but there

should be a dialogue where pupils can freely express their concerns to teachers and vice versa. By doing so, both teachers and pupils can come to a consensus, and change the ways of their working and practices that could lead to school effectiveness and improvement. However, this may depend on whether teachers are prepared to shift the status quo. Teachers need to engage pupils democratically by establishing structures that will help pupils put forward their views and participate in school development work. As indicated in the literature review chapters, this will have a twin effect of school improvement and democratic citizenship. The next chapter presents the thematic analyses of the data to tease out the level of pupil participation encouraged in Ghanaian schools and if there are any democratic practices in schools that should be encouraged.

CHAPTER EIGHT

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS: DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION IN BASIC SCHOOLS

8.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the findings related to democratic themes arising from the data collected. Pupils were not directly asked questions about democracy but questions were designed in such a way as to tease out opinions regarding whether the practices in Ghanaian basic schools underpin democratic principles of participation, rights, equity and informed choice (Davies et al., 2002). These multiple data collection strategies of pupils' interviews and the in-depth observation of one of the schools as well as various informal observations were all used to explore the third research question 'what are the views of pupils on how schools might be changed in a more democratic direction?'

The thematic analyses here were explored by using these fundamental questions: Do pupils participate in decision-making processes in their school? Do pupils know their rights especially the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child? Are pupils treated fairly and equally or given equal opportunities in their schools? Are pupils well-informed about the choices they have to make or how is information disseminated in schools? Basically, the themes here are based on basic principles of democracy participation: rights, equity and informed choice (Davies et al., 2002). This will help establish the current level of democratic practices in Ghanaian schools and what pupils think they should be.

The literature review in Chapter Four established that school councils serve as entry points to greater democratic participation in schools. Therefore, having insider knowledge of Ghanaian basic schools that there are no existing school councils, I set up mock councils to investigate whether they would work. The findings on the mock school council meetings will also be discussed in this chapter.

8.2 The Nature of Schools in Ghana

All the various methods of data collection, especially the in-depth study of one of the schools, and various informal observations in the schools involved in the research, help in one way or another to establish the current nature of schooling in Ghana. Are practices in schools predominantly authoritarian as indicated in the literature (Harber, 1997; 2004; 2009) or is there a current shift of interest into democratic practices? In order to do this, the data collected from all the schools were repeatedly read to attach comments to the key codes of basic democratic principles of participation, rights, equity and informed choice. Further analyses of the data produced additional categories such as self-discipline, tolerance and conflict resolution which are among the core values of democracy. These principles and values of democracy are used in a matrix below. The matrix describes the nature of Ghanaian schools with regards to principles and values of democracy found in the practices of pupils, teachers and headteachers. Are there any entry points for greater democracy in Ghanaian basic schools?

The headings of the matrix in Table 8.1 are adapted from the framework of indicators for democratic inspection of schools devised by Davies et al. (2005:11-12). Some of the findings from the interviews, open-ended essays and observations were used as evidence of some of the practices that seem to be democratic and others that are autocratic. The matrix below seems to be critical of the practices in Ghanaian basic schools. However, as noted in the literature review in Chapter Two, there is no clear cut policy in Ghanaian basic schools that promotes democratic practices or principles. Citizenship Education has been introduced into the primary school curriculum by which pupils might be taught structures of democratic governance but not the practices of democracy in schools.

The basic principles were used because, as discussed in Chapter Two on the various definitions of democracy, these principles should be fundamental whatever the interpretations or conceptions of democracy in a particular context. In order to validate the various conceptions of democracy to internationally accepted standards, citizens need to participate in decisions affecting them through direct or representative governance. People's rights should be respected, and individuals should be treated equally and fairly. Citizens should also be adequately informed on all the choices and decisions they make. Harber (1989) argues that a choice based on ignorance is no choice at all. Therefore, to what extent are these principles applied by key stakeholders in Ghanaian schools? The matrix presents my own observations and various interactions with the respondents during the field work with the aim of teasing out entry points to democratic practices.

In Chapter Five, when discussing the theoretical framework for effective schools, reference was made to Davies and Yamashita (2007) outlining some of the key factors associated with students' social and emotional competences as: communication skills, listening to others, self-esteem, cooperation, conflict resolution skills, negotiation skills, support skills and advocacy, debate and dialogue skills. These factors are also true for democratic schools. The values associated with these factors that seem problematic and came up repeatedly in the data were tolerance and conflict resolution. They are therefore used in the matrix below. The matrix shows how the principles and core values of democracy are applied in schools by pupils, teachers and headteachers in Ghanaian schools.

Table 8.1 Indicators of Democracy Related to Existing Practices

Democratic Principles / Values	Applied by Pupils	Applied by Teachers	Applied by Headteachers
Participation	Pupils rarely participate in decision-making. Involved in classroom discussions and also participate in sporting activities. In some of the Junior High Schools pupils are involved in electing prefects but it is not a standard practice across all schools. In most primary schools pupils are not involved in selecting their prefects.	Participate in most of the decision-making in schools depending on the style of leadership by the headteachers. Plan and teach all their lessons but rarely asked students for input and feedback from their lessons. Teaching methods most at the time didactic e.g. lecture and traditional question and answer methods. Teachers in most schools have a big influence electing or selecting prefects.	Represent the education authorities to implement policies and act on circulars. Take all the decisions in the school and sometimes involving teachers. They seldom consult pupils on issues. Most pupils are scared of them or really shy to approach them with issues.
Rights	Most of the pupils do not know their rights, they are not aware of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Those who claim they know could not fully state any one of the Articles. They have the basic knowledge of the general human rights e.g. right for education, shelter, food and health. Few of them mention freedom of speech as well. Pupils have been at the receiving end as teachers' abuse their rights.	Most of the teachers are not aware of the UNCRC. When some of the Articles were read to them, they thought, they cannot work in Ghana ignorant of the fact that Ghana was among the first nations to ratify the conventions. Most of the teachers therefore use corporal punishment. There were canes in all the schools involved in the study. I witnessed one serious caning in the rural Adom JHS. Two teachers were found to be holding canes in a classroom at the Adom Primary and when asked what those were for, both of them jokingly said they used the canes as pointers.	Headteachers have been supervising the abuse of pupils. However, none of them was seen to be involved in any incident but failing to act on abuses is tantamount to complicity. They have failed to recognise or implement pupils' rights in taking part in decision-making.
Equity	Pupils are treated equally in terms of access to education. However some pupils felt that whenever there are competitions like quizzes, spelling 'Bs' and drama performance, teachers always go for the academically clever pupils and those who think they have the talent and ability to participate in those competitions are left out.	Teachers treat pupils equally in schools. However there are different rules for children and another for teachers in terms of treatment. Teachers can be late for schools or lessons but pupils will be beaten for being late. Teachers also choose their favourites to be class prefects and the school prefects especially in the primary school.	It seems to be problematic in terms of headteachers managing equity and equality in schools. There were no clear-cut written admission policy in the in-depth study school the Wisdom JHS and most of the schools. Therefore admissions intake did not match with available facilities. For example, some pupils complained of shortage of chairs and desks in classrooms. Sometimes distribution of power creates conflicts in schools as headteachers might choose their favourites to delegate certain roles.

Informed Choice	<p>Pupils are rarely informed when making choices. Choices are hardly available apart from games and activities. Pupils have to accept what is on offer. For example, in one of the schools, there was a government feeding programme of which children were provided with free meals. Pupils had no choice from the food available, and they are offered only one kind of a meal a day. However, they complained to me that the food was not nutritious and they have not enough bowls and plates to eat from. There was no student notice board in any of schools involved in this study. Any information was given to students in their daily assemblies or passed on during lessons.</p>	<p>Teachers who are believed to be knowledgeable and experienced make all the choices and inform pupils to comply. Most of the decisions in schools do not leave room for alternative ideas. A teacher informally told me that there were not enough resources or money available in Africa to ask children to choose what they want. The school climate suffers when headteachers often failed to inform teachers about key decisions.</p>	<p>Headteachers are the most well informed people in schools in terms of decision-making and choices. As gatekeepers, every activity that goes on in the school should be authorised by them. However, they may decide to pass information to teachers if they want them to act. They regularly make choices on behalf of the school as it is their duty but most of the time, their choices are final. Some may decide to engage teachers on issues but pupils do not come in at all and they seldom explain to pupils why they took certain decisions on their behalf.</p>
Self-Discipline	<p>Most pupils lack self-discipline, they hardly take responsibility without being supervised. Pupils in the interviews complained of noisy classrooms if there was no teacher present. Pupils are highly controlled by corporal punishment. Most of the pupils think that the only way to maintain greater discipline in school is by the use of the cane and without it there will be chaos.</p>	<p>Teachers' self-discipline is problematic and questionable. From my observations most of the teachers were well-behaved but a few disrespected pupils. I also saw a drunk teacher who disrupted one of my interviews in high profile city school the United Primary. Reports from pupils' essays and interviews suggest some teachers coming to school late or not being punctual during lessons; some do not stick to their stipulated lessons time and eat into other teachers' time or breaks. They probably need strict headteachers to toe the line as they take advantage of their newly found freedom as an adult, which is not like during their school days nor in the teacher training days.</p>	<p>Most of the headteachers are non-teaching and therefore one could hardly find some of them in school. Some do not come to school early or they regularly visit the district education office. It could be excused though from my insider knowledge. According to the reports from pupils, most of them are not keen on their supervisory roles, teachers take advantage and can do whatever they want to the detriment of pupils.</p>

Tolerance	The degree of tolerance among pupils in terms of learning and teaching is reported to be very low. Pupils laugh at and tease those who make mistakes during lessons and those who make mistakes when speaking English. There are lot of name calling and bullying among pupils	Teachers' tolerance level is very low with regard to dealing with pupils. Teachers react angrily and beat badly behaved pupils mercilessly. A whole class can be caned by a teacher for the act of one pupil. Some teachers do not tolerate jokes or criticisms from pupils. A pupil cited an incident in the Wisdom Primary whereby one of the children challenged a teacher on a spelling of 'movable' and the child was nearly sent home though the teacher was right in terms of the spelling. The child spelt it 'moverable'. Teachers do not tolerate any explanation from pupils when their behaviour is perceived as totally wrong e.g. lateness or fight between two pupils.	Since headteachers are the final point of contact when there is a problem, they seem not to have issues with many pupils. However, they could be pretty uncomfortable with criticism from colleague teachers. One of the teachers in the Advanced JHS told me about an incident in his former school when he challenged the headteacher about misappropriation of school funds. The headteacher called him 'insane and disrespectful' and then requested the teacher his transfer from the school.
Conflict Resolution	Pupils have got no chance to resolve conflict in school. The Advanced JHS was reported to have a disciplinary committee involving pupils but such committees in Ghana hardly resolved conflicts. They are often used for punishment purposes.	Teachers, instead of resolving conflicts especially fights between pupils, often beat the two parties without listening to them. They often used deterrent measures instead of finding the problems and resolving them once and for all.	Headteachers most of the time have to deal with conflicts between staff members or a staff and themselves. Lack of conflict resolution skills creates tensions and uneasy climates in schools.

These fundamental principles of democracy overlap with each other and work together for building a democratic culture within schools. Pupils need to be rightly informed before participating in decision-making and also pupils cannot claim the treatment of equality if they do not know their rights. Therefore, specific questions were asked about pupil participation in decisions in schools and also whether they were aware of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This convention gives pupils at the responsible age the right to participate in the decisions affecting them.

8.3 Pupils' Knowledge on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

In the group interviews, pupils were asked whether they had any knowledge of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and if so where they heard or read about them. It was a mixed reaction from pupils; half of the participants responded that they were not aware of the UNCRC while the other half responded affirmatively. However, when probed further to give examples, it appeared that most of them were not aware of the UNCRC but had some knowledge on general human rights. They gave examples such as 'the right to live', 'the right to shelter', 'the right to education', 'the right to play', 'freedom of speech', 'access to food' and 'the child should not be abused'. While these are enshrined in the UNCRC, they appeared not to have been exposed to the Articles as they are. When asked where they got the ideas about the rights from, some indicated on TV, in the internet, newspapers, social studies textbooks and one of them said from the Social Studies teacher. There were a few of the participants who sounded convincing that they knew what they were talking about. Some said:

Yes, I saw it in the Junior Graphic (state newspaper for young people), it was a student who wrote an article about students who are being put into slavery in some parts of the country and he asked for the rights to come to pass (Pupil, Advanced JHS - Interview).

Every child has the right to education, I saw it on TV3 news that children work in the farm and it is not right (Pupil, Advanced JHS - Interview).

I know that every child has right to education on the TV, radio and newspapers (Pupil: Adom JHS - Interview).

These statements seem to suggest that some pupils might have heard about the Convention in the media discussions but do not know the entirety of the articles. This therefore corresponds with Alderson (2000), where a decade after the inception of the UNCRC, most pupils in the United Kingdom have not heard about it and those who are aware have only a little bit of knowledge about the articles. After two decades later, in Ghana (2010) when pupils were asked a similar set of questions, the situation was the same as it was then in the UK ten years before.

Having realised that most of the pupils were not aware of the Articles in detail I gave copies to them in the interview and read through a few of the Articles, especially Articles 1, 12, 19, 28, 34, 37 and 42. Pupils were then asked to comment on them, as to whether they were working or will work in Ghanaian schools. Pupils made some useful comments about the Convention and its application in the Ghanaian context. Although most of them thought it will work in Ghana, some argued that there are issues to be dealt with. For example one observed:

In Ghana the majority of the people are not educated, so if you bring something like this it is very difficult for the people to obey and be aware of those rules, the best thing we must do is to educate all the youth and so that they will know their rights and freedoms of individuals (Pupil, Wisdom JHS - Interview).

There was an interesting discussion in a group interview at the Wisdom JHS and the following comments came out:

Pupil: I think they have no choice, they have to follow it but majority of the parents about 98 per cent are not aware of it.

Pupil: All these things (Articles) are there but the parents are not obeying and teachers are not using them.

Pupil: The advice for the government is that, parents should be informed through the media. Some parent did not go to school and if it is in English they will not understand.

Pupil: Ghanaian people do not follow these Articles because they don't want to spoil their children.

There are useful ideas here that suggest when given the chance, pupils can offer constructive suggestions to adults and governments on how things will work with them. The issue here is the last comment above which reiterates what has been said in the literature about teachers' fear that if they allow pupils to exercise their rights there will be chaos and anarchy (Chiwela, 2010; Davies, 1999 and Davies et al., 2005).

Pupil respondents also commented on individual Articles, with regards to various Articles such as 19 and 34. On Article 19 which seems not to be in favour of corporal punishment, some of the children disagree with that article with one stating:

Bible says that teach the child the way he or she should go and spare the rod and spoil the child. The UN rules have advantages and disadvantages, anyone who corrects you love you. They love us and don't want us to go to the wrong way (Pupil, Advanced JHS - Interview).

As discussed in the previous chapter, most of the pupils in this study do not support the total banning of corporal punishment. This statement also suggests how children in Ghana or elsewhere in Africa have been socially, culturally and religiously conditioned to such a physical nature of punishment in their up-bringing (Agbenyega, 2006; Hake, 1972). It is also hard to prove that the teachers that subjected pupils to

caning always meant well. During one of the pupil interviews in the rural Adom JHS one of the girls within the group reluctantly asked me a question when I read some of the Articles to them. She asked:

Ok I want to ask a question, if teachers are caning you and keep holding your buttocks, is this against the law? (Female Pupil, Adom JHS - Interview)

I did not ask her why she was asking that question but I could see that, in addition to corporal punishment some teachers touch pupils indecently and that could be an infringement of Article 34. Agbenyega (2006) reported that teachers do not care whether you are girl or boy when caning and unfortunately for some girls their underwear could be exposed which then becomes a topic of gossip and other pupils making fun of them. This kind of gender-related abuse has also been reported in other studies (Dunne et al., 2005; Leach et al., 2003).

One of the Articles within the UNCRC to have attracted comment is Article 12, where adults are encouraged to take children's views seriously when they make a decision on behalf of them. Pupils, most of the time, do have opinions but they feel threatened to open their mouths because it is culturally unacceptable. For example one pupil noted:

If your parents are talking and you go there, they will say you are a bad girl or boy (Pupil, Adom JHS - Interview).

This has been the situation in many African countries where pupils sharing their opinion with adults has been culturally problematic (Pryor et al., 2005 in Ghana, Mncube, 2008 in South Africa, and Chiwela, 2010 in Zambia). Mncube (2008) reported that some School Governing Bodies in South Africa which are legally mandated to include student governors sometimes ask them to go out when they are

making so called ‘sensitive’ decisions about other pupils. Some respondents also thought that some parents will not allow you to make choices because they might not have money to provide the alternatives and therefore it will not be necessary for them to listen to you. Other pupils also pointed out that teachers will not listen to you anyway in making decisions about them, so it is better they ‘shut their mouth’. The next section discusses whether teachers are aware of the UNCRC and what they think of the convention.

8.4 Teachers’ Views on the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child

Teachers were also asked similar questions in their interviews as to whether they have any knowledge of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and if so, where they heard or read this from. Surprisingly, out of the twelve teachers interviewed, seven of them had no knowledge of the UNCRC, the rest had some knowledge of children’s rights but were honest to say they could not list them; it was only one teacher who admitted reading such a document but not all of it. It is therefore not surprising that pupils’ knowledge of their rights is limited. The teacher who had read it partially was probed to comment on the charter and he remarked:

I read it but not all, it should be good teachers are abreast with them. Sometimes teachers know but they don’t want children to know (Male teacher, Advanced JHS).

Similarly, like the pupils’ interviews, teachers were provided with copies of the Articles within the UNCRC in the interview and read through a few of the Articles, especially Articles 1, 12, 19, 28, 34, 37 and 42. Teachers were asked to comment on the Articles and suggest ways they could be implemented in Ghana. One teacher remorsefully commented that ‘when you are a citizen of a country and you do not know things you make a lot of mistakes’. Perhaps many teachers are making a lot of

mistakes with ignorance about children's rights and also highly adapted to the traditional notion of childhood especially in the Ghanaian context. Articles that attracted some comments from the teachers were Articles 12, 19, 34 and 37. Some remarked:

They are nice but as Africans, we have this idea that if adults are talking, children don't have to interfere or contribute but I think it is high time we stopped that. The children sometimes become so timid that they don't tell, if their parents or teachers are molesting them. I know of parents and teachers who are molesting their children, I think we should develop relationship with them to confess secrete things to us (Female teacher Adom JHS).

As Ghanaians we can do it but with the African child, I don't think it will work. Africa here we are so poor that parents are always angry about things so children have no chance of putting their views across (Male teacher, Adom JHS).

In Ghana when something is worrying you, the bureaucratic process is too long. Children decide to keep quite not that they don't know but for convenience sake because they are afraid they will be sacked from schools if they report teachers. Even when we were in teacher training colleges there were certain decisions we were not happy with but whether you like it or not they will force you to comply, if you openly voice your opposition to the authorities, they will sack you. So you ask yourself how many years am I spending here, just 3 years so we just comply and go (Male teacher, Advanced JHS).

Teachers do not disagree with the Articles in principle but contextually there are so many issues to deal with if the UNCRC should be implemented fully in Ghana. The culture imperative on how adults relate to children is problematic, while pupils might fear victimisation if they demand their rights. However, some teachers were of the view that if Ghana has signed it they should make sure it is implemented regardless of the many barriers. When asked how schools can implement certain aspects of the UNCRC, they were not entirely optimistic about how successful it will be because when children are taught their rights in school they cannot exercise them at home. One said:

It will not work at homes, sometimes children are hurt badly at homes, and it is a matter of advising the whole nation (Female teacher, Advanced JHS).

Another teacher was of the view that, pupils can exercise their rights and be protected from abuse only if the law enforcement agencies do their work, saying:

As for western countries pupils can call police if you abuse them but not here in Ghana. We have just signed it but we are not using even right after school you can see a primary year 3 pupils selling in the streets, which is abuse (Female teacher, Wisdom Primary).

While probing teachers on the types of abuse at home and in school, the most common mentioned are sexual and physical violence. Teachers condemned sexual abuse in schools and proposed that offenders should be severely dealt with. However, they tried hard to justify corporal punishment which most of them might be relying on in one way or the other. Most teachers were of the view that it is their religious responsibility to discipline the child with the rod and quoted from the Bible ‘*spare the rod and spoil the child*’ (Proverbs 13:24). Some teachers also felt reluctant to use the cane but complained that pupils’ behaviour left them no option but to use the cane. Some said:

I am not happy using cane on human beings; most of the children are very stubborn they cannot understand simple message, don’t go there or pass here at this time unless you use the cane that is why it is the only message they can hear (Male Teacher Adom JHS).

I don’t think caning is bad, it is for reforming because we are using for the child to know what he or she has done is wrong. If you give them the chance they (pupils) will abuse it, although sometimes we resolved not to cane them but some of them are so recalcitrant that we have to use it. We had some friends in the UK who visited us in an exchange programme; they saw it and were not happy. They advised us to have alternative ways of punishing them (Male teacher, Wisdom Primary).

This suggests that much more work should be done in teacher education colleges, where teacher trainees will experience practical ways of controlling and managing

pupils, so they will not feel the cane is the only option. In-service training for existing teachers on how they could implement changes in their practices to meet universal standards that are acceptable globally would also be helpful. This will therefore break the cycle of authoritarian educational institutions from the lower level to higher level and then back again (Davies, 2002; Harber, 1997; Blishen, 1969).

8.5 Pupils' Participation in Decision-Making

Democracy is described as the rule of the people (Rust and Laumann, 2001; Held, 1996) and this means that the process of decision-making should involve the people. How much participation are pupils allowed to have in the decisions that affect them in schools? Since there is no policy or clear intention to promote democracy in basic schools in Ghana, the amount of student participation in decision-making is very limited (as described in Table 8.1). However, pupils were asked whether pupils in their school participate in decision-making, and if so, they should give examples. Most pupils in the primary schools responded 'no' and some of them remarked that 'they do not give us a chance to vote even when selecting prefects'. 'No, because teachers think we are small girls so we cannot give them any proper answer' (Pupil, Adom Primary). However, in the Junior High Schools they said 'no' with regard to big decisions but were sometimes allowed to vote for the selection of prefect. One said clearly:

Yes, we get our chance to vote for prefects nobody will beat you for taking your decisions; you have your rights or freedoms to vote for those you like (Pupil, Advanced JHS - Interview).

Perhaps the election of prefects is the only decision they are involved in and even in this it does not happen in every school. It depends on the nature of teachers in that particular school because there is no rule or policy that proposes election of student

prefects. In the city Junior High Schools, it is becoming normal practice as there are highly competitive school prefect elections as I was told, but it was not like that in Adom JHS. A pupil observed:

We don't participate in decision-making; we don't know the reason why not even choosing our prefects (Pupil, Adom JHS - Interview).

When probed as to who selected their prefects, they said it was the teachers. Pupils who are interested in a position write application letters to teachers, and the teachers will interview the applicants to appoint the various prefects. On many issues, teachers do not consult pupils at all; they make the decisions and tell them. Some remarked:

No, they (teachers) don't give us a chance, in their meeting they gather there and talk about things and make decision even if the thing concerns us, they just come and tell us (Pupil, Wisdom JHS - Interview).

Teachers should tell us when they are making decisions on our behalf so that we will let them know what is right for us (Pupil, Wisdom Primary - Interview).

Despite the immense evidence of how pupils could be consulted to improve schools (Cox et al., 2010; Harber, 2010; Yamashita et al., 2010), there is little chance for students in Ghana to participate in decision-making. They are not consulted in matters regarding the running of the school. Considering Hart's (1992) ladder of participation from my in-depth observation and other findings in this study, schools in Ghana could be placed at the levels 1, 2 and 3 where pupils have been manipulated, decorated and tokenised. For example there are school prefects in Ghanaian basic schools but they do not participate in decision-making, but some duties like supervision of pupils cleaning the school compound are usually delegated to them. These bottom levels are known as 'degrees of non-participation'. These findings present a mismatch of what actually happens in school and that of national aspirations towards democratic citizenship.

Having in mind the checklist of indicators of a democratic school (Davies, 1995, see Chapter 4, Section 4.3) pupils were asked whether there are any processes in their school whereby pupils' views are made known to teachers, and I also followed up with in-depth observation and various informal observations and conversations with pupils and teachers. With regard to formal structures of participation or where pupils' views are made known, it was hard to find any evidence in all schools. There were no school councils in any of the schools. The only school where I was told prefects had regular meetings with the headteacher and also had a disciplinary committee involving pupils and teachers, was the Advanced JHS. It was also reported that Wisdom JHS had a suggestion box which was confirmed by pupils and teachers, but it was nowhere to be found during my time in the school. Pupils however, were aware of the informal ways in which they could communicate their problems to teachers. Some said:

There are prefects in the school, so if there is a problem and you feel shy to tell a teacher you go to the prefect and prefect will tell a teacher. If the teacher feels the need to talk to the head teacher, he/she will do so (Pupil, Advanced JHS).

At times when something is disturbing, you can tell a teacher (Pupil, Adom JHS).

I am adolescent and we do see physical changes to our body but when you see a teacher they will explain to you calmly. They are free that whatever you have, you can go them (Pupil, Advanced JHS).

Some pupils do have reservations about going to the teachers with issues. The reason being either they are too scared to talk about issues with teachers or they feel it will be embarrassing if teachers ignore them. They said:

Sometimes when we want to speak up, we afraid of talking to the teachers, may be if it sounds bad to him, he will beat you up anyhow (Pupil, Wisdom JHS).

I am afraid of them (teachers) because what they are doing is too much bad. Any decision that they are making, they will not tolerate our views (Pupil, Adom Primary).

If you talk to teachers, they have more important things to do like going to other classes for their lessons. If you talk to them and they don't mind you, you will feel embarrassed all day (Pupil, United Primary).

These are the impressions pupils have about their teachers, probably they are speaking out of experience which has existed through generations but it might not be like that for all teachers as apparently some teachers have started getting feedback from children. One pupil stated:

One teacher asked me to write something about him, when I did I can see he has changed (Pupil, Adom JHS).

Pupils' views could have a positive impact on teaching and learning and the professionalism of teachers (Le Riche, 1995; Rudduck, 1996). However, the existence of a culture of fear in basic schools in Ghana presents a greater barrier for pupils to interact freely with teachers where their concerns would be shared.

Although there are limited democratic processes of which pupils' views will be known in these schools, nevertheless, extending it to full democratic participation should be the ultimate goal. Therefore, pupils were asked if they had something to offer in terms of decision-making. Pupils demonstrated that they had views on certain issues. They also indicated that they had a moral responsibility to correct teachers if they get it wrong, saying:

Teachers should not look down on us and think that we have nothing to offer (Pupil, United Primary - Interview).

I am the assistant girls' prefect, if there is something bad going on in the school I can discuss with the head teacher (Pupil, Adom JHS - Interview).

We want different subject teachers not only one teacher will teach us all the time (Pupil, Wisdom Primary - Interview).

When choosing school prefect they (teachers) should tell us, if we don't want the person (Pupil, Wisdom Primary - Interview).

Everybody makes mistakes so when teachers make mistakes we can correct them (Pupil, Advanced JHS - Interview).

When something goes wrong in the school we must tell the teachers (Pupils, Advanced JHS - Interview).

As a researcher, and having asked pupils to speak about how they would like their school to be, I observed that their confidence increased as they got used to me during the interviews, and they made bold statements like those above, but unfortunately they could not do so to their teachers because of fear and intolerance by teachers. Teachers from the six schools involved in the study were therefore interviewed to find their perceptions on pupils' voice and participation in decision-making.

8.6 Teachers' Perceptions of Pupils' Voice and Participation in Decision-Making

Teachers' voice is also important if pupils' voice will be recognised in schools for any meaningful school improvement work. Teachers are those dealing with children directly and any kind of policy implementation or recommendation made in this study largely depends on them. Therefore, their willingness to accept and make changes to their daily practices in Ghanaian basic schools is essential towards democratic change. Teachers, in their interviews, were asked whether they recognised pupils' voice as important and whether listening to pupils could help improve schools. All the teachers interviewed were of the view that pupils' voice was very important for the running of the school and listening to pupils had various advantages for the school. Some said:

We cannot do our away with the pupils. I think that pupils should be given a chance to express themselves on how things should be run in schools (Male teacher, Adom JHS).

I do recognise pupils' views as important because without them we cannot come to classroom and teach, so teachers must listen to the children (Female teacher, Advanced JHS).

Listening to pupils can help, children are not empty headed they also have ideas. You will be surprised that certain children in this school have very good ideas but the platforms for them to air those ideas are not there. So beginning to solicit their views and listening to them will make schools happy places for both the teachers and students (Male teacher, Advanced JHS).

Despite the positive response about listening to pupils' views, the evidence from pupils suggests this rarely happens in Ghanaian basic schools. Some of the respondents were honest to admit that although on a personal level they recognised pupils as important, it does not happen at the whole school level. They observed:

As for me I recognise pupils' voice but I can't see that one in this school. They [teachers] have been saying 'they are kids we don't take their views', but their views are important. I have been interviewing them but when you go to the staff meeting and tell them you get no support (Female teacher, Wisdom Primary).

Yes, pupils' voices 'very very' important, the school riots that have been going on various secondary schools, it is because pupils' voices are not considered. Pupils are such that when they are not actively involved they can decide to relax on their responsibilities. For instance in this school when you are a teacher on duty, when it is time to get pupils to classroom after break, you need to be chasing them here and there to drag them into their classrooms. But if you empower the prefects the children have elected, they will give instructions and the children will follow without the teacher chasing them (Male teacher, Advanced JHS).

When we listen to pupils, sometimes they are on the right path but with the Ghanaian society adults are always right. Sometime children might be right and sometimes they have some views that if we listened to them, we can even learn from them. It is better we listen to their views to see when we have to correct them as well (Female teacher, United Primary).

In these statements, teachers point out some prospects of listening to pupils and some of the consequences of ignoring pupils' views. However, the main barrier for teachers not paying attention to pupils' voice has been the adult perceptions on childhood (Rudduck and Flutter, 2004; Pryor et al., 2005). One stated:

Actually we should listen to them [pupils], but we have this thing that the African child has not got rights because when we give them the rights they will abuse them, so that is our assumption. Even if you give them that chance they should be guided, if you allow them on their own, they will mess up (Female teacher, Wisdom Primary).

This also confirms teachers' fears that there will be anarchy if you give pupils an opportunity to express their democratic rights (Davies, 1999; Davies et al., 2005). On the other hand, there are some teachers who argued that pupils in Ghanaian schools have been maltreated enough. One observed:

In Ghana, we adults do not allow children to talk but they have their rights and we should let them voice out their views. Sometimes they are on the right path but we dampen their spirit, we shout at them and put fear in them. When they grow up with this fear it causes more harm because they cannot talk where they should. As democratic country we should allow them to voice out their views (Female teacher, United Primary).

The key issue is that teachers are aware of the negative effect of their actions towards pupils, but some of their practices are rigid. Teachers were further asked to indicate some of the ways pupils could be encouraged to participate in decision-making in schools.

8.7 Entry Points to Democratic Practices in Ghanaian Schools

A lot of ideas were generated when teachers were asked about ways they could encourage pupils to participate in decision-making in schools. Most of the teachers suggested pupils should be encouraged to elect their own prefects and that some prefects attend staff meetings and report deliberations to fellow students. In Advanced JHS, a teacher said that they have made an attempt to organise prefects so that they would meet periodically to talk about issues and forward their problems to teachers. However, a teacher in the United Primary pointed out that they have prefects in every

school but the problems have been with the teachers themselves for not involving pupils in decision-making. She said:

With decision-making, we have prefects but we have turned them to errand boys and girls. It shouldn't be so. We should decide with them, they are in the situation to know what is good for them. When pupils come out with things that you as an elderly person you think it will not help them. You can tell them this one wouldn't help you (Female teacher, United Primary).

The question is whether teachers allow pupils to contribute to discussions or whether they are just there to observe and report any decisions made to the whole student body. In South Africa, it is a law to include students in the school governing bodies. It was found in a study that some adults felt uncomfortable for student governors to express their views in meetings and sometimes asked them to go out for decisions they deemed to be sensitive (Mncube, 2008).

Teachers interviewed suggested many ways in which pupils could be encouraged to participate in decision-making at school. Some of them said:

There are so many ways, we can organise school clubs, pupils can pass their grievances through their prefects. We can also set certain days for class discussions and each class will talk about their problems (Female teacher, Adom JHS).

We always assign them [pupils] some duties but we don't include them in our decisions. It is better we give them a chance to have a class discussion and whatever come out they give it to the teachers for the headteachers attention. There should be suggestion box in each class (Male teacher, Wisdom Primary).

We can encourage them [pupils] by letting them know that whatever they say is important and listen to them. But if they say something and we ignore them it will not encouraged them (Female teacher, Advanced JHS).

In theory, most teachers have ideas on how to encourage pupils in decision-making yet they are far from being put into practice. Throughout the interviews, I realised that Ghanaian teachers are full of ideas and concepts to make their teaching better and

improve their relationships with students, but they prefer to stick to the traditional methods. This confirms that teachers who do not experience such types of democratic practice in teacher training cannot perform democratically in classrooms (Alderson, 2000; Harber, 1995).

Teachers were asked during the interviews to share their views on having school councils in basic schools in Ghana. Most teachers were of the view that school councils would be a good idea and it will work well in basic schools in Ghana. The School Representative Council (SRC) is very popular among Senior Secondary Schools and higher education institutions in Ghana but pupils in basic schools have heard little about the SRC when I asked them. One remarked:

It is very laudable idea, something that I like because we have SRC at the senior high school level and the university level. Why can't we have it at the basic level, they are not too young at this level, pupils also have their views (Male teacher, Advanced JHS).

Among the teachers interviewed, there was almost unanimous support for school councils to be established in basic schools. Only one teacher felt that primary school pupils were too young for that. However, when I explained that my study involved those in the upper primary year four to six and Junior High School pupils, she agreed with that age group (9 years up to 15 years). On the contrary, when I was organising the mock school council in Adom Primary School, a group of nursery and kindergarten teachers approached me and asked why I did not come to their setting. When I explained the data collection processes to them, they dared me to come to their setting and would be surprised at what the children would tell me. This indicates that Ghanaian teachers are aware of what pupils are capable of doing but it is not their usual practice to listen to them or encourage them to participate in decision-making.

When respondents were further asked to explain why there was a need for school councils in basic schools, most of them related the benefits to school improvement, child development and future leadership roles. They said:

I think it will be better to have school representative councils in basic schools so that the children will have a better future and also improve schools. Here the children are not abreast with whatever happens at the administrative level of the school (Male teacher, Adom JHS).

Since the children meet and discuss their problems, they will have the confidence to deal with future problems. For example if a teacher meets the council and they want to talk about the performance of that teacher, they can discuss issues in the presence of him or her (Female teacher Adom JHS).

It will help the school because some of the pupils are bright and they can help us in decision-making. It will improve everything in the school (Female teacher, Wisdom Primary).

When teachers were probed whether they would continue with the councils I had set up in the various schools, some of the teachers said the staff would have to deliberate over it, while others wanted me to discuss appointing some teachers to look after it with the headteachers. When I was encouraging the headteacher in the United Primary to continue the school council in informal conversation, she retorted that ‘children empowerment has always been on the agenda but it has come to nothing yet’. This means that she might take it as one of those campaigns that do not fulfil its full potential. However, a senior teacher at Wisdom Primary was more positive that they would continue the school council after I had left for the United Kingdom, saying:

I saw you meeting with them (school council) and I was very happy. I think if we are able to get something like that it will help us to listen to their views, but it is also a training to know how to become leaders in the future so that they can take decisions on their own. It is a very good thing you want us to

carry out; even if you are away we will continue with it (Male teacher, Wisdom Primary).

These teachers are aware of the benefits of school councils and need some encouragement and materials to start the process.

8.8 School Councils as a Step Towards Democracy in Schools

School councils can serve as the gateway for greater democracy in Ghanaian schools. When they are well organised councils will promote pupils' voice and ensure pupils' participation in schools (Inman and Burke, 2002). Since school councils are not common in the primary and junior high schools in Ghana, I decided as part of this study to try it in three primary schools and three junior high schools. The mock school councils were highly successful and popular in all the schools. This was also used to test the democratic credentials among pupils and establish some leads for future development. I supervised all the elections of class representatives or councillors in all the six schools and as I walked in class by class there was great excitement among pupils. Pupils have witnessed national and local council elections and some schools even elected their prefects, therefore the balloting was conducted in an orderly and a peaceful manner. In each of the schools, the election of councillors took place a week before the school council meeting in order for them to solicit views from their class.

The mock school council meetings did not follow strict procedures of formal meetings with an agenda as this was the first kind of meeting most of the councillors had attended. A set of questions as follows, were set in order for the councillors to engage with while I observed and acted as the facilitator: How might school councils improve schools?; Who would be on them, how might they be chosen and how would they work?; If you are in the school council over the next year, how would you improve

your school?; What would you improve and how would you do it? The various councils were asked to come out with a minimum of five realistic recommendations or projects that could be carried out to improve their schools. Most of the meetings took an hour during their long breaks between 12:00 midday and 1.00 pm in order not to disrupt much of the contact hours. In all the schools the councillors elected the chair and the secretary from among them. Surprisingly, the council in the United Primary elected a little girl from year 4 as the chair instead of the big boys and girls in year 6. This looked promising, because, in electing the chair, the councils who had school prefects among them did not even nominate them which I thought would be the automatic choice. For the purpose of the discussion here, all the reports taken will be reproduced below without editing. This will also help the analysis of the future democratic process in schools, with regard to the skills children have now and how they could be developed. The reports were meant to be the minutes recorded by the elected secretaries for the various schools. Since these secretaries were not trained in how to write minutes and had not done anything like that before, they were just asked to record proceedings of the school council meeting and present it to the researcher afterwards.

The recording of the reports followed the set of questions given to them to work with in the meeting. The secretaries did not write detailed reports as discussed in the meetings but I believe that they wrote according to their level of English language and how quickly they could capture the deliberations. Below are the reports provided by the various school councils starting with the Wisdom Primary School.

School Council Meeting: Wisdom Primary School

How might school councils improve schools?

- *Helping us expressing our views as kids when decisions are made by the head teacher.*
- *It will help motivate the children in the school.*
- *Help us identify lots of ideas as students.*
- *Make decision on the facilities we lack in schools.*
- *Making it best in sanitation.*

(we should form a school council in this school)

Who would be on them, how might they be chosen and how would they work?

- *There should be two representatives from each class (a boy and a girl).*
- *The school prefects are also included in the school council.*

How are we going to work?

- *There should be rules to improve sanitation in the school.*
- *Writing letters to PTA, government, individuals etc for support.*

Realistic Materials

- *Brooms, dustbins and washing bowls.*
- *Washing materials to clean our place of convenience.*
- *Gardening day must be put in place.*

Although the discussions were much lengthier than this report, the secretary was able to capture the summary of proceedings. Further to the mock school council meetings, pupils were asked in the group interviews whether it would be helpful to have school councils in their school. In Wisdom Primary School children were of the view that a school council would be very helpful for their school development. Some observed:

Pupil: School council will help us to express our ideas in helping develop our school.

Pupil: It is a way which we kids can have a chance to express ourselves.

Pupil: One thing I don't like about the representatives is if you tell them your suggestions they don't take it up to the meeting. The representative for school council should be two or three from each class.

(Group interview Wisdom Primary)

Whilst other pupils were excited about school council meetings, the pupil who made the last comment did not fail to point out some of the problems pupils may face with their own representatives, as sometimes in meetings they might not represent the views of their class. This also indicates the consequences of representative democracy as Members of Parliament might not represent the views of the constituents but party ideologies. Davies (1994) argues that it becomes a dilemma as to which model of democracy schools should pursue, whether direct or representative democracy. However, apart from the school council, more structures like class councils and circle time will help with more pupil participation in order not to marginalise some voices (Alderson, 2000). From informal interaction with the pupil who made the comment discussed above, he was very disappointed that he was not elected to represent his class for the school council, but for this study he was able to contribute through the group interviews.

In the Adom Primary, the secretary of the mock school council wrote the report in a different style. During the meeting I encouraged them to find ways they could solve any problem they raised. The following is the report:

School Council Meeting: Adom Primary School

How many pupils represent the school council?

- *Two representatives from each class one boy, one girl from year 3 to year 6, minimum of sixteen.*
- *The boy's and girl's school prefects are part of the school council.*

Realistic Projects

- *Somebody said there is no window in 6B classroom. [Solution] Tell the headteacher and also write a letter to seek help from organisations.*
- *We do not have computers and also drinking water (Pipes). [Solution] Write a letter to the Member of Parliament (M.P).*

- *We want green grass on the school park. [Solution] We will bring black soil and plant the grass on the park.*
- *The classroom for class 4B when raining it started breaking. [Solution] We will talk to the headteacher.*

All Other Matters

- *Others schools teaches French but we don't have French teacher.*
- *We don't understand while when is time for weeding, the prefects weed.*
- *Our toilets have been broken even we don't have some.*

In the Adom Primary, the report of the school council does not follow the order of questions they were asked to deal with, but they did very well in listing their problems in their school and suggesting how they might deal with them if they got another chance. Since I asked them to suggest realistic projects these rural primary school children were able to list their problems and how those issues could be solved. Empowering pupils to take on some of the issues at their level will only help school improvement whilst they also build up skills for life in the big democratic society. In the interviews, pupils confirmed that they liked the school council because it helped them to share their views. For instance, when they needed something, the council could help them to tell the teachers. Likewise, if there was something wrong, teachers would know through the council members.

The pupils in the United Primary council were fluent in speaking English and therefore it made the council meeting interesting. The secretary did very well to capture how they deliberated with issues by the way questions were asked, and how they planned to solve them and recorded the final decision after discussion. The report is presented here.

School Council Meeting: United Primary School

Representative: Two representatives for each class, one comes for the meeting and the other stays. If the main representative is sick or cannot attend the meeting the other comes.

Library: How are we to build the library? Representatives have to write letters to parents, organisation etc, for them to help us build the library.

Sanitation:

- *Dustbins - how are we to get the dustbins? Every class contributes some money for the dustbin.*
- *What should we do to keep the environment clean? We must not litter.*
- *What should we do to those who litter? We choose pupils to spy on those who litter, then we let them pick what they have dropped then the person pay a fine sum of 20 pesewas Ghana money (less than 10 pence GBP). If the person does not have money we write the person's name then the person pay later. Then we use the money to buy dustbins.*

School buses: we should write a letter to Metro Mass Transport so that they could provide buses for us.

Liquid Soap: classes should contribute some money for them.

Entertainment: a day should be set aside for quizzes, dramas, games etc.

Clocks: classes should contribute some money to buy wall clocks for each class.

As I observed the council meeting here, one thing that I realised was pupils' suggestions may lack maturity or practicality, therefore may need a teacher to work with them closely. The teacher should not dictate to them but guide them on what is appropriate. For example, in discussing about sanitation, one pupil suggested that all those who litter the compound and refuse to pay the fine imposed should have their shoes confiscated until they paid up. I had to step in and tell them to find better ways of dealing with that situation. In the group interviews in the United Primary School, some pupils thought the idea of a school council was exciting. Some commented:

Pupil: I think it is exciting; school council is a good idea we need library and computers.

Pupil: Children have many things, they want to share with people but we can't because we don't have such programmes like school councils in this school.

Pupil: I think it is wonderful idea so that children can bring their opinion for the school to improve.

Pupil: I think it is good because our P.E park is without green grass, I hope the council help put some grass on the park.

(Group Interview, United Primary)

Most pupils seemed to be ambitious about what the school councils could do and with the support from all stakeholders in education, things could be achieved with pupils' involvement.

The next report to be considered as found below is from the Wisdom Junior High School. This is another report, that does not contain the full deliberations but at least it indicates how pupils think about their school.

School Council Meeting: Wisdom Junior High School

Benefit of school council

- *It can help in the school and discipline.*
- *It can bring teamwork.*
- *It provides school needs e.g. urinals, furniture, library and computers.*
- *It can support financially.*
- *It helps the school in terms of classes.*
- *Sanitation*
- *Academic development*

Students' Representatives

- *There should be election of all representatives, two pupils must be elected from each class that is a boy and a girl, a maximum of 26 pupils*

Targets for the school council

- *Wall clock in each class*
- *Improvement of English speaking*

- *Library block by raising funds from parent with permission from the headteacher.*
- *Computer lab from fundraising*
- *Form a drama group to perform in different schools*
- *Doing something to prevent erosion in the school compound*
- *Dustbin in each class*
- *A refuse dump*
- *Dining Hall*

When pupils were asked in their interviews to comment on the school councils, respondents' gave their full support for their school to have permanent councils, with some stating:

Pupil: School councils can help so that our grievances can be heard by the teachers.

Pupil: It will improve the school, so that we will have the facilities like canteen and boarding house for the final years who are preparing to write exams.

Pupil: It is good to have school council because they will think about what is good or bad for the school.

Pupil: I think it is good because if we have the school council, there will be discipline in the school and everybody will know what to do and what not to do in school.

(Group Interview, Wisdom JHS)

These things could be achieved by school councils only when it is seen beyond tokenism and moved to fuller participation. Students Representative Councils have existed in Senior High Schools for years but it has not moved beyond control mechanism and headteachers merely passing information to students. However, those in higher education like universities have been able to carry out development projects like hostels on campuses through the activities of the SRCs.

For the report from the Adom Junior High School, the secretary listed some of the things they were concerned with and talked about during the meeting. These show that pupils have many problems but until this study, they had never had a chance to talk about them. It said:

School Council Meeting: Adom Junior High School

Number of representatives

- *Two people from each class a boy and a girl*
- *Meetings once in a week*
- *Time of meeting 2:30pm*

This is to improve the school

- *Renew of the roofing sheets on the library block.*
- *Building of toilet*
- *Filling the holes in our classroom*
- *Repairing broken windows and doors*
- *How to get dustbins and pans*
- *Variety of food in our canteen*
- *How to get netball and volleyball court*
- *How to get a computer laboratory*
- *Visiting a computer laboratory*
- *Weeding the school environment*
- *Going on excursion*
- *Discussing with teachers how to go on trip*
- *Problems about the school feeding programme for our primary schools*

The feeling of joining the school mock council

- *To give our opinion to teachers about what we like and dislike.*
- *Improve relationship between pupils and teachers*
- *We can go to teachers and tell them our problem*

One of the things listed here which needs to be highlighted, is the council's concerns about a school feeding programme for their sister primary school, the Adom Primary. The government of Ghana is running a trial on school feeding programmes where selected primary schools are provided with snacks and lunch during school time. During the meeting the pupils were concerned that Adom Primary was not included in

the school feeding programme. This really shows the tendency of Ghanaian pupils to look after their younger siblings in the primary school and I think this is a lesson to politicians. In this school, all the respondents for the group interviews liked the idea of school councils in basic schools, with some stating:

Pupil: I think it is a good idea because if one class is having problems, they can have meeting share ideas together bring them to the school council for them to be shared with the headteacher and all the teachers.

Pupil: School council can help the teachers to relax while the prefects work, they can sit and relax.

Pupil: It will also help the teachers to know what we like and dislike and we too will know their likes and dislikes. Teachers will know how to handle us.

Pupil: It will help us to communicate to teachers. Pupils might not share their views with teachers individually.

(Group interview, Adom JHS)

These are overwhelming statements of fact from these children in a rural junior high school. This is the first time a school council meeting had been organised by a researcher yet they could foresee the advantages of such structures in schools. The merits of school councils extend beyond the school community. There have been city-wide, regional and national students councils elsewhere that have embarked on many programmes including curricula activities for improvement of teaching and learning (Carnie, 2010).

The secretary in the Advanced JHS really showed some skills in the report that was closer to minute-writing, which could help him or her in the English Language essays should the school council remain. The report says:

School Council Meeting: Advanced Junior High School

Number of representatives

- *2 elected members; a boy and a girl from each class. 18 representatives in total for 9 classes.*
- *5 pupils said prefects are to be automatic members.*
- *6 pupils said the other way round. It was agreed that, prefects are not automatic members of the council.*

Meeting Days: *it was agreed that they meet once a week. Wednesday's at lunch, 12:30pm.*

Realistic Projects

- *Buying washing bowls.*
- *Wall clock in each classroom*
- *Establish club which will organise quizzes*
- *Litter bins*
- *Cupboard and padlocks for locking cupboards.*
- *First Priority – Wall clock*
- *Second Priority – Litter bins*
- *Lucy said these points and it was seconded by Adele, and then it was agreed by all. (note: pseudonyms for the pupils mentioned here)*
- *One of the main priorities agreed on was the establishment of clubs that organises quizzes.*

Once again, pupils have significant concerns about their schools but they hardly get a chance to contribute. After the school council meeting in the Advanced JHS, I asked some of the participants to comment on the meeting and they had this to say about the school council:

Our voices can improve the school because most of the children are afraid of the teachers, so if the council go to the teachers, pupils will always feel free to come to us and tell us what they need so that the council can help (Girl, Representative).

I think it is very good because the school council can help provide things the school needed but due to some reason it has not been provided yet (Girl, Representative).

I feel that it will help the school to provide the needs of the student and also something special for the school and pupils will improve on their academic performance (Boy Representative).

I think it is very good because the council is great point in this school and because of this we must do our best so that we can help the voice of the pupils and therefore we can get everything we want from the staff in this school (Boy, Representative).

Pupils' expectations about the school council were very great as can be seen through all the reports, what they intend to do and how they will do it. Effective school councils are very important for pupil voice movement and for that matter democratic school pupils will be responsible for many things that will free up teachers' workload (Pryor et al., 2005). Although school councils have not been made compulsory in schools in the UK, they are very popular in both primary and secondary schools and their worth are shown in many studies (Davies, 1998; Inman and Burke, 2002; Davies and Yamashita, 2007; Carnie, 2010).

8.9 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter has explored the nature of schooling in Ghana by using the fundamental principles and values of democracy. The study found that there are more practices in Ghanaian schools that relate to autocracy rather than democracy. However, there are many entry points to democratic practices if there is to be a genuine desire to produce democratic citizens. Both pupils and teachers have limited knowledge of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. They accept the Convention in principle but have doubts on how some of the Articles are problematic in the Ghanaian context. Pupils were of the view that they have got ideas to contribute to the improvement of their schools yet there are inadequate structures in Ghanaian schools to promote pupils' voice and participation. Teachers also agreed to the notion of listening to pupils and encouraging greater participation, but felt that the obstacles

have been long term traditional practices in schools and adult perceptions of childhood.

In exploring the question on how schools in Ghana might be changed in a more democratic direction for school improvement, school councils were piloted in the six schools and the findings discussed in this chapter. Pupils were excited and fully supported the idea of school councils where they could have the chance to solve their own problems and also to negotiate with teachers on school improvement issues. Sampled teachers interviewed also supported the implementation of permanent school councils but the problem was that there is no government legislation or policy for them to be established in basic schools in Ghana. I intentionally did not use the word democracy directly with the pupils as it could generate various meanings. However, possibilities and entry points of democratic practices were teased out by exploring pupils' voice, rights, equity, participation and informed choice.

As I analysed the data concerning teachers' views on pupils' voice and participation, one question that kept coming to me repeatedly was: 'Why do teachers in Ghana have such brilliant ideas but their practices are far from their views'? Reflecting on the discussion earlier on in this chapter, they recognised pupils' views as important on school improvement issues, but in reality they do not listen to pupils in decision-making. They accept UNCRC in principle but do not want to give children all the entitlement of their rights because of the fear of anarchy and chaos. They have good ideas to encourage pupil participation but unless there is policy or legislative documents forcing teachers to act, most government schools will remain as they are for many generations. Few teachers will innovate or initiate something in their school

that will cause a change nationwide; most school reforms are centrally motivated. These issues could be leads for further research but in this study the role of teacher education in producing teachers with this attitude have been explored in Chapter Four. The next chapter explores the views of teacher trainees as to ways their teacher training could help them to become teachers who will be able to change schools in Ghana in a more democratic direction for school improvement.

CHAPTER NINE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS: THE ROLE OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION

9.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings on the role of teacher education towards democratic education. The fundamental questions explored during the data collection were: What is the nature of teacher education in Ghana? Does it train would-be teachers to recognise pupils' views as important for school improvement? Are there any practices in colleges of education that will encourage teacher trainees to involve pupils in decision-making in schools towards more democratic education? This study is a follow up from my previous research (Agyemang, 2007) which found various entry points towards democratic teacher education (see Table 4.1 in Chapter Four). However, four years after that study, has the situation changed or it is still the same old way of doing things?

9.2 Teacher Trainees' Experiences in Colleges of Education

Through the in-depth study at the Royal College, the following outlines the daily experiences of teacher trainees. Teacher trainees wake up with a rising bell at 5:00 am. They proceed to do their morning chores, known in the college as 'monitorial duties', where students have been assigned various places to clean on campus and need to finish and prepare for morning devotion. Morning Devotion starts at 6:00 am at the Assembly Hall, and is about 30 to 45 minutes long depending on the speaker and the number of announcements made. Monday to Friday, classes start at 7:00 am and finish at 2:15 pm, they have breakfast between 9:00 am and 10:00 am and 15 minutes short break at 12:00 noon, the rest of the time is for lessons. They have lunch after

2:15 pm, and there are a lot of activities after lunch including house chores such as weeding and scrubbing bathrooms especially for the first year students, and also many rehearsals if there are cultural and sporting competitions whether inter-house or inter-college. They then have their supper/dinner between 5:00 pm and 6:00 pm. All meal times are compulsory for the student to attend the Dining Hall. They go for 'prep' or personal studies from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm and go to bed at 10:00 pm when all go 'lights out'. As discussed in Chapter Four, these findings confirmed that teacher trainees in colleges of education in Ghana are faced with highly regimented practices and routines on a daily basis (Akyeampong and Stephens, 2002; Dull, 2004).

At the moment, colleges of education in Ghana operate in a system called IN-IN-OUT, two years on campus teacher education programme and one year teaching practice on the field for the Diploma in Basic Education qualification. The two years on campus is a normal routine for all teacher trainees. There might be similar practices in all colleges of education in Ghana as Dull (2004) found the same kind of routine in Peki College of Education which is in the Volta Region of Ghana far away from the Royal College in Ashanti Region. While I did not do any in-depth observation in Akwaaba College in rural Ashanti Region, their written open-ended essays and interview responses indicate they share similar practices. In order to discover more practices in colleges of education, teacher trainees were asked to write open-ended essays about things they enjoyed in college and those they did not. This enabled the sampled teacher trainees to express themselves about practices in their college they would like to continue and those they disapproved of. These experiences have been categorised into positive and negative experiences.

9.2.1 Positive Experiences of Teacher Trainees

Teacher trainees have been socialised into the daily routines in the colleges of education and some of them think that it is possibly the best way to promote discipline. Arguably some of the students enjoy the regimented activities. One observed:

There are lots of things I enjoy as a student of [Royal] College of Education, some of those that make me happy is the discipline that is inculcated in students that pass through this college. The frequent roll calls at various gatherings make me regular and punctual. As a student who believes in self discipline and not imposed, I try in my own capacity to do the right thing at the right time, thanks to the rules and regulations circulating around me. It marvels me when I read to know that, some students future leaders in other tertiary institutions are allowed to do things of their own choice with no authority to correct them. Then the question is what good example would he / she who dresses indecently impact unto others. Thanks to the authorities of my noble college who prescribe the code of dressing making me simple and smart (Teacher trainee, Royal College - essay).

This is the type of teacher trainee that the authorities in colleges of education want. If you have this mind-set, then you will enjoy your time throughout the period of your teacher education. However, the issues raised by the teacher trainee here are debatable and one needs to ask some questions as to: who sets those rules? How long have these rules and regulations been there? Have there been any reviews recently? Should roll-calls be used to attract students to meetings and gatherings? Should teacher trainees wear a prescribed uniform? What colleges of education in Ghana have done well previously is to socialise teacher trainees into these old rules and regulations without opening a real debate as to what practices are still relevant in today's society.

There are a number of things that teacher trainees enjoy in their colleges generally ranging from morning devotions (religious), teaching methods, relationship with tutors and colleagues, sporting activities, good quality facilities and having leadership roles.

According to Akyeampong and Stephens (2002), most colleges were started as missionary institutions with a culture of strict discipline to train ministers, catechists and later teachers. The practice of morning devotion (assembly) has stayed since then in many colleges of education in Ghana. While they have to be at the assembly hall as early as 6:00 am for the morning devotion, it remains one of the popular activities respondents enjoy at college. Some said:

I most enjoy our morning devotion where messages from the Bible are shared with us from the Reverend minister or students. These messages help us to start our day with some motivation (Teacher trainee, Royal College - essay).

I like the fact that the spiritual development matters to the college and so we are being trained spiritually by the tutors, the appointed stewards as well as other leaders of religious denominations on campus. We go to worship God every morning before lessons starts ... (Teacher trainee, Akwaaba College - essay).

While this Christian worship is compulsory for every student regardless of religious affiliation, most respondents say they are happy with it. The worship also prepares them for working life, as in Ghana most schools organise a daily morning religious assembly where pupils say the Lord's Prayer, sing the various national anthems and are made to march with accompanying songs to their various classrooms. Some of the teacher trainees also pointed out that religious activities helped them to learn good moral values and therefore such activities should be encouraged in every teacher education institution in order to produce good and competent teachers. However, a few respondents argued that religious activities should not be made compulsory, but tutors responsible should organise them in such a way that church services will attract all teacher trainees.

Teacher trainees admire tutors who are punctual, attend classes regularly and use various teaching methods for lesson delivery. Most respondents also appreciate tutors who are approachable and respect the needs of teacher trainees. Some of the respondents said:

The academic performance of this college is very good, due to the good teaching methods adopted by the tutors for students teachers to understand whatever they are taught (Teacher trainee, Akwaaba College - essay).

One thing I enjoy in this college is the unity among the tutors and students. The unity is exhibited through class discussions and group assignments. As students work together as a group when given assignments and teachers adopt the discussion between tutors and students. Among the tutors also, they solved every problem that rises among them amicably and peacefully (Teacher trainee, Akwaaba College - essay).

The good tutor-student relationship of some tutors enables me to ask questions that bothers me especially on my education calendar. The frequent attendances of most teachers in the class also help me understand topics and prepare well for all examinations (Teacher trainee, Royal College - essay).

Some of the teacher trainees contended that tutors should have a good attitude towards their job and carry out their duties effectively because they are learning from them. This point should be emphasised because some of the bad practices in colleges are being repeated in schools; examples will be discussed later in this section. Furthermore, teacher trainees enjoy cordial relationships among themselves. Although they come from different backgrounds and ethnic groups, teacher trainees reported that they relate to each other very well with one remarking:

One of the things I enjoy is relating with students (colleagues) from different ethnic group. It helps me to learn much about their cultures which goes a long way to help me to be tolerant to other ethnic groups (Teacher trainee: Royal College - essay).

In both of the colleges of education involved in this study, there were very strong student leadership/prefects elected by the teacher trainees themselves. One respondent contended that ‘privileges given to students to take up leadership roles in the college

help to develop the various skills for the future' (Teacher trainee, Royal College). Most of the respondents like sporting activities, games, entertainment and competitive events with other colleges. Some of the teacher trainees also talked about things that would make them really happy in college. These included cordiality among tutors and students, adequate explanation of monies that teacher trainees are requested to pay to the accounts department, no accommodation problems, and availability of other social amenities and facilities that are functioning properly in the college. I discuss next some of the issues that teacher trainees do not enjoy at college that contribute to their negative experiences.

9.2.2 Negative Experiences of Teacher Trainees

Teacher trainees were also asked to write about things they do not enjoy at college. Most of the things they wrote about in both colleges significantly show that teacher trainees have not much voice, they report that tutors abuse their rights, some are humiliated, and are often 'forced' to do things against their will. Teacher trainees were concerned with many issues in their colleges especially lack of good opportunities to express themselves to the authorities. Their responses to this question were overwhelming as respondents took the opportunity to talk about various issues affecting them. First of all, some teacher trainees contended about the lack of involvement in decision-making, with some remarking:

There is no democratic living on campus; students should be able to express their views on certain issues rather than college authorities imposing their decisions on students (Teacher trainee, Royal College - essay).

I am not happy about how tutors impose some things and rules on us, make me hate being in the college. They try to force us to obey some rules of which we cannot due to inconveniences. They [tutors] do not include us in decision-making (teacher trainee, Royal College - essay).

Teacher trainees are rarely asked to give feedback to the authorities with regards to curriculum, teaching methods and assessment. One of the respondents had a problem with the mode of assessment of the teacher training programme in Ghana and stated rather bluntly:

The mode of assessment of the colleges of education is one of the things I don't like. We are being taught over here by our own tutors but at the end of each semester, it is the University of Cape Coast that assesses our performance. This is very unfortunate because, sometimes we are assessed on topics that are not treated in the classroom and this affects us since the syllabi are sometimes not fully covered. Certificates are awarded to us at the end of the three years course and no one has ever attained first class in the Diploma course. This is all because of the mode of assessment (Teacher trainee, Akwaaba College - essay).

The issue here is that, while teacher trainees have identified this problem, there are no formal structures for their feedback or any procedures for complaining. The only answer for the teacher trainees is to work very hard to pass the examination and keep their views to themselves which is not helpful for teachers' training and development. In Akwaaba College, respondents complained about how the college administration delays in publishing their examination results. One noted:

The greatest dislike in this college is the delay of our examination results. At times we may hear of other colleges having their results posted on their notice board while ours will not be seen until we are about writing another semester exams (Teacher trainee, Akwaaba College - essay).

While the results are posted on the notice boards in the Royal College early enough, some teacher trainees were displeased with the way the individual candidates' results are publicly displayed in order of performance from first to bottom. One pointed out:

There are individual differences everywhere, so if at the end of semester someone is not able to perform very well, such a person needs to be encouraged than putting the person into shame (Teacher trainee, Royal College - essay).

From my insider knowledge in the Ghana education system, this kind of practice was common in primary schools in the 1980s and early 1990s where the headteacher would announce results of every class from first to bottom before the whole school and some members of the community who attend the closing assembly for the end of term. Due to the increase in workload of teachers, this system was dramatically reduced to where individual subject teachers would work out positions of pupils in the subject and put it in their report card. It is therefore surprising that those colleges of education which are now classified as tertiary institutions still persist in the 'orthodox' way of doing things. Perhaps, the idea is to motivate teacher trainees to take their studies seriously as they will be exposed at the end of semester examination. This could be one of the factors why teacher trainees felt they were being treated like primary school pupils as reported in Akyeampong and Stephens (2002).

Teacher trainees were not happy about the attitudes shown by some of their tutors. Respondents complained that some tutors do not give teacher trainees any respect at all, even the prefects among them. Some tutors are not punctual to lessons and also waste instructional time. The following are two examples of their remarks:

I don't like the way our leaders on campus are treated, tutors do not give them the needed respect which I am a victim (Teacher trainee, Royal College - essay).

Some of the tutors also misuse their instructional time. They talk about wrong things at the times they are supposed to teach and sometimes too, attend classes very late. This hinders the improvement of our academic performance (Teacher trainee, Akwaaba College - essay).

Some respondents also reported unhealthy sexual relationships between tutors and teacher trainees. Although teacher trainees are adults, and they might be consenting to

some extent, such tutors are likely to take advantage, especially of the female teacher trainees. One commented:

Some tutors take advantage of some ladies respect for them and end up having sex with them. When student refuse, the advances of those tutors, they can go as far as failing them in their subject areas. This can go a long way to affect the lady who finds herself in such a situation and I always feel bad about it because I can also be a victim (Female teacher trainee, Royal College - essay).

There might be many such incidents happening in colleges of education which go unreported. If teacher trainers can behave this way and abuse teacher trainees, it is not surprising where similar things happen at school level. There is a worrying trend in the cycle of authoritarian institutions (Blishen, 1969; Harber, 1997) as shown in the findings in both teacher education and schools that portrays leaders (Teacher trainers and Teachers respectively) as bullies (Meighan, 2005). Those in authority in such ‘bully institutions’ as labelled in Meighan (2005) seek to be too powerful by putting fear in the subordinates by bullying and abusing them. At the Royal College I found that some staff members had some benches under a big shaded tree at which some of the tutors sit instead of the staff room. Through informal conversation, a tutor told me they set those benches up instead of using the staff room because there is somebody in the senior management at the college who will always come to the staff room and ask any tutor found there whether they have nothing to do. Since the staff room is nearer to the administration and management offices, they took the decision to settle far away from them in order to have peace of mind. Anyway, there was a lot of comradeship among the tutors under the tree, and they accepted me because some of them were my former tutors and others my former classmates at the college who had become teacher trainers. This suggests that even teacher trainers will receive some form of bullying from those above them in the pecking order.

Some of the teacher trainees were not happy about the way their week days are packed with activities and their fixed timetable. One said:

The way our time table is, makes me hate this college. They stress us a lot we can be in classroom from 7:00am to 2:15pm. This makes us tired (Teacher trainee, Royal College - essay).

Apart from the daily hectic curriculum work, respondents did not like the way they were made to weed the campus. An observation was made thus:

Even though we are being trained to keep our surroundings clean, I think the cleaning done by the students as training should be their immediate surroundings. I don't like it when students stay under the sun for a whole day and even more clearing weeds supposed to be cleared by labourers. I suggest proper measures should be put in place to change that tradition (Teacher trainee, Akwaaba College - essay).

At the Royal College, during their morning chores, the male teacher trainees are made to sweep the whole campus, the various streets, classrooms and public toilets. If they failed to do it their names would be mentioned in the assembly hall during the morning devotion session for further punishment. Some female teacher trainees were not comfortable with that practice probably due to cultural implications and one remarked:

I always feel bad when I see men sweeping the roads of our college and classrooms every morning. I don't feel comfortable walking past them as they sweep. It always saddens my heart to hear their names being mentioned at the college assembly hall for not honouring their 'monitorials' (morning chores) (Female teacher trainee, Royal College - essay).

Some teacher trainers on their duty and prefects responsible for the environment will usually give severe punishment to all those found not to have done their morning chores. Punishments include weeding, scrubbing dining halls and toilets. Teacher

trainees could also be made to wear all white clothing to unblock any blocked drainage system. Respondents felt that some of the punishments were unfair. One said:

Some kinds of punishments that some tutors give to students are not good, they make student feel very bad, they [tutors] correct them from the wrong with the same wrong things (Teacher trainee, Royal College - essay).

Respondents also complained about a lack of maintenance culture and poor facilities in their colleges. One student remarked:

Workers do not prepare for the return of students to campus after vacations. Light and water are very essential for students but here students report at college just to realise that taps are not in good conditions and there is darkness in dormitories and bathrooms. I have witnessed prefects who basically come to college a day before the actual re-opening days just to make sure things are in order. They confront workers and the workers give so many excuses and leave the work undone (Teacher trainee, Akwaaba College - essay).

Teacher trainees were generally not happy with poor facilities and inadequate infrastructure in their colleges. There were a number of uncompleted buildings in both colleges and teacher trainers, through informal conversations, explained that former Principals of the colleges wanted structural legacies after they had left the college or retired. They therefore rushed into building projects without sufficient funding and had left many projects uncompleted. Teacher trainees from the Akwaaba College were not happy to be using one particular hall for most campus activities. Ideally, it was designed as a dining hall but they used it as an assembly hall, for entertainment and every other gathering that required large numbers attending. They pointed out to me an uncompleted building which should have been used as an assembly hall when the project was completed but it had been abandoned at the time of my visit.

Most teacher trainees were not happy with being forced to go to the dining hall. In both of the colleges eating at the dining hall was compulsory; students paid their

feeding fees from their monthly allowance from the government. Some remarks here explain this issue:

I think we are too matured to be fed at the dining hall. Students at the training colleges are old enough to feed themselves. We can prepare our own food and eat when we like but the college provides food for us and sometimes we do not like some of the meals prepared for us by the matron and her staff (Teacher trainee, Akwaaba College - essay).

At the dining hall, it will be good that they stop preparing food for us, because the food they serve there are not of good quality and even in quantity (Teacher trainee, Royal College - essay).

I presumed that we must be given our liberty to make our own food to eat in order to feed on a balanced meal (Teacher trainee, Akwaaba College - essay).

I think we are above eating from the dining hall. We should be allowed to prepare our own food. Till we get to that level, I think can modify what we have. I always ask myself what I am going to do in the dining hall if I don't want to eat that particular food. In the view of that, I think going to dining hall should not be compulsory (Teacher trainee, Akwaaba College - essay).

There are always lots of issues dealing with students feeding in secondary schools and colleges in Ghana. Most of the time, students feel they have not received value for money in terms of the amount they have paid, and meals they are served in the dining hall. However, headteachers and principals always complained about inflation and the market price of food stuff. In my first year at the teacher training college, we had to embark on a hunger strike for four days because the principal wanted to deduct from our monthly government-funded allowance, feeding fees which did not match the standard of the meals provided. In the past, these issues have led to violent demonstrations where teacher trainees noted properties were destroyed in some colleges.

Some of the respondents were not happy about violent demonstrations in colleges of education, saying:

The other negative thing I dislike is the violent expression of students' sentiments or opinions in handling or dealing with problems that may arise on campus. As adults in a tertiary institution, I think we should act very maturely in dealing with such problems as they occur. But what I do see, some of the men embark on unnecessary and violent demonstration instead of rendering their petition through the appropriate channels (Female teacher trainee, Akwaaba College - essay).

While violent demonstration cannot be justified, engaging with the data and reflecting on the practices of teacher training colleges in Ghana, suggests that teacher trainees most of the time are not treated as mature students. In Ghana, most teacher trainees are between the ages of 20 to 22 (Akyeampong and Furlong, 2000). Such group of students could use every means for their voice to be heard, since there are no structures to deal with student complaints and feedback in colleges. However, if they use violent demonstration, they will receive public attention for the wrong reasons, but not for their voices to be heard. Although highly controlled and regimented teacher education has worked for the authorities for a long period of time, one could ask if Ghanaians need that to sustain the young democracy in Ghana. In the next section the practices in the college of education are analysed to tease out whether some practices are democratic or not using the basic principles of democracy.

9.3 Democratic Practice in Teacher Education

9.3.1 Equity

In a democratic society there should be equal treatment for each and every individual regardless of their gender, ethnic, religious or political affiliations. With reference to the Ministry of Education, their mission statement spells out these same ideas with regards to the provision of education to Ghanaians (MoE, 2001). However, while some practices in teacher education conform to this principle of equity, most others do not. In terms of admissions, applicants to colleges of education are treated equally and

are admitted based on the entry requirements and performance during interviews. Some religious teacher training institutions will not allow students from other faiths to become college prefects. Although they have reasons behind this regulation, it goes a long way in affecting the principle of equity. The practice of democracy should foster political equality in either micro or macro politics. In the Royal College, dating back to the 1920s when the college began, no female had ever been the college prefect. Although this position is currently contested through highly competitive elections, female teacher trainees do not even show much interest.

There is also power distance between teacher trainers and teacher trainees. Tutors do not consider themselves as colleagues or co-equals with their trainees although they are adults. Teacher trainers therefore sometimes treat teacher trainees like minors and subject them to humiliating circumstances from time to time. However, I realised that in both of the colleges, some of the current teacher trainers were teacher trainees at the respective colleges a few years ago and now they are colleagues with their former tutors. One of the teacher trainers, who was my classmate as a teacher trainee in the Royal College, jokingly teased his colleagues, our former tutors, that they had allowed me to overtake them to study for my PhD. Furthermore, since these fundamental principles of democracy overlap, work together and depend on each other, the instances outlined above sometimes amount to abuse of the rights of teacher trainees. On this notice we turn the discussion to the fundamental principle of 'rights'.

9.3.2 Rights

One of the characteristics of democracy is the rule of law, where there is a set of protected entitlements for all individuals. The UN has gone to great lengths in setting

a Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In a democratic society, citizens should be aware of these rights and respect them. In my previous study, Agyemang (2007), teacher trainees were aware of some of the fundamental human rights, and the most common right which respondents usually referred to is freedom of speech (see Table 4.1 in Chapter Four). Teacher trainees believed that in a democratic teacher education, all stakeholders including the teacher trainers and trainees have the right to express their views on matters. However, in this study, reflecting on some of the experiences of teacher trainees, most practices in teacher education violate the rights of individuals except a few. This is simply because some tutors and principals exploit the ignorance of their students about their rights and abuse them. Unfortunately, teacher trainees seem to accept this rather than challenge the authorities and risk victimisation even if they know their rights. Some respondents were of the view that there are too many compulsory activities that teacher trainees in colleges of education must attend, but argued that should not be the case. One remarked:

There are things which should not be compulsory for students at this level. Sunday church service and Saturday night entertainment should not be compulsory. Our nation's constitution allows freedom of worship. Students should therefore not be forced to be Christians, instead, the chaplains should be trained to organise services attractive enough to get students to attend willingly. The same principle should be used for entertainment programmes (Teacher trainee, Akwaaba College – interview).

However, through informal conversations, teacher trainers argued that teacher trainees have nothing to complain about because they signed their acceptance letter of admission that requires them to obey rules and regulations of the colleges.

When teacher trainees were further asked if they had any knowledge of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, most of the interviewed respondents said 'no'.

Two of the respondents had knowledge of the Convention from the media, newspapers and magazines while only one had knowledge from citizenship education lessons. This raises questions as to whether these teacher trainees who are ignorant of children's rights will make any difference in terms of promoting democratic principles after qualifying as teachers. The authoritarian system will convert them and they will continue the kind of abuse children suffer in schools as indicated in Chapter Seven. Most teacher trainees are unaware of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which means there will not be a conscious effort informed by this rights basis to listen to pupils or let them contribute when decisions are made for them.

9.3.3 Participation

Since democracy is described as the rule of the people by the people, this means that the process of decision-making should involve the people. How much participation are teacher trainees allowed to have in the decisions that affect their training? Since there is no policy or clear intention to promote democracy in teacher education, the level of participation of students in decision-making is very limited. An area where there is maximum participation of teacher trainees is voting to elect college prefects or the Student Representative Council (S.R.C) executive. On the other hand, as discussed under rights earlier on, female participation in terms of vying for the top positions in the student elections could be said to be unsatisfactory. This could be attributable to cultural differences where males have dominated the leadership role of the household and the chieftaincy institutions in Ghana.

Lessons were also observed to identify whether teacher trainees participate in lessons and also the type of pedagogy used by teacher trainers. In a typical classroom at the

colleges of education, especially at the Royal College where there was an in-depth whole institution observation, there were about thirty students per class with individual desks facing teacher trainers who usually stand in front of the class. Most teacher trainers involve students in lessons but the most popular method used by tutors is the traditional question and answer method. I observed a Physical Education lesson on the topic of 'Wounds'. This was purely a theory lesson with no demonstration or pictures to show types of wounds. The Physical Education tutor only had his board markers to engage teacher trainees in a series of questions and answers to come out with different types of wounds. In a Mathematics lesson, on how to construct a 90 degree angle on a straight line at particular points, the tutor only dictated from his notes while teacher trainees used sets of mathematical instruments individually to construct the required angle. In all the lessons observed, including English and Science lessons, teacher trainees participated by answering questions asked by tutors or vice versa. Teaching and learning materials used were very limited and there were no group activities in any of the lessons observed. The centralised national curriculum for schools in Ghana emphasises child-centred learning and encourages pedagogies that put the child at the centre with lots of activities to achieve lesson objectives. While teacher trainers talk about child-centred teaching methods in their lessons, they do not usually demonstrate such types of teaching methods in their lessons for teacher trainees to learn from them.

9.3.4 Informed Choice

Informed choice is very important for effective democratic processes; in order to make decisions individuals need to have knowledge on the choices available. For example, in student elections or national elections, voters should have the opportunity of having information on each candidate in order to determine whom to vote for. Individuals

should be made aware of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in order to respect the rights of others and to defend themselves against abuse. Without informed choice, people can vote or take decisions on the basis of factual misunderstanding. This is where some politicians exploit people by whipping up ethnic sentiments to achieve their selfish interests. However, in the colleges of education in Ghana, most of the time, teacher trainees are informed of decisions but they have least available choices for them. At the dining hall, apart from those who have special dietary requirements, there is one same kind of food for everybody. Through informal conversation some teacher trainees told me that some students intentionally see doctors for medical reports so that they can have a varied menu.

The College administration usually passes on information to students through regular announcements in morning assemblies and pastes them on student notice boards afterwards. Considering all the examples given in all the four basic principles of democracy, it could be deduced that teacher education in Ghana is far from democratic teacher education. The issues discussed in the sections above reflect on the kind of practices in colleges of education in Ghana. This study does not intend to compare the practices in colleges of education to those of basic schools in Ghana but some of the findings discussed here are similar. The next section explores teacher trainees' views on pupils' voice and participation in decision-making in schools.

9.4 Teacher Trainees' Views on Pupils' Voice and Participation in Decision-Making

Teacher trainees were therefore asked if they recognise pupils' views as important for running the school. In this instance all the respondents agreed that pupils' views are very important for daily decision-making in the school, with some commenting:

Without students your objective will not be achieved. I think when you are making decisions you ask pupils for their views (teacher trainee, Royal College - interview).

I think it is very important to know the views of your students. It will help you build better classrooms..... If you ask children about things they like best, it will motivate them to come to school (Teacher trainee, Royal College - interview).

I do recognise pupils voice as important because whatever we are doing in the school is a reflection of what is happening in the society. We are training pupils in schools to go and work in the society. The pupils' voice is really needed (Teacher trainee, Akwaaba College - interview).

I think it is very important to listen to pupils because most of them come from different backgrounds, some from financially low homes so when they come with problems and they explain to you as a teacher, you must understand and also try to improve upon their situation (Teacher trainee, Royal College - interview).

These statements outline some of the reasons why trainees perceive pupil voice is important for the running of the school. They also indicate that teacher trainees are aware that listening to pupils will help some form of school improvement; however it is very difficult to predict whether they will consult pupils on issues when they qualify as teachers. Although respondents indicated they were ready to listen to pupils' views in their future practice as teachers this is not guaranteed until they become teachers. The shift in the status quo may change their mind as they assume their position of power as teachers.

Respondents were asked further on whether listening to pupils will help improve schools and what areas of school life pupils should be consulted on regarding improvement issues. All respondents positively affirmed that pupils' views could be used to improve schools. Some said:

Pupils are the school, if pupils are not there, the school would not be there. I deem it very important for pupils to be given the chance to share their views on how schools should be improved (Teacher trainee, Royal College - interview).

We are in the school as teachers to train children; if we listen to pupils we can know their problems and help them solve it. If teachers get closer to children, they can help them with moral issues (teacher trainee, Akwaaba College - interview).

When teachers don't listen to children, it develops some fear in the students and therefore when you are in front of student teaching, the acquisition of knowledge would not be rapid because children find it difficult to ask questions. Students are not likely to correct teachers if they make a mistake (Teacher trainee, Akwaaba College - interview).

Teacher trainees were very receptive to the idea of listening to pupils, because their experiences in the colleges of education are related to pupils in schools. As indicated in the last quote above, respondents were also aware of the consequences of not listening to pupils in schools. However, practices in Ghanaian schools as shown in the findings for both Chapters Seven and Eight indicate pupils are not consulted during decision-making in schools. The issue to explore here is why teacher trainees have a genuine desire to make conditions in school better than when they were in school, but as soon as they become teachers, they are easily socialised into the usual practices and routines. Perhaps, that is the only system they know and their teacher education has not offered anything new.

Respondents were asked if any aspects of their teacher training would help them get the necessary skills to involve pupils in decision-making in their professional practice. Most of the teacher trainees responded in the affirmative and only a few said 'no'. However, some of the respondents gave practical examples of things they have been doing at college that will help them become interested in pupils' views. Some asserted:

We have Student Representative Council (SRC) in this college. We elect two representatives from each class for the college SRC. If there is a decision they put it before every class for discussion and the representatives will take what the classes agreed on to council meetings (Teacher trainee, Royal College - interview).

I am part of the college's student Disciplinary Committee (DC). I am the secretary and building my leadership skills that will be used in my teaching. I think it is important to have DC in schools. Children these days are like grown up because of the movies and songs they watch and listen to. So it will be interesting for their colleagues to ask them questions and demand explanation for any bad conduct (Teacher trainee, Royal College - interview).

There are other ways where teacher trainees can express their opinion, for example, if the Principal of the College organises an open forum, which is once in a blue moon as reported by the respondents. The various classes in the colleges have specific form (group) tutors who are responsible for identifying student problems and dealing with them but respondents reported they hardly see them. Teacher trainees contended that the knowledge they had acquired through a subject like Education which includes topics in Child Psychology and Adolescent Studies would help them understand and deal with children's problems. Some of the prefects among the interviewees also believed that vying to be prefects in the college will help them to transfer their skills to the pupils they would teach in the near future.

There are existing structures in the colleges of education in Ghana where, if appropriate attention is given, could be turned to greater democratisation in teacher education. Having teachers experiencing democratic ways of doing things at college will serve as an entry point for greater pupil participation in decision-making in schools. Teacher trainees were asked to suggest ways in which pupils could be encouraged to participate in decision-making. Respondents shared many ideas that could be used to encourage pupils to bring out their views on issues and participate in

decision-making. Some respondents argued that before any meaningful participation, there should be a cordial relationship between teachers and pupils. Two of them said:

If teachers relate to children cordially, it will be easy for children to tell teachers their problems (Teacher trainee, Royal College - interview).

I think children are like if you don't ask them about issues, they will not come by themselves, you have to encourage them so that they will draw closer (Teacher trainee, Royal College - interview).

A teacher trainee suggested that teachers, especially English Language teachers, should also provide pupils with a lot of reading work to improve their English speaking so that they can express themselves. Respondents were generally of the view that pupils should be consulted in most of the major decision-making in schools. This could be done by both informal and formal means. For example, teacher trainees suggested that teachers should take about five minutes of their time to talk to pupils about their problems as often as they can informally. Pupils could be allowed to elect their own prefects or leaders through whom they could channel their problems to the teachers and the headteachers. Some respondents were of the view that whenever headteachers and teachers are taking a decision that affects pupils, they should let them be aware in advance so that their views will be taken into consideration.

Most teacher trainees were of the view that the fundamental ways of encouraging pupil participation are to allow pupils to elect their own prefects and even involve them in the school administration. As they put it:

There are many ways we can encourage pupils' participation, for example pupils choosing class secretaries, school prefects and even choosing of head of departments because there are teachers who are so authoritative (Teacher trainee, Royal College - interview).

In every school, we should have student administrative body or create a situation whereby we select pupils to represent in the administration of the school. Whenever staff meets, they talk about their own welfare but if there are about 3 pupils representing students in staff meetings it will help (Teacher trainee, Akwaaba College - interview).

Some respondents contended that in a situation where the learners did not appoint their own leaders, they will find it difficult to obey their instructions and argued that pupils should be made to elect their own prefects. One observed:

It is very good idea for pupils to elect their own prefects, formerly in my school days teachers used to appoint prefects by looking at those who are neat and tidy in appearance but now I get to know that they are changing in some schools, candidates need to present their manifestos to both teachers and pupils before election (Teacher trainee, Royal College - interview).

Furthermore, on the entry points of greater participation, some teacher trainees suggested that there should be more clubs in schools which empower pupils in specific responsibilities. Some said:

There are so many ways to encourage pupil participation, for instance when we talk of decorating environment, we can form a club that will look after planting ornamental plants and beautifying school environment (Teacher trainee, Royal College - interview).

Pupils cannot give financially but they can tell what to do, if you give them the chance, they can decorate your classroom and beautify the environment (teacher trainee, Royal College - interview).

Unfortunately this is not a longitudinal research study. I would have been very keen to follow up the interviewees later in their professional practice to see how they could put these ideas into practice. I therefore asked both teacher trainees and teachers in schools about the possibilities of democratic schools in Ghana.

9.5 Democratic Schools in Ghana: Issues and Possibilities

The interview questions for both teachers and teacher trainees were designed such that the characteristics of democratic schools would be explored without directly mentioning the word ‘democracy’ initially. As discussed initially in this chapter and Chapter Eight, both teachers and teacher trainees have positively supported pupils having a voice, knowing their rights and participating in decision-making in schools. However, when teachers and teacher trainees were asked whether there could be democratic schools in Ghana, it generated mixed reactions. Most teachers and teacher trainees asked me to clarify what a democratic school was. This indicates that democratic education is not on the agenda of teacher education and neither is it in schools. When I explained democratic schools to them, there were divided opinions as to whether such schools can exist in Ghana.

Some of the respondents contended that we can have democratic schools to some extent but not to a fuller extent, arguing:

Well, from my point of view, if we should have not more, not fully democratic. We cannot have a totally democratic school, so that a child will challenge a teacher about punishment. A total democracy will bring indiscipline, it should be ‘half-half’ (Teacher trainee, Akwaaba College - interview).

We can have democratic school but there should be a limit because these children if you give them the ‘free’ they will add the ‘dom’ [referring to ‘freedom’ sarcastically]. As for these pupils we should not give them all the freedom (Teacher, Wisdom Primary - interview).

We can have, but it cannot be many here, we are in a democratic state but people are ignorant. If we are to have democratic schools many parents will not sent their children to such schools (Teacher, Advanced JHS - interview).

These statements confirmed what has been said in the literature (Davies, 1999; Davies, 1994; Chiwela, 2010) that some teachers fear democracy in schools will breed indiscipline, yet these were the teachers and teacher trainees who were endorsing pupil

voice and participation in decision-making. They also suggest the notion of democracy among Ghanaian teachers and teacher trainees is contentious and possibly shallow. Davies (1999) in dealing with definitions of democracy, points out that people often compare democracy to anarchy or laissez faire which is unfair and therefore argued that like should be compared to like. On the other hand, teachers resist moves towards democracy in schools because of their own interest. For example, when a teacher was asked whether teachers should allow pupils to assess or evaluate their performance in lessons, she asserted that:

It is not likely for teachers to accept it because it will turn the child to someone who is disrespectful. What rights do pupils have to assess me? Recently our headteacher introduced attendance book for teachers and the books are kept by class prefects but if teachers report to lessons late, prefects will be in trouble if they put the actual time which the teacher is late (Teacher, United Primary - interview).

It seems teachers are fully aware that empowering children means they will rise up and challenge their excesses, therefore, for some teachers, it is better not to shift the status quo.

Sections of the respondents were of the view that there could be democratic schools in Ghana, but the process should be gradual as there are barriers and challenges ahead.

Some observed that:

I think we can have democratic schools, but I don't think it should be right now. Some subsequent years to come, when we keep developing (Teacher trainee, Royal College - interview).

Of course we can have democratic schools; there is nothing that we cannot have. In actual sense the Ghanaian society abhor certain things, there is no circumstances that a child can argue with an adult. A teacher is always right, that is a misconception, but there is one thing that I know. Education always brings a revolution as I am talking now we are not there yet but gradually we will be there. So if we start putting all these democratic principles in education by five to six years time we will be there, there is no harm in bringing those principles (Teacher trainee, Akwaaba College - interview).

The teacher trainee who made the last comment from Akwaaba College was highly fascinated about the concept of democratic education and remarked that the interview had been beneficial to him and recommended that I organised a workshop for them. Another teacher in Adom Primary also commented that the research had introduced her to new things and hoped to continue with the school council. However, she pointed out that pupils were very 'stubborn' and hoped that they would change sometime.

The final section of the respondents affirmed the possibility of more democratic schools in Ghana. The teacher trainees were more enthusiastic about the idea of democratic schools in Ghana with some saying:

I believe we need more of democratic schools because the children are growing and they are the future leaders so if you stop them from bringing out their views. It is like in the way you are dampening their spirit, you are not letting them grow and you are always spoon feeding them. So I believe that if we have more democratic schools, it is going to help them build the confidence wherever they go and the country will have prospects for brighter future leaders (Teacher trainee, Royal College - interview).

Democracy is about bringing out your views without somebody hindering your perceptions. We the teachers have to encourage democracy in our schools. If what you are asking me (interview questions) the country will be able to solve these problems, the country will move forward (Teacher trainee, Royal College - interview).

These teacher trainees were passionate about promoting democratic schools, and even though they were highly optimistic, they were also cautious. Perhaps they know the system very well and how difficult it is to change those entrenched practices. Some of the comments included:

I think it [democratic schools] can work in our communities in the metropolis and cities but will have issues in rural areas. Dictatorship has become part of us, I want you to do more for me but I don't want to listen to you. I think most schools will have peace and nice atmosphere if they listen to children (Teacher, Advanced JHS - interview).

I think we can do it, as a democratic country we have to practice in school as well. May be the teachers are not abreast with the word democracy, therefore all the decisions we make we should consult the children and our schools will be better. The children cannot speak English very well, if they can it helps (Teacher, Adom JHS - interview).

We have democratic schools but we need to educate a lot especially parents because children are being taught their rights (Teacher, United Primary - interview).

They argued that pupils should be given the chance and be supported especially with issues like language as indicated above. The medium of instruction as discussed earlier is English, and while it is not their mother tongue, pupils are encouraged to speak the language in all their activities. According to Jorgensen (2004) democracy is considered as a dialogue, therefore effective democratic practices means children are able to communicate clearly in a language which they understand.

9.6 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter explored research question 4, on the role of teacher education in promoting democratic education in Ghana. It was therefore necessary to explore the voices of teacher trainees to identify their experiences in colleges of education in Ghana. Teacher trainees recounted some positive experiences that made them enjoy their teacher training. However, they also expressed many negative experiences that portray colleges of education in Ghana as highly regimented and authoritarian. As indicated in the literature, proper democratic education can occur if teachers are trained and experience democratic practice in their teacher education. Further themes were discussed under the basic principles of democracy, equity, rights, participation and informed choice in order to tease out entry points to greater democratic practice in teacher education.

Furthermore, teacher trainees agreed that pupils' views were important for school improvement work and therefore pupils should be encouraged to participate in decision-making in schools. Finally, both teachers and teacher trainees were asked about the possibilities of more democratic schools in Ghana. Most of the respondents believed that there could be democratic schools in Ghana but much would need to be done to remove barriers and change misconceptions about democracy.

CHAPTER TEN

CONCLUSION: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 Introduction

This study recognised the current debate on education and democracy in the international agenda. It began with the assumption that with the current role of Ghana as an emerging democratic state in Africa, and judging by its own aspirations, there should be wider responsibilities to educate its young citizens to be democratic. The main aims of the research were to: (a) find out how the views of pupils could be used to improve schools in Ghana in a more democratic direction; and (b) to explore the views of teacher trainees on what role their teacher training could play in promoting greater democracy in schools. Research questions were raised on how far the practices in schools and teacher education in Ghana could reflect those of a democratic society. Further questions were asked on how the practice of democratic principles in schools will enhance school improvement and effectiveness. In this respect, qualitative research was designed in order to uncover some of the answers for those research questions. The main findings, as discussed in the previous chapters, indicate that the authoritarian practices in Ghanaian schools and colleges of education mismatch that of the national aspiration of democratic citizenship. Details are discussed in the next sections.

10.2 The Case of Mismatch: Producing Democratic Citizenship in Authoritarian Educational Institutions

The 1992 constitution of the Republic of Ghana made it clear that Ghana shall be a democratic country and therefore all measures must be taken to ensure that the

political objective of the state are achieved. The extract below is the political objective of Ghana as indicated in the constitution.

POLITICAL OBJECTIVES

(1) Ghana shall be a democratic state dedicated to the realization of freedom and justice; and accordingly, sovereignty resides in the people of Ghana from whom Government derives all its powers and authority through this Constitution.

(2) The State shall protect and safeguard the independence, unity and territorial integrity of Ghana, and shall seek the well-being of all her citizens.

(3) The State shall promote just and reasonable access by all citizens to public facilities and services in accordance with law.

(4) The State shall cultivate among all Ghanaians respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms and the dignity of the human person.

(5) The State shall actively promote the integration of the peoples of Ghana and prohibit discrimination and prejudice on the grounds of place of origin, circumstances of birth, ethnic origin, gender or religion, creed or other beliefs.

(6) Towards the achievement of the objectives stated in clause (5) of this article, the State shall take appropriate measures to:

(a) foster a spirit of loyalty to Ghana that overrides sectional, ethnic and other loyalties;

(b) achieve reasonable regional and gender balance in recruitment and appointment to public offices;

(c) provide adequate facilities for, and encourage, free mobility of people, goods and services throughout Ghana;

(d) make democracy a reality by decentralizing the administrative and financial machinery of government to the regions and districts and by affording all possible opportunities to the people to participate in decision-making at every level in national life and in government; and

(e) ensure that whenever practicable, the headquarters of a Government or public institution offering any service is situated in an area within any region, taking into account the resources and potentials of the region and the area.

(7) As far as practicable, a government shall continue and execute projects and programmes commenced by the previous Governments.

(8) The State shall take steps to eradicate corrupt practices and the abuse of power.

(9) The state shall promote among the people of Ghana the culture of political tolerance.

Source: Constitution of the Republic of Ghana (1992: 37-38)

As discussed in Chapter Two, Ghana has made great strides in electoral democracy; however, one could not confidently articulate that the political objectives outlined

above have been achieved. The present discussions about democracy in Ghana have now shifted focus on how pupils should fit into society, and become decision-makers in the near future because formal schooling is the main way in which the majority of pupils are prepared for adulthood (Arnot et al., 2010). There has been the introduction of Citizenship Education in the national curriculum for primary schools in Ghana recently. The introduction of the Citizenship Education syllabus reads:

Citizenship education is a subject that aims at producing competent, reflective, concerned and participatory citizens who will contribute to the development of the communities and country in the spirit of patriotism and democracy. It focuses on problems/challenges of human survival in Ghana. The subject exposes pupils to the persistent contemporary issues hindering the development of the nation and the desired attitudes, values, and skills needed to solve these problems. The subject is introduced into the curriculum at the Upper Primary level (P4-P6) to make children appreciate basic concepts and values that underlie a democratic political community and constitutional order to enable them uphold and defend the Constitution of Ghana at all times (MoESS, 2007:ii).

The introductory note confirmed the change aspiration in Ghana to that of democratic citizenship but the issues raised in the above statement are being pursued as subject knowledge rather than practices in schools.

The findings presented in this study, as discussed in Chapters Seven, Eight and Nine, indicate that the practices in teacher education and schools do not show a clear intent in order to inculcate to the young citizens of Ghana the political culture of democracy as stated in the political objectives of the Ghana constitution. These findings are corroborated by Arnot et al. (2010) that the type of democratic citizenship being proposed is still not likely to be experienced in most Ghanaian schools. The study found that despite Ghana being part of democratic countries, practices in schools are largely based on authoritarian ethos and values. The appointed headteachers act as key implementers of mandatory national policies and directives. In all the schools

involved in the study, pupils reported that they were not involved in the decision-making process and their views were rarely considered by both the headteachers and the teachers. Pupils are expected to be obedient and submit to the will of the teachers and those who disobey are severely punished by corporal punishment. Most often, pupils' rights are abused by teachers and this is because pupils may not know or are simply too afraid to stand up for their rights. Only the Junior High Schools reported some pupils' involvement in the elections of school prefects in their school. In all the schools there were no visible structures to encourage pupil participation in decision-making.

The functions and organisation of schools in Ghana reflect the social theories by which western types of schooling were invented in the nineteenth century. The findings confirmed that Basic schools in Ghana are organised bureaucratically as described by Harber (1997):

- Features: strict discipline, corporal punishment, school uniform and adult controlled.
- Practices: silence, strict control over time/timetables (marked by bells and drums) and restriction of space (sitting in rows).
- Values: obedience, abiding by the rules, loyalty, respect for authority, punctuality, regular attendance, patriotism and tolerance of monotony.

Such models of schooling were then imposed through colonialism in order to inculcate the skills and values necessary to provide the subordinate African personnel required for effective functioning of the colonial administration and have been perpetuated in the post-colonial era until now (Harber, 1997). There are other practices in Ghanaian

schools that depict nationalist and militaristic notions. For example in most schools in Ghana there are daily morning assemblies where pupils line up class by class, they say morning prayers, sing the national anthem, say the national pledge, and after announcements, pupils march to their classes with accompanied songs and drumming. So long as pupils may enjoy these activities, they present a form of indoctrination whereby pupils are made to pledge their allegiance to their nation without them understanding the implications of what they are singing and saying on a daily basis.

The education system in Ghana derived its roots from colonialism (Pryor, 1998). However, over five decades of independence and two decades of democratic civilian rule, the practices in Ghanaian basic schools and colleges of education, as found in this study, are more consistent with the development of the colonial subject or citizen under a military dictatorship than the current democratic aspiration. The boarding school concept was used by the colonial masters to alienate the young native from their environment to subdue the African culture as inferior to that of European culture (Aissat and Djafri, 2011). Yet all the public colleges of education are boarding institutions which operate on the 'culture of submissive absolutism' that reinforces colonial ideals and missionary education strategies used by Britain (Agbenyega and Deku, 2011). The findings in this study indicate that the relationship between teacher trainers and teacher trainees were like a master-servant relationship. The findings from the in-depth study, teacher trainees' interviews and open-ended essays confirmed the authoritarian nature of teacher training colleges in Ghana (Akyeampong and Stephens, 2002; Dull, 2004). The daily lives of teacher trainees in the colleges of education are full of routines and regimentation. For example teacher trainees are only allowed to wear prescribed uniforms on campuses, women are required to plait their hair

according to specific styles and also lessons are based on a traditional questions and answers method (see Chapter Nine for details). Many teacher trainees were not happy about the kinds of chores and duties they had to undertake in their colleges. Teacher trainees suggested that some of the work like weeding on their campuses should be done by the college labourers. They also asserted that routines like going to the dining hall should not be made compulsory. Their main argument was that teacher trainees were adults and could prepare their own meals. Any attempt by teacher trainees to flout these rules and regulations carries severe punishment and sanctions. However, as indicated in the literature review, teacher trainees ought to be trained democratically in order to break the cycle of authoritarian institutions (Blishen, 1969 and Harber, 1997).

British cultural practices of the colonial era have had a profound influence on most practices in present day Ghanaian schools (Arnot et al., 2010). The system of high-handedness in colleges of education is being perpetuated in basic schools. Some of the negative experiences described by children in Chapter Seven were deeply worrying in that such things happen in schools within a democratic nation. Many of the issues raised by pupils contradict the political objectives outlined in the constitutions of Ghana. Corporal punishment has been normalised by both pupils and teachers regardless of the rules governing it by Ghana Education Service. Teachers interviewed in the study had the courage to defend the corporal punishment yet it was against their code of conduct which states that:

As articulated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) which was ratified by Ghana in 1990 and the Children's Act of 1998 (Act 560), children in Ghana have a right to education and should be free from being subjected to harmful or degrading punishment and any type of violence or exploitative labour that shall deny the child of his/her right to education. Teachers, as duty bearers and members of Ghana Education Service have a responsibility to uphold and protect children's rights. (MoE/GES, 2008: 4)

According to the teachers' code of conduct in Ghana, teachers should not inflict on pupils any form of verbal, physical or sexual violence. This shows that Ghana seems to be doing well in terms of paperwork and policies but practices in the basic schools as discussed in Chapter Seven are problematic. Corporal punishment continues to exist in Ghanaian schools. Most of the pupil respondents, while they do not like to be caned, did not want corporal punishment to be banned in school. Pupils, however, thought teachers should be cautious when using corporal punishment. In this context, pupils have been socialised into accepting that a physical form of punishment is the most effective way to deter children from wrong doing, and therefore removal of the cane will bring chaos and anarchy in schools. Teachers share similar views to those of the pupils and further believe that it is their religious responsibility to keep children under control. The most common quote from the Bible was 'spare the rod and spoil the child' (Proverbs 13:23).

It has been consistently argued that schools globally, with few exceptions, are authoritarian institutions which are deeply rooted in the historical purpose of schooling and thus unreceptive to significant change (Harber, 2009). Educationists such as Dewey had started arguing for change in the authoritarian nature of schooling in the early twentieth century. Dewey argued that the school children had literally been clothed with hand-me-down garments - with intellectual suits which other people had worn. The school had therefore failed to produce citizens for the contemporary democratic movement. This schooling structure affected the mind of both teacher and pupil, and the growth and extension of the democratic principle in life beyond school doors (Dewey, 1903). Dewey was therefore right when he predicted that failure to address the undemocratic nature of schools will give the unconverted an opportunity to

point the finger of scorn, asking for a return to the 'good old days' when the teacher was securely seated in the high places of authority (Dewey, 1903:201). After many decades such notions still exist in a study of teachers' voice in the Gambia and South Africa. Jessop and Penny (1998:395) point out that teachers are disillusioned with today's pupils who 'have no view of the future', who 'are rude', and who 'don't see the need for education'. On the contrary this study has shown that pupils have greater aspirations for the future but it is the teachers who have not bothered to listen to them. As indicated in Chapter Seven some of the pupils wanted to be politicians and even become like the president of Ghana. The inaction of the state by not producing facilities for quality education or creating a democratic environment in schools may not produce great democratic politicians who serve the interests of their people.

Furthermore, the authoritarian nature of schooling in Ghana does not encourage pupils or even teachers to come out freely with their views if there is a problem. There is the existence of a culture of fear in schools because some headteachers will not tolerate any form of feedback that might expose their incompetency or wrong doings or even their strengths. Some headteachers always dictate to teachers and pupils. From my observations and interviews, pupils are scared to approach the headteachers with problems and younger teachers hesitate to suggest things to their headteachers. There are few democratic spaces to permit useful dialogue for school improvement. Therefore, members of the school behave as if nothing is wrong even if there is and go about their respective jobs as much as possible. However, this study has shown that if there is an atmosphere of trust, both pupils and teachers are keen to discuss issues. Through an informal conversation, a teacher told me that the headteacher of his former school arranged secretly for him to be transferred to a rural school when he questioned

the headteacher about the school's finances. This teacher was lucky to get a school of his choice when an education officer revealed the plot and advised him to get a 'release' letter from the District Education Office so that he could move to other districts and look for any school he wanted. One would expect that in a democratic country like Ghana there would be transparency and accountability in educational institutions, but it is hard to achieve these as those who try to raise issues are often victimised.

According to Meyer-Bisch (1995:12) 'democracy is not a state, but a constant fight against all forms of laziness, mediocrity and stupidity'. He points out that the weapon for such a fight is dialogue and therefore it should be non-violent. However, the findings discussed in the previous chapter suggest teachers used violence (corporal punishment) in order to ensure discipline in some Ghanaian basic schools. Such practices militate against the principles of democracy as pupils are brought up in fear of authority. Meyer-Bisch argues that schools must become genuine conservatories of democracy where democratic values are experienced and learned. Pupils will learn self-discipline by taking up responsibilities willingly because they have to but not because of fear of corporal punishment or high handedness by school authorities. While democratic governments relied on opposition political parties to check on autocratic or corrupt rule, democratic schools could rely on pupils being encouraged to express alternative views and having channels by which these voices could be heard (Davies, 1994).

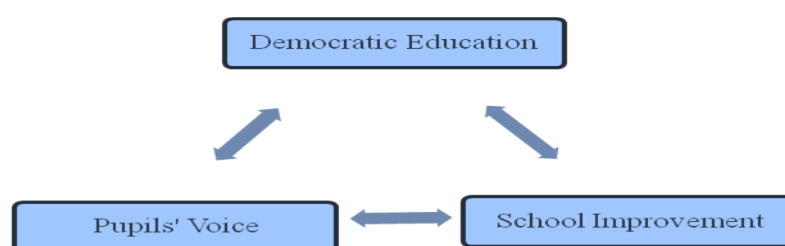
The findings in this study also confirmed teachers' fear that democracy in schools will bring anarchy and chaos. If teachers fear to train children to be assertive, independent

and critical thinkers who can contribute to the democratic society, then the purpose of education would continue to be training citizens who are ‘ripe for dictatorship’ (Carl Rogers in Meighan 1994:63). Davies et al. (2005) contend that democracy is a much disciplined affair and therefore the principle behind democratic discipline is that pupils will keep the rules if they understand them and took part in making those rules. This study was designed to explore the views of respondents on democratic education, pupils’ voice and school improvement. These are big subjects on their own, and while this study does not claim to have explored all the issues concerning them, the next section attempts to link each of the themes.

10.3 Democratic Education, Pupils’ Voice and School Improvement

There are numerous international and comparative studies that provide empirical evidence that listening to pupils, encouraging their participation and giving them more power and responsibility (that is greater democratisation) results in more effective schools (Cox et al., 2010; Mncube and Harber, 2010; Mncube, 2008; Flutter and Rudduck, 2004; Davies et al., 2002; Schweisfurth et al., 2002; Harber, 1997 and many more). The literature review (Chapters Two, Three and Four) explored the role of democratic education in listening to pupils’ views and encouraging them to participate in decision-making on things that affect them in schools thereby helping school improvement. Therefore, democratic education, pupils’ voice and school improvement can be represented in a multi-direction cycle (see Figure 10.1). Schools working on democratic education need to empower pupils’ voice through democratic practices which will lead to school improvement.

Figure 10.1 The Multi-direction links of Democratic Education, Pupils' Voice, and School Improvement



This also means that school improvement work could begin with establishing democratic structures such as school councils within schools so that pupils' views will be important in the school development work. The inter-connection should be approached holistically because there is a real urgency in producing democratic citizenship and improvement in democratisation cannot be achieved in schools without listening to pupils' views. This study is one of the few researches in terms of democratic education in Ghana. I could not locate a specific school in Ghana with democratic practices that have led to school improvement. However, listening to pupils through interviews and trying out school councils in some Ghanaian schools have proved that there is greater potential for school improvement if pupils are empowered to help solve their own problems through democratic principles.

One unique thing that democracy offers is people's voice, the opportunity to contribute to the affairs of one's nation and participate in decision-making. Prior to Ghana's re-introduction to democratic government in 1992, the various media outlets embarked on campaigns that propagated the benefit of democracy and therefore urged Ghanaians to vote 'yes' in a referendum to accept the 1992 Constitution of Ghana. On the contrary the western representative democracy adopted by Ghana meant that the

only meaningful way people can contribute to national affairs is through national or local government elections. It has been argued that democracy has long existed in most areas of pre-colonial Africa. The traditional conception of African democracy was based on a constant search for consensus through dialogue and open discussion (Gyekye, 1996; Adeyemi and Asimeng-Boahene, 2001). While there are provisions in the constitution (local government law) to encourage community participation in their local development, in my opinion this has not been successful. According to Gyima-Boadi (2010) the constitutionally required programme of decentralisation has stalled because Presidential appointments of local government functionaries are typically made on the basis of party allegiance rather than competence, further undermining local government efficiency, responsiveness and accountability. As argued in Chapter Two, democracy is a catalyst for national development (Sen, 1999). Therefore, I argued that democratic education will provide effective schools and opportunity for school improvement work.

The study posits that the process of democratisation should start from schools where pupils' voice is recognised within democratic structures. Robinson and Taylor (2007) contend that student voice work empowers students to have the opportunity to communicate their views and participate meaningfully and collaboratively in school improvement work. However, reflecting on the findings in this study about the language policy which is to use English as the medium of instruction, and the connotations associated with the speaking of Ghanaian language, gives an indication that student voice work in Ghana will be problematic. This is because some voices might be excluded from pupils' voice work in Ghana. Therefore, Bragg (2001:70) raised a question of the 'communication as dialogue' principle by invoking the need to

hear ‘incomprehensible, recalcitrant or even obnoxious’ voices, the very absence of which in much student voice work points to the existence of an ‘implicit contract’ to ‘speak responsibly, intelligibly and usefully’. Robinson and Taylor (2007) further argue that it is only by including these ‘other’ voices that the potential of student voice work to achieve social justice can be realised. This means that schools must have democratic systems or structures where all pupils are able to express their grievances freely. At the moment, little can be said of any meaningful student voice work in Ghana. This study set the pace by providing opportunity for pupils to express their views on their schooling experiences and how they could be improved.

Pupils in Ghana demonstrated that they are aware of the social and economic functions of schooling and have interesting ideas that will help improve their schools. Most of the pupils’ views covered improvements in facilities and resources for teaching and learning. In all the six schools, pupils were unhappy with the environment and sanitation conditions in their schools. While they recognised that it was their responsibility to keep their environment clean, schools do not provide basic cleaning equipment like dustpans and brushes, bins and other cleaning products. Furthermore, pupils complained about bullying and teasing among themselves which needs to be addressed seriously. Pupils were concerned with unprofessional conduct by some teachers and how they wasted contact hours through lateness or absence from lessons.

Teacher trainees had the opportunity to reflect on their schooling experiences and pointed out some of the issues that needed to be resolved in order for schools to improve in Ghana. Most of the teacher trainees contended that teachers use didactic methods in teaching and rote learning is encouraged in Ghanaian schools. However,

they explained that such teaching methods exist due to the lack of equipment and inadequate teaching and learning materials. Teacher trainees also confirmed the existence of different kinds of abuse in schools that need to be stopped. Some of the issues mentioned are corporal punishment, forcing pupils to pay for extra classes and also forcing pupils to buy teachers' pamphlets. When asked what they could do to improve their schools when they qualified as teachers, some teacher trainees were quite determined to do their best to root out all that they thought were bad practices in their school days. One needs to follow the progress of these teacher trainees to determine whether they would be ready and well-equipped to change the status quo or whether they will succumb and be socialised into the same old practices. The exploration of the views of pupils and teacher trainees in this study provides evidence for greater school effectiveness and improvement work.

It was argued in Chapter Three that school effectiveness and school improvement research vary in their core concepts, beliefs and theoretical orientations, but there is evidence that their interests are beginning to merge (Hopkins et al., 1994). Harris (2001) points out that the interest of school effectiveness research is to measure pupils' outcome through the lens of difference in resources, processes and organisational structures. This has therefore led to many school improvement programmes that focussed on promoting structural and cultural change in schools. This study did not measure pupils' outcome but explored pupils' views in their schooling and this has established a degree of structural and cultural deficit that need improvement. Therefore, I re-visit the effective school model by Davies and Yamashita (2007) discussed in Chapter Five. They categorised indicators of effective schools into three core elements which are:

- school ethos/environment
- enhancement of social and emotional competences
- teaching and learning.

I argued in Chapter Five that the factors within schools of which these three key indicators are formed overlap with that of democratic schools. This explains why promoting democratic ethos in schools produces more effective schools. I therefore use these indicators, and draw conclusions from the data on the existing practices in Ghanaian schools, as to what might be done to improve democratic practices in schools in the matrix below.

Table 10.1 Indicators of Democratic/Effective Schools

Indicators of democratic/effective school	Existing Practices in Ghanaian schools	Practical Implications for policy and practice
1. School environment (ethos)		
happiness	Most pupils are happy in schools but it is not caused by the nature and organisation of schools (e.g. pupils are happy to be with friends, play games and go on trips).	There should be a conscious effort by the teachers to make pupils happy in schools.
trust	There is little trust in the system, most pupils are afraid to disclose certain information to teachers.	There should be guidance and counselling in schools. Teachers should make effort to restore trust among them so that pupils can approach them with issues of concern and confidential matters.
feeling involved in decision-making	Pupils felt not involved in decision- making.	Structures should be put in place to encourage pupils' participation in decision-making e.g. school councils, open forum and suggestion boxes.
absence of insult and violence	Pupils reported verbal abuse among themselves and teachers also sometimes insult pupils and often resort to corporal punishment.	There should be ground rules in schools set by both teachers and pupils that prohibit verbal abuse and violence.

low incidence of bullying	Pupils reported a lot of bullying in schools but it is not an issue of concern nationally in Ghana. Pupils reported fights in play grounds but teachers often dealt with it by caning both parties.	There should be policies to promote anti-bullying in schools like peer mentoring.
ability of students to communicate with teachers	Pupils felt shy or afraid to speak to teachers on issues because they think teachers will not be interested in their issues. There is also a language policy issue where pupils are encouraged to speak only English at school but many of them cannot do so.	English Language teachers should do their best for every pupil to grasp the basic knowledge on how to speak English. Furthermore, rules should be made on when pupils can express themselves in the local Ghanaian language.
2. Students' social and emotional competences		
communication skills	Apart from the classroom lessons, there are few activities to enhance communication skills of pupils. Prefects in Junior High School are sometimes allowed to conduct school assemblies. There are also inter-schools drama and cultural competitions.	There should be more activities in and outside classroom to build pupils' communication skills. For example, pupils leading group work presentations and community campaigns.
listening to others	Pupils are trained to be quiet and listen to teachers in school but can be hostile to their peers if they speak in lessons.	Teachers should set ground rules with pupils about classroom manners.
self-esteem	Little is done here for pupils to develop self-esteem.	Pupils should be given responsibilities in their class or whole school and be rewarded when they have done well.
cooperation	Teachers rarely used group work in their lessons. Pupils are grouped into houses or sections to clean their school compounds.	There should be more group work in lessons and other extracurricular activities.
conflict resolution skills	Work needs to be done here.	Peer mediation system where pupils will try and resolve minor issues before reporting to a teacher.
negotiation skills	Work needs to be done here.	More can be done through school councils negotiating with teachers and even parents. There is an example in Chapter Four where student clubs in Nepal negotiate with teachers in reducing corporal punishment.

support skills	Work needs to be done here.	Peer tutoring needs to be encouraged in Ghanaian schools. The 'buddying' system in UK schools can be adapted in Ghana where pupils from upper classes can protect the young ones from bullying.
advocacy, debate and dialogue skills	Work needs to be done here.	These skills could be developed through school councils and debating clubs.
3. Learning and teaching		
work ethic	Both teachers and pupils in Ghanaian schools work very hard. Most of the activities are examination driven.	Pupils should be encouraged to work hard in a democratic environment.
teaching methods	Most teachers used traditional question and answer methods with the notion that pupils are involved.	Teachers should employ participatory methods, group work and student initiated research.
expectations	Pupils have high expectations on examination results and their future job. Sometimes teachers felt pupils have no expectations and therefore have to force them to learn.	Teachers should not assume on pupils expectations but listen to them and find out their aspirations so that they can help pupils to fulfil these expectations.
teacher-student relationships	Pupils reported they love their teachers but the relationship is from teacher to pupil with little dialogue.	There should be a cordial relationship between teachers and pupils to improve teaching and learning outcomes
classroom interactions	In theory, teachers in Ghana should use learner-centred activities in classrooms. However lessons are rarely interactive as there are overcrowded classrooms with children sitting in rows. Teachers also commented that there are few teaching and learning materials to interact with.	Teachers need more pre-service and service training on how to interact with pupils in the classroom. There should be more facilities to create spaces for more interactions in classroom. Teacher-pupil ratio needs to be looked at in some schools. The Ghana government should provide equipment like interactive white boards and computers for schools.

There is much work to be done if basic schools in Ghana would embrace democratic practices and principles within their operational set up. This study provides a foundation for both future research and promotion of democratic education in Ghana.

10.4 Entry Points to Democratic Practices in Ghanaian Basic Schools

The focus of this study is not democracy as a political system, but rather how democratic values and principles can be reconstructed within social practices such as schooling. Therefore, the study was not simply qualitative but a kind of action-oriented research which is emancipatory in nature. Pupils were made to experiment with the decision-making process by electing representatives to act on their behalf at the school council meetings.

10.4.1 School Councils

The school council meetings were highly successful as indicated in Chapter Eight. Pupils involved in the school council demonstrated to me that they have fascinating and interesting ideas that can help improve their schools. Most of their views covered the following areas: facilities, maintenance, teachers' and pupils' behaviour, school bus, environment and sanitation. Empowering pupils to take on some of the issues at their level will only help school improvement, whilst also building up skills for life in the big democratic society. Pupils supported the idea of school councils to help them express their views on school improvement issues and also negotiate with teachers on things they like or dislike in school. Pupils demonstrated that their views are important for the school and therefore urged teachers to listen to them and not consider them as just little children. This study has confirmed that school councils are entry points to wider democratic practices in schools. Among the teachers interviewed, there was unanimous support for school councils to be established in basic schools. As argued by Inman and Burke (2002), the school council is a model of citizenship education in that it can provide pupils with first-hand experience of democratic structures and

processes and provide opportunities to develop the attributes of democratic citizenship in all pupils.

Moreover, in order to establish effective school councils in Ghana, lessons could be drawn from Inman and Burke's (2002) study in Britain, *Schools Councils: an apprenticeship in democracy*. They concluded that effective school councils could be achieved if they act as a vehicle of pupils' empowerment, having their rights to be heard and consulted, the power to make decisions and giving them responsibilities. Pupils are not involved in 'tokenistic' activity, but rather are engaged in a serious purpose. All these will thrive in a school with wider democratic ethos and genuine pupil involvement (Inman and Burke, 2002). Davies (1994) argued that it is important for pupils to explore the processes of decision-making and make all the mistakes at a young age that can then be corrected, rather than to wait until they are adult politicians when their mistakes are very costly and irreparable.

Furthermore, this study builds on Pryor et al. (2005) evidence that school councils can work in basic schools in Ghana. What both studies have in common is that the school councils were initiated by individuals and not the government and therefore the councils might not survive beyond my studies or the headteachers that established them in the Pryor et al. (2005) study. Student Representative Councils (SRC) are common in Ghanaian Senior High Schools (SHS), and universities but not at basic schools level, that is Primary Schools and Junior High Schools (JHS) (Pryor et al., 2005). However, in my opinion they have not existed to promote democratic citizenship as they were present during the military regimes as well. The higher education ones, especially the universities, have been good breeding places for future

political leaders. In Agyemang (2007) teacher trainees at the university pointed out that the two main political parties in Ghana are much interested in SRC elections and secretly found their candidates. There is also a dearth in the study of SRC activities in secondary schools and higher education institutions which may be explored in the future. As indicated in the literature, school councils have not been made compulsory in schools in the UK, they are very popular in both primary and secondary schools and their worth is shown in many studies (Davies, 1998; Inman and Burke, 2002; Davies and Yamashita 2007; Carnie 2010).

10.4.2 The Role of Teacher Education towards Democratic Schools

The exploration of the views of both teacher trainees and serving teachers helped establish their perceptions on pupils' voice and participation in basic schools in Ghana. This also confirmed that teacher education, whether pre-service or in-service, has a major role to play if there could be more democratic schools in Ghana. Teacher trainees were of the view that to encourage pupil participation in decision-making, there should be a cordial relationship between teachers and pupils. Pupils should be made to elect their own prefects in various classes and also at the school level. Teacher trainees encouraged the formation of clubs like an environmental club that could take care of the decoration of the school environment. Most of the teacher trainees also supported the formation of school councils in basic schools in Ghana, with some of them questioning that if they have school councils at the higher education institutions, therefore pupils should also have councils at the basic school level.

Teachers were also asked about the issue of pupils' voice and participation in decision-making in schools. Most of the teachers recognised pupils' voice as important

for the school and asserted the fact that it was because of the pupils that they were in school. They acknowledged that pupils should be involved in decision-making by making them elect their prefects. Teachers suggested that prefects should be made to attend staff meetings and report deliberations to other pupils. They had many ideas to encourage students' participation such as open fora, school durbars, school councils and one-to-one interactions with pupils. However, their current practices fall short of the ideas presented here. Teachers having knowledge of good practices should be taken as positive and they will need more than a little encouragement, further training and policy directives to implement such practices in their work.

When teacher trainees were asked if any aspects of their teacher training could help them get the necessary skills to be democratic professionals, they pointed out structures like the Student Representative Councils (SRCs), Students Disciplinary Committees and the Food Committees of which when empowered will represent more democratic participation for teacher trainees. These groups have responsibilities in handling student-initiated projects, minor student disciplinary issues and planning the menu for the dining hall, but have little influence in major decisions. Teacher trainees also reported of highly competitive student elections where they were allowed to elect their student leaders. However, as indicated in the findings in Chapter Nine, some of the prefects were not happy in their colleges because some teacher trainers do not give them the necessary support and respect. Some teacher trainees were pessimistic about democratic teacher education as most colleges of education in Ghana are controlled by religious groups like the Roman Catholics, Methodists, Presbyterians, Anglicans and the Seventh Day Adventists. For instance, all students attending colleges affiliated to

these religious bodies have to conform to their values and ethos and attend Christian church services even if one is non-Christian.

The study further explored the views of teacher trainees and the present teachers as to whether Ghana can have more democratic schools. Respondents were affirmative but three categories emerged:

- Those who want schools to have a level of democracy, however insist that pupils should only be allowed to exercise limited rights.
- Those who are cautious about democratic schools but want a gradual process of democratisation to be developed over a number of years.
- Those who are highly optimistic about democratic schools in Ghana and want the process of democratisation to start immediately.

These indicate that all respondents recognise that Ghana is a democratic country and therefore pupils should be educated for democratic citizenship. However, more needs to be explored in terms of further interventionist research and practical measures to promote democracy in teacher education institutions and basic schools in Ghana.

10.5 Further Research and Recommendations

Having explored pupils' views for school improvement and involving them in democratic processes through school councils, if there was time, the next step could be to help pupils to solve the problems raised during the interviews, essays and the school council meetings. I therefore recommend the Ministry of Education and Ghana Education Service to commission a similar kind of research and include issues raised here as part of the study, and to act on the findings of this study and the next stages. In this research I made the necessary steps for the data collections to be guided by

democratic principles. I may not have covered every student view in all the schools, but the various methods used for data collection and the sampling strategy which included student elections, respondents volunteering to write essays and interviews, allowed many views to be covered. School councils are not common in basic schools in Ghana, and having realised from other studies that school councils are a great way to encourage student voice and participation in decision-making, I decided to let pupils have some experience of it before any meaningful enquiry could be generated from the experimental ones for future development. This decision proved useful because pupils did not answer the questions on school councils based on an abstract notion. Although SRCs are common in further and higher education institutions, it was surprising to know that pupils have little knowledge of it. I therefore suggest that practical steps should be taken for pupils to have some democratic experiences at least the basic level of education to prepare them for democracy in later stages of their education, and in life. I recommend interventionist approaches in terms of future research on pupils' voice and democratic education in Ghana. Through a more interventionist approach to research, pupils and teachers can be helped to explore different ways of doing things and see how they could change their mind-sets about highly authoritarian practices like caning in schools. There should be further research on democratic teacher education which uses interventionist or action research approaches similar to the CfBT project in the Gambia (Schweisfurth, 2002) where ways to promote education for democracy are explored.

This study has established the lack of, and demands for, a vibrant democratic education in basic schools and the teacher education sector in Ghana. Further nationwide research could persuade educational planners, the MoE, GES, NGOs and

all other stakeholders in education to consider the following practical recommendations formulated from the findings of this research in the table below.

Table 10.2 Practical Recommendations for Democratic Education in Ghana

	Activities Recommended	Institutions and Individuals responsible
1.	The Ministry of Education (MoE) should develop a policy on education for democracy where teachers would be trained democratically in order to impact the knowledge, skills and values of democracy to their pupils.	The Policy Planning, Budgeting, Monitoring and Evaluation Division (PPBME) of the MoE.
2.	Appropriate curricula should be developed for schools that encourage democratic teaching methodologies and practices.	Curriculum, Research and Development Division (CRDD) of the GES.
3.	The teacher training institutions in Ghana should review their curricula and integrate the principles of democracy in their pedagogy. This will encourage more participatory and democratic approaches towards the teaching of teacher trainees.	Teacher Education Division of the GES. Institute of Education, University of Cape Coast. University of Education Winneba.
4.	Regimented and authoritarian practices in Teacher Training Colleges in Ghana should be reviewed for more democratic processes and structures in their wider ethos and practices.	Principals of colleges of education. Teacher trainers. Teacher trainees.
5.	Basic schools in Ghana should be encouraged to establish democratic structures like school councils which will encourage pupils' participation in decision-making. This could be a bottom-up approach. For example, school councils are popular in many schools in Britain, although it is not a statutory requirement.	District Directorate of GES. Headteachers. Teachers. Pupils (students).
6.	Awareness of international debates on education for democracy. Workshops and in-service training should be organised for teacher trainers and teachers in order to update their knowledge in ways of teaching which are more democratic.	District Directorate of GES. Teacher trainers. Headteachers. Teachers. UN agencies (UNESCO).
7.	Provisions of various resources and teaching aids that facilitate participatory learning approaches that promotes education for democracy.	Ministry of Education. GES. NGOs Donor agencies
8.	There should be consensus building and national debate on some of the cultural issues that serve as a barrier to greater democracy in teacher education as well as schools.	Mass Media. Conferences.

10.6 From Research to Advocacy

The innovations recommended above would involve substantial changes to practice and I do not imagine that there will be no barriers. However, education remains the main option through which individuals can be prepared to meet democratic expectations. It is therefore vital for governments to join the international debates and modern educational innovations research in order to produce top quality education for their citizens. I therefore urge the government of Ghana to embrace education for democracy in order to produce democratic citizens. In this study, I have argued that there are two particularly relevant arguments supporting more democratic forms of education. The first is that it helps to create a more democratic society and the second argument is that democratic organisation leads to a better quality, and more effective, schooling system.

This study has been a long journey as I stepped into the schools and colleges of education with an insider's and outsider's lens. There were so many familiar things that I used to cherish and hold dear in the past, but struggled to make meaning out of in the context of this research. My former Principal at the Royal College when I was a student used to say that 'teacher trainees are 'formatters' and being trained to go and form other children'. Therefore, he always admonished us to go through the routines and regimentation in teacher training colleges without questioning their authority because they want the best for us. Perhaps some of the current Principals are products of the 'old school' educated for the survival of the colonies and have failed to see the current democratic aspiration for citizens of Ghana. My growing conviction that democratic education is the way forward made separating research from advocacy a challenging part of this study for me. Beyond this thesis I would love to step out of

the neutrality of academic research and advocate for democratic principles to be incorporated into the practices of teacher education and schools.

There are existing structures like SRC, Student Disciplinary Committees and Food Committees in teacher education institutions that could be empowered to serve as greater entry to democratic citizenship. School councils as piloted in this study were a potential success and I would like to work more with pupils, teachers and headteachers on developing effective and genuine councils that may help prepare pupils for the democratic society. Copies of this study will be disseminated to the policy division of the Ministry of Education and Basic Education Division and Teacher Education Directorate of the Ghana Education Service for the necessary policy actions to be considered. Articles concerning the findings of this study will be submitted to academic journals and in the mass media to generate the debate on education for democracy in Ghana. Hopefully, any impact, however small, will be a positive contribution toward democratic change.

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APPENDIX A: Consent Notices

A1: Information Sheet and Consent Notices for Directors of Education, Principals and Headteachers

School of Education, Research Studies
University of Birmingham
Edgbaston, Birmingham
B15 2TT
United Kingdom

Doctoral Researcher: BOAKYE AGYEMANG

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Academic Supervisor: Professor Clive Harber

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

I wish to seek the permission and consent to conduct my doctoral research in your educational institution (school/college). I am a 31 year old young man and qualified teacher in Ghana. I am currently studying for Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) Education at the University of Birmingham in the UK. I wish to state that this research is purely for academic purposes and the anonymity of all participating institutions and individuals will be protected.

The current working title of my PhD thesis is, *“Towards School Improvement and Democratic Education: An exploration of the views of pupils and teacher trainees in Ghana”*. The aims of the research are to: (a) find out how the views of pupils could be used to improve schools in Ghana in a more democratic direction; and (b) to explore the views of student teachers on what role their teacher training should play in promoting greater democracy in schools. A great deal of research has been done on the views of pupils about schooling. However, most of this research has been done in developed countries and some efforts are being made for pupils to contribute their views on aspects of their schooling experiences. There are not many studies of education in Africa that promotes pupils voice in schools and student participation in decision-making is very limited. Reflecting back on my experiences as a pupil and as a teacher in Ghana and considering the available literature for my doctoral studies, I realised that children in Ghana’s schools have got little chance of expressing their views on issues concerning their school, which should be a grave concern for a democratic country.

By reflecting on the aims of the study, there is the need for a multi-method approach to carry out this inquiry. Therefore, the strategies of data collection will involve: interviews with pupils, teachers and teacher trainees in their respective schools and colleges in Ghana. In addition an open ended essay on how pupils want their schools to improve will be used and teacher trainees will be asked to write an open ended essay on the ideal school they would like to teach in and how it can be achieved. Mock school council meetings will be held in four selected basic schools in Ghana. One basic school and one teacher training college will also be included for in depth study of a whole institution. The research will involve group interview with pupils at school. These will be arranged through contact with headteachers. All interviews will be audio recorded; potential participants are free to opt out of the research if

they are not happy with this. All responses will be kept confidential by the researcher and personal comments will not be permitted or recorded. All pupils participating will be requested not to reveal what other individuals have said in the group interviews and there will be an opportunity for participants to review interview notes.

I am therefore requesting that you grant me the permission to conduct my research in your institution(s) or school(s). I will be in Ghana for two months and plan to spend one week in each school after which I will do a follow up and visits to schools when required. The selected school/college for the in-depth study will be visited for one further week to enable observation of lessons. The attached documents are my data collection procedures and interview questions for respective participants and also a letter of introduction from my academic supervisor on which you can find his contact details. I have provided my contact details above. If you have any questions regarding this study feel free to contact me. Thank you for your support and cooperation.

Boakye Agyemang
Doctoral Student

.....

CONSENT SLIP

I do / do not give my consent for this research to be conducted in my institution(s)

.....

SIGN	DATE	PRINT NAME	POSITION
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A2: Informed Consent to Participate in Research (Teachers and Teacher Trainees)

**School of Education, Research Studies
University of Birmingham
Edgbaston, Birmingham
B15 2TT
United Kingdom**

Doctoral Researcher: BOAKYE AGYEMANG

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Academic Supervisor: Professor Clive Harber

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

My name is Boakye Agyemang and I am a doctoral student at School of Education, University of Birmingham. I am conducting this research on “Towards School Improvement and Democratic Education: An exploration of the views of pupils and teacher trainees in Ghana”. I am particularly interested in how we could use pupils’ views for school improvement in Ghana and for that matter working towards democratic schooling. To that end I have selected your institution/school to interview teachers and teacher trainees about their perceptions on whether pupils’ views are important for school improvement and democratic schools. I will be seeking the help of teacher trainees to write open essays on the ideal school they would like to teach in and how it can be achieved. At some point in the research process, I may be asking you if you would like me to follow up for the purposes of clarification as there will be an opportunity for participants to review interview notes.

If you agree to participate, you do not have to answer any question that you are not comfortable with and you may choose to withdraw or terminate the interview at any time. Please know that the activities I observe or record during my meetings and your responses to interview questions are for my educational purposes. The interviews will last up to 40 minutes. All interviews will be audio recorded; potential participants are free to opt out of the research if they are not happy with this. All responses will be kept confidential by the researcher and personal comments will not be permitted or recorded. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact me on the phone numbers and addresses above. For those of you who might want it, I have provided the contact details for my academic supervisor above.

CONSENT SLIP

I do / do not give my consent to participate in this study (Delete as appropriate)

SIGN

DATE

PRINT NAME

POSITION

A3: Children/Parents Information Sheet and Consent Form for Participants under 18

**School of Education, Research Studies
University of Birmingham
Edgbaston, Birmingham
B15 2TT
United Kingdom**

A project asking pupils in schools in Ghana about things they would like to improve in their schools

Who's doing the project?

My name is **Boakye Agyemang**

I am a student at the School of Education, University of Birmingham, UK. This project is for my doctoral degree.



Boakye

To contact Boakye



Who is the academic Supervisor?



Professor Clive Harber

To contact Clive

What is the project about?

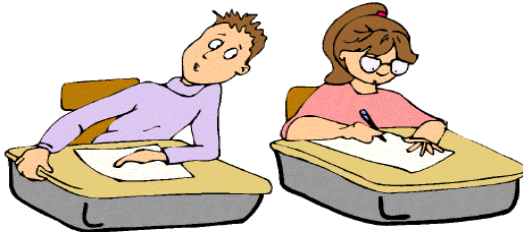
The project is the requirement of my doctoral degree which started in October 2008 and expected to end by September 2012. I am listening to pupils in your school and other selected schools about what makes them happy in school and also what can be done to improve their schools. I am interested in ages from 9 years to 15 years that is from primary year 4 to 6 and Junior High School year 1 to 3 in Ghana.

How is it going to be done?

1. Group interviews of volunteer pupils in your school, the interviews will be between 30 and 60 minutes long. All interviews will be audio recorded and kept confidential by the researcher. No one will ever know the names of people who have participated in the research.



2. Some volunteer pupils will write open essays on the ideal school they would like and how it could be achieved.



3. Elected pupils from various classes in your school will meet for a school council meeting.



Do you have to take part?

No – you will only take part if you want to and your parents agree. You can stop at any time without saying why. I will use what I found out to write my thesis and will never include your name in it. If you have any questions concerning this project and your participation contact Boakye or Professor Clive Harber on the contacts above.

What should Parents do?

Your child is being asked to take part in this study because most of the time we do not give children the opportunity to share their own experiences in school. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before you agree to your child being involved in the study. Please note your child will not take part in this project unless you have signed your part of the consent form below as well as your child.

Thank you

Child's Consent Slip (To be returned to the researcher)



I certify that I have read and understand this consent form and agree to take part in this project as described above. I agree that the research procedures have been explained to my satisfaction. However, my personal participation in this research is given voluntarily. I understand that I may stop taking part at any time without given reason. I certify that I have been given a copy of this consent form to take with me.

Signature:

Date:

Print Name:

Parent's Statement of Consent (To be returned to the researcher)

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to allow my child (.....) to participate in this study.
Child's name

Print Parent/Guardian Name:

Signature of Parent or Guardian: Date:

APPENDIX B: Data Collection Documents

B1: Mock School Councils

Agenda/Set of questions for the council to explore

1. How might school councils improve schools? Who would be on them, how might they be chosen and how would they work?
2. If you are in the school council over the next year, how would you improve your school? What would you improve? And how would you do it?
3. The council should come out with a minimum of five realistic recommendations on how pupil voice could improve their schools.

Note: examples of things that the school council may discuss are conditions of teaching and learning, school environment (structures and resources), school climate (relationships), sports and leisure activities etc.

B2: Questions for Pupils' Interviews

1. What makes pupils happy in coming to school every day?
2. Do pupils participate in decision-making in your school, give examples? If not what stops this?
3. What do you feel that pupils have got to offer in terms of decision-making and running of their school? Are there any specific areas?
4. Are there any processes in your school whereby pupils' views are made known to teachers?
5. Do you have any knowledge of the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child? If so, from where?
6. Would it be helpful to have a school council? Why?
7. What can you as a student do to help improve your school?

8. What suggestions do you have for the teachers and the headteacher for school improvement?

Since the interviews are semi-structured, these questions are there to guide the direction and unnecessary ramblings and other questions might arise depending on the answers given.

B3: Questions for Teacher Trainees/Teachers' Interviews

1. What experiences from your school days would you like to change or improve when you qualify as a teacher?
2. Do you recognise pupil voice as important for the running of the school?
3. Can listening to pupils help to improve schools?
4. What areas of school life do you think pupils should be consulted on regarding school improvement issues?
5. Are there any ways we can encourage pupils to participate in decision-making in schools?
6. What are your views about having school councils in basic schools?
7. Have any aspects of your teacher training helped you to get skills to involve pupils in decision-making in your professional practice?
8. Have you had any knowledge of the United Nations (UN) 1989 convention on the Rights of the Child? If so, from where?
9. What can schools do to implement certain aspects of the UN convention on the Rights of the Child?
10. Do you think we can have more democratic schools in Ghana? What stops schools listening to pupils in Ghana?

B4: Open Essay Questions for Pupils

Discuss things you most enjoy in school and those you do not. Describe your ideal school.

How might such a school be achieved?

B5: Open Essay Question for Teacher Trainees

Discuss things you most enjoy in your college and those you do not. Describe the ideal school

you would like to teach in. How might such a school be achieved?