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Pupils' views of the future at four Ghanaian schools

“I am told that to learn my books will help me in the future”

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ABSTRACT

A Minor Field Study [MFS] and an examination thesis on the Teacher Training Programme at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden.

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Abstract:

The overall aim of this study was to contribute to increased understanding regarding pupils' views of the future and attitudes towards education in Ghana. In the study the pupils' views and attitudes were contrasted with teachers' and principals' discussions on the same themes. The context of the research can be described as a suburb – in this study referred to as Mastar – of Accra, the capital city of Ghana. The people in Mastar are mixed in terms of socio-economic backgrounds, ethnicity, languages and religiosity. The research approach used was inspired by common case study methodology. Questionnaires, interviews and observations in a broad sense as well as field notes were used as data collecting methods. The findings indicate strong norms regarding how the pupils should think about the future and education in their context. The norms that predominate are as follows:

- 1) The pupils *should* have a positive attitude towards education.
- 2) The pupils *should* think that education is the key to the future.
- 3) The pupils *should* take studies seriously and preferably be "best in class," which in turn will lead to future success.

The findings indicate that norms regarding the future as well as education are closely linked together and very complex. This study should be understood as an attempt to reflect the pupils' perspective as a valuable resource of information when working to improve education in Ghana. Furthermore, with Ghana as an example, the findings of the study can contribute to an increased understanding of the complexity that surrounds pupils' attitudes and views of the future, and can also stimulate a discussion about these important issues.



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FOREWORD

This Minor Field Study [MFS] was financed with a scholarship from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency [Sida]. MFS is a program administrated by the Swedish government agency International Programme Office for Education and Training which promotes academic exchanges and cooperation across borders. The overall aim of the MFS program is in short to prepare students to work in global contexts as well as to give the education institutions possibilities to promote international networks. The MFS scholarship consisted of 25 000 Swedish kronor as well as a two day long field study preparation course. This MFS is furthermore an examination thesis on the Teacher Training Programme at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. The data was collected in Ghana during a several week visit at the end of 2010.

This was one of the most intense and rewarding time periods of my life. I want to express my gratitude to all pupils, teachers, and principals in Ghana for their cooperation. A special thanks goes to my supervisor in the field, John Woolley, as well as to my outstanding supervisor, Professor Monica Rosén at the University of Gothenburg. Further, I wish to extend my appreciation to Richard Sarkodie Amo and John Bensah who helped me in a remarkably unselfish way. In addition to this, I want to thank Beniamin Knutsson who acted as my supervisor as well as a source of inspiration during a small field study carried out in South Africa during the spring of 2010. His advice regarding collecting data in the field was invaluable. I also wish to thank 'Freda in the kitchen' for allowing me to know you.

Sabina Franzén, Gothenburg, Sweden, 2012

1. Introduction

The main focus of this case study is Ghanaian pupils' views of the future and their attitudes towards education. These will be understood with the help of concepts about norms. The future aspect mainly falls within a large field of research commonly labelled "youth future research". Views of the future are a topic of research in all kinds of disciplines worldwide, not least within educational science research. The focus on attitudes towards education is in turn best placed within what is called attitude studies – also a huge field of research within different disciplines. Attitudes should here be understood as an evaluative reaction towards a concept which in this study is education. Attitudes can in turn vary in direction (positive, neutral or negative) and strength (strong or weak) (Passer & Smith, 2004:297). In order to better understand the attitudes towards education and views of the future, some background information about Ghana and its recent history is needed.

Two main characteristics of Ghana's development during the last years are a growing economy and a strong democratic government. This transformation has led to improvements for the people of Ghana, which is now one of the countries on their way to achieving the Millennium Development Goal [MDG]¹ of reducing extreme poverty, i.e. halve the proportion of people living on less than one dollar per day by 2015 (United Nations [UN] 2012a).² Another MDG focuses directly on education, i.e. achieve universal primary education. This goal has the defined target to ensure that all boys and girls complete primary school. Also with respect to this goal, Ghana has improved and is constantly continuing to improve in a positive direction. Yet, Ghana has still a ways to go to fulfill this goal completely³ (UN, 2012b). Importantly, this last goal furthermore is a human right universal and written down in different types of international agreements (UN, 2012c). Since independence from the United Kingdom in 1957, the government of Ghana has made significant efforts to improve the education system. During the past few years, Ghana's education system has gone through several reforms regarding content, administration and the management of education (United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2006). In 2011, Ghana participated for the first time in Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study [TIMSS], a regularly occurring international evaluation of school systems carried out by International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement's [IEA]. Ghana's participation will contribute with information about pupils' knowledge and skills when it comes to mathematics and science, but will furthermore lead to increasing attention, both international as well as national, on education in Ghana (IEA, 2012a). Despite this extensive focus on education, there is very little research carried out in a Ghanaian context with an educational focus that includes pupils' views. To me, this has been a somewhat unexpected discovery as education mainly concern young pupils. My thinking as a teacher is that knowledge about young pupils' views, thoughts and attitudes holds important information for all who work with improving education in Ghana and elsewhere. However, the Canadian professor of sociology and equity studies George J. Sefa Dei's *Schooling & education in Africa - the case of Ghana* (2004) has contributed with a study in which students', teacher students', teachers' and parents' views of the latest Ghanaian educational

¹ In year 2000 leaders from 189 countries, agreed to the Development Goals (MDGs). This means that the countries will do their best to achieve eight specific goals and targets by 2015. The aims with these goals are to attain peace, security, human rights and sustainable development in the world (UN, 2012a).

² Ghana has gone from 50.1 % in 1992 to 30 % in 2006 when it comes to people living on less than one dollar per day (UN, 2012b).

³ This goal consists of the following aspects: Net enrolment in primary education, literacy rate of 15-24 years olds and proportion of pupils that started grade 1 and reached the last year of primary³ school. The enrolment in primary school has however increased from 60.2 % in 1999 to 76.2 % in 2009 (both sexes). The proportion of pupils that started grade 1 and who reach the last grade of primary school increased from 62.6 % in 1991 to 73,2 % in 2008 (both sexes). When it comes to literacy rate of 15-24 year olds, the number has increased from 70.7% in 2000 to 80.1% in 2009 (both sexes) (UN, 2012b).

reforms are investigated. Sefa Dei argues that educational reforms must be driven by the needs and aspirations of the local people. Of particular interest for my study has been the results that indicate that the teachers and parents interviewed are seeing education as synonymous with what in the context is referred to as both success and the ‘correct way’ to secure the future (p. 105-127). This way of expressing norms as a ‘correct way’ has been an inspiration to the overall focus on norms in this study.

The British scientists David Hicks and Catherine Holden, who are active within what is usually referred to as “youth future research”⁴, argue that our views of the future are especially significant to investigate. One of their arguments is that these views motivate and influence daily choices as well as behaviors (1995:24). Similar arguments are found within the field of attitude research that also attitudes in different ways guide our actions and decisions. Accordingly, views of the future as well as attitudes towards education seem to be significant in human life and therefore urgent to focus on in scientific studies. The *Word Value Study* [WVS], a worldwide network of social scientists studying values and their impact on social and political life, includes several value concepts that correspond closely with those addressed in “youth future research”. Changes over time as well as comparisons between countries are the main focus of the WVS. Ghana participated in the third wave, carried out from 1994 to 1998, as well as the fifth wave, carried out from 2005 to 2008. Unfortunately the few variables regarding values connected to education are missing in the Ghanaian data set. However, WVS contributes with data regarding Ghanaian values connected to a large number of other variables. According to WVS scientists, the results indicate for example that Ghana is a country where traditional values are strong, which implies both a high level of conformity and a high degree of obedience relative to authorities (WVS, 2012). Some specific results – those with connections to the topic of this study – show very consistent answers occurring on a Ghanaian national level (WVS, 2012). This would indicate some kind of norms regarding these aspects. The indicated results of WVS (2012) along with Sefa Dei (2004) have inspired the topic of this essay, where focus will be on the pupils’ views of the future and their attitudes towards education.

⁴ where young people’s views of the future are investigated

1.1 Purpose of the study

The overall aim of this study is to contribute to an increased understanding regarding Ghanaian pupils' views of the future as well as attitudes towards education. The pupils' views and attitudes will be contrasted with teachers and principals discussions on the same themes. Thereafter, the expressed views and attitudes will be understood with help of previous studies and concepts about norms. Accordingly, that pupils' views of the future and their attitudes towards education in some way are influenced by norms acts as a basic assumption in this study, which is based on previous studies carried out in Ghanaian contexts (Sefa Dei, 2004; WVS, 2012). The study is an attempt to reflect the pupils' perspective as a valuable resource of information when working with improving education in Ghana. The study includes both descriptive as well as interpretative approaches. The overall aim gives rise to the following research question:

- How can the pupils' views of the future as well as their attitudes towards education be understood with the help of the norm concept?

This question deals with patterns in the data that indicate norms regarding the investigated themes.

The aim also gives rise to more empirical research questions:

- 1) How do pupils view their own future and the future of the local community?

This question deals with the pupils' views of the future of the local community. Furthermore, it deals with the pupils' views of their own future in terms of a preferable future with a focus on education and jobs. Features, that the pupils point to as tools for the future will also be dealt with. Finally, the views will be explored with the help of the optimism vs. pessimism concepts.

- 2) What attitudes do pupils have towards education?

This question deals with how the pupils' attitudes can be stated in terms of direction, e.g. positive, neutral or negative, vs. in strength, e.g. strong or weak.

Delimitations

Three main delimitations have been made. The first delimitation has been made through choosing a specific context. The investigated context can be described as a suburb – in the study referred to as Mastar – of Accra, the capital city of Ghana. The people in Mastar are mixed in terms of socio-economic backgrounds, ethnicity, languages and religiosity. The second delimitation is done through strict operationalizations of definitions of investigated concepts in research questions, interview questions as well as in questionnaires. The third delimitation is a selection based on accessibility instead of representativity.

2. Theoretical framework

In this chapter some central concepts will be defined. The most central concepts in this study, e.g. norms, views and attitudes are conducted in different research disciplines and can as a result imply partly different meanings. Additionally, these concepts are common in daily conversations. However, in the following section the norm as well as related concepts will be defined mainly with the help of social psychology terminology.

Norms are often defined as unwritten rules regarding how we should behave, feel and think. Furthermore, norms are essential and characteristic for human social life. Norms arise, develop and are retained through group members' daily actions. How this takes place in practice is furthermore a common focus for research. Another characteristic of norms is that some kind of sanction comes from group members if the norms are not followed. An example of sanction is less status within the group. Norms are often invisible, unspoken and taken for granted by the group members. As a result of this, norms are often easier to identify for someone that is not a member of the group (Hogg & Vaughan, 2011:236-259; Hwang et al., 2005:294-296; Passer & Smith, 2004: 601-612). The group concept has an obvious central connection to norms. Kelley (1952) made a distinction between reference and membership groups. A reference group is psychologically significant for our behaviors and attitudes. There is a tendency to seek to behave in accordance with or in opposition to the reference group dominating norms. A membership group is a group to which we belong by some objective external criterion. Views and attitudes – two of the most central concepts in this study – are often considered to be components of what is called social influence, which in turn can be defined as the process where individuals' attitudes and behaviors are influenced by others. This social influence can in turn be conscious as well as unconscious for the individual. In social psychology two different kinds of social influence are common to distinguish: conformity and obedience. Conformity is when we are moving our positions in the direction of the group as a result of social influence. In other words, we have internalised the view of the group. This is almost synonymous with norms. Obedience means almost the same but is furthermore related to a relation with some kind of inequality in terms of power. In this case the views are not internalized (Hogg & Vaughan 2011: Hwang et al., 2005: 294ff. Passer & Smith, 2004:602-612). Obedience is in turn closely linked to another central concept in the study, i.e. authority. Social influence becomes greater the stronger the one who is influencing is. Stronger can for example be about power. Power is often defined as the capacity to influence others while resisting their attempts to influence. Social influence also becomes greater if the distance between the one who influences and the one who is influenced is less. Finally, social influence has a larger effect on the influenced when there are many people or sources influencing (Hwang et al., 2005:297; Hogg & Vaughan, 2011:236-239). The “dual-process dependency model” is another way to illustrate the two separate processes that “operate” when it comes to social influence: dependency on others for social approval and for information about reality (Hogg & Vaughan 2011: 237). This is furthermore closely linked to what is called social desirability bias, i.e. the tendency to respond in a socially acceptable manner rather than according to how one truly feels and behaves (Passer & Smith, 2004:36). Norms can guide us through the social interaction but can also limit the group members' behaviors and thoughts. In this study, Ghanaian pupils' views of some aspect of the future and their attitudes towards education will be understood with the help of these concepts about norms.

2.1 Previous studies

To my knowledge, there are no previous studies carried out within the same context or on the same topic and with the same approach as the present one. This chapter will be divided into different sections. First, some classical within social psychology – experiments about norms will be briefly introduced. Thereafter, two different surveys with special relevance in terms of theme vs. in terms of investigated context will be mentioned. Finally, some previous studies carried out in other contexts on the topic of pupils' views of the future as well as attitudes towards education will be given as a short introduction to these two fields.

Norms

Several studies carried out in different contexts indicate that humans placed together develop norms, which in turn influence behaviour as well as thoughts. Some of the below mentioned experiments, e.g. Sherif (1936), Asch (1956) and Milgram (1974), are frequently referred as well as replicated within social psychology. Muzafer Sherif investigated how norms take form and transform between people. He found that randomly created groups develop norms. The experiment task involved an optical illusion, referred to as auto kinetic effect. As the experiment informants heard each other's answers, their judgment converged and a group norm was developed, i.e. the group must have the correct answer (1936). Solomon Asch's (1956) another of the founders of social psychology conformity experiments carried out 1951 and 1956 are closely linked to Sherif's experiment. In Asch's experiment task, individuals were to judge which of three comparison lines were of the same length as a so-called standard line. This task was performed in multiple trials, using a different set of standard and comparisons lines each time. Despite this, approximately 37 percent of the minority gave an incorrect answer, i.e. in line with the majority's answer. "Fair for deviating" and "the majority could not be wrong" were the most common explanations for giving up an own opinion. Asch's conformity experiments have been replicated in several studies. For example Bond and Smith (1996) investigated culture and conformity through conducted meta-analyses of conformity studies – from 133 replications of Asch experiments in seventeen countries. Their findings indicate that cultural values are important factors in conformity. More specifically, their findings indicate that conformity tends to be higher (37.1 percent) among research informants from what often is referred to as collectivistic cultures than in individualistic cultures (25.3 percent). One of these 133 replications of Asch's experiments was carried out 1971 in Ghana by McKissack (referred in Bond & Smith, 1996:112). Bond and Smith (1996) refer to Ghana as a culture where collectivistic culture is dominating. The conformity experiment in Ghana indicated for example a higher level of conformity than in a similar experiment carried out in Germany. Finally, Bond and Smith argue that more studies are needed because of the huge complexity of the topic and not least what they mean is problematic with the abstraction of collectivistic versus individualistic cultures (1996:111-137). Stanley Milgram (1974) also carried out experiments closely related to norms. However, Milgram's experiments are controversial and largely debated because of their ethical implications. In comparison to Sherif and Asch, his main focus was obedience. In 18 studies carried out between 1960 and 1963 he investigated if ordinary citizens obey the orders of an authority in terms of physically harming of innocent persons. 65 percent of the experiment informants obeyed the authority despite the fact that they knew that they were harming an innocent and for them unknown person with a shock level of 450 volts. These studies indicate that humans seem to have a tendency to obey authorities to a great level. If humans have a tendency to obey authorities even in extreme situations as in Milgram's experiment, it is not unlikely that humans will tend to obey authorities even in more ordinary situations.

Two studies of special relevance – in terms of context and focus

As mentioned in the introduction, some concrete results from Sefa Dei's - Canadian professor of sociology and equity studies - *Schooling & education in Africa - the case of Ghana* (2004) have acted as the main source of inspiration when it comes to the focus of themes in this study. Sefa Dei has since the 1980s been involved in studies where local people's thoughts have been valued as resources for improving education. Between July and October 1997, Sefa Dei carried out ethnographic studies in two local Ghanaian schools – one Senior Secondary School [SSS], one teacher training college and in surrounding communities. One of his questions was about how students, teachers, educators and parents/guardians think about the educational reforms. With the help of an anti-colonial discursive framework, Sefa Dei critically analysed the Ghanaian education system as well as reform attempts. Despite having of totally other overall aims and approaches than this study, Sefa Dei contributes to it with information about Ghanaian school contexts. Of particular interest for my study has been the result where the interviewed teachers and parents indicate a noticeably high valuation of education. More specifically, they are seeing education as synonymous with what in the context is referred to as success and also the 'correct way' to secure the future. As mentioned in the introduction, this way of expressing norms as a 'correct way' has been an inspiration to the overall focus on norms in this essay. A link between academic success and social success can also be seen. In the study, the parents' self-imposed roles when it comes to supervising and guiding the young people towards the future are noticeable. Finally, the results also indicate that success and future security in a Ghanaian context seem to be closely linked to morals, behaviour, character and a willingness to practice what has been taught (p.105-127).

World Values Survey [WVS] is a worldwide network of social scientists studying values and their impacts on social and political life. In these surveys, changes over time and comparisons between countries are the main focuses. Five so-called waves – from 1981 to 2007 – of surveys have been carried out. The sixth wave is ongoing and will be finished during 2012. Ghana participated in the third wave – 1994 to 1998 – as well as the fifth wave – 2005 to 2008. The WVS has together with the European Values Study [EVS] carried out surveys in 97 societies containing almost 88 percent of the world's population. The political scientist Ronald Inglehart is acting as the director of the project (WVS, 2012). WVS is based on a representative sample on a national level. Accordingly, WVS has other aims, approaches and a much larger sample than the present study. Additionally, another data collecting method is used. In WVS, data is collected through interviews guided from standardized questionnaires. However, results from WVS have contributed with data about dominating values in Ghana on a national level. Analyses of data indicate that many basic values are closely correlated and can be depicted in two major dimensions of cross-cultural variation: 'traditional values' versus 'secular rational values' and 'survival values' versus 'self-expression values'. According to scientists working with WVS, these two dimensions can explain more than 70 percent of the cross-national variance in a factor analysis of ten indicators, and each of these dimensions is strongly correlated with scores of other orientations. The scientists within the project have tried to visualize the data from the fifth wave – 2005 to 2008 – on what they call 'the global cultural map', which reflects that a large number of basic values are closely correlated. The countries are positioned according to its people's values instead of its geographical location.

Traditional/Secular-rational values dimension⁵ reflects differences between societies in which religion and closely linked values are very important and those in which they are not. The second major dimension indicates whether Survival or Self-expression⁶ values are the most dominating. Data was carried out in Ghana in 1995 as well as in 2006 (WVS, 2012).

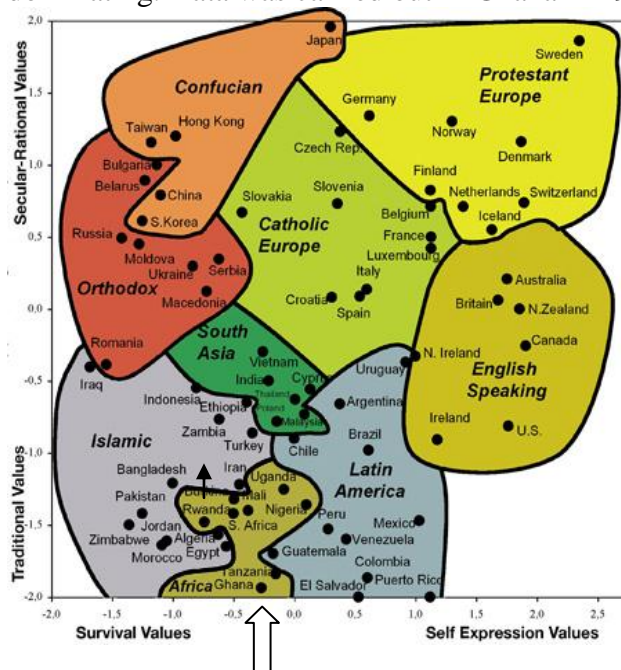


Figure 1. Show 'The global cultural map'. Each country is positioned according to its' peoples' values from the fifth wave - 2005 and 2008. Ghana's position is marked with the arrow (WVS, 2012).

In figure 1. Ghana can be found a little bit closer (M: -0.29) to the 'survival values pole' than to the 'self-expression values pole'⁷. This indicates that Ghana is a society where neither 'self-expressing values nor survival values' are really dominating on a national level. On the other dimension 'traditional values' versus 'secular-rational values', Ghana can be found near the traditional pole (M: -1,66)⁸. In other words, the position on this dimension indicates that 'traditional values', i.e. religiosity and related values are important among the inhabitants. Thus, according to the scientists of the WVS surveys, Ghana is a society in which the importance of parent-child ties, defense of authority and traditional family values are common. As indicated, the database from WVS contains uncountable variables. On some of the specific questionnaire questions – those which have connections to the topic of this study – very consistent answers occur on a Ghanaian national level. This would indicate some norms regarding these aspects. First, it seems to be very important to be a successful person⁹. Second, hard work brings – without any doubt – success¹⁰. Third, it is important to try to be oneself rather than to follow others¹¹. It is also important to decide the goal of life on your own¹². On the other hand, it is very important to make your parents proud of you¹³. Unfortunately, data values connected to education are missing. Another significant factor is that Ghana on the so-called 'mass values scale' between conformity and self-expression can be

⁵ on the y-axis (Figure 1.)

⁶ on the x-axis (Figure 1.)

⁷. A higher M indicates a dominance of more *self-expression values* while a lower M indicates a dominance of *survival values*.

⁸ A higher M indicates a dominance of more *secular-rational values* while a lower M indicates a dominance of *traditional values*.

⁹ variable 85

¹⁰ variable 120

¹¹ variable 65

¹² variable 67

¹³ variable 64

found closer (M: -0,40) to conformity than to self-expression (WWS, 2007¹⁴). Important to note is that these results are on a national level and of course do not reflect each individual's values.

In summary, all the studies mentioned above indicate that groups develop norms, while "culture" seems to influence to what level as well as in what directions these norms are developing. Additionally, findings from previous studies indicate that in Ghana seems there to be a "culture" where norms are supposed to be relatively strong.

Pupils' views of the future

The future has become a focus of increasing concern within scientific research, which is often referred to as the "future field". As mentioned, in this study young Ghanaian pupils' views of the future will be the main focus. For the sake of clarity, the "youth future research" will be used as the term for the field of research this study more specifically falls under (Hicks and Holden 1995:19-33). The studies below are mentioned in an attempt to give some examples of studies carried out within this field. These studies have acted as inspiration sources for the approach, design and operationalizations of concepts when it comes to the pupils' views of the future. As indicated, to my knowledge no study focusing on pupils' views of the future has been carried out in a Ghanaian context. Nevertheless, a large number of studies on the topic have been carried out in what is often referred to as Western contexts. However, since the aim of this study is an increased understanding of a specific Ghanaian context and, in other words, not to act as a comparison with pupils' views in other contexts, these studies will only be introduced briefly. Yet, some of the in this study used operational concept that will be further mentioned in connections with the empirical research questions. The conducted approaches, designs, operationalizations, use of concepts and the context in which the studies are carried out are the main differences between the studies within "youth future research". Many similarities can, however, be found as well. One example is that in many of the studies some kind of multi-methodological design is conducted. An example is questionnaires in combination with essay methods. David Hicks and Catherine Holden, two active scientists within "youth future research", have carried out studies in British contexts (1995). Within the Swedish context, Åke Bjerstedt from the early 1980s acted as a leader for the project *Preparedness for the future as an educational objective* at Malmö University. As a partial goal of his project several studies were carried out on the topic of pupils' views of the future. Ankarstrand- Lindström's study (1984) as well as Bjerstedt's own study (1992) can for example be mentioned. Vilgot Oscarsson, lecturer of teacher education at The University of Gothenburg, has analysed and discussed pupils' views of the future with the help of data from several of the National Evaluation of Swedish schools [NU] – NU 92; NU 98; NU 03 (2005).

Pupils' attitudes towards education

The focus on pupils' attitudes towards education is best placed within what is called attitude studies – a huge field of research within all kinds of disciplines. Consequently, I will not attempt to give an overview of this complex field. To my knowledge, there is no study that explicitly focuses on pupils' attitudes towards education carried out in a Ghanaian context. Instead some studies that indirectly stress this focus carried out in a Ghanaian context will be presented below. The operationalizations of the attitude concept will be further explained in connection with the research questions. As already mentioned, in 2011 Ghana took part in TIMSS, an international large scale study with a focus on achievements in mathematics and

science – for the first time. This study, contributed a lot of background materials about the participants using a student questionnaire. In this questionnaire questions about attitudes towards education were indirectly asked. Unfortunately, at the time of writing this essay the data has not yet been published. Another study, Sefa Dei (2004), indirectly investigated attitudes towards education in a Ghanaian context. As described in the introduction education in Ghana seems to be high valued and the ‘correct way’ to reach success and future security. Merriam – writing about case studies – mean that metaphors are having a special position to identify meaning (2010:160). Therefore, some metaphors from Sefa Dei’s study on the education topic will here be mentioned. This parent informant makes a simile with “old times” when people have to secure their future through farming. She explains that the land that days have the same value as the children’s brains today. This parent also claims that “knowledge is power” (p.121-122). As written in the introduction, data sets about values of educations are missing in WVS.

3. Background

Below is a brief introduction to Ghana with a main focus on education. As written in the introduction, there is a gradually increasing focus on education – through reforms, participation in TIMSS 2011 and through struggles regarding achieving the MDG.

3.1 The Ghanaian educational system

Ghana has 12 universities, 17,315 primary schools and 9,507 junior high schools (UNESCO, 2006). In 2011 the population was approximately 24.8 million inhabitants (Indexmundi, 2012). The number of pupils not attending school – net enrolment ratio was estimated to be 83.4 percent in 2007/2008. In spite of this Ghana is one of the countries within east Africa with the most children attending school (UN, 2012b). However, the education access has, since the colonization of the British in 1957 increased a lot. The *Government of Ghana official portal* (Ministry of Education: Ghana, 2012) indicates that, despite many efforts and reforms, there are still obstacles to overcome when it comes to education.

Different educational levels

At an average age of four, Ghanaian children start their Pre-school education. When they are around six years old they start their six year long Primary education. After that, the children go through a three year long Junior Secondary School education [JSS] (in this study referred to as Junior High School [JHS]¹⁵). During the last year of JHS, the pupils have to take their Basic Education Certificate Exams [BECE] to get an educational certificate. This certificate is required for applying to Senior Secondary Schools (in this study referred to as Senior High School [SHS]). At this stage pupils can choose between different strands, e.g. Science, Business and General Arts. At the end of the third year of SHS, pupils have to pass the West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination [WASSCE]. Pupils who achieve good grades on this examination can be admitted to University, Poly-technic, or a Teacher Training program. Finally, students who graduate from these have to do at least one year of National Service in either a governmental or private institution (UNESCO, 2006). In the present model the structure of Ghanaian education levels is illustrated.

¹⁵ Different terminology in different sources.

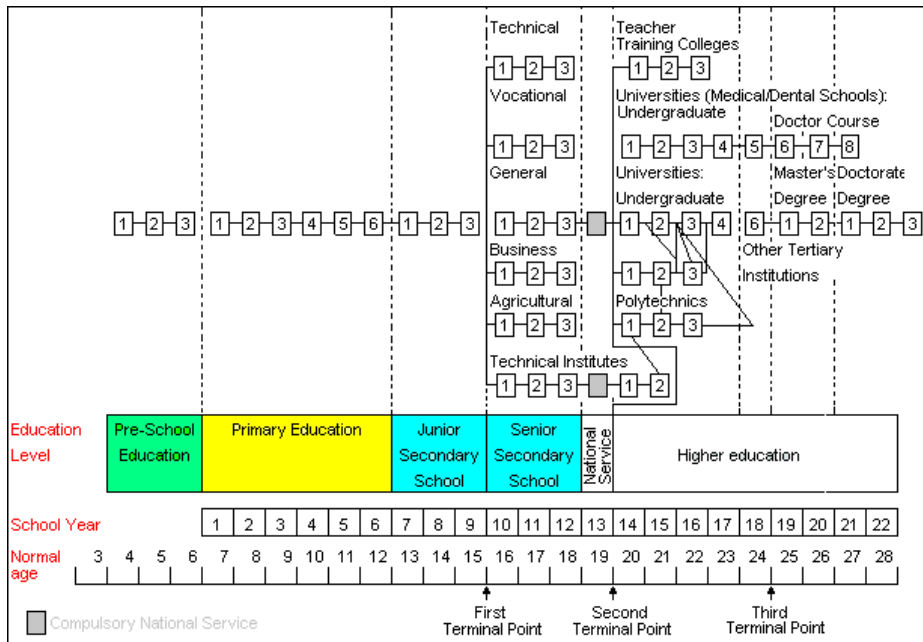


Figure 1.1 Showing structure of the education system according to UNESCO (2006).

Since 2002, the English language has been the teaching language from the first year in school. Nevertheless, when it is necessary, local languages are conducted in parallel with English. Furthermore, the pupils study local languages throughout all years in school (Utrikespolitiska institutet, 2010). Basic Education is in theory compulsory, free and available to all. However, basic schools are tuition-free only in public schools and even in public schools various forms of fees are common.

3.2 Description of the investigated context

The context can be defined as follows: pupils from four schools in a suburb of Accra, the capital city of Ghana and also some pupils living in villages in the Volta region to the east of Ghana. The Volta region is one of Ghana's ten administrative regions. The suburb of Accra, which will be referred to as Mastar, is located in the Greater Accra region. Ghana's location as well as the investigated context can be seen on the maps below.



Figure 1.2 Shows the location of Ghana on a map of Africa (Nationalencyklopedin, 2012).



Figure 1.3 Shows the administrative regions within Ghana. The investigated contexts are marked with stars (Wikipedia, 2012).

Mastar is a middle income area where both rich and poor people live (Mr Steward, principal, 2010:11:02, pers. comm.). Mastar can be described as a suburb where people can be found on the whole continuum from very poor to very rich in terms of money. Begging, probably homeless people can be seen on the streets as well as very rich people – in terms of property e.g. huge luxury houses, expensive cars and so on. In Mastar all types of facilities including supermarkets, markets, shops, restaurants, internet cafés, churches, petrol stations, hotels, and guest houses, can be found. The Volta region on the contrary can best be described as countryside with a lot of farmers that, in terms of money, are poor. The photos below show some houses from Mastar.



Figure 1.4; 1.5 Some views from Mastar – a suburb of Accra, the capital city of Ghana (not showing the most exclusive vs. the poorest houses) (own photos).

According to pupils' questionnaire answers, rubbish, crime and infrastructure are the most frequent areas referred to as very big problems in the local area, Mastar. These areas are also referred to in the pupil interviews, but using other terminology. In the interviews, Grace, a 12 years old girl in the 8th grade says, “If a thief steals something, the thief always run away” (Grace, 2010:11:10, oral). She continues, “There is rubbish everywhere, people just dump it. My prayer is that one day there will it be an end to this” (Grace, 2010:11:10, oral). Even two other pupils, Kwase, 13 years old, and Prince, 14 years old, in 9th grade mention rubbish as a problem in the local area (2010:11:10, oral). Richard, 12 years old in 8th grade points to defects in the transport system and finishes his reasoning by saying, “We have resources, but it seems that we do not know how to do” (Richard, 2010:11:10, oral). Through observations in the field rubbish is a problem. Even crime and corrupt police are things that I, during my time in the field became a witness to. In daily chat, the infrastructure problem was referred to as “bumpy roads” as well as traffic queues.



Figure 1.6 Shows a road within Mastar (own photo).

Ares marked as “not a problem” in the pupil questionnaire were food supply, availability and quality of education, electricity and lack of democracy.

Locals’ suggestions about how to improve education

Below, some suggestions from people living in Ghana regarding how education can be improved are stated. These are based on Sefa Dei’s conclusions about locals’ critique and recommendations regarding the educational reforms (2004:81-294).

- Adequate resource materials e.g. textbooks and computers
- Adequate school and classroom facilities
- Closer cooperation between education and society
- Equal opportunity for all students
- Adult education and literacy programs
- Teaching about local knowledge, culture and languages
- Partnerships with international institutions

Some characteristics in the school contexts

This section should be understood as an effort to describe the investigated schools from the viewpoint of someone who has never been there. Important note: This is my – a researcher from Sweden – description based on observations as well as discussions with people in Ghana.

- Relations between pupils and teachers can be described as what in psychological terms is often referred to as authoritarian, often associated with a controlling but cold, unresponsive or rejecting relation (Passer & Smith, 2004:395). In contrast, outside the classrooms the relations have more of an authoritative character, often associated with a demanding but warm and caring relation (Passer & Smith 2004:395).
- There seems to be tendency to ask for a ‘correct answer’. This interpretation is for example based on classroom situations where the teachers ask the pupils if they have understood and the pupils respond by screaming “Yes Miss” – regardless of whether they have understood or not.
- Reflection and analysis seem does not to be dominating. In a Guide book about Ghana but here in terms of a tendency for “remembering by heart” (Utley, 2010:96).
- There is a huge influence of religion within the school contexts as well as in society in general.
- Age heterogeneity within the classes and levels are common.
- School fees are common.
- School children wear school uniforms.



Figure 1.7; 1.8 Shows girls in school uniforms and pupils filling in questionnaires (own photos).

4. Method

The research approach used was inspired by common case study methodology. A complex phenomenon was investigated, understood and interpreted with help of complementary methods. The following different kinds of data were collected to illuminate the research questions: questionnaires, interviews, observations in a broad sense and field notes. As a case study researcher, I have permitted myself to be free regarding the use of the materials. That considered to be relevant, elucidating or illustrating in the data has been used.

4.1 Procedure and ethical considerations

During the planning, field work and writing stages, ethical rules, e.g. *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* (American Psychological Association [APA], 2010) and *Forskningsetiska förhållningsegler I samhällsvetenskaplig forskning* (Vetenskapsrådet, 1990) were carefully considered and adhered to with the aim to safeguard the rights of informants. The principal at each school gave his/her consent. As a recipient of an MFS scholarship, I had to find the schools to visit myself. The contact work thus had to start before travel arrangements could be made. Through my supervisor Monica Rosén's network at The University of Gothenburg and her colleague Girma Berhanu I came in contact with a principal and also the director of one school in Mastar. Additionally, through this principal's contacts as well as through my own networking I later got permission to carry out the study with pupils from three other schools. After approximately two weeks in the field, a pilot study was conducted at one of the schools. At this time, several discussions with teachers, principals as well as others took place. The pilot study consisted of three different parts: small group interviews, test questionnaires and finally follow-up discussions. Questionnaires and interview guides were modified according to the results of the pilot study. The actual study started with information meetings and interviews with the principals at the participating schools. Information was later given to the informants in the classrooms regarding the aim, procedures as well as ethical regulations. In addition, interviews with two different teachers were carried out. These interviews were also done with help of an interview guide. Thereafter, open-structured interviews were carried out with the pupils. With the aim to create a comfortable atmosphere in which the pupils would feel free to express their thoughts, the interviews were carried out in pairs. All interviews were taped and transcribed verbatim. Unstructured and unsystematic observations were continuously made during the time in the field. All kinds of situations and documents have served as data. Field notes were done daily for best memory effect. When the main data collection work – pilot study, interviews and questionnaires – was completed, I was asked to be responsible for some concrete tasks at one school. This gave me an opportunity to do observations in a more relaxed form.

4.2 Designing of questionnaires and interview guides

The questionnaires as well as the interview guides were constructed in alignment with common advice given in the literature on methods (for example Bryman, 2008; Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson & Wängnerud, 2012:44-65). The questionnaire consisted of questions that can be classified into two different parts: questions about background variables and questions about the pupils' views and attitudes. The questions were constructed with inspiration from the student questionnaires used in Progress in Reading Literacy Study [PIRLS] 2006 (IEA, 2012b) and in the TIMSS student questionnaire used in 2007 (IEA, 2012c). Additionally, previous studies on the topic of the future have served as sources of inspiration (for example

Hicks & Holden 1995; Bjerstedt; 1992; Oscarsson, 2005). The questionnaire used in this study consisted of 46 questions. Some examples of questionnaire questions can be seen in Appendix C. As mentioned, some questions were modified to better suit the context where the data were collected. Semi- structured interview guides were constructed with the overall aim to both contextualise the responses in the questionnaires and to ensure validity.

Validity and reliability

Several considerations to improve validity aspects have been taken into account when the questionnaires and interview guides were constructed and when data were collected from these. As a first step to improve validity the questions were initially formulated with inspiration from previous studies. Thereafter, suggestions from people in the field were considered. I as a researcher was present in the classroom during the time the pupils filled in the questionnaires. The first questions were read out loud by me as a way to ensure that the pupils understood what to do. I answered all kinds of questions related to understanding of the questionnaire. I was careful to emphasize that the questions were about the pupils' own views and that there therefore were no right or wrong answers. That English, which was neither the informants nor my own first language, was used in the questionnaires and interviews may be considered to be a threat to the validity. However, in Ghana all schools teach in the English language and, as a result, most pupils manage English quite well. Another fact that at first can seem to be a threat against validity is that the pupils were from one school and furthermore chosen by the principal. However, these were a result of the guest aspect as well as the fact that limited time was spent in field and that consent from the principals was required for interviews and questionnaires. To ensure reliability, different observation methods, along with multiple indicators for both attitudes and views of the future in the interview and in the questionnaire, were used. Finally, all collected data was handled with great care and accuracy.

4.3 Analytical method

The data, presented in the chapter on results, were analysed and chosen with what Holme and Solvang (1997:158) refer to as whole analysis (own translation)¹⁶. This method can be described as a way of constructing meaning and exploring eventual patterns. Whole analysis consists of three parts: choice of theme or problem area, formulation of research questions and finally analysis. That which is traditionally referred to as quantitative data – collected in the questionnaires – was analyzed and classified in numerical terms. Data connected to background variables was summarized with the help of the statistical program SPSS. The data collected in connection with the open questions was classified by the researcher and thereafter converted to percent. Pattern searching was the main tool for making sense of the observed data. In line with case study methodology, the researcher's sensitivity and knowledge should also be regarded as an analytical instrument throughout the process (Merriam, 2010:129).

Confirmability

Below, some of my own biases will be mentioned in an attempt to enhance what in case study methodology literature is often referred to as confirmability. This concept refers to the degree to which the results can be confirmed by others. My view of and knowledge about education and my conception of the world and human beings has mainly been formed in a Swedish context. Additionally, I have an Upper Secondary Teacher's perspective. Moreover, psychology and Swedish are the subjects I teach. My primary education mainly took place during the nineties, while my University education took place during the first decade of the

¹⁶ in contrast to analyses of parts (own translation).

twenty-first century. However, during my spare time as well as during my University studies I have constantly strived to widen my perspectives through visiting new contexts. Another aspect that, with my choice of topic in mind, may be relevant to stress here is that I was born and raised in a family with what in many ways, are considered to be middle class values. Additionally, in my surrounding environment, an implicit encouraging attitude towards education has been significant. Moreover, ethical issues and therefore also my moral beliefs have been continuously considered throughout the study. Of course, my biases are so much more complex than what can be communicated here. In summary, my perspective is, thus that of someone not living in the observed context.

4.4 Informants

The selection of schools was made on the basis of accessibility. The study was carried out at four different schools in a suburb of Accra, the capital city of Ghana. In addition to this a contact of mine went to an area in the Volta Region, where he in turn had contacts. This made the selection wider. All informants that agreed to participate completed their commitment. No distinguishing differences were noticed between the schools as far as buildings and atmosphere. In the figure below, some descriptions of the participating schools and informants are presented.

The schools

Table 1. Shows some characteristic about the schools from which the questionnaire informants are attending

	School A	School B	School C	School D
Existed since	2001	Primary School:1974 JHS:81	2000	1995
Amount of pupils	360	395	700	430
Fee ¹	65-85 GHC/term ¹⁷	No fees	55 GHC/term	40-120 GHC/term
Amount of teachers	24 teachers 15 pupils/teacher	28 teachers 14 pupils /teacher	27 teachers 26 pupils/ teacher	32 teachers 13 pupils/ teacher
Owner	Private	Government	Private	Private
Levels	“Day care”, Primary school and JHS	Primary school and JHS	Primary school and JHS	Primary school and JHS
Catchment area	Mastar and some pupils from: Gambia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Togo and Liberia	Mastar and suburbs nearby	Mastar and suburbs nearby. Some pupils from China	Mastar and suburbs nearby
Socio-economic backgrounds	The majority are middle class	Very poor: “Some of the children have no one that takes care of them. Some are orphans. Many parents are dead”	60 % are “average” and 40 % are “poor”	The majority are middle class

Interview informants

Four principals, one at each school participating in the survey, were interviewed. In addition to this, two teachers were interviewed. Furthermore, two group interviews with two pupils in each group were carried out. The teachers as well as the principals were interviewed individually. The interview informants were selected as a result of accessibility and therefore all interviewed pupils and teachers attended school A. The pupils were chosen by the principal, and the teachers offered to participate. In order to make the text more readable and authentic, the interviewed informants will from now on given made up names. The principals will be referred to as Mr Steward (school A), Mrs Jane (school B), Mr Marc (school C), and Mr Emmanuel (School D). The pupils will be called Grace a 12 year old girl in the 8th grade, Richard a 12 year old boy also in the 8th grade, Kwase a 13 year old boy attending 9th grade,

¹⁷ 1 GHC ≈ 7.29 Swedish kronor 20 May 2012 (Forex, 2012, oral information)

and, finally, Prince a 14 year old boy also in the 9th grade. All the interviewed pupils were interviewed in pairs. Grace was interviewed with Richard and Kwase was interviewed with Prince. The teachers will from now on be referred to as Mr Roger and Mrs Hannah.

Questionnaire informants

In total, 225 pupils responded to the questionnaire. Of them, 110 (49 %) were females and 115 males (51%). The age span was between 9 and 27 years old. Some background characteristics of the informants can be seen in Appendix B. The response rate was quite satisfying all of the pupils who were asked to participate agreed to do so. Within the questionnaire, the fraction of non-responses on all questions with a fixed response format was less than 2 percent, while on the open-ended items the fraction of non-responses varied somewhat more.

5. Results and analysis

This section contains results and analysis related to the following empirical research questions that were initially posed:

- 1) How do the pupils view their own future and the future of the local community?
- 2) What attitudes do pupils have towards education?

Each of these questions is analyzed in a separate section of this chapter. At the end of each section, the results are summarized and links to previous studies are shown. The overall research question about how the pupils' views of the future and their attitudes towards education can be understood with the help of psychological norm concepts that are discussed later on in the "Final analysis chapter".

5.1 Pupils' views of the future

As an introduction, there will be some brief remarks regarding the general concept of future. None of the pupils, none of the teachers, none of the principals indicated any kind of puzzled expressions when the future concept was brought up for discussion. Nevertheless, I asked questions about definitions and associations to explore whether the future seems to be a part of the pupils' world of experience. In what follows are some of the pupils' voices about the future concept:

Kwase defines the future as follows: "What will happen in the time to come" (2010:11:10, oral). His body language indicated that he was surprised by the question, or rather by the acceptance of his answer. His body seems to ask "Is it really this obvious answer you ask for?" This reaction indicates that the future is something self-evident and that the actual meaning of the concept had not caused any deeper thoughts or reflections. However, this can also be a sign of the habit to give the 'correct answer'. When asked about associations, Richard says that he thinks of his career and what he wants to do:

Climate change. I know that this will be a big problem in the near future. I want to be an activist in climate change /.../. I want to make sure that our government is hanged out. I cannot see when we are running out of time. It breaks my heart. As an educated person I have to make sure that they do something (Richard, 2010:11:10, oral).

By mentioning climate change, Richard seems to associate the future concept with a global phenomenon. Thereafter, he points to his own feelings connected to this by saying, "It breaks my heart" (2010-11-10, oral). Grace, the 12 year old girl in 8th grade, says, "Fortunes". Later on she also talks about her own career or, in other words, her own future:

I will become a lawyer. I will make sure that the ones that do the bad things are punished. And they who are offended, their problems will be solved (Grace, 2010:11:10, oral).

Below are results from two questionnaire questions: *How often do you think about the future?* and *How often do you talk with others about the future?* These are considered to be indicators for the degree to which the future seems to be a part of the pupils' world of experience. (Q16;17)

Table 2. How often do the pupils report that they think or talk about the future, showed in percent

	Think	Talk
Never or almost never	0	10
Once or twice a month	4	12
Once or twice a week	9	29
Every day or almost every day	87	49
Total	100	100

As shown, the majority of the pupils think about the future every day or almost every day. Also, results from interviews confirm the impression that the future concept seems to be a part of the pupils' world of experience. Kwase says, "I have to keep it (the future) in mind" (Kwase, 2010:11:10, oral). This can have the implicit meaning: I have to keep the future in mind so I am prepared or so I can work towards what I want. Prince says, "We talk to each other about the future maybe twice a week" (2010:11:10, oral). Mr. Steward, one of the private school principals, says that the pupils think more about their own future than about the future of Ghana (2010:11:02, oral). My field note observations also indicate that the future concept is regularly referred to in daily chats, in newspapers, in advertisement, in slogans and so on.

View of the future of the local community – In the open questionnaire question (Q22) there were in total 620 different features stressed as preferable in an imaginary ideal society. These features were classified into six subareas.

Table 2.1 Preferred features in an imaginary ideal Society, showed in percent

Features	Percent
Education ¹⁸	28
Political issues ¹⁹	22
Health issues ²⁰	16
Proper facilities ²¹	14
Responsible for the environment ²²	4
Other	11
Total	100

As shown in table 2.1 features that are linked to education and political issues were the most frequent answers. The following are responses to the interview question: *What are the features of the best society you can imagine?* Grace responds that:

In some ways it is not good right now. When I grow and set up my education. I will change it. /.../. The place will come clean. I will make sure that the thief must be punished" (Grace, 2010:11:10, oral).

Richard says that:

If I will be a president I will make sure that the corruption will be stopped./.../. I cannot delete that (the effects of the corruption) even in my home. For two days and two nights there wasn't light (Richard, 2010:11:10, oral).

The expressions "I will make sure" and "I will change it" indicate that the pupils feel that they can contribute to changes in desirable directions. Kwase declares that the best society he can

¹⁸ Education: Schools for all, textbooks

¹⁹ Political issues: democracy, equality between people

²⁰ Health issues: hospitals, healthy food

²¹ Proper facilities: good houses, good roads

²² Responsible for the environment: no rubbish, no climate change

imagine is full of a healthy atmosphere (2010:11:10, oral). Prince explains that this ideal society will be quiet and you can get everything you want. He gives books, a library and a science lab as examples. In the questionnaire, the informants were asked to mark what problem areas they thought would emerge within a ten year period (Q18,19). An optimistic view of the future was reported in connection with the following areas: rubbish, crime, corruption and economic resources. The majority of the pupils have for these areas responded either “decrease a little” or “decrease a lot”. On the other hand, when it comes to unemployment the majority of the pupils marked “increase a lot”, which indicate more pessimistic views of the future in connection with this area. When it comes to questions about infrastructure, a rather equal distribution between the different alternatives was observed. Unemployment was the only area that attracted more pessimistic views. A plausible interpretation is that unemployment rather than rubbish, crime, corruption and economic resources will influence the pupils’ own lives more directly.

View of own future - Some of the pupils responses so far have already indicated their plans and wishes for their own future. However, below, are responses to the questions regarding their own future. Table 2.2 presents the educational level the pupils have marked for themselves on the questionnaire question: *What is the highest level of school you expect to complete?* (Q8):

Table 2.2. Own future: expected level of education showed in percent

Level	Percent
Primary school	1
Junior High School	1
Senior High School	1
TTP ²³ and Polytechnic	7
University	90
Total	100

As shown, a majority of the pupils indicated that they expect to study at the university in the future (90%). This is a much larger proportion in comparison to the educational level required by the job they believe they will have when they are thirty years old. According to my classifications on the open question (Q9), only 51 percent will need a university education. Doctors and lawyers have for example been classified as requiring a long university education. Some 40 percent mentioned jobs that require some kind of education after SHS. Pilots and teachers are mentioned as examples. About 9 percent mentioned jobs that do not require any further education, e.g. sales manager and hairdresser. There are several probable reasons for the mismatch between the responses on these two questions. One may be my lack of knowledge about what level of education is needed for the different jobs. Another reason may be the pupils’ lack of knowledge in these issues – they are still quite young. Differing understandings of the concepts *expect* and *believe* may be another cause. However, the most likely reason is a combination of several factors. Also, all of the pupils in the interviews wished to complete a university education. Grace tells that she wants to become a lawyer and because of that she wants to study at the university. On the question about other plans or dreams, Grace says that she wants to “manufacture science books and text books” (Grace 2010:11:10, oral). Prince wants to finish university and thereafter become a pilot. Also, Prince points out another dream i.e. to write novels (Prince 2010:11:10, oral). Richard also wants to go to the university and he says that he wants to complete a PhD. He continues by saying, “Otherwise, no employment” (Richard 2010:11:10, oral). Here, Richard indirectly reveals his fear of unemployment in the case of not fulfilling a long education. Kwase says that his plan

²³ Teacher Training Program

is a degree in science because he wants to become a doctor. On the question about other plans or dreams he mentions a dream to become a painting artist. However, Kwase continues that the best would probably be to do this “on the side” (Kwase, 2010:11:10, oral). According to my interpretation there were mainly optimistic views expressed towards the future in the interviews.

The categories in table 2.3 below are based on an open question (Q11) in which pupils’ thoughts about their most important tools for reaching their future plans or dreams have been classified. There were a total of 362 suggestions which were later classified into five categories.

Table 2.3 Areas that the pupils see as tools - helping them to fulfill plans and dreams showed in percent

Tool	Percent
Education ²⁴	44
Behavior /attitude ²⁵	36
Material resources ²⁶	4
Religiosity ²⁷	6
Support ²⁸	10
Total	100

As can be seen, the tools classified as either education or behavior/attitude were the most frequent. Also, the responses to the open question *What, if anything, have you learnt in school that you think is important for the future?*(Q15) include information about what the pupils believe can be tools for the future. These answers were classified into the following categories: behaviour/attitude²⁹, self-esteem/self-confidence³⁰, communication skills³¹, language skills³², and subjects (language not included)³³. Even here, the answers connected to behaviour/attitude were the most frequent answer.

Summary and links to previous studies

Results that reflect the pupils’ views of the future will here be summarized and linked to results from previous studies. The results indicate that the future concept seems to be a part of the pupils’ world of experience, which is in line with previous studies carried out in for example Swedish and British contexts, (Bjerstedt, 1992; Hicks & Holden, 1995; Oscarsson, 2005). How do the pupils view the future of the local community and their own future? The data shows that the pupils’ views of the local future in terms of optimism and pessimism vary depending on the areas in focus. This is in line with previous studies that indicate differences in levels of optimism and pessimism depending on the areas the pupils focus on. These areas are in this study as well as in previous ones linked to what have happened or what is going on in the local or global surroundings (Bjerstedt, 1992; Hicks & Holden, 1995; Oscarsson, 2005). However, a majority of the views are optimistic or neutral. Jobs that require some kind of longer education are the most frequently marked answers regarding preferable own future. However, the same pupils that talked about long academic careers in the interview are also indicated other dreams i.e. more creative ones, like writing novels or becoming a painting

²⁴ Education: good grade, language studies

²⁵ Behavior/attitude: be unpretentious, learn the view of the teacher

²⁶ Material resources: books, computers,

²⁷ Religiosity: prayers, attend church

²⁸ Support: advice, help

²⁹ Behavior/attitude: focus, competition

³⁰ Self-esteem/self-confidence: self-reliance, confident in front of people

³¹ Communication skills: talk to people, teamwork, cooperate

³² Language skills: read and write, learn other language

³³ Scholl subjects: Social science, Information and communications technology [ICT]

artist. In the questionnaires, factors classified as belonging to education and behavior/attitude is the most common answer when it comes to tools for the future. Interesting to note is that there are some answers that I relate to authoritarian relations between the pupils and the grown-ups: obedient, take advice and learn the view of the teacher are quite frequent suggestions. Another pattern indicates that pupils tend to connect a long education with opportunities to change conditions that they feel are not good right now in the local society. Expressions that include “I will change it” and “I will make sure” indicate an “active optimistic future orientation” using Oscarsson’s (1993) terminology, which he says is worth promoting for the sake of education. In the answers can also a link to what Sefa Dei’s (2004) informants are indicating when pointing on education as a self-evident way to secure the future.

5.2 Pupil’s attitudes towards education

In this section, results on the attitude questions regarding education follow. The pupils were to grade their opinion, on a four-point scale to three attitude statements that followed the stem *What do you think about your school and schoolwork* (Q14).

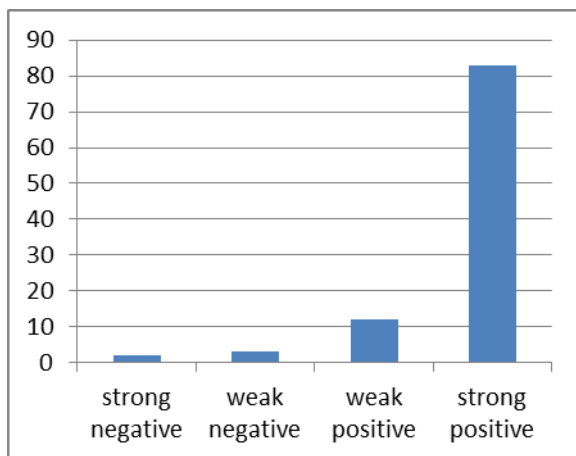


Figure 2. Shows attitudes towards education in percent.

For the attitude statements about satisfaction in school, some 92 percent of the pupils marked the alternative high. 80 percent of the pupils marked the alternative high on the statements about efforts in school work. Furthermore, 76 percent marked the alternative high when asked for estimated results in school work. If seeing these answers as indicators of attitudes towards education, a majority of the pupils have a strong positive attitude towards education. In addition, features related to education were the most common answer to the questionnaire question: *Imagine an ideal society. Please describe the main features in your ideal society* (Q 22). The pupils mentioned features linked to education, e.g. books, a library and a science lab in the interviews as well. In addition, in the interview answers were positive attitudes towards education implied as was also various reasons for these positive attitudes. In total, some 44 percent of all factors that were mentioned as tools for the future have something to do with education. Richard says, “I enjoy school because I go to school to set up my education, to learn and to prepare for what I want to be in the future” (2010:11:10, oral). Grace says, “I go to school to learn. Some things we must know. I am told that to learn my books will help me in the future” (2010:11:10, oral). This answer indicates something more complex than only a positive attitude towards books and indirect education. Kwase says “I go to school to brush up my knowledge and I also learn how to be an inspector of society /.../ I want to be respected in

the society” (Kwase, 2010:11:10, oral). Prince express that he likes school. On the follow-up question “Why” he answers, “It is nice. You learn what you want” (2010:11:10, oral). “Like” and “enjoy” indicate a weak positive attitude towards education. On the follow-up question as to why the pupils like or enjoy school the pupils mainly point on expected benefits, future advantages and to respect in the society. Situations that can be linked to attitudes towards education were even observed. According to the guide book about Ghana (Utley, 2010:95) pupils’ positive attitudes toward education are especially emphasized. An example of an observation made is as follows: At a yearly Christmas show at school A that for example included a fashion competition, pupils had to hold a speech about a subject if their choice. Jennie and Sarah, both 12 years old who attended 5th grade held a small speech with the following content and indirectly pointed of attitudes towards education:

What we have for you today is education. Education is about advantages in the mind. This school is known by all nearby and this is where we can achieve knowledge, taught by a teacher. Education is also the process in which society transmits knowledge, skills and other values from one generation to another. Through education people get skills they need in life /.../ Education is very important and no one should be deprived of it (Jennie & Sarah, observation of oral presentation, video recorded, 2010-12-21).

Another observation worth mentioning is when a class at one school was preparing for their BECE on which they required good grades to compete with when applying to SHS. They were staying many nights at the school in order not to lose any time. Mr Steward, one of the principals, says that he thinks that there are generally significant positive attitudes towards education in the context. He also discusses possible reasons for this:

In Ghana the parents have to struggle hard every day so their children can attend school. The fees have to be paid. This struggle the children cannot miss to notice. The children can daily see what will happen if they do not go to school - how it then will end up. They (the pupils) understand why they are in school. If a child does not come to school we (the staff) try to find out why the child did not comes /.../ The reason often is that there is no money for the fees. In these cases, the children are not happy (Mr Steward, 2010:11:02).

The statement that the children can see what can happen if they do not attend school was observed in field. In the mornings, children dressed in colourful school uniforms as well as children dressed in dirty clothes on their way to collect rubbish could be seen. Accordingly, consequences of not attending school are therefore difficult not to notice. In addition, situations with parents coming to school to explain why fees haven’t been paid was observed. Pupils were sad and begged to be allowed to come back. One of those who were not attending a school was Nana a 12 year old girl who was observed in a school library. Her experience can further contrast attitudes towards education. Nana was in the library with the aim to clean the library – not to read. However, after cleaning, she often stayed and looked in the books. Once, Nana was going to read aloud but instead she invented her own story while she pretended to read. Nana was an orphan who had never attended a school for any length of time. Over the years, Nana had tried to attend different schools, but each time conflicts with the other pupils had arisen. These conflicts can be understood with the help of the observations below, which can contribute to further understanding about what in the context often are referred to as success. In addition, following examples can also contrast the seemingly positive attitudes towards education. Several young peoples’ stories indicate that being “too old” in class, being a drop-out or not achieving good grades seem to result in less status, which in turn can lead to problems for the individual in the form of teasing. In *Junior Graphic* – a newspaper aimed to young Ghanaian people – boys and girls can write questions

and get advice from a grown-up. In general this grown-up shows an understanding regarding the problem when addressing these issues. Thereafter, advice is given: First, remember that your (the pupil's) aim and dream are to be educated and nothing should stop you. Second, if you listen to the mates and do not finish your education you will suffer the consequences later in life. Third, be serious, study hard, try to be best in the class and soon everybody will be proud of you – even yourself. As a result of these the teasing will stop (2010). Another newspaper called *Guide young blazers* was delivered to one of the schools with the aim to sell a subscription. Two of the texts within this newspaper can indirectly indicate attitudes towards education:

Education in Africa

Let us all educate ourselves, Africans.
 Success and prosperity are ours from, Tunisia to South Africa.
 Let us educate our children today to shape Africa tomorrow.
 Our children must go to school, especially girls.
 So parents and guardians, educate your children to shape the economy of Africa
 (Lovelyn Yeboah, published in *Guide young blazers*, 036/2010)

-Poem-

Schooling

School is a good place
 To learn and to study
 To get knowledge
 Information and entertainment
 In the morning, I get ready
 Hungry or not hungry
 Food or no food
 Am of to school
 To do hard work
 Teacher says am late
 Senior says I didn't sweep
 Master says punish him
 Oh, troubles everywhere
 When shall I be free?
 But when I go to JHS, SHS and University
 One day I will become a doctor, a lawyer, and a professor
 And all the work I see
 (Abotsi Franci, published in *Guide young blazers*, 036/2010)

In these poems, education is positioned as a main key for a good future. The good future is in the first poem indicated in terms of economy. In the second one higher education will reward the pupil in the future to endure the troubles in terms of punishment from older people and from teachers in school (2010). It is unclear whether pupils have written these two texts, or if they are written by journalists with the aim to guide the youth in this direction. However, in both cases the journalists seem to have chosen the texts with the aim to guide the young pupils in a direction of a positive attitude towards education.

Summary and links to previous studies

One pattern that occurs is that, depending on the kind of source focused on, partly two different tendencies can be seen in terms of direction and strength of the attitudes towards education. In the questionnaire attitude statements, a majority of pupils indicates strong positive attitudes towards education. The same occurs in the open questions – where education and related factors is the most frequent answer both as tools for the future and wished features in an imaginary ideal society. What can be interpreted as positive attitudes occur in the interviews as well – but are less strong. The positive attitudes toward education in the interviews explicitly occur in terms of expected benefits and future advantages. Another aspect also occur the fact that education can lead to a form of status in society. These themes are similar to the ones that occur in Sefa Dei's (2004) results. However, when adding data from observations, attitudes are not that apparently positive. The observations reveal possible

explanations to the unequivocally positive attitudes that occur in the questionnaires as well as in the interviews. In the newspaper *Junior Graphic*, there is a young pupil who is told to endure school despite of troubles - because in the future the pupil will reach social success. This theme can also be found in Sefa Dei (2004). As mentioned in the chapter on previous studies data linking attitudes to the educational system is missing. However, one question about attitudes towards work can be found. And here is it hard work that results in success³⁴. Parallels to Mr Roger’s statement that “you have to struggle to get where you are” can be seen here (2010-12-13). Struggle cannot be interpreted as having unequivocally positive connotations. However, these observations indicate that education is in some way considered to be inherently good. In summary, different kinds – depending on the source focused on – of attitudes towards education occurs. One explanation to this pattern could be that the sources that are indicating strong positive attitudes towards education are sources in which the pupils know that they are attending a study.

5.3 Some findings that can further contrast the pupils’ views and attitudes

In this section pupils’ views and attitudes will be contrasted with the help of context observations and interviews with teachers. First, pupils’ views of the future and attitudes towards education will be contextualized through some data about what can be interpreted as the ‘correct way’ or, in other words, what can indicate predominating norms. On a classroom wall, a hand-painted cartoon about “The successful man” was found. The picture said: “To be successful, Listen to me! Obey your teachers. Learn hard. Try to get aggregate ‘1’ in all the subjects. Then you will be successful like me. Amen!”³⁵

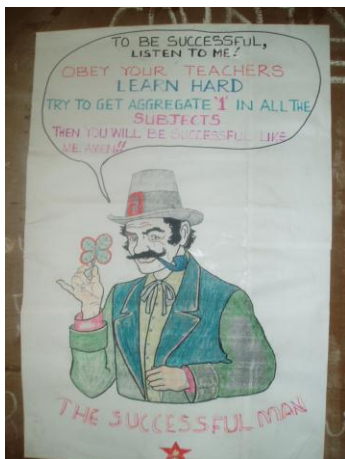


Figure 2.1 Shows “The successful man” – found on a classroom wall (own photo).

Mr Marc, one of the principals, discusses success in connection to strategies preparing the pupils for the future as follows: “Discipline is the full mark to success /.../ punctuality, hard work and academic excellence and on top of it all is good management” (2010-12-13, oral). According to the guide book author Utley, parents in Ghana often raise their children with a desire to develop persons who are serious when it comes to education, respectful to adults and who are hard working (2010:94-95). Accordingly, there seems to be predominating norms that are closely linked to behaviour. During one interview with the teacher Mrs Hannah, she explicitly mentioned good behaviour several times. On the follow-up question about what she means with good behaviour, she answers, “This behaviour is one thing I always worry about” (2010-12-15, oral). She concretizes through giving an example: “The pupils can be a bit rude these days. They frown”. Mrs Hannah also points out the importance of the pupils seeing the

³⁴ Variable 120

teachers as teachers. She says, “They (the pupils) have to respect us (the teachers)” (Mrs Hannah, 2010-12-15, oral). Finally, she talks about the importance of obeying by giving an example of “silent time”:

When we (the teachers) say it, it should be silent /.../ around the school people are living. There are houses/.../. We have to observe the rules. People are talking good about the school /.../ So that discipline we are talking about (Mrs Hannah, 2010-12-15, oral).

Thereafter, Mrs Hannah describes the importance of discipline through telling about an incident in school the same day:

Today a parent came here and just witnessed. He wanted his child here /.../ He has been at so many schools, about six schools and he finally came here. The principal asked him the reason why. He said when he came the children were all in their classrooms. They were much disciplined and they were promoting themselves. And he came to another school /.../ And the pupils were running /.../ it is also like a credit to this school (Mrs Hannah, 2010-12-15, oral).

Observations as well confirmed that discipline in school contexts seems to be closely linked to predominating norms. Utley, the guide book author, points out that pupils, on the one hand often are hard working as well as what he calls well behaved. On the other hand, he says that there is one big problem, i.e. that the pupils to a less extent are taught to think on their own. He continues that there is often an immense focus on remembering by heart (2010:94-95). When it comes to the future, the interviewed teachers’ and principals’ answers on the questions about if and in what way they try to motivate the pupils for the future can indicate some kind of predominating norms. All the answers indicate that the teachers and principals have strategies to motivate the pupils for the future. While the strategies varied some common themes appeared: being role models, encouraging independence, advising, conversation, and telling stories about own examples. In addition, several of the informants mentioned God as important in one or another way. Even another theme was made visible through observations – punishment. Below are some teacher voices, Mrs Hannah talks about the importance of being good role models as teachers.

The teachers have to act our needs.. /.../ and show them (the pupils) how they should live. They imitate us a lot. We should set the rules for them to carry out. We have to be on the right practical. They spend more time with us than with their parents. We should set the good examples (Mrs Hannah, 2010-12-15, oral).

The expressions “how” and “should” indicate some kind of norm. In Hannah’s reasoning a ‘correct way’ of living will be transferred from the teacher to the pupil by the pupils seeing how they should behave. When Mr Roger uses the words “guide” and “right directions” some kind of norms can also be seen.

It all depends on the teachers. We must give something extra. What concerns are the teachers. We have to be their guide and give them right directions /.../ I use examples and tell stories about myself. /.../ You are their present (Mr Roger, 2010-12-13).

Mr Roger says that he really likes children a lot. “I understand the children. I can teach every class. I translate myself to be like them. I also play with them. But you cannot be their best friend” (Mr Roger, 2010:12:13). Mrs Hannah says that “We (the teachers) have to talk to them (the pupils) about how they should behave. When they go out they should be

exceptional around other schools” (Mrs Hannah, 2010-12-15, oral). Even here she uses the expression “should”, thereby indicating some kind of ‘correct behaviour’ that will result in social respect. Several answers can be connected to the encourage theme. Informants from different schools mention money as a way to motivate the pupils for the future. Mr Steward, one of the principal says, “There are so many ways to motivate them. We use the scholarships. We give these to each kid that is best in the class” (Mr Steward, 2010-11-02). Mr Roger mentions that he sometimes gives money to the pupil who gets the best marks on exams as a way to encourage those who have worked hard (Mr Roger, 2010-12-13). In these examples, it is being best in class as well as working hard that seem to be the most desirable. Furthermore, Mr Roger also stresses independence as something desirable:

I have been through a lot. /.../ I stayed with my own parents. I don't like to depend on my parents. I like to depend on my God and to do my best. It depends on yourself. Make life on your own. When you make life on your own you can celebrate. Jesus did it on his own. You have to *struggle* to get where you are. Sometime you have to tell them [the pupils] about social and parents' problem. But they cannot take it in to academy. This is the time when you can make it on your own. Forget about mummy (Mr Roger, 2010-12-13, oral).

Another theme that occurs is advising and here as well a type of norm can be seen. Mr Roger says that he really likes to advise the pupils and gives the following example: “I see their results. And understand that this pupil cannot be a president” (2010-12-13, oral). But he also points out “This is just exam results. They [the pupils] are good inside /.../. If you got a bad result, it is not about you as a person. Next time you can do it” (2010-12-13, oral). Mr Roger continues “Destiny. What God tells you I as a teacher try to lead them” (2010-12-13, oral). Here it is the teacher or God who have the ‘correct answer’ for the future. Furthermore, Mr Roger indicates that they (the teachers) know the kinds of education or professions that are most suitable for the pupils:

They must have someone that encourages and praises them to plan their future. You cannot plan your future on your own (Mr Roger, 2010-12-13, oral).

In Roger’s reasoning above, a contradiction can be found. He stresses the importance of independence – make your life on your own – but on the other hand the pupils cannot plan their future on their own, i.e. they must get advice from a teacher that for example in turn can rely on God’s will. Physical punishments were seen at several of the schools as a way to set examples. The persons that specified the aim of this did it with a kind of excusing expression in the voice as well as body language, and indicated that this was not a totally accepted way.

Summary and links to previous studies

The data indicates that there are predominating norms that for example include what views of the future as well as what kinds of attitudes towards education are acceptable and advantageous. In this context norms are often referred to as success. Observations as well as answers in the interviews indicate that it is good behavior as well as hard work that lead to success. This is in line with Sefa Dei’s result (2004), which indicates that success and future security in a Ghanaian context seem to be closely linked to morals, character and a willingness to practice what has been taught. Even in WWS, hard work will result in success. Furthermore, the data indicates that the teachers and principals – maybe also grown-ups in general – see themselves as important factors for motivating and guiding the pupils toward the ‘correct way’. This too endorses Sefa Dei’s findings (2004). A similar kind of contradiction to the one seen in Mr Roger’s reasoning about independence, on the one hand, and that the pupils need advice from a grown-up or from God, on the other hand, appears in data from WWS. Independence regarding decisions making goal for your life are important, but it is

also important to make the family proud of you. Also, in Sefa Dei's results, God is frequently ascribed as possessing a considerable role when it comes to the future (2004).

5.4 Final analysis

In this section, an attempt to answer the following overall research question below will be made:

- How can the pupils' views of the future and their attitudes towards education be understood with the help of psychological concepts about norms?

The results indicate that within the investigated contexts, strong norms exist regarding how the pupils should think about the future as well as about education. Furthermore, the findings of this study endorse some specific findings from previous studies carried out in a Ghanaian context. Above all, the results obtained are in line with Sefa Dei's (1994) findings where an assumption of a direct and immediate linkage between education, success and future security can be seen. Yet even WVS (2012) and McKissack 1971 (referred in Bond & Smith, 1996) point to relatively strong "traditional" values that includes a high level of conformity and a tendencies regarding authoritarian obedience in Ghana. The "within context" predominating norms can be stated as follows:

- 1) The pupils *should* have a positive attitude towards education.
- 2) The pupils *should* think that education is the key to the future.
- 3) The pupils *should* take studies seriously and preferably be "best in class" – which in turn will result in future success.

There are four main patterns in the collected data that confirm this interpretation. First, there is concordance regarding occurring themes and attitudes among different kinds of sources. In interviews as well as questionnaires, the results show strong positive attitudes towards education as well as some weaker positive views of the future. However, when comparing this with another sources – observations in a broad sense these positive attitudes and thoughts become more complex. Some of the observations showed that school is something that must be endured as a way to achieve future success and status. A pattern showing that different sources indicate different results occurs. In sources where the pupils know that their views and attitudes are investigated, e.g. interviews and questionnaires more positive attitudes as well as optimistic views occur. This pattern may be explained by what is called social desirability biases or controlled attitudes, i.e. the pupils give answers in line with what they think I as a researcher want to hear. Second, some kind of sanction – in terms of less status – seems to be distributed from the group if they do not follow, think or behave according to these norms. Here the advice column in *Junior Graphic* (2012) and the orphan Nana act as examples. Even the fact that status and respect in the society is closely connected to the investigated themes is indicated in different sources. For example, in *Guide young blazers* (2010) it seems that status and success can be an expected and self-explaining result of education. A third pattern that strengthens the interpretation that there are strong norms regarding the investigated themes is that nobody during my stay in Ghana explicit talked about this in any other way than what was taken for granted. As the fields of norms describe it, norms are invisible, unspoken as well as taken for granted (Hwang et al., 2005:294-296; Passer & Smith, 2004: 601-612). Finally, the authoritarian relations between young people and grown-ups that according to the results seem to predominate in this context can even strengthen the interpretation that there are strong norms regarding these themes. The grown-

ups – in this study teachers and principals – are all pointing in the same direction. There is a ‘correct way’ regarding how the pupils should think about education and the future. Here, one pupil’s answer can serve as an example: ”I am told that to learn my books will help me in the future”. As mentioned, this example will also act as an illustrating sub-heading in the title of this essay.

A plausible reason for these strong norms would be what social psychology studies point to as characteristic for norm development. Strength, distance and amount have all been indicated as important factors for social influence and in turn essential for developing norms (Hwang et al., 2005:294-296). Strength in the Ghanaian context may be explained by the predominating authoritarian relations between children and grown-ups. In a context where grown-ups are considered to be the authorities they must be interpreted as strong influencers, not least with Milgram’s (1974) results in mind. The distance between the influencer and the influenced must consider being small. The pupils are in daily social interaction receiving the same message. Finally, the number of influencers representing the same message must be regarded as massive. Everywhere the pupils are they meet the same message in accordance with the predominating norms – in daily chats with grown-ups, in newspapers, on the classrooms walls etc. Using Kelley’s terminology (1952) the pupils meet the same messages from their reference group and their membership group, which, according to her, results in even stronger norms. In summary, with the above mentioned factors about social influence in mind, it is not difficult to understand why there are such strong norms regarding these themes in the investigated context.

One factor that – at a first glance – talks against that the expressed attitudes and views are about predominating norms is the fact that Ghana is what is often referred to as a developing country. Maybe these attitudes and views are 'true facts'. Yet, these interpretations do not contradict each other. Maybe the pupils have heard that education will lead to future success so many times that they do not reflect over any other alternatives. That the results are about norms does not necessary mean that they are not “true” or that many of the individuals not have these attitudes and views. As mentioned norms can guide us through the social interaction, but they can on the contrary limit the group members’ behaviors and thoughts.

6. Discussion and conclusions

What follows are some conclusions, implications and methodological aspects.

6.1 Value and quality of the findings

First, I will address some notions about credibility which parallels internal validity. The interaction between the researcher and the context is often suggested to be the most significant when it comes to improving credibility. In this study, the following advice regarding strategies to improve credibility have been conducted: multiple methods for collecting data, a relatively long time in field, and every step in the process has been taken in dialogue with people in the field. The transferability, which parallels external validity, refers to eventual possibilities, and mainly the convenience, to transfer the results to other contexts. In this study, the explicit question is: What can a broader knowledge and understanding of one specific case say about other cases? And even more specifically, what can a study about a specific context in Ghana tell people in other contexts? This will be discussed in this section through a more overall approach. It will also be further discussed in the chapter Contribution to teachers' professional practice will these further be discussed in connection to a Swedish context where this essay will be published. My position on this issue – inspired from Merriam's (2010:183ff.) compilation of different theorists' entered opinions regarding external validity when it comes to case studies – is illustrated through the following formulation:

Firstly, increased and in turn more nuanced understanding of specific contexts may improve possibilities to see and explore complexity and nuances even in other contexts - familiar as well as unfamiliar. Secondly, how this understanding more specifically will turn out in a teacher practice do I want to leave to the reader of this essay.

The idea of dependability, which parallels reliability, can be described as an assessment of the quality of the whole process of the study. An auditing approach described in the method chapter explicitly describes all phases of the research process that have been conducted to improve the so-called dependability. Yet, a weakness of the study can also be seen: the study generated extremely large data sets and consequently included several considerations that are impossible to describe in detail because due to readability. Confirmability, which parallels objectivity refers to how the researcher's biases may influence the findings. A human fact of the impossibility to totally erase normative and cognitive elements from thinking must be considered to be acceptable irrespective of approach. However, throughout the study all kinds of considerations were taken with every effort made to minimize this human limitation effect and to in this way improve the so-called confirmability. Biases have furthermore been explicitly expressed in the method chapter. Additionally, with my educational background in the field of psychology in mind, my awareness of and knowledge about cognitive limitations connected to the study must be considered to be relatively high. In conclusion, the strength of the study is the holistic approach, which in turn includes both the multi-methodological design as well as a psychological interpretation of a field that is often associated with help of pedagogical or sociological terminologies – or, in other words, interdisciplinary approach described in the introduction. Another strength of the study is the attempts made to explicitly express biases and decisions taken through every step in the process. However, in the latter the weakness of the study can be found. This weakness is connected to the above discussed

dependability, which includes the impossibility to be exhaustive as a result of space limitations as well as readability.

6.2 Ethical issues

In this chapter there will be a main focus on ethical considerations, which I consider to be especially relevant and urgent to elaborate on. This chapter is mainly inspired by Merriam's (2010:188ff.) reasoning on ethical issues in connection to case studies. The aspect that during the study required most attention is issues connected to relations between the researcher and the informants. This was mainly an issue of concern in relation to the younger children. I have chosen to explicitly present considerations and main thoughts connected to this issue despite the risk to over-interpreting my own significance as an "important person" in some of the pupils' life. However, it is not possible to totally deny the fact that I as a guest, as well as a researcher, was in a position and role that some of the pupils had never met before. Merriam (2010) discusses this issue in terms of the unavoidable emotional devotion, which she describes as unavoidable as result of the case study design. The considerations about this issue have mainly been about the fact that an intense relation has taken place and, thereafter, taken an abrupt ending when returning to Sweden. This abrupt ending in terms of geographical distance resulted in the impossibility to "follow up" and continue these relations. However, all possible considerations to minimize harm through every step in the process have been taken. A consciousness approach about this is a first and important step. Striving for this has even resulted in deep deliberations about methodological instruments in relation to this aspect. Another issue connected to ethics has been the responsibility that is an inevitable consequence of all studies but, according to Merriam (2010), is especially significant when conducting case studies. The bias of views, values and so on is an unavoidable consequence of this kind of approach. To minimize this risk, I have strived throughout the essay to explicitly express biases and to be as objective, honest and rigorous that it with the human conditions is possible to be. The responsibility aspect further includes the consequences for the informants which are impossible to predict upon the publishing of this essay. Here I cannot do more than point out my deliberations about eventual consequences of this kind of study and my hope that the consequences will be mainly positive and not cause any harm for the informants.

6.3 Contributions to teachers' professional practice

The findings of the study can, with this example from Ghana, contribute with an increased understanding of the complexity that surrounds pupils' attitudes and views of the future. The contribution of the results to teachers' professional practice in a Swedish context as well as others is closely linked to the quote about transferability in chapter 6.1: It must be up to each reader of this essay to take responsibility for the way the findings of the study can contribute to their own professional teacher practice. However, some reflections about the work process can be mentioned. The process with this study has contributed to a more conscious way of dealing with the investigated themes in my own daily practice. Another concrete reflection I have made has been about a possible hypothesis if a similar study were carried out in a Swedish context. Which norms regarding education and the future are dominating in Sweden? One other reflection I has made has been about one of the interviewed principal's talks about what he refers to as the importance of not taking education for granted. Is there a tendency to take education for granted in Sweden? If so, what consequences can this lead to in the future? My hope is that this study can contribute to stimulating a discussion about the important issues.

6.4 Final reflections

The findings indicate that norms regarding the future as well as education are closely linked and very complex. The human tendency to think in dichotomies i.e. to place everything as end poles of a continuum or as each other's opposites, in turn often leads to incorrect conclusions being stressed. During the case study process this human tendency and even the risks with this kind of thinking have been obvious. A false dichotomy in this study can for example be to presuppose that there are just two alternatives regarding for example placing different views and attitudes in relation to each other. The above mentioned end poles are, however, often representing the most rigid and extreme ideas, opinions and outlooks. In fact the end poles represent views or attitudes that each individual "in reality" cannot identify her- or himself with. Examples of dichotomies in the study are for example, optimism versus pessimism. Finally, the "reality" must be understood as much more complex than this study ever can show.

This study should be seen as an attempt to reflect the pupils' perspective as a valuable resource of information when working with improving education in Ghana. There are a number of approaches that would be of special interest for future research, not at least to further develop the methodology with the aim of trying to find the pupils' views and attitudes not influenced by predominating norms. One suggestion is to follow pupils over a longer time period and making observations in all kind of situations. It would also be valuable to carry out similar studies in which pupils from different backgrounds and areas can make their voices heard.

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Appendix A: Abbreviating

APA	American Psychological Association
BECE	Basic Education Certificate Exams
IEA	The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
JHS	Junior High School (also JSS)
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MFS	Minor Field Study
PIRLS	The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
SHS	Senior High School (also SSS)
Sida	Styrelsen för internationellt utvecklingssamarbete
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
TTP	Teacher Training Program
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WASCE	West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examinations
WVS	World Values Survey

Appendix B: Questionnaire informants

Informants

Table 3. Birth year of the informants showed in percent

Age	Birth year	Percent
12	1999	6
13	1998	5
14	1997	9
15	1996	20
16	1995	24
17	1994	14
18	1993	7
19	1992	6
Other		9
Total		100

Table 3.1 Grade attended at the moment for the survey showed in percent

Grade	Percent
6 th	5
JHS 1	4
JHS 2	7
JHS 3	83
Other	1
Total	100

Table 3.2. Language mainly speaking at home showed in percent

Language	Percent
Ga	22
Twi	27
Ewe	18
English	21
Fante	6
Other	6
Sum	100

Informants' parents

Table 3.3. Parents' educational background -or guardians'- showed in percent.

Educational background	Mother	Father
No school	2	2
Primary	4	0
JHS	23	16
SHS	37	24
TTP	9	10
Polytechnic	7	14
University	18	34
Total	100	100

Table 3.4 Parents' occupation - or guardians'- showed in percent

Occupation	Mother	Father
Working full time for pay	51	69
Working part time for pay	16	15
Not working but looking for job	20	5
Other	13	11
Total	100	100



Appendix C: Showing some examples on questionnaire questions. The layout is partly changed.

Your view of the future

These questions are about *reading, school* and *future*. You don't need to write your name. I will be very happy to hear your answers!

- *Read* each question carefully, and choose the answer you think is best for you.
- *Mark the box* next to your answer and in some questions you have to write comments on the lines.
- *Ask for help* if you do not understand something or are not sure how to answer.

About you

1. What grade are you in?

6 th grade	<input type="radio"/>
Junior high school 1	<input type="radio"/>
Junior high school 2	<input type="radio"/>
Junior high school 3	<input type="radio"/>

2. Are you a girl or a boy?

Girl

Boy

3. When were you born? (Fill in what year)

19 _____

20 _____

4. What language is your first language (mother tongue)?

5. What language do you speak at home most of the time?

Your plans for the future

8. What is the highest level of school you expect to complete?

Primary school	<input type="radio"/>
Junior high school	<input type="radio"/>
Senior high school	<input type="radio"/>
Teacher training college	<input type="radio"/>
Polytechnic	<input type="radio"/>
University	<input type="radio"/>

9. What kind of job do you believe you have when you are about 30 years old?

Write the job title: _____

10. Is this the job of your dreams?

- Yes
- No

Your view of school and schoolwork

14. What do you think about your school and schoolwork? Tell how much you agree with these statements:

	Disagree a lot	Disagree a little	Agree a little	Agree a lot
I like being in school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I put a lot of effort in school work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I do well in school work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

15. What, if anything, have you learnt in school that you think is important for the future?

Your view of the future

16. How often do you think about the future?

Never or almost never	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Every day or almost every day
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

17. How often do you talk with others about the future?

Never or almost never	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Every day or almost every day
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

18. In your local area, where you live, how much of a problem do you think the following are?

	A very big problem	A big problem	A medium problem	A minor problem	Not a problem
Unemployment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Corruption	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Crime	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Economic resources/poverty	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of justice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of democracy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Material standard	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Food supply	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Availability and quality on education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Insufficient reading and writing skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Illiteracy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Availability and quality of medical care	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Homeless people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rubbish	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Infrastructure, like bumpy roads	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Water resources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Electricity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other :	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
_____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
_____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

19. In your local area, what do you think will happen within the next 10 years?

	Increase a lot	Increase a little	No change	Decrease a little	Decrease a lot
Unemployment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Corruption	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Crime	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Economic resources/poverty	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Justice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Democracy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Material standard	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Food supply	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Availability and quality on education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reading and writing skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Illiteracy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Availability and quality of medical care	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Homeless people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rubbish	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Infrastructure, like bumpy roads	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Water resources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Electricity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other :	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
_____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
_____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

22. Imagine an ideal society. Please describe the main features in your ideal society.

23. In your opinion, what are the main factors that prevent the ideal society to come true?

About your family

40. What is the highest level of school your parents or guardian have completed?

Mother (or guardian):

No school	<input type="radio"/>
Primary school	<input type="radio"/>
Junior high school	<input type="radio"/>
Senior high school	<input type="radio"/>
Teacher training college	<input type="radio"/>
Polytechnic	<input type="radio"/>
University	<input type="radio"/>

41. What is your mother /guardian currently doing?

Working full time (for pay)	<input type="radio"/>
Working part time (for pay)	<input type="radio"/>
Not working, but looking for a job	<input type="radio"/>
Other (e.g home duties, retired)	<input type="radio"/>

43. What is your mother's main job (e.g school teacher, nurse, sales manager)

If she is not working now, please tell us her last main job

Please write in the job title: _____

44. What does your mother do in her main job? (e.g Teaches high school students, cares for patients)

If she is not working now, please tell us her last main job

Please use a sentence to describe the kind of work she does or did in that job

Thank you for your participation!

Sabina Franzén

