

The Gender Gap in Enrolments in Senior High Schools in Ghana: The Case of West Mamprusi Municipality in the Northeast Region

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Abstract: The study determined gender gaps in enrolment in Senior High School students from 2015/2016 to 2018/2019 academic sessions in the West Mamprusi Municipality of the North East Region of Ghana. Two objectives were raised and one research question was answered. The ex-post facto research design was used. The population of the study consisted of all Senior High School students in the WMM. A purposive sampling technique was used to select all the six (three public and three private) Senior High Schools in the Municipality. The total number of students stood at 22773 which consisted of 13252 males and 9521 females. Students' enrolments for 2015/2016 to 2018/2019 were collected and analyzed using percentages for the research question. The results of the study revealed that there were more males enrolled than females in the Senior High Schools in the Municipality. There are myriads of social, religious, economic, institutional and cultural barriers that bring about the gender gap in Senior High School education in Ghana. They include entrenched cultural practices such as female genital mutilation, the Trokosi and Voodoo practices, early marriages, child labor, poverty, lack of nearby schools among others that affect the education of girls more than boys. Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that there should be an enlightenment campaign about the importance of Senior High School education to female students. Enforcement of the laws, media campaigns and educational outreach programs against child marriage and other negative cultural practices. There is a need to create a female-friendly environment in schools and communities and finally sustain the Free Senior High School education policy to eliminate the economic barriers to female education.

Keywords: Enrolment, Gender gap, Ghana, Research questions, Senior High Schools, West Mamprusi Municipality.

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Introduction

The ability to read and write a simple sentence is essential in today's everyday life. Anyone unable to do so effectively is grossly handicapped. In spite of this reality, recent United Nations (UN, 1998) statistics state that there are one billion illiterate adults in the world, with

two-thirds being women. As well, of those females who do go to school approximately 500 million starts primary school but more than 100 million children, two-thirds of them girls, drop out before completing four years of primary school (Adadevoh, 1999).

Government officials claim that Sub-Saharan Africa has made excellent gains in females' education. Yet, an estimated 23 million girls were not in school in the year 2000, and there has been an overall widening of the gap in the region (Ohene-Konadu, 2001). Ghana's former first lady Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings stated at the 1998 International Conference on Girls' education in Washington, D.C., that the male literacy rate in Ghana was 71% and the female literacy 46%, with male illiteracy increasing by 6 million while female illiteracy increased by 14 million. These alarming statistics constitute a clear violation of women's basic human rights, which ensure that "every woman and girl is entitled to the realization of all rights- civil, political, economic, social and cultural- on equal terms with men, free from discrimination. Women should also enjoy human rights specifically linked to their status as women" (The People's Movement for Human Rights Education, n.d.).

There is considerable evidence that the education of women has a direct impact on various aspects of the social, economic and political well-being of a country. For example, (Swainson, as cited in Tanya, 2003) suggest that the mother's educational level has a direct influence on economic productivity and the level of her daughter's education. Research findings show that investing in females' education may be the most cost-effective measure a developing country can take to improve its standard of living (Donkor, 2002). Furthermore, Kofi Annan, Ghanaian former UN Secretary-General, at the World Education Forum, 2000, also stated:

No development strategy is better than involving women as central players. It has immediate benefits for nutrition, health, savings, and reinvestment at the family, community, and ultimately, country level. In other words, educating girls is a social development policy that works. It is a long-term investment that yields exceptionally high returns. We need those with power to change things to come together in an alliance for girls' education: governments, voluntary progressive groups, and above all, local communities, schools, and families. Similarly, the Preston Education Fund for Girls (1995), a sub-group of the Global Fund for Women, reports, "failing to invest in the education of women and girls has long-term consequences on health, population and growth, and environmental security."

As more and more children in developing countries enroll in primary school and gender gaps in primary enrollment shrink, policymakers' attention has shifted to secondary school. For instance, the first target under education for the U. N's new "Sustainable Development Goals" is "by 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes." Many see secondary education as having potentially transformative economic and social impacts, particularly for girls. Yet others have more negative views; some experts believe that rapidly expanding access to secondary education will produce little additional learning, given weaknesses in the school system (Pritchett, 2001).

Another hypothesis is that young people see secondary education as promising access to tertiary education and ultimately a government job, with associated rents, and that since such jobs are inherently limited, rapidly expanding education may lead to a cohort of "overeducated" young people, frustrated in their aspirations, and to associated social and political tensions (Krueger and Maleckova 2003; Heckman, 1991).

A third hypothesis is that expanding access to secondary school in developing countries will require curricular changes to prepare students for the labor market. When the United States moved from a system of secondary schools designed to prepare elites for tertiary education to a system of mass secondary education, many secondary curricula dropped Greek and Latin and incorporated vocational education (Goldin, 1999). This debate is surprisingly uninformed by high-quality evidence from the developing world. Although there are strong claims about the effects of secondary education for girls, especially on reproductive health, fertility, and empowerment (UNGEI, 2010; Warner, Malhotra and McGonagle, 2012; Ackerman, 2015), well-identified studies are scarce.

According to Article 25 of the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana: All person shall have the right to equal educational opportunities and facilities and with a view to achieving the full realization of that right- (a) basic education shall be free, compulsory and available to all; (b) secondary education in its different forms, including technical and vocational education, shall be made generally available and accessible to all by every appropriate means, and in particular, by the progressive introduction of free education; (c) higher education shall be made equal accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular, by progressive introduction of free education; (d) functional literacy shall be encouraged or intensified as far as possible (The Constitution of Republic of Ghana, 1992).

Higher Education is all type of education of an institutional nature (Academic, professional, technological, teacher education) such as University colleges, liberal arts colleges, technological institutes and teacher training colleges for which the basic entrance requirement is the completion of full secondary education. The usual entrance age is about 18 years and the program leads to the giving of a named award (degree, diploma or certificate) of higher studies (Addo, 2010). The UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural rights of 1966, in Article 13, asserts that higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, based on capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education. These statements presuppose that there should be conscious efforts to formulate and implement policies to ensure that concepts, values skills are properly transmitted to the current and the next generation through higher education.

Higher Education enables individuals to create economic benefits for the nation. The new knowledge and skills acquired by way of education help with the overall human development of the nation. Higher education is important to the individual. Ansere (1976) identifies the benefits of education to the individual as bringing direct financial returns through higher education. It, therefore, follows that an individual who acquires higher education is capable of contributing to the overall good of the society and also has a great opportunity for self-advancement.

While it is undeniable that educating females is one of the surest ways of empowering them and enhancing national development, gross gender gaps continue to impede women participation in secondary education in the West Mamprusi Municipality of the North East Region of Ghana.

Problem Statement

Access to education in Ghana is seen both as a fundamental human right and an essential element in the national development strategy to promote growth and ensure adults are prepared for productive adult life. Ghana's aspiration to become a middle-income country by 2020 rests in large part on her ability to improve educational access to the point where it has a

highly educated population which can provide the human resource base for accelerated development. Access to education has a social and economic benefit to both the individual and wider society.

Any effort to improve health, nutrition, agriculture, industry, commerce and environmental conditions in Ghana has to enhance equitable access to both basic and post-basic education. Without this poverty will remain intractable, the disadvantage will continue to be transmitted across the generations, and economic growth will be compromised by shortages of knowledge and skill in the workforce. No country has become a major player in the global economy without a critical mass of literacy and numeracy in the population and substantial access to post-basic education.

The objectives of the study were to determine:

- 1) The barriers that militate against girls' education in Ghana and
- 2) Enrolment distribution rate in Senior High Schools in the West Mamprusi Municipality from 2015/2016 to 2018/2019 academic sessions.

The Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- 1) What are the constraints militating against girls' education in Ghana?
- 2) What is the enrolment distribution rate between male and female students in Senior High Schools in the West Mamprusi Municipality from 2015/2016 to 2018/2019 academic sessions?

Literature Review

Much has been done in the field of education to unravel gender inequality in enrolment. Research evidence in most of these studies shows that there is a gender difference in school enrolment in favor of the male (Okwo, 2001). Observations show that males' enrolment is higher than that of the females in primary, secondary and tertiary levels.

Gender is a broad analytical concept, which has grown out of attempts to understand the inequality between men and women. The concept not only concerns women but also highlights women's roles and responsibilities concerning those of men. The gender system is variously defined in different societies and almost all, it is asymmetrical, and one gender is considered inferior to the other (Mangwilat and Abama, 1997).

According to UNICEF (2005), gender disparity in education is so central to the performance of the millennium development goals. Even more significantly, the development of women, Ekezei (1994) pointed out that though school enrolments in Africa have increased in the last few decades, girls' education still lags behind that of boys especially after primary school. This is because an equal opportunity in male and female enrolment in schools is still far from being accomplished. Dayo (2004) observed gender disparity in schooling among the younger population, where female school enrolment in primary and secondary education falls behind the male.

Mallum and Mogba (1999) observed that nowhere in the world do women participate adequately with men in informal education. In the third world countries especially male enrolment outnumbers female by a ratio two to three (2:3). Azimi (1993) stated that in most highly populated countries, enrolment for girls lags behind that of boys by ten to thirty percent.

Gender disparity in school enrolment in favor of males is further depicted in a UNICEF report as cited by Orire (1996). According to the report, out of 130 million children who do not have access to primary education in developing countries, 81 million are girls. Jibril (2000) notes that the enrolment of males is higher than that of females in primary schools, secondary schools, and universities. The highest gender differential is recorded in Universities followed by secondary and primary schools.

Education is a significant indicator of women's status in a given society. Educational levels and work experience are most crucial to ultimate status attainment for both men and women. According to Hulton and Rose (2001), education, particularly of girls, is highly correlated with improvement in health as well as reduction of fertility, infant mortality and morbidity rates. To them, education can empower women to play significant roles in decision-making within the family, community, and society at large.

Dine (1988), identified cultural and religious values as factors which affect female education. She observed that in the Arab States, cultural and religious norms led to strict segregation of the sexes at school and at work, with girls taught in single-sex schools by female staff and restricted to a curriculum which favored home economics more than science and mathematics. To her, this did not prepare girls for full and equal participation in the workforce and thereby limited their career horizons. Dine (1988) also observed that parental interest and encouragement constitute major factors in the retention of girls in schools. In traditional societies, parents have low occupational aspirations for their daughters and even see education as risky for women. Her survey of rural wives in Pakistan showed that it was acceptable for girls not to receive a formal education. In another study she conducted in Papua New Guinea, she found that educated girls would not be good mothers because they tended to respect tradition, parents, and husbands less than they should. Similar research conducted by her in Syria revealed that most of the parents wanted their daughters to be housewives or seamstresses.

The development of education in Ghana is closely tied to the socio-political changes that have taken place from colonial times to the present day. The transformation processes have seen the education system expand from the first castle schools (which only targeted populations linked with the social, economic and religious interests of the early missionaries, colonialists and adventurers) to the spread of formal education across the country, including access to free schooling, the inclusion of technical and vocational education, and improved teacher training. Key policy drivers and priority interventions: The key focal areas of education development in Ghana are contained in the Education Strategic Plan 2010–2020.

The Strategic Plan identifies access, quality, and management as the main policy drivers determining priority interventions. Besides, having realized the importance of science and technology over the years, the government has targeted these as priority areas for improvement. Some important interventions currently being implemented are focused largely on the improvement of basic education in response to internationally agreed development goals, such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and the Education for All (EFA) Dakar Principles.

These include the provision of infrastructure, promoting gender equity, provision of Capitation Grants for primary schools, provision of free textbooks, provision of free school uniforms for children from poor households, and initiating Best Teacher award schemes for teachers in pre-tertiary institutions. Besides, the government has created special teacher

motivation packages for teachers working in hard-to-reach and deprived areas, and for teachers of mathematics and science, as well as those in technical and vocational education. The introduction of the School Report Card system and School. The based Assessment process is aimed at ensuring effective school attendance and enhanced school-level management at the basic level while tracking pupil learning achievement trends. The School Report Cards allow stakeholders of schools to come together to discuss the state of the school. The process also informs the preparation of the School Performance Improvement Plan (SPIP), used to expend funds provided by the government under the Capitation Grant scheme.

The education system is faced with major challenges in access and participation. For example the low enrolment of girls; low quality in terms of poor pupil learning achievement; inadequate supply of trained and qualified teachers, resulting in extremes of class size; and lack of resources for teaching and learning. The government has introduced many measures to mitigate the impact of these challenges.

On access and participation, girls' participation, which used to be a major constraint on the country's move to attaining gender equity, has seen some improvement. Since introducing a major intervention on girls' education to remove the barriers that prevent girls' enrolment, school timetables have been made more flexible in areas where girls are expected to carry out domestic chores at home. The government has reviewed all textbooks to remove aspects of gender stereotypes that discriminate against girls. A Girls' Education Unit has been set up to facilitate support to girls in the learning of science and technology. Furthermore, selective scholarship packages have been introduced to target girls from poor households, with vacation camps organized to encourage girls to continue schooling. Learning achievements Despite the focus on promoting girls' schooling, the performance of boys has not been significantly affected.

Methodology

Research design

The study was an ex-post factor whose design was causal-comparative. An ex-post factor is a design in which the independent variable has already been determined and the researcher observed the dependent variable. The researcher studied the independent variable in retrospect for their possible relationship to an effect on the dependent variable (Kerlinger, 1970). In this study, gender difference, which is the independent variable, was examined retrospectively against enrolment (the dependent variable) to establishing a link between them.

The population of the study

The study population was all available Senior High Schools which offered admissions to students from 2015 to 2019 in the West Mamprusi Municipality of the North East Region. There were six Senior High Schools (three public and three private) and all were selected purposively for the study. While all SHS1 to SHS3, 22773 students enrolled, out of which 13252 were males and 9521 females. Data collected were analyzed using percentages to answer the research question.

Results and Discussion

Barriers Militating against Girl's Education in Ghana

One of the problems attracting public concern in Ghana today is gender disparity in enrolment distribution of students in schools. This observable disparity has been blamed on

some factors including social, religious, institutional, economic and cultural stereotyping among others.

Location of school and security risk

Insecurity and long distances to schools, and often the relationship between the two, are leading factors affecting children's attendance to school. The distribution of Senior High Schools in Ghana is concentrated in urban areas, and there are large rural areas without schools. In some parts of Ghana, children who want to go to school have to walk a long distance through village paths to get there. In some situations, children walk many hours to and from school, this is not welcoming to those who are young, ill, physically disabled, or girls- exacerbating inequalities. There are two dimensions to this concern: one relates to the length of distance and the energy children have to expend to cover the distance, often with an empty stomach. The other relates to vulnerability while going to or coming from school each day. Parents are unwilling to send their children especially girls to distance schools where the danger of being kidnapped, raped, molested and subjected to other forms of abuse looms large (Abdi, 1998; UNESCO, 2009). In rural Ethiopia, girls tend to drop out of school at a significantly higher rate when the distance to walk to and from school is long. Location and distance of schools is a compelling factor for the flow of girls to schools in Eritrea. In most parts of urban areas in Ghana, girls are harassed both physically and verbally when they use public transport to and from school.

Poverty

Prospects for increasing educational opportunities to many children as possible in Ghana have been undermined by poverty. Poverty is the single largest factor that causes disparities in education. Poverty is pervasive across sub-Saharan African the region. Most people live on less than \$1 per day. A strong association between poverty and gender inequalities in education has been established. Inability to pay school fees, the costs of uniform, shoes, transport, stationery, added to the opportunity costs of what children might be contributing to household labor, eat away at meager resources and push children from school. If all of their children cannot attend school, then parents will most likely give boys' precedence over girls (UNICEF, 2006; Ervin and Muriithi, 2009).

Waiving school levies and providing teaching materials can reverse this situation for both girls' and boys' enrollments. The abolition of school fees that prevents many children from going to school positively resulted in the increased enrollment of 12 percent in Mozambique, 14 percent in Ghana, 18 percent in Kenya, 23 percent in Ethiopia, and 51 percent in Malawi was recorded in primary schools following the abolition of school fees. Similar increases in enrollment in the year with the abolition of school fee have occurred in many other countries; for example, Cameroon, 26 percent in total primary enrollment (59 percent in grade 1); Lesotho, 11 percent in total enrollment (75 percent in grade 1); Tanzania, 23 percent in total enrollment (43 percent in grade 1); and Uganda, 68 percent in total enrollment (UNESCO, 2009). This increase in enrollment demonstrates the importance of fee abolition because cost considerations determine whether parents will be able to enroll and maintain their children at school.

Social and Cultural barriers

There are myriads of social and cultural constraints that bring about the gender gap in Senior High School education in Ghana. They include entrenched cultural practices such as female genital mutilation, the Trokosi and Voodoo practices, early marriage and child labor that affects the education of girls more than boys.

Teenage pregnancy and early marriages

In some communities in Ghana, religious and traditional norms dictate that children are married at a certain age early. The practice of early marriage is known to affect all children but most affected are girls. Poor families may regard a young girl as an economic burden and her marriage as a necessary survival strategy for her family. They may think that early marriage offers protection for their daughter from the dangers of sexual assault, or more generally, offers the care of a male guardian. Early marriage may also be seen as a strategy to avoid girls becoming pregnant outside marriage. Early marriage has been cited as "a barrier to continuing education because one is expected to quit school and engage in parental activities (Jensen and Thornton, 2003; Dagne, 1994). Enforcement of the laws against child marriage is a very effective way of addressing this issue. Also through media campaigns and educational outreach programs, governments need to take responsibility for stopping this practice.

Teenage pregnancy

Teen pregnancy contributes to high-school dropout rates in Ghana. In Ghana, when a girl gets pregnant, she is likely to drop out of school completely thereby negatively affecting her future earning potential. School policies in Ghana have for a long time been advocating for expulsion of pregnant girls who are seen as a bad influence on other girls in the school. Very few schools allow pregnant girls or young mothers to complete their education. The Pregnant girls mostly get their education terminated and never allowed to continue with school because it is argued that allowing these teenage mothers back to school would trigger multiplier effect among other girls (Oyaro, 2010; Wamahiu and Wangoi, 1995; Wanjama and Kimani, 1995).

However, Ghana in recent times has reversed these obnoxious policies and now are permitting girls to go home to deliver and nurse their children and thereafter they are free to return to continue their schooling without hindrance (Oyaro, 2010). This policy guideline is to ensure access to quality education of all children without any form of discrimination.

Traditional practices

In most parts of Ghana, access to education continues to be limited because of traditional practices that prevent some children from going or staying in school. For example, the Trokosi and Voodoo practices (Trokosi is a Ghanaian word meaning "slaves to the Gods") have been found to keep enslaved young virgin girls from enrolling or attending school. The practice requires that young innocent virgin girls are sent into fetish shrines as reparation for misdeeds of their family members. The virgin girls spend their days collecting water, cooking, cleaning, farming and caring for livestock. They are denied access to education, prohibited from leaving, banished from her family home, and soon to face the sexual advances of their master, the priest. Reports of school-going teenage girls in parts of Ghana removed from school by their parents and given up for training as traditional priestess are common (Tanye, 2008). The imposition of strict Islamic Purdah (the Islamic practice of keeping girls and women in seclusion from the public and outside) impedes girls or women from venturing out of the home to attend school (Papanek, 1982).

In some of the rural communities in Ghana, girls' dropout rates accelerate dramatically at the onset of menstruation (Kristof, 2009). In most of these communities, menstruation itself is so taboo that girls are prohibited from cooking or even banished to the private sphere during their periods. Establishing separate sanitation facilities for girls and boys is a crucial part of retaining girls in particular in schools because schools that lack latrines are often seen as unsafe by both parents and children.

Child labor

Child labor poses a great threat to education systems, as children are forced to work rather than attend school, or have to divide their time between work and school; thus greatly affecting their ability to learn. Around the world, 246 million girls and boys are working instead of attending school and enjoying their childhood (International Labor Office, 2002). It is very common in urban areas in Ghana to young girls selling pure water and fruits along the streets. Girls, in particular, are systematically deprived of their right to education by family expectation, society's norms or the mere lack of attention given to their specified needs. In rural Ghana, children carry foodstuff for miles to market areas for sale to aid their parents and sometimes to get money for family upkeep. It can be argued that child labor poses a great threat to education systems, as children are forced to work rather than attend a school or have to divide their time between work and school; thus greatly affecting their performance. Compared to boys, girls bear the burden of child labor which in most cases deprives them of their right to education. Parents often reluctant to send their girls to school because the labor substitution is not equal to the service the girl child provides at home, replacing her mother, who can then go out to work. The opportunity costs are usually much higher for girls than for boys, since girls are expected to do more domestic work than boys (Bendera and Mboya 1999).

Institutional barriers and Instructional challenges

There is a range of institutional and instructional factors that impede gender equality in education, from poor quality schools, sexual harassment by classmates and teachers, lack of models the gender bias in learning materials affect girls' educational attainment and performance.

School environment

There are strong arguments that the school environment is at times not conducive for learning and this may ultimately lead to underachievement which results in repetition: a precursor for dropout. Arguments against repetition stress that repetition has potentially harmful effects on student's self-esteem and attitudes towards schooling and this increases the likelihood of dropping out of school (Cuadra, 1992). School environment also seems to affect the two sexes differently. Others have argued that the school environment especially the teachers' attitude, behavior and teaching practices have perhaps the most significant implications for female persistent and academic achievement (Odaga, 1995).

This problem is rooted in societal beliefs which teachers bring into the classroom scenario. This can, therefore, be linked to the cultural beliefs which tend to look at females having less ability than males and hence leads to the marginalization of girls in the classroom and further de-motivates girls in their academic pursuits.

Intimidation, Violence, and harassment in schools

In the 21st Century, children especially girls still encounter violence and harassment in the place they should be the safest- at school. Daily in schools across Ghana, pernicious forms of gendered violence, including physical, verbal and sexual assault and harassment happens to girls making it impossible for them to realize their right to education (Ofeibea 2003; Haffeejee, 2006). For example, in schools, rape, assault, and sexual harassment of girls are widespread.

Girls are frequently fondled, raped in school toilets in empty classrooms and hallways, subjected to aggressive sexual advances verbally degraded and these are committed by both

teachers and male students. Studies indicate that, boys are very aggressive towards girls and that they use physical force, threats and tease girls to silence them in class. Teachers also prey on girls, threatening to fail them, or publicly humiliate them, to prod them into sexual liaisons. Those girls who give in to teacher demands are often rewarded with grades high marks and other goodies. Sexual violence and harassment in schools erect a discriminatory barrier for children especially girls seeking education.

Violence is a key challenge to girls' school attendance and achievement, undermining their social and economic advancement. Violence against women and girls also compromises efforts to combat HIV/AIDS by undermining their ability to protect themselves in intimate relationships. The disturbing reality of violence against girls is it is rarely treated with the abhorrence that it deserves. Even in countries where there are comprehensive legal frameworks to address such issues, the reality on the ground is very different.

Inadequate role models for the girl child

Absence of a role model is a problem that the girl child in Ghana faces both at home and school. For example, throughout their lives, girls are taught mainly by male teachers, especially the sciences and mathematics which they come to perceive as male subjects. Therefore, girls seem to have no role models to look up to, no one to identify with and no one to serve as a mentor. If there were to be more women leaders who could act as a role model for girls, there would possibly be an increase in the number of girls aspiring for higher positions in society.

Ombati (2003) suggests that the promotion of female teachers to the position of responsibility as a strategy to encourage girls' education and provide them with role models. Apart from providing positive role models to young girls, particularly in rural areas, parents are put at ease about their daughter's safety by the presence of female teachers.

Gender insensitive curriculum

In Ghana as in most parts of the world, the school curriculum continues to be gender-differentiated and, when offered a choice, girls and boys choose subjects that fall within the traditional male/female split, which is promoted by teachers, parents, and peers (Gordon, 1998). Research has established that the curricula and teaching materials used in schools across sub-Saharan Africa remain gender-biased to a large degree, and are rarely sensitive to the specific needs of girls and women (Bailey, 1992).

Gender bias in curricula varies, but instructional programs and texts generally reinforce subordinate or domestic roles for women. Discriminations based on gender stereotype surface in many ways in the school context. It may occur, for example, through teachers' samples of group placements and activity assignments, the content of compliments and criticism. Examples range from the treatment of females in textbooks and curriculum materials to differential treatment of males and females in the classroom, to mistaken beliefs about attitudes and cognitive abilities (Marshall and Reihartz, 1999). Perhaps curriculum modifications among other changes addressing sex stereotyping might ensure fuller participation and performance of girls in science and technological subjects.

Biased instruction

In teaching, research has established that in most schools, female students can become nearly invisible, as teachers interact more frequently with boys, asking them better questions and providing more precise and helpful feedback. Studies show that teachers tend to answer boys

more often than girls in math and science classes and pay more attention to girls in 'softer' classes, thereby sending messages about gender capacities. Teaching materials, textbooks, and lectures tend to depict science and technology as a male domain, depriving girls of role models (Sadker and Sadker, 1994).

The immediate outcomes of these practices are channeling of girls and boys to what are seen as gender appropriate subjects and careers. Generally, the participation in science and mathematics education at primary level in sub-Saharan African countries is compulsory for all children. However, the participation rates drop significantly from primary to secondary school, especially for girls.

The way out is to have gender-equitable materials to enable students to have a more gender-balanced knowledge, to develop more flexible attitudes towards gender roles, and to imitate role behaviors contained in the materials. There is also a need to create a female-friendly environment in schools and communities. Teachers, parents and the community should encourage girls to select scientific and technological subjects by cultivating self-confidence and assertiveness in girls (Orenstein, 1994). Girls should be encouraged to venture into male-dominated subjects to acquire skills needed for senior decision-making positions in both the public and private sectors. Developing instructional and learning methodology that is child-friendly and gender-sensitive is an important element of gender and child-friendly schools.

Research question two (2)

What is the enrolment distribution rate between male and female students in Senior High Schools in the West Mamprusi Municipality from 2015/2016 to 2018/2019 academic sessions?

This research question was answered by year, gender and class as follows:

Table 1. Results of the percentage of students' enrolment distribution rate between male and female students in Senior High Schools in the West Mamprusi Municipality from 2015/2016 to 2018/2019 academic session

Year	SHS1			SHS2			SHS3		
	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total
2015/16	1044 (60)	705 (40)	1749	1282 (61)	808 (39)	2090	1190 (58)	847 (42)	2037
2016/17	1013 (55)	821 (45)	1834	1058 (64)	599 (36)	1657	1180 (58)	851 (42)	2031
2017/18	1098 (58)	811 (42)	1909	1069 (59)	728 (41)	1797	977 (57)	733 (43)	1710
2018/19	1300 (55)	1085 (45)	2385	1072 (59)	740 (41)	1812	969 (55)	793 (45)	1762

The table above indicates enrolment rates of males and females. The results show that more male than female enrolled in Senior High Schools from 2015/2016 to 2018/2019 academic sessions.

During the years under review, more male students enrolled in Senior High Schools than female students in all the schools in the West Mamprusi Municipality of the North East Region. This conforms with the findings of Jibril (2000) and Azimi (1993) who found that there is gender disparity in favor of male students in enrolment in schools.

The results are also in agreement with the findings of Mallum and Mogba (1999) who observed that nowhere in the world do women participate adequately with men informal education. In the third world countries especially male enrolment outnumber females by a ratio two to three (2:3). Furthermore, the results are in line with the findings of Dayo (2004); Badejo (2001) and UNESCO (2005) which all revealed that classroom enrolments in Yobe State in Nigeria consistently indicates more male than female students.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, more males enrolled than females in Senior High Schools in the West Mamprusi Municipality from 2015/2016 to 2018/2019 academic sessions. There are myriads of social, religious, economic, institutional and cultural barriers that bring about the gender gap in Senior High School education in Ghana. They include entrenched cultural practices such as female genital mutilation, the Trokosi and Voodoo practices, early marriages, child labor, poverty, lack of nearby schools among others that affect the education of girls more than boys in Senior High School education in Ghana.

Recommendations

- ✓ There should be an enlightenment campaign about the importance of SHS education to female students.
- ✓ Female students should be properly guided and counseled on the need for women education generally
- ✓ Schools should organize, career guidance, workshops, and seminars on the role of SHS education in society.
- ✓ Sustain the Free Senior High School education policy to eliminate the economic barrier to female education.
- ✓ Enforcement of the laws, media campaigns and educational outreach programs against child marriage and the practice of female circumcision.
- ✓ Changed of policies to permit girls to go home to deliver and nurse their children and thereafter return to continue their schooling without hindrance. This policy guideline is to ensure access to quality education of all children without any form of discrimination.
- ✓ Establishing separate sanitation facilities for girls and boys in schools.
- ✓ Promotion of female teachers to the position of responsibility as a strategy to encourage girls' education and provide them with role models.
- ✓ Curriculum modifications among other changes addressing sex stereotyping might ensure fuller participation and performance of girls in science and technological subjects.
- ✓ There is a need to create a female-friendly environment in schools and communities.
- ✓ Teachers, parents and the community should encourage girls to select scientific and technological subjects by cultivating self-confidence and assertiveness in girls.
- ✓ Girls should be encouraged to venture into male-dominated subjects to acquire skills needed for senior decision-making positions in both the public and private sectors.
- ✓ Develop instructional and learning methodologies that are child-friendly and gender-sensitive.

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