

Factors Affecting the Standard of Female Education: A Case Study of Senior Secondary Schools in the Kassena-Nankana District

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Abstract: This study presents the current factors affecting the standard of female education in the Kassena-Nankana district in Upper East Region of Ghana. Poverty, long-held negative attitudes about women's intellectual capabilities, teenage pregnancy, early marriage, examination failure in mathematics and science and the traditional division of household labour are among the many factors that continue to keep vast numbers of girls out of the classroom in the district and country as well.

Key words: Standard of female education, factors, senior secondary school, incentives, scholarship

INTRODUCTION

Nearly a billion of people can not read and write and 300 million of our school-aged children are not in school. Two-thirds of those who can not read and write are women, 60% of children not in school are girls, (World Bank 1990). Many countries still do not provide basic education for all children. Numerous students are not in school and those lucky enough to be enrolled in primary drop out before completion and the level of achievement students attain is often low. These problems affect girls more than boys. In Africa, for instance girl primary school enrolment accounts for only 57% of the school-age population, compared with 75% to boys^[1].

The education of female is paramount to the development of a nation. Women are involved in all kinds of activities both at the community level and the regional level: Farming, trading, child bearing and general household chores are all associated with women. Hence there is an urgent need to make education accessible to them to enable them contribute meaningfully to nation development.

Numerous studies have shown that female education is a pre-requisite for greater social autonomy for women and for improving the socio-economic status of their families. Inequality in female access to education has continued despite commitments by various governments to the goal of formal education^[1-10].

Another worth point for emphasizing girls' education is the weak base from which it is developing. Indeed, notwithstanding sensitization programs,

seminars, policy statements and so no, many of the good intentions to improve girls' education remain at theoretical rather than the implementation phase.

The thinking of the rural man that the female's main office is the kitchen has contributed greatly to the low education of females in the country. However, it is noted that countries with smaller gender gaps in education have better indicators of social welfare. For instance, lower fertility rates, lower infant mortality rates, improved nutrition, increased life expectancy and better opportunities for their children in the next generation are social benefits that will arise if more females are provided with proper education^[2,3].

The Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED) is dedicated to fighting poverty and AIDS in rural communities in Africa by educating girls. CAMFED began in 1993 by supporting 32 girls in rural Zimbabwe. In 2006, 300,900 children benefited from CAMFED's programme of educational support in some of the poorest regions of Zimbabwe, Zambia, Ghana and Tanzania. CAMFED has helped to transform the lives of young women like Lucia, who was able to finish secondary school with CAMFED's support.

These young women-among them doctors, lawyers, teachers and businesswomen-are now sharing the benefits of their education with their communities.

CAMFED was named International Aid and Development Charity of the year in 2003 and currently co-chairs the United nation Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI). In 2005, CAMFED was awarded a prestigious Skoll Award for Social Entrepreneurship by eBay founder Jeff Skoll and Executive Director Ann Cotton was awarded an OBE in the Queen's New Year

Honours list for her service to girls' education in rural Africa. CAMFED patrons include internationally-acclaimed actor and renowned author.

The Nyariga Doone Mothers' Club is a community-based NGO committed to ensuring high enrolment of girls in schools, especially in the Bolgatanga District. The Club encourages women to send their daughters to school and to keep them in school until they graduate.

In the rural areas, the education of the female child is not so much valued as compared to the male child. As a result, boys are sent to school at the expense of the girl child. Prevalent factors such as outmoded cultural practices, ignorance, legal restrictions, family cost, including opportunity cost, socio-cultural barriers, early marriages, gender biases in classroom practice, inaccessibility of schools, cultural perceptions of boys' superior abilities, poor performance of girls on examination, teenage pregnancies, lack of parental support and many others are the constraints to female education.

The good news is that credible visionaries and world leaders, such as UN secretary General Kofi Annan, continuously highlight the role and powerful impact of girls' education and described it as accelerator of progress and human development. What remains to be done now is to make it totally apparent that education with a "gender lens" benefits girls and boys and that education programs without that lens will always produce inequitable results and hamper quality.

Comparison of date for men and women reveals significant disparity in educational attainment. By 1992, among people older than fifteen years of age, 22% of women were literate, compared with 49% of men. The comparatively slow rate of improvement for women is reflected in the fact that between 1980 and 1989, among women aged fifteen to twenty-four, 25% were literate. United Nations sources say that in 1990 for every 100 girls of primary school age there were only thirty in school, among girls of secondary school age, only thirteen out of 100 were in school, and among girls of the third level, grades nine and ten, only 1.5 out of 100 were in school. Slightly higher estimates by the National Education Council for 1990 stated that 2.5% of students-3% of men and 2% of women-between the ages of seventeen and twenty-one were enrolled at the degree level. Among all people over twenty-five in 1992, women averaged a mere 0.7 year of schooling compared with an average of 2.9 years for men. The discrepancy between rural and urban areas is even more marked. In 1981 only 7% of women in rural areas were literate, compared with 35% in urban areas.

One of the study's main assumptions is that the body of knowledge on girls' education and interest accorded to it in the last ten years in Africa should already have resulted in improved parents' and communities' attitudes, school policies and classroom management approaches. These improvements should in turn lead to change in girls' behavior and performance in school and thus greater female survival, confidence, achievement and retention. Moreover, this particular study will help identify ways of improving what we do to advance girls' schooling.

Twenty years ago, little was said and even less was known about female schooling in Africa. Although it is no longer the case today, there are still important gaps in our knowledge base, particularly at the school level. Girls' enrollment, persistence and success in school depend, of course, on many factors beyond the classroom and the school itself. Studies in a number of African countries demonstrate the daughters' workloads, distance from home to school, discrimination against women in the job market, demand and supply issues as determined by established policies, the parents' level of education and their socio-economic status as well as political commitment.

The fact that girls tend to be marginalized in classroom has been documented in several studies. Classroom studies in the United States and France have shown that even when girls make up the majority of students, teachers pay less attention to them than to boys. It is fair to add here that boys sometimes get attention because they are being disciplined for bad behavior while girls tend to be disciplined less because they are more reserved and timid. Studies also show that most teachers hold lower expectations on girls.

Purpose of the study: The premise of this discussion is the United Nations' Special Initiative for Africa (UNSI) focuses on selected low-enrollment African countries in an effort to help them find pragmatic, sustainable solutions to the problems that have depressed female primary school enrollments for so long. As part of this process, a four-country study was conducted between November 1998 and May 1999 in Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali and Mauritania. The purpose of this study is to investigate, examine the factors affecting the standard of female education in senior secondary school in the Kassena-Nankana District and the study specially focused on identifying and understanding the practices likely to promote female school participation in a significant way.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study area: The research study was conducted in the Kassena-Nankana District in Upper East Region of Ghana. It is one of the Six districts in the Upper East Region with Navrongo been its district capital. The district is geographically located in the northern most part of the country. It shares boundaries with Burkina Faso to the north, Bongo and Bolgatanga district to the East, Busilsa and Sisala to the West and finally Mamprusi West district to the South. The district lies between latitudes 10° 30' and 11° 00' north of the equator and between longitudes 1° 00' and 1° 30' West of the Zero Meridian and cover an area of 1,675 Square Kilometers along the Ghana Burkina Faso boarder. In 1999, the district registered a Population of 140,881. The population is quite young, with 41% below 15 years, the broad age distribution is as follows: 0-4 years 13.1%, 5-9 years 28.0%, 15-64 years 54.2 and 65+4.7% Female constitute 53% of the population, giving a sex ratio of 89 males per 100 female.

The district has 77 Primary Schools, 35 Junior Secondary Schools, 6 Senior Secondary Schools, 1 Teacher Training College, 1 Community Health Nursing Training School, 2 Vocational Institutions and the third Faculty of the University for Development Studies which focuses on applied sciences. There is also an Orphanage managed by the Catholic Mission.

Educational attainment in the district is quite low, in general about two-thirds (65.5%) of the population aged 15 years and above have received no formal education and only 8.2% have attained senior secondary or higher level of education. The distribution by sex indicates that more females (74.6%) tend to be uneducated than males (54.4%). Similarly, current school attendance among the 6-25 age group is lower for girls (48%) than for boys (54%). Overall, about 55% of all the the population aged 6 years and above have never been to school.

Sample collection: Five senior secondary schools out of the Six secondary schools which are mixed in this district were selected for the study and Staff of the secondary schools were part of the sample used. One hundred female students of the five senior secondary schools were taken into account for the questionnaire administration and ten teachers, two from each secondary school were randomly selected for the research. The sample size of the female students for each senior secondary school was determined using the proportional allocation procedure. The five secondary schools under study are: Navrongo Senior Secondary

School, Awe Senior Secondary/technical School, Our lady of Loude Senior Sec/tech School, Chiana Senior Secondary School and Sirigu Senior Secondary School. The following formular below is used for the proportional allocation procedure:

$$S = n/N \times 100$$

Where:

S = School

n = Number of female students in each secondary school

N = Overall total number of female students in all the five secondary schools and 100 is the sample size of female students of all the five secondary schools

Descriptive analysis of the questionnaire: For convenience and easy understanding of the factors affecting the standard of female education: a case study of Senior Secondary School (SSS) in Kassena/Nankana District. Table 1-10 show the descriptive analysis of the questionnaire used in the process of the research.

Table 1: Frequency distribution of female students in the five Secondary Schools of our choice in the district

Name of schools	SSC I	SSC 2	SSC 3	Total row	S = n/N*100
Navrongo Sec. School	119	90	100	309	39%
AWE Sec./Tech. School	20	26	14	60	07%
OLL SEC./Tech. School	63	61	52	176	22%
China SEC. School	57	50	49	156	20%
Sirigu SEC. School	24	43	27	94	12%
Column total	283	270	242	795	100%

Table 2: Parential/educational background/occupation and attitude towards

Items	Frequency (%)	Mean	Std. deviation
Parental attitude towards female		1.8	1.08
Excellent	13	13.0	
Very good	23	23.0	
Good	9	9.0	
Poor	55	55.0	
Father's level of education			
Primary	22	22.0	
JSS	11	11.0	
SSS	7	7.0	
Tertiary	33	33.0	
Other	27	27.0	
Mother's level of education		2.0	1.07
Primary	42	42.0	
JSS	28	28.0	
SSS	16	16.0	
Tertiary	14	14.0	
Other	0	0.0	
Father's occupational status		3.0	1.0
Trader	8	8.0	

Table 2: Continued

Farmer	24	24.0		
Government worker	25	25.0		
Other	43	43.0		
Mother's occupational status			3.0	1.00
Trader	40	40.0		
Farmer	18	18.0		
Government worker	11	11.0		
Other	31	31.0		

Table 3: Residential status and distance of students from home to school

Items	Frequency	(%)	Mean	Std. deviation
Residential status of students				
Day	55	55.0		
Boarder	45	45.0		
Distance of students' home from School				
Very far	47	47.0	2.2	1.25
Moderately far	11	11.0		
Far	19	19.0		
Not far	23	23.0		
Total	100	100.0		

Table 4: Factors affecting female education most

Items/Factors.	Frequency	(%)	Mean	Std. deviation
Poverty	43	43.0		
Lack of parental care	4	4.0		
Work load at home	14	14.0		
Lack of teachers	33	33.0		
Lack of textbooks	6	6.0		
Total	100	100.0	2.6	1.47

Table 5: What should be done by the government to improve the education of students in the region of our choice

Items/things	Frequency	(%)	Mean	SD
Provision of more qualified teachers	33	33.0		
Provision of more text books	7	7.0		
Well-equipped libraries	2	2.0		
Scholarship for female students in SSS	58	58.0		
Total	100	100.0		

Table 6: Things teachers want government to do to improve female education in the district

Responses	Frequency	(%)	Mean	SD
Campaign for female education	3	30.0		
Provision of more trained	1	10.0		
Incentives for female students	6	60.0		
Total	10	100.0		

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study are tabulated as shown in Table 1-10. The focus is mainly on the examination of the factors affecting the standard of female education in senior secondary schools in Kassena/Nankana district in Ghana. The parameters/factors used on our case study of the subject matter are highlight in terms of the frequency, percentages, with the mean and standard deviation.

Table 7: Major factors affecting female education in the district

Factors	Frequency	(%)	Mean	SD
Teenage pregnancy	1	10.0		
Work load at home	1	10.0		
Lack of parental care	3	30.0		
Poverty	4	40.0		
Negative attitude of teachers towards female student	1	10.0		
Total	10	100.0	3.3	1.16

Table 8: Factors that accounts for the low standard of education

Factors	Frequency	(%)	Mean	SD
Poverty	2	20.0		
Lack of Parental care	1	10.0		
Female are not serious at school	4	40.0		
Poor campaign for female education	1	10.0		
Ignorance of Parents	2	20.0		
Total	10	100.0		

Table 9: Teachers assessment of the activities of girl-child education in the district

Assessment	Frequency	(%)	Mean	SD
Very active	2	20.0		
Active	3	30.0		
Dormant	3	30.0		
Poor	2	20.0		
Total	10	100.0	2.30	0.82

Table 10: Teachers assessment of female students performance in their various schools

Performance	Frequency	(%)	Mean	SD
Excellent	1	10.0		
Very good	2	20.0		
Good	1	10.0		
Average	4	40.0		
Below average	2	20.0		
Total	10	100.0	3.90	0.74

CONCLUSION

The study examined the factors affecting the standard of female education: A case study of senior secondary schools in the Kassena-Nankana district. The study revealed that, distance of students' home from school, residential status, parents' attitude/concern towards female students, parents' level of education, parents occupation status, poverty, lack of qualified teachers, lack of scholarship for female students, lack of parental care and the activities of the girl-child education in the district are the main factors threatening the education of females in the district.

Many of the secondary schools in the district are day schools, thus most students stay with their parents or rent rooms in town while attending school. This does not create a good atmosphere for them to learn effectively and hence the poor performance in examinations. Schools such as China Secondary

School, Awe Sec/Tech. Schools, Sirigu Secondary School and Our Lady of Loude Sec/Tech. School are day schools and do not have hostel accommodation for the students.

Campaign for female education are not in place to help promote the education of females, since most parents in the district are not educated, there is the need for an intense campaign for female education to encourage more parents to send their female children to school. Scholarship for female students will also put them in good mood to study effectively.

Recommendations: In line with the findings of this study the following suggestions were made to wards a multi-pronged approach to help promote the education of females in the Kassena-Nankana district in particular and Ghana in general:

- Government needs to organize seminars through district education. Directorate to get parents to be concern about their children education. This will help change the negative attitudes that they have towards female education
- The district Assembly should provide loans from their poverty alleviation fund to needy parents to enable them improve upon their economic activities and thus raise their incomes. This will make it easy for them to cater for their female students by providing them with their basic needs and paying for extra class tuition fee
- Information and awareness raising campaigns should target parents, particularly mothers and encourage them to register their girls in school
- Action must be taken to encourage parents to change attitudes and lighten the household workload of the girl and provide her with the time and a comfortable space for learning at home
- National policies should constitute the general framework for the guidance, coordination, impetus, follow up and evaluation of actions taken for female schooling
- All level of government should be involved in national policies for female education and rank them as a high priority in the governmental agenda, thus making them a factor of mobilization and a source of credibility in the eyes of civil society

- At the international level, the need for priority action in female schooling in a perspective of equity , development and fundamental human rights is obvious and resulted in recommendations by various international conferences and conventions on education, women and social development

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