CAREER DEVELOPMENT TRAJECTORIES AMONG UNIVERSITY OF GHANA STUDENTS

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JUNE, 2015
DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that except for other people’s work cited and duly acknowledged, this thesis is the result of my own original research, and that this thesis, either in whole or in part, has not been presented elsewhere for another degree.

I bear sole responsibility for any shortcomings.

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ABSTRACT

This study delved into the career trajectories of final year Sociology students of the University of Ghana, with 120 students (main respondents) responding to self-administered questionnaires, and 7 secondary respondents interviewed for the study. The study produces mixed findings. It was evident that whilst all study respondents have certain career choice aspirations and goals, many do not undertake or embark on any career development activities throughout their lives and years of education to prepare for the world of work. It was evident that 47% of the study respondents noted the possibility of changing their current career choice aspirations and goals; and as much as 60.7% of the study respondents indicate that they may engage in careers they do not aspire to or prepare for when the opportunity presents itself. The reasons cited for this response are the possibility of unavailability of jobs in their preferred career choice areas, the lucrativeness of the opportunity, inability to further train for their preferred careers, etc. This notion became the point of rally, as it became evident from respondents interviewed as well as from responses of the main study respondents that career interest and passions do not drive most individuals toward any specific career fields. Thus, there is evidence of much instability and flip-flopping in the career choice of respondents. Meanwhile, 25% of the study respondents indicate that their current career choice aspirations are influenced by passion. It was apparent also that opportunities for career development activities at all educational levels in the country is lacking, with all study respondents advocating for efforts to institute measures and mechanisms that can promote and regulate the practice of career development and training activities and possibly require students to mandatorily undergo such activities. The need for collaboration between industry, educators and governments in the design and implementation of national career development policies became apparent and was recommended by the study.
DEDICATION

To all those dwelling in that life crises and vague atmosphere of career uncertainty and vacuum, needing that crucial support and counsel to turn around their lives, especially our dear students. May you find that path as you come forth and surge on in utter determination and faith. And let it not end there, provide the change and set the footprints that are needed to undo the stranglehold of orthodoxy and dogmatism once you break through. For nothing more is more needed and powerful than a new breeze of chance and change.

And, remember we are together tied to this, but the courage of a few can set loose the bunch! And to the many special people that inspire my every step and endeavor; my Wife – Eunice Adrakpakpa, my son Keli Bishop Avudzi and my uncountable Families and Relatives, a debt is paid.

God’s Own!
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Glory is to the Lord God Almighty!
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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Background & Introduction

As Adam Smith postulated, the wealth of any nation is not in its gold and mineral resources, but in the labor it commands. And sociology obviously is very curious about how societies holistically continue to function, evolve, sustain and achieve progress – and, for all things to transition in any society, work and labor mostly is the first thing to breathe forth any beginning. For nothing is achieved without work. And the work that people engage in may become their lifelong career. But one requires a dream, orientation, preparation, training and the acceptance of a particular kind of work or career to start with. More so, everyman aspires to at least a good career that guarantees sustained and well rewarding employment or work, lend them good reputation and peace of mind in their lifetime. Thus, a sociological interest lies in the understanding of social institutional processes and adaptations, and how individuals come to, aspire, prepare and choose certain careers and lines of work, all of which societies depend on to stride their balance of development - especially in the present state of a quickly evolving global world.

And often than not, most people’s preparation towards the world of work and future careers begin when in school. And people’s career choices often begin with one’s career aspirations, followed by preparations (career development efforts and activities) undertaken to achieve these ends. As indicated by Care (1982:285) “the central features of a career, involves work which one anticipates doing and staying with over a significant period of time, which one expects to be rather positively committed to rather than be resentful of.” Care (1982) further observed that one's career may be in business, law, teaching, entertainment, professional philanthropy, or something else, it typically involves work and way of life such that the former has implications for the makeup of the latter. A simple Ghanaian adage says
“Work is Man”. Others go on to insist that one is defined by the kind of work they do (NCDA 2008, Care 1982, Kroll et al 1970). By Care’s (1982) insistence, a person may be embodied in her work so that they become a part of his personal identity. People’s prestige, status, privileges, and level of wellbeing in most societies is often associated with the work they do. Care asserts that “one's thoughts, hopes, aspirations, energy, and sense of worth may be wrapped up in and dominated by the materials and apparatus of one's career” (Care 1982: 285). The individual, young or old, thus aspires to career options towards which they undertake preparations set to aid them achieve their life expectations, fulfillment and desires through work.

In any bid to attain certain career prospects, most people undoubtedly embark on higher education in order to acquire knowledge and certain skills. Skills development, hence career development, for economic and social transformation constitute major bedrocks and ingredients of educational foundations in any society. Complementarily, education and skills development are the pathways for human capital and career development, productivity, and the general employability of the population of any nation. Ghana’s first President, Kwame Nkrumah envisioned this according to Akyeampong (2008: 1-2), and outlined that education as a tool for producing a scientifically literate people to harness Ghana’s economic potentials and to tackle the environmental causes of low productivity. In Ghana today however, it is debated that the quality of education, skills training and employability are pathetically alarming, with supply-demand gaps evidenced in joblessness (Boateng and Ofori, 2002). This is further evident in the formation of Unemployed Graduates Association in Ghana somewhere in 2011 by a teeming youth of unemployed graduates. For the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC 2010) weak linkage between tertiary education and industry is a major cause of emerging unemployment in the country. Baah-Boateng (2012
& 2013) noted higher unemployment among the educated and affirmed that the skills mismatch in what higher educational institutions churn out and what industry requires cannot escape blame.

The above position was emphasized by the CEO of the Association of Ghana Industries in a national conference on ‘bridging the gap between education/training/industry and the world of work’ held in Accra on May 19-20 2014 at the Accra International Conference Centre. He cited instances where experts for technical positions such as machinist and mechanical engineers are hired from outside the country due to lack of such skills in the country. President John Mahama during this conference indicated that practical internship programs should be undertaken by students of higher education, and that incentives should be provided for private companies to engage students in these programs. He observed further that mutually sustainable industry-education-government collaborations should be promoted among higher education and industries in the country. He further laid emphasis on the need for increased attention on vocational and technical education, regular labor market survey for labor skills and needs identification, increased contributions to education curricula by industry players, etc. He called for increased partnership between industry and education with major intervention initiatives in the areas of scholarships and grants in special areas of interest to be funded by industry players. Professor Ernest Aryeetey, the Vice Chancellor of the University of Ghana also at this conference, however asserted that academia and industry relationships should be bounded by a larger framework that directs the country to where it is going. Professor Stephen Adei, a former Rector of the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA) however intimated the need for reorientation in the Ghanaian educational system especially in the public schools – from basic levels all the way to higher education. He noted that current Ghanaian cultural values and educational policy
and curriculum do not project vocational and technical education as imperative. He further lamented that the caliber of graduates from the present educational system are not up to the best standards to help the nation achieve its economic potentials. The conference established clearly that the country over the years has not managed to create the needed link between education, training and industry, and that national policy to produce graduates at all levels with the right mix of skills to meet the demands of industry and the general world of work are inadequate and ineffective.

And the issues in the previous paragraphs noted recently, Wiafe (2002) had earlier noted that, former President Jerry John Rawlings stated on two different occasions – one on the Golden Jubilee Celebration of the University of Ghana, and the other on the 29th Congregation of the University of Cape Coast in 1999 – that a perceived gap exist between the skills needed by industry and the skills acquired by graduates. He expressed the need for students of higher education to be adequately trained and equipped to meet the needs of work and the world of work. Unfortunately, the same issues are visited in present times and propositions deliberated upon. Among other things, skills and career development challenges such as mismatch in skills training of students of higher education, inadequate practical training during academic study, social discrimination toward certain careers, lack of career counseling, lack of public policy on support systems for graduates on career development, contraction and low private sector investment, complications of emerging trends in a globalized economy, compounded by Ghana’s rising population are cited as contributing factors to low economic development, low employment generation and a failed cycle of career development (Republic of Ghana, 2005). On developing individual preparedness towards the world of work, commitment and responsibility, team spirit and leadership skills, problems solving and initiatives, interpersonal and communication skills, diligence and
interest in a specific career or job, competence and capability, among others are considered to be indispensable (Wiafe, 2002). To achieve these feet, it is noted that manpower assessment and curricular alignment at all educational levels to meet the demands of industry as well as encourage entrepreneurship is crucial. Reference is often made to global lessons from countries such as Taiwan, Korea, Malaysia, and China that have achieved remarkable success through rapid industrialization and deploying curricula at higher institutions of learning to address its challenges. More emphasis on practical training and internships, identification of needed skills, regular review of course structures to meet country and globally emerging industrial needs, increased quality of education and capacity, academic admissions based on aspirations and interests of students, academic-industry-government collaborations, among others should be given definitive attention (Ghana Employers Association, 2006). Thus the Ministry of Education’s (2010) Education Strategic Plan 2010-2020 objective of strengthening links between education and industry to promote skills training at all levels of education and employability should receive adequate attention and strategic implementation.

However, it is argued often that higher education, for all its intended consequences have its relevance diminished when many young people who graduate from these institutions are not able to create jobs or find any. Asafu-Adjaye (2012) reinforced this position by noting that higher unemployment levels among the educated youth in Africa in recent times have reinforced the skepticism about the private returns on education in terms of employability. He argued further that the economic crisis and cuts in public expenditure in most African states as a result of the structural adjustment programs implemented in the late 1980s constrained the labor market opportunities for many educated youth, thus a skepticism that has endured for so long (ibid.). In Ghana however, he contended that adequate evidence suggest that education is still widely held as critical for both individual and national progress. Patrinos et
al (2006) indicated that wage gains associated with each year of higher education are between 10 and 15 per cent in Ghana, Ivory Coast, Kenya, South Africa, Nigeria and Burkina Faso. In West Africa, the literature suggests that earning premium associated with education increases with level of education. In Ghana, it has been identified that wage premium of education increases as level of education increases. According to Fasih (2008) higher wage returns on education are apparent only at the highest level of education and hence the big payoff in wage employment in Ghana is tertiary education. Primary to middle school education yields wage returns averaging 4% per year whilst middle and secondary education yields 10%. Estimated private returns for university degree was about 16% per year. In Ghana’s public sector, higher qualification is identified with higher wage premium. As a result of these dynamics, many Ghanaians are poised to embark on higher education – thus the medium for career preparation.

For broad social and economic consequences, and as outlined in the previous paragraphs, the careers undertaken by individuals in any society provide the ‘pool of workforce’ that directs the social, cultural, political and economic dynamics of progress and development associated with that society. Currently, the environment of high levels of unemployment, desperation, relatively uncoordinated career development policies and pathways leads many young people in Ghana to be lost in what true career aspirations to pursue. These circumstances in themselves breed unemployment among the youth with its attendant consequences of loss of innovation, economic development, among others. Meanwhile the common trend among young people graduating from Universities and other Institutions in Ghana has been to find regular income and secure (permanent) employment in the formal sector; both private and public institutions. However, it is estimated that only 8.0% of the total labor force in Ghana is in the formal sector of the economy with the remaining
92.0% in the informal sector (NDPC 2010). This depicts the unavailability of adequate jobs to match the massive number of young people seeking employment and careers in the formal sector. Amankrah (2008) indicated that 230,000 young people enter the labor market every year in Ghana and that 60% of the unemployed in Ghana can be found in the age bracket of 15-24 years. He cited the more than threefold increase in the youthful population over the last forty years and failure of the economy to generate sufficient employment outlets as the cause of these woes.

Globally, the International Labor Organization (ILO 2012) indicated that the youth unemployment rate is typically twice the adult unemployment rate across low, middle and high-income countries. Back in 2011, 200 million people are said to be globally unemployed as a result of the global economic meltdown. This dramatically affected employment opportunities for the youth everywhere. The ILO (2012:V) thus considered youth employment as “much more sensitive to business cycles and policy-induced economic downturns as adult employment.” The ILO cited “well-known negative externalities associated with high and persistent youth unemployment as: higher incidence of unhappiness, higher crime rates, higher inequality, higher fiscal costs in terms of foregone output and lower tax revenues, and higher political and social tensions” (ILO 2012:V). The case of Arab Spring that spiraled off from Tunisia to Egypt, Libya, Syria, etc all started off as a result of young people fighting for economic and social justice. Today, Africa is deeply affected with a high rate of unemployment especially among the youth. Meanwhile Africa today has the most youthful population in the world with the youth up to 60% to 70% of the continents population (Frimpong 2013).
In these circumstances, young people are often confused about what careers to aspire to and pursue. The laudable initiatives by higher/tertiary institutions that require and encourage students to undertake internships with corporate organizations during vacations to help promote career development are not materializing effectively. Students widely complain about their inability to find placement for these vacation internships. The National Service Program of Ghana also is widely known for its placements of tertiary education graduates in job positions that do not necessarily match their fields of academic studies and career aspirations. Other ad hoc initiatives that include entrepreneurial education in the University of Ghana for example and the infamous GYEEDA vocational and apprenticeship programs need to be re-evaluated for their impact on career development. Initiatives that include matching academic programs with their career areas, publication of rates of employment and other achievements attained by graduates of various academic disciplines as done in most advanced countries must be explored in Ghana to provide broad base options to applicants to academic programs. Thus, the observation by Haase (2011:2) that universities apart from their traditional functions of teaching and research are challenged to contribute to economic and social development as their ‘third mission’ holds substance. He cited the footprints of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and other universities as examples and charged that “‘producing’ qualified people are an important task and perhaps the most fruitful transfer mechanism” (Haase 2011:2).

The bottom line is that anyone’s career aspiration leads eventually to a career choice that produces an outcome; an outcome that determines the sustenance and progress of any society. It is worthy to note that individual actions in any society produce large scale social consequences. On the other hand, complex social and environmental constraints produces outcomes on the individuals in any society – hence the career aspirations of young people in
Ghana in this case. It is a cycle that reproduces itself. As Coleman observed “norms are macro level phenomenon that comes into existence on the basis of micro-level purposive action” (Quoted in Ritzer 2000:302).

1.1 Problem Statement

Arguably, the best time to aspire to a career is when one is young as it requires much preparation and orientations. Unfortunately, many young people in Ghana are often baffled with their career choice aspirations and goals. Even people who have embarked upon university education sometimes bluntly express their confusion and frustration about their lack of knowledge on what careers may be available or suitable to aspire to, prepare for and pursue. And many studies corroborate this position by intimating that students all over the world are usually often faced with dilemmas in making a career choice decision (Watson et al. 2010; Issa and Nwalo 2008; Macgregor 2007; McMahon and Watson 2005). Issan and Nwalo (2008) observed further that in some cases, the choice of subjects, and courses of study and the subsequent career paths to follow are nightmares for prospective undergraduate students. Schneider & Stevenson (1999) maintained that sociological research in the tradition of ‘status attainment’ underlie aspirations for the future as centrally important for career outcomes. They maintained that contemporary generations of teenagers have high aspirations for education and occupational attainment yet have greater difficulty making clear plans for reaching their ambitions. Thus career guidance and counseling and vocational choice in particular also becomes a topical research problem, due to the increased youth unemployment levels in the last few decades on the one hand, and lack of vision, knowledge and motivation for professional career development efforts among adolescents and young adults on the other. All these are challenges facing not only the labor market but also the educational system and the nation as whole.
Evidently, through casual interactions with students studying for their first degrees in the University of Ghana, and in their final years for example, one may notice the expression of anxiety and perplexity among many students regarding what careers may fall within the remit of their academic studies and what career development activities and preparations they need to undertake (even if outside their academic curricula) to better equip themselves towards attaining those career goals. As a researcher of this topic, this is reminiscent of the anxiety, naivety and hopelessness that engulfed me and many of my colleagues regarding career aspiration, choice and preparation processes during our undergraduate studies. These situations partly arise from the evolving and changing nature of one’s career aspirations as the years went by. It is a common phenomenon as one goes through maturation – finding it difficult to identify a specific career that he or she prepares towards. These situations may stem from nonexistent or ineffective career development policies and institutionalized mediums to set clear cut guidelines for career counseling programs, trainings and apprenticeship, mentoring, exposure and information that young people need throughout their early development stages.

On the other hand students often fail to take responsibility towards their own career development and actualization by neglecting any such existing opportunities in the areas of counseling programs, apprenticeship, internships, mentoring and entrepreneurship programs, among others. The bottom line is that young people not being able to at least aspire to specific careers in the final years of their studies in the university for example is to some extent a sad indictment on themselves and society at large. Care (1982) opined that persons who are able to take up the problem of career choice are "competent individuals." He considered them as persons who are positioned to self-realize and to contribute to the lives of others. Care (1982: 285) noted that “at a minimum such persons possess intelligence,
knowledge, health, energy, talent, and imagination to a degree which is sufficient to support activities involving planning and following through.”

In any ideal sense, anyone can aspire to any career in life. But the realization of such a career is contingent on a set of complex factors that involve personal capability, preparation in the appropriate area of education, training, apprenticeship, mentoring, commitment, discipline, etc. Coupled with these factors are extraneous factors generally influenced by the environment (gender, social, economic, political and institutional processes, etc) in which the career aspirant finds he/herself. And one’s ability to navigate through all the complexly webbed issues to arrive at a career destination requires access to information, counseling and other formally institutionalized processes that guides individuals towards realizing their true potentials. The inadequate or non-existence of these institutional mechanisms, and deliberately fashioned strategies to tap the potentials of the youth on diverse career and professional fronts to achieve dramatic social, economic and political progress and development is evident in the relatively static or slow national progress. Unemployment and its associated desperation thus are very rampant. Thus, a heightened debate in the Ghanaian society today about the relevance and contributions to the nation’s development efforts by the overly ubiquitous arts and business academic programs that churn out many graduates in their wake. These debates continuously cite excessive academic focus on the arts and business programs to the neglect of the sciences and technical vocational education as the causes of the nation’s economic and unemployment woes. Reports such as the World Bank (2000) report ‘Higher Education in Developing Countries: Peril and Promise’ also decried the education curricula in developing countries as mostly poorly designed with students poised to regurgitate notes to achieve higher marks; hence killing creativity – creativity which essentially influences the career aspirations of young people.
1.2 Objectives of the Study

This study sets out to generally assess the determinants of career aspirations of final year undergraduate sociology students of the university of Ghana by identifying their present career aspirations, explore what influences them to aspire to these careers, what preparations/trainings they embark or intend to embark upon in order to achieve their aspirations, and what institutional mechanisms are in place to help them work toward these aspirations. More specifically the study aimed to:

I. Identify the determinants of career aspirations of study respondents and career development activities and other opportunities students participate in and explore the strategies developed, adopted and envisaged by students to achieve their career aspirations.

II. Interrogate the stages at which study respondents were exposed to institutional career development mechanisms and how these help guide them to discover, form and nurture their potentials and career aspirations.

III. Interrogate the collaborative initiatives between government institutions, the universities and private sector players toward career development as a strategic human capital development imperative.

IV. Explore how the career aspirations of the study respondents evolved from childhood to date. And to identify and explain the reasons for the changes in their career aspirations on entry and throughout the period of studying in the University.

V. Elaborate on the kinds of careers (popular/rare) students aspire to and explain the reasons for these choices.

VI. Explore the context in which their current courses of study fit into the pursuit of the careers they aspire to presently.
1.3 Significance of the Study

I. This study is to help promote the need for further studies into career development and policy design in Ghana. It aimed to set the path for career policies and frameworks opened to increasing awareness among younger children and teenagers on diverse career options, the required plans and standards, actions and preparations/trainings required to achieve them. It may lead to the re-design of academic curricular that provides technical and practical education on skills applicable in specific career fields.

II. This study may further help in the formulation of new policy guidelines that eliminate the relatively clear cut early academic specialization that tentatively begins from First Cycle Education in Ghana (students at this level are required to select courses or elective areas before progressing to the Second Cycle). It can help push academic specialization to tertiary levels where students become relatively matured enough to form clearer career aspirations and decide which tertiary academic disciplines to pursue to fit those career aspirations.

III. Finally, this study may help arouse a rethink on the career development challenges in Ghana and help promote a new agenda of career development that deliberately and carefully target and nurture young people (possibly from childhood) with variedly wide and versatile potentials and talent. This young people with integrated skills and careers can work and contribute to meet the demands of Ghana and Africa’s indigenous development challenges instead of always being imitators of career trends of global giants who leave us trailing behind and confused.

1.4 Research Questions

The research questions are:

I. What are the present career aspirations of students?
II. What are the considerations and situations that may influence and determine students’ current career aspirations?

III. What were the opportunities of training, apprenticeship and other institutional career development processes that students were exposed to and how did they take advantage of these opportunities?

1.5 Hypothesis

Assumption for the study is:

I. The more students undertake and participate in such career development activities as internships, mentoring programs, apprenticeship and training, consultations, career fares, etc, throughout their education the easier it is for them to form career goals and identify specific career(s) they intend to pursue.
CHAPTER TWO

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Rational Choice Theory (RCT). Ferejohn and Satz (1994) argued that the RCT’s use in economics and sociology is “largely aimed at illuminating structures of social interaction in markets, governments, and other institutions”. The RCT as pioneered by George Homans (1961) in a basic framework of exchange theory finds extension in the 1960s and 1970s in the works of Peter Blau (1964), James Coleman (1973), and Cook (1977) (Scott 2000). By the RCT, individuals are seen as generally motivated by the wants or goals that express their ‘preferences’. Individuals thus act within specific given constraints and on the basis of the information that they have about the conditions under which they are acting. At its simplest, the relationship between preferences and constraints can be seen in terms of the relationship of a means to an end. As it is not possible for individuals to achieve all of the various things that they want, they must also make choices in relation to both their goals and the means for attaining these goals.

Rational choice theory holds that individuals must anticipate the outcomes of alternative courses of action and decide that which will be best for them. Rational individuals hence choose the alternatives that are likely to give them the greatest satisfaction (Scott 2000). This position is implicit in the viewpoint of Becker (1985) who advanced in his human capital theory that human beings are rational beings and for that matter, they make choices to invest in human capital (i.e. education and training) in order to increase their productivity in their jobs, future earnings and opportunities for better career. As evidenced from literature presented in this work, individuals with higher education and skills training earn higher wages as their productivities are often measured as higher than those with less education and skills training (Asafu-Adjaye 2012). Even among the educated and trained, disparities exist in
the skills acquired, the careers engaged in and the wages earned as a result of the kind of training embarked upon, individual determination, discipline, hard work, among others. These factors thus drive the ‘rational individual’ to opt for the best options that can lead to the best outcomes, taking into account options available, personal capability and capacity as well as other environmental constraining factors.

Thus, Friedman and Hechter (1988) simplified that rational choice models always rely on conceptions of actors as purposive and intentional, corroborating Scott’s position. These actors Friedman and Hechter (1988) argued are conceived to have given preferences, values or utilities. They act with the express purpose of attaining ends that are consistent with their hierarchy of preferences. In one breath, RCT is mainly taken by many scholars to be a psychological theory in that it explains a person's actions in terms of her mental states. It is also taken to be an individualistic theory in that it applies directly only to individuals. But Ferejohn and Satz noted that “this common philosophical interpretation of rational-choice theory as a psychological theory wedded to a reductionist calculative program in the social sciences, where the behavior of a social aggregation is explained in terms of the mental states should be conceived only as optional”. Ferejohn and Satz (1994) thus summed rational choice or action as one in which the agent takes the best available action given her preferences and beliefs – based on social, economic and other environmental conditions rather than based merely on psychological deductions.

As Ferejohn and Satz (1994) elaborated further, in many social-scientific explanations, we are not interested in explaining a particular agent's behavior, but in the general regularities that govern the behavior of all agents. They noted that in such cases, it is not the agents' psychologies that primarily explain their behavior, but the environmental
constraints they face – thus, rational-choice theory can take a perspective external to the agents whose behavior is being explained. Kanazawa and Hetchter (1997) shared the views of Ferejohn and Satz by arguing that the RCT does not aim to explain what a rational person will do in a particular situation and that that question lies firmly in the domain of decision theory. They contended that genuine rational choice theories, by contrast, are concerned exclusively with social rather than individual outcomes. Thus, they proffered, given that each individual acts rationally, the aggregate outcome therefore does not necessarily become "rational" or desirable.

Thus, in a society where people have to pursue certain life goals and careers, many complexly webbed factors such as psychological, personal capacity, ability and potential; societal values such as wealth, prestige and status; family and peer pressures; among others, may contribute to determine one’s path in choice making. As Friedman and Hechter (1988) noted, individual actions are not solely as a result of intentions, they are subject to constraints that derive from scarcity of resources and social institutions. For example, differential possession of and access to resources make some ends easy for individuals to attain, some more difficult, and preclude the attainment of others altogether. On account of scarcity, then, the opportunity costs may vary considerably for different actors. Hence, in seeking to reap maximum benefit, actors keep a wary eye on opportunity costs. They contend that social institutions can be a second source of constraint in that the ordinary and average individual continuously will find his or her actions restricted, challenged and checked from birth to death by familial and school rules, laws and ordinances, firm and public policies, religion, peers and friends, and hospitals, etc. (ibid). Thus, by restricting the feasible set of courses of action available to individuals, enforceable rules of the game - including norms, laws, agendas, and voting rules - systematically affect social outcomes. Therefore, within rational
choice models, variations in outcomes can be due logically to variations in preferences, in opportunity costs, and/or in institutional constraints (Friedman and Hechter, 1988).

Thus far discussed, the relevance of the RCT in this research hinges on the interest in the relationships of micro-macro level theory and data central to study of both individuals and collectivities. The attempt is to explain how individuals affect collectivities and vice versa over time. As Huber (1997) puts it, the basic question is how structural change, for example in the labor market, affects individuals and how individual behaviors aggregated, in turn, affect social structures. Huber (1997) intimated the prime reward of using a rational choice model as to bring sociology closer to solving its most significant and most persistent theoretical and empirical problem of how to link individual behavior and belief with aggregate behavior and belief. He contended that such an explanation requires a model of the springs of individual action that can inform a theory of transitions between individual and system behavior (Huber, 1997). In any instance, the preferences of employers for certain types of workers may create constraints for workers and job seekers. And on the other hand the preferences of workers for certain types of jobs may create constraints for employers. Policies and strategies adopted to shape human capital development in any society, for example, also may to a large extent influence the career choice of individuals based on their access to information, knowledge levels, personal capabilities, commitment and other factors.

2.2 Literature Review

The literature review focused on literature that illuminate the various dimensions from which one’s career needs and potentials could be nurtured and the various determining circumstances under which people may aspire to and prepare towards certain careers – touching on psychological perspectives, social psychological perspectives and sociological
perspectives. It touched broadly on career choice, aspirations and pathways, on education as a front burner to human capital and career development and the role of higher/tertiary educational institutions to helping students harness and develop their career potentials. It also delved into policy frameworks and guidelines that aid societies and individuals towards harnessing their human capital and career potentials.

2.3 Career Choice & Development: Psychological Theoretical Perspectives

Zytowski (1972) accounted that efforts to help people identify suitable careers are historically known to have dated back to the fifteenth century, but the roots to career development theories only gained steam after Frank Parsons three-step formula that emphasized conscientious efforts aimed at attaining a career. Parsons notably stated that

“In the wise choice of a vocation there are three broad factors: (1) a clear understanding of yourself, your aptitudes, abilities, interests, ambitions, resources, limitations, and knowledge of their causes; (2) a knowledge of the requirements, conditions of success, advantages and disadvantages, compensation, opportunities, and prospects in different lines of work; (3) true reasoning on the relations of these two groups of facts” (Parsons, 1909:5).

With this assertion Parsons (1909) maintained that people will be more satisfied with their careers if they were to actively engage in choosing them than to rely on chance during a career hunt. Many scholars build their theories with these notions at the core. Parsons second notion – ‘knowledge and understanding of the workplace and its related conditions’ – then became dominant among career counselors during the first part of the twentieth century (Brown 2002). Then the use of tests to measure and assess the intellectual functioning of people before classifying and placing them under occupations to achieve satisfactory performance became prominent in the times of World War I, the Great Depressions of the thirties and the World War II (ibid). Parsons concept known as the “trait-and-factor theory” constitutes the backdrop of many psychologically based theories (ibid). The term refers to the
abilities, interest and personality characteristics of individuals. It assumes that the matching of an individual’s abilities and interest with an available career opportunities can be accomplished and once accomplished solves the problems of career choice for the individual.

Among the theorists of this persuasion, John Holland in 1973 published an oriented explanation of vocational choice from a static to a more dynamic model. This he has revised in 1985 and 1997, resulting in tremendous impact on practice due to the instruments he developed. His model was described by Brown (2002:6) as “the most influential model of vocational choice making that is currently in existence”. Holland (1997) noted that individuals are attracted to a given career because of personalities and numerous variables that constitute their backgrounds. He insisted that career choice is an expression of, or an extension of, personality into the world of work, followed by subsequent identification with specific occupational stereotypes. Thus, one chooses a career to satisfy one’s preferred modal personal orientation. Individuals are therefore attracted to a particular role demand of an occupational environment that meets their personal needs and provides them with satisfaction. He emphasized the importance of self-knowledge in determining the modal personal orientations and for matching occupational environments. The modal personal orientations he classified into six areas: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising and conventional.

Donald Super (1953) also emphasized on developmental psychology, personal construct theory that emphasized self-concept and sociological theory in relation to the trait-and-factor theory. According to Super, self-concept changes over time and develops as a result of experience, and as such, career development is life-long. He postulated five work and career development stages: I. Growth Stage (age 0-14) characterized by development of
self-concept, attitudes, needs, and general world of work; II. Exploration Stage (age 15-24) characterized by ‘trying out’ through classes, work experiences, hobbies and may result in tentative choice and skills development; III. Establishment stage (age 25-44) characterized by entry-level skill building and stabilization through work experience; IV. Maintenance stage (45-64) characterized by continual adjustment process to improve position, and finally; V. the decline stage (65+) characterized by reduced output and retirement. Super (1953) recognized that the self-concept changes and develops throughout people’s lives as a result of experience. People successively refine their self-concept(s) over time and application to the world of work creates adaptation in their career choice.

Others such as Dawis and Lofquist (1984), Williamson (1939), etc. also adopted the trait-and-factor perspective in advancing their career development and choice theories. Dawis and Lofquist (1984) elaborated that the more closely a person’s abilities, i.e. skills, knowledge, experience, attitude, behaviors, and etc. meet the requirements of the role or organization, the more likely it is for them to excel in their job and receive satisfactory commendations from their employers. They furthered also that when the rewards or reinforces are close enough to the values that a person seeks to satisfy the higher the chances of the person considering the job as satisfying. They also identified six values that individuals seek to satisfy with their careers; achievement, comfort, status, altruism, safety and autonomy. Dawis and Lofquist (1984) as part of their Theory of Work Adjustment posited also that individuals and environments impose requirements on one another for which any successful work relations result from the adjustments intended to create a balance between individual and environmental characteristics. Williamson’s (1939) work on how to counsel students which also derived from the trait-and-factor concept emphasized on the use of clinical tools such as “tests, questionnaires, case records and grades, the usefulness and
validity of which depend, in part, upon the thoroughness of objective standardization on
groups” (Williamson 1939:xvi). This is to help in diagnosing certain types of educational
problems such as educational interests and aptitudes in order to assist with “remedial work
with study skills and scholastic motivation” (ibid.). He emphasized that “the diagnosis of
treatment of certain types of learning difficulties by means of diagnostic achievement tests
and analysis of the errors and correctional instruction is recognized as the special province of
the remedial teacher” (Williamson 1939:XVI).

2.4 Career Choice & Development: Social Psychological Perspectives

Aside the trait-and-factor oriented theories, other scholars such as Anne Roe (1956)
postulated some career theories smitten more in social psychological orientations. Roe (1956)
in her book ‘The Psychology of Occupations’ observed that early childhood environments
influence children to aspire or enter certain occupational groups and suggested that the early
childhood experiences and emotional patterns of parenting highly influences the later
vocational choice of individuals. Roe (ibid.) further cited the combination of early parent-
child relations, environmental experiences and genetic features as determinants in the need
structure of the individual. Roe (ibid.) classified career into Person-oriented career types
where the individual satisfies needs primarily through interactions with people and; and non-
person-oriented career types where the individual satisfies needs primarily by acting on
things or ideas independently. Ginzberg, Ginsburg, Axelrad and Herma (1951) also
recognized that vocational choice is influenced by four facts: the reality factor, the influence
of the educational process, the emotional factor and individual values. The theory of these
scholars insists that it is a ‘development path’ that leads to career choice. Ginzberg et al
(1951) argued that career choice efforts begin in pre-teen and ends in young adulthood ages
where individuals pass through three stages: fantasy, tentative and realistic stages. During the
fantasy stage, the child is free to pursue any occupational choice; a process that enables the child to identify preferred activities related to his/her future career choices. In the pre-teen years and through high school, Ginzberg et al (1951) maintained that the young person further defines their interests in, capacity for and values of an occupational choice. The cumulative effect of the process is the transition process in which the adolescent begins the career choice process, recognizes the consequences and responsibility of that choice.

Lent, Brown and Hackett’s 1994 ‘Social Cognitive Career Theory’ (SCCT) grounded in Bandura’s 1986 ‘Social-Cognitive Theory’ also elaborated on issues of culture, gender, genetic endowment, social context and unexpected life events that may interact with and supersede the effects of career-related choices. This theory focuses on the connection of self-abilities, outcome expectations and personal goals that influence an individual’s career choice. SCCT outlines that career choice is influenced by the beliefs the individual develops and refined through personal performance accomplishments, learning, social persuasion and physiological states and reactions. These aspects work collaboratively in the career development process by the individual developing an ability and expertise for a particular endeavor and successfully excel in it. This process reinforces one’s self-efficacy or belief in his or her ability and expertise. As a result, one is likely to develop goals that involve continuing involvement in that activity and endeavor. Through an evolutionary process beginning in early childhood and continuing throughout adulthood, one narrows the scope to successful endeavors to focus on and form a career goal and choice. Critical to the success of the process is the extent to which one view the endeavor or activity as one at which they are successful and offers valued compensation. The contextual factors come into play by influencing the individual’s perception of the probability of success. If the person perceives few barriers the likelihood of success reinforces the career choice, but if the barriers are
viewed as significant there is a weaker interest and choice actions. By adolescence, most people have a sense of their competence at a vast array of performance areas, along with convictions about the likely outcomes of a career. Through a process of intervening learning experiences that shape further one’s abilities and impacts self-efficacy and outcome beliefs, one’s vocational interests, choices and performances are shaped and reshaped. Apart from the theory’s psychological perspective it dynamically indicated the social and economic contexts by which individuals’ career aspirations are inherently influenced.

Bordin, Nachmann and Segal (1963) also proposed a framework for career/vocational development based on *psychic dimensions and body zones*. They presented a psychoanalytic model related to Freud’s psychosexual stages with emphasis on the role of play in adult work. They construe play as activity that brings about satisfaction, and individuals they believe seek satisfaction and joy from their work. Thus individuals in order to achieve joy and satisfaction in their work will select consciously or unconsciously occupation that guarantees satisfaction and enjoyment.

Equally important is Linda Gottfredson’s (1981) *theory of circumscription and compromise*. This theory elaborates on the development of career aspirations and how individuals become attracted to occupations. Through circumscription individuals as they develop their self-concept restrict over time the occupations they consider acceptable; whilst through compromise individuals choose from available but imperfect alternative occupations by sacrificing some needs for others. This theory emphasized that one’s social and psychological image influences an individual’s gravitation to a particular career. Thus prestige, gender roles, etc. constitute crucial career development determinants during childhood, adolescence and early adulthood. Gottfredson (1981) underlie four cognitive
development stages in children that influence their career aspirations. First, *orientation to size and power stage* (ages 3-5) where children classify people as big and powerful or small and weak based on differentiation of people and their jobs. Career options not suitable for their gender are sieved out in the process. Second, *orientations to sex roles stage* (ages 6-8) where children make distinctions based on job classifications and sieved out careers that are not gender appropriate. Third, *orientations to social valuation stage* (ages 9-13) where social class and prestige become important factors in career choice aspirations and vocations that are not class appropriate are eliminated. Finally, *orientations to unique internal-self stage* (ages 14 and older). As levels of cognitive development and growth is heightened among adolescents’ and young adults’ greater insight into vocational aspirations and how these match with the view of themselves, gender roles, and prestige is achieved. Occupations that do not fit the self-image of the adolescents are then eliminated.

John Krumboltz’s (1979) *Social Learning Career Theory* also identified four factors that influence career choice: genetic endowment and special abilities; environmental conditions and events; learning experiences; and task approach skills. Krumboltz’s (1979) theory elaborates on individual learning processes and encounters that eventually inform the career interests and choices of individuals. The theory emphasized on the impact of social influences on career choice and observed that as learning occurs recurrently from encounters with the world it results in development of self-esteem and task skills that are applied to new situations. Thus people select encounters that allow them to develop specific interest that aid their choice of certain careers. The theory underlines the possibility that cognitions and beliefs emerging from socio-economic and cultural sources influence skill development, interpretations of self-observations and world-view generalizations (Krumboltz, 1979; Krumboltz, 1994). The community therefore plays a forceful role in the life of the individual.
Corroborating this position are Lewis and Gilhousen’s (1981) assertion that career myths are passed from one generation to the next and give rise to career decision making behaviors that are based on a structure of strongly held beliefs validated by the community. They maintained that these observations are of particular relevance to career psychologists and counsellors working in multicultural contexts. It is essential that counsellors are sensitive to the role that the community and the family could play in the career decision making process of a young person. In such situations, including the family and the community in the career counselling process may have a more effective outcome than focusing on the individual alone (ibid). Hence, the need for the development of counselling techniques in skills that take into account the social cognitive factors influencing the career planning behavior of specific client groups in multi-cultural contexts is imperative. Counsellor training could include inputs that develop skills for incorporating the family/community into the career counselling interaction.

Peterson, Sampson, and Reardon (1991) also set forth another relevant dimension in career choice decision in their Cognitive Information Processing (CIP) theory of career development. Their theory relies on an information-processing model to explain the processes involved in career decision. The approach aims at helping people make appropriate and current career choice and in the process learn improved problem-solving and decision-making skills that may be needed for future choices. Peterson, et al (1991) argued that whilst some theorists and scholars downplayed the relevance and prudence of the notion of making or committing to an occupational, educational, or employment choice in today’s changing economy, the contention is that most individuals, regardless of age or life stage, continually face choices they must make. Even if the options are severely restricted, e.g., to pursue further schooling or not, to work in a low paying services job, or seek a higher paid position in a manufacturing operation, etc., these choices must be made with limited or incomplete
information, and in the context of a multitude of factors that have shaped the person’s life path to that point. The CIP approach thus deals with not only the decision “at hand” that a client might be facing, but as noted earlier, is also concerned with helping clients learn strategies for career problem solving and decision making they can effectively use throughout their lifespan, thus enabling them to deal with unexpected and unplanned life events they may encounter. Further, in addition to emphasizing the importance of self-knowledge, e.g., interests, values, skills, the CIP approach allows for diverse ways of learning about one’s self, that accommodates both structured and unstructured assessment techniques (Peterson, Sampson & Reardon, 1991).

For any career development theories and research, abundant evidence points to combination of psychological conditionings and sociological contexts that forms the defining blocks of determining circumstances under which the career pathways of many people, especially teenagers and young adults are shaped. For instance, in Osipow’s (1990) attempt to synthesize a general career development theory, project future development and suggest further research he leans toward the evolution of the systems approach which embodies both the situational and individual factors influencing career development.

2.5 Career Choice and Development Trajectories: Sociological Perspectives

Eraut & Steadman (2007) viewed career development in the light of complex processes for the individual, involving self-awareness in relation to interests, abilities, competencies and values, awareness and understanding of enterprise, industry and occupational structures, directions and career pathways. This they observed usually involve continually advanced or diverse activities, greater responsibility, development of knowledge, skills and attitudes generally through a planned program of learning experiences (ibid). This
position embodies Kroll et al’s (1970) assertion that career development involves the balancing of recognizing and meeting needs of the individual and simultaneously responding to the outer forces and realities of life, reflecting the sociological interest in career choice and development. For sociologists, the consequences of socioeconomic development, inequality and mobility, and other diverse ways that social structure and social institutions affect people’s choice of occupations, orientations to work and attainments throughout one’s life course is imperative (Johnson and Mortimer 2000, Blau and Duncan 1967). Career aspirations and choice in themselves are often based on one’s life desires, expectations, perceived talents and capabilities, and sometimes social capital and networking and eventual result of the ‘career development process’ (Johnson and Mortimer 2002).

In another breath people’s life, learning and work opportunities are influenced by personal characteristics such as age, gender, ability or disability, and sexual preference as well as by family, community and cultural values, geographic, economic and political circumstances, as well as random and unpredictable events (ABCD, 2010). Comyn (2008) observed that career development best describes a complex process of managing life, learning and work over the lifespan of any individual or group of persons in society. It is a continuous lifetime process of interaction between the individual and their environment aimed at shaping people’s learning requirements and their levels of mastery of the career competencies in different ways and at different times in their lives. In this process compelling socio-cultural boundaries, economic and political environments, trending careers, unemployment levels and personal underpinnings individually or webbed together could determine the career paths of any individual or group of people (Haase 2011). Personality traits, career trends, gender connotations, mentoring, influence by parents, relatives, friends and partners, teachers, other
influential people, etc. could serve as factors that determine people’s career aspirations (Borchert 2002).

Kartz and Martin (1962) also purported that people’s real life career choices sometimes come about as a result of opportunity, chance or happenstance (Kartz and Martin 1962). Kartz and Martin (1962:149) further asserted that “there exist patterns of career choice which are based on a series of situational decisions which, individually, have no rational connection with the choice of a particular occupation but, nonetheless, comprise the process of embarkation upon a career”. They debate the possibility that entry upon an occupational career, such as nursing, may be predicated less upon a deliberate choice of nursing than upon a series of limited decisions focused upon immediate problems encountered at the stage of the life cycle in which the adolescent girl finds herself (ibid). The view which is here adopted is that the process of entry into an occupation may be looked upon as the cumulative product of a series of specific acts, which may or may not be directly focused upon a deliberate career choice but may arise out of situationally delimited contingencies. Such decisions they argue may not involve definite career decisions in terms of a subjective career commitment, but may nonetheless constitute the active steps toward entry upon a career (ibid). They added that definite career decisions are quite likely to occur in the early part of life, and that definite commitments may have occurred even when there is no explicit recollection of the occasion when they came into being (ibid).

In another brief, career choice is often preceded by the course of life one lived, actions one take, the nature of education, mentoring, career advice, vocational training, apprenticeship, and self-discipline one commit to in order to achieve such set aspirations. Career aspirations and trajectories thus in themselves, over a period of one’s life are not
static; they constantly evolve and change as people experience maturation and situational changes (Kroll et al 1970). Often also, career aspirations are influenced by prominent trending careers and other kinds of work generally known and available in society of which people become aware of or are exposed to through multifaceted means. And sometimes people are influenced to aspire to certain careers in order to meet certain expectation, reputation or family traditions. It is common to hear children and young people at basic and high school levels aspire to be Doctors, Lawyers, Engineers, Pharmacists, Pilots, Accountants, Bankers, etc. than to be Nurses, Police Officers, Teachers, etc. It is altogether hard to hear them mention such professions as plumbing, carpentering, farming, etc. This situation, Kartz & Martin (1962) observed, is the individual going through a period of fantasy (when he cannot assess his capacities), before a tentative period (when he weighs various satisfactions), and finally, a realistic period (when he makes compromises between his individual wants and the actual opportunities which exist for him). Thus, as time goes by the tones in career aspirations may change. This may be due also to the fact that as people aspire to certain careers they may not be able to follow through the appropriate orientations, apprentice, education, etc. or may not simply match-up to the standards required for embarkation on their desired careers, or fail as a result of personal misfortunes (Care, 1984). Ginzberg (1951) and Kartz & Martin (1962) further observed that occupational choice is a process, that the process is largely irreversible, and that the process ends mostly in a compromise. Meanwhile, Ginzberg (1951) underscores career choices as seen in the context of the individual's maturation, whilst Kartz & Martin (1962) conceived career choices as courses of action which are composites of adaptations by individuals, to be sure to meet the exigencies of particular, immediate situations.
Whilst people may aspire to certain careers and undertake certain preparations to achieve their aspirations, they may be influenced in many complex ways to embark on these actions. In other circumstances, the ‘deliberate activities’ people undertake or are involved in over time may influence them in the direction of the type of careers to pursue in life and with diverse orientations towards work (Johnson and Mortimer 2002, Blau and Duncan 1967). For Behrman et al. (1998) college and career destinations are the results of an individual moving along a path over time, and choices made over the period are influenced by the person's characteristics, which themselves are partly a function of past choices and also partly a function of expectations about future opportunities and alternatives. All these may constitute the career development processes of an individual. Some of these activities may include mentoring, apprenticeship and skills training, internship, peer and family influence, happenstance, social capital and networking, gender and cultural limitations, nature of economic system and trends, personality traits, capabilities and determination, even race and ethnicity among others (ibid).

Hauser (1971), Hauser and Sewell (1976) added social psychological variables to attainment model, citing academic ability, performance and other encouragement of one’s educational goals by others such as teachers, friends, parents, partners, etc. Instances of pre-labor market influences of peer group effects to which individuals are exposed before they join the labor market are said to affect human capital significantly and are recognized also among economist. For these economists, elements of investment by parents and society also play major parts in career paths, Hauser and Sewell (1976). For example, an altruistic parent deciding where to live is also deciding whether her offspring will be exposed to good or less good pre-labor market influences. Thus, most sociological theories, including those by Blau and Duncan (1967) focused on status attainment antecedents. Within the attainment
framework, the point was also made by Roberts (1968) of how aspirations have limited consequences in situations of constrained opportunities, furthering the notion that career aspirations go as far as there are opportunities to accommodate them. Mortimer (1996, 1994) noted further that sociologists have come to the realization that wide array of psychological orientations and occupational aspirations and plans influences vocational directions and the capacity to be successful in the world of work. Hence, sociologists, unlike psychologists are concerned more about how location in the social structure influences people’s orientations toward work.

Elder & O’Rand (1995) in their own right also observed that occupational choice and vocational/career development is a lifetime process that runs through early years of life and throughout people’s life course. And important to the formation of these processes is the contexts in which people live their lives and pursue their educational and economic goals (as in primary and secondary educational institutions, labor market, family circumstances, cultural values and gender roles, etc.) and predicated upon opportunities, challenges and constraints to their career potentials (ibid). These conditions, coupled with individual actions in response to goals, preferences, values, opportunities, and the deliberate functioning of institutional settings that determine structural opportunity yield diverse lifelong career patterns based on continuity, stability, rewards and leading to eventual attainment (Johnson & Mortimer 2000).

To elaborate on institutional settings for example, cross-national differences in the structure of education and work in different countries are noted as precursors to career development trajectories, as well as other institutional factors. Research in biology/social biology has documented that there is some component of IQ which is genetic in origin, that
is, workers can have different amounts of skills/human capital because of innate differences (even as the exact importance of this component is debated in career development related issues, some labor economists have also taken part in this). The relevance of this observation for labor economists were that there is likely to be heterogeneity in human capital even when individuals have access to the same investment opportunities and the same economic constraints; and that in empirical applications, we have to find a way of dealing with these source of differences in human capital, especially when it’s likely to be correlated with other variables of interest. Thus, presented in the ensuing paragraphs are some institutional settings and individual orientations that may influence and lead to the determination of an individual’s career choice or career development trajectories.

2.5.1 Educational Environment and Settings

Kerckhoff (1996) proffered that educational systems are characterized by the extent to which they are differentiated by the distinct occupational futures of their students and the vocation-specific credentials they offer. Contrasting the educational system of the U.S.A and Germany for instance, differences exist in the direction of students, regarding apprenticeship integration programs for students with lower test scores, and university education for those with higher test scores in Germany whilst the United States educational system is not vocationally specific (Kerckhoff 1996). Kerckhoff (1996) then concluded that the less vocationally specific the training provided at the secondary/high education system, the more turbulent and floundering is the early career. The German apprenticeship system is said to present young people with the opportunity to pursue specific occupations, with 70% of young cohorts obtaining a highly specific occupational certification upon completion (Mortimer & Kruger, 2000). In the U.S.A on the other hand, more than two-thirds of high school graduates in a cohort study seek higher education (Kerckhoff 2000). Schneider & Stevenson (1999)
observed that these disparities present contemporary adolescents in the U.S.A with vague notions about occupational and little understanding of the kinds of credentials required to achieve certain career goals. They observed the opposite for Germany, where adolescents are said to enquire about the various kinds of occupations they intend to embark upon prior to their apprenticeship.

Meanwhile, organizational features and differences between schools are noted by Lee, Bryk & Smith (1993) for shaping educational outcomes, individual experiences and opportunities with implicit implications for career outcomes. Educational settings, environment, family background and educational attainment of parents, all play implicit roles in occupational goals and preferences. Thus, some educational structures are thought to perpetuate existing social inequalities in career outcomes across generations and leading to the production of additional inequalities as well (ibid). In a similar argument, Dauber, Alexander, & Entwisle (1996), and Alexander, Entwisle, & Horsey (1997) asserted that educational outcomes often clearly result from long-term trajectories set by organizational structures of an educational system. An example is tracking and ability grouping done in Western educational systems, where the tendency for track assignments tends to be self-perpetuating (ibid). In this situation, placement in the system at one grade level has a strong effect on placement in later grade levels; independent and unrelated to a students’ level of academic performance, and often as a result of institutional inertia. Hence, any inequity initially introduced by group and track assignments is likely to be sustained over time. These internal structures and arrangements are said to often widen the gap and differences in achievement over time. So, as educational trajectories diverge, differences in opportunities for higher education and occupational trajectories and attainment become greater (ibid). Kerckhoff (1993) traced the divergence in students’ achievement over the life course in a
British birth cohort, establishing how initial placements within the school system persisted and had cumulative effects on student learning.

Structural differences between schools and their consequences for student achievement and postsecondary opportunities are noted in various forms, and triggers concern for sociologists also. For instance, Bryk & Thum (1989), and Lee and Bryk (1988) noted that students in Catholic schools have lower absenteeism rates, less likely to drop out, and have higher levels of math achievement than students in public schools. The advantages of attending Catholic school are thought to operate through the normative and structural features of these schools, including the greater similarity in course taking across curriculum tracks (in comparison to public schools). Apart from this, students enrolled in smaller schools have higher levels of achievement and lower levels of absenteeism and dropping out than those in larger schools (Lee, Bryk, & Smith, 1993; Lee & Smith, 1995). Variation in the interest and commitment of teachers also produces achievement differences across schools (Lee & Bryk, 1989). The composition of the student body is another factor influencing individual achievement. For example, the average socioeconomic status composition of schools, above and beyond a student’s own socioeconomic status, is linked to absenteeism, dropping out, and achievement (Bryk & Thum, 1989; Lee & Bryk, 1989). Such compositional effects may influence student outcomes through several possible mechanisms. Socioeconomic status composition may be associated with the fiscal and human resources of a school or may reflect differences in the values and expectations of students, parents, and staff, which in turn shape school organization (Lee, Bryk, & Smith, 1993). These structural features of schools, like sector, size, and class and even race composition, are thought to produce inequities in learning environments and subsequent occupational opportunities.
2.5.2 Labor Markets, Economic Trends and Social Environment

How labor market determinants and economic trends influence the career choice and development of people also is of concern to Sociologists. The basis lies in the fact that the jobs people hold, as well as their wages and other rewards, are a function of workers’ educational credentials, preferences, and skills (including cognitive and other skills developed through schooling, as well as other job-related skills) and influenced also by the environment in which these people reside (Johnson and Mortimer 2002). Largely, it is argued that occupational choice and attainment are shaped by community labor market conditions. These are particularly important at the time of labor force entry, as initial placements influence subsequent occupational career trajectories (Farkas et al., 1988). The types of industry present in communities vary widely, and both the presence of particular industries and the range of industries affect the occupations in which men and women can be employed. Both the probability of employment and the level of earnings achieved are, in part, determined by local unemployment rates, local wage levels, and the size, etc. (ibid). This presents concerns with employment opportunities and vocational development of young people in high poverty areas.

Under such conditions, young people grow up in families without a steady breadwinner and in neighborhoods with high levels of joblessness. Such extreme conditions are a reminder that possibilities for choosing one’s career can range from the extremely limited to the widely open. In such circumstances, even marginal jobs assume great importance in the process of vocational development (Newman, 1999). Many rural areas also face rising unemployment and the outmigration of young people. Moreover, rural areas offer less diversified labor markets, and opportunities for meaningful employment can be limited.
In addition to the local labor market conditions of rural areas, rural youth face some additional complexities in making career choices. With greater geographic isolation, rural youth may have less access to information about higher education and the qualifications needed for various occupations (Elder & Conger, 2000). Growing up in different kinds of communities’ influences what young people seek in their work lives, as their values are shaped by those of the people around them, as well as local conditions of life. The community thus plays a forceful role in the life of the individual in many African countries. Ghanaian and African child rearing practices, family structure, and social organization and value systems promote interdependence and independent decision making may not be directly nurtured, hence implicitly affecting career choice trajectories.

From another perspective, labor markets are said to be often well organized; producing positions and influencing occupational attainments. The wages and other rewards, as well as mobility patterns, sociologists evidently found are often shaped by the size of the employing organization and industry and by the sex and race composition of the occupation and firm in which one works, all influencing people’s career choice and development trajectories (Reskin, McBrier, & Kmec, 1999). To this end, sociological attention has also been known to be directed to organizational practices that shape career outcomes. For example, some organizations have formalized personnel practices for recruiting, hiring, and assigning jobs, as well as for the evaluation and promotion of workers, whilst others adopt less formal ways to performing these tasks (ibid). These practices may directly affect the career progression of workers already engaged in these organizations, and indirectly affect the career development processes of career aspirants. Coupled with this, labor market structures differentially shape the career experiences of men and women. This may be reflected in the notion of “occupational segregation” – the tendency for men and women to
work in different occupations. This practice and notion apart from being an important determinant of the wage gap between men and women also prescribes or defines career pathways for both sexes (Cotter et al., 1997). Marini & Fan (1997) attributed 42 percent of the earnings gap to the combined influence of the allocation of men and women to different jobs by employers and of social networks that provide job-relevant information and influence to men and women. Such employer and network action leads men and women into different occupations and industries at career entry. They concluded that the association between the sex composition of a job and its wage rate within the organizational structure of the labor market is “perpetuated to some degree by micro-level processes that produce gender differences in the aspirations and qualifications with which workers enter the labor market, but this association is perpetuated even more by micro-level processes that operate at the point of career entry to channel women and men with the same aspirations and qualifications into different sex-typed jobs” (Marini & Fan 1997: 602).

On another level, cultural limitations that are expressed in gender roles are also of significant implication on the differences in the career aspirations and development trajectories of male and females, hence their participation in labor markets. Correll (2001) noted that cultural beliefs about gender are argued to bias individuals’ perceptions of their competence at various career-relevant tasks, controlling for actual ability. To the extent that individuals then act on gender-differentiated perceptions when making career decisions, cultural beliefs about gender channel men and women in substantially different career directions. The career choice process occurs throughout the life cycle as individuals make a series of decisions that have occupational consequences.
Gender beliefs can also operate in different ways simultaneously to contribute to the reproduction of gender inequality. It is clear that children learn and internalize gender beliefs and that this internalization affects behavior. For example, holding stereotypic beliefs about activities, such as mathematics, has been shown to influence the attitudes and career aspirations of young people. Ridgeway (1997) argues that when gender beliefs are salient they shape behavior most powerfully by affecting people’s sense of what others expect of them. When males are widely thought to be more competent at a task than females, both males and females in a situation unconsciously expect more competent task performances from men. This differential performance expectation has been shown to invoke the use of a more lenient standard for evaluating the performances of men in the situation compared to women. The use of a more lenient standard to judge male performances causes males to be perceived as having more task ability than females, even when males and females perform at the same objective level. Thus, when a female enters a situation having internalized the belief that “most people” expect more competent performances from men, she may still leave the situation with a lower assessment of her ability compared to a male performing at the same level. This is due to the biasing effect of others expectations even if she does not personally endorse this stereotypic belief. Steele and colleagues (Steele 1997; Spencer, Steele, and Quinn 1999) experimentally manipulated the relevance of a gender belief associated with a task, with results that showed that when subjects were told that males performed better at the task, male subjects outperformed female subjects. However, when subjects were told that previous research had found no gender differences in performing the task, females and males did equally well. Even if subjects did not personally believe that males were better at the task, their awareness that others held this belief heightened their anxiety and had an impact on their performance.
This leads to the conclusion that regardless of whether gender beliefs are personally endorsed or internalized as other people’s expectations, they often lead to biased self-assessments of ability. The constraining effects of gender beliefs thus is that widely shared cultural beliefs about gender and task competence differentially bias how individual males and females evaluate their own competence at career-relevant tasks. This bias may be the result of the internalization of a cultural belief about gender and one’s gender identity, or it may be the result of the expectation of others causing males and females to invoke the use of different standards for evaluating their own themselves.

2.5.3 Family Settings

It is contended also that the family has important implications for the development of occupational reward values that may largely influence an individual’s career trajectories (Lindsay & Knox, 1984; Mortimer & Kumka, 1982). These values are assessments of the importance of various rewards offered through work. A major strand of sociological research on occupational choice and attainment has focused on parents’ workplaces as a context for the vocational development of children. The characteristics of parents’ jobs are thought to influence parents’ values and personalities, which, in turn, shape parenting behavior. For women, the complexity of a mother’s job influences the quality of the home environment she can provide for children, ultimately affecting children’s cognitive development (Parcel & Menaghan, 1994). Through parents’ childrearing orientations and behaviors, parental work conditions affect children’s and adolescents’ interests, values, and aspirations (Kohn, 1969; Kohn & Schooler, 1983).

Kohn and Schooler (1983) argued that the personality traits important to fathers’ success at work influence the qualities fathers value most in their children. For example, it is
assumed that men whose work requires them to make independent decisions value self-direction in their children whilst those whose work places greater emphasis on following directions or the supervision of others are more likely to want their children to be obedient. According to the occupational linkage hypothesis, these values are transferred to children and come to influence their own choice of occupations and capacities to act in a self-directed way, thus perpetuating the class structure over generations (ibid). Ryu and Mortimer (1996) also maintained that adolescents learn their occupational values more from the same-sex parent than from the opposite-sex parent. Mothers’ and fathers’ opportunities for self-direction on the job, including the chance to exercise autonomy and engage in substantively complex tasks, affect children’s internalization of parental norms, thus lessening behavior problems (Parcel & Menaghan, 1993; Cooksey et al. 1997). Whitbeck et al. (1997) also found that autonomy at work enabled fathers to be more flexible in their parenting styles, fostering a sense of mastery and control in their adolescent children. Schulenberg, et al. (1984) concluded that the family’s influence on vocational development lies along two dimensions: by providing opportunities; and through socialization. With continuing changes in family work-life, the family’s influence on vocational development may also change in important ways. For instance, women’s increasing labor force participation and contribution to family income, has the potential to alter the historically gendered nature of vocational socialization.

Beyond these dimensions, the socio-economic status of families is also noted to influence the career beliefs and trajectories of many young individuals. Werts (1967b) observed that in general, students at different social class levels tend to have different career choices depending on their academic ability. Other studies of female career choices further indicates that women who choose nontraditional careers as mathematician, chemist, government administrator, architect, and lawyer have highly educated fathers, even though
some of these careers (e.g., pharmacists and engineers) draw men whose fathers have relatively little education (ibid). Werts (1967a), observed also that in studying factors related to changes in career plans during college, a trend toward "social homogeneity" was evident, that is, students who are unlike the majority of the other students with the same initial career choice tend to change their career plans to another field where they will be more like the other students.

The ‘social homogeneity’ context was linked to the socio-economic status and academic abilities of the individuals. He cited examples of freshmen who want to be physicians and lawyers from relatively high socio-economic status (SES) families/groups; physicists and businessmen from intermediate socio-economic status groups/families; and teachers, engineers, chemists, and accountants from relatively low SES families (Werts 1967a). It was noted also that sons who chose the same occupations as their fathers were less likely to change their career plans than others making those career choices for the first time on their own (ibid). For any career switching trends and other differences in the kinds of careers pursued by people in different SES, it was assumed further that beliefs about the importance of acquiring qualifications, skills and personal proficiency for an occupation may be a factor (Arulmani et al. 2001). As such, the lower SES groups may tend to place lower emphasis on acquiring work skills proficiencies. This could be the result of the high degree of pressure on lower SES groups to begin earning for survival at the earliest, as much evidence exist to this effect in Ghana. Conversely, higher SES groups are believed to place higher value on acquiring skills that would enhance their proficiency for an occupation. It is possible, that the career planning of the higher SES groups could be characterized by a willingness to commit time and available resources for acquiring proficiencies for suitable employment (ibid). This aside, beliefs about control over one’s life situations and self-
direction are assumed to be another factor that greatly influences the individual’s resolve toward a career path (ibid). Here, the possibility that the lower SES groups viewed the future in terms of the deprivations experienced in their present situation and demonstrated a lower orientation to exercising control over the trajectory of their lives; hence exerting time and effort toward planning for a career that might be actualized sometime in the future may not be a felt need. The higher SES groups on the other hand may show stronger orientation to creating opportunities for themselves.

Then also, there are beliefs that support persistence toward career goals despite difficulties and barriers that could emerge during the process of career preparation (ibid). To this, the persistence toward career goals is lower and less consistent among lower SES groups. As a result young people from lower SES families could be more predisposed to sacrifice long term gains for more immediate gains in the here and now. The higher SES groups on the other hand demonstrate a higher degree of persistence. For instance, when a middle SES family suffers economic difficulties, children’s schooling is one of the last expenditures to be cut down. On the other hand schooling would be one of the first compromises to be made by a lower SES family that faces barriers and difficulties. In all, it is noted that beliefs about prestige and respectability play a powerful role amongst middle and higher SES families and influences the kinds of careers individuals from these groups pursue (Desai and Whiteside, 2000; Lightbody et al. 1997).

2.5.4 Personal Experiences (Internships/Apprenticeship, Mentoring & Networking)

Career choice processes are to a large extent very dependent on the individuals concerned also. Thus, the level of self-motivation gained through such activities as internship and apprenticeship programs, mentoring and social networking may help shape one’s career
development pathways and direct them towards future career decision making. In many regards, it is believed for instance that adolescent employment has the potential to influence career choice and development in a variety of ways. Early jobs serve as first-hand introduction to employment and have the potential to shape work habits, attitudes, and occupational interests. For example, working may help clarify an adolescent’s work interests and values and encourage the adolescent to consider what he or she may be “good at.” Even undesirable jobs may inspire thinking about the kind of work one would like to do and the credentials needed to obtain a satisfying job or career. Moreover, work experience can build human capital, enabling young people to command higher wages as they move from job to job, and may serve as a buffer against unemployment as they learn how to look for and keep jobs. Also, adolescent work experiences can influence career choice and development by affecting school performance and attainment.

Countless research findings point to the fact that parents and teens alike have favorable assessments of adolescent employment, viewing it as an important site for vocational development. Parents express considerable enthusiasm about their own early jobs (Aronson, Mortimer, Zierman, & Hacker, 1996). Phillips & Sandstrom (1990) also observed that parents believe that employment fosters responsibility, independence, and good work attitudes and habits, and that it teaches skills that adolescents would not learn in school. Consistent with teens’ and parents’ perceptions, studies indicate developmental gains for working adolescents, including higher punctuality, personal responsibility and dependability, and self-reliance for girls (Greenberger & Steinberg, 1986). Furthermore, it was known that adolescents who report having an opportunity to learn skills on the job develop stronger intrinsic and extrinsic occupational reward values which contribute to vocational development and affect career decision making (Mortimer et al., 1996). In addition to these
social-psychological outcomes of adolescent employment, working may teach young people important job seeking skills, like where and how to look for a job and how to behave during a job interview (Marsh, 1991; Steel, 1991). Thus, the practice of internships and apprenticeship programs provide crucial stop gaps for students, especially those in higher education to achieve these milestones, gain adequate work experiences and be able to clearly identify their career paths.

For internships, Howery (1983: 336) stated that the primary objective is "to provide students with an opportunity to test abilities and attitudes toward particular material or career possibilities for the future". According to Neapolitan, a conference on Undergraduate Internships in 1976 (cited in Neapolitan, 1992) listed vocational development as one of the four major functions of internships; the others were intellectual development, personal growth, and community service. Virtually all discussions of internship programs mention clarification of career choice as a major function and justification (Neapolitan, 1992). It is noted that interns are no more certain of their career choices than other similar students before their internships but are more certain after the internship. Therefore it appears that the internship experience contributes significantly to clarification of career choice particularly by providing useful career information (ibid). In sum, it is established that the internship experience helps many interns to become less anxious about entering and working in their probable chosen careers (ibid). On apprenticeship, it is noted that the implementation of apprenticeship programs and viable workforce and career development strategies and the career pathways they underpin, create an environment of sustained capacity for retention of skills and optimized experience (Mitchell et al. 2011). This also helps for new skills needed to respond to industry where new technologies can also be developed and skill shortages reduced (ibid).
Regarding mentoring, Kram (1985), maintained that it provides opportunity for developmental relationship in which less experienced individuals receive help and guidance from more experienced individuals with the aim of improving the career opportunities and growth of the junior person. He emphasized that the simultaneous impact of multiple developmental contacts, the way these contacts contributes to career success, and how the structure of one's social network facilitates access to developmental relationships paves the way for career pathways and success (ibid). It is also noted that mentoring is great for networking, career planning, and achieving success especially among new career entrants, thus a mentor’s additional experience may add perspective, opinion and may provide access to extra information and resources needed to achieve higher career feet (ibid). In the process of mentoring, it is envisaged also that social networks are built, notwithstanding other means by which these networks are made. Known otherwise as ‘social capital’ social networks are said to be very essential for gaining a step on the career ladder and climbing it. The notion exists that social resources embedded in networks will provide benefits to the actor are central (Kanter, 1977). These benefits include greater and timelier access to information, greater access to financial or material resources, and greater visibility, legitimacy, credentialing and sponsorship within the social system (ibid). Bolles (1992) maintained that popular advice for “getting ahead” in one’s career rarely fails to mention the importance of “networking” for the achievement of career goals.

2.5.5 The Role of Higher Education in Human Capital & Career Development

To a large extent, peace, progress and holistic development of societies is easily achievable when people find careers that are true and dear to their natural talents and calling. Education as the most prominent medium of socialization, the shaping and diffusion of
knowledge in the modern world thus become the central focal point of appeal for effective career development initiatives. Thus, educational institutions by all standards provide a major avenue and platform for human capital and career development. Most career development frameworks for example look to educational institutions at all levels to implement desirable strategies that help in shaping the career aspirations, potentials and choices of both children and adults. They indicate the need for career development strategies such as obligated internships, career fares and workshops held by departments and faculties of universities, and affiliations with industries and corporate organizations in order to keep pace with society’s movement to a postmodern era and to help in the building of the human capital stock of societies (ABCD, 2010). ‘Human Capital Development’ itself is regarded as the ‘macrological’ context in which policy frameworks and actions are taken by societies to nurture and embolden the capabilities and wellbeing of their people through the advancement of education and other social services such as healthcare. As argued by Son (2010) “human capital is regarded at the macro level as a key factor of production in the economy wide production function”. Son (2010:30) contended further that human capital plays a critical role in economic growth and poverty reduction – that from “a macroeconomic perspective, the accumulation of human capital improves labor productivity; facilitates technological innovations; increases returns to capital; and makes growth more sustainable, which, in turn, supports poverty reduction” Son (2010:30).

This said, human capital development is foremost achieved through education. And education by its nature is mostly geared toward the advancement of the course of any society through work and productivity, expression of culture, ideals and visions. Ghana’s first President, Kwame Nkrumah on March 5, 1957, according to Akyeampong (2008: 1-2), outlined his vision for education: “first, as a tool for producing a scientifically literate
population; second, for tackling the environmental causes of low productivity; and third, for producing knowledge to harness Ghana’s economic potential”. Nkrumah noted,

“We must seek an African view to the problems of Africa. This does not mean that western techniques and methods are not applicable to Africa. It does mean, however, that in Ghana we must look at every problem from the African point of view … our whole educational system must be geared to producing a scientifically-technically minded people. Because of the limitations placed on us, we have to produce, of necessity, a higher standard of technical education than is necessary in many of the most advanced countries of the Western world.” (Akyeampong, 2008: 2)

Thus education serves as the platform for the development of a nation and the career niches of its people. The role of education in the dissemination and implementation of career development frameworks and policies, and in the ‘micro-logical’ processes by which the individual becomes defined in many regards, including which career options to pursue thus cannot be underestimated (Haase 2011, Australian Blueprint for Career Development 2010). From a microeconomic perspective, as Son (2010) argued, education increases the probability of being employed in the labor market and improves earnings capacity. Son (2010) argued further that at the micro level, human capital is considered the component of education that contributes to an individual’s labor productivity and earnings while being an important component of industrial production. In other words, human capital refers to the ability and efficiency of people to transform raw materials and capital into goods and services, and the consensus is that these skills can be learned through the educational system. Apart from these assertions education is identified also with some non-labor market outcomes such as health and family well-being, social change and progress, environmental benefits, among others (Schultz 2003, Asafu-Adjaye 2012). This concluded, education in any form - vocational and technical training, apprenticeship, tertiary or any other higher academic training aids any society to economic development. This position as shared by many scholars, including new growth theorist such as Lucas (1988); Romer (1990); Mankiw, Romer, and Weil (1992);
Barro and Sala-i-Martin (1997) who observed fundamentally that accumulation of human capital through education and on-the-job training fosters economic growth by improving labor productivity, promoting technological innovation and adaptation, and reducing fertility. Fasih (2008) contended that countries with low levels of education run the risk of being trapped in technological stagnation and low growth. An instance of this is the claim by Dzisah (2010:147) that “half of the considerable difference in economic growth between South Korea and Ghana over the past decades was attributable to the investment in the right kinds of knowledge.”

Whilst ample evidence is established in this literature that education contributes to economic growth and development of any society, other studies intricately indicate that education if it were to achieve these results must be deliberately coordinated to produce people with required matching skills. As Son (2010) observed, the link between education and economic development is realized through the labor market. Thus, skills learned and in the educational system should be used by firms in the production of goods and services for economic growth and development. But this Pritchett (1996) noted has been elusive in the developing countries since the 1960s as a result of educational quality and institutional problems. Citing similar challenges in the Philippines and Cambodia, Son (2010) attributed this to the educational system not teaching the skills needed by the labor market, either because of a mismatch between skills supplied and demanded, or because of poor quality of education. Hanushek and Woessman (2009) citing Korea, Singapore and Taiwan as examples demonstrated that countries need both “rocket scientists” and “basic-skills students” complementarily for positive economic outcomes - indicating however that “rocket scientists” have much stronger impact on economic growth. In their analysis, increasing the share of students who are “rocket scientists” by 10 percentage points will lead to 1.3
percentage point higher annual economic growth, while increasing the share of “basic-skills students” by the same amount will raise annual growth by just 0.3 percentage point. They further contended that the impact of the share of “rocket scientists” is significantly stronger for countries that have a long way to catch up and converge on developed countries. This notwithstanding, teaching basic literacy skills to all students they agreed may be a prerequisite to finding those few “rocket scientists” in the population (Hanushek and Woessman 2009). This position echoes the distress in the Ghanaian society today about the need for a balanced proportion of people with backgrounds in science and mathematics, engineering, arts and humanities, etc. to be produced by our educational institutions as the rate of unemployment looms to devastating consequences. In cognizance with these shared observations, the Ministry of Education after a national conference dubbed “Bridging the Gap between Education/Training and Industry on the 19th and 20th May, 2014 issued a 16 points communique on the way forward to addressing education and career needs training. The listed points are “

1. Education and skill training in the country be considered from a global perspective by producing graduates with the view to making them effectively compete in the world of work at the national, regional and global level.
2. A strong and structured collaboration among education and training institutions, government and industry in a broader national framework aligned to the development goals of the country are urgently needed. This collaboration should take the form of the following but not restricted to:
   a. Involvement of industry and employers in the labor market in the design of education and training curricula;
   b. Periodic retooling of skills of instructors in education and training institutions through regular training at the world of work or industry;
   c. Institutionalize and increase the duration of internship/practical attachment for students to enable them appreciate what is taught in class and at the work place.
   d. Involvement of practitioners of industry and world of work in the teaching and training at some point of education and training processes.
3. Industrial attachment should be provided with competency certification and must be extended beyond the current 3 month period to give students sufficient time to link the classroom work with what occurs at the work place.
4. At the senior high and tertiary levels, the need for general and generic training cannot be discounted but there is also the need for establishing specialized institutions that
focus on training science, technology and engineering graduates to provide specific training needed by critical areas in the economy.

5. Review the education system to equip school leavers with productive skills and inculcate in them the values and norms as a country to distinguish Ghanaian graduates from the rest of the world.

6. The foundation of education in the country must be strengthened by improving the quality of basic and secondary education through conscious effort to enhance the governance system and decentralize supervision, management and accountability at the school level.

7. In terms of technical and vocational education training (TVET) participants were of the view that.
   a. TVET must be strengthened to facilitate employability of the youth particularly in the informal economy.
   b. There is the need to bring together all TVET institutions under one sector as part of governance restructuring and institute targeted support.

8. There is the need for industry and training institutions to collaborate periodically to provide stakeholders with data and statistics on job opportunities, required skills and skills available through regular skill gap survey to guide education/training and policy.

9. Industry should be prepared to invest in a top-up skill training to suit their needs since all over the world, employers offer on-the-job training to fresh school leavers to make them adapt to the requirements of a particular job.

10. Introduction of short courses at the polytechnic and technical institutions for graduates to impart world of work skills should be instituted.

11. Skills training should be accompanied by government policies that favor the development of indigenous industries.

12. The National Council for Tertiary Education should consider establishing a unit to liaise between academia and industry to strengthen the partnership between education and industry.

13. Restructure Counseling Centers in Senior High Schools (SHS) and tertiary institutions into Resource Development and Counselling Centers (RDCC).

14. Government should consider special incentives for industry that show stronger collaboration with education/training institutions.

15. Establish science and technology parks to serve as incubation hubs for start-up industries.

16. Ensure the deepening of the use of technology in teaching and learning at all levels of education and facilitate better outcomes of the partnership between education/training and industry.”

Prior to this conference and communique, the Association of Commonwealth Universities during a conference held in Accra from January 16 to 18, 2011 laid out a 10 point declaration to stakeholders including politicians, educationists, employers and students.

The declaration as listed below shared much resemblance to the previous communiques.

1. “The tertiary sector to adopt clear policies and strategies to ensure that the needs of graduate employment are fully integrated into the design of course provision, embracing curriculum design, the development of employment-related skills (including soft skill), and the nurturing of an entrepreneurial spirit an capacity
2. The tertiary sector to maintain clear points of information and advice for their students regarding employment issues, as well as channels through which students can voice their concerns and needs.

3. Employers to designate staff with specific responsibility for graduate recruitment and liaison with tertiary institutions.

4. The development of mechanisms of national and local level of continuing dialogue between employers, tertiary institutions and other stakeholders.

5. The development of clear incentives for teaching staff and employers to prioritize graduate employment issues in their work.

6. The development of better mechanism to survey graduate employment issues, and to feed these back into institutional planning.

7. Better use to be made of alumni, diaspora, and other contacts in industry, to provide information, advice, and mentoring for students.

8. The development of further funding programs, such as the British Council Africa Knowledge Transfer Partnerships, which provide direct access to industry for graduates and a catalyst for further collaboration.

9. The expansion of effective pan-African as well as wider international partnerships and networks (such as the ACU Graduate Employment Network), to develop dialogue between practitioners and facilitate the flow of information regarding job opportunities.

10. The inclusion of graduate employment issues in major future policy debates on higher education.”

Evaluation of the outcome of these two conferences clearly outline the relevance and place of education and educational institutions as well as other stakeholders, including government and industry players in establishing and promoting sound career development platforms and opportunities for students and other career seekers to tap into for guided career development trajectories.

2.5.6 Connecting the dots of Career Development: Education, Industry & Governments

Evidently, employment, work, and career issues today have increasingly become human capital development debate, with a new trajectory of strands of players from industry, government and education agreeing on the danger and challenges of ineffective career development policies and actions. As Comyn (2008) observed career development relies on strong relationships among the partners to ensure a balance between enterprise, industry, government and social priorities in education and training. Meanwhile, the preceding debates
are indicative of how human capital and career development is mostly achievable through education. Haase (2011) points to how higher education institutions play an ever-increasing role in today’s’ world. He insisted that beside the traditional functions of teaching and research by higher educational institutions, they are now challenged to contribute to society’s economic and social development. This position echoes Dzisah & Etzkowitz’s (2008) assertion that abundant concern is frequently expressed that university-industry-government interaction continually should be multifaceted rather than unidirectional to ensure its complex nature and processes are kept continuously evolving. Citing Noble (1976) Dzisah (2010) argued that apart from teaching and research co-existing today the capitalization of knowledge as an extension of the new mission of socio-economic development would become normalized and seen as part and parcel of the academic repertoire. He cited university-industry-government relations linkage exemplified by industrial internship programs in many advanced countries as burgeoning in Ghana presently. Dzisah (2010) surmised that in human capital training, the universities through their alumni provides the basis for enhanced interactions, but lamented that universities in Ghana have focused only on teaching with the goal of a colonial and post-colonial educational system that turns out clerks to perform administrative duties than to undertake endogenous innovative heights.

Further citing Huff (2006) Dzisah (2010) indicated that the history of academic research has intimations of university-industrial collaboration way back in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries’. Citing Etzkowitz (2008) also, Dzisah (2010) indicated that the ‘triple helix’ of university-industry-government interaction comprises a more prominent role for the university in innovation – a movement toward collaborative relationships among institutions in which innovation policy is increasingly an outcome of interaction; and the
fulfillment of traditional functions in addition to taking on the role of other spheres for which intended and unintended consequences, crises, niche formation, and self-organization is anticipated. Haase (2011:2) corroborated this position by insisting that universities apart from their traditional functions of teaching and research are challenged to contribute to economic and social development as their ‘third mission’. Haase (2011) as well as Dzisah (2010) cited the footprints of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and other universities as examples and charged that ‘producing’ qualified people are an important task and perhaps the most fruitful transfer mechanism.

Haase (2011) noted the introduction of entrepreneurship programs as an academic discipline in the last decade and as was done also at the University of Ghana as an effort aimed at promoting business ventures and start-ups at higher educational sector. Dzisah (2010) further argued that in a triple helix regime, institutional roles are no longer fixed, as interaction is needed to generate, sustain and reinvigorate innovation environments with the university now assuming the role not only of a supplier of knowledge and human capital, but also as “a new ‘industrial actor’ creating intellectual property and co-shaping new firms”. Citing Gibons et al. 1994, Dzisah (2011:148) indicated that “in contemporary knowledge-based development, any model that sought to entirely separate the site of knowledge production from application is not only outdated but irrelevant to Ghana’s development needs”. Thus, government through the assumption of facilitation roles can help bring industry players and universities together for mutual collaborations that promote sustainable economic growth and development. These systems include policy frameworks that help in creating the appropriate human capital and career development paths for people to realize their potentials. As argued by Etzkowitz (2008), as knowledge is transformed into capital, persons from any triple helix sphere become potential entrepreneurs and firm founders. Universities thus are
able to extend into the realm of shaping organizations in entrepreneurial education and incubation programs.

In light of these debates it is often supported that career development processes be deliberately shaped through policy guidelines and frameworks that can be used to design, implement and evaluate career development programs for young people and adults. Institutionalized ‘frameworks’ (such as the Australian Blueprint for Career Development 2010, National Career Development Guidelines Framework of the U.S.A. 2008, etc.) are encouraged to serve as platforms for identifying the skills, attitudes and knowledge that individuals need to make sound choices and to effectively manage their careers. These career management skills will help young people to transition successfully to post-secondary training or a job after high school and higher education (ABCD, 2010). They will encourage students to value learning by linking it to their hopes and dreams for the future. These skills will also help adults to transition successfully between learning and work roles that support their family and community responsibilities (ibid). These frameworks are known to enable teachers, parents, career development practitioners, employment service providers, employers or others who are in a position to support people’s careers and transitions, to work with a nationally consistent set of career management competencies to help people better manage their lives, learning and work (ibid). These frameworks subscribe to actions that are laudable to help people, right from their childhood to adulthood to better achieve their life dreams and potentials through their choice of career. All frameworks placed much emphasis on the role of education and educators in the formation and nurture of the career aspirations and goals of the individuals in society, as it is observed always that an individual’s career potentials and needs are nurtured in the society to which he or she belongs. It is never achieved in isolation.
2.5.7 Career Development Trajectories: The Ghanaian Conundrum

In January 2015, the CEO of Ghana Employers Association, Alex Frimpong, during a tripartite meeting between the Trades Union Congress (TUC), noted that even as there is increasing number of educated people and opportunities in the country, employable skills are still “scarce” (Appiah, 2015). And notwithstanding official estimates that Ghana’s economy has achieved sustained improvements in economic performance evidenced in growing gross domestic product (GDP) in the past three decades, the formal sector continues to decline in terms of its share of total employment (NDPC, 2010). This has been described as “jobless growth” as it reflected in no growth in job creation. As a consequence of this situation employment in the informal sector has taken the larger share of total employment in Ghana. Policy-makers have acknowledged the labor market policy failures, yet the labor market receives very little attention in terms of concrete policies that will create jobs for the teeming youth and tens of thousands of school leavers (ibid). As such, Ghana is riddled with high unemployment rate, even to the existence of Unemployed Graduates Association. This known, the role of education and national career development policies and frameworks as defining bedrocks for shaping and directing the career needs of people, especially the youth have been emphasized time over in Ghana. Many conferences were held, communiques and guidelines for actions issued year after year only for the career development efforts to lack forthright action.

Much blame is placed on misdirected training of graduates, with most courses of study deemed irrelevant to industry demand. Other constraints include inadequate practical training during course of study, lack of counselling on job prospects, lack of practical and problem solving skills, creativity, resourcefulness and interpersonal skills, entrepreneurial and communicative skills, etc. (Ghana Employers Association, 2006). This assertion was
corroborated in the Ghana Youth Policy of 2010. The policy listed access to quality education with attendant inadequate or inappropriate training for the job market resulting in unemployment and underemployment, inadequate mentoring opportunities which lead to weak moral, social, cultural and religious values. The policy offered that links between tertiary education and industry be strengthened and supported by strategies relating to establishing industry/university collaborative programs (Ghana Youth Policy, 2010). This, the policy noted is to help increase opportunities for practical training/internship and human resource planning; determining the skills and human resources requirements necessary to achieve middle-income status. It is to further the creation of opportunities for students to study and work, and create opportunities for industry to participate in curriculum development (ibid).

In the space of this conundrum, employers’ expectation about the need for relevant skills to fill employment spaces in industries has been well sounded in the works of Kwadwo Ewusie (1967), in the 1966 Kwapong Committee report, and with other concrete references made to the ‘leap in fate’ by the Asian Tigers in the 1950s attributed to their investment in education and other deliberate actions in overall human capital development (Wiafe, 2002). Other works by various scholars such as Amankrah in 1999, Kwabia Boateng in 2000, and colloquiums and conferences held throughout the 1990s to date have mentioned the need to find the right balance in educational attainment and occupational skills development in Ghana. The role of educators to achieving these feet has never been more pronounced, and the leadership expected from policy makers has been affirmed by all, whilst the collaboration needed from industry players has been well recognized. Yet, no clear cut frameworks and guidelines exist to shape people’s direction in career pathways. Such simple provisions as ‘job dictionaries’ or ‘career reference books’ – that provide entries on all categories and types
of careers available and trending in Ghana and elsewhere, description and skills required to attain them, institutional support systems and vocational trainings needed, and other academic qualifications needed to meet the requirements of such careers, etc. are non-existent.
CHAPTER THREE

3.1 Methodology

This study employed the mixed method approach for its data collection. The approach aided in elaborating on the findings of the study by complementing data from one method with the other. This helped provide findings that are not merely statistical in nature, but grounded in broader understandings of individual career choice trajectories and how institutional frameworks and processes work to determine these trajectories. Open-ended questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data and to solicit in-depth interpretative understanding of situations, actions and decisions.

Further in-depth interviews were conducted to ascertain the collaborative initiatives between government institutions, the universities and private sector players on the roles they play toward career development as a strategic human capital development imperative in Ghana. A Senior Lecturer who was a former head of the Sociology Department, an Assistant Registrar at the Counseling and Placement Centre of the University of Ghana were interviewed to ascertain any roles played by their outfits towards career development of students. Other officials interviewed include a Senior Research Officer of Trade Union Congress and Institute of Labor Research Ghana, a Director of the Tertiary Education at the Ministry of Education, an Acting Secretary of the Ghana Employers Association, an Assistant Director at the Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations, and the CEO of Equinox Company Limited – a private sector industry player.

3.2 Study Area

The study was conducted at the University of Ghana, Legon campus. The University was founded in 1948 as the University College of the Gold Coast for the purpose of providing
for and promoting university education, learning and research. The campus of the University is mainly based at Legon and lies about 13km north-east of Accra, the capital of Ghana. The University is the oldest and largest of the six public Universities in Ghana with a current student population of 35,683 (representing a male/female ratio of about 3:2) the University of Ghana is the oldest and largest of the six public Universities in Ghana (Handbook for Graduate Studies, 2010). The original emphasis of the University was on the liberal arts, social sciences, basic science, agriculture, and medicine. But partly as a result of a national educational reform, the curriculum was expanded to provide more technology-based and vocational courses and postgraduate training. An estimate of 865 Senior Members engage in research and teaching in the University. Senior Administrative and Professional staff also number 128 (UG Website Nov 18 2013).

3.3 Target Population

Study respondents were final year undergraduate students of 2013/2014 academic year of the University of Ghana, pursuing a major or a combined major degree in Sociology. This population was chosen based on the researcher’s past experience of vagueness and unawareness of any specific careers to aspire to and prepare towards as at the time of graduating from his undergraduate studies in May 2006 as a Sociology major student. The researcher through interaction with students in the Sociology department immediately prior to this study became curious and convinced about the need to research into the issue of career aspiration and choice of final year undergraduates of the Sociology department in order to again an understanding what shapes their actions, decisions and indecision in regards to the subject matter.
3.4 Sampling Method

A sample size of 120 respondents out of a total student’s population of 478 final year sociology students of 2013/2014 academic year, 224 of them females and 254 males participated in the study. 180 questionnaires were given out via non-probability sampling methods of purposive and accidental sampling techniques. Two research assistants helped distributed questionnaires specifically targeting known 2013/2014 final year sociology students. Equal proportions of questionnaires were given out to the males and females but 41.6% (50 respondents) of questionnaires retrieved were from the male and the remainder 58.4% (70 respondents) retrieved from the females.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

Open-ended Questionnaires were used to solicit response from the main respondents (students) of this study. Questionnaires were self-administered. In-depth Interviews were conducted (guided by interview guides) for key informants of key institutional bodies to establish understanding of the institutional processes and practices that goes into career development and how students assess these processes.

3.6 Data Sources

Data was collected from two sources; Primary and Secondary Sources. Primary data was collected from all respondents of the study whilst secondary data was based on books, journals and literature review, government policy documents on employment, career development policy documents (if any) of institutions both local and international, etc. Articles, newspaper publications, policy documents and online journals would be accessed from the internet.
3.7 Data Handling/Analysis

Data from questionnaires were analyzed using the statistical tool SPSS whilst those from the in-depth interviews were transcribed, manually analyzed and classified according to themes and subject matter.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

This research was conducted with regard to all relevant ethical considerations. The rationale of the study was made known to respondents to elicit their consent, support and participation. Views, opinions and responses of respondents were duly respected. Anonymity of respondents was observed and the research topic was submitted for review by the Institutional Review Board (IRB).
CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 Results, Discussion and Presentation of Findings

This chapter presents the interpretation of findings from the analysis of both the qualitative and quantitative data. The quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS whilst the qualitative data was done by thematic classification. The demographics and social characteristics of respondents are presented to provide an effect of the various groups of respondents surveyed for this study whilst the main presentations and findings are entailed in headings and sub-headings as: the career goals/aspiration of the respondents to date and reasons for such choices; the present career choice aspirations of respondents and factors that influence such decisions, with emphasis on how respondents were influenced by personality factors, family and peer, gender roles and stereotypes, and educational experience and environment. Other findings were presented under such topics as career development trajectories – preparations, orientations and exposures; internal career development at the University of Ghana; national career development policy framework; collaborations between industry, government and education; and expectation of industry players from educators and governments. Holistically, the various topics explored the career development trajectories the respondents underwent, what influences them along the way and what institutional mechanism provided relevant platforms for them to prepare towards their life and career goals.

4.1 Demographic & Social Characteristics of Respondents

The table below shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents – indicating their age ranges, sex. And as shown in the table below the study respondents were 50 males and 70 females with majority of both males and females being in the age group of
22 and 25 years; 6 males, 2 females in the age group of 18 and 21; 10 males and 7 females in the age group of 26 and 30; and 5 males and 2 females in the age group of 31 and 35.

Table 1: Cross tabulation of age and sex of Main/Primary Study Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEX</th>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>18-21</th>
<th>22-25</th>
<th>26-30</th>
<th>31-35</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>18-21</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18-21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further, 74% of the study respondents mostly grew up living in urban communities and cities, and the remainder from rural and smaller towns. 38% and 7% of all respondents attended private basic schools and senior high schools respectively, whilst the remainder in each respective case attended public schools. 28.8% of respondents have parents whose combined annual income is more than GHC61,000; 30.5% between GHC 41,000 and 60,000; 13.5% between GHC 21,000 and 40,000; 15% between 10,000 and 20,000, and the remaining 12.2% between GHC 3,000 and 9,900.

4.2 Evolution of Career Goals/Aspirations from Childhood to Date

Over the life course of the study respondents, as much similar to many other persons, their career goals have changed and evolved. Each time, such changes occur as a result of multiplicity of factors, resulting in new adaptations to what must be done to accomplish such shift in career goals and aspirations. At the time of the study, noted as ‘currently’, where respondents are final year undergraduate students of the University of Ghana with Majors or combined majors in Sociology, it became obvious that majority of them are aspiring to be Lawyers, Public and International Relations Expert, Entrepreneurs, Bankers, Accountants, Lecturers/Teachers, Social Workers, Musicians, etc. Except for being a lawyer, accountant,
banker, lecturer, running through the life course of respondents from childhood/basic education through high school to the university, most respondents have aspired to various careers that they have later abandoned for other careers.

Fig 1: Career Choice Aspiration Evolution of Respondents from Childhood to Present

These career changes evolved from idealistic aspirations carried from childhood and teenage fantasy stages to early adulthood where final or tentatively realistic career aspirations are formed. The individual at the realistic stage becomes aware of their personal abilities and capabilities, networks, existing economic opportunities, circumstances, environmental and other constraining factors to achieving certain career aspirations. Once this is realized, the individual settles on realistic career goals – albeit tentative or final – and makes deliberately concerted efforts to achieving them. This stage, ‘tentative or finally realistic’ career aspiration stages were evidently reached by the respondents in this research. Whilst career goal changes
are envisaged as discussed in the subsequent paragraphs, most of the changes are envisaged to fall within ranges of career goals the individuals find attainable. For example, most respondents intend to pursue careers in law, public and international relations, accounting, human resources, security services, fashion, pastoring, etc. that are either linked to their academic pursuit or can easily be attained through further academic pursuit or skills and entrepreneurial training. Thus, respondents at worst have their career goals set in a pool of career fields/areas they do not envisage wandering away from.

As evident in the figure above, in comparing ‘current’ career aspirations to career aspirations at the SHS level, the number of respondents who aspired to be accountants changed from 24 to 10 in the present. The number of respondents who wanted to be in banking/finance, lecturers, entrepreneurs increased whilst those who wanted to be journalists reduced. The graphs show that different career objectives were developed and some of the respondents dropped their previous career aspirations. It can be argued simply that most of the respondents kept on changing their career aspirations as they transition from childhood to date. The most preferred career fields at the basic level were law and medicine whilst at the SHS level it was law and accounting. At the tertiary level most respondents wanted to be lawyers, public/international relations officers and entrepreneurs. Apparently, the careers considered attainable in the present and near future are the ones aspired to the most. As one respondent noted “we knew of certain professions when we were growing up, and we simply preferred some to the others….say being a doctor or a lawyer…and we went along with some until we realized that’s not going to happen for us”. Another respondent simply asked, “we all had childhood dreams right? …and it doesn’t always work out the way we dream”. Another respondent confirmed that she was passionate about her childhood career but did not receive the appropriate career orientation in order to undergo the relevant choice of academic
pursuit and rigorous training in her early life to follow through on that passion. Another
responded that his career goals change frequently as his priorities and circumstances in life
change. He noted “one do not always have control over the things that he really want so
sometimes you just have to go with the flow.”

Other respondents noted that “they became aware of ‘some equally good career fields’
only when they came of age and got into their tertiary education.” This prompted their
curiosity and desire to readjust their career goals towards such areas rather than focusing on
some career areas and goals they have long held on to, and currently find unattainable. When
study respondents were further asked from another angle as to whether there are careers they
do not aspire to but may gladly engage in, 60.7% of them responded yes. This reflects in the
happenstance situations where individuals may take on other equally suitable career roles that
are not necessarily related to the careers they aspire to and prepare for when the chance or
opportunity presents itself. Reasons respondents give for this response include, desperation
and lack of job opportunities in the careers of their passion, the lucrative nature of the
opportunity (as in jobs in the Oil & Gas sector, consulting roles and job opportunities with
international aid and development agencies, security services, etc.) and the potential for
future career development on such jobs.

The views expressed by the study respondents on how their career goals evolve and
change was underpinned in the assertions by such scholars as Kartz & Martin (1962), Care
(1984), and Ginzberg (1951), that individuals go through a period of fantasy (when she/he
cannot assess his capacities), before a tentative period (when he weighs various satisfactions),
and finally, a realistic period (when he makes compromises between his individual wants and
the actual opportunities which exist for him). These scholars noted also that as time goes by,
the tones in career aspirations may change, due possibly to the fact that as individuals aspire to certain careers they may not be able to follow through the appropriate orientations, apprentice, education, etc. or may not simply match-up to the standards required for embarkation on such careers, or fail as a result of personal misfortunes. These scholars further observed that occupational choice is a process, largely irreversible, and that the process ends mostly in a compromise. Ginzberg (1951) emphatically further underscored career choices as seen in the context of the individual's maturation, whilst Kartz & Martin (1962) conceived career choices as courses of action which are composites of adaptations by individuals, to be sure to meet the exigencies of particular, immediate situations.

Digging deep to underscore how the current career goals/objectives may change over time, it became evident that 47% of the study respondents, in the present scheme of things envisage the possibility of changing their current career goals/aspirations in the future when the question was posed. The table below provides a breakdown of why respondents may consider changing their current career aspirations. 35% indicate monetary gains or financial motivation as the reason for which they may be drawn to such a consideration whilst 23% indicate happenstance or the need to seize any career or job opportunities that may come their way. Other factors that may result to this consideration include a change in career interest, inability to financially support training in current career choice area, and non-availability of career related or job opportunities in the current field of academic studies and career interest.

In an interview with an Assistant Director at the Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations, she indicated that most young graduates in present times are rather not focused on any specific career field when looking for job but rather hunt and look for employment opportunities in any field that they can chance upon. She observed that, the level of unemployment in the country has driven many young graduates from the notion of focusing
on building skills tailored to meet certain career needs, objectivities and opportunities. Many young graduates apart from these challenges do not also have work experiences that are applicable to any specific career areas but rather have generic skills that are harnessed through on-the-job training when one is lucky to chance upon one – thus “many flip-flop between any available career/job opportunities they chance upon”, she noted.

**Fig 2: Reasons for current career goals change anticipation**

She added further that the unemployment levels in the country apart from rendering many young people unstable with specific career areas of interest pushes most people, especially ‘the young naïve and impatient graduates’ to turn to their families and friends for ‘links’ to employment opportunities that may not necessarily correspond to their career aspirations and desires.

Also, it is noteworthy to point out that new career fields such as pastoring, music, beauty care (make-up and cosmetics) which hitherto might not be considered as ‘gloriously dominant’ careers that parents would encourage their children to aspire to in their childhood emerged at the tertiary level. But in the current normal and trends, highly educated young people with entrepreneurial desires are aspiring to venture into such fields including fashion & design (tailoring and dressmaking), carpentry and furniture making, cookery, real estate, etc. These are part of the entrepreneurial frenzy in the 21st century, a drive that is reorienting
young and highly educated youth in Ghana and Africa as a whole to take up opportunities in the not too dominant vocational career areas reserved in the past for all others but not “for the so called highly intelligent” and in essence graduates. A former head of the Sociology Department of the University of Ghana interviewed during the study contrasted the pitiful degrading of vocational careers in Ghana and Africa as whole to how they are valued elsewhere by asserting that “in many instances, when one with skills in dressmaking travels to the U.S.A, they easily secure jobs in that field whilst one with a PhD may still be looking for a job. In essence, the current ‘entrepreneurial wave’ is to create new industries that can employ masses of young unemployed people from all walks of life. This entrepreneurial drive constitutes part of the academic discourse of higher institutions such as the University of Ghana where students are required to undergo entrepreneurial education for at least a semester. Even as the momentum to entrepreneurial development and the creation of new industries and large scale employment is slow, the approach and practice is praised publicly to be gaining steam gradually. This reflects the policy position of the Ghana Youth Policy (2010) and the call for such new entrepreneurial trainings by the Ghana Employers Association in their 2006 report. Both reports lamented about the inadequate practical training and problem solving skills, creativity, interpersonal skills and entrepreneurial education during the course of academic studies to drive convergence and emergence of new industries that promote economic development. In a similar vein, many scholars, including Comyn (2008), Dzisah (2008), Haase (2011), etc. have argued for inventive continuous collaboration between industry, government and education to undertake and achieve endogenous innovative heights.
4.3 Current Career Goals/Aspirations & Factors Leading to such Determinations

Current career goals and aspirations of respondents provide an indication of how ‘aware they were’ of themselves in their present times and what career heights they may be capable of attaining in their present and not too distant life. This notwithstanding, the expression of doubt and anxiety about attaining such career goals abound – as 47% of respondents further noted their likelihood to change their career goals depending on changes in future circumstances due to lack of jobs, lack of support for further training and academic studies, emergence of new career/occupational opportunities, etc. Meanwhile to have aspired to such career fields as law, entrepreneurship, banking, accounting, politics, teaching and lecturing, etc. as indicated in the ‘current career choice’ column of figure 1 requires mastery of personal conviction, anchored in the embrace of compromises and passions, and influenced by many factors. The range of influence, intensity and level of impact of these driving factors on the individual respondents in the selection of their career objectives from time to time also depend on the level of exposure of the individual to other information and

![Fig. 3: Drive towards Career Goals and Aspirations](image-url)
knowledge as well as the momentary circumstances. For majority of respondents at the time of the survey, as much as 25% were driven towards their career goals and aspirations by their passion; 15% by their personal attributes; 13.3% by monetary/financial motivation; another 9.2% by entrepreneurial spirits; another 10% by the need to attain prestige, 6.7% driven by the need to satisfy employment needs; 7.5% by family influences, among others as shown in figure 2.

When an Assistant Registrar and Senior Career Counsellor at the Counselling and Placement Center of the University of Ghana, was interviewed on factors that may influence the career choice aspirations of students at the tertiary level, he responded, “it is always difficult to tell….everybody has their own interest for jobs. He stated “some time ago I did career development program for students and most of them wants to work with ECOBANK in Ghana... because at ECOBANK the ladies dress very nicely. He further stated that “sometimes people look at where they can make more money when it comes to job preference, whilst others want to work with TV stations because they will get to appear on TV and become famous”. Corroborating much of these assertions a Senior Lecturer and Former Head of the Sociology Department of the University of Ghana when interviewed on the subject matter observed that “many students’ career choice aspirations and goals are much influenced by monetary gain and income than any other factor”. He cited how many students he came across at the University of Ghana who expressed their desire to work for the Customs and Excise Preventive Service and the Police Service in order to obtain wealth – with the students “believing that there are opportunities for corruptibility and other means of making extra money in these jobs” He expressed his bemusement at the extent to which monetary gains is exceptionally influencing how students make career choices in present
times. When an Assistant Director at the Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations was interviewed on this same subject matter, she objected to the notion that most people follow their true passion in their career choice aspirations – she hypothetically said, “only 1% of career seekers follow their true passion”. She stated that “most people in their youth aspire to being Medical Doctors, Lawyers, Engineers, Accountants, Bankers, etc. basically because of the wealth, prestige and recognition associated with those professions.

The observations of these interviewed respondents are partly reflected in the responses provided by the main study respondents when asked as to whether there are careers they do not aspire to but may gladly engage in. To this question, 60.7% of the respondents responded yes. This reflects in the happenstance situations where individuals may take on other equally suitable career roles that are not necessarily related to the careers individuals aspire to and prepare for. The reasons the respondents give for this response include, desperation and lack of job opportunities in the careers of their passion, the lucrativeness of the opportunity (as in jobs in the Oil & Gas sector, consulting roles and job opportunities with international aid and development agencies, security services, etc.) and the potential for future career development on such jobs. The main motive for any such switch to a job in a situation of happenstance seem more about the monetary reward – a situation that may be very rational to most people.

These findings and observations known, four other factors that may aid respondents’ career selection processes were further investigated. The factors include personality attributes, gender, family and friends, and educational/schooling environment. Questions were asked in order to elaborate on how these factors may influence and impact on
respondents selection of career choice aspirations and goals and the preparation processes they have being going through to achieve their career goals.

4.3.1 Personality Factors in Career Aspirations & Goals

As asked whether respondents took their personal capabilities, social skills and other attributes into consideration in the choice of the career areas and objectives they currently set out to achieve, 55.8% of all the respondents responded ‘yes’, and the remainder responded ‘no’. For those who responded yes, 19.3% cited personal attributes as good communication skills and outspokenness as part of the reasons for their consideration of their current career goals whilst 13.43% cited analytical skills and confidence, 14.9% cited good interpersonal skills. Other attributes cited include being smart and organized (11.9%), persuasive and convincing (8.9%), patient and perseverant, desire to help others, passion, etc. It was evident also that 17.7% of respondents identified with lack of ability in certain subject areas that they thought might inhibit their desire and ability to aspire to certain career fields when in senior high school. Such subjects as stated include Math & Elective Math, Physics, and Chemistry. Some careers this group of respondents stated they had wished to pursue are medicine, engineering, architecture, economics and computer engineering. The table below provides a detailed breakdown of responses on personality attributes that influence career choice aspirations and objectives.

Most of those who responded ‘no’ indicated their lack of cognizance and awareness about the correlation between the relevant personality traits and ability to deliver on the career types that they may embark upon.
Some cited their lack of concern for how the two may relate. This revelation implicates the respondents in regards to the depth of appreciation and understanding that goes into the selection of career objectives taking into account one’s personal capabilities or abilities. It also lends credence to the widely held believe that most students even at their highest point during academic pursuit are baffled and vague about their career objective. An Assistant Registrar at the Counselling and Placement Center of the University of Ghana observed during an interview for this study that “even at Level 400 students don’t know the careers they want to pursue … and they don’t really think through what they really want to do … and it is only when national service is about to end that they start to think of what they want to do”. The Assistant Registrar observed further that apart from students who study career-specific academic courses such as law, accounting, finance and banking, engineering, medicine, nursing, etc. who knows the career fields they are graduating from school into, those who study in the fields of the humanities and arts for example mostly acquire generic skills for which there are numerous career fields to choose specific goals from. He noted that

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality/Attributes</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Desire to Help Others</td>
<td>4.47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Communicator &amp; Outspoken</td>
<td>16.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytical &amp; Confident</td>
<td>13.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-motivation</td>
<td>5.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness</td>
<td>2.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good at Record Keeping</td>
<td>1.49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenacious</td>
<td>1.49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient &amp; Perseverant</td>
<td>4.47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passionate</td>
<td>2.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persuasive/Convincing</td>
<td>8.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring &amp; Loving</td>
<td>2.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart &amp; Organized</td>
<td>11.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Interpersonal Skills</td>
<td>14.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Minded &amp; Approachable</td>
<td>4.47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>2.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>99.9%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the ability to make such determinations, choice and prepare towards certain specific career areas always become elusive for these group of students. He noted further that career development activities such as “internships are very crucial in helping students assess themselves in relation to careers that reflect their values, abilities and personality.” These findings are reflective of the observation by Salami (1999) in his study of career choice of Nigerian Youths by which he concluded that many youths made wrong career choices due to ignorance, inexperience, peer pressure, advice from friends, parents and teachers, or as a result of prestige attached to certain jobs without adequate vocational guidance and career counseling.

Unearthing these understandings from the various respondents brought to the fore the positions observed by career development scholars as Dawis and Lofquist (1984). These two scholars observed that the more closely a person’s abilities, i.e. skills, knowledge, experience, attitude, behaviors, etc. correspond with the requirements of their career or work roles or organization the more likely it is for them to excel in their job and receive satisfactory commendations from their employers. This provides significant contrast to the fact that many students at their highest point of their academic pursuit, even in their final years at the university do not consider their personality types, abilities, knowledge, etc. in the pursuit of any career paths. And by that fact many currently might not have set their career objectives in relation to their personal values. As Dawis and Lofquist (1984) further observed, it mostly when the rewards of career are close enough to the values that a person seeks to satisfy that the chances of the person considering the job as satisfying are higher.
4.3.2 Family & Peer Influences on Career Objectives and Aspirations

The family is the first and the principal institution for socialization and in that capacity often has immeasurable amount of influence on the choices and social life of most of their members – including career life and work. Several studies came to the conclusion that families, parents and guardians, play indispensable roles in the occupational aspirations and career goal development of their children, and in many instances, without parental approval or support, students and young adults are often reluctant to pursue or even explore diverse career possibilities (Knowles 1998; Mau and Bikos 2000; Wilson and Wilson 1992). In many dimensions, the level of parental education and socio-economic status and personality, school peers, etc. greatly influence students’ career choice aspirations and goals (Crockett and Bingham 2000; Wilson and Wilson 1992). Thus, in order to ascertain the extent to which study respondents have been influenced in their career choice aspirations and objectives by their family members (both nuclear and extended) the question as to whether their families and relatives as well as friends/peers influence them in these regards was asked. 42.5% of the study respondents responded ‘yes’ and the remainder responded ‘no’ to this question. Most respondents cited their uncles (32%) as the ones who influenced and persuaded them the most in their career goal decisions. Fathers (24%), friends (18%), mothers (9%) cousins (8%), siblings (5%), grandmothers, (4%) and were also cited in this regard.

Table 3: Career Choice Aspiration Influences by Families, Relatives and others

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Enquiry</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Influence/Persuasion of Families, Relatives &amp; Friends towards Career Choice Goals</td>
<td>42.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pursuit of career goals as a result of Influence/Persuasion from Families &amp; Relatives &amp; Peers</td>
<td>39.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Occupation &amp; Influence on Respondents</td>
<td>43.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pursuit of Career to Maintain Family Honor by Respondents</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ Career Influence on Respondents Career Choice Aspirations and Goals</td>
<td>28.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Most respondents cited being persuaded and influenced to pursue such careers as law, accounting, medicine, and banking/finance. Other career fields respondents cited include politics, journalism, nursing, teaching, public/international relations, catering services, and the security services.

The reasons for which family relatives persuade respondents towards such career choice goals and aspirations included the lucrativeness of the jobs in those career fields, continuation of family businesses, the need to attain prestige and higher social status in life, job security, peace and stability in career life. It was also established that 39.2% of respondents out of the 42.5% study respondents who cited been persuaded and influenced by families and relatives on career choice aspirations and goals have confirmed that they are currently pursuing such career goals and aspirations. They indicated that such decisions were made in cognizance of their knowledge about how lucrative and highly regarded such career fields are, as well as their trust in the reputation and personal experiences of such relatives. These findings give clear indication as to the extent to which families, relatives and friends/peers continuously interact in shaping the life of one another regarding which career paths can provide them with the best opportunities and possibilities in the world of work and life. These influences, however may not present career choice aspirants with the best career guidance since they may be provided in merely limited spirit of wishful desires rather than based on expert career counsel that takes into account different capabilities as well as other factors. On the part of peers also, the findings of the studies is aligned with the findings by others scholars such as (Bojuwoye and Mbanjwa 2006; Stuart 2000) that ‘peers’ especially adolescents are easily influenced by their peers because they rely on each other for validation of the choices they make including career decisions. This known, Bojuwoye and Mbanjwa (2006) further found that peers were reported not to be marginally influential in career
decision making among university students, thus by assumption limiting much of these ‘career choice aspiration influences’ in basic and high school levels.

On the specificity of whether the careers/occupations of parents of the study respondents influence their career choice aspirations and goals 28.5% of the study respondents responded ‘yes’ and the remainder responded ‘no’. Different reasons accounted for this response. 69% of those who responded yes cited their desire to simply continue in family lines of businesses and career occupations, whilst the remainder indicated that they have chosen to pursue careers related to those of their parents based on their personal capabilities and also the security of occupations held by their parents. 67% of those who responded ‘no’ intimated that they identify with personal strengths and capabilities with which they can strive ‘to be’ better or ‘do better’ than their parents. The remaining respondents simply consider their area of career interests unrelated to their parents. It is however noteworthy that the income levels of all those who responded ‘no’ to being influenced by their parents’ careers/occupations have parents whose combined annual income fall in the range of all the income brackets provided in the questionnaire (GHC3, 000–9,900; GHC10, 000–20,000; GHC 21,000–40,000; GHC 41,000–60,000; and GHC 61,000 and above). More specifically 9% of the ‘no’ respondents indicated to have parents whose combined annual income is more than GHC61, 000. All the 28.5% respondents who responded ‘yes’ to being influenced by the career paths/occupations of their parents, also have parents whose combined annual income is above GHC61, 000 per annum. This is indicative of the point that only respondents whose parents’ ‘income levels are higher and are most likely employed in occupations that guarantees job security, prestige, social recognition and status, etc.’ showed willingness and interest to follow up in the career and occupational steps of their parents. This finding interlays with the varying opinions and findings as to which specific family
characteristics – as in education level of parents, socio-economic variables etc., that influence career aspirations (Shumba & Naong 2012). Mau and Bikos (2000) did agree further that both parents’ education and income influence career choice aspirations of children, thus the findings of this study that some respondents are influenced to pursue the occupations/career paths of their higher income earning parents largely valid.

4.3.3 Gender Roles, Stereotypes and Career Choice Aspiration Influences

In many instances, gender differences account for the career paths many people pursue. And when the question was posed as to whether respondents are deterred from pursuing certain career aspirations or are influenced to pursue certain career goals as a result of their sexes, 22% responded yes. They have attributed these to the belief systems, notions and biases they were brought up to have regarding these career fields and occupations. For the male respondents a male child or adolescent with such career goal as nursing, catering, cosmetologist, etc. will be seen as odd and encouraged to opt and aspire for more dominant ‘traditional’ male careers as being a doctor, engineer, lawyer, police officer, etc. Likewise for the females, they are encouraged to avoid such career fields as engineering, medicine, architecture, and other dominant male vocational careers as carpentry, building and construction, etc. These findings share much semblance with the findings of Deng (2004) who in her study in Nigeria found that sex-role stereotypes exist among boys and girls in primary schools as they aspire to traditional occupations. Spade (2001) also observed that gender difference in peoples’ experiences starts at pre-school and continues throughout their educational careers whilst Barnett (2007) intimated that teachers just as parents are viewed as key players in the career paths that young people eventually pursue. Falaye and Adams (2008) emphasized that some teachers even encourage students to take certain subject options that are congruent with potentials, aptitudes and abilities that they identify in them. This
implies that parents’ and teachers’ as well as much of society’s beliefs influence their children’s self-perceptions of ability and consequently career choice. This positions known, respondents noted that change is abound presently towards the views, perception and orientation towards such gender roles and connotations that inhibit both sexes from pursuing certain career paths, relaxing both sexes to opt for careers known as traditionally dominated by the opposite sex. In light of cultural practices that may inhibit respondents from pursuing certain career paths the findings were identical mostly with the gender constructions that influence career choice aspirations. On the other hand, respondents noted their awareness of certain cultures in some Ghanaian societies today where women are limited and placed in domestic roles and restricted from accessing education and social mobility through family and community support. Others cite such superstitious beliefs as lawyers been buried facedown when they pass away as deterrence to pursuing career as lawyers.

4.3.4. Educational Environment & Impact on Career Choice Aspirations

Investigation into the schooling environment of an individual and how it impacts their exposure to career awareness and access to programs and activities put in place to shape their career development trajectories and efforts underlies the appreciation of how such individuals come to select their career choice aspirations and goals. For instance Bojuwoye & Mbanjwa (2006) in their work ‘on factors that impact career choices of students found that career choices of tertiary students from previously disadvantaged schools are negatively impacted by lack of finance, lack of career information, poor academic performance and unsatisfactory career counseling services. Maree and Beck (2004) also indicated that in disadvantaged communities, schools with career counselling programs under-utilize the facilities and viewed the facilities as too expensive. Maree (2009) established that many learners in South Africa passed Grade 12 without having received career counselling in any form and
consequently denied the opportunity to apply for acceptance into sought-after fields of study at tertiary training institutions.

These findings largely corroborate the schooling experiences of study respondents and its impact on their career choice aspirations and goals when investigated from basic level through to the tertiary level. As evident from this study, when the question was posed to study respondents

### Table 4: Impact of Basic School and SHS Education on Career Aspirations of Study Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact/Influence on Career Aspiration</th>
<th>Basic school</th>
<th>SHS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Positive Impact</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>42.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Impact</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>12.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little Positive Impact</td>
<td>20.83%</td>
<td>13.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Impact/Influence</td>
<td>9.16%</td>
<td>11.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>broadened mind on field</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>generated interest on career</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wider exposure to career</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sharpen/improved skills</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

as to the impacts of their basic schools on their career choice aspirations, most respondents (60%) indicated that their basic school (Primary to Junior High Education) level education simply had no impacts on their career choice aspirations whilst 42.5% indicated same for their senior high school education. 10% and 12.5% of respondents also noted that their basic school and senior high school educations respectively had negative impacts on their career choice aspirations whilst 20.83% and 13.33% of respondents noted that their basic and senior high school education respectively had little positive impact/influence on their career choice objectives and aspirations. 9.16% and 11.66% of the respondents however stated that their basic school and senior high school education experiences respectively have great
impact/influence on their career choice aspirations and objectives. Other respondents cited broadened mind on career fields, development of new career interests, wider exposure to career fields, attained sharpened and improved skills towards career choice during their senior high school education. The table below provides a statistical breakdown of the impact of education on the career choice aspirations of respondents.

To establish the relationship between the type of basic and senior high school education and experiences study respondents have and their impact and influence on the career aspirations of study respondents it became evident that 92% of respondents who cited their basic schools for having great impact/influence on their career choice aspirations attended private basic schools located in urban areas. 79.7% of those who cited their senior high school education for having same influence on their career choice aspirations on the other hand attended public senior high schools located in urban areas and cities. This notwithstanding, it was generally established that 58% and 91% of all study respondents have gone through public basic schools and senior high schools respectively. Majority of the study respondents also had their education in urban communities and cities – 72% at the basic level and 94% at the senior high level. The deduction from these findings simply confer that irrespective of the community settings and school type the respondents attended, much impact was not made on the lives of the respondents in terms of career choice decisions and influences. This implied that much career information and awareness was lacking for molding the respondents for their preparation and course selection/choices towards higher education during their basic and senior high education years. 81% of the study respondents further confirmed that no attempts were made to expose or provide them with relevant career information, counselling and training to help shape their knowledge and understanding of the requirements for most of their childhood career dreams and aspirations. The remaining 19%
of the respondents however mentioned such activities as career seminars and workshops, excursions, role play of career mentors, school clubs and career advice from teachers, as means by which they were oriented and exposed to varied career fields.

At the tertiary level, 41% of study respondents have noted that their current courses of study (Sociology) are not related or linked to their areas of career choice aspirations. 28% provided no response whilst the remaining 31% indicated a link in the pursuit of their current courses of study to their current career goals. They have cited career fields in the security forces/law enforcement, public and international relations practice, human resources, entrepreneurship, business and corporate management careers, law, pastoring etc. Many were of the position that the generic knowledge acquired in the academic discipline of Sociology and other humanity/social science programs broadened up their worldview to better appreciation of how societies and their allied structures operate. These experiences they believe will serve them in their career pursuits and personal development. This notwithstanding, an overwhelming 94.6% of the study respondents envisage/intend undertaking further studies to meet their career goals in lecturing, banking and finance, accounting, public/international relations, law, music, development practice, etc. This finding is reflected in the career choice aspiration of respondents in the basic and senior high school levels where majority intend to pursue careers in law, accounting, banking and finance, medicine, publishing, etc., that may not necessarily relate to their current course of study (Sociology). This corroborate the observation by Shumba and Naong (2012) that career choices are often long decided before the learners enter the universities and choosing the right courses/subjects or getting admitted with the right courses/subjects to prepare them for their future careers is often a make or break point. Much further evidence of the impact of the tertiary/university education on the respondents is presented in the next page under the University of Ghana http://ugspace.ug.edu.gh
heading “Career Development Trajectories: Preparations, Orientations & Exposures”.

Evidence as presented under this heading showed that most respondents are aware of opportunities for career development activities that they could voluntarily participated in. Yet most respondents fail to do so. Meanwhile, when respondents were asked about rating how career development issues are addressed throughout all levels of education (breakdown provided in the pie chart below), 47% of them ticked ‘not well enough’; 21% ticked ‘fairly well’; 17% ticked ‘not at all’; 11% ‘very well’ and only 4% ticked ‘excellent’. This notwithstanding, all study respondents support the need for better ways of addressing career development efforts and activities at all levels of education in Ghana. Currently, 47.9% and 21.7 of all respondents believe that schools focus excessively on academic work, and are theory oriented respectively. 19.2% also believe there are no adequate efforts and motivation from policy makers toward career development issues whilst 8.2% believe that support and collaboration with industry players is elusive in getting career development in schools successful and sustainable; and the remaining respondents state no reasons.

Fig. 4: Rating of how career development issues are addressed at all educational levels
4.4. Career Development Trajectories: Preparations, Orientations & Exposure

The career development trajectories study respondents underwent throughout their lifetime also underscore the kinds of career goals they currently are determined to pursue and how they come to arrive at such goals and aspirations in the present. The overall trajectories as conceived in this study partly include such career choice and objective determining factors as family and friends, personality types, ability and capabilities, gender, socio-cultural, economic and political environmental influences, etc. as much as involve the preparations that the individuals in their rational senses and interface with their institutions of study, associations, networks, etc. embark upon to achieve their career objectives to achieve their target of entry into certain career fields. So the question remains, as many factors may combine to influence the individual as to which career choice aspirations to pursue, what preparations do most students or individuals undergo apart from their academic works in order to achieve their career goals? In all regards, much about building one’s own credentials, abilities, and potentials in readiness to taking on opportunities lies in self-effort.

Thus, the enquiry into whether study respondents have voluntarily engaged themselves in some extra curricula activities throughout their years in school at all levels in preparation towards the realization of their career dreams and aspirations had 51% of them responding ‘yes’ and the remainder ‘no’. 63.8% of the ‘yes’ respondents cited their engagement in such career development activities as internship; 19% in part time and holiday jobs; 12% in vocational and technical training programs as fashion and design or dressmaking, cosmetology, etc.; and the remaining mentioned engagement in sports and debate clubs. On the whole, all study respondents indicated that they have not been ‘required mandatorily under no choice option’ throughout their years of education to undertake any career development activities such as attending career counselling services, career workshops.
and fairs/expos, internships, consult course advisors, apprenticeship and other training programs, etc. However at the University level 27.8% of respondents stated that they have been encouraged by their lecturers, career advisors, among others to undertake such activities as internships, mentoring programs, entrepreneurial apprenticeship, etc. and to make other relevant efforts towards finding their career paths. 71.7% of the study respondents further stated that they were aware of some opportunities for career development programs during their stay in the University. Such opportunities include career programs organized by the Counselling and Placement Center within the University, course advisors and tutors assigned to students for advisory roles on career interest and choice of courses, career and leadership workshops organized outside the University by Springboard and Emmanuel Dei-Tumi of Future Leaders Group, etc.

The study further focused on the specific activities undertaken voluntarily throughout the years of study by the respondents at the university of Ghana, and found that 48% of the respondents mentioned been to career workshops for at least once whilst the remaining have not. 64% of those who participated in these career workshops stated that their career directions were much sharpened afterwards, whilst 19.8% mentioned achieving greater insight, awareness and knowledge of many new career fields and opportunities that they hitherto were unaware of. The remaining respondents stated that they continue to feel vague and unsure of their career objectives and choice aspirations even after attending the career workshops. With as much as 71.7% of all the study respondents, been aware of the existence of course advisors to consult, merely 21% of them have consulted their course advisors at least once concerning their career aspirations and course choices. These respondents confirmed that their consultation experiences with their course advisors equipped them to better understand their prospects after first degree, broadened their scope on career paths,
helped them develop insights and settled on career choice goals. In a similar vein, whilst
96.8% of the study respondents have knowledge of the Counselling and Placement Center of
the University, only a paltry 19.6% of them have ever visited the center for career counselling
and other support services. 64% of the respondents who have visited the center, found their
services helpful in shaping and enhancing their career directions, focus and insight.

Notwithstanding the limited and unstructured career development activities and
opportunities in existence, findings of the study evidently reveal that some few study
respondents did go out of their comfort zones to take up the task of career development
activities to prepare themselves towards their future career choice aspirations during their
tertiary level education. But these efforts as noted were mostly not made by majority of
respondents, thus resulting in many instances where many graduates from tertiary
institutions/universities find it difficult to have career direction. As An Assistant Registrar &
Senior Career Counsellor of the Counselling and Placement Centre of the University of
Ghana noted, “Most students only become aware of their lack of career direction when
national service is almost completed…and as a result, most of them want to get back to
school immediately when they cannot find any jobs after national service”. And as found and
corroborated by responses from the respondents of the study an overwhelming 94.6% of them
envisage/intend to undertake further studies to meet their career goals in lecturing, banking
and finance, accounting, public/international relations, law, music, development practice, etc.
This also reflects in the situation where many respondents, as much as 46% stated that they
were pursuing courses not related to their career areas; or many respondents possibly did not
get admitted for the courses they may consider suitable for their career needs when they first
applied to the university; or possibly because such courses are not available at the first degree
level; or possibly as a result of change of mind on career choice interests and aspirations; or
possibly because most respondents consider their first degrees as the stepping stone to attaining other higher degrees and career goals. An Assistant Registrar & Senior Career Counsellor at the Counselling and Placement Centre noted also that, even for those who intend to pursue further academic studies after their first degree in order to attain some career goals, an earlier involvement in career development activities such as consultation of course advisors, career counselors, attending career fares/expos and workshops, etc. is indispensable for gaining insight into suitable areas for further academic studies or training. He lamented further that “majority of students do not seek career counselling and psychometric testing services at the center but rather focus on securing introductory letters for vacation internship programs and jobs.”

4.5 Internal Career Development Mechanisms at the University of Ghana

Internal career development activities at institutions of higher learning are deemed crucial for shaping the career aspirations and directions of their students. Thus the issue has been explored further in order to ascertain whether efforts are made to duly prepare students toward the world of work after school within and across various departments, faculties, etc. in the University. An Assistant Registrar & Senior Career Counsellor at the Counselling and Placement Centre interviewed noted that there are no institutionalized mechanisms in place to get students to mandatorily undergo career development activities. “Students who undertake such activities do so on their own initiatives” he stated. He emphasized that attempts to institutionalize career development programs since 1995 never really materialized. He stated that any measures to orient students on careers that may fall within the courses they pursue in the University are not part of the center’s mandate and that the center is not aware of any career development counselling, training and other activities undertaken by the various departments within the University. He acknowledged that even as the Center is gaining
prominence within the University, no internal collaborations on career development, training, counselling, etc. exist between the center, departments, faculties, and the rest of the academic community of the University. He however stated that efforts are underway to streamline the situation and institute career development mechanisms within the University.

A senior lecturer, who once served as the head of the Sociology Department when interviewed about the role of the departments and lecturers in students career development activities quipped that “it is not our duty as a department and as lecturers” and that as lecturers, they are simply expected to research and teach – noting that such responsibility should be placed before the counselling and placement center. He however noted that, during his time as head of department, the department once in a while called in employers from the banking sector who gives talks on career prospects in the banking sector. He noted that, the department became aware through these interactions that graduates from the department were the most employed by the banks. He prompted that all departments within the University can facilitate such activities as career fairs, workshops and training programs as well as internships, and apprenticeship programs earlier enough in the academic life of the students (mostly by level 200 & 300) in order to expose them to available career opportunities and motivate them towards achieving them. He asked that prompting from all departments for students to be sensitized during lectures would be as much essential, whilst encouraging students to be inquisitive about their career goals by seeking to understand courses that are relevant to such career paths.

In simplistic terms, institutional mechanisms for innovative career development practices that can be harmonized to facilitate convergence between the academic community, the counselling and placement center, and other parts of the University of Ghana is
considered lacking. Deliberate efforts needed to put these initiatives in place and to see to its implementation to address the career needs of students must be tied to the soul and the essence of the very sustenance of the University as an institution and a place where ‘all round training and education’ for survival in the world – including the world of work – is imperative.

4.6 National Career Development Policy Framework

In larger settings, the policy framework of any nation/state set the standard by which all else is pursued, practiced and experienced, and unfortunately in the case of career development and training, there is no known coherent ‘go to’ policy framework in Ghana to guide the process. All the secondary respondents interviewed on the subject matter emphasized their lack of knowledge and awareness on the existence of any specific career development and training policy framework in the country. As a tertiary level director of education at the Ministry of Education noted “I am not aware of any career development and training policies…and if any exist, then they have not been formalized”. He acknowledged that, most students become more sensitive and conscious of their career needs only at the tertiary level because the educational system of Ghana is not structured to adequately provide career development orientations at the basic and high school levels, even at the tertiary educational levels. An assistant Director of Research at the Ghana Labor College & Trades Union Congress, emphasized that there are no deliberate and strategic policies by governments over the years on the quality and quantity of labor needed across various sectors of the economy, and that has resulted to the excessive training and education of most of the population of the country in arts, humanities, and business programs to the neglect of those needed with science and math backgrounds, vocational and technical skills. He contended that if such deliberate policies and efforts were to exist, career development and training
policies and frameworks would have been devised aimed at achieving such set targets right from basic level education. Apparently, in the present scheme of things, no formal policy framework exist to cater to the career needs of the youth, and haphazard adoptions by individual students, institutions, etc. are used and followed to attain the career development needs of the youth of this country.

4.7 Collaborations between Industry, Government & Education

To achieve cohesion in career development training and activities of young people especially for first time entrants into the world of work requires profound understanding of the trends in industry in a particular society as well as the emerging trends in worldwide/global economies. That requires, meticulous assessments, research and in-depth knowledge of what labor requirements are needed, and how to raise or train that labor stock through education and training in order to sustain the division of labor and specialization needed in any society for progress. Such cannot be achieved without governments leading the way for industry and education to collaborate. Collaborative arrangements between these institutions are imperative for strategic human capital development. Yet, this study reveal that, even as many efforts were made, some dating back as two decades, no realistic achievements were realized in attaining the collaboration needed between, industry, education and government to achieve the career development and training programs in Ghana. As one respondent noted;

“We don’t have an employment policy. We don’t have statistics on labor. We don’t have the number of opportunities available and job specifications. So there is that gap between what the university produces and what industries need. Industries do not inform academia and academia also does not go to find out. So that gap will continue to be there. Government is not providing any bridge.” – An Assistant Registrar & Senior Career Councillor of the Counselling and Placement Centre of the University of Ghana noted.
The Chief Executive Officer of Equinox Company Limited when interviewed stressed that academia and industry have many times attempted to collaborate on devising curricula and career development programs at the school levels for the right workforce to be trained but yet failed to take any concrete steps to translate these efforts concrete policy decisions. A tertiary level director of education at the Ministry of Education noted that the consensus needed on how the collaboration between industry, academia and government can take shape has been elusive. For the Assistant Director at the Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations, there must be a decisive intervention of government to closely link academia and industry players as well as institute other measures to create congenial and suitable ecosystem for varied skill sets and career development and training needed across all industries. These efforts will in the long run produce a cycle that is socially, politically and economically beneficial by reducing the massive unemployment problems and set the stage for improved societal harmony.

4.8 Expectation of Industry Players from Educators & Governments

In order to attain the best output in industry, and general wellbeing in society through work, various players in industry have waded in to request for what best approaches educators and governments have to consider in training its people with the best career/work skills. In this regard an Acting Secretary of the Association of Ghana Industries (AGI) intimated that the AGI is of the view that the Ghana educational system is not producing graduates in career fields that require real technical knowhow and skills. The Chief Executive Officer of Equinox Company Limited confirmed this position by observing that there is adequate pool of managerial and administrative professionals that industry is always satisfied with. The concern of industry as he noted is the lack of people with science, engineering,
vocational and technical expertise who are needed to directly contribute to the production of goods and services.

The understanding was that industry is open to working with educators and governments to attain the relevant shifts necessary in the training and retraining of the masses of youths with potentials and talents both in schools and unemployed after school. The various industry players interviewed expressed readiness to commit to collaborations needed for better industrial and career development. They further observed that opportunities for internships, coaching and mentoring, apprenticeship, vocational and technical skills training, and entrepreneurial skills, etc. are necessary at all educational levels in any career development and training efforts.

4.9 Hypothesis Testing

One broad hypothesis was formulated and tested during this study. The test was conducted with a chi-square test at an alpha level of 5% to determine the relationship between certain variables. The study tested whether it is easier for the study respondents to form career goals and make specific career choice aspirations they intend to pursue as a result of the more they undertake and participate in career development activities such as internship, mentoring programs, apprenticeship and training, consultations, career fares, etc. throughout their education. Thus, the following two relationships were investigated:

I. Relationship between experiences of career developmental activities respondents embarked upon in the past and their ability to make specific conscious career objectives.

II. Relationship between career developmental activities embarked upon by respondents and the commitment of the respondents to stick to and pursue
such current career choice aspirations with no immediate intention for
career choice change.

**Fig 5: Chi-square Test Showing the Relationships in the Hypothesis**

As shown in the chi-square test in the series 1 above, the significance value of 0.000 is less than 0.05. Hence we reject the null hypothesis in the first relationship (i) above, that the two variables are not related. Therefore, the study concludes that there is a significant relationship between the career development activities that respondents undertake and their ability to attain clarity, awareness and to confidently and decisively make their current career choice aspirations and objectives. This means that the developmental activities respondents were involved in has an influence on their current career choice aspirations and objectives. This is evidently depicted in the study when 64% of those who participated in these career workshops and other career development training activities stated that their career directions were much sharpened afterwards, whilst 19.8% mentioned achieving greater insight, awareness and knowledge of many new career fields and opportunities that they hitherto were unaware of.
The chi-square test in the second relationship (ii) as shown in series 2 above, on the other hand shows that there is no relationship between the career development activities respondents previously engaged in and their ability to commit to and not change their current career choice aspirations since the significance value of 0.47 is greater than 0.05. This means that the career development and training activities respondents are involved in has no influence on their immediate ability to stick or commit to their current career choice aspirations without the intention and possibility of changing them in the immediate future. This is reflected in the findings of the study where 47% of the study respondents regardless of their conviction on their current career choice aspirations and objectives noted their likelihood to change their career goals depending on changes in future circumstances due to lack of jobs, lack of support for further training and academic studies, emergence of new opportunities, etc.
CHAPTER FIVE

5.1 Conclusions & Recommendations

Conclusively, this study produces very intricately complex mixes of understanding as to the trajectory and how career choice aspirations of the youth in Ghana in general and as well for those who found themselves in higher learning/tertiary institutions altogether unfold. It unravels to an extent the rocky experiences of career development and training experiences across all levels of education in Ghana and the shaky foundation upon which individuals are endeavoring to build their future worlds at the workplace. The study reveal that, career dreams are often passed on from the process of socialization, either being aspirations handed out by parents and other relatives during childhood and teenage stages, or from school teachers and peers, societal stereotypes on gender roles, etc. These career aspirations as passed on become dominantly inhabited in the minds and hearts of the individuals, forming the core of career passions that drive many. Unfortunately, most of these individuals do not receive the appropriate orientation on what the requirements to attaining these careers aspirations and goals are, whilst many do not simply possess the abilities, disciplines, commitments, resources, etc. that it takes to journey through the hurdles necessary to attain such dreams. And as the study unearthed, 60% and 42.5% of the study respondents indicated that their basic and senior high schools respectively had no positive impacts in influencing their career aspirations and goals whilst growing up. 10% and 12.5% of respondents also noted that their basic school and senior high school educations respectively had negative impacts on their career choice aspirations whilst 20.83% and 13.33% of respondents noted their basic and senior high school education respectively had little positive impact/influence on their career choice objectives and aspirations. Only 9.16% and 11.66% of the respondents however stated that their basic school and senior high school education experiences respectively have great impact/influence on their career choice aspirations and objectives.
Most of these experiences were attributed to lack of deliberate efforts to provide relevant career guidance and counselling, career information and training required to help shape their understanding and knowledge of the requirements of childhood career aspirations. 81% of the study respondents observed these positions whilst 19% observed that activities such as career seminars and workshops, excursions, career mentoring and role plays, school clubs and career advice from teachers were deliberately used to orient and expose them to varied career fields. An interesting mix of a revelation about these positions was that 92% of respondents who cited their basic schools for having great impact/influence on their career choice aspirations attended private basic schools located in urban areas, whilst 79.7% of those who cited their senior high school education for having same influence on their career choice aspirations attended public senior high schools located in urban areas and cities. Worthy of note however is the fact that 58% and 91% of all study respondents have gone through public basic schools and senior high schools respectively. The revelations here can be placed in the context of the impacts that schooling environments can have on students, opening up the need for further and an exclusive research area and assessment in Ghana.

At the tertiary levels however, the early childhood and teenage career aspirations are deemed to have evolved from idealistic aspirations to ‘tentatively realistic’ career aspirations. As one respondent noted “they became aware of ‘some equally good career fields’ only when they came of age and got into their tertiary education….this prompted their curiosity and desire to readjust their career goals towards such areas rather than focusing on some career areas and goals they have long held on to, and currently find unattainable”. At the time of the study respondents, up to 47% expressed doubt about their ability to achieve their current career goals and expressed the possibility of changing them in the future – citing reasons such as monetary or financial motivation (35%); happenstance or the need to seize any lucrative
career or job opportunities that may come their way (23%); ‘career passion/interest change’ (19%); non-availability of career interest related jobs (15%); inability to financially support further training in current career choice area, etc. But their career choice aspirations at this stages fall within ranges the individuals find attainable. For example, most respondents intend to pursue careers in law, public and international relations, lecturing, as sociologists, human resources, security services, etc. that is either linked to their academic pursuit or can easily be attained through further academic pursuit or skills training. Also renewed entrepreneurial drive and frenzy catching on among highly educated young graduates are leading many to venture into such fields as fashion & design (tailoring and dressmaking), carpentry and furniture making, cookery, real estate, etc. These reorientation is said to be ferociously catching among the highly educated youth in Ghana and Africa, with opportunities being taken up in the not too dominant vocational career areas reserved in the past for all others but not “for the so called highly intelligent.

The study further revealed that most young graduates do not focus on any specific career field when looking for job but rather hunt and look for employment opportunities in any field that they chance upon. And 60.7% of the study respondents observed this position when asked, maintaining that in happenstance and other circumstances, they may take on other equally suitable career roles that may not be necessarily related to the careers they aspire to and prepare for. The level of unemployment in the country, desperation, lucrativeness of any ‘chanced upon job opportunity’ (as in jobs in the Oil & Gas sector, consulting roles and job opportunities with international aid and development agencies, security services, banks, insurance firms, etc.) will be reasons for such considerations. Other reasons such as, lack of specific and applicable job experiences, possible career development opportunities on such jobs, etc. are said to be factors responsible for many young graduates
inability to focus specifically on building skills tailored to meet certain career needs, and opportunities. Thus on regular basis, masses of young graduates ‘flip-flop’ between any available jobs they chance upon. Often also, the upbeat is that many who have pursued academic studies/disciplines that impart generic knowledge as in the arts and humanities are often predisposed to continuous adjustment of career choice decisions and needs as compared to those who pursued career specific academic studies such as medicine, engineering, accounting etc. And as relatively evident for example, as much as 41% of study respondents noted that their current courses of study (Sociology) are not related or linked to their areas of career choice aspirations and 28% provided no response, the remaining 31% indicated a link in the pursuit of their current courses of study to their current career goals. Thus, at this point, a lot of respondents at worst have their career goals set in a pool of career fields/areas they do not envisage wandering away from. These notwithstanding, an overwhelming 94.6% of the study respondents envisage the possibility and need or intend to undertaking further studies to meet their career goals. This also provides a very profound context regarding the prospects for the realization of the career aspirations by many. It shows the resources required – time, financial, commitment and discipline – the length to which most young people today must go to achieving their career goals.

Regarding the question as to what drives study respondents to determining their various career goals and aspirations, 25% indicated passion; 15% noted personal attributes; 13.3% noted monetary/financial motivation; 9.2% noted entrepreneurial spirits; 10% noted the need to attain prestige, 6.7% noted the need to satisfy employment needs; 7.5% by family influences. The issue of passion however has been contested in many contexts, with many respondents noting their likelihood of switching career goals under many different circumstances, including their inability to find jobs in their desired career fields.
happenstance, lucrativeness of other job opportunities, etc. One secondary respondent at the Ministry of Employment noted that ‘whilst passion drives career aspirations, it does not result in the career/jobs that most people eventually engage in. She attributed the massive scale of unemployment in the country and the drive of many towards finding lucrative jobs in sectors as oil and gas and banks to these trends. She observed that only an estimate of 1% of job seekers may actually follow through with their passion when it comes to what jobs/careers to engage in. Meanwhile, it was also evident that 44.2% of the study respondents responded to not consciously and deliberately understanding and working towards any specific personal attributes, abilities and capabilities that may be deemed most suitable for the career paths they aspire to. Most respondents in this group cited their lack of awareness about any correlation between the relevant personality traits and certain career fields with its associated impact on ability to excel in those careers, whilst others simply cited their lack of concern for how the two may relate. This finding implicates the respondents’ depth of appreciation and understandings regarding the selection of their career objectives, taking into account one’s personal capabilities or abilities. It also lends credence to the widely held assertion that most students even at their highest point of academic pursuit are baffled and are less proactive about their career goals and do not make concerted efforts to understanding these issues profoundly. For the 55.8% respondents who claimed to be aware of how personal attributes, abilities and capabilities can impact on ones performance on the job, 19.3% cited personal attributes as good communication skills and outspokenness; 13.43% cited analytical skills and confidence; 14.9% cited good interpersonal skills as part of the reasons for their consideration of their current career goals. Other attributes cited include being smart and organized (11.9%), persuasive and convincing (8.9%), patient and perseverant, desire to help others, passion, etc. In another light 17.7% of respondents identified that at their High School level, they saw themselves as ‘lacking brilliance’ in certain subject areas that are deemed
desirable to aspire and progress to certain career fields such as medicine, engineering, computing, etc. Such subjects as stated include Mathematics & Elective Mathematics, Physics, and Chemistry.

The study further found that families, friends, relatives and teachers are very influential in determining the career paths and goals of the study respondents. As much as 42.5% of the study respondents alluded to this position, with reasons for which relatives and families wield such influences ranging from the need to find lucrative jobs in the respective career fields, continuation of family businesses, the need to attain prestige and higher social status in life, job security, peace and stability in career life, etc. To this extent 39.2% of these respondents confirmed that they are currently pursuing such ‘families and relatives influenced’ career goals. 28.5% of the study respondents also alluded to have been influenced by the careers/occupations of their parents. Different reasons accounted for this response. 69% of those who responded yes cited their desire to simply continue in family lines of businesses and career occupations, whilst the remainder indicated that they have chosen to pursue careers related to those of their parents based on their personal capabilities and also the security of occupations held by their parents. It is also worthy of note that the 28.5% respondents who claimed to have been influenced by the career paths/occupations of their parents have parents whose combined annual income is above GHC61, 000 per annum. This is indicative of the point that only respondents whose parents’ ‘income levels are higher, can be classified as middle class, and are most likely employed in occupations that guarantees job security, prestige, social recognition and status, etc.’ showed willingness and interest to follow up in the career and occupational steps of their parents. Those who have not been influenced by the occupations/careers of their parents intimated that they identify with personal strengths and capabilities with which they can strive ‘to be’ better or ‘do better’ than
their parents. These observations provide clear cut insights into how influential families and relatives can be in shaping and determining which career paths their wards follow. And depending on what circumstances the individual finds themselves, these influences can make or break them, distract/stray or embolden them, weaken their confidence or provide them an atmosphere of awareness, direction and purpose in finding their career feet. In this regard, complex support systems, information, education and career development activities to complement any roles by families, friends, peers and teachers are highly recommended. In this regard, complex gender connotations that may influence career choice positions from an ordinary person’s perspective can be adequately dealt with in much professional ways. As the study revealed 22% of the study respondents believed they have invariably in many ways experience influences regarding what career goals to pursue because of their sex. As stated by these respondents whilst the males were encouraged to opt and aspire for more dominant ‘traditional’ male careers as to become a doctor, engineer, lawyer, police officer, etc. the females, were often cautioned to avoid such career fields as engineering, medicine, architecture, and encouraged to aspire to be nurses, journalists, teachers, caterers, etc. This implies that parents’ and teachers’ as well as much of society’s beliefs influence their children’s self-perceptions of ability and consequently career choice.

When it comes to achieving one’s career goals and aspirations, a lot of discipline and personal initiatives are required. The study delved into these individual efforts and found mixed results – that most respondents were aware of some opportunities for career development that they could voluntarily participate in, some went out their comfort zones to take up these engagements and others did not. As it was put simply by one secondary respondent “many students only become aware and concerned about their lack of career direction when national service is almost completed”. Regarding voluntary career
development preparatory efforts throughout their schooling life, as much as 49% of respondents engaged in none. For the 51% that indicated in engaging in any, 63.8% cited internships; 19% cited part time and holiday jobs; 12% cited vocational and technical training programs such as fashion and design or dressmaking, cosmetology, etc.; and others engaged in sports and debate clubs. At the University level, 71.7% of the study respondents stated their awareness about some opportunities for career development programs. Such opportunities include career programs organized by the Counselling and Placement Center within the University, course advisors and tutors assigned to students for advisory roles on career interest and choice of courses, career and leadership workshops organized outside the University, etc. And out of the 71.7%, 21% of the respondents have consulted and received encouragement from their lecturers and course/career advisors to undertake such activities as internships, mentoring programs, entrepreneurial apprenticeship, etc. and to make other relevant efforts towards finding their career paths. These respondents confirmed that consulting their course advisors equipped them to better understand their prospects after first degree, broadened their scope on career paths, helped them develop insights and settled on career choice goals. It was further evident that at the university level, 48% of the respondents mentioned to have been to career workshops for at least once. 64% of those who participated in these career workshops stated that their career directions were much sharpened afterwards, whilst 19.8% mentioned achieving greater insight, awareness and knowledge of many new career fields and opportunities that they hitherto were unaware of. The remaining respondents stated that they continue to feel vague and unsure of their career objectives and choice aspirations even after attending these career workshops. In a very specific enquiry, 96.8% of all study respondents have knowledge of the Counselling and Placement Center of the University, but only 19.6% of them have ever visited the center for career counselling and other support services. 64% of the respondents who claimed to have visited the center, found
their services helpful in shaping and enhancing their career directions, focus and insight. On the whole, all study respondents indicated that they have not been ‘required mandatorily under no choice option’ throughout their years of education to undergo any career development activities. Meanwhile, 47% of the study participants rated the way career development issues are addressed throughout all educational levels ‘not well enough’; 21% ‘fairly well’; 17% ‘not at all’; 11% ‘very well’; and 4% ‘excellent’. All study respondents however support the notion for better ways of addressing career development efforts and activities at all levels of education in Ghana. And in that regard, 47.9% and 21.7 of all respondents believe that schools focus too excessively on academic work, and are theory oriented respectively. 19.2% also believe there are no adequate efforts and motivation from policy makers toward career development issues whilst 8.2% believe that support and collaboration with industry players is elusive in getting career development activities coherent.

Under critical observation, the turbulence in career choice difficulties can in many ways be attributed to the vacuum and a lack of deliberate career development planning throughout all levels of the educational system of Ghana. As evident from this study there are no career development frameworks and policies to shape guidance, counselling and other training activities, thus haphazard practices are either adopted by institutions to cater for these vacuums or nothing at all is done. For many young people, complex processes of career development, involving self-awareness in relation to interests, abilities, competencies and values, awareness, knowledge, information and understanding of enterprise, industry and occupational structures, directions and career pathways in many regards are lacking as social institutional mechanism to manage the processes in Ghana are non-existent. As such, the continually advanced or diverse activities, greater responsibility and prestige, development of
knowledge, skills and attitudes generally through a planned program of learning experiences that characterize the career development processes are never experienced. And consequently, most young people as they are left out without realizing and nurturing their true potentials become ‘sensitively rational’ in their career choice aspirations. Survival in the job market becomes the imperative approach – with no realistically specific career paths sought. These masses of youth/individuals become ‘cautiously calculative’ in the choice of their career paths and forsake or let loose the ‘so called passion’ that drive many towards their career goals. Based on what needs are to be met, what circumstances these individuals find themselves in, what differences exist in personal attributes and other environments people find themselves, they often decide on which career paths may best suit their immediate needs. And on these bases, respondents seek certain career paths and goals or are willing to change their career goals when circumstances in their life change. If it becomes difficult for them to find jobs in their initial career choice areas, they become more willing to accept any other opportunities they chance upon. As many secondary respondents interviewed alluded to, and as many study respondents confirmed their possibility of changing their career goals when circumstances and opportunities change, most young people who are not ‘career-specifically-trained’ evidently tend to look for jobs wherever they can find them without recourse to passion or any future regrets. This runs asymmetric to the notion that people will be more satisfied with their careers if they were to actively engage in choosing them than to rely on chance during a career hunt. An individual finding themselves in this turbulent career choice instability thus rationally acts to satisfy their immediate occupational needs than to prepare towards some ‘passion and desires’ they may foretell how it could eventually unfold. Placing this in the ‘rational choice’ approach to satisfying career needs, runs parallel to the notion that career development involves the balancing of recognizing and meeting needs of the
individual and simultaneously responding to the outer forces and realities of life becomes a 
better sum to allude and adhere to.

At the core, it has never been a rule of thumb for people to follow through with their 
career goals in their lifetime, and it is notable that people everywhere around the world from 
time to time switch jobs/careers for one reason or the other – based on what new trends 
catches their fancy, passion and interest change, or as a result of changes in circumstances, 
maturation, environment, etc.. But the basic argument is that most individuals should have 
found themselves with the right kind of career choice goals and aspirations early enough, 
have enough time to prepare toward them, understand what the requirements to attain them 
are, so as to make meaningful decisions towards their lives. But as evident from this study, 
individuals sometimes pursue courses that are unrelated to their career interest and 
aspirations. And they often turn to, or intend going back to school to pursue second degrees 
in areas of their career interest, using their first degrees as stepping stones. This may results 
in long years of schooling and academic preparation, stress on financial resources of the 
individuals, delays in income earning activities, etc. that the individuals may not forehand 
envisage. Individuals who do not have the support systems to further continue mostly get 
stack, mostly counting on chances for employment in any career fields they chance upon. 
And unfortunately, as evident in other studies as well as this one, individuals from less 
economically privileged and endowed backgrounds who do not go to well-resourced schools 
are bound to formulating their career goals late in life, especially when there are no deliberate 
efforts for such exposure to be gained in their basic and high schools. These same individuals 
are often the ones to pass on and forsake their career choice aspirations and interest as a result 
of lack of resources to pursue further and long academic studies and other trainings required 
to attain those career/professional heights. Simply put, much is not done at all educational
levels – thus challenges exist in students’ abilities to formulate realistic career goals and interest early enough in order to duly and adequately prepare toward.

The highlights of these career choice aspirations and career development and training problems extend to challenges of the unavailability of better mechanisms and institutionalized means of dealing with career development activities in the Ghanaian society. As observed by an Assistant Registrar & Senior Career Counsellor at the Counselling and Placement Centre observed that “there are no institutionalized mechanisms in place to get students to mandatorily undergo career development activities. “Students who undertake such activities do so on their own initiatives” he stated. He emphasized that attempts to institutionalize career development programs since 1995 never really materialized. He further stated that any measures to orient students on careers that may fall within the courses they pursue in the University are not part of the center’s mandate and that the center is not aware of any career development counselling, training and other activities undertaken by the various departments within the University. All the secondary respondents interviewed on the subject matter also emphasized their lack of knowledge and awareness on the existence of any specific career development and training policy framework in the country. As a tertiary level director of education at the Ministry of Education noted “I am not aware of any career development and training policies…and if any exist, then they have not been formalized”. He acknowledged that, most students become more sensitive and conscious of their career needs only at the tertiary level because the educational system of Ghana is not structured to adequately provide career development orientations at the basic and high school levels, even at the tertiary educational levels. As such, the problem is compounded and becomes complex than it currently looks on the surface. Simply put, there are no deliberate efforts to coordinate career development activities in the country, and the individual and various institutions are
left on their own to figure a way out – a way and process that can be perplexing. Meanwhile much academic literature on career development and training activities, factors influencing career choice, stating the complexity involved in the whole process, as well as other career development frameworks and policies exist to guide the shaping of a Ghanaian career development policy and framework. But no successful action has been forthcoming from all stakeholders involved. Whilst it is evident that efforts are continuously made to initiate collaborations between government, industry and educators, no eminent results with a ‘kill-bullet’ solution can be found today to help resolve the issues as they stand now. Apart from issued communiques from national workshops and conferences on career development, unemployment challenges and other pointers left out in our Youth Policies and National Development Plans, there is no actual plan to address the career development challenges. As it is now, industry players are vehemently laying accusing fingers at the educators, especially tertiary institutions, for failing to ‘produce’ relevant and all-rounded graduates that meet the needs of industry. Tertiary educators on the other hand believe, their roles are to research and teach, and not to produce graduates that ‘fresh-out of the-school system’ meets the needs of industry, and that industry must conduct some of the further and advanced trainings required depending on what skill sets and needs they want to meet.

All in all, the most basic understanding from the findings of this study is that, the career development activities required of students across Ghana, regardless of their academic backgrounds, personal attributes, abilities, capabilities other limitations are far more complex than it may be surveyed from the surface, requiring individual and societal efforts, collaborations, institutional mechanisms, national policy frameworks and action plans - all needed to streamline the problems engrossing us and right on sight.
5.2. Recommendations

Evidently the link between education and socio-economic development is realized through work and the labor market. Thus, skills learned in the educational system should be used by firms in the production of goods and services for economic growth and development, and also by society for shaping the direction and sustainability of the society itself. And education if it were to achieve the best results must be deliberately coordinated to train and produce people with the required matching skills. This requires deliberate efforts at career development and training throughout all levels of a society’s educational system. And per this study, the recommendations here, even as they relate to the findings of the career choice aspiration experiences of sociology/humanities and arts students, is extended to all young people regardless of their academic backgrounds and disciplines. And it is meant to advocate/propose individual and institutional initiatives and mechanisms relevant to shaping and sharpening the career development landscape of Ghana toward peoples’ preparation toward the world of work and fruitful economic engagement. To this end, the notion of leaving individuals to their own fates to rationally pursue their own career interests, potentials and other capabilities based on trending opportunities in the employment/labor marketplace or in an economy without any deliberate institutional coordination, support and intervention must be reassessed. The notion that the aggregate outcome of individually rational acts does not necessarily become rational or desirable is valid in this context. Thus, strategic and conscientious national planning that involves the career development and training of the youth and the population to meet the needs of specific industries, societal needs and various career fields and world of work must be imperatively analyzed. The individual must be consciously and deliberately involved in these efforts, assuming greater responsibility in personal development through practical skills and career training programs throughout all schooling years. The complexity of these efforts must be realized, integrating inputs from
many influencers on the individual. The teacher, parents, friends and peers, must critically be engaged to help the individual discover their talents, potentials and abilities rather than inhibit them. These efforts must be continuous and dynamically evolutionary; with society playing renewed roles that are not automatically ascription based and closed but open and forward looking. Individuals must understand the discipline, commitment, and other relevant requirements to achieving their career goals, with information, knowledge, awareness and better insight into what the trends and various career fields are. In brief, individuals must form the core and be at the center of any actions to provide an atmosphere of opportunities for career development and general progress.

One peculiar institutional approach to dealing with the career choice aspiration turbulence among young people is the development of an up-to-date holistic ‘national career dictionary and catalogue’ known in other places as ‘Dictionary of Occupational Titles’. This ‘national career dictionary and catalogue’ for instance may take into account other regional and global career fields that are relatively unknown or dominant in Ghana to guide career seekers, the youth, educators and career counselling and development experts. These ‘catalogues’ as available in other jurisdictions as the U.S.A, Germany, etc., state specific career areas, requirements (educational training and costs, personal abilities, commitments and orientations, etc.) to attaining these careers, financial compensations and remunerations associated with different occupations and careers, opportunities for career growth/progressions, auxiliary careers that one can branch into with such trainings, etc. to guide the individuals. These efforts can better be underpinned by a holistic National Career Development Framework and Policy, duly and carefully crafted and developed, implemented and disseminated across the country. These frameworks and policies must promote activities and guidelines for career counselling, training, awareness and exposure that one must
undertake at every level/stage of their educational life (from basic to tertiary). These frameworks must clearly establish the careers that can be attained conventionally at each level of education reached, how it can help shape the individuals’ lifestyle and quality of life as well as help in nation building and economic transformation. These frameworks must lay out approaches and strategies to attain collaborations with other stakeholder in society. Collaborations between industries of all kinds, the educational institutions, especially the tertiary institutions, and government should be increased and fostered. With such underlying frameworks, government should be required to directly take up the task of providing the platform and facilitations for corporations and educational institutions to interface regularly in the training of students and design and development of academic curricula. Intensity on vocational and technical education as part of mainstream education at basic and high school educational levels with emphasis on various entrepreneurial and industrial initiatives that can be built in the line of various technical and vocational skills training should be emphasized. Concessions must be made to encourage the teaching and learning of science and math, and also for pursuing further studies and training in the vocational and technical skills area. These deliberate national career development initiatives must extend to the identification of talents/potentials of students in their junior years and the need to provide support for (especially the needy) those that are critical in certain career fields such in science & math, technology, innovation, vocational and technical inclinations and acumen, engineering and design, etc. Quota systems can be developed throughout districts/schools on such talent/potential identification and funding sources identified to providing for such people at national/regional career and training hubs or with scholarships provided for such individuals to receive such dedicated educational training elsewhere. This can help provide a balance in the quality and quantity of ‘rocket scientist’ and ‘basic skills’ students and workers the country needs across all career spheres in a matter of a decade or two. This can further help
reduce the excessive dependence on import of expatriate workers across industries and national development projects. In another breath, this can result to a surge in local technological innovations, industries and new heights in entrepreneurial growth to spur employment and economic expansion.

Such measures as tracking systems for new and emerging career trends – as possibly imperfect as they may be, as well as research, data collection and database development on employment data on various career fields in order to establish comprehensive projections for the labor needs for various career areas and industries in the country should be designed, adopted and implemented. This can help guide and achieve balance in any deliberately coordinated career development activities and policy framework that seeks to achieve a comprehensive and balanced supply of labor and help to as much extent prevent deficit in other crucial labor needs in other career fields. Whilst labor demands may be largely based on free market demands, the system needs to be flexible and adaptive enough not to create supply gaps in anyway but merely to ensure reduction in excessive redundancy that exist in labor supply in certain career fields in order to minimize massive unemployment. This will help stem the tide on a ‘supply driven labor market as opposed to demand driven labor markets’.

As it is now, the raging debate is for individuals to continuously be allowed total freedom to choose their educational direction and train for whatever career fields catches their fancy in the labor market. Whilst this argument is sound and congruent with the democratic and free market environment of Ghana, with the emblem “freedom and justice”, it has been contested by many scholars that, Ghana’s current educational system and labor
training direction is skewed towards the arts, humanities and business programs, resulting in massive unemployment levels after years of schooling and graduation form the tertiary institutions especially. At the same time there are incessant complains about huge labor deficits in vocational, technical, engineering, science and math career fields with its attendant lack of industrial and entrepreneurial initiatives and business developments in those fields. Hence, the call for interventions by the government of Ghana with policy directions that deliberately prompts its citizenry and individuals, with facts, orientations and re-socialization if necessary, without necessarily taking a central planning and command approach, towards achieving possible balances in the labor market in order to reduce the current level of unemployment (level of unemployment currently and usually unknown due to lack of comprehensive data from a specific institution of authority on the matter).

In other breaths, universities/tertiary institutions and their faculties/schools and departments can go out of their ways, and be innovative by reaching out and establishing affiliation and linkage with private and public sector industries, public institutions such as the Ghana Police, CEPS, Fire Service, SSNIT, COCOBOD, and many others to find places for internships and apprenticeships to provide on-the-job practical work experiences in vocational and technical jobs, farms, etc. for their students. These measures and opportunities when introduced to students in their early years of studies in the tertiary institutions may go a long way in sharpening the career senses, awareness, exposure, direction and focus. Other measures such as career counselling and advisory services, psychometric testing can become mandatory requirements to help students identify with their potentials and career directions at the tertiary institutions. Career workshops/seminars and fairs, mentoring and coaching programs, mock interviews and aptitude testing, etc., should be frequently organized, at least once in a semester with students required to attend.
Platforms for students to interface, interact, build bridges and contacts with top industry players and officials of public institutions can be provided once in a years. Students through these opportunities may get to understand what courses of studies may be relevant to specific career areas or what other areas of further studies and preparations students need to embark upon to attain and meet the requirements of certain specific or generic career fields.

At the basic and high school levels, measures such as career counselling and advisory services, psychometric testing, mentoring and coaching programs, occupational role plays, vocational and technical skills training, individual and group class projects, etc., must be conducted to help individuals find their potentials, talents, and possible niche career directions. Most especially at the formative years of the individual at the basic school level, the classrooms must be enabled as a place of work and playful learning to enhance the development of cognitive abilities, talents, potentials, creative urges. It must be emphasized that much of such career development and training efforts, with orientations on courses of studies that are relevant to various career fields, exposure, information, training and knowledge on arrays of varied career backgrounds, special schools that can meet special individual course/subject and career training needs must be done before individuals complete their Junior High Schools at the basic education level. This is important because, the period of branching out and specialization in subject/course areas and selection of Senior High Schools in Ghana is done during the Junior High School education period. Such choices in the long run go to affect the career needs of the individual, thus adequate measures must be taken to help the individual in making as much ‘possibly close-to-accurate decisions’ at these levels. Other relevant efforts of career development and training activities must be done prior to the individuals’ completion of the Senior High School since this presents another step on the ladder and a milestone to venturing into the world for possible further trainings, at the University of Ghana http://ugspace.ug.edu.gh
tertiary levels, and other professions leading to career path. In undertaking these efforts, at the basic and high school levels, it important to emphasis the need for parents-teachers-students-peers interfaces and orientations on career options availability, potentials/talents, abilities, requirements and support systems needed to attaining them. This to help avoid the duplicity in career choice and aspiration influences that may come from these different interest groups in the individuals life and end up throwing the whole career development process into a state of frenzy and confusion.

In sum, there is an indispensable need for career development training activities to be conducted throughout all educational levels individuals go through in their ‘maturation years.’ As often noted, career development is a life-long process and endeavor. And on that basis, it can be argued simply that children and young adults need career development and training the most, if they are to grow up as better and matured adults to take up the challenges of an ever increasingly and complexly evolving societies in our modern times.
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Appendix 1: Questionnaire for Main Study Respondents (Final Year Sociology Students – 2013/2014 Academic Year)

M.Phil. THESIS QUESTIONNAIRE

My name is Satch Avudzi. I am an M.Phil. Sociology student of the University of Ghana, Legon. As a requirement for the award of this degree I am conducting a research titled ‘Career Development Trajectories among University of Ghana Students’. And this is my questionnaire to collect data from my main study participants who are final year Sociology students. I therefore humbly solicit your consent and participation in this survey. The identity of all respondents in this survey will be kept confidential and the responses used solely for this research. Kindly respond to all questions honestly. Thank you.

A. Socio-demographic Background

1. Sex
   a. Male [ ]  b. Female [ ]

2. Age
   a. 18-21 [ ]  b. 22-25 [ ]  c. 26-30 [ ]  d. 31-35 [ ]  e. Other [ ]

B. Education & Career Development Exposures

3. What type of basic school did you attend mostly? Private [ ] Public [ ]

4. Were there any deliberate attempts to expose you to diverse professions during your childhood and basic education? Yes [ ] No [ ]. What forms did these attempts take if yes?

5. What career(s) did you aspire to when you were a child or in basic school?

6. What impact did your basic school education have on the careers that you aspire to whilst growing up?

7. How related was this exposures and career aspirations to the course you chose to study in high school?
8. What type of senior high school did you attend mostly? Private [   ] Public [   ]

9. What course did you study in the senior high school? ...........................................

10. Do you have any regrets for the course you studied in senior high school? Yes [ ] No [ ] If yes, why this regret ..............................................................

11. What career(s) did you aspire to when you were in senior high school? ......................

12. What impact did your senior high school education have on your perception and exposure to the careers that you aspire to today? ............................................................

13. How related was this exposures and career aspirations to the course you studied in senior high school? State briefly ..............................................................

14. Whilst in senior high school were there any subjects that you think made it difficult for you to aspire to certain career(s) you desire? Yes [ ] No [ ]. Please state subject and describe your challenge..............................................................

15. Throughout schooling, have you ever engaged in any activities, for example, debate clubs, internship programs, vocational and technical training, sports, part time/holiday jobs, etc Yes [ ] No [ ]. If yes, please state specific activities..............................................................

16. Are you satisfied with your current course of study at the University of Ghana? Yes [ ] No [ ]? For either answer please state why.................................................

17. What subject combinations were you offered in the University? .................................

18. What was the impact of being offered these subject combinations? ............................

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Has the courses changed your career objectives? Yes [ ] No [ ]. If yes how?

19. How would you relate your chances of achieving your career aspirations to other students who study such career specific academic programs as law, medicine, accounting, engineering, pharmacy, etc.

20. What other preparations, for example, mentoring & training, internships, etc do you participate in to prepare yourself for your desired future career whilst in the University?

21. If you have not ever participated in any activities as in question 20, are you aware of any opportunities to do so? Yes [ ] No [ ]. Have you ever been required by your department or the University to participate in any such activities? Yes [ ] No [ ].

22. Have you ever consulted your course/academic advisors regarding which careers you intend to pursue and what courses may be suitable for those careers? Yes [ ] No [ ]. If yes how helpful was their counsel, and if no why haven’t you?

23. Do you know of the counseling and placement center of the University of Ghana? Yes [ ] No [ ]. If yes have you ever gone to solicit any career related advice from their office before? Yes [ ] No [ ]. If yes did their service help you in formulating any career goals and aspirations? Yes [ ] No [ ]. If yes, how? 

24. Have you ever attended any career fare/workshop whilst in the University? Yes [ ] No [ ]. If yes did that event help you towards finding a career direction? Yes [ ] No [ ]. If yes how, If no why? 

Which body organized the career fare it?
25. Do you think issues on career development are well addressed in all educational levels in Ghana? Excellently [   ] very well [   ] fairly well [   ] not well enough [   ] not at all [   ].
   Why do you think so? ........................................................................................................
26. Would you advocate for career development efforts at all educational levels? Yes [   ] No [   ]

C. Career Aspirations/Objectives

27. What career(s) do you aspire to currently? .................................................................what are your career objectives? .................................................................
28. How did you select your career objectives? .................................................................
29. Are you clearly/fully confident and aware of your career goals and the requirements of this career field? Yes [   ] No [   ]
30. Are you confident you will find work and achieve your career objectives? Yes [   ] No [   ].
   Whether yes or no why that response .................................................................
31. What drives you toward this career area? .................................................................
32. What preparations, training and strategies apart from your current academic studies are you currently undertaking or intend to undertake to meet your career aspirations? .................................................................
33. Have your career objectives changed whilst in the University? Yes [   ] No [   ]. What are the reasons for these changes? .................................................................
34. Do you anticipate changing the career you currently aspire to? Yes [   ] No [   ]. If yes what will be the reason for such a change? .................................................................
35. How will you prepare and adapt to any such career aspiration/choice change? ......................
   ............................................................................................................................

36. Do you consider your personality traits as a factor in deciding what career(s) to aspire to?
   Yes [   ] No [   ]. What personality traits do you think make you suitable for the career you
aspire to currently? ……………………………………………………………………. How
do you come to this conclusion? …………………………………………

37. Do the career you aspire to currently relate in any way to your present area of academic
study? Yes [ ] No [ ]

38. Would you undertake any further or advanced academic studies in order to meet your career
aspirations? Yes [ ] No [ ]. If yes kindly state area of potential further
studies………………………………………………………………………………………………

39. Are there careers you do not aspire to at all but would gladly engage in by chance or
happenstance? Yes [ ] No [ ]. State some of these careers and why…………………………

40. What are some popular career areas that most colleague students aspire to? ..........................
………………………………………….................................................. Why those careers?
………………………………………………………………………………………………

What are some rare careers that colleague students aspire to? ….
………………………………………….................................................. Why those careers?
………………………………………………………………………………………………

D. Environment & Social Conditioning

41. Where did you live mostly growing up? Give name and location…………………………
………………………………………… How long did you live in this place?

42. What is the level of education of your parents? Mother ............... Father..............

43. What is the main occupation of your parents? Mother ............... Father..............
......................... Do you like the occupation of your parents? Yes [ ] No [ ]. Briefly
describe how you feel about their professions…………………………………………

What other income earning activities do your parents engage in? ……………………

44. Within which of the following income brackets in your estimation do your parents’ joint
annual earning fall? GHC3,000.00 – 9,900.00 [ ] 10,000 – 20,000.00 [ ] 21,000 – 40,000
[ ] 41,000 – 60,000[ ] 61,000 and above [ ]
45. Does the occupation of your parents in any way influence you towards the career you aspire to presently? Yes [ ] No [ ]. For any response describe why …………………

46. Do you get influenced by any family relations/friends to pursue any specific careers? Yes [ ] No [ ]. Kindly state relations ……………………………. What career(s) do you mostly get influenced to pursue? ……………………………. What do you think or know is the reason behind such persuasions if yes …………………
………………………………………………. Have you agreed to their persuasion? Yes [ ] No [ ]

47. Would you pursue a career if it becomes necessary to achieve or maintain family honor and reputation? Yes [ ] No [ ]. If yes under what circumstance………………
………………………………………………. Are you in any such situation? Yes [ ] No [ ]

48. Are you very friendly and socially connected? Yes [ ] No [ ]. Do these connections in any way influence the career(s) you aspire to at any point in time? Yes [ ] No [ ] If yes provide the circumstance……………………………...…………………….

49. Is there any particular person you regard as your mentor whose career you intend to pursue? Yes [ ] No [ ] Have you embarked on any activities in order to achieve this objective?
Yes [ ] No [ ]. If yes, state type of activities……………………………………

50. Are you aware of any national employment or career development programs you intend to undertake to enhance your future career chances or your current career aspirations? Yes [ ] No [ ]. If yes kindly state program(s)……………………………………

51. Are there some careers or professions that deterred you just because of your sex? Yes [ ] No [ ]. Kindly list some of these professions if yes………………

52. Are you aware of any cultural practices and beliefs that may restrict you or any other persons in Ghana from pursuing certain career aspirations? Yes [ ] No [ ]. If yes kindly state some of these circumstances……………………………………
…………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………

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Appendix 2: Interview Guide for Counselling and Placement Center of the University of Ghana

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON

Semi-structured Interview Guide for M.Phil. Sociology Thesis

Thesis Title: ‘Career Development Trajectories among University of Ghana Students’

Interview for Counseling and Placement Center

Socio-demographic data (Applicable to all interviewees)
1. Sex
2. Age
3. Office/Title
4. How long have you been working in this position?

Interview Questions
1. Do you think most students whilst studying here are generally conscious and concerned of the career paths their courses of studies may lead them to?
2. What differences exist between students offered career specific academic programs such as Law, Medicine, Business Administration etc and those without, such as the arts & humanities?
3. What is the role of the Counselling and Placement Centre of the University of Ghana?
4. What prominence has that role occupied in the University community today?
5. Do the University in its entirety sees the need and assumes any responsibility towards the career development needs and the essence of producing competently relevant graduates?
6. Per your encounter and knowledge, which areas of academic studies are students most likely to branch out of; to what, and why?
7. Which careers are newly trending today and why? What careers are generally the most sought after and why?
8. What are the things you think drives students or people towards certain careers the most?
9. Do you encounter students who seek change to the careers they earlier aspire to? How often is this and what are the reasons and circumstances for these changes?
10. How often do students consult officials of the Counselling & Placement Centre on career related issues and areas of studies that may fit these aspirations? Are there any initiatives to encourage students to do so?
11. Are there any measures to orient students to the careers that exist within the remit of their courses of study? E.g. through internships, apprenticeships, career fares and training, etc as relevant in shaping the career focus and aspiration of students?
12. Are there situations where students are obliged to undertake such activities as paid/unpaid internships, apprenticeship, and any other career development programs?
13. How often do students participate in these programs and measures?
14. Do you think students are generally aware of what the requirements are to attain success in their preferred career areas?
15. In your estimation which group of students fare well in the Ghanaian employment market; those offering career specific academic programs such as law, medicine, engineering, etc or those in the arts and humanities such as Sociology, Economics, etc?
16. What is your view of the structure of the Ghanaian educational system in terms of promoting career development at all levels of education? Do you know of any policies aimed at comprehensive career development in Ghana and as much in the Universities?
17. Are there any measures (e.g. through the University alumni body) by which your centre or the University track its graduates to ascertain what stations they are in life?
18. What affiliations and relationships exist between industry players (organizations) to the University, its departments and faculties?
19. Are academia and industry players reaching out enough to each other on ways to producing relevant and competent graduates who can transform the fortunes of industry and society in general?
20. How are government agencies and institutions involved in any such relationships? Are there any specific initiatives to rope in both academia and industry players to help shape the career terrain and development of professionals?
21. How open is industry to accommodating higher education students to understudy their crafts and businesses in the forms of internships?
22. What impact could this make in shaping the potentials and aspirations of students, and in the creation of new business leaders and industries?
Appendix 3: Interview Guide for a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Sociology of the University of Ghana, Legon.

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON

Semi-structured Interview Guide for M.Phil. Sociology Thesis
Thesis Title: ‘Career Development Trajectories among University of Ghana Students’

Interview Guide for a Senior Lecturers at the Sociology Department

Socio-demographic data (Applicable to all interviewees)
1. Sex
2. Age
3. Office/Title
4. How long have you been working in this position?

Interview Questions
5. Do you think most students whilst studying here are generally conscious and concerned of the career paths their courses of studies may lead them to?
6. What career areas/jobs do you think graduates from your department can pursue directly out of school without any advanced academic studies?
7. In your estimation, what differences exist between those offered career specific academic programs such as Law, Medicine, Business Administration etc and those without, such as the arts & humanities?
8. Do the University in its entirety sees the need and assumes any responsibility towards the career development needs and the essence of producing competently relevant graduates?
9. Per your encounter and knowledge, which areas of academic studies are students most likely to branch out of; to what, and why?
10. Do students consult their course/academic advisors on career related issues and areas of studies that may fit their career aspirations?
11. Are there any measures to orient students to the careers that exist within the remit of their courses of study? E.g. through internships, apprenticeships, career fares, etc as relevant in shaping the career focus and aspiration of students?
12. Are there situations where students are obliged to undertake such activities as paid/unpaid internships, apprenticeship, and any other career development programs?
13. Do you know of any policies aimed at comprehensive career development in Ghana and as much in the Universities?

14. Are there any measures (e.g. through the University alumni body) by which your department, faculty or the University track its graduates to ascertain what stations they are in life?

15. What affiliations and relationships exist between industry players (organizations) to the University, its departments and faculties?

16. Are academia and industry players reaching out enough to each other on ways to producing relevant and competent graduates who can transform the fortunes of industry and society in general?

17. How are government agencies and institutions involved in any such relationships? Are there any specific initiatives to rope in both academia and industry players to help shape the career terrain and development of professionals?

18. What impact could this make in shaping the potentials and aspirations of students, and in the creation of new business leaders?
Appendix 4: Interview Guide for Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON

Semi-structured Interview Guide for M.Phil. Sociology Thesis

Thesis Title: ‘Career Development Trajectories among University of Ghana Students’

Interview Guide for Ministry of Employment & Labor Relations

Socio-demographic data (Applicable to all interviewees)
1. Sex
2. Age
3. Office/Title
4. How long have you been working in this position?

Interview Questions
5. Which careers in Ghana requires the most daunting academic tasks? Are there enough people readily available who meet the criterion required to pursue those careers?
6. Are there opportunities and openings to gain entry to study for these careers? And are job openings abundantly available to them?
7. What careers are generally the most sought after, and why?
8. Are academia and industry players reaching out enough to each other on ways to producing relevant and competent graduates who can transform the fortunes of industry and society in general?
9. How are government agencies and institutions involved in any such relationships? Are there any specific initiatives to rope in both academia and industry players to help shape the career terrain and development of professionals?
10. How open is industry to accommodating higher education students to understudy their crafts and businesses in the forms of internships?
11. What impact could this make in shaping the potentials and aspirations of students, and in the creation of new business leaders?
12. Do you think there is enough career diversities in Ghana to enable the country develop holistically?
13. Do these career diversities have adequate openings to provide absorption opportunities to those who aspire and train to pursue careers in those fields?
14. How satisfied is industry players with the career professionals in their sectors? Are there any means to measure that?
15. What is industry’s perception of the knowledge of fresh graduates on the job? Are they in relative terms aware of what their jobs may entail when they are first hired?
16. Do most graduates get on the job with any past experiences they might have acquired through internships or other measures whilst in school?
17. Hypothetically speaking what are the chances of career aspirants/job seekers who have undertaken other trainings through internships, etc in finding jobs as compared to those who haven’t gone through any such orientations?
18. Which groups of students are the most unemployed in Ghana? What accounts for that?
19. Is there any study and record of whether most people employed in Ghana works in their most desired careers?
20. Are people just looking for work wherever they could find it or they target certain specific careers?
21. Are there means of tracking people’s career aspirations, career choice and career progress in order to determine their career satisfaction?
22. Do you think there are (if any at all) adequate career development activities in our educational institutions to prepare students towards the world of work, entrepreneurship and industrial development.
23. What career development measures will you propose to be adopted throughout our educational institutions toward achieving these ends?
Appendix 5: Interview Guide for Labor Research Institute, Accra Ghana

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON

Semi-structured Interview Guide for M.Phil Sociology Thesis
Thesis Title: ‘Career Development Trajectories among University of Ghana Students’

Interview Guide for Labor Research Institute

Socio-demographic data (Applicable to all interviewees)
1. Sex
2. Age
3. Office/Title
4. How long have you been working in this position?

Interview Questions
5. Which careers in Ghana require the most daunting academic studies and training?
6. Are there enough people readily available who meet the criterion required to pursue those careers?
7. Are there opportunities and openings to gain entry to study for these careers? And are job openings abundantly available to them?
8. Which careers are newly trending today and why? What careers are generally the most sought after and why?
9. What affiliations and relationships exist between industry players (organizations) and Ghanaian Universities?
10. Are academia and industry players reaching out enough to each other on ways to producing relevant and competent graduates who can transform the fortunes of industry and society in general?
11. How are government agencies and institutions involved in any such relationships? Are there any specific initiatives to rope in both academia and industry players to help shape the career terrain and development of professionals?
12. How open is industry to accommodating higher education students to understudy their crafts and businesses through internships and apprenticeships? What impact could this make in shaping the potentials and aspirations of students, and in the creation of new business leaders and industries?
13. Do you think there is enough career diversities in Ghana to enable the country develop holistically? Do these career diversities have adequate openings to provide absorption opportunities to those who aspire to pursue careers in those fields?

14. What career fields or professions do industry thinks are most lacking today in Ghana and why?

15. How satisfied is industry with the career professionals in its sector?

16. What is industry’s perception of the knowledge of fresh graduates on the job? Are they in relative terms aware of what their jobs may entail when they are first hired?

17. Do most graduates get on the job with any past experiences they might have acquired through internships or other measures whilst in school?

18. Hypothetically speaking what are the chances of career aspirants/job seekers who have undertaken other trainings through internships, etc in finding jobs as compared to those who haven’t gone through any such orientations?

19. Which groups of students are the most unemployed in Ghana? What accounts for that? Is there any study and record of whether most people employed in Ghana works in their most desired careers?

20. Are people just looking for work wherever they could find it or they often target certain specific careers?

21. Are there means of tracking people’s career aspirations, career choice and career progress in order to determine their career satisfaction?
Appendix 6: Interview Guide for Ministry of Education

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON

Semi-structured Interview Guide for M.Phil Sociology Thesis
Thesis Title: ‘Career Development Trajectories among University of Ghana Students’

Interview Guide for Ministry of Education

Socio-demographic data (Applicable to all interviewees)
1. Sex
2. Age
3. Office/Title
4. How long have you been working in this position?

Interview Questions
5. Do you think most students at least from their senior high education to tertiary levels are generally conscious of the career paths their courses of studies may lead them to?
6. In your estimation, do most students enter the University with any clear cut career aspirations at all? What differences exist between those offered career specific academic programs such as Law, Medicine, Business Administration etc and those without, such as the arts & humanities?
7. Per your encounter and knowledge, which areas of academic studies are students most likely to branch out of; to what, and why?
8. Which careers in Ghana requires the most daunting academic tasks?
9. Are there enough people readily available who meet the criterion required to pursue those careers?
10. Are there any measures to orient students to the careers that exist within the remit of their courses of study? E.g. do you consider such measures as internships, apprenticeships, career fares and training, etc as relevant in shaping the career focus and aspiration of students? Are these measures adequate?
11. Are there situations where students are obliged to undertake such activities as paid/unpaid internships, apprenticeship, and any other career development programs?
12. Are there any means of evaluating these measures to assess the impacts they have on students who patronize them?
13. In your estimation which group of students fare well in the Ghanaian employment market; those offering career specific academic programs such as law, medicine, engineering, pharmacy, etc or those in the arts and humanities such as Sociology, Political Science, History, Economics, etc?

14. What is your view of the structure of the Ghanaian educational system in terms of promoting career development at all levels of education?

15. Does the educational system have a deliberate strategy towards the promotion and development of diverse career fields and human disciplines needed to achieve the development needs of Ghana?

16. Do you know of any policies aimed at comprehensive career development in Ghana and as much in the Universities?

17. Are academia and industry players reaching out enough to each other on ways to producing relevant and competent graduates who can transform the fortunes of industry and society in general? How are government agencies and institutions involved in any such relationships? Are there any specific initiatives to rope in both academia and industry players to help shape the career terrain and development of professionals?

18. How open is industry to accommodating higher education students to understudy their crafts and businesses in the forms of internships? What impact could this make in shaping the potentials and aspirations of students, and in the creation of new business leaders?

19. Do you think there is enough career diversities in Ghana to enable the country develop holistically?

20. Do these career diversities have adequate openings to provide absorption opportunities to those who aspire to pursue careers in those fields?
Appendix 7: Interview Guide for Private Sector and Industry Players

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON

Semi-structured Interview Guide for M.Phil Sociology Thesis
Thesis Title: ‘Career Development Trajectories among University of Ghana Students’

Interview Guide for Private Sector and Industry Players

Socio-demographic data (Applicable to all interviewees)
1. Sex
2. Age
3. Office/Title
4. How long have you been working in this position?

Interview Questions
5. Which careers in Ghana requires the most daunting academic studies and training?
6. Are there enough people readily available who meet the criterion required to pursue those careers?
7. Which careers are newly trending today and why? What careers are generally the most sought after and why?
8. What career fields or professions do industry thinks are most lacking today in Ghana and why?
9. How satisfied is industry with the career professionals in its sector?
10. What is industry’s perception of the knowledge of fresh graduates on the job? Are they in relative terms aware of what their jobs may entail when they are first hired?
11. Do most graduates get on the job with any past experiences they might have acquired through internships or other measures whilst in school?
12. Are people just looking for work wherever they could find it or they target certain specific careers?
13. What affiliations and relationships exist between industry players (organizations) and Ghanaian Universities?
14. Are academia and industry players reaching out enough to each other on ways to producing relevant and competent graduates who can transform the fortunes of industry and society in general?
15. How are government agencies and institutions involved in any such relationships? Are there any specific initiatives to rope in both academia and industry players to help shape the career terrain and development of professionals?

16. How open is industry to accommodating higher education students to understudy their crafts and businesses through internships and apprenticeships? What impact could this make in shaping the potentials and aspirations of students, and in the creation of new business leaders and industries?

17. Do you think there is enough career diversities in Ghana to enable the country develop holistically? Do these career diversities have adequate openings to provide absorption opportunities to those who aspire to pursue careers in those fields?

18. Which groups of students are the most unemployed in Ghana? What accounts for that? Is there any study and record of whether most people employed in Ghana works in their most desired careers?

19. Hypothetically speaking what are the chances of career aspirants/job seekers who have undertaken other trainings through internships, etc. in finding jobs as compared to those who haven’t gone through any such orientations?