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Exploring the influence of household internal migration and parents' main livelihood activities on children's occupational aspirations in Ghana

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Abstract

Background: Although individuals and entire households engage in internal migration in Ghana, the literature mostly focuses on individual migration. The main objective of this paper is to explore the influence of household internal migration and parents' main livelihood activities on children's occupational aspirations.

Methods: This paper draws on data collected from study sites in Ghana as part of a larger research project on Children Mobility and Transport in Sub-Saharan Africa (which took place in Ghana, Malawi and South Africa). During the project survey questionnaire, a total of 125 children and young people aged between 8 and 18 years were interviewed within urban, peri-urban, rural and remote rural sites in two agro-ecological zones in Ghana (eight sites in total). Additionally, the paper draws on qualitative research undertaken in the project in all sites using individual interviews and focus group discussions with key informants, parents and children.

Results: The main motives of household internal migration among study participants were economic and social. While parents were mostly engaged in agriculture, their children generally aspired to non-agricultural occupations based on their interests, capabilities and perceptions. The children in both rural and urban areas aspired for occupations of fairly similar status.

Conclusions: Children's occupational aspirations are shaped by exogenous and not endogenous factors from their parents but their aspirations in both rural and urban areas are fairly similar. The paper has implications for career counseling at home and in school as well as the National Youth and Employment Programme (NYEP) in Ghana.

Keywords: Internal migration, household, livelihood, children, occupational aspirations, Ghana

Introduction

Household migration may be defined as a situation where an entire household decides to migrate from one locality to the other as a family unit. In the literature two main patterns of household migration have been identified: these are split-household migration and entire household or family migration. Split household migration is a situation whereby a member of a household, usually a husband, migrates from a rural to an urban area but occasionally visits the rest of the family in the rural area (Agesa and Kim, 2001). This may be because the costs of living in urban areas are generally higher than rural areas and therefore it is more economical for most of the household members to reside in rural than urban areas, particularly when the motive of migrating is economic. On the other hand, an entire household or family may decide to relocate to a different destination for various reasons.

This paper focuses on the latter form of household migration, which involves whole household relocation. Four patterns of household migration are considered: urban-to-urban, urban-to-rural, rural-to-urban and rural-to-rural. The literature on household migration and associated livelihoods is now well established (e.g. Meikle, Ramasut and Walker, 2001; Cahn, 2002; Ellis, 2003). A number of studies have looked specifically at the educational achievements of migrants' children at destination (Smith and Tomlinson, 1989; Grisay, 1993). What appears to be less documented in the literature are studies that examine the impacts of household migration on children's occupational aspirations; this issue has been under-researched in general and almost no work on this in Ghana exists (Ocansey, 2005). The main objective of this paper therefore is to assess the influence of usual place of residence and parents' main livelihood activities on children's occupational aspirations. The paper seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the determinants of household internal migration in Ghana?
2. Do parents' main livelihood activities influence the occupational aspirations of their children?
3. Are there any differences in occupational aspirations between children in rural and urban areas?

Conceptual and theoretical perspectives on migration, livelihoods and occupational aspirations

Migration may be defined as a form of spatial mobility involving a change of usual residence between clearly defined geographical units for various reasons (International Organization for Migration, 2003). Traditional economic theories of migration postulated that the decision to migrate was made by the individual,

independently of other members of the household (Harris and Todaro, 1970). But subsequent theories were developed which recognized the role of the household in migration decision-making (Stark, 1991; Chant, 1998; Arango, 2000). The concept of 'household' has been defined in many different ways. Friedman (1992) defined a household as a residential group of persons who live under the same roof and eat out of the same pot while the Ghana Statistical Service defined a household as 'a person or group of persons who live together in the same house or compound, share the same housing-keeping arrangements and are catered for as one unit' (Ghana Statistical Service, 2002 : viii). These definitions seem to suggest that a household is a homogeneous entity but in reality it comprises members with varied background characteristics, perceptions, preferences and aspirations. Also, in a household, particularly in Ghana and other African countries, differences in power relations exist, particularly in terms of sex and age. In Ghana, for example, a male is almost always the *de jure* household head; a female becomes a head of household only in the event of the death of her spouse or when her spouse migrates or when she is not married (Ghana Statistical Service, 2002). Also, in most ethnic groups in Ghana (particularly in northern Ghana), females and children are rarely involved in household decision-making. This paper is situated within the context of the household strategy approach proposed by Chant (1998), in which the household is considered the social arena where family members take collective decisions concerning their well-being. Migration arises because a household needs to satisfy livelihood requirements, and therefore may decide who can leave and who has to stay behind. The entire household could however, relocate depending on the prevailing circumstances.

The term 'livelihood' has been defined by Chambers and Conway (1992) as the capabilities, assets, and activities required for a means of living. It is based on the assumption that the asset status of an individual is fundamental to understanding the options open to him/her, the strategies he/she adopts to attain a livelihood, the outcomes he/she aspires to and the vulnerability context under which he/she operates (Ellis, 2003). Livelihood activities have been defined as all activities that generate the means of household survival. Scoones (1998), Carney (1998) and Ellis (2000), cited in Cahn (2002), have identified three main types of livelihood strategies or activities: natural resource base, non-natural resource base and migration. Household migration could thus, in some cases, be a form of livelihood strategy aimed at improving upon its livelihood status.

Occupational aspiration refers to a strong feeling of interest and preference for a particular occupation, vocation or job accompanied by the desire to enter that occupation, vocation or job (Ocansey, 2005). There are a number of theoretical

perspectives in both sociology and psychology that have outlined factors that influence occupational aspirations of young people (Hotchkiss and Borow, 1990; Leung, Comdey and Scheel, 1994). One sociological perspective on occupational choice is the Status Attainment Model (Hotchkiss and Borow, 1990). Among other things, the model focuses on the influence of family background and parents, friends and relatives on occupational aspirations of children. The underlying assumption is that parents' status—educational/professional level and main occupation— influences the occupational aspirations of their children (Ocansey, 2005). However, empirical results from Herting's (2005) studies on the development of elementary-aged children's career aspirations and expectations indicate little relationship between parents' jobs and the jobs the children stated they wanted to have when they grew up. Only six percent of the children aspired to the same occupation as their mother's and 10 % aspired to the same occupation as their father's.

There is some disagreement about the developmental stages at which children form occupational aspirations (Herting, 2005). Gottfredson's (1996) theory suggests that children under five will express fantasy occupational aspirations and that at approximately age five, children's occupational aspirations begin to be shaped by social influences such as gender expectations, social prestige, and the perceived difficulty of the career. Earlier work by Ginzberg (1951) indicates that children up to age 11 base their career choices on fantasy, and around age 11 they begin a transition to viewing career choices more realistically. Also, Havighurst (1964) proposed in his stages of career development that between ages five and ten the concept of working becomes ingrained in a child's conception of adult life. As a result, parents and other adults close to the child are important models in creating this vision. In sum, these theories of children's career development all describe a developmental process whereby children come to refine their thoughts and plans regarding desired careers as they grow up.

Although some research has been carried out on the relationship between parents' main occupation/ profession and their children's occupational aspirations, the conclusions are generally ambivalent. This study introduces a third element (place of residence) into the usual relationship (i.e. relationship between parents' main occupation and their children's occupational aspirations), and specifically examines the possible influences of usual place of residence (whether remote-rural, rural, peri-urban or urban) and main livelihood activities of parents on the occupational aspirations of their children.

Data and Methods

This paper draws on data collected in Ghana as part of a large multi-country research project: *Children, Transport and Mobility in Sub-Saharan Africa* (www.dur.ac.uk/child.mobility), designed and led by Durham University (UK), in collaboration with the University of Cape Coast (Ghana), the University of Malawi and CSIR (South Africa). Details of the project study design, methodology and analysis (where this relates to Ghana) can be found in Porter et al (this volume); see also Porter et al (2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2010d, 2011 in press); Robson et al, (2009) Briefly, the Child Mobility project was conducted in 24 field-sites across three countries: Ghana, Malawi and South Africa. In each country, the study was carried out in two main agro-ecological zones with each zone comprising four study sites, namely urban, peri-urban, rural with services and remote rural without services. In line with definitions used by the Ghana Statistical Service (2002), a rural area is defined as a settlement with a total population of less than 5000 people, while an urban settlement has a population of 5000 or more inhabitants. In each field-site, qualitative and quantitative research methods were used to gather data on children's mobility in relation to education, health, livelihoods, transport and migration. In this paper, we draw on material collected in the Ghana field-sites.

A total of 125 children and young people¹ aged between 8 and 18 years were interviewed at each site using a survey questionnaire. The questionnaire covered themes such as household background characteristics, activities that children engage in which involved walking or the use of transport services and problems that they encounter in carrying these different activities. The survey was preceded by interviews, conducted among in and out-of-school youth, parents and key informants using various qualitative techniques of data collection such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, life history interviews, accompanied walks (see Porter et al, 2010a) and key informant interviews. Interview schedules for children and other participants included questions on the use of various modes of transport, migration experiences, occupational aspirations and decision-making at the household level. At each of the sites, the research team first visited and sought permission from the Assembly man or woman (District Assembly representative at the community level) and traditional leaders before starting to conduct the research in that community. The participants in both the surveys and interviews/group discussions were selected based on availability and willingness to participate. A further component on the work (not discussed further here) involved training 'child researchers' to conduct

¹ The terms 'children' and 'young people' are used interchangeably to refer to study participants aged 8-18 years.

peer research on mobility in their communities (Porter et al, 2010c; Robson et al, 2009; Hampshire et al, 2012, forthcoming). The instruments and approaches used, including questionnaires and qualitative checklists, were developed as a collaborative endeavour by Durham University and the participating institutions in Ghana, Malawi and South Africa, and reviewed by the university of Durham Ethical Review Board.

The questionnaires were edited and coded using a coding manual prepared for all open-ended questions in order to ensure consistency in data entry. SPSS was used to input and analyse the survey data, while the qualitative information/data was transcribed, edited, and the relevant sections teased out and analysed contextually

Study areas

The study was carried out at four sites in each of two zones: the forest (Brong Ahafo Region) and coastal (Central Region) agro-ecological zones of Ghana. The study sites in each zone comprised urban, peri-urban, rural and remote rural settlements.

The 2000 Population and Housing Census report shows that the total populations of the four sites in the forest zone in 2000 were 203,267, 1,919, 938 and 415 respectively (Ghana Statistical Service, 2002). The Bonos are the main ethnic group and the indigenes of the area while the others are mainly migrants of various ethnic backgrounds. Agriculture is one of the main economic activities in the rural forest sites; in the urban and peri-urban areas petty trade is particularly widespread, in part based on agricultural produce from the surrounding rural areas. In the four study sites, the number and quality of key social services such as schools, health, communication and transport vary according to the status of the site; whether urban, peri-urban, rural with services and rural without services. For instance, transport services in the rural and remote rural areas are very irregular except on market days where vehicular flow is somehow better but still less frequent compared with the peri-urban area.

In the coastal zone, the total populations of the four sites in 2000 were 15,326, 1,301, 414 and 61 respectively (Ghana Statistical Service, 2002). Besides the Fantes, who are the dominant ethnic group, the population is a mix of people of different ethnic backgrounds. With the exception of the urban site which has varied economic activities ranging from services through trading to small-scale manufacturing activities, farming and, to a lesser extent, livestock rearing constitute the major livelihood activities in the other three sites. The pattern of distribution of social services in the coastal zone is similar to that of the forest

zone. The physical and socio-economic characteristics of the study sites are livelihood resources that can be expected to influence the main livelihood activities of the population.

Results

The results presented in this section are based on the data collected in Ghana, particularly from the qualitative information which has themes on migration experiences, children's occupational aspirations and decision-making at the household level.

Determinants of household migration

This section focuses on permanent relocation of households and assesses the factors that determine such relocations. In-depth interviews were used to assess the causes of permanent migration among households. In general, socio-economic reasons such as the search for better livelihoods, transfers, death of a family member and the desire for quality education for children were mostly the main determinants of household internal migration in the qualitative data.

The death of a member of a household was one important cause of internal migration of households as observed in these two narrations:

We were first staying at **** with my mother and grandmother. After the death of my grandmother, we moved to stay at quarter guard with my uncle.

[15 year old girl, in school, peri-urban]

I was born at ****. I was staying with my parents. My grandfather died at the **** Barracks where he worked as a civilian. After the funeral the whole family moved to ****.

[12 year old boy, in school, peri-urban]

It must be noted that the family members who died are not the sole breadwinners of the family to warrant migration but, for reasons best known to them, these households decided to relocate after the death of a member.

Another major factor that leads to internal migration of households is parents' search for better sources of livelihood. Generally, people tend to move from less endowed to more endowed areas in order to improve upon their livelihood status. In Ghana, for example, differences in the physical characteristics and socio-economic development have created differences in socio-economic

opportunities between the northern and southern parts of the country and also between rural and urban areas in general. The southern parts of the country are more developed in terms of economic activity, which makes them centres of development and growth while the northern parts remain underdeveloped (Addo, 1980; Kwankye, 1997; Tsegai, 2005; Abane, 2008). These differences stimulate internal migration and the search for better livelihoods as stated by this respondent:

I was born at **** in the Upper West Region of Ghana. When I was two years old my parents migrated from **** to **** to engage in farming. Since then I have stayed at **** up to date.
[17 year old boy, in school, rural]

Others move from one locality to another within southern Ghana in order to engage in some livelihood activities at their new destination as reported by these two boys in rural areas.

I was born at **** in the Ashanti Region. My parents migrated from **** to **** in search for better means of livelihood.
[18 year old boy, in school, rural]

I was living in Accra with my biological parents. My parents came to make a farm at ****, a village near Sunyani and now we have moved from Accra to settle here permanently. My father is a driver and a farmer as well while my mother sells kenkey.
[15 year old girl, in school, rural]

One main feature common to all these three narrations is the fact that parents took the decision to relocate without any evidence of children being involved in the decision-making, underscoring differential intra-household power relations. Farming appears to be a very common livelihood activity for migrating households at destination. This is consistent with the fact that Ghana is predominantly an agricultural country with over 50 % of the active labour force engaged in agriculture, and also it serves as a major source of income for most households in Ghana (ISSER, 2010).

One other reason for household migration is to have access to formal education for their children. In Ghana, schools are often classified as 'better' or 'worse' based on a number of factors which include infrastructure, availability and quality of teachers and, to a large extent, academic performance. Generally, most of the less endowed Basic Schools

with poor academic performance are found in remote rural and rural areas. For instance, Etsey (2007) noted that several rural Junior High schools often record between zero and five percent passes in the final Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) compared with much higher pass rates in their counterparts in urban areas. Thus, access to quality education informed the decision of some households to relocate as explained below:

I was born in a **** (remote rural) in the Western Region of Ghana. When I was 11 years old my parents migrated to **** (Rural) to enable me have access to better education. The school at **** is up to Junior High School but my former school was only a Primary School.
[13 year old boy, in school, rural]

Human capital or capabilities comprise knowledge, skills and good health. Formal education provides the opportunity for children to develop their human capital. Thus, migration for the purpose of having access to quality education is an attempt to obtain quality human capital which will enable some children to attain their future occupational aspirations.

For parents who are formal sector employees, transfers could lead to occasional migration with their household members. This can have implications for their children's education as some of the transfers could be from urban areas, where academic performance is generally better, to rural areas, where standards are typically lower (Etsey, 2007). An illustrative example is the quotation given below where the boy's parents moved from one urban area to another and finally to a rural area.

I was born in [urban location] in the Eastern Region. When I was five years old my father was transferred to a village near [another urban location] in the Western Region so the entire family moved to that place. My father was transferred again from that village to [rural settlement], and we have been here since the past five years.
[18 year old boy, out-of-school, rural]

In a few cases, parents could be compelled to relocate with their children in order to end regular hostilities between them and their neighbours. For instance, a 15 year old student provided the information below as the reason why his parents migrated:

I was born at [A]. I started schooling there. At [A] there was a female tenant who always quarrels with my mother, so my grandmother

advised my father to move out of [A]. Finally, we came to live in [B].
[15 year old boy, in school, peri-urban]

The pattern of household migration as observed from the study is mostly to rural areas, with families moving from both urban and rural settlements. This is consistent with the general internal migration patterns in Ghana as shown by the 1970, 1984 and 2000 censuses (Table 1). On the average, two-thirds of all internal movements from 1970 to 2000 ended up in rural areas as the final destination.

**Table 1: Patterns of internal migration in Ghana from 1970-2000
(as percentage of total population)**

Pattern	1970	1984	2000
Rural-rural	60.0	35.3	32.0
Rural-urban	17.6	16.6	10.0
Urban-rural	11.4	25.3	35.0
Urban-urban	11.0	22.8	23.0
N	8,559, 313	12, 296, 081	18, 912, 079

Source: Ghana Statistical Service, 1970, 1984 and 2000.

Main livelihood activities of parents by location

In theory, a parent could engage in any livelihood activity depending on his/her choice, capabilities and assets which include knowledge, skills, health status and financial resources. In addition, access to natural resources (land, climate, water, etc) and physical resources (basically physical infrastructure) are the other elements necessary for a livelihood activity to thrive but this to a greater extent depends on one's location, whether rural or urban. In the study, children at all the four site types were asked to state the main livelihood activities of their parents: Tables 2 and 3. Farming was the main livelihood activity of both parents in both coastal and forest zones, particularly in remote rural, rural and peri-urban areas. In the urban areas, more than half (55%) of fathers in the coastal zone were engaged in civil service or artisan work while their counterparts in the forest zone were involved in transport services or artisan work (27%). Although mothers in urban areas were mostly engaged in trading, the proportion was higher in the coastal zone (70%) than in the forest zone (48%). In general, the results show that the main livelihood activities of the parents were farming, civil service, artisan work and trading.

Table 2: Main livelihood activities of fathers by location (in percentages)

Main activity at coastal zone	Remote rural	Rural	Peri-urban	Urban	Total
Unemployed	0.0	1.1	1.0	4.0	1.5
Retired	0.0	0.0	2.0	0.0	0.5
Farming	69.8	79.8	46.5	10.0	50.5
Trading	4.2	2.1	0.0	13.0	4.8
Civil service	4.1	5.4	16.9	30.0	14.4
Artisan	5.2	2.1	13.9	25.0	11.8
Transport services	5.2	2.1	7.9	11.0	6.6
Security services	0.0	1.1	4.0	4.0	4.3
Other	11.5	9.4	7.8	4.0	5.8
N	96	95	101	100	392
Main activity at forest zone					
Unemployed	0.0	0.9	5.0	7.3	3.5
Retired	0.0	0.0	4.3	3.1	2.1
Farming	98.7	91.8	37.9	24.0	59.8
Trading	0.0	1.8	2.1	9.4	3.3
Civil service	1.3	2.7	16.3	10.4	8.7
Artisan	0.0	0.0	10.7	12.5	5.9
Transport services	0.0	0.0	5.7	14.6	5.2
Security services	0.0	0.2	3.5	1.9	3.5
Other	0.0	2.6	14.5	16.8	8.0
N	77	110	140	96	423

Source: Data from the project

Occupational aspirations of children in relation to those of their parents

Through in-depth interviews, the children were asked about their future occupational aspirations; whether it was their own decision or they were influenced by anybody and how they could achieve these aspirations. The verbatim responses of some of them are presented here. Although farming and trading were found to be the main livelihood activities of most parents, none of the children interviewed aspired to pursue these occupations. They rather mentioned wide a range of professions ranging from police service through healthcare services to football. For instance, an 18-year-old young man in a rural area gave the following information about his future aspirations:

Table 3: Main livelihood activities of mothers by location (in percentages)

Main activity at coastal zone	Remote rural	Rural	Peri-urban	Urban	Total
House wife	1.0	0.0	0.0	4.6	1.4
Farming	79.6	71.8	60.9	1.9	53.7
Trading	15.5	20.5	36.4	70.4	35.6
Civil servant	0.0	0.9	0.0	8.4	2.3
Catering/baking	1.0	1.7	0.9	4.6	2.1
Security	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.2
Artisan	2.9	4.4	0.9	6.5	3.8
Other	0.0	0.7	0.9	0.7	0.9
N	103	117	110	108	438
Main activity at forest zone					
House wife	0.0	1.8	8.3	5.7	4.6
Farming	98.8	92.0	43.4	29.5	62.6
Trading	1.2	1.8	39.3	47.7	24.7
Civil servant	0.0	0.0	3.4	3.9	2.1
Artisan	0.0	0.9	0.0	8.6	2.3
Catering/baking	0.0	1.8	4.1	3.8	2.7
Other	0.0	3.5	1.5	0.8	1.0
N	81	113	145	105	444

Source: Data from the project

I want to become a policeman in future because my physical stature shows that I can be taken as a policeman. I like that profession because they are able to control criminals. To become a policeman in future means that I have to take my studies seriously and pass all my examinations.

[18-year-old boy, in school, rural]

The respondent was self-motivated and convinced by his physical stature, which is an aspect of human capital, that he could be suitable for the police service. However, his parents were farmers residing in a rural area where there is no police station or services within the village.

Another respondent, whose parents were also both farmers, indicated that she wanted to become a professional nurse in future because of the perceived financial advantages, while another said he wanted to become an electrician although his parents were farmers. In both cases, the parents of these children

were not in either of these jobs. Moreover, these children reside in rural areas where these professions are not readily available:

I want to become a professional nurse in future. I am interested in that profession because they are better paid than other workers, especially teachers. The challenges are my ability to pass all my examinations and also my parents being able to pay my school fee.

[18-year-old girl, in school, rural]

I want to be an electrician in future. I personally developed the interest of becoming an electrician in future. Nobody gave me that idea. I have been watching the electricians whenever they are at work and that is where I developed the interest for that profession.

[13-year-old boy, in school, rural]

Others' aspirations are influenced by particular talents that they consider themselves to have, or by the encouragement of influential adults, particularly teachers. Although their parents were farmers or civil servants or traders or artisans:

I want to be a footballer in future. I have the talent and desire for playing football. Through football, I can earn some money. The likely obstacles to my aspiration as a footballer are injuries during matches, low level of education since I did not further my education after the Junior High School level and lastly, if a fellow footballer decides to 'work on me' through 'juju' (Africa metaphysics).

[17 year old boy, out-of- school, urban]

I want to be an artist so that I can earn more money. I have the interest and flare for it. I can draw and design gadgets like electric fan. One of my teachers has been encouraging me to learn art. I want to further my education to a Technical Institute. I have to move to a bigger town before I can become an artist

[14 year old boy, in school, peri-urban]

In future, I want to be a business woman dealing in already made dresses and local fabrics or materials (Tye and dye). People who are in business, like my senior sister, always have some money to enjoy themselves

[18 year old girl, out-of-school, urban]

From the above information, it is obvious that children aspire to engage in professions that are completely different from those of their parents. This is

consistent with Herting's (2005) studies which found little relationship between parents' main occupation and the occupations their children aspired to engage in. Instead, the choice of their future occupations is based on their own interests, capabilities and perceptions about monetary reward associated with such professions. Although the background characteristics of parents and the socio-economic and political environment in the study which Hotchkiss and Borow (1990) tested the status attainment model might be different from that of the present study, it can be said that the findings in this study are contrary to the perspectives of the status attainment model (Hotchkiss and Borow, 1990), which indicates that parents' occupations or professions influence the occupational aspirations of their children.

Since the respondents were all above the age (5 years or less) where aspirations are influenced by fantasies (Gottfredson, 1996; Ginsberg, 1951), it means that they are at the stage where they have come to terms with realities and therefore the choice of their aspirations are now based on their own interests, capabilities and perceptions about the most rewarding or socially prestigious occupations. On the challenges that they are likely to encounter in their bid to achieve their aspirations, some children reported that their success depended on their ability to pass the requisite examinations and also their parents' ability to pay their school fees. The challenge anticipated by the children about their ability to pass their examinations depends to some extent on the quality of education at their new destinations. As noted above, quality of education in rural areas in terms of academic performance has been found to be lower than that of urban centres (Etsey, 2007).

Place of usual residence and children's occupational aspirations

This section examines whether or not there are some differences in the choice of occupational aspirations between children in rural and urban areas. Generally, some of the occupations mentioned by children in rural areas (including rural remote) include police service, nursing and electrical works while those of their counterparts in urban areas (including peri-urban) include football, art and business (trading in dresses and local fabrics). These occupations (both rural and urban) can be described as middle-level vocational jobs which have more or less similar status. Children and young people in both rural and urban areas thus have fairly similar occupational aspirations. This might be due to the fact that both groups have access similar information on various vocations from the media, even though some of the occupations mentioned by those in rural areas did not exist in their localities.

Discussion and conclusion

The main objective of the paper was to assess the influence of household internal migration (entailing a change in usual place of residence and often of parents' livelihood activities) on the occupational aspirations of children. The main determinants of household migration were economic and social: the search for better livelihoods, transfers, death of a family member and the desire for quality education for children. Due to differences in natural, economic and social resources in the country, people are often attracted to places which are perceived to have better economic opportunities. For instance, the main migration pattern in Ghana is north-south owing to the socio-economic attractions in the south compared to the northern parts. However, there are other minor migration patterns within the southern or northern zones for economic, social and other reasons. The main pattern of household migration was from either urban to rural areas or from one rural settlement to another. In effect, rural areas constitute a major destination of household migration, and farming was found to be the main livelihood activity of most households in both ecological zones. Although this could enhance food production in the country, it may increase pressure on the natural resource base.

The study also revealed that children aspired to pursue livelihood activities that were completely different from those of their parents. This is contrary to the basic tenet of the Status Attainment Model which assumes that parents' status (occupation and education level) affects the occupational aspiration of their children. Also, the finding is at variance with the concept of inter-generational transfer of knowledge and skills from parents to children, since the occupational aspirations of the children were completely different from their parents' occupations. Children appeared to choose their future occupations based on their human capital and perceived financial reward. This implies that occupations that are associated with lower financial gains are likely not to attract people in future although not all children will be able to attain their aspirations.

The study showed that children in both rural and urban areas have fairly similar occupational aspirations. Although more than half of child respondents lived in rural and small towns where farming was the predominant occupation, almost all the children interviewed aspired to engage in professions other than farming. This means that children's occupational aspirations are not confined to their local areas. This may be partly due to the influences of globalization, education and advancement in information technology which exposes children to other occupations. For example, there are radio stations in all the districts and sub-districts in the country which provide information on varied social, economic and political issues including career opportunities. It could also be explained in

the context of Gottfredson's (1996) theory that children's occupational aspirations at later ages are shaped by exogenous influences other than endogenous developmental processes. For instance, the 13-year-old boy who wants to become an electrician developed this interest by watching electricians whenever they are working, while the young woman who wished to be a professional nurse did so because of the perceived high remuneration associated with that profession compared to teaching.

According to the children, achievement of their occupational aspirations depends on their ability to pass all requisite examinations and also the ability of their parents to pay their school fees. But the study revealed that households mostly migrated to rural areas where the quality of education is generally low compared to the urban centres. Consequently, children in some schools in rural areas are not likely to attain their career aspirations owing to low academic performance associated with such schools (Estey, 2007). However, even urban-dwelling children will not necessarily be able to achieve their occupational aspirations, since many do not have the financial means to pursue the necessary further education or training.

One of the Government of Ghana's poverty reduction strategies as stated in the GPRS II is the payment of fees for all pupils in public basic schools through the capitation grants, which means that parents are relieved of the burden of paying school fees at the JHS level (for children aged up to 15 years). However, parents still have to meet various other schooling expenses for children of this age (costs of uniform, books, food, etc.). And at the Senior High School (SHS) level (15-18 years) and beyond, parents are expected to pay schools fees. Children whose parents are unable to pay their fees at the SHS level are not likely to achieve their desired occupational aspirations, particularly if the profession in question demands further academic and professional training beyond the JHS level or appropriate social connections. In other words, the ability of children to achieve their occupational aspirations depends on household financial situation, as well as the children's own academic performance.

Policy implications

Since some teachers assist pupils to decide on their future occupation, there is the need to provide in-service training to teachers without professional career counseling so that all teachers could be in a better position to assist pupils in their career aspirations. This is particularly important since, for most children, whose parents are engaged in subsistence farming, parents are unlikely to have the appropriate knowledge and expertise to advise their children about the range of occupations they might pursue. It has been noted that children's career

aspirations transcend their locality of residence, which means that programmes designed to provide career counseling to children should not be limited to only few careers that are available and accessible to them locally.

Children's aspiration may be unattainable due to migration of households from urban to rural areas where quality of education is generally low coupled with other unfavourable social and environmental factors. There is therefore the need to provide the less-endowed schools in rural areas with basic infrastructure, logistics and professional teachers to enable them improve upon their academic performance.

It is incumbent for parents to guide their children to choose their own future careers but not to impose their own career on their children since children are not likely to pursue similar careers as that of their parents. However, it is important to note that children may initially aspire to pursue a particular career but may end up in another as they grow and come to terms with realities as indicated by Ginzberg's (1951) theory on occupational choice.

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