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ABSTRACT

AN EXAMINATION OF FEMALE STUDENTS' SCHOOLING EXPERIENCES IN AN ERA OF EDUCATIONAL REFORMS IN GHANA: A CASE STUDY IN THE ACCRA –TEMA SCHOOL DISTRICT

This dissertation examines female students schooling experiences within the Accra – Tema district of Ghana. The case study centers and privileges the stories and experiences of girls and present them in their own voices to uncover their knowledge of ongoing educational reforms, challenges they encounter, opportunities made available to them, and the kind of interactions/relations they have with teachers and peers. The ongoing comprehensive educational reforms including the FCUBE program have resulted in improvements in girls enrollment at all levels of education. Yet, female students still experience many forms of discriminations and inequalities in educational access and participation. The continuing marginalization of female students by educational policy discourses and practices is untenable and need redress. Multiple obstacles that hamper gender equity education include the lack of financial resources, ingrained gender biased cultural practices, limited institutional support with effective policies and the lack of gender focused research to capture female students' experiences.

This study draws on postmodern feminist frameworks to collect, analyze and discuss data collated from fifteen girls on their schooling experiences. The findings of the study are presented to reflect accurately the stories and experiences of participants and raise awareness of their schooling predicaments. The voices of girls are privileged to provide vital information and data that policy makers, educators and stakeholder may find useful in transforming education. The study also provides meaningful theoretical and practical insights of alternative approach in policy research and analysis to examine educational outcomes in Ghana.

The findings of the study indicate that girls are limited in their knowledge of the FCUBE and other educational reform programs. They experience many forms of discrimination, sexual abuse and gender stereotypes on a regular basis in school. The lack of school amenities such as libraries, laboratories, classrooms and basic facilities have all added to the negative experiences of girls in schools.

The study recommends that a comprehensive approach to educational reforms must include changes in policy, practice and research approaches to effect gender equality in

education. The voices, stories and experiences of female students must be incorporated in the conversations, design and implementation of policy reforms. The study advocates for effective collaboration among stakeholders including policy makers, researchers, parents, educators and international community to ensure that Ghana meets its Millennium Development Goal target by the year 2015. In addition efforts should be made to create schooling environments that honors and respects equal access and participation of all children irrespective of gender because issues of gender equality are issues of human right and social justice which are not negotiable.

AN EXAMINATION OF FEMALE STUDENTS' SCHOOLING EXPERIENCES IN AN ERA OF EDUCATIONAL REFORMS IN GHANA: A CASE STUDY IN THE ACCRA –TEMA SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Dedication

To Patience, Karen and Kevin for whom I strive and live

CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

"If you educate a man, you educate an individual but if you educate a woman, you educate a nation" Dr. Kwegyir Aggrey

Introduction

In Ghana, as in many parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, policies to reform education have not eradicated many of the problems and challenges girls encounter in their daily experiences in school. Hence, reform efforts to achieve gender parity and equality in education have become the rhetoric rather than the reality. Besides, much of the research done to investigate policies' impact on girls' education are couched in mainstream agendas that marginalize the realities of girls'. There is therefore very little information and data to convey the stories and experiences based on gender understanding of educational reforms in Ghana from girls' perspectives. This state of affair makes it impossible for policy makers and educational leaders to gain adequate insights into how policies actually stifle efforts aimed at addressing gender inequalities in education. So, the environments within which girls learn and experience schooling are not adequately understood. The purpose of this research study is to examine girls' schooling experiences to uncover their perception of education reforms, challenges and opportunities, as well as their interactions and relations with teachers and peers.

Recent global attention to promote girls' education has garnered interest among development scholars, multilateral agencies, nongovernmental organizations, educators, and policy makers. Development agencies continue to partner with government and local women's groups to promote girls' education because girls' education has not only become a human rights issue, but also an investment for the socio-economic development of countries (Levine, 2006). The United Nations strongly supports the promotion of girls' education in many developing countries by pressuring governments to prioritize girls' education in their development strategies (Aikman and Unterhalter, 2005). Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goal (MDG) are two important global policies to promote universal basic education, expand education access for girls, empower women, and to eliminate gender disparities in education by the year 2015 (Aikman and Unterhalter, 2005). Ghana's government has endorsed both the EFA and MDG declarations.

The implementation of the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education initiative, popularly called FCUBE, is aimed at providing all children with universal basic education by the year 2015 (ISSER, 2004). This reform program and subsequent initiatives as they stand now, have not adequately addressed many of the challenges and obstacles that girls face in education. Research findings confirm that girls still lag behind boys in areas of enrollment, participation, accessibility, achievements, and retention at all levels of education (Ministry of Education, 2006; Sutherland-Addy, 2002; Daddieh, 2007).

Research traditions normally used for investigating policy's impact on education often neglect the stories and experiences of girls. Their findings however, continue to shape, authorize, legitimize and set the standards for education (Marshall, 1998). These research approaches use methodologies that are overly positivist and "male centered" and hence fail to include female perspectives. This kind of research assumes that all research subjects share the same relationship to their social environment and render categories such as gender, race, class and sexuality unimportant, and evaluate them on the basis of male norms (Bensimon & Marshall, 1997). This positivist paradigm is widely accepted and used by policy analysts to dispassionately encourage the broader policy community to perceive research enterprises in the same manner.

According to Marshall (1997) such research techniques used for analysis and evaluation of educational outcomes ignore the political nature of research and are grounded in a narrow, falsely objective, overly instrumental view of rationality. In so doing inherent biases are masked and allow policy elites and technocrats to present analyses and findings as neutral and objective when in actuality they are tied to prevailing systems of power relations. As Marshall and others argue, mainstream researchers are likely to marginalize and silence the voices, stories and experiences of girls by normalizing gender issues and maintaining the status quo.

In contrast, the emergence of postmodern feminist approaches have offered alternative methods in research investigations that challenge mainstream methods by involving ordinary people in policy research (Vidovich, 2007). At the forefront is Catherine Marshall, who has championed the use of the Critical Feminist Policy Analysis (CFPA) approach in the analysis of policy impact and outcomes from female perspectives (Marshall, 1997). This approach draws on feminist, critical and postmodern traditions to undermine and challenge mainstream methods in policy research.

From a feminist standpoint, CFPA unravels female consciousness and experiences to contradict mainstream accounts of human life, and put women's issues at the center of policy research investigations and to uncover cultural and institutional sources of oppression (Marshall, 1997). The critical component is concerned with issues of social justice, and problematizes institutionalized structures within society and schools that operate powerfully to maintain unequal and unjust relations. The approach moves beyond description of women's status and barriers to insist on equal rights in access, opportunities, and participation (Marshall, 1997). The postmodern component of CFPA rejects grand narratives that privilege discourses used in explaining social phenomena to predict patterned inter- relationships in schools and society. This postmodern feminist framework is used to uncover contradictions inherent in policy and practices, to embrace 'difference', and reject essentialism (Lather, 1991). It also draws on the importance of narratives and lived experiences to connect the complex identities of women's meaning making in policy research (Marshall, 1997).

The silencing of girls' voices, stories and experiences in education research has been sustained in policy reports through institutionalized socio-cultural practices (Slaughter & Leslie, 1999; Glazer, 1997; 1999). Hence, education programs, which may appear orderly, rule-driven and informed by expert decisions and analyses may not necessarily address the urgent challenges girls face in schools. This research project examines girls' schooling experiences by drawing on their stories and narratives to understand education reform outcomes from the ground up. This research privileges the girls' own understanding of school reforms as well as the challenges and opportunities they experience in their schooling environment.

Using the Accra-Tema schooling district as a case, the researcher purposely selected fifteen girls from the junior high school, senior high school and the university to discuss their schooling experiences. The researcher engaged participants in interview discussions to uncover many of their concerns as they relate to school resources, teacher/peer attitudes and interactions. Prior to fieldwork, the researcher reviewed literature on policy, gender education and policy paradoxes to contextualize Ghana's education policy and its implication for girls. The researcher also reviewed the methodologies of postmodern and African feminist approaches to policy research and development to ground the study.

The overarching objective of the study is to promote girls' education in Ghana. However, until this can be accomplished, research on policy outcomes should be able to accurately analyze

and capture the macro and microstructures of policy and practice, and how they impact girls' education. The study examines education policy implications from micro level analysis with girls telling their stories in their own voices about their schooling experiences. In this process girls become co-authors of the research as their stories, perceptions and opinions are centered in the research study. The findings of this study add to the body of literature aimed at promoting gender equality in Ghanaian education.

Background to the Study

The current state of girls' education in Ghana needs improvement. On April 7, 2003, the Minister of State in charge of Girl-Child Education shared this sentiment. Ms. Christine Churcher, launching the Global Education for All (EFA) initiative week in Accra under the theme "Promoting Girls Education," acknowledged that a large number of children, particularly girls, are out of school and not receiving formal education. The United Nations Children's Education Fund (2007) confirms in a report that about 1.357 million Ghanaian children are out of school, 60% of which are girls (Adamu-Issah et. al. 2007).

This grim statistic is a cause for concern with the national Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) consistently showing wide disparities between boys and girls. Comparatively, in the year 2000, the national GER was 83.7% for boys and 76.2% for girls, and the literacy rate was 80.3% for boys and 63.2% for girls (Ministry of Education, 2006). In that same year, rural Ghana showed 75% GER for girls, but this ratio dropped to 50% in 2001 and further dropped to 20% before girls completed junior secondary education in 2002 (Ministry of education, 2006). In her remarks, Ms. Churcher questioned if Ghana would be able to meet its target of education for all by 2015 when there was consistent widespread gender disparities in enrollment and drop outs among girls. She concluded by calling for immediate collaboration by government and civil society to promotion education for all children to meet the millennium development goal by the year 2015 (Ghanaian Daily Graphic, 2003).

Bellew and King (1993) point that "the benefits of education are well established to improve the quality of life, promote health, expand access to employment, increase productivity and facilitate social and political participation" (p. 285). However, girls' education in Ghana like in many Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries, are inherently shaped by the gendered systems that subordinate and marginalize female positions in society (Mbilizi, 2008). Gender stereotypes

and ingrained cultural practices continue to stifle girls' education and many reforms have not arrested the situation.

The ongoing FCUBE and general education reforms have not fully addressed many gender inequities in schools because the context and content of education deploy unequal learning opportunities that reinforce gendered positions, roles and power relations in school and society (Lee, 1998; Stromquist, 1999; Sadker and Sadker, 2001). The subordinate position, roles and expectations for females are perpetuated by cultural attitudes, norms, and practices that sustain gender inequality in education. The abysmal state of girls' education has prompted national and international advocacy both in theory and practice to promote the full inclusion and participation of girls in education (Tanye, 2008). The benefits of equal education for both males and females are that they ensure their effective participation in the socio-economic process and reduce poverty among women in many developing countries (Sinha and Nayak, 2008).

The United Nations acknowledges that education is the only medium through which the human capacity of a country can be developed to awaken talent, empower people, protect their rights, and foster developments (UNICEF, 2000). Gender equality in education is therefore an inalienable right that must be effectively planned and implemented to enable girls to access and participate equally in education without any impediments (Takyi-Amoako, 2008). It has been argued that girls' education substantially deepens their knowledge and enhances their social skills (Stromquist, 2005; Young, 2000), builds their capacity to participate in the development process (Browne & Barrett, 1991), and improves their health, nutrition, fertility, and child survival rates (Levine, 2006). It is obvious that the benefits of girls' education are enormous to the development, prosperity, and democracy of a country (Owusu – Banahene, 2000). Education of girls is therefore viewed as a panacea for breaking the cycle of poverty, illiteracy, deprivation, and marginalization of women in the Sub-Saharan African region (Fentiman et. al., 1999; World Bank, 1989).

Daddieh (2007) asserts, "the base of Ghanaian educational system is sufficiently broad to permit expanded access to a majority of school-age children…but access is considerably narrowed at higher levels of the educational ladder, with serious implications for female participation in particular" (p.154). This assertion is supported by evidence in many Sub-Saharan African countries where more girls drop out of school, are prone to absenteeism, show poor academic performance or learning deficiency, and register negative schooling experiences as

they struggle to stay and complete their education (Rao & Smyth, 2005). In effect, the reality of girls' education is obscured by gender inequality in obvious and subtle ways that limit their full access and participation (Mule, 2008; Ross, 2005). Aside from these limitations, records on girls' enrollment after the implementation of the FCUBE program have shown improvements (Girls' Education Unit, 2006), but there are still some deep seated challenges that must be addressed to sustain girls' continued stay and graduation. There is the need for further reforms to expand school amenities, improve instructional resources, and encourage gender inclusion at all school levels.

Global efforts to improve female education and employment show progress, but much remains to be accomplished in Sub-Saharan Africa where girls are deprived quality education and opportunities to effectively participate in socio-economic and political processes (Mbilizi, 2008; Subrahmanian, 2003). Studies have consistently shown that girls are underrepresented in math, science, technology, and engineering subjects (Sinha and Nayak, 2008), score lower on standardized tests (National Science Foundation, 2007), and are usually tracked into vocational courses and training programs that are traditionally viewed as feminine (Mbilizi, 2008). Girls are also discriminated against in athletic sports and leadership programs. They are prone to sexual abuse, harassment, and bullying in schools (Anderson-Levitt et. al., 1998; American Association of University Women, 2007). African feminist insights on the status of girls' education similarly point to issues of marginalization and subordination in educational discourses and practices.

These horrid stories of biases and injustices against girls were barely reported in male controlled mainstream research. Recently, however, progressive scholars, women's groups, civil society, and nongovernmental organizations have partnered to rethink, both in theory and practice, how to effectively unravel and address these lingering challenges (Stromquist, 2008). Some proponents argue for the government to implement strict and effective reform initiatives that align with internationally agreed protocols. Others, however, argue for local collaborations in the design of reform initiatives that are pragmatic in addressing local issues to strategically promote girls' education. The third group feels that a blend of the two approaches would be much more effective in addressing girls' education in Ghana.

Since Ghana signed onto the Declarations on Education for All (EFA) and the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDG), the government has made efforts to improve girls' education (UN, 1990). These global policies on education have been supported with

external funding aimed at reducing and ultimately eradicating gender inequalities in education (Sinha and Nayak, 2008). It has also ensured the collaborations of national and international groups to help eliminate dropouts, declining academic achievements and negative schooling experiences among girls in Ghana (UNESCO, 2003).

A global monitoring report on EFA, issued in 2009 by the United Nations, indicated that progress has been made by many Sub-Saharan African countries in narrowing gender gaps in enrollments. However, the report also pointed out that there is more work to be done for full gender equality to be achieved. By full gender equality, education must be responsive to gender parities in enrollment, school attendance, access, and participation in subject or course offerings, and gender sensitivity within the schooling environment. Schools need to make learning environments more gender friendly and inclusive, provide facilities and resources, adopt curricula that have equal gender representations, and develop teaching practices that respect, tolerate, and are relevant and sensitive to gender issues (UNESCO, 2009). The report also revealed that there are only few cases in Sub-Saharan Africa where girls have caught up or even surpassed boys in subjects such as math and science at the primary and secondary school levels. On the whole, the report points to girls as still lagging behind boys in enrollment and academic achievement as they move into higher levels of education, and in subjects that are traditionally considered "male domains" such as science, technology, engineering and math (UNESCO, 2009).

Some reports also argue that either by overt or covert reasons, school practices have continued to track students based on their gender into courses that are tagged "male" or "female." Gender streaming is influenced by cultural stereotypes perpetuated in schools to track girls into "feminine courses." This practice accounts for more than two-thirds of girls who pursue traditionally considered "feminine" courses, including teaching, nursing, home economics, and social work (UNESCO, 2009). The process of gender streaming is not usually visible until secondary and tertiary education where future career and professional choices are made. Exploring gender streaming in Ghanaian higher education, Daddieh (2007) compared female enrollment in several university courses and found

> a heavy concentration of both male and female students in the arts, humanities, and social sciences. At the University of Ghana, the ratio of female was more than six in ten (5,205 out of a total of 8,606) in the faculties of Arts, Social studies and Law during the 1997/98 academic year. There were fewer than two in ten (14%) enrolled in the natural sciences. Less

> than 19% (225 out of 1,205) of students in the natural sciences were female. By contrast, nearly eight in ten (80% or 82 of the 103) students enrolled in home science were women. For the same year, the data from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) in Kumasi show that only 8% (92 out of 1,114) of the Engineering students were women. While female participation remained unchanged from the preceding year, male enrolment actually went up by slightly more than 15% (140 students). In the sciences, females accounted for roughly 15% (218) of the 1,414 students. This figure actually represented a modest increase of about 12%, but still lagged behind the male enrollment increase, which was twice as high (p. 156).

He also found that

> male students were over –represented in the faculties of agriculture, environmental and development studies, and renewable natural resources. These are areas where one would have expected female students to make a much stronger showing because of socio-historical factors that foreground the traditional conception of women as custodians of land and forests. The data from University of Cape Coast tell an almost identical story. For the academic year 1997/98, roughly 16% of the students enrolled in the natural sciences were women (138 of the 876 students). Women accounted for roughly 16% of students pursuing agriculture (66 of the 511) but represented nearly 44% (898 out of 2,041) of students pursuing degrees in education (p. 156).

This statistic is only a snippet of the broader scenario of what goes on with respect to girls' education in Ghana. Just because girls and boys may experience learning in different ways, does not mandate different tracks to shape their future career options. Furthermore, schools designed from male-centered perspectives have not at all helped in the process of gender equality because school practices continue to deny girls opportunities to venture into male-dominated subjects. Such biases do not only derail the dreams of many girls, but contribute to high attrition and low graduation among girls and add to the high illiteracy and poverty rates among Sub-Saharan African women (World Bank, 1990).

Ghana's commitment to universal basic education for all children by the year 2015 is on track (UNICEF, 2007), but achieving gender equality is a challenge. While modest achievements have been made in terms of increased girls' enrollment at all levels of education, the expansion in school facilities such as library resources, science laboratory equipments, computers, and amenities such as modern toilets, canteens, and recreational facilities have not been provided to service the growing number of student population. The lack of financial resources and cultural stereotypes also hamper policy initiatives aimed at gender equality

Gender stereotypes stem from cultural attitudes and practices that subordinate females and perpetuate male hegemony and power. Margaret Nash (2005) refers to this kind of relationship as a product of the "separate sphere" ideology. In Ghana, customary practices and traditions sustain gender and power relations that are unequal by socially constructing and positioning women as housewives, child bearers, nurturers, and home makers, and men as heads of households vested with power and authority to make decisions for and on behalf of women (Owusu – Banahene, 2000; Amuah-Sekyi, 1988). The marginalized position of many Ghanaian women keeps them subservient to men, particularly in rural and poor areas of Ghana (see Amuah- Sekyi 1988). The attitudes and practices that perpetuate unequal gender relations consequently diffuses into the institution of education to subordinate and limit the capabilities of girls to fully access, participate, engage, retain, and complete education.

The lack of external financial resources to fund programs has limited the government's ability to initiate strategic reforms aimed at implementation, assessment, and accounting for the progress and shortfalls of the education reforms (Maslak, 2008). Gender equity education will succeed when funds are available for the construction of new school buildings and facilities, to provide textbooks, train teachers, and create schooling environments that are gender sensitive and responsive. The availability of funds could also facilitate in the dissemination and education of people about the importance of educating the girl child.

Subsequent financial supports received after the implementation of the FCUBE program enabled the government to implement the Education Strategy Plan (ESP) for 2003-2015, the Growth Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS), and the Capitation Grant that abolishes tuition and expands early childhood development services. These are all efforts to promote gender parity at the basic level of education. More recently, the school nutrition and feeding program has been introduced to sustain enrollments and attendance in school (Adamu-Issah et al., 2007). However, the survival of these initiatives depends on political leadership, commitment to reforms, strategic collaboration with donor agencies, and resource mobilization efforts to support and sustain all of them (Adamu-Issah et al., 2007).

It is important that intervention programs to promote girls' education include gender specific and friendly issues that are responsive and encourage girls enrolled in schools to stay and complete their education (UN, 2005). Overcoming systemic obstacles to girls' education requires innovative strategies aimed at disrupting institutionalized discourses and practices of

patriarchal ideologies that perpetuate gender inequalities. For this reason, this study examined some of the challenges girls encounter to understand the circumstance within with they live, learn, and experience schooling.

The lack of adequate information about girls' schooling experiences has led to the lack of documented stories from or by girls themselves and hence their situation is poorly understood (Sutton, 1998). Whether by omission or commission, researchers often neglect or silence the voices, views, stories and experiences of girls in their analysis and findings. Fine (2007) argues that researchers, who speak over or for participants, often misinform and obscure the respective, varied roles and voices of participants. It is imperative for researchers to take the responsibility and provide girls with platforms on which they could articulate their stories and narratives in their own voices on education outcomes. This research study ensured that the intersection of gender and culture of schooling was amplified to understand girls' educational needs, concerns and opportunities.

Daddieh (2007) argues that the existence of differential rates in gender participation in Ghanaian education would be better understood by

> (a) an examination of the strong linkage between pre-tertiary and tertiary gender disparities in both enrolment and subject choices; (b) a greater scrutiny of the vastly different experiences of male and female students in the Ghanaian education system; (c) acknowledgment of the motivational bases of decision making at the household level which ultimately determines who receives sustained financial sponsorship to attend school and who is left behind; and (d) an interrogation of developments at tertiary level of education (p. 157).

This study was interested in scrutinizing the different experiences of female students to complement many reports done on males. The intention is to capture girls' experiences by centering their own stories and narratives in the study.

Description of the Problem

The disregard of girls' voices and experiences in educational policy reports are outrageous, especially when issues of gender equality in education are the focus of discussions. Kozol (1992) has pointed out that there are many conferences and symposia held on behalf of children, but which unfortunately lack the voices and experiences of children. It behooves researchers to begin to investigate what happens to girls within their schooling environment to gain empirical understanding of their situation. Boylan and Ing (2005) argue that adults often try

to act in the best interest of children, but fail to find out from them their interests, experiences, opinions, and thoughts on issues that affect them. If the needs, concerns, and challenges of girls remains unexamined, biased research findings will continue to shape education policies and practices. The implications would be that the quality, quantity, and content of education will also continue to subordinate and marginalize girls', not only in schools, but in their socio- economic conditions in society (Kelly & Elliot, 1982, Mbilizi, 2008).

There are few research reports on Ghana's education reforms that focus on girls' education, but rarely do they include the stories and experiences of girls' schooling encounters. Much of the research done by the Ghana Education Service and funding organizations generally focuses on comparing and contrasting enrollment, dropouts, graduation and achievements with mainstream lenses (Girls Education Unit, 2002; 2003; Sutherland-Addy, 2002; UNICEF, 2005). Yet, these studies fail to account for disparities in access, participation, interactions, subject offerings and gender sensitive teaching through the stories and narratives of girls. For these reasons, the challenges that girls encounter in schooling have remained unexamined and unaddressed.

In many cases, the issue of gender equality is lost in research findings and program evaluation reports because, more often than not, they focused on enrollment and graduation as the measure of success of reform programs. For example, most of the literature and records obtained from the Ministry of Education and Ghana Education Service rely on enrollment and graduation data to make a strong case for progress made in the promotion of girls' education. I sincerely do understand their motives and intentions for doing so, but I still have reservations about the use of enrollment and graduation figures to make sweeping generalizations, especially when the issue of girls' equality, full access, and participation in education are in contention.

For instance, Table 1.1 illustrates a case in point where increases in girls' enrollment are used to denote success of the education reforms (Girl Education Unit, 2003). There is some progress made, but in reality substantial increases in enrollment at the basic level of education have not translated into proportionate increases at the high school and tertiary levels. The fact is that while all levels of education have experienced some levels of increases in girls' enrollment, it is unwarranted to be excited when in actuality girls' composite enrollment declines as they move up the academic ladder. Table 1.1 shows the Gross Enrollment Rates (GER) for primary and junior high schools from 1992 to 2000.

As the table indicates, the GER totals for boys and girls at the primary school level declined from 77.58% in 1992/93 to 75.70% by 1999/2000. At the JHS level the GER figures barely changed from 58.18% in 1992/93 to 58.80% in 1999/00. The data however shows that between 1992 and 2000 girls' GER fluctuated over the years, but remained steady from 71.43% in 1992/93 to 71.60% in 1999/00 for primary schools. At the JHS, the GER for girls showed consistent increases over the years from 48.90% in 1992/93 to 53.30% in 1999/00. The figures show that modest gains have been made in girls' enrollment due to the FCUBE. However, a lot of improvements are needed to increase the required annual enrollment rate to 2.5% per year if Ghana hopes to fulfill the 2015 millennium target (ISSER, 2004).

Table 1.1

Gross Enrollment rates for Primary and JHS Levels by Sex, 1992 to 2000 Ac. Years

Year	**Gross Enrollment Rate**					
	Primary Level			**JHS Level**		
	Girls %	Boys %	Total %	Girls%	Boys%	Total%
1992/93	71.43	83.71	77.58	48.90	67.44	58.18
1993/94	72.19	84.07	78.14	50.23	68.17	59.21
1994/95	70.51	81.28	75.90	50.65	66.74	58.71
1995/96	69.50	79.70	74.61	51.33	66.49	58.93
1996/97	71.54	81.54	76.55	51.60	65.56	54.51
1997/98	68.61	76.83	72.53	51.36	57.66	54.51
1998/99	68.67	71.10	72.80	52.30	63.80	58.10
1999/00	71.60	79.80	75.70	53.30	64.20	58.80

Source: Ministry Of Education, SRIMPR Division Accra (2003)

It is clear that the percentage rate of girls' enrollment in primary school reduces at the JHS level. For instance, girls' enrollment in 1992/93 reduced from 71.43% at the primary to 48.90% at the JHS. A similar story is seen in 1999/00 when 71.60% of girls enrolled into primary school, but this figure reduces to 53.30% at the JHS level. These decreases may be due to a large number of the girls who enrolled into primary schools who either dropped out before entering junior high school or were not able to graduate for a variety of reasons. This observation is consistent with Daddieh's (2007) assertion that the number of girls enrolled at each school

level declines as girls move up the education ladder. According to Daddieh (2007), if girls' enrollment percentages are graphed for each school level, the picture shows a pyramid to indicate a large primary level base that narrows as girls advance into junior high, senior high and tertiary levels of education.

Also, data obtained from the Ministry of Education (2003) further shows that the annual dropout rates of both girls and boys averaged 6.00% and 4.60% respectively for the years between 1994 and 2000. According to Hyde (1993), girls' ability to enroll and stay or drop out of school depends on several sequential decisions influenced by characteristics of the individual, the home, the community, the school, and the educational system. However, the lack of data and literature on girls' learning and schooling experiences only denies education stakeholders of the vital information needed for effecting sustainable reforms in education.

A growing body of scholarship argues that the shortage of women in male dominated occupations is not due to the lack of access or relevant intellectual ability (Jacobs, 1989), but rather the processes of education that serve as instruments for perpetuating social inequalities and structural reproduction (Apple, 1979, Giroux, 1983). There is research to confirm equal achievements, including girls surpassing boys due to their initial developmental edge and evidence of girls scoring higher on standardized tests, being more mature, and more prepared to learn than boys at primary school level (Mann, 1996). However, there are also studies that show girls' decline in standardized tests and achievements at the secondary school level affects their self worth (Mbilizi, 2008).

The significant declines were not only in enrollment, but also in achievements as girls move up the educational ladder in many African countries. This suggests that the institution of education is a tool for perpetuating a gendered social order (Sadker & Sadker, 1994). Reports of declining average GER from the primary to the tertiary levels indicate that there is something wrong structurally with the school curricula, teaching methodology, and general environment within which girls learn. The National Vision for Girls' Education in Ghana, which was prepared by the Girls' Education Unit (2002), asserts, "barriers to girls' education are multifaceted and interrelated….and overcoming these barriers … will require multiple perspectives and multi-sector partnerships" (p. 13).

According to Assie- Lumumba (2007), documented evidence of high drop outs, forced-outs, repetitions and underrepresentation of girls as they move up the education ladder has

serious consequences on their future career aspirations and effective participation in society. The lack of data to understand how and why girls drop out of school or perform poorly while enrolled also contributes to the lack of understanding of their experiences and the ability of stakeholders to make informed decisions aimed at gender equality policy initiatives in Ghana.

Critical feminist research across the globe has spearheaded efforts in both theory and practice to include female experiences in research to undermine and challenge the structural reproduction of power and gender relations in schools and society (Stromquist, 2008). They confront the status quo and empower marginalized groups including women to reclaim their voice from silenced, powerless, and subordinated positions (Stewart & Cole, 2007). The feminist platform centers the voices of girls and it is the responsibility of researchers to listen and share those experiences with the public. The researcher needs to communicate with participants (girls) the knowledge produced to foster deeper understanding and connections that empower the girls (Devault, 1990; Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007). According to Lykes and Coquillo (2000), as power and privilege shifts from the researchers to participants (girls), researchers become "facilitator of the voices of girls with whom they work with…to create the opportunity through which participants (girls) can tell their own stories (p. 315).

Within a framework of Critical Feminist Policy Analysis (CFPA), the study identifies research subjects as active participants rather than passive objects (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007), and sheds light on what goes on in their learning environment. For too long, the findings and reports in most educational research have been written and told from male perspectives. It is therefore appropriate for females, in this case girls, to also tell their side of the story as a counter, and correct erroneous stories that men have written about females (Barthel 1985). In essence, the study provides the forum for girls to narrate their stories and lived experiences candidly in their own words and voices (Lykes & Coquillo, 2007). Stories usually constructed from research may differ depending on the focus of the study on the gender, age, researcher or researched, and theoretical and methodological frameworks that guided the study. In this study, the focus is to examine girls' educational experiences in areas of: (a) their knowledge and understanding of ongoing school reforms; (b) the challenges they encounter and opportunities available for them; and (c) the nature of their interactions and relations with teachers and peers.

Research Questions

The main research question that guided the study was: Given the recent efforts to improve girls' education through comprehensive policy reforms in Ghana, how do girls make sense of their formal schooling experiences in the area of knowledge of reforms, challenges and opportunities, and interactions with teachers and peers? The study draws on girls' knowledge, perceptions, narratives, and interpretations to understand how ongoing reforms impact their schooling experiences. It captures how girls negotiate with school cultures couched in male sensibilities and the nature of the challenges that diminish their equal opportunities, expectations, and aspirations in schooling. It also unravels how girls perceive and interpret school discourses and practices that shape their ability to stay and complete, or drop out of school. These were the interview questions:

- *What is your knowledge and understanding of the FCUBE and ongoing reform programs? How if at all, have they affected your education?*
- *What are some of the opportunities availed to you by these reforms?*
- *What are some of the challenges presented by ongoing reforms?*
- *What kind of interactions and relations do you have with teachers and peers and why?*

Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine girls' schooling experiences within an era of multiple education reforms targeted at improving girls' education. It is expected that the findings and recommendations of the study would help to improve and promote girls' education in Ghana. With evidence of girls' continued experiences of biases, subordination, and obstacles that hamper their equal opportunities in education, the study aims at promoting gender equality in education. The data, information, findings, and recommendations of the study will be a valuable resource for a nationwide investigation on girls' educational experiences.

The study provides meaningful insights on both theoretical and practical perspectives to examine how mainstream approaches to policy research and analysis could be challenged with alternative approaches. The information made available by the study could bring a renewed sense and awareness to policy implications and how girls are impacted in the process. The study hopes to empower girls with analytical tools and a sense of self worth to examine and interpret school policies and practices, and how they shape their lived reality. This micro level approach to policy

analysis would contribute to our understanding of the disconnections between policy and practice. The study provides girls with the platform not only to reflect on school discourses and practices that subordinate them, but also enable them to tell these personal stories in their own voices as they speak to the challenges, opportunities, and possibilities in schooling.

The study further aims to advocate and mobilize support aimed at usurping educational structures that systematically subordinate and discriminate against girls and women in schools and society. It helps to evoke female subjectivity to name, read, interpret, and deconstruct structural power relations and/or privileges that socially construct them in both school and society. It provides girls with a sense of liberation and empowerment that can foster their senses of resistance to male domination in school and society. By this process, girls may become agents of change in transforming the content and context within which schools operate as they fight for equal rights, social justice, and democracy. Finally, the study aims to validate the stories and narrative of girls about their schooling experiences as equally important as those provided from male perspectives, and information made available to researchers, educators, policy makers, and stakeholders for the required changes needed in Ghanaian education.

In sum, in this study, I examine girls' knowledge of education reform through their own understanding; explain school deficiencies from girls interpretations, views, and narratives; provide a platform for girls to tell their schooling concerns and opportunities; unravel the contradictions inherent in school policies and practices; create a sense of self awareness that liberates and empowers girls for education transformation possibilities; provide data useful for moving the conversation on gender equality education forward; add to the literature on girls' education in Ghana; and advocate for equality, social justice, and democracy in the Ghanaian education system.

Significantly, the study offers valuable insights that provide some answers to lingering questions relating to gender inequalities and biases that exist in Ghanaian education. With about 15% of girls and young women out of school, the study brings awareness to some challenges and obstacles that confront efforts to promote girls education. The study seeks to advocate for school reforms that are gender inclusive, responsive and sensitive toward gender equality in education.

Definition of Terms

There were a couple of operational definitions used in the study to support the research. To avoid any ambiguities in understanding the concepts I have provided operational definitions to clarify the terms and the contexts and contents with which they were used in the study.

Case Study: is "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 2003, p. 123.)

Curriculum: is an integrated course of academic studies or a set of courses, course work, and content offered at schools, which is partly or entirely determined by external authoritative body. According to Beauchamp (1982), curriculum is a written plan depicting the scope and arrangement of the projected educational program for a school. Curriculum design is the substance and organization of goals and culture content so arranged as to reveal potential progression through levels of schooling (pp. 25). Curriculum system is a system for decision making and action with respect to the three primary curriculum functions: planning, implementing and evaluating (Beauchamp, 1981, pp. 206).

Discourse: is a concept that refers to an array of related statements produced under definite social and historical conditions to define a field of legitimate knowledge. Discourse is about the production of knowledge through language, and since all social practices entail meaning, and meanings shape and influence what we do and our conduct, all practices have a discursive aspect (Hall, 1997). In Foucauldian sense, discourse is an idea that form and function due to institutions and relations of power (Foucault, 1978).

Gender: in contrast to sex, refers to the non-biological aspects of men and women in the society. The 1995 Commonwealth Plan of Action on 'Gender and Development' defines gender as the socially constructed differences between women and men that result in subordination of women and in opportunity to have a better life (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1995). Historically, women and men play different roles in society through their relationship to each other in socioeconomic, political and cultural contexts. These differences in roles evoke different treatments leading to unequal relations between men and women, and particularly in areas of access to power, opportunities and resources in the household or societal level. Evidently, gender inequality has led to poverty of the majority of the world's women. To eradicate poverty, development planners focus on gender inequalities that exist in society and particularly in education. Gender equality in

education has therefore become one of the central poverty reduction strategies in modern development discourse. Hence, failure to provide quality education to girls is seen as hindrance to anti-poverty measures and denial of human rights (Global Campaign for Education, 2003).

Gender Equality in Education: means achieving equitable outcomes for females and males in all that is of value to individuals and society. Adapted from the AERA-sponsored *Handbook for Achieving Sex Equity through Education* (Klein, 1985), gender equity outcomes are attained when: (a) both females and males acquire the most valued characteristics and skills (even if they have been generally attributed to only one gender) so that fewer jobs, roles, activities, expectations, and achievements are differentiated by gender; (b) sex segregation in education and society caused by gender stereotyping and other inappropriate discriminatory factors is reduced; and (c) there is decreased use of gender stereotyping in decision making about individuals (Klein et. al. 2007).

Girls' Education Unit (GEU): was established within the Ministry of Education in 1997 to be responsible for the promotion of girls' education in Ghana. There are district and regional offices which coordinate and collaborate with school on issues relating to girls education at the local levels.

Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER): is the total number of children enrolled at each level of education expressed in the ratio of the total number of children who belong to that age group and should be enrolled at that level of education (Fentiman, et al. 2007).

Human – centered Education: is pivotal in sustaining socio-economic development in every country. Investing in the education of people has always been the priority of many progressive societies irrespective of their ideological orientation and developmental strategies.

Junior High School (JSS): replaced the older junior secondary school system since 2007. It is a three-year post primary education system that precedes senior high school. The education reform program pursued by Ghana has restructured the entire educational system which includes: free compulsory and universal basic education of two years of kindergarten, six years of primary, three years of junior high and four years of senior high.

Patriarchy according to Hartmann (1976) is a set of social relations which has a material base and in which there are hierarchical relations between men, and solidarity among them, which enable them to control women. Patriarchy is thus the system of male oppression of women (p. 138). Also, patriarchy directs us to the family system in which pervasive authority of males have

become a doctrine that sincerely subordinates women to uphold the superiority of men (Hamilton, 1990, p. 77)

Policy: is a deliberate plan of action to guide decisions in achieving rational outcome(s) but could also denote what is actually done even when it is unplanned. Subrahmanian (2002) argues that policies are "laws of regulatory orders and normative frameworks with the scope of enforcing normative conceptions of the good and to shape them" (p.228) on any given issue to signal its specificity, importance, and governments desire to work on them.

Primary School: is the basic level of education from class one to six. This level has gained maximum attention in the effort to ensure that all children receive basic education by the year 2015. In recent times the preschool and kindergarten levels of education are gaining attention as well to improve literacy among children at the basic level of education.

Public policy: is a dynamic value-laden process through which a political system handles a public problem. It includes a government's expressed intentions and official enactments as well as its consistent patterns of activity and inactivity (Fowler, 2004, p. 9.)

Senior High School (SHS): is a four year program to be pursued after the completion of the junior high school. Students are only admitted to pursue SHS education after they have passed the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE). Under this new program, a four year SHS program replaces the former senior secondary school (SSS) system which was three years. Unlike primary and junior high schools, which are basic, compulsory and available in many communities, SHS are very limited in numbers, not free, and admissions into them are highly competitive and selective.

Delimitations of the Study

The delimitation of the study is that it focused only on a small sample of girls within the Accra–Tema schooling district of the greater Accra region of Ghana. This implies that the findings on this small sample from one district out of one hundred and thirty-eight districts in Ghana cannot adequately reflect the general population or be generalized as a representation of the whole country. This is why the researcher does not draw any inferences or generalizations and instead hopes that the findings will set the tone for a broader national research on gender equality in education and moves the conversation on gender policies in education forward.

Summary and Conclusion

The growing interests in the promotion of girls and young women's education have gained momentum in Ghana and around the world. Researchers in the area of education and development have called for urgent need to bridge fledging gender inequalities in education. Progressive scholars and advocates have articulated that girls' education is an equal right and social justice issue that must be enforced in developing countries. The fact that ongoing educational reforms implemented by Ghana's government have not adequately addressed gender parity and equality in schools is worrying and requires urgent attention.

Research data have usually focused on enrollment without paying attention to what really happens within the schooling environment. The over-reliance on the enrollment figures for girls to indicate success of reform program is not only misguided, but also fundamentally flawed because there are deep-seated structures that systematically hamper girls' stay and completion of education at all levels. Against the backdrop that many of the challenges girls face have not been adequately addressed, the study solicited for stories and narratives of girls' experiences. It is the researcher's belief that the best way to understand the challenges girls encounter is for them to tell their stories in their own voices, lenses, perceptions, and understandings.

The study draws on critical feminist approaches including "postmodern" and African feminism to conceptualize and critically examine issues pertaining to gender inequality in education. The critical feminist epistemology helps to challenge and undermine mainstream approaches in policy research and analysis. It also helps to subvert pervasive structures of power relations that sustain gender inequalities in schools and society. In examining girls' schooling experiences from these perceptions and standpoints, girls are empowered to narrate and tell their own stories about their schooling experiences.

The ongoing education reforms were implemented with promises of improved access and participation for all children. But, after nearly three decades and counting, there are still lingering problems with enrollment parity, subject selections, gender sensitive amenities, and resources just to mention but a few. There have been modest improvements in girls' enrollment, access, and participation at all educational levels of education, but there are substantial drops among girls as they progress from primary to the university. Maybe researchers are not asking the right questions, are not focused on the right participants, or are

not focused on the pertinent issues that need addressing. Furthermore, policy and practices continue to marginalize girls in their equal access and participation in schooling and this is unacceptable in this 21st century where gender equality in education has become a human right's issue.

It is when the challenges, needs, and concerns of girls have been adequately researched and addressed with pragmatic policies can progress in gender equality in education be made.

Organization of the Study

The study is organized into six chapters. Chapter one provides the background to the study, description of the problem, the research questions, significance of the study, limitations of the study, definition of terms, summary and organization of the study. Chapter two contextualizes the historical and contemporary education for girls to situate ongoing educational reforms in Ghana. It discusses the implications of recent educational reforms on the curriculum, school organization and challenges that girls confront in education. The chapter also discusses the current shifts into alternative forms of education through informal and non-formal systems to compliment the formal system of education in Ghana. Chapter three reviews the literature on gender, education, and development, global policy typologies and paradoxes, education policy and girls' education in Ghana. The chapter also reviews feminist approaches and methodology in research and development efforts to provide tools aimed at liberation and transformation of gender relations in sub Saharan Africa. Chapter four describes in detail the research design, methods, and procedures. It elaborates on the study area and the processes of researchers' entry, sampling procedures, data collection, interview protocols, observations, documents used, and explanation on how data was analyzed. Chapter five presents the findings and discussions of the study, which includes the analysis of data from interviews, documents, observations, and photographs. Chapter six contains the summary, conclusions, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER TWO – CONTEXTUALIZING GIRLS' EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCES IN GHANA

Introduction

This chapter begins with a brief historical account of girls' education to foreground the contemporary state of girls' education in Ghana. It discusses the recent educational reforms and how they have shaped education delivery system, curriculum relevancy, organizational structures, financing, and personnel who provide skills to improve education for girls. Ghana's education is influenced by internal and external factors (Anderson-Levitt et al., 1998), and has evolved with strong influences from the "triple heritage," of traditional, Islamic, and Western cultures (Mazrui, 1986). It also discusses the current shifts into alternative informal and non-formal systems that are being used to compliment the formal system of education in Ghana. The following sections discuss girls' schooling and classroom experiences in the context of Ghanaian and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Background Account of Education in Ghana

Girls' education in the formal schooling system has shown consistent improvements over the years. The inclusion of girls in formal education has not diminished the reliance on informal and non-formal systems of education as well to educate girls in Ghana. As a result, all three forms of education still coexist and are used to educate girls. While instructional approaches and curriculum delivery may differ, all three systems have evolved with time and incorporated in their curriculum vestiges of both foreign and indigenous cultures. According to Ali Mazrui (1986), the influences of the "triple heritage" of Western, Indigenous African and Islamic cultures have had indelible impact on the education of African children. I must point out, however, that the discussions in this chapter will solely focus on traditional African and Western cultural influences on girls' education because Islamic culture was not that prominent in southern Ghana.

In general, historical development of education was a slow process interspersed with periods of successes and failures (Graham, 1971). The curriculum for girls' education was patterned in ways that followed traditional philosophies that subordinated and marginalized women and girls. These, notwithstanding the formal, informal, and non-formal systems, played significant roles in the education of girls and women in Ghana. According to Nocon and Cole

(2006) these different forms of education, though, vary by the kind of curriculum, and instructions are critical for meeting diverse learning needs of children and adults alike.

In Ghana, the lack of financial resources coupled with limited learning opportunities for girls and women in the formal education system have opened avenues for informal and non-formal settings to thrive. In fact, the domination of the formal education system has not in any way limited the impact of informal and non-formal systems in educating and training of girls in character formation, leadership roles, professional training, and artisanship (Coe, 2002). The non-formal system has been relied upon to train especially women and adolescent girls in basic reading, writing, and arithmetic skills in many parts of Ghana. Both informal and non-formal systems have become very popular in providing learning opportunities for children, adults at home with their kids, or adult learners who want to expand their knowledge base, enrichment their careers or learn a vocation (Coe, 2002).

The formal education system is a Western phenomenon, but its delivery has come under criticism because of unequal outcome for boys and girls. Some critics have tied the causes of unequal gender outcomes to socio-cultural practices aimed at preserving certain cultural norms, symbols, rituals, and traditions that give meaning and must be passed on to the next generation (Ofori-Attah, 2006; Mortimore, 1990). For these reasons, the contents and contexts within which curriculum for girls are developed to define girls' education expectations have been couched in patriarchal sensibilities. The literature on the history and development of education in Ghana provide insights into how indigenous and Western cultures intersect to sustain "separate sphere" ideology to perpetuate existing gendered society (Ofori - Attah, 2006, Nash, 2005). According to Margaret Nash (2005), separate sphere is an ideology propagated by male hegemony to subordinate females. In this context males are viewed as public and authority figures who must work outside the home while females become the private and subservient homemaker.

In her book to unravel gender inequalities in education in Sub-Saharan Africa, Barthel (1985) argues that the history of girls' education has been shaped by "man's history," and that it takes critical interrogation and analysis of "man's history" to uncover the injustices done. She unraveled "man's history" by publishing detailed case studies based on fieldwork and historical research, and comparatively analyzing the many factors that determined educational opportunities and outcomes cross-nationally. For Gutek (1988), it takes a thorough examination of the intentions of curriculum planners, the core content of curriculum, the interests of learners,

and the forces that shape the process to understand curriculum and education trajectories. On his part, Mazonde (2001) categorized societies into "industrial and pre-industrial," "subsistence and exchange economy" and "formal and informal economic systems … to unravel differential education and curriculum in colonial and postcolonial Africa, and how they impacted on girls' education" (p. 3).

To unravel curriculum content that defines girls' education, Anderson (1970) points to the diverse forces on school curriculum and called this the "struggle for school." Ball (1983) asserted that any curriculum is valid knowledge when deployed through a structured medium to shape people's perceptions and expectations. On this note, education, whether formal, informal, or non-formal, are critical means for transmitting knowledge of societal norms and values either orally or experientially. The next section discusses contemporary education in Ghana.

Contemporary Education in Ghana

Ghana's independence on March 6, 1957, under the leadership of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, unleashed an aggressive educational expansion with a seven-year development plan. The educational component of the development plan provided free tuition and textbooks for basic education. It also allowed for the construction of more school buildings to accommodate the growing number of students at all levels of education. By 1965, three new teacher training colleges, twenty-five new secondary schools, two Agricultural colleges, and three Polytechnic institutions were established to provide middle level and technical manpower. Additionally, the Cape Coast University was also established to complement the existing University of Ghana to train future managers and leaders of the country (Graham, 1971).

The expansion program demanded new curricula that reflected the growing needs, aspirations, and culture of the country. In this quest, the Ghana Education Service established a "Curriculum Development Center" to develop curricula, teaching pedagogy, syllabi, timetables, etc. for schools. Subjects and instructional techniques were redesigned and tailored to meet the needs of Ghanaians and limit existing curricula which were extremely couched in European culture and civilization. These curricula changes however, did not affect the fundamentals of education, like the use of English language for instructions and other core subjects already laid by Europeans. No comprehensive reforms occurred in education until the late 1980s.

Like many post-colonial independent states, Ghana experienced about twenty-five years of political instability until stability returned under military dictatorship in the 1980's and later democratic governance by 1992. Before the twenty-five years of instability, Ghana's education, which was described as one of the best in Africa, began to deteriorate by the mid 1970's (World Bank 2004). It was not until the late 1980's when a major reform initiative was envisaged to fix the broken and crumbling educational system. The government revisited the recommendations made by the Dzobo commission report of 1973 to serve as guide for future reforms in education.

The education reform actually began in 1987 as part of the economic recovery program to response to the declining economy, poor quality of schools and efficient delivery system. The restructuring of education in Ghana was also in response to the global agenda on "Education for All" initiative (Akyeampong, 2004). Prior to the implementation of reforms, the crumbling economy had led to reduction in the proportion of GDP spent on education form 6.4% in 1976 to 1.7% in 1985 (World Bank, 1996). Schools at that time lacked basic essentials like textbooks, stationary, furniture, equipments, and school buildings were in dilapidated conditions (Yeboah, 1990). In addition, there was large a scale exodus of qualified teachers to Nigeria where newfound oil wealth was funding a rapidly expanding basic education. As a consequence, untrained teachers filled up vacant positions of teachers who left (Akyeampong, 2004).

Furthermore, increasing population led to increased class sizes and a steady fall in gross enrolment ratios from 80% in 1980 to 70% in 1987 (Colclough & Lewin, 1993). The condition of the education system at that time subsequently impacted school management, teaching morale and quality of education as a whole (World Bank 2004). The educational system was criticized as too long and waste of resources by development partners such as the World Bank and IMF. They argue that the 17 years of pre-tertiary education was inefficient, highly selective and marginalizes the poor and especially girls in society (World Bank, 2004). According to the Ministry of Education report, which outlined the new comprehensive reform program on basic education for all, the following targets were set:

- *To replace the older education system of 6, 4, 7 with a new system of 6, 3, 3, and in the process, shortening pre-tertiary education from 17 years to 12 years. The new system and its content were to begin with the Junior Secondary School (JSS) concept. The new system was based on an earlier Government White Paper titled, The New Structure and Content of Education (MOE, 1996). This new system called for 6 years of primary, 3 years of junior*

secondary, and 3 years of senior secondary schools and a minimum of 4 years tertiary education;

- *To improve the quality of teaching and learning by increasing school hours and phasing out the hiring of untrained teachers; and*
- *To make education planning and management more efficient and effective* (Ministry of Education, 1996).

By 1990, the focus of reform shifted to the Senior Secondary School program because the first batch of graduates revealed many weaknesses with the new system. The reforms had failed to achieve quality targets and exposed the whole education sector to public ridicule and criticism. The government responded by setting up the Education Reform Review Committee of 1993 to examine the challenges of the new system. The committee's report culminated in the convening of the National Education Forum in 1994 to discuss the problems and how to overcome them. The forum was attended by 150 participants drawn from stakeholder groups including teachers, parents, university professors, educators, government officials, and policy makers who identified the following problems:

- *Poor quality of teaching and learning in schools due to ineffective teaching, learning and management practices;*
- *Inadequate funding for education sector leading to inadequate supply of school logistics;*
- *Lack of adequate parental involvement in children's education;*
- *Poor language policy which makes English the only medium of instruction after primary class 3;*
- *Lack of teacher motivation resulting in low commitment and devotion to teaching;*
- *Lack of adequate co-ordination and collaboration among reform implementing divisions of Ghana Education Service;*
- *Disappointing growth in school enrollments; and*
- *Persistent low regard for and poor attitude of the Ghanaians towards technical and vocational education* (Ministry of Education, 1996).

The outcome of the public forum in addition to the 1992 constitutional provision led to the formulation of a new education policy which was implemented as the FCUBE (see list of acronyms) (Ministry of Education, 1996). The 1992 constitution provided that within two years after Parliament inauguration, the Government shall draw up a provision for the implementation

of the FCUBE program to improve upon the 1987 reforms and address its shortcomings. The FCUBE program was implemented in 1996 based on the proposal, advice, and financial supports of the IMF and the World Bank to decentralize the control and management of education for effective community participation. The FCUBE program was developed on the basis of three cost components:

- *To improve the quality of teaching and learning through the review and revision of teaching materials, new measures on teacher incentives, and a focus on in-service teacher training.*
- *To strengthen management of education at the central and district level offices; and*
- *To improve and encourage girls' access to participate in primary education* (Ministry of Education, 1996).

The program also ensured the introduction of School Management Committees (SMCs) and Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) to encourage community involvement and engagement in education service delivery. To ensure that the FCUBE objectives were fulfilled, a large scale Whole School Development (WSD) program was established at the Ministry of Education to manage and counter the paralysis that had crippled decision making over the years. With the introduction of this program, decision-making about schools are to be made at the local levels and school management and control decentralized from national and regional offices to the districts and local community offices. Most recently, other intervention programs implemented include Education Strategy Plan (ESP) for 2003-2015, Growth Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS), Capitation Grant, and the feeding and nutrition programs. These are all aimed at encouraging school attendance and reducing dropout rates among girls, especially in deprived and rural areas of the country (Adamu-Issah et al., 2007).

The Current State of Education in Ghana

At present, primary and junior high schools are tuition-free and mandatory in Ghana and the government's support is unequivocal as indicated in Article 39 of the constitution which made basic education free universal and compulsory. The government has also mandated specific divisions within the Ministry of Education to regulate sectors of the education system and these are: the Ghana Education Service which is mandated to administer pre-university education; the National Council on Tertiary Education; the National Accreditation Board; and the National Board for Professional and Technician Examinations (NABPTEX). The West

African Examinations Council (WAEC), a consortium of five Anglophone West African Countries (Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Gambia, and Liberia) is responsible for developing, administering, assessing and evaluating of graduating examinations for basic and secondary levels of education (MOE, 1998).

Since 1986, the system of education has undergone changes to include six years of primary, three years at the junior high, and three years of senior high school of pre-tertiary education. Successful completion of senior high school is a requisite for admission eligibility into training colleges, polytechnics and universities. In 2006 there were approximately 5.1 million students attending schools at pre-tertiary levels: 68% of them were at the primary, 23% at the junior high, and 10% at the senior high school level. As at 2004, there are over 600 public senior high schools which graduated over 90,000 students compared to 300 secondary schools that graduated about 27,000 students in 1987 (Ministry of Education, 2006).

The private sector, which in the past had played limited role in the delivery of education in Ghana have shown increases in recent time. While there is a sizeable number of a private sector involvement at the basic school level, there are only a handful of schools in Ghana offering Senior high school and tertiary education on private basis. Private sector in the delivery of education in Ghana is therefore very crucial in Ghana's quest for education for all by the year 2015. A report by Tooley and Dixon (2005) on private sector contribution to poor communities in rural Ga district of the greater Accra region of Ghana indicated that,

> Of the 779 schools in Ga, 25.3 percent (197schools) were government and the rest—74.7 percent of the total (582 schools)—were private (unaided) schools. That is, the large majority of schools were private unaided. Of those schools, the largest number was registered (405 schools or 52.0 percent of the total), compared with 177 unregistered (22.7 percent of the total). There also were almost as many unregistered private unaided schools as there were government schools (p. 8-9).

At the tertiary levels admissions into the five public universities is very competitive, but the recent surge of universities operated by churches and the private sector have opened the possibilities for more girls to enroll into colleges. Presently, the number of private institutions for tertiary education has increased with the consent of government and approval by the National Accreditation Board. In addition to the growing number of universities and colleges, there are ten public polytechnics that offer the British Higher National Diploma (HND) with a three-year curriculum in several applied fields of study including vocational and non-tertiary diploma

programs. There are also forty teacher-training colleges and fifteen nurses' training colleges. The present student population at the tertiary level of education in Ghana as at 2008 was 84,078 in secular degree-granting programs in seventeen public and private universities, 29,047 students enrolled in the polytechnics, and 26,025 teacher trainees enrolled in teacher training colleges.

Implications for Girls Education

Girls' education after independence has made some progress in areas of enrollments, access, and participation than it was in colonial period. These improvements notwithstanding, girls still lag behind boys in enrollment, achievement, and in gender equality in access and participation in certain subjects and courses. Sciences, mathematics, engineering, and technology subjects continue to enroll many more males, while the majority of females continue to pursue courses in Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences, and Home Economics (Daddieh, 2007). Gender stereotyped subjects and courses would be eradicated if policy efforts were made to change these perceptions.

In spite of progress chalked in enrollment and graduation levels, there are still bottlenecks for girls to equally access and participate in education. Financial resources to provide schools with amenities and logistics are limited when the number of students enrolling and graduating from schools is considered. For instance, while about 99.1% of junior high school graduates gain admission to senior high schools, only about 34.4% of senior high school graduates are able to gain admission into universities and polytechnics. Among these figures, girls account for more than 65% of students who are unable to proceed to the next level of education (Ministry of Education, 2006). This state of affair occurs due to a variety of reasons including cultural stereotypes that limit girls' educational progress, poverty of parents or the systemic problems of school practices that stifle girls' educational opportunities.

Changing the status quo of persistent gender inequality in education has been hampered by the harsh economic conditions Ghana has faced since the late 1970s to present. The deep economic recession and subsequent recovery and restructuring processes have had serious consequences on girls' education. Under the direction and supervision of the World Bank and IMF, the government of Ghana withdrew all subsidies on education and this had enormous impact on the promotion of girls' education. The dire situation has led to collaborations and financial support from development partners like UNDP, UNESCO, and NGOs in partnership

with many local women's groups to provide alternative sources education for those who drop out of the formal education system.

The government also established the Girls Education Units within the Ghana Education Service to coordinate girls' education and encourage more girls into science, mathematics, engineering and technology. The unit has also begun to advocate for quotas in girls' admission into tertiary institutions and involved in other affirmative actions aimed at gender equality in education. These and other collaborative efforts have not only helped improve enrollments in the kinds of subjects and course girls offer, but also ensured that girls are included and involved in all schooling activities within the classroom and in extracurricular activities.

Aside these initiatives in formal education, there are other strategic innovations that have been pursued in the informal and non-formal educational settings to arrest rising levels of poverty, sustaining the environment, improving sex and health education, encouraging healthy childcare habits, and generating income for girls and young women throughout the country. In many rural areas and poor communities for instance, girls and women are enrolled in the non-formal education (NFE) system to learn about HIV and health issues, cooperative farming, and income generation strategies. Many NGOs work directly with women to address specific problems they encounter within their communities. The non-formal education system has gained recent momentum in dealing with girls who drop out of school to acquire vocational training to ensure their immediate participation in society (Robertson, 1984.)

Even in the formal education setting, vocational curriculum has gained credence in many Sub-Saharan African countries. Proposals for education reforms have also led to the promotion of middle level technical and vocational manpower. According to Yamada (2001), increases in vocational schools usually send conflicting messages to both the labor market and tertiary institutions in respect of the benefit of vocational education to a country's development. He argued, increased emphasis on training in home economics, dress making, culinary, computer programming, masonry, carpentry, electrical, and electronics courses has enabled girls to gain the knowledge and skills for immediate employment and participation in the economy. Vocational education does not only reduce government expenditure on educating girls from primary to the university, but also ensures that girls have immediate skills required for economic development.

Education and Girls Schooling Experiences

Most research investigations into girls' formal schooling experiences in Sub-Saharan Africa have examined girls' performances in standardized testing, gender attitudes and behaviors, and rates of enrollment, dropout, and graduation in both single-sex and co-educational environments. Mbilizi (2008) argues that girls' educational performances and experiences are shaped by the kind of environment within which they learn. For this reason there are advocates who strongly support a single-sex schooling environment for girls, but others reject and maintain that a co-educational system is a better option for girls. Even though boys and girls experience schooling differently, there is strong evidence showing that girls' performance is much better in single-sex institutions than in co-educational environments (Mbilizi, 2008).

The history of education in both developed and developing countries show that men and women experience schooling differently. In recent times coeducation has increased and overshadowed single-sex education for a variety of reasons. Most important is the change of attitudes in gender relations worldwide as progressive and women's groups have stepped up campaigns for social justice and equality in all aspects of social organization (Mbilizi, 2008). In spite of these changes, there are pockets of resistance from religious and cultural conservatives who sometimes invoked God, morality, and traditions to defend the status quo (Sadker & Sadker, 1994). Relics of these kinds of resistances still linger in policies and programs designed to shape education discourses and practices within the schooling environment.

While discriminatory practices against female students are illegal in many developed countries, Sub-Saharan Africa is yet to overcome this hurdle. In the USA for example, gender discrimination in schools was abolished with the passage of Title IX Education Amendments Act of 1972. This Act prohibited discrimination in public schools that benefitted from federal funding. The government of Ghana has not passed any form of legislation to eradicate the tide of discriminatory practices girls confront within schooling. Girls with limited opportunities to learn are constrained and not motivated to participate or engage in school or classroom activities (FAWE, 2003). The Fellowship of African Women's Educationalist (FAWE), a strong advocate for gender equality, has branches in most African countries and regularly publishes research findings on the state of girls' education in Sub-Saharan Africa. Their reports are critical of how girls are shortchanged and denied educational opportunities in areas of science and math as well as discriminatory practices that stereotype girls within school practices. They also provide

recommendations to governments and seek funding for improvements in girls' education in many parts of Africa.

The issue of single-sex and coeducational settings has raged on for years to find out which of these environments best support girls' education. Many research studies on girls' performance in different school settings have shown that, girls in single-sex schools perform better academically and socially than those in co-education settings (Mbilizi, 2008; Mamslem, 2001). Girls who attend single-sex schools are more likely to enter medical schools, choose careers in non-traditional fields, and work at the highest levels in government and corporations (Lee & Marks, 1990, Sadker & Sadker, 1994).

Single-sex schools have been noted to help girls develop self-confidence, assertiveness, and a strong sense of identity (Smith, 1996). They also provide "a unique place where women are valued and supported," (Sebrechts, 1992 p. 22). Mbilizi, quoting from Pollard (2006) pointed out that, single-sex classes enhance social and personal development and also better prepare underprivileged students for roles they are likely to assume in adulthood. Furthermore, single-sex classrooms according to Riardon (1990) have helped address some gender biases inherent among African and Latin American cultural settings within schools. Single-sex schools have been identified to benefit disadvantaged students with records of poor success rates in the American educational system (Meyer, 2008). In general, critics of coeducation argue that mixed schools are inherently organized for the benefit of boys to perpetuate male dominance (Spender, 1982, Clarriotes, 1978).

However, there are others who disagree with this view and argue that while boys and girls may learn and experience schooling differently, their performance is not due to the kind of school setting but rather on the quality of instructions they receive. For instance, Sax (2006) found that even if boys and girls are placed in the same classroom or in a gender-neutral environment, one group will be disadvantaged over the other because of the learning styles. Mathews (1998), also argued that many researchers ignore the importance of "emotional intelligence" and how the development of the whole person contributes to improved cognition. He contends that while people undervalue the essence of human relationships and maturity as educational objectives, social aspects of education are very important to "emotional intelligence" which contributes to increased communication skills and possible increased understanding between the sexes.

Supporters of coeducation deny the existence of male domination in mixed schools by insisting on the fact that coeducation provides the opportunity for girls and boys to equally access and participate in education even if one sex is evidently dominant in numbers. Proponents for coeducation argue that this educational setting prepares students for real life experiences while single-sex education in contrast is unreal (Blumner, 2002, Sullivan 2001). For supporters, the objective of coeducation is not only to instruct children in basic curriculum but to teach them commonality, tolerance, and citizenship (Weil, 2008).

Many feminists counter these arguments and insist that it is also possible to teach from a unique feminine perspective and involve girls in learning within the realities associated with their experiences. In girls' schools and classrooms, students experience some level of liberation from intimidating boys and teachers, and are able to freely express themselves without having to fit themselves into male dominant modes, which expect them to channel their emotions and behaviors into masculine framework (Bracey, 2006).

Research studies conducted in Sub-Saharan Africa on general effects of schooling environments on girls' experiences show positive outcomes in single-sex schools where achievements in cognition and skills improve significantly. Hyde's (1993) research in mathematics cognition in Africa concluded that girls in single-sex schooling environments perform much better in mathematics than their peers in coeducational schools. Mallam's (1993) investigation found out that girls in "all girl" Nigerian schools favored mathematics more than girls in coed public boarding schools, particularly when mathematics was taught by female teachers. Lee & Lockheed (1990) also found that girls in single-sex schools in Nigeria usually outperform other girls and hold less stereotypical views about mathematics. A similar trend of personal growth, self improvements, higher academic achievements, and higher cognition have been found among girls who attend single-sex schools compared to those in co-educational settings in Malawi (Mbilizi, 2008).

Studies on classroom experiences of girls in Sub-Saharan Africa have also been done. Karen Biraimah's work in Nigeria (1989) and in Togo (1980) concluded that girls, who are a small minority and usually "invisible spectators" in many classrooms, are normally hesitant to raise their hands in class and are infrequently called upon by teachers to answer questions (see also Bloch et al., 1998; Davison & Kanyuka, 1992; Tietjen, 1991). An analysis of classroom interaction in Liberia to uncover classroom interactions, Brenner (1998) showed that recitations,

teacher lectures, and group works vary from one moment to another over the course of a day, and from one classroom to another However, she concluded that some ways of interactions did encouraged girls' participation more than in others (Brenner, 1998).

Another challenge for girls in Africa classrooms is that most teachers hold lower expectations for girls' academic performance than for boys (Davison and Kanyuka, 1992; Tietjen, 1991) and assign girls all the housekeeping tasks around the school (Biraimah, 1980, 1987). While teachers do not create the school's atmosphere by themselves, their attitudes and behaviors contribute heavily in shaping it. The majority of teachers tend to express familiar cultural stereotypes and beliefs that boys typically learn better, raise their hands, give good responses, and manifest their ambitions to excel, as compared to girls who are usually well-behaved but timid and not as hard-working as boys (Bloch et. al., 1998).

Male teachers especially show stereotypical behaviors to girls in the classroom. Biraimah (1989) observed that teachers in Guinea expected girls and only girls to handle the daily cleaning of school property, especially in sweeping classrooms and verandas. Boys, too, did manual labor, especially in rural schools, but they did not do it every day. In most schools, the raking of the school yard, cleaning of the latrines and other maintenance jobs were often assigned to both boys and girls as punishment. As the observer noted in one primary school, the punishment for girls who misbehaved was to stay after school and sweep. Another observation was that all the first-grade girls stayed after school to sweep. This is symbolic that schools sometimes punished girls simply for being girls (Biraimah, 1998).

Another stereotype exhibited by some male teachers in particular is the assumption that it is normal to pressure female students for sexual favors. Bloch et al., (1998) wrote that, a tiny minority of male teachers have the tendency to engage in such despicable acts. No matter how remote these possibilities are, these attitudes create consternation among many parents. While many teachers may not engage in such disparaging practices, some view this practice as normal. For example, when Bloch and co-researchers were collecting data in one school, they overheard one male staff member at an urban college teasing his colleague for not finding a girlfriend among the student body, "this man has been here for 25 years and still cannot make up his mind and pick one. I wonder what you are waiting for" (pp. 107).

While many teachers today work hard to maintain fairness in their classrooms and even take extra time and effort to encourage girls to participate in classroom activities, these efforts

have recorded varying rate of success. There are, however, a few male teachers in particular who still prefer to use domineering attitudes over students and send subtle messages of discrimination and hostility against girls. A study in India found that teachers often used derogatory and biased languages to reinforce gender, class, and caste discriminations (Global Campaign for Education, 2005; Ramachandran, 2004). Some male teachers in Africa also use derogatory remarks and insults on girls, because in their mind women are subordinate to men, and they reject any idea of gender equality or social justice (Bloch et. al, 1998).

There are also studies that have reported on biased teacher attitudes, behaviors, and practices that have negative implications on girls' academic achievements, social skills, and cognitive behaviors (Casely-Hayford, 2008; Chimombo, 2005). In many classrooms, teachers pay more attention to boys than girls and when teachers are of the habit of embarrassing girls in the classroom, they become less enthusiastic to participate in classroom activities. Rose and Tembon (1999) found that teachers' low perceptions and expectations for girls compared to boys contributed to the limited attention girls receive from teachers in the classrooms. A study in Nigeria showed that interaction of teachers and students were more positive towards boys than girls, especially in the upper primary school levels. Teachers were found to spend more time helping boys than girls (Global Campaign for Education, 2005; Rugh, 2000).

Girls Education in Sub-Saharan Africa

The preceding discusses some of the negative stereotypes and attitudes that teachers bring to bear on girls within the schooling environment in many developing countries. The persistent biased attitudes and practices of teachers compounded by the lack of effective gender sensitive programs in most cases lead to stalled dreams in academic and social development of girls. This section examines some of the problems girls typically face in Ghana education.

Many schools in Ghana lack adequate facilities and resources such as textbooks, teaching aides, computers, laboratory equipments, and importantly, gender specific amenities. The attitudes of teachers, as already argued, have severe impact and significant impact on the success or failure of girls' education. Research studies show that when girls are respected and given adequate learning opportunities, they perform better than those who are denied. Also, girls are known to perform at a higher level when they are given their own spaces to work and learn

compared to those who share or without any space or places to work and learn (Mallam, 1993; Lee & Lockheed, 1990; Mbilizi, 2008).

Many school buildings in Ghana are fast deteriorating because they are overstretched with increasing student population. Classrooms are becoming overcrowded and the fixtures and fittings such as lightening, ventilation, tables, and chairs are in dismal state of disrepair due to poor maintenance. Simple amenities like clean toilet facilities for girls in many urban school are in poor conditions because they lack regular and proper maintenance. The situation is even worse in rural schools where pit latrines and dug out channels are used. In many schools, toilet facilities are dirty, poorly ventilated, and lack regular disinfecting, a probable cause of diseases among students. Studies have shown that poor toilet facilities impact negatively on the privacy and hygiene of girls (Elimu Yetu Coalition, 2005).

In reference to a study done in Pakistan, the researchers found that many parents never enroll their girls into schools until they are satisfied with the school's latrine facilities. Parents visit the schools to inspect if the toilet facilities are built with solid bricks and have standby water pumps in flushing of toilets (Herz & Sperling, 2004). The same researchers, after they have surveyed thirty African countries, concluded that there were many schools without latrines or places of convenience for girls. In such situations, girls are more likely to absent themselves from school when they are in their menstrual cycle (FAWE, 2001; Herz & Sperling, 2004). Based on similar findings, the Global Campaign for Education (2005) cautioned that, "failure to provide adequate physical facilities such as toilets and running water are inconvenience for boys, but a disaster for girls" (p. 41).

There is also the issue of teacher perception of gender roles within schools and classrooms. Many teachers still hold onto cultural views about females as subordinates to males. According to Annin (2009), girls are used as workhorses both at home and at school. Usually, girls are the ones teachers will send to run errands, fetch water, and buy food. Teachers, by their actions, only perpetuate gender roles and female position in society. Girls, therefore, spend a greater part of the day taking care of other people's business and having very limited time for themselves and their academic work. It is argued that female teachers serve as role models for girls, but their numbers among school staff are disproportionately low compared to males. Hyde (1993) commented that, "the presence of female teachers in classrooms and schools sometimes counter stereotypical views and images about girls" (p. 123). However, the absence of more

female teachers in Ghanaian school hampers the possibilities of girls having role models and counselors.

Another problem that hampers girls' education in Ghana relates to the kind of curriculum and textbooks used in schools. The textbooks used in schools are not only outdated, but contain images and contents that continue to perpetuate gender stereotypes, sex roles, and power relations between men and women within the Ghanaian society. As Hyde (1993) pointed out, although there is no available study to confirm the impact of these images on the choices made by girls, they have the potential to shape their reality and schooling experiences. According to Masemann (1974) the use of "hidden curriculum" in Ghanaian schools contributes to the perpetuation of embedded ideology that girls are born to become wives, child bearers, and home makers in the foreseeable future. His research in a girls' boarding school indicated that conventionally or unconventionally, the hidden curriculum is communicated to girls through cues and prompts that reinforce girls' own perception in accepting the status quo.

Smock (1981) alluded that "the influence of European education on Ghana has contributed to women's marginalization in discussions on agricultural production, society, and history" (p. 57). As of now, the education system of Ghana has the trappings and legacy of European colonization and very little has changed after independence. Textbooks currently in use are not only outdated, but draw overwhelmingly on Western cultures and ideology. While the Western developed world has made significant progress in gender equality in education, their former colonies are still grappling with gender equity issues. Access and participation in college courses are still skewed with females overrepresented in arts and social sciences, and underrepresented in science, math, technology, and engineering courses (Daddieh, 2007; Smock, 1981).

Other challenges prevalent in education that girls confront daily include sexual harassment, bullying, and intimidations usually perpetrated by teachers and students. A study conducted by Elimu Yetu Coalition (2005) in Kenya found that some male teachers seek sexual favors from girls and are in constant competition with male students for girls' attention. Also, many sexual abuses meted to girls are either not reported or under-reported, and those that are reported are often met with silence or inaction on the part of local and national authorities (Global Campaign for Education, 2005).

Conclusion

The history and development of education in Ghana show that girls' education has seen some level of improvements over time, but there are still hurdles to overcome for girls to experience equal and quality education just like their male peers. In a recent report titled 'Impact assessment Study of Girls' Education Program in Ghana" submitted to the UNICEF, Sutherland – Addy (2002) unravels the inadequacies of the education reforms in addressing many of the challenges girls encounter in school. Persistent inequalities and disparities in education require that the context, content, and process of policy reforms focus and target the promotion of girls' education. Conscious efforts to improve not only enrollment, but also eliminating discrimination, stereotypes, and biased teaching practices should be undertaken. It is the hope that with more gender equality measures implemented in schools, those discourses and practices that continually perpetuate girls' marginalization would be eradicated.

However, the lack of aggressive policies to reform school discourses and practices that marginalize girls have been hampered by the lack of financial resources to build and renovate schools, provide adequate learning and instructional materials, train teachers on gender sensitivity, and improve the general learning environment for girls. While external funding and proposals for reforms have been important in the execution of ordinances and policies over the years, the over reliance on them have also caused major disconnects with internal efforts to promote education for all children. The vestiges and trappings of colonial, postcolonial, and neo-colonial legacies of Western culture and civilization still permeate the formal education system. Some scholars question external influences on education as a continuation of Western domination aimed at perpetuating and sustaining unequal power relations and reproduction of the status quo (Apple, 2004). The World Bank, IMF and NGOs have been accused of overtly or covertly operating in ways that perpetuate Western hegemony and existing economic dependencies (Wallerstein, 1974).

Internally, overcoming socio-cultural attitudes and practices that subordinate girls' education to male hegemony and unequal power relations is also a challenge. Masemann (1974) asserted that embedded structures in schools sustain gender inequalities through "hidden curriculum," are designed to pass on knowledge and reinforce girls' future roles and responsibilities as housewives, child bearers and homemakers. These roles are scripted and communicated through cues and prompts designed into curriculum to sustain the perception,

thoughts, acceptance and pursuance of “feminine” subjects in fulfillment of their future role expectations. This kind of approach to education can only change through the collaboration and engagement of stakeholders in the design and implementation of effective gender equality policy to reform education. These two prong challenges are deeply rooted in the legacies of the triple heritage.

Pragmatic gender equality policies to reform school must foster and change the minds and hearts of the public about girls’ education. Paulo Freire (1970) in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, advocated for the use of engagement, dialogue, and critical reflection among educators, learners, and stakeholders in the design, implementation, and monitoring of education reforms. It is critical that stakeholders in education collaborate in gender equality reforms in education for it to have maximum and effective impact. Changes in attitudes and practices towards girls’ education should be supported with credible research to provided data and information needed for monitoring and evaluation process. Government support and determination is crucial in effecting changes such as abolishing any form of gender discriminatory practices in schools. These are reforms that must definitely occur for Ghanaian education to be truly gender equal.

CHAPTER THREE – LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

Girls' education in Ghana has been at the forefront of national and international educational policy research and evaluation. As I have outlined in previous chapters, the purpose of the current study is to understand the educational experiences of girls and use alternate methods and theories that mainstream approaches generally overlook in educational research on policy investigations. Thus, this chapter has two objectives: the first part presents existing scholarship on issues relating to policy, gender and education, and how these are relevant to girls' education in Sub-Saharan Africa. The second part articulates the theoretical framework from which feminist and gender perspectives to invoke the voices, stories, and experiences of girls in educational policy research.

Specifically, the first section reviews the following: policy typologies, global policy, gender and education, policy paradoxes and disconnections, education policy analysis, and Critical feminist policy analysis. The section discusses the theoretical framework of feminist and gender perspectives including African feminism, gender education, and development approaches and how they impact on girls' education. On the whole, the literature review draws from a variety of sources including those on Sub-Saharan African and the developed world.

The Nature and Typologies of Policy

There are several types of public policies enacted every year by governments for a variety of reasons. However, the classification or types of public policy is dependent on their intended and declared outcomes. According to Stromquist (2008) public policy is an authoritative proposal enacted through legislation, regulations, administrative practices, and court decisions that signals government priority to act on decisions. There are four elements in every policy and these include intention, regulation, implementation, and assessment. These components may not necessarily be linear or mechanistic, but they must be present in policy.

Lowi (1964) outlined a comprehensive typology for policy that extends into gender analysis into three categories:

- *The first relates to distributive policy, which is designed to benefit certain groups through service, contracts, and subsidies. When this category is extended to women, it targets them as*

a visible group that deserves to receive certain benefits. Examples have been implemented in electoral quotas, affirmative action and equal education opportunities.

- *The second is regulatory policy, which is designed to impact on the general population but function to either limit or expand the choices of individuals and groups. When this is applied to gender, issues such as nondiscrimination, abortion, rape, domestic violence, and labor rights fall under this category.*
- *The third is redistributive policy, which is used to reform the material differences between the rich and poor by reallocating resources. When applied to gender it provides women with greater material resources such as higher wages and rights to property and inheritance* (Lowi, 1964).

However, Stromquist (2008) argues that increased feminist demands for redistributive policies have faced impediments due to limited resources and resistances especially when the issue pertains to wages, conditions of employment, or even in education. For Nancy Fraser (1998) policies of recognition and redistribution are needed if gender inequalities and injustices in society are to be addressed. To her, the policy of recognition acknowledges women's right to be different and yet enjoy the same rights as men (ibid). Even though this type of policy may seem acceptable, they are highly contested, resisted, and challenged by the status quo. The policy redistribution also tends to make gender issues even more controversial (Stromquist, 2008; Fraser, 1998).

Sttromquist (2008) also argues that the normative view offered by dominant literature in policymaking process toward gender equality and social justice is usually not accurate in reality. Rather, it is women groups and movements who advocate, mobilize, and collaborate with other partners to identify women's needs and seek redress. Major changes that have occurred in gender and power relations around the world have been spearheaded and achieved through active roles women played at the community levels before they were later incorporated into national policy agendas.

- *A fourth type of policy relates to the extent of coverage. There are those designed to reach everybody (system wide) and those for targeted to specific groups or subgroups. The Title IX and No Child Left Behind policies in the USA were system wide and applied to all public institutions. In contrast, the Women's Educational Equity Act (WEEA) only targeted people or groups to receive funding for women's causes. As of today, any policy aimed at small*

groups are called focal policies, and those centered on poor and vulnerable groups are called compensatory policies because they seek to address inequalities in society (Stromquist, 2008).

With Ghana's education inextricably linked to global policy agenda, neoliberal attributes of efficiency in cost and management is taking hold. Educational policies are increasingly being designed to achieve selective goals and hence becoming a struggle over who gets what (Cochran, et al; 2003), even as they purport to legitimize societal values, beliefs, and attitudes (Prunty, 1985). Policy intentions get disconnected from outcomes because multiple actors, who invest their time, resources, and energy on its implementation, usually pursue different agendas (Nudzor, 2007). Sabatier and Jenkin-Smith (1999) contend that policy-makers and implementers' core beliefs are generally unaffected by policy disconnects until there is an outcry for change through external factors such as inflation or approaching elections (cited by Shulock, 1999, p. 226). In effect, the policy arena is a highly contested and controversial field. To understand why policy intentions and outcomes usually contradict, I review perspectives and suggestions provided in the literature in the next sub section.

Policy Paradoxes, Disconnections, and Contradictions

To understand policy convergence, divergence and component parts, the perceptions, articulations and interpretations of policy actors and recipients are to be synchronized. Ball's (1994) composite theory on policy as both "text" and "discourse" unpacks the complex nature of the policy phenomenon. For some time now, policy research and analysis are generally pursued from scientific rationality models until recent time when postmodern approaches began to re-conceptualize policy research and analysis. Traditional policy making, analysis, and evaluation used to be limited to policy makers and politicians, who were considered experts and sole regulators. Policies often fail to fulfill declared intentions when policy arrangements exclude key actors, recipients, and change agents in the process. However, the postmodern turn changed the policy making process with the inclusion of micro level analysis of ordinary people impacted by the policy. Nudzor (2007) identified three perspectives that explain why policy intensions and outcomes contradict, and the remedies to avoid this happening. These include change management, democratic/participatory, and postmodern perspectives.

Change Management Perspective

Change management perspective in policy making process is associated with scholars like Bennett, Crawford & Riches, (1992); Fullan, (2001); Huczynski & Buchanan, (2001); and Everard & Morris, (2004). These scholars argue that tensions are bound to occur in policy making if policy makers, implementers, and change agents are not connected nor effectively engaged in communication with one another. The emphasis here is effectively management of the policy making process to sustain engagements among all parties involved in the policy process. If this does not happen, declared intentions and outcomes may not agree.

To avoid policy disconnects, declared plans must operate effectively and efficiently through communication and dialogue among all actors. The success of policy implementation is not just defining the goals to be executed but continued engagement in dialogue, interactions, feedbacks, plan recycling, modifications, coping with other people's values, feeling apprehensive with other stakeholders, being pragmatic, and sometimes getting frustrated with others in the process (Nudzor, 2007).

Explaining further, Everard and Morris (2004) pointed out that sometimes implementers of policy fail by rationalizing their thinking and assume that whatever policy they design will be endorsed and executed appropriately by change agents on the ground. In reality, the policy process is a "variable" and subject to "changing practices," which alter existing practices to achieve desired outcomes (Fullan, 1988; 2001). But often times, policy tensions and paradoxes are engendered because of ingrained structures that resist change (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2001). According to Bedeian (1980) there are four reasons why new policies aimed toward organizational changes are often resisted. These include: the parochial self-interest of individuals or groups in the organization; misunderstanding and/or lack of trust for the change process; contradictory assessment of change; and low tolerance for change. As long as these conditions exist, changes in policy and desired outcomes will remain partially met or totally unfulfilled in organizations.

The change management perspective provide strategic framework for organizational changes to the status quo. One major weakness of this approach is its limited scope and disregard of the importance and dynamism of social, cultural, and political attributes of society in the policy making process. It also assumes that if policies are properly conceptualized, designed, planned, strategically managed, and effectively executed, they would lead to positive outcomes.

In reality the policy success even after all the protocols have been followed does not guarantee effective policy outcomes (Nudzor, 2007)

Democratic/Participatory Perspective

The democratic/participatory perspective ties policy failures to embedded traditions of scientific rationalized functional approach's disregard of democracy in the policy making process. According to this perspective, neoliberal influences in educational policies pursued by developing countries encourage the involvement of diverse stakeholder in the policy making process. This "paradigm shift" enables diverse groups to engage and reconfigure leadership, management and decision-making practices in education. It calls for collective and inclusive decision-making in schools by adherence to democratic ethos of equal participation and shared responsibilities for teachers, board members, administrators, parents and community members.

In her seminal work that examined data from 1985 to 1994 on how members of the US Congress engage in policy making process, Shulock (1999) found that policy analysis was neither used to solve problems nor selected among alternatives to design public policies by policy makers. She criticized the US Congress for over-reliance of mainstream rational methods, which are undemocratic instead of the use of approaches that are interpretive and participatory. For her, rationalism in policy making and analysis limits: (a) the language for framing political discourse; (b) the legitimate approach for legislative action where rationality inhibits decision making; (c) the symbol of legitimate decision making process to increase support for governance in a society that values rationality (p. 229).

The democratic/participatory perspective is an alternative to technical rationality in the policy making process because it is grounded on a philosophy that believes in democracy as fundamental to resolving many societal problems. One main critique of this perspective is that, oftentimes policy implementers view themselves as experts and these attitudes can blur their understanding, and even refuse to accept opinions or viewpoints of people they see as ordinary and without expert knowledge in the democratic process.

Postmodernist Perspective

The postmodernist perspective re-conceptualizes and redefines policy and decision-making processes by evoking critical theories that challenge and resist existing dominate

approach. Postmodern scholars like Codd, (1988); Ball, (1994); Corbitt, (1997); Trowler, (1998); Olssen et al, (2004); and Walford, (2000) argue that, in spite of the investments that go into policy making process, evidence to the contrary shows that policies do not necessarily make significant impact in solving many societal problems. Scholars with postmodern views have their suspicion of dominant approaches and are quick in pointing to contradictions and failures in policy process. Postmodernists argue that policy makers and implementers fail or are unable to clearly conceptualize and define the policy intensions and outcomes. Ball (1994) reiterates that "the meaning of policy is taken for granted when its epistemology is built into existing analytical structures and constructed to suit pre-existing frameworks making it difficult, if not impossible for policy provisions implemented to align with desired outcomes" (p. 15).

Advocates of a postmodern perspective like Ball, "conceptualize policy as 'text' and as 'discourse,' and also believe that 'two theories are probably better than one" (p. 14). He also recognizes "the adhocery of the macro and the micro without losing sight of systemic effects of adhoc social actions, and iterations embedded within chaos" (Ball, 1994, p. 15). In support of the assertion that policy is a text, Walford (2000) embraces both written and spoken text to signify the contested and negotiated nature of the policy process. These ideas draw on literary theory to recognize that encoded textual representations have inherent compromises and struggles, but then reject technical-rationality and authorial intentions that lie behind texts (p. 124). Codd (1998) added that "texts are languages that contain diverse meanings, contradictions and structured omissions, which could be subject to multiple readings and readers" (p. 238). "Policy as discourse" according to Ball (1994) implies that, ideas and propositions contained in a text lies in how it is expressed and interpreted to affect "intended" meanings of the texts. This view uncovers how discourses either shape or limit people's perceptions of the world. Foucault's work speaks to this view "by pointing to the limitations of what can be said, thought, and who can speak, when, where and with what authority" (Walford, 2000, p. 125). Clearly, the messiness of the policy making process caused by institutionalized discourses and practices can be undone by critically examining to understand policy contents and provisions.

The postmodern perspective provides insights to the complexities of social organization and the policy making processes. The advantage of this approach is that, understanding policy as "text" shows the existence of struggle over the policy process, and the contested, changing, and negotiated character of policy. Also, "policy as discourse" accepts diverse understanding and

struggles inherent with discursive practices that ultimately constrains the policy making process (Nudzo, 2007).

The foregoing discussions indicate that change management perspective neglects socio-cultural attributes in the policy making process, while the democratic /participatory view is yet to receive maximum attention from policy makers. The post- modernist model conceptualize policy as 'text' and 'discourse' to unravel how contested the policy process is especially in recent time when global-national-local policy interplay bring on diverse implications for girls education. Taylor and Henry (2003) argue that "policies reflect local, national or sub- national traditions but in the context of an increasingly integrated world" (p. 13). Understanding the complexity of policy making, research, and analysis is critical to understanding how global policies impact on education in Ghana. The next sub section reviews global policy impact on gender and education in Sub-Saharan Africa in general and Ghana in particular.

Global Policy, Gender, and Education

Recent global policy on the Ghanaian educational landscape has been enormous and its impact on girls' education is mixed. In Sub-Saharan Africa, these global policies have intensified efforts in the promotion of girls' education. According to Marshall and Peters (1999) education policies are fast changing in response to the changing global dynamics. Globalization has brought about unprecedented reform in both the economies and education in many developing countries (Brown & Lauder, 1996). Along these changes, governments are losing their power and ability to control and supervise the activities of multinational institutions, maintain the integrity of their economic borders, and even pursue independent policies or programs (Ball, 1998). Almost everything including policies and how they are analyzed has gained global interconnectedness. Many programs in education have been contracted, deregulated and privatized, and governments' capacity to control and intervene in important social service like education have waned (Harvey, 1996).

According to Stromquist (2008), reforms that have been unleashed through global policy agendas have also impacted on institutional approach to research and analysis on education, leadership, and development. The growing interest in girls' and women's education as well as development, has led to innovative ways to bridge policy contradictions in intentions and outcomes. The democratic principles and ethos provided by global policy have enabled scholars

to draw on postmodern analytical methods and tools to investigate female underrepresentation in education, work, and leadership in Africa. Advocates for gender equity in education in particular, have also joined progressives to think of ways in which postmodern research findings could be incorporated into education policy designs and implementations.

Nelly Stromquist (2008) argues that education in "contemporary globalized world has become the main instrument for governments to achieve equality among diverse groups, especially between women and men" (p.3). The promotion of girls' education in many Sub-Saharan African countries is supported by the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, Nongovernmental Organizations, and civil groups to reverse gender inequalities in society. The World Bank and the IMF with inordinate power and influence on public policies in developing countries have declared "education as the most important productive asset most people will ever own" (Perry et. al. 2003). It is therefore expected that public policy should make education more accessible and of high quality to all persons irrespective of gender.

According to Subrahmanian, policies are "laws of regulatory orders and normative frameworks with the scope of enforcing normative conceptions of the good on any given issue to signal its specificity, importance, and governments desire to work on them" (2002, p.228). However, empirical evidence suggests that policies are more announced than implemented and their executions have typically shown wide gaps between declarations and the reality. The global policy arena is complex and ambivalent, and characterized by multiple sources of authority which impacts their formulation and implementation (Coombs, 1994). For instance, an education policy could have multiple sources of authority and spheres of influence at the classrooms, the school, the district, the regional office, and the state levels. Each sphere of influence has its respective actors engaged in policy decisions of some sort. Hence, the study of educational policy must encode strategies that recognize the presence of multiple actors with varied agendas to pursue (Stromquist, 2008).

Educational policies in developing countries are usually faced with problems because of internal and external exigencies (Maslak, 2008). In Ghana, internal and external influences have been crucial in shaping the outcome of ongoing educational reforms. Internally, political ideologies, cultural attitudes, and the economy impact policies on education that the government pursues. Sometimes, these policies are pursued with little or no consultations with educators and teachers unions (Grindle, 2002), or the universities and nongovernmental organizations

(Reimers, 2002). External factors such as large foreign debts owed to multilateral institutions have led to the permeation of neoliberal ideologies that curtail governments' capability to subsidize social services like education (Colxlough, 1997; Ball et. al. 2003). Often times, lending institutions are the key sources of blue prints for economic and educational reforms and governments have no choice but comply with their proposals (Reimers, 2002).

The harsh reality of girls' education in many developing countries led to the declaration of two major global policy initiatives aimed at promoting girls education. The first was the Education for All (EFA) initiative which advocated for basic education for all children by the year 2005 and at all educational levels by 2015. The second was the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which promotes quality education for to girls (UN, 2005). These global initiatives which uphold educational access, inclusion and graduation potential for girls are embraced by donor agencies, governments and civil society. For progress to be achieved stakeholders would have to collaborate and commit to established goals and plan of action.

According to Stromquist (2008), public policies regarding gender usually deal with resource distribution to improve the quality of life for men and women around the world. Some of these policies seek to transform the nature of social relations between men and women, while others seek to ameliorate these relations (e.g. the attainment of gender parity in basic education). In Ghana and many Sub-Saharan African countries, global policies have significantly impacted on education and improved the enrolment and graduation for girls. However, very few countries have really succeeded in reforming curriculum contents to include gender issues. Stromquist (2008) posits that two critical changes required to transform education are textbook revisions and teacher training. In many developing countries these changes have not materialized because the revision of textbooks to include gender issues is usually entrusted to curriculum specialists who have no expertise in gender issues. Also, training of teachers on gender sensitive practices is limited to few teachers instead of all teachers.

Global policies on education in Ghana are complicated by socio-cultural factors associated with power and gender relations within the traditional settings. Ingrained socio-cultural attitudes and practices of many parents and families interfere with girls' educational expectations and possibilities (see Daddieh, 2007, Amua-Sekyi, 1988). In addition, poverty and harsh economic conditions compound the reality of girls' education. Henry (2001) suggests that the problem of girls' education seriously needs re-conceptualization of theories and methods on

gender, policy analysis, and globalization to bring about gender equality and social justice in schools. In sum, global policies have brought about some changes in school discourses and practices and possible expectations for students (Henry *et al*. 1999, Ozga 2000). To understand the impact of gender and education in Sub-Saharan Africa, efforts should be made to improve our understanding of how education policies and analysis work. The next sub section explores the education policy analysis arena and how this can change research approaches to promote girls' education in Ghana.

Education Policy Analysis Arena

Education policy analysis is an area that offers educators and researchers an exciting important opportunity to consider, but often contentious and unexamined connections in policy propositions and outcomes. Typically, mainstream policy planning, designing, implementation, analysis, and evaluations are done from politically motivated perspectives and methodologies that conform to dominant hegemonic values (Plaut & Sharkey, 2003). In Ghana for example, researchers who analyze education draw mainly from mainstream approaches, which usually disregard the views, experiences, and stories of women and girls. The postmodern turn has enabled progressive researchers to incorporate the voices and narratives of diverse underprivileged groups to uncover many unexamined issues about girls in education.
Many progressive scholars including Marshall (1998), Vidovich (2007), and Ball (1994) just to mention a few have argued for alternative approaches that privilege groups like women and girls who are usually denied voices and representation in policy analysis and conversations.

Vidovich (2007), for instance, argues for the inclusion of ordinary individuals and/or community agencies in policy making and analysis process. By this approach ordinary people marginalized by dominant policy culture will play crucial roles in participating in the cleaning up the "messy" process of policy analysis. She calls for micro level engagement in policy analysis and interpretations to provide critical information needed for holistic understanding of policy impact and outcomes. In her hybrid framework, she contends that the continuous "policy cycle" of macro-level analysis usually constraints micro level agency in capturing a complete policy trajectory and outcome picture (Vidovich, 2007).

However, as recent educational policies become increasingly complex with global, national and local community forces, the dynamics of macro–level policy text and discourse and

the micro level individual agencies become very critical in understanding the policy analysis processes. Over reliance on functional rationalized models articulated by macro level analysis do not present the accurate picture and reality of those affected by the policy on the ground. Any policy making process or policy analysis that engages micro level participation fulfills the democratic project of education (Ozga, 2000).

Also, Ball's (1994) understanding of policy as text and action, words and deed ensures that policy outcomes are carefully planned and executed to fulfill original intentions. Bowe et al. (1992) continuous "policy cycle" conceptualizes policy in the context of influence (where interests groups struggle over construction of policy discourses); the context of policy text production (where texts represents policy, although they may contain inconsistencies and contradictions); and the context of practices/effects (where policy is subject to multiple interpretation and recreations). These contextual ideas broaden the terrain of educational policy studies from its macro level (often government focus) to micro level (individuals, schools and classrooms) analysis. Hence, policy analyses rigorously executed from critical feminist perspectives are helpful for this study. The next sub section discusses critical feminist policy analysis and its implication on gender education and development in Ghana.

Critical Feminist Policy Analysis

This postmodern feminist approach has gained credibility as a tool to explain policy implications and outcomes from the standpoint of women and girls. The Critical Feminist Policy Analysis (CFPA) approach is an alternative to mainstream policy analysis and research (Marshall, 1997a, 1997b). CFPA's theoretical and methodological framework draws on feminism, critical, and postmodern theories to analyze and interpret policy. Its standpoint enacts female consciousness and experiences to counteract mainstream accounts of human life in order to center women's issues in policy analyses to uncover cultural and institutional sources of oppression. Its critical perspective is concerned with issues of social justice and resists institutionalized structures that operate powerfully to maintain unequal and unjust relations. It moves beyond just describing women's status and barriers to insist on equal rights, access, and opportunities for women in education and society (Marshall, 1997a). It connects cultural and social analyses of politics to unravel governments' inability to address policy flaws, and by so doing, infuse feminist perspectives to ensure equality and social justice (Marshall, 1997b).

CFPA's postmodern tenet rejects grand narratives that privilege discourses used in explaining social phenomena to predict patterned inter-relationships and essentialism to uncover contradictions within discourses by embracing difference (Lather, 1991). Many feminist scholars who deal with postmodern frameworks reject abstract discourses and instead, recognize the importance of narratives and lived experiences of individuals in order to connect public discourse on policy issues to the complex identities of women's meaning making (Marshall, 1997b).

Often, mainstream research analyses on policy rely on the assumption that objectivity is achievable and desirable because research subjects share the same relationship to their social environment. This obviously renders categories like gender, race, social class, and sexuality unimportant, and hence evaluates women on the basis of male norms (Bensimon & Marshall, 1997). Unfortunately, such a positivist paradigm is widely accepted in the policy world and allows policy analysts and the broader policy community to perceive research enterprises in the same way. Thus, traditional policy analysis willfully ignores the political nature of research from a narrow, false objectives, and overly instrumental rationality that masks its biases, and allows elites and technocrats to present policy analyses as neutral and objective when in actually fact they are tied to prevailing relations of power (Marshall, 1997a).

In contrast, CFPA challenges policy structures that restrict access to power (Anderson, 1989) in order to bring sustained attention to women's interests and how these intersect and contradict with stated agenda (Shaw, 2004). Marshall contends that "Policy analysis and feminism intersect over questions about what is public and what is private and who decides . . . . on social justice, or what is the role of the state? Or can the state be relied upon for analyses of inequities?" (1997a, pp. 18-19). Thus, CFPA questions the entire policy making process from its formulation, implementation, method of analysis, and even the presentation of findings. It assumes that policy makers (i.e., the state) act in ways to sustain and reinforce dominant structures in society, and it is the intent of CFPA to unravel these contradictions, and advocate for redress aimed at altering gender and power dynamics.

The CFPA model uses female as its "fundamental category" to understand female identity and experiences. Its goal is not to develop a universal understanding of human experiences, but to bring closure to ways in which policy impact on gender and other socially constructed insights. This enable feminist researchers to rely on data collated on stories and lived

experiences of women and told by the women themselves to uncover contradictions in the policy making process. Like in action research, CFPA aims to transform the institutions of the status quo by focusing on issues of power relations (Bensimon & Marshall, 1997). It centers on gender to identify both formal and informal processes of power that impacts on the advancement and development of men and women (Marshall, 1997a). As an approach used for research purposes it is neither a new theory nor a new methodology, but an application of existing theories and methods to new realm of inquiry—namely, policy analysis.

Even though, CFPA is not considered a mainstream approach, its utility for scholars and researchers has grown in recent times. It has been applied in many social, political, and education areas to provide information on policy effects on women. For example, Luker employed CFPA to examine the politics of abortion (1985) and teenage pregnancy (1997) to illustrate ways in which simplistic and negative perceptions of female sexuality results in public policy based on false assumptions in which, immorality rather than poverty is the cause of unintended pregnancy. Gordon (1994) used CFPA to analyze U.S. welfare policy by focusing on the gendered nature of welfare development and reforms, which was originally designed to address the needs of "deserving women" widowed during the Civil War, into one that became increasingly punitive as perceptions of single mothers turned negative. CFPA was also applied by Piven et al., (2002) to provide insights into the intersection between gender and social policy, while Sassen and Appiah (1999) used the model to examine the effects of globalization on the economy, and particularly its negative implications on the poor and colored women.

Within the education front, Fine (1991) and Weis (1988) utilized critical ethnographic methods to trace the effects of globalization and de-industrialization on high school dropouts among girls and how these impact their educational aspirations. There are other examples in which CFPA frameworks were used to examine policy outcomes in education. At the K-12 level, this lens was used to examine curriculum (Yates, 1997; Adams, 1997), teacher training (Hollingsworth, 1997), and federal policies such as Title IX (Stromquist, 1997). On less obvious areas, CFPA was used to explore educational policy in areas such as the responses to teen pregnancy (Pillow, 1997) and the acquisition of computer knowledge and skills by females (Singh, 1997). At the postsecondary level, topical issues on affirmative action (Glazer, 1997), tenure and promotion (Acker and Feuerverger, 1997), and feminist pedagogy (Luke, 1997) have all been done with CFPA.

CFPA research is concerned with mechanisms to possibly reverse power relations and policy slippages. Its tools interrogate ways in which policy design, implementation, and effects are synchronized (Marshall, 1997a) and directly challenge dominant policy discourse to restore dignity to marginalized groups in schools and society. Thus, it provides researchers interested in understanding embedded relationships of gender and power in education policy with the tools to unravel these dynamics.

Conceptually, CFPA questions issues of power, social justice, and democracy in education and society, by challenging and interrupting mainstream policy discourses and practices to unravel socially constructed gender limitations that constrain human possibilities (Marshall, 1997). This framework critically analyzes why programs fails to change "the 'male-as-norm' conceptions of policy, of educational purpose, of students, of teachers, of curricula, of pedagogy, and of the profession of education" (Leach & Davies, 1990: 322). CFPA integrates the reality of gender, power, and politics to unravel the common sense, structured or assumed, dichotomy and differences that shape policy choices, and to serve some in-group ideology while marginalizing others. It undermines political agendas that benefit systemic male structures in school and replaces them with alternative perspectives that ask questions about who really benefits from existing arrangements and seek for possibilities towards redress.

CFPA recognizes that traditional policy analysis, assumptions, and methods do not suffice, but are edifices of hidden curriculum that perpetuates gender relations in schools and society. Employing CFPA expands the policy analysis field to incorporate feminist and critical viewpoints because education policy analyses have never been value-neutral (Shaw, 2004), especially when the role of the state in gender politics is not overtly discussed in official documents (Apple, 1994). When issues of gender are silenced by traditional policy analysis the findings are only "partial and perverse in understandings" of how women's lives are affected by the policy (Harding, 1986).

CFPA Implications for Girls Education

There are several benefits to accrue from the application of CFPA methods and tool to examine educational policy reforms in Ghana. The policy environment would be better understood as girls' opinions and views on issues are presented. Such information is vital for researchers, policy makers, teachers, students, and stakeholders to have access and accurate data

on the concerns of girls in Ghanaian education. The information could contribute to understanding the challenges girls encounter for appropriate investments to be made to promote gender equality education. The absence of empirical data on policy outcome on girls had put government and policy makers in denial of the gravity of problems they confront in education. So, unraveling policy contradictions and controversies will be crucial to changes in attitudes towards girls' education in general.

Moreover, the use of CFPA would go a long way to foster among girls and women the consciousness to reflect on their marginalized position and question practices that perpetuate them. Girls and women involved in such research would have the platform to participate in future policy decisions on how policy is designed, implemented, analyzed, and evaluated. The more the voices and experiences of girls are included in policy analysis, the brighter the chances of achieving gender equality in education. While the application of CFPA in policy research empowers participants and women in general, the information also enriches the policy community on the flaws of existing discourses and practices that obscure progress in education.

On the whole, the use of CFPA would contribute to both the theory and practice of policy making and analyses in Ghana. It will add to the literature and scholarship on ways in which policy research contributes to education practices toward gender equality. The principles guiding policy designs in education will be transformed so that girls are respected and given equal opportunities in education. In a nutshell, CFPA would foster democratic and socially just schooling environments, which promote equal access and participation of girls in school enrolment, subject choices, teacher involvement, fair curricula contents, and gender sensitive facilities in Ghanaian education.

Gender, Education and Development

In Sub-Saharan Africa, issues of gender, education, and socioeconomic development have become bedfellows for national prosperity (Levine, 2006). Browne and Barret (1991) argue that human centered development contain strategies to improve education, health, nutrition, and quality of life for all members of society because it is established that a nation's people are its most important asset for achieving development. Unfortunately, in Sub-Saharan Africa, this agenda has not been realized and the region continues to languish in illiteracy and poverty. The

region is noted for its poor indicators in human development which include low life expectancy, high infant mortality and high illiteracy among its female population (World Bank, 2006).

Scholars in development studies have cautioned that if this dismal trend is not reversed, the foundation for long-term socioeconomic development would be jeopardized. To sustain the tide for development, the United Nations in collaboration with governments and development partners like the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and reputable Nongovernmental Organizations have continued to stress on education, health, and nutrition as development ingredients (World bank, 1989; 2006). Such partnerships have enabled the implementation of programs in education, health, and other needed areas to improve the quality of life for girls and women in Africa (UI Haq, 1988; UNESCO, 1990). On many occasions, education is at the core of these programs since girls' and women's education is known to have positive implications on the health, nutrition, hygiene, child survival and fertility rates of women (Levine, 2006; World Bank, 2006). The reality is that in many parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, governments have not done enough to educate the majority of its female population (World Bank, 1990).

In Ghana, the promotion of girls' education lacks gender equity attributes in terms of access and participation. In an effort to understand challenges to gender equity in education, (Klein, et. al.,1994, 2007) identifies some of the challenges to gender equity in education to include the following: overt barriers (e.g., sex differences in course enrollments), subtle barriers (e.g., peer pressure to conform to stereotyped expectations), and sex discrimination and gender stereotypes, which in combination have serious consequences for girls' educational opportunities. To overcome these challenges the authors suggested,

- *The provision of same access and treatment for female and male learners either within the same context or possibly in a separate (sex segregated) but equal context* (Klein, Russo, Campbell, & Harvey, 1985, p. 7-8).
- *The provision of differential access and treatment to female and male learners based on their (individual) needs, their (individual) merit, or their (individual) needs and merit combined* (Klein, Russo, Campbell, & Harvey, 1985, p. 8).

Ghanaian education shows very limited application of gender equity to ensure that girls and boys experience education equally. Girls are normally treated differently from boys not on the basis of their learning needs but on socio-cultural norms and practices that subjugate them as inferior to

boys. Until this attitude and mindset is changed, the problems confronting efforts aimed at gender equity in education will be difficult to overcome.

As I have articulated in earlier chapters, girls' education in Ghana is influenced by internal and external factors and this intersection sometimes creates problems. Externally, girls' education is tied to global policy blueprints usually proposed and championed by external donor and development agencies. These policies are wholesaled and implemented in Ghana without regards to domestic factors and conditions. For example, while the reform proposals insist that all children deserve at least basic level education, the loans and grants allocated for this purpose also strip government the ability to subsidize essential social services like education and health. Governments' inability to subsidize education only exacerbates dropout and withdrawal of children (especially girls) by parents who are unable to afford the rising cost of education. Another problem that girls' education faces is that, because very little premium or value is attached to girls education by many families, they would rather prefer girls being out of school to take care of house chores, nurture and care for siblings or peddle goods or produce to contribute to family earnings. This kind of attitude and stereotypes is couched in patriarchal sensibilities that continue to stifle girls' education.

For these reasons intervention programs that subsidizes education is part of the process toward gender equality in education. That is why the government has made basic education free and compulsory. The free tuition and textbook supplies have become crucial components in the promotion of girls' education effort. Recently, the feeding program has been added to make sure that children in school are not hungry. These efforts have helped girls enroll, stay and graduate from school but there are also evidence that girls continue to encounter obstacles and challenges.

Records of increased enrollment of girls have not been matched with gender equity and gender sensitive practices in schooling environment. Some scholars attributed this to the lack of empirical data and information on girls' educational experiences. Most research on girls' education in Ghana use approaches that normalize girls' unique experiences into mainstream agenda. Usually their findings and presentations blur the data on girls' education and marginalize their experiences. Education policies and reform initiatives which are truly aimed at promoting gender equality should include information generated from girls' experiences. Issues such as girls' access and participation in subjects, their perceptions of curriculum and instruction, and

their views of teaching and schooling environment are crucial pieces of information that would aid in the design of gender equity initiatives in education.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

Introduction

The theoretical framework for this study draws on postmodern feminist and gender perspectives, African feminism, and critical feminist policy analysis to conceptualize girls' and women's education and development in Sub-Saharan Africa. Of particular importance to this study is the critical feminist policy analysis (CFPA), which is a method and analytical tool that encourages girls to partake in policy research. By this approach, the agency of girls becomes critical factor in uncovering policy discourses and practices that unfairly undermine girls' education. By this process, girls are centered and privileged to narrate their stories and experiences in their own voices.

The promotion of girls' education in Ghana faces a lot of challenges and the works of postmodern feminists are helpful in unraveling policy contradictions as the stories told by girls. Epistemologically, understanding the structure and agency of a phenomenon and how they are related helps to identify, comprehend, and explain that phenomena (Ritzer and Gindoff, 1994). It also shows "how social phenomenon can be fully understood by investigating the dynamic conditions, circumstances, and situations of the players in a particular situation and also focusing on the interaction between the macroscopic social elements and microscopic individual movements" (Maslak, 2008, p. xviii).

Feminism

The core of feminist research evaluates the ideals of justice, freedom, happiness, and social change as it discovers and discusses hidden power and knowledge connections within these ideals (Ingram & Simon–Ingram, 1991; Lennon & Whitford, 1994). Obviously, a research study on girls' schooling experiences would demand require the use of feminism to unravel deeply rooted disconnects. Feminism, however, has become a controversial because of its varied perspectives and the lack of unified front. To capture these variations, Stone (1994) categorized feminism into universalist, separatist, essentialist, and particularist to show a continuum of thought on the role of biology, culture, history, and equality embedded in issues relating to

women. Glazer (1991) politically divided feminism into liberal, radical, Marxist, socialist, and postmodern. While many feminists view women and men as equal but different, some insist that equality is embedded in "difference" rather than sameness of men and women. Indeed, the blurring of feminist models has created undue tensions between the modern and postmodern feminism (Allen & Baber, 1992).

The postmodern turn brought new feminist thinkers who were much critical of modern and enlightenment thinking. Ontologically, postmodern feminist thinkers argue that there is no "generic" human because there are variations in human characteristics. They also emphasized on "difference" and the deconstruction of binary categories in their articulations (Lyotard, 1984). Many of the postmodern feminists depart from the search for "universal truth" which grounded "liberal humanism" and characterized the modern era that began in the 18th century (Hutcheon, 1988). Postmodern thinkers disregard the efficacy of universal laws and theories and, instead, focus particularly on local meanings that are socially constructed.

In this connection, postmodern feminists agree with the critique of essentialism and draw on the importance of identifying diverse categorical knowledge. They are quick to question issues relating to gender and development by focusing on language and power embedded in theory and practices especially in developing countries. In this light, postmodern feminists deconstruct the category "woman," only to recognize that "woman" is a socially and culturally constructed phenomenon. Postmodern feminists also recognize that the first wave feminism, which was dominated mostly by middle class, white, and heterosexual women, has usually mistaken the term "woman" to embrace all women irrespective of their race, color, geographical location, and sexual orientation.

Underneath all these variations and controversies within the feminist tradition lie societal laws, discourses and customary practices that divide the sexes into gender roles, which restrict women and men on what they can do individually. Even though many ordinary women refuse to identify with feminism, their personal philosophies encompass ideas associated with feminism (Wolf, 1993, Fox-Genovese, 1996). For instance, in matters such as independence, interdependence, equal pay for equal work, and equal rights and opportunities, all women agree and share those visions even if they do not identify with feminism (Fox-Genovese, 1996).

Feminism in Africa

Feminism in Africa, a recent phenomenon, has gained credence with many scholars of African descent to deconstruct Western feminism. Their main contention against especially the second wave feminism of the West is that it is Eurocentric. However, they agree with postmodern feminists on many fronts, including the avoidance of generalizing the universality of womanhood and the focus on local experiences and realities of women (Yeboah, 2008). African feminists acknowledge that "womanhood" as a concept has diverse meanings, interests, and implications depending on one's geographic locations. While the term African feminism is new, women in Africa are known to have engaged in political, social, and economic activities within local communities before European colonization (Scott, 1996; Mikell, 1995; Afonja, 2005).

Scholars who are involved in African feminism recognize that oppression of women is a worldwide phenomenon that women in Africa identify and stand in solidarity with others to fight against (Kohrs-Amissah, 2002). Critics who find the term "feminism" hypocritical, racist and a mainstream Western conception (Gyimah, 2003; Afonja, 2005) have suggested alternative terms like "Womanism," (Kolawole, 1997), "Motherism," (Acholonu, 1995), and "Stiwanism" (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994) to replace the use of African feminism. This notwithstanding, the term "feminism" has been accepted by many African scholars who realized the need for African women to take charge of their own experiences and interpret their own realities (King, 1986).

Several arguments aimed at differentiating African feminism from the kind advocated in the West have been propounded. It is argued that feminism in Africa predates Western feminism even though there was no documentation of such activities (Afonja, 2005; Mama, 1996; Steady, 1996; Gadzepo, 2005). African women's activities in the past were not documented until recently (Mikell, 1997; Steady, 1996) when systematic attempts were made to rediscover African women's history (Afonja, 2005; Mama, 1996). Owing to undocumented accounts, there are difficulties identifying a single theoretical framework on African feminism. For this reason, the fragmented history of African women have been put together by contemporary scholars on issues relating to theories of racial, sexual, ethnic, class, historical processes, and cultural dimensions of oppression to produce a more comprehensive and inclusive idea on feminism in Africa (Akatsa-Bukachi, 2005; Steady, 1996; Mohanty, 1991).

The surge and involvement of African women scholars have added to efforts in rediscovering African women's history and redefining the perspectives and methodologies

appropriate for research on women in Africa (Steady, 1996). Many of the theories on African feminism draw on discourses from pre-colonial to modern globalization era (Steady, 1996; Adeleye-Fayemi, 2000; McFadden, 2001; Afonja, 2005). These discourses are usually located and examined historically to unravel the realities of African women's oppression and domination during colonization, neo-colonialism, and recent era of globalization (Adeleye-Fayemi, 2000; Steady, 1996). Usually, the intersection of gender, women's oppression, race, ethnicity, poverty, and class are the focal points from which African women's lives are centered and examined historically.

Broadly speaking, the aim of African feminism is to deconstruct existing negative knowledge and stereotypical images about African women that were propagated by Western feminism and male writers in general. Their aim is to construct a positive image and propound theories with new terminologies to reflect African women's reality and connect them with issues of class, race, and sex oppression (Boyce Davis and Graves, 1986; Kohrs-Amissah, 2002; Amadiume, 1987). It was from this perspective that Mama writes:

> The experience of African women across the region indicates that we cannot just passively import terms and concepts that have been developed elsewhere, under different social and political conditions. The task we face as African intellectuals is that of developing our own applications of given theories, and more radically, of taking our own realities as the starting point for articulating perspectives, or even entirely new theories (1997, p. 4-5).

For Mama (1997), this is a clarion call for African women scholars to get involved in conceptualizing their own identities and constructing positive images of themselves by rewriting the histories of strong ancestry and highlighting the role colonialism played in widening gender gaps within many parts of Africa (Kohrs-Amissah, 2002).

The efforts of post-colonial feminist scholars have led to the critical examination to trace historical developments and how colonialism negatively impacted African women's lives (Steady, 1987; 1996; 2005; Mama, 1996; Oyewumi, 1997; 2002; 2003; Ogundipe- Leslie, 1994); Amadiume, 1987; 1997; Adeleye-Fayemi, 2000). For instance, Adeleye-Fayemi (2000) revealed that women of earlier African civilizations had access to power and leadership through the exercise of matriarchal or patriarchal relationship, even as these relations varied from one part of the region to another (Steady, 1996; McFadden, 2001). Entrenched patriarchy systems in African societies notwithstanding, women were able to rely on institutions of motherhood, communalism and polygyny to resist and neutralize patriarchy.

Steady (1996) historically analyzed the systems of social organization, communal activities, and production in pre-colonial era to position women and show their influence in the household structure. Social organization at that period was based on the principle of patrilineal or matrilineal relationship or a combination of both. The household, which was the economic unit, generated use value through production and reproduction. Interestingly, production was only for household use and so the question of differential valuation was not an issue. The basis for valuing reproduction was more subjective and symbolic than of materialism. In essence, they valued community, cooperation, and distribution than individualism, competition and accumulation (Steady, 1996).

Communal ownership facilitated women's access to land and ensured a degree of control over their labor as well as decisions about their labor (Sudarkasa, 1996). Communalism assured women's autonomy and status, which changes throughout their lifecycles. The status of women within a community rises during their reproductive years and reaches its climax at old age. Elderly women in society are eligible for leadership or political positions. Hence, a woman success was embedded in her life course which is an important aspect of her femininity.

Colonialism however, brought different sets of economic and social relations that profoundly changed the lives of African women. It disrupted the traditional systems of production (Adeleye-Fayemi, 2000; Steady, 1996; 2006; Robertson and Berger, 1986; Amadiume, 1987; Pellow, 1977) and introduced systems geared towards extracting wealth from Africa. The imposition of Western culture increased urbanization and its attendant problems of class and gender inequalities. Cash cropping, when introduced, enabled men to earn cash or opportunities for wage labor (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994). The colonizers also introduced strict dichotomous divisions of people into biological categories of "male" and "female" that were unequal (Steady, 2006). The British, for example, introduced the "Victorian" concept of woman's role into the colonies, adding new forms of social, political, and economic discrimination to those already in existence in traditional societies (Pellow, 1977; Robertson and Berger, 1986; Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994; Steady, 1996). In effect, colonialism widened existing gender gaps when formal education system, which favored boys over girls, was introduced.

The Victorian and Christian concepts further excluded women from the public sphere. Men became the breadwinners and political agents (Kohrs-Amissah, 2002; Mikell, 1997) and women, the private homemakers. Moreover, the colonial legal system made it impossible for

women to possess land, which destroyed the matrilineal structure in many African societies. Oyewumi (2003) contends that colonialism simply eroded the political position of African women, gradually disengaged them from local governance, and de-radicalized women's movements. This assertion is consistent with what Amadiume (1987), Ogundipe-Leslie (1994), Mama (1996) and Okome's (2000) have said in their extensive discussion on the disenfranchisement of women during colonial period.

While colonial activities integrated Africa into the world system of dependency, earlier contact with merchants from the West since the 15th century was on mutual trade. The integration of Africa into world economies brought about social stratification, racial segregation, and gender marginalization. Literature on the history of African women show that women resisted colonial exploitation of their reproductive and productive labor. "The Women's War of 1929 in Nigeria" was a direct form of resistance against colonial taxation and an indirect protest against the differential integration of women into the world economic system (Steady, 1996; Ifeka-Moller, 1975). In Ghana, the story of Yaa Asantewaa (queen mother) who led the battle against the British in Ashanti when the King was captured is another case in point (Rushing, 1996). Many of such examples speak of the valor of African women and how actively they engaged in social, political, and cultural affairs within their community and sometimes fought for social justice.

The gaining of independence by many African countries has not brought any significant changes to their economies or the gender inequalities perpetrated by colonialism (Steady, 1996; Robertson and Bergers, 1986). Postcolonial development models have continued the West's domination over Africa and severe economic conditions have rather strengthened the neocolonial dependency relationships (Robertson and Bergers, 1986).

Even as women play dominant roles in food production, their contributions are ignored in "development" planning (Boserup, 1970, Robertson and Bergers, 1986). In reaction to stringent economic conditions that marginalizes and oppresses them, African women have developed various strategies of resistance and survival even as it hurts their traditional family life (Steady, 1996; Mikell, 1997). A typical example is the female-headed household which has become an issue for feminist analysis. The matrilineal and matrifocal African cultures practiced in parts of Nigeria and Ghana, usually position women with powerful roles such as Queen Mothers with the responsibility for "enstooling" and "destooling" chiefs (Rushing, 1996). There is also evidence

of uneducated market women in Ghana who, through their trading activities, have risen politically and economically to become "Market Queens" with power and clout to lead the association of market women (Clark, 1994; Robertson, 1984). Amadiume (1987) has also demonstrated the interchanging roles of women in Igbo society where daughters take positions as sons and women act as husbands to illustrate how powerful women can be and the flexibility of their gender systems. All of these examples portray how African women in their roles as feminists engage in activism.

African feminist have also re-conceptualized gender as a category in its origin, which constitutes an expression that prevails in Western ideologies (Mama, 1997; Oyewumi, 1997; 2005; Amadiume, 1987). African women scholars hold the view that gender systems in Africa are flexible and allows for adjustments and modifications of biological systems. Oyewumi asserts that,

> the delineation of gender categories are an outgrowth of the biological foundationalism of Western thinking about the cultural logic of Western social categories is based on an ideology of biological determinism: the conception that biology provides the rationale for the organization of the social world (2005: xii).

Oyewumi also contended that gender, which is proclaimed as social construction in Western discourses in reality, is biologically determined. He explains that in Western societies, gender studies are usually linked to sexuality, so discourses of gender are usually also discussions of sexuality (Oyewumi, 2005). It is from this dominant Western conception that discourses used by many scholars emerge to shape their research on issues of gender conceptualization and the theoretical tools made available in the process. However, gender as an analytical category in African studies transcends biology because the notion of gender is not taken at its face value but from a multiple perspective (Oyewumi, 1997).

In her book "Male Daughters, Female Husbands," Amadiume's (1987) shows how Igbo women's identity change functionally as they take up responsibilities normally assigned to men. She depicts how female play male roles and be socially categorized as "male" within the patriarchal lineage structure, depending on the context. Social motherhood also tends to transcend biological categories and can lead to empowerment of women (Steady, 2006). The concept of "motherhood" has gained prominence in African feminist literature because of its importance as a tool for women's empowerment (Amadiume, 1987; Steady, 2006). African feminists argue that Western feminist devalue reproductive labor, and motherhood is seen to be a

disadvantage, particularly within the labor market systems (Jeannes and Shefer, 2004; Arnfred, 2003).

In African cultures and traditions, "motherhood" is the basis of empowerment for women irrespective of their lineage type (Amadiume, 1997; Oyewumi, 2003; Nzegwu, 2004; Jeannes and Shefer, 2004). Mothers are essential building blocks of social relationships, identities, and societies (Oyewumi, 2003). It is therefore highly valued and desired in African societies, and most women strive to attain motherhood. The attainment of motherhood for married African women is a status symbol. Women move out of their subordinate position of "wife" to an exalted category of "mother" with they give birth to a child (Nzegwu, 2004). Akatsa-Bukachi (2005) acknowledged that a woman's name often changes from her own with the addition of her child's name as soon as she becomes a mother. For example, if a woman gives birth and names the child Kweku, people usually call her Kweku's mother, and that is a status symbol in African societies.

Akunne (1977), a cultural historian sees motherhood as domination over men and postulated that motherhood symbolically dominates men or fathers because of the spiritual bonding usually associated with mothers and their children. According to Amadiume,

> the maternal experience, which is the primary identification with and centrality of the female reproduction, production, property, and status inheritance, give cultural expression in a strong, mother-focused ideology (1997, p.114).

The roles of wives and mothers, which Eurocentric ideologies characterized as belonging to the "private" sphere and therefore devalued, can have political significance and serve as a mobilizing force for development among African women. As mothers women have economic roles that grant them important entitlements and privileges that confer power in social, economic, ritual, and political spheres (Yeboah, 2008).

Motherhood is seen as a lifelong commitment and a collective responsibility for women in Africa. Steady (2006) proposes communalism as a framework for studying African women. She argues that socialization of children is a communal responsibility rather than an individual responsibility. Family structures and residential patterns based on extended family systems promote communal living and provide women with the opportunity to mother children in the household whether or not they are their biological children (Surdarkasa, 2004; Magawaza, 2003). This is referred to as "social mothering" meaning "motherhood that transcends biological categories" by Steady (2006, p.7).

Social mothering provides the platform for analysis of the roles of grandmothers, co-wives, and mothers which are interlinked and interchangeable in the traditional family setting (Daniels, 2004). During birthing, the oldest women (grandmother, senior wife, mother in-law) in the lineage are called upon to assist in the birthing process. She also helps with the daily chores and activities of the new mother and baby until the mother regains her strength to handle her own household duties (Oyewumi, 2000; 2003). In contemporary times, urban women either leave their marital homes to be with their mothers just before childbirth or invite their aging mothers over to the city to live and care for them during the last trimester of pregnancy and early postpartum periods (Yeboah, 2008).

It is also common in African societies for women who migrate from rural to urban areas to work to leave their children in the care of their mothers (Tanle, 2003; Beauchemin, 1999; Daniels, 2004; Nzegwu, 2002). In situations where there are no mothers, older women in the family like aunts, sisters, cousins or others become substitutes. It is not surprising that in Ghana there is a proverb which says "a mother never stops giving birth," suggesting the never-ending role of motherhood in Africa (Yeboah, 2008). Motherhood, as denoted by African feminists, is the social position that is value to both family and community.

Empirical studies done by Steady (2005), Stamp (1986) and Amadiume (1987) also show how communal mobilization is part of efforts women contribute to community development. Stamps' (1986) analyzed how women used their positions as mothers and sisters to appropriate and dispose resources in Kenya. In Sierra Leone, Steady shows how communal mobilization of women helped in activities aimed at political participation and development. In this respect, motherhood is a collective concept necessary for advancing both women and societal interests. In addition, collective mothering and communalism within the African feminist framework provides a basis upon which this study can draw upon to liberate girls from their educational oppression. Communalism in African tradition and family lifestyle are amply displayed in various forms in a woman's lifecycle including puberty, marriage, childbirth, mothering, funerals and others (Yeboah, 2008).

Another concept that African feminists have revisited is polygyny and how it relates to communalism. They postulate that Western discourses condemned polygyny as one of the worst symbols of African women's oppression (Miles, 1998; Hudson-Weems, 1998; Nnaemeka, 2005; Lazreg, 2005). Nnaemeka (2005) points to the practice in Western society where men have one

wife with multiple mistresses. This is what I call "serial monogamy." According to Nnaemeka (2005) the only difference between the two is that African men legitimize their relationships with more than one wife. Nnaemeka concludes that:

> African women in a polygamous relationship seem to be a step or two ahead of their Western counterparts living under the illusion that they are not sharing their husbands: African women know who else their husbands are with (2005, p. 62).

Polygyny, according to African feminists, is not as humiliating as Western discourse proclaims; rather it has some advantages. Scholarship on polygyny from a Western perspective portrays it as harmful to women, leading to their subjugation (Amadiume, 1987; Madhavan, 2002). Much of these scholarships have emphasized competition, rivalry, and jealousy (Meekers and Franklin, 1995; Ware, 1981). Schnier and Hintmann (2001) even attack polygyny from a legal standpoint that it violates women's rights and leads to gender inequality in Ghana. Others have provided a laundry list of problems associated with polygyny including: women's inequality in marriage; contributes to the spread of HIV/AIDS; impedes the ability of women to attain the highest standard of mental health; contributes to domestic violence; denies children adequate paternal support and affects the development of the girl child; as well as prohibits women from exercising their right to education. From such analysis women are viewed as being oppressed in polygamous marriages. There are counter arguments that suggests that these laundry list of problems also exists in monogamous marriages especially when one partner is unfaithful.

African feminists have challenged these Western conceptions as baseless for not contextualizing the practice of polygyny and positing it as the norm. They argue that polygyny is an economic system that promotes communal and cooperative values. It ensures economic security of members of the household (Walter, 2004; Steady, 1996), and offer women the autonomy and mobility in marriage, particularly for senior wives (Steady, 1996). Amadiume writes that,

> the advantages in a polygynous marriage system includes the possibility of autonomy within marriage ... the embedded supportive systems in terms of childcare and domestic help which facilitated mobility and therefore encouraged women's economic and political activities (1987, p. 142).

The importance of communal living, cooperation, and peaceful co-existence between co-wives facilitate greater mobility, personal freedom, and shared mothering of children and

perhaps economically, which would not be possible in nuclear and monogamous marriages. The challenge is that, if Western discourses engage in micro-scale analysis on polygamy in Africa and examined it carefully to understand the situation of women they would be amazed of the many good side of the practice.

The preceding discussion presents discourses in African feminism. The analysis centered on African women's attempt to recreate their own identities, women's changing status and power relations from pre-colonial to the present. The concepts that have been prominent in African women's theorization are communalism, motherhood, and polygyny. These practices are used symbolically to illustrate women's power and autonomy in traditional societies.

In conclusion, it can be argued that African feminists are breaking new ground with innovative ways to theorize and work within frameworks that deal with the complex realities of women's lives in the local and global context of the contemporary world. Using communalism as a broader framework with concepts such as motherhood, polygyny, and mobility as a source of empowerment for women, the analysis discusses how women used their circumstances to obtain autonomy within social structures that are difficult to change. Situating this project within this framework will provide an understanding of how girls could circumvent their local traditional structures such as patriarchy, polygamy, and others to their advantage. It will also provide useful analysis on the situation of girls' education in Ghana and how gender equality can be achieved.

From the foregoing discussions it is clear that African feminism and postmodern feminist share similar attributes of focusing and understanding localized realities and experiences of women and in this case girls. Furthermore, the growing interests in women's equality in Africa suggest that advocates of African feminism and Western postmodern feminism can compromise and work together to transform the plight of girls in education. They both agree in centering female voices, experiences, and lived realities in development and research. They both recognize women as agents of change in efforts geared toward equality, development, social justice, and democracy around the world. The next sub section therefore reviews ongoing feminist methods used for research in education and development.

Feminist Methods in Research and Development

According to Maguire (1987), there is no single definition of feminist research and method. Basically, feminist scholarship and methods are built on premises that seek to challenge

traditional modes of representation, creation, and distribution of knowledge. Feminist knowledge creation, among others, employs various strategies to research women's experience and their social worlds (Hesse-Biber & Yaiser, 2004). Feminist research is uniquely feminine because of the motives, approaches, concerns, and the kind of knowledge that is brought into the research process. According to Hesse-Biber et al (2004), researches conducted with feminist tools are open to "issues of difference, the questioning of social power, resistance to scientific oppression, and a commitment to political activism and social justice" (p. 3).

Feminist research methods differ from traditional research approach in several ways (Brayton, 1997) and seek to address the issue of power relations in the research process (Moss, 2002; Hesse-Biber et al, 2004; Skelton, 2001). Politically, feminists are motivated to change social inequalities and center their research on the standpoints of women to give them "voice" (England, 1994). Issues of power relations embedded in research processes of "conventional" approaches to conceptualize knowledge are challenged. Hay (2000) posits that conventional social inquiry which tends to emphasize objectivity involves two components. "The first relates to the personal involvement between the researcher and participants in the study, as well as the independence of the researcher's from the object of research. The second is based on to the premise that, little or no interactive relationship between the researcher and the researched in the research process" (p.31).

Traditional scientific approaches reinforce power relations by its insistence on the independence of the researcher from the object of research. Diane Wolf (1996), as quoted by Naples (2003), proposed that in research processes, power is discernible in three interrelated dimensions. First, power differences embedded in the positionalities of the researcher and the researched are couched in issues like race, class, nationality, life chances, urban-rural, ethnicity, and gender. Second, power exerted in the course of the research process is usually expressed through unequal exchange and exploitation. Third, the presentation of data gathered in the research process could be skewed if power is exerted during the post-fieldwork period, or during the analysis, writing and presentation stages. The implication here is that at each stage of the research process the power relations between the researched and the researcher is compromised.

Feminist methodology on the other hand, aims to remove the hierarchical power relationship between researchers and participant by calling for what is termed "feminist objectivity" or "situated knowledge" (Hay, 2000; England, 1994; Hesse-Biber, 2004; Bhavnani,

1993; Harding, 1993). “Feminist objectivity” researchers make conscious efforts to involve their participants in the research process at all levels. Participants are recognized as the experts and authorities of their own experiences (Brayton, 1997). Unlike traditional social science inquiry, where researchers own the knowledge created, feminist research is always determined to restructure inequality by removing the ownership of knowledge from researchers and making the process a co-authored or shared knowledge. Feminist researchers also ensure the validity and accuracy of research by sending back the findings to the participants for verification.

Feminist researchers use reflexivity to avoid unequal power relations during the research process. Reflexivity according to England (1994) is “self-critical sympathetic introspection and the self conscious analytical scrutiny of self as researcher and of the research process” (p. 82). Reflexivity is a two-way process (Rose, 1997), looking both “inward” to the identity of the researcher and “outward” to the relationship with the research participants. In each of these two-way processes, the role of the researcher is vital in determining the structure of the research process without necessarily being in control. Reflexivity helps researchers to unearth their own privileges and possible bias as well as addressing the differences between and within communities (Naples, 2003; Rose, 1997). It is in this direction that Wasserfall (1993) writes

> The kind of reflexivity proposed by postmodern literature could help prevent raising expectations and making naïve assumptions in ethnographic research and help promote a more ethical approach to social scientific research. Indeed the underlying assumption ……by being reflexive in one’s fieldwork, one may deal successfully with issues of power differences in the research project as well as the written text. Reflexivity, from this quote becomes a very important tool used by researchers to control the acquisition of knowledge and also to create a balance in the power of representation (p.24).

Politically, feminist research urges scientific inquiry to change the status quo from power vested in the researcher to that of the researched. As argued by Mies (1983), “the change of the status quo becomes the starting point for a scientific quest” (p.135). This implies that research intended to empower women must begin with the interests of women instead of being a tool to support the dominant masculine worldview (Brayton, 1997). He further argues that “feminist research must not be abstract and removed from the subject of investigation but instead it must have a commitment to working towards societal change with the researched being part and the researcher should not simply seek to present data and information” (Brayton, 1997). Feminist research therefore, strives to raise the political consciousness of the participants to challenge the status quo in order to bring about transformation.

Finally, feminist research's aim is to share women's life experiences and promote their perspectives on issues such as life experiences and perspectives that could be used as starting point and/or focus from where feminist research progresses (Gilbert, 1994; Brayton, 1997; Naples, 2003). Knowledge of women's lives have been misconstrued or constructed from the perspective of men (Mattingly & Al-Hindi, 1995; Rose, 1997). Women's participation in public spheres for instance, have been absent or presented from the standpoint of men. It is imperative that feminist research take women's issues, situations, concerns, experiences, and perspectives into account as a basis for new research. Feminist research uses methods that are people-centered to provide participants the opportunity to shape and control the knowledge being produced. In this respect, understanding of how postmodern feminism is applied for education and development research purposes in Africa is worth examining.

Feminism and Development in Africa

Insights from postmodern feminism have been applied to development programs in Sub-Saharan Africa. Development scholars have tapped women as change agents in two major approaches namely Women in Development (WID) and Gender and Development (GAD). The WID approach however was criticized in the 1970s for its limited benefits to women in the development process. It did not really address the fundamental problem of women's subordination and marginalization in society. The WID strategy included women in the development process with programs designed around income generation schemes, micro credit and loans all aimed at facilitating and increasing women's productivity (Maslak, 2008).

Unfortunately, ineffectiveness of WID to correct structural biases and imbalances evoked by gender and power relations made it seem like women were only the "recipients" of handouts instead of as 'active' agents for change. The WID programs was also accused of using women as "pack horses" and making them work without pay on projects which further exacerbated their triple burden of reproductive work, productive work and community managing (Moser, 1993). The Gender and Development (GAD) approach was proposed in the late 1980s as alternative to WID. This new approach viewed the problems of women from a gender and power relations perspective (the social relationship between men and women in which women are subordinated and oppressed), and not from sex (biological distinctions from men).

The GAD approach challenged the "naturalized" role of women and the dynamics of the household (Kabeer & Subrahmanian, 1999). It resisted approaches that examine and analyze gender roles on the basis of nature and reproduction of male power (Colclough et al., 2003). While GAD acknowledges WID agenda for equal opportunities for women to participate in all aspects of life, its focus also examined gender and power relations at all levels. GAD programs were to intervene and bring about equality and equity among women and men in all spheres of life including legal reforms (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1999: 12).

In comparison, WID included women in the development process, but was not interested in dismantling existing structures and the status quo. The GAD was aimed at transforming gender relations in society by challenging the reproduction of gender inequalities through the integration of women into the development process to bring about changes in power relations. Programs enacted through the WID and GAD were both offshoots of Western postmodern feminist thinking. Their contribution to the study of women's education and development filtered through the agency-structure analytical lens is undeniable. The agency of women's perspectives and personal life experiences are very important in understanding issues relating to their particular socioeconomic, geographic, cultural, historical circumstances, situations, and conditions that affected their lives (Boswell, 2003; Choi, 2004). Postmodern feminists therefore had to grapple with structures and systems to describe and explain women's situation and experiences (Frye, 2000). Consequently, this approach often illuminates how institutionalized structures have defined, shaped and influenced categories like gender, class, ability, sexual orientation etc to impact on women's education and development (Coats, 2000; Wermuth & Monges, 2002).

While WID principles assured equal access to opportunities, it saw women's oppression as defined by universally accepted notions of social, cultural, and economic inequities. Even though WID achieved relatively little success in elevating women's position and standing in society, it contributed to later shifts in focus where women's agency in relation to structures that oppress them were used to critically examine issues. The GAD movement situates macroscopic perspective of society as the primary force that causes gender inequity. It conceptualizes and analyzes women's problems by examining inequality from social, cultural, political, and economic structures because "it assumes that gender relates to cultural specific forms of social inequality, which is inherent in particular social and cultural institutions" (Young, 1993, 135).

Maslak (2008) posits that both WID and GAD do not offer complete depiction of women's oppression because they do not offer effective ways for women's emancipation. She criticized the WID approach for its focus on the individual and disregard of the social settings and forces that shape peoples actions. Individual (or individuals) agency in the context of the broader socio-cultural, religious, economic, and political structures is critical in understanding how systems created shape and ultimately define the lives of others. She also criticized the GAD approach for failing to critically tease out ways in which systems and structures constructed and perpetuated by individuals relate to the oppression of women. These approaches have been used extensively in African countries but both have neither fully recognize the relationship between agency and structure, nor adequately explained how agency and structure permeate and percolate to aid our understanding of girls and young women's education (Maslak, 2008).

Maslak further contends that the shortcomings of these approaches are addressed when insights from "social thought on relationism, which foregrounds the macroscopic (structure) and microscopic (agency) are used to explain social phenomena. Alone, macro models ignore the importance of history, process of social change, and fail to consider the influence of individuals in forging the social system, and how social relations affect one's ability to advance. The micro paradigm alone also discounts the importance of institutions and organizational parameters that shape social structures in which people inexorably live and work. ….So, it inadequately explains how institutions enable or disable individuals' social action and movement" (2008, p. xvii).

She concluded that "one-sided adherence to either the macro-structural perspective (i.e. social facts paradigm) or the micro-individual perspective (i.e. the social definition and social behavior paradigms) results in the inability to comprehensively depict the existing forces, circumstances, situations, and conditions that account for sociological phenomena, thereby ignoring the interactions among them, some of which may help to explain the phenomena" (p. xvii).

Apart from postmodern feminist critique of WID and GAD, African feminist have also discredited them as too Eurocentric in nature and underline with Western theories (Parpart, 1995). African feminism provides stronger justifications for an alternative model of development for African women. They challenge the Western feminist's knowledge, concepts, and portrayal of African women (Afonja, 2005; Steady, 2005; Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994; Oyewumi, 2005; 2003), and reject structural functionalism. They instead argue for the adaptation of more culture

centered approaches that are sensitive to local realities (Afonja, 2005; Ngzewu, 2002; Bhavnani, 2003; Kurian, 2003).

Sen and Grown (1987 89–93), proposes the adoption of strategies that empower women through organizations and communal activities as alternative visions for development. They identified different types of organizations that can empower women in their local contexts. The traditional grassroots organizations are social reform movements that hardly break traditional and cultural boundaries but empower women. Women's informal communal activities organized along family and culture also have the potential to empower women.

African feminism agrees with Women Culture and Development (WCD) approach to gender studies because it emphasizes both culture and women's agency in their theorization. Africa feminism and WCD are against the use of Eurocentric models in studying women from different geographical areas (Bhavnani, 2003; Steady, 2005; Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994; Mikell, 1997). Steady (2005) asserts that culture has valuable and positive assets and provides effective models for gender research that can lead to empowerment and advancement of African women. Women power bases are partly derived from traditional and cultural values that stress the potency of the female principles that govern life and reproduction through motherhood (Ibid). With culture as a focal point, local ideologies, knowledge and values that structure and shape gender will be manifested and addressed (Afonja, 2005; Nzegwu, 2004; Steady, 2005).

In her study of Yoruba women in Nigeria, Afonja (2005) observed that women's autonomy was an outcome of women's choices because of their class, access to power, race, ethnicity, or geographical location. Women's autonomy was based on the political constitutions, history, and level of prosperity of their geographical locations. Women who were in more prosperous and egalitarian cultural communities were less subordinated to men than those from strictly hierarchical and patriarchal areas (Afonja, 1981). This clearly indicates that gender power relations in local cultures have to be analyzed in order to understand women's identity. It is therefore, necessary for researchers to come out with workable models for research and development that recognizes the positive aspects of African women's way of life (Nzegwu, 2004; Afonja, 1981).

African feminists are therefore proposing alternative methodologies that are African focused. Steady (2005) calls for approaches that include the following: a historical perspective, a holistic perspective, multidimensionality, multiple time frames, multiple level of analysis,

multiple identities and realities, relational and dynamic contexts, comparative methods, oral history, life history, and others that capture the essentials of African women's realities. It is obvious from the discussions that research into issues of girls and women's oppression need to use microscopic analysis that draws on the agency of individuals in explaining social phenomena. In the case of this study, the agency of girls is used to understand the education policy outcomes in Ghana. We now turn to another important postmodern feminist approach to doing research on oppressed groups particularly girls and women. The next section examines how critical feminist policy analysis (CFPA) taps into female agency in policy research and analysis.

Conclusion

This chapter discusses relevant and salient literature on global policy, gender, education and development, and to understand policy contradictions and they can be avoided to help in the promotion of girls' education in Ghana. It draws on global policy implications on local practices to inform researchers on ways to harness tools availed by critical feminism to center the voices and experiences of girls in policy research. Micro level policy analyses drawn from critical feminism are not just liberating but serve as alternative approaches to mainstream policy discourses and practices. Madison (2005) posits that, recognizing and foregrounding the lived experiences of subjects provide researchers with a broader understanding of the "other" in the design, execution, and interpretation of the research study. The feminist approach to the study ensure the recognition and centering of female voices, stories and experiences in order to connect them with mainstream finding that usually suppresses female articulations. Critical researchers according to Madison (2005), sacrifice their subjective positions through self-reflections to engage the "Other" in dialogue to responsibly bridge the difference by presenting and interpreting the "other" in a just and humane manner.

In theory and practice, education policy like all other public policies has inherent contradictions in intentions and outcomes. Policies to reform and promote girls' education in Ghana are prone to unintended consequences especially when postmodern frameworks do not guide them. Feminist methods and analytical tools ensure that female voices and stories are included in policy research and analysis. The impact of education policy reforms on girls schooling experiences is best understood when the agency of girls is harnessed for

transformational purposes. The methods and tools offered by critical feminist policy analysis ensure that the stories, experiences and voices of girls are centered and privileged in policy research study.

The use of alternative or counter research approach to existing methods in which policies are framed and analyzed begins the transformation process. Mainstream policy practices that consistently failed to address gender disparities and biases in education will be resisted and challenged. These changes in education reforms do not happen overnight until hegemonic discourses and practices are neutralized and macro structures that restrict female equality in educational access, participation and opportunity are eradicated (Rose &Tembon, 1999).

Collins Anim (2009) concluded that girls' educational problems in Ghana are complex and multifaceted and become intertwined in home, school, community relations, but which results from inadequacies in state-run programs. But this researcher sees a far more intricate relationship that extends from home through school, community, national and global boundaries. Solving the problem of girls' education will also have to draw on all influences if Ghana is to reach its target goal of quality education for all children by the year 2015. A strategic collaboration and partnership of government, international community, parents, educators, community, and researchers committed to engage and support reform programs are the surest way to change institutionalized structures and attitudes to foster gender equality in education.

In this process, the availability of finance resources is crucial for the success of gender equality programs. Funds are needed to undertake massive reforms, educate the population to create awareness of girls' education, construct and renovate schools, train teachers and provide instructional logistics. In all of these, lingering questions on challenges that girls encounter in schools must also be approached with investigations that candidly and accurately report on issues that are central and important to girls to improve their education.

CHAPTER FOUR – RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, DESIGN, AND PROCEDURES

Introduction

This chapter explains the research methodology, design, and procedure used in the collection and analysis of data in this study. Literature on research methodology, designs, and procedures indicate that the nature of the subject of inquiry, the focus of investigation, the purpose of study and specified questions all combine to shape the method(s) of investigation (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Hay, 2000). This study draws on a case study approach to collect and analyze data empirically. It also utilizes narratives in the reporting and presenting information and data collected on girls' educational experiences. Case study research includes a family of methods usually focusing on small sample sizes and with limited time (Padgett, 1998). Its procedures helps researchers gain a better understanding of human interactions (Marshall and Rossman, 1995) through iterative processes of "tacking" back and forth between the different components of the design to honor the purpose, theory, research questions, methods, and validity threats of the study (Maxwell, 1996).

The methodological underpinnings of this study require that the design centers girls' educational experiences in order to understand the influence of education policy on school discourses and practices in the Accra–Tema School districts of Ghana. Postmodern feminist methodology embraces "difference" and revolves around issues of gender, class, race, sexuality, etc. to provide theories that challenges and resists mainstream approaches. Feminist research also employs an array of methods to empower research participants (Adomako-Ampofo et al, 2004; Reinharz, 1992). These methods usually include focus group discussions, interviews, participant observation, oral history, autobiography, content or textual analysis, and ethnography studies. In all these methods, feminist researchers focus on women's socioeconomic and cultural relations with interactive and inclusive techniques that are not hierarchical, but, rather, based on detailed case studies that reciprocate the relations between the researcher and the research subjects (Gilbert, 1994).

It is the determination of the study to let the data collated from views and voices of girls speak as articulated by critical feminist traditions. This approach enables the researcher to document girls' lived experiences to understand how they cope at the margins of school culture. Examining girls' educational realities assures that: (a) their experiences are made visible and audible; (b) their experiences are presented from their own perspectives; (c) their views

complement as well as counter mainstream approaches; and (d) their collaboration with researchers would lead to the rethinking of education in the context of power relations (Maynard & Purvis, 1994). In essence, the feminist perspective adopted in the study helps to better understand the culture, meaning, and experiences of girls' daily realities in education (Stacki, 2008).

In this study, the primary data was gathered from interviews, photographs and observations. These qualitative data come from various sources including field notes, interview transcripts, documents, diaries, and journals (Wimmer and Domminick, 1997).The secondary data was collated from documents and literature on gender education policy and female schooling experiences. These multiple sources of data collection assured triangulation and in-depth knowledge about the phenomenon under investigations (Denzin and Lincoln 1994). The data collated was analyzed with critical feminist policy analysis in mind to uncover some of the challenges that perpetually marginalize girls in education.

The way forward is the adoption of a research approach that accommodates and includes the candid reflections, perceptions, and views of women and girls to unearth stories that have been left out by mainstream research. In this way, many of the obstacles and challenges that girls confront in education will be unraveled to offer accurate and precise account of girls' voices and stories that captures their educational experiences.

My Role and Position as the Researcher

As the only researcher in the study, I was solely responsible for the collection and analysis of data. It is therefore important that I foreground myself in relation to the role, interest and position in the research process. Researchers are cautioned not to impugn their personal values, beliefs, experiences, and biases onto the research process to avoid influence the data collection, analysis and conclusions of the study. Lincoln and Guba (1995) argue that, the advantage of human beings gathering data in a qualitative study is their ability to interact with the situation, respond to environmental cues, collect information at multiple levels simultaneously, perceive situations holistically, process data as soon as they are available, provide immediate feedback and request for verification of data, and explore atypical or unexpected responses. But, this is not always the case. As a male researcher investigating issues

concerning girls' education and using feminist methodologies, it is crucial that I declare my position and intentions for doing this research.

While, feminist research is neither limited to women alone, nor the prerogative of women researchers, nor only about female subjects, it makes sense that I state my position. Visweswaran (1997) makes it clear that "women should not be seen as the sole subjects, authors, or audiences of feminist research" (pp. 593, 594). My inclination and interests in feminist research and studies is due to a multiplicity of factors including my progressive leanings, academic work, personal interests, convictions, and experiences. These have shaped my very being and provided me with an unflinching desire for social justice, democracy, and gender equality in schools and society.

In as much as I recognize that most feminist research and scholarship is done by females, it does not diminish my interests and desire to undertake this research study, which is very dear to my heart. My educational experience as a student and teacher coupled with years of working outside the education arena, has imbibed in me a great sense of progressive thinking. I have strongly come to believe in fairness, equality and social justice as cardinal principles to transform society instead of binary positionalities based on gender, race, ability, or other markers of difference.

Transforming society from ingrained belief systems is a hard, tall order but small efforts like this project goes a long way to open up the conversation to reform the system. Coming from a Sub-Saharan African country, I have witnessed the intensity with which patriarchy and embedded socio-cultural practices perpetually subordinated all aspects of female lives.

In addition to having four sisters, a mother, aunties, and many other female relatives who by virtue of their gender were denied higher and better education, has continued to hunt me personally. While I was not privy to the cases of my mother and sisters' limited education, I sincerely think that I could be part of the solution. It is also my strong belief that for Ghana to attain mid level development status, female education must be given priority because it is only when gender equality, social justice, and democracy is fully embraced and practiced can the country see the fruits of development.

My progressive philosophy, position, belief, and inclination makes me a staunch advocate for gender equality and my hope is that this research study will bring a modicum of awareness to policy makers and stakeholders about the need to center female views, opinions and perceptions in educational conversations. It well documented that it is by education that women can be

emancipated and effectively participate in development processes of a country. Sadly, the lack of quality education for the majority of females in Ghana only perpetuates and widens gender and power inequalities and disparities, which is a recipe for sustained underdevelopment (World Bank, 2001). It is my fervent hope that this research is a token contribution as an educator both theory and practice to support the progressive agenda to transform Ghana's education.

As a Ghanaian and the fact that I lived and worked in Ghana for over 35 years before immigrating to the USA for graduate studies, also provides me with the dual lenses to better understand the cost–benefit analysis of female education in the USA and in Ghana. Prior to my arrival in the USA, I had obtained all my basic to bachelor level education in Ghana and also worked in various capacities such as a teacher, office manager, and program manager for a total period of fourteen years. The experiences I gained from these work environments being an elementary and secondary school teacher, and working with a nonprofit organization, gave me jitters about the deplorable state of girls' education in Ghana. My further education has afforded me the progressive lenses and social justice philosophical tools to pursue, fight, and promote female education in Ghana.

For me this is a moral issue and I hope that this research opens a new and uncharted approach to understanding the endemic problems that girls confront in schooling and bring some understanding among stakeholders about the urgency for further research and finding workable solutions to this canker. I am certain that this is achievable if the combined voices, forces and advocacy of men and women are trumpeted loud and clearly. Historical evidence has shown that everywhere that changes have occurred in issues relating to gender always have the efforts of committed men and dedicated women to bring about such remarkable changes.

Case Study

A case study according to Greene (2003) is one of several ways to do research intensively on a single group, incident, or community. A case study provides a systematic way of looking at events, collecting data, analyzing information and reporting the results from interviews, observations and documents that have been collected and collated. Stake (1995) views interviews as crucial in capturing multiple realities but Yin (2003) argues that multiple sources of evidence allow research investigators to address a broader range of historical, attitudinal, and behavioral

issues. The reliance on multiple sources of evidence ensures the convergence of findings or conclusions in a more credible way as it captures information from several different angles.

One cardinal principle of case study according to Yin (2003) is its viability in creating a case study database because the absence or lack of formal database for most case studies is their weakness. Yin therefore, encourages the use of the four components of a case study to generate such database. These include: notes (from interviews and observations), documents, tabulated materials (surveys, frequency counts), and narratives (open-ended answers to questions). Yin (1994) further argues that the greatest strength of case study is its ability to use "how" or "why" questions to inquire about contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little or no control" (p.153). He points to some weaknesses of case study to include the lack of rigor within some case study research, and the lack of time limits on the scope of case study, which sometimes lead to lengthy, unreadable documents. To forestall these limitations he advised that case study should devise strong advance plans for gathering observations and interview data.

The Study Area

The research study was done in the Greater Accra–Tema region of Ghana where the schools from which respondents were selected are located (see Appendix A). The Greater Accra Region is one of the ten administrative regions of Ghana which is sub-divided into six districts: Accra Metropolitan District, Dangme East District, Damgme West District, Ga East District, Ga West District and Tema Municipal District. The population of the region is about 2,905,726, and the land cover area is about 3,245 square kilometers (Ghana Statistical Services, 2000). According to Wimmer and Dominick (1997), researchers need to understand what is possible from a site and be certain that the site holds the potential for fruitful data collection.

This region has the capital city of Ghana, the central government, corporate head offices, state departments, and foreign missions. The Tema municipal area is the gateway of Ghana with sea port, commence and industrial facilities. The population for the region has doubled in the last decade because of internal migration from rural areas and other urban centers. The demography of the region is similar to any major city within the country, which is dense, but skewed by gender, socio-economic status and age.

My choice of the study area is due to familiarity and attachments to this region. Apart from growing up in this region, I attended all my schooling in this region. After graduation from

the University of Ghana, I was employed as a teacher at the primary, middle, and secondary school levels for about six years. I also worked as an office manager within the region for about nine years. In addition, I was one of the field assistant delegated by the ministry of education to collect and collate data on elementary schools before the FCUBE program was fully implemented. Against this backdrop, it is my hope that I will investigate this region to find out what the state of education is like after all these years. In short, the region is the most convenient and accessible study area for me to probe into the quality education for girls.

Finally, with the intention to return back to Ghana and work in the district, it is appropriate that I focus my attention on this region. My knowledge about the dismal state of girls' education over the years as a student and a teacher gives me the impetus to investigate this issue with the view of providing suggestions and recommendations for future school reforms. As the researcher, I hope to present my findings forcefully to bring into to policy conversation the need to reform schools toward gender equality in education.

Sampling Procedures

The selection of schools and participants for the research study was based on my convenience and familiarity with the school district. I had lived my whole life in the Tema municipality as a student, teacher, and worker before migrating to the USA for further studies, and so it was convenient to purposely select schools that I am familiar and comfortable with. My years of teaching at the elementary, junior high and senior high and alumni of the University of Ghana made my entry and immersion into the schools less difficult. I was fortunate that some of my former colleagues were still teaching in these schools and this provided the base upon which I developed the rapport and relations with other teachers and administrators of these schools.

However, before interviews sessions were conducted I visited the two schools I have purposely identified in each category of schools where respondents will be selected. I interacted informally with teachers and students to familiarize and discuss ongoing programs pertaining to student achievements and particularly, girls' education. I also spoke to the principals about my research and promised to get back at the appropriate time. Two schools were very familiar places that I easily accessed due to my past ties and hence purposively selected them to recruit respondents for interviews and do non participating observations.

Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling was used in selecting participants for the study. According to Merriam (1998), "Purposive sampling is based on the assumption that one wants to discover, understand and gain insights therefore, one needs to select a sample from which one can learn the most" (p.48). For Patton (1990) it is the process where subjects are selected because of some characteristic or when you want to access a particular subset of people. In this case boys were rejected because they do not fit the profile and the purpose in mind. Purposive sampling is non-probability and can be subject to bias and error since samples are selected in deliberate and non-random fashion to achieve certain goals.

In this case study, the researcher consciously selected the schools to do the research and also the girls to be interviewed for reasons stated already. Purposefully selecting girls ensures that only the views, opinions, and perspectives of girls about their schooling experiences are collected and analyzed. Purposive sampling is often used in pilot studies and its weakness is that it is difficult to make strong inferences or conclusions from samples. Patton (1990) however asserts that purposive sampling usually has intense rich information, reduces variations in sampling, simplifies analysis, ensures picking of cases that meet certain criterion for quality assurance, attract attention to the study, and make the study **c**onvenient as it saves time, money, and effort.

Purposive sampling is also known as criterion sampling because the researcher needs to set criteria on the basis of which respondents will be selected. Snowball, or chain sampling and stratified purposeful sampling were used because of the different categories of participants selected for the study. The stratified purposive sampling helped in the selection of specific number of girls from each educational level to contribute their experiences. The rationale for choosing stratified purposeful sampling was to avoid sampling from the same level of education that may hold similar perspectives.

Sampling from different levels of education helped to cross confirm data and information gathered from different perspectives within the schooling district. It also helped in the selection of broad information-rich participants whose input helped to illuminate questions and provide in-depth knowledge on issues under investigations. Snowballing was of importance since it helped in identifying other subjects. Patton (2002), asserts that "snowball sampling identifies cases of

interest from sampling people who know people who know people who know and what cases are information rich, that is, good examples for study and good interview participants" (p. 243).

Units of Analysis

In order to have a reasonable sample that represents all educational levels within the greater Accra–Tema school district, I conveniently and purposively selected one school from each school level. The schools selected include a Junior High school (JHS), a Senior High school (SHS) and a University from among all the public and private schools within the region. The particular schools selected are the University of Ghana located at Legon in Accra, the Chemu Senior High School located in Tema and the Tema First Baptist Junior High School also located in Tema. Aside interviews conducted with girls from these selected schools, I also engaged in non participating observations in the classrooms and at other extracurricular activities in these schools.

The Tema First Baptists School: is owned and operated privately by the Tema Baptists church, an affiliate of the Baptists Church incorporated of Ghana. The school was initially established as a kindergarten in 1986 and has since evolved to the level of junior high school. Currently, the school has a population 648 students composed of 380 girls and 268 boys. At the junior high level, the student population is 302 which comprise of 175 girls and 127 boys. There are 30 teachers in the school, but only 10 of them teach at the junior high school level. Out of the 10 junior high school teachers, 5 are females and 5 are males. The curricula that the school is based on are standards set by the Ghana Education Service which include: Mathematics, General Science, English, Ghanaian language, History, Social Studies, Technical and Vocational studies and Computer training. The performance of the school in the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) is rated among the top five percentile in the Accra-Tema school district.

The Chemu Senior High School: was established as a public school by the Ministry of Education in October 1982 as a co-educational institution to encourage day schooling, and to offset the rising cost of boarding education. Initially called the Tema Day Secondary School, the name was changed to Chemu secondary day school. It began with only 86 students and 9 teachers but the school has since outgrown its statute. In 2009, Chemu High school had a student population of 1, 763 comprising of 1009 boys and 754 girls. The teaching staff strength is 90 supported by 21 administrative staff.

In a short 25 years of Chemu high schools, it has become one of the top schools in the country due to the excellent academic performance of students. Currently, there are five curricula tracks offered at the school: General Science, General Arts, Technical, Home Economics and Visual Arts. The school encourages students to engage in extracurricular activities such as Science Club, Debating Club, Information and Technology Club etc to provide the forum for students to improve both their academic abilities and social skills.

The University of Ghana: was founded on August 11, 1948, as the University College of the Gold Coast upon the recommendation of the Asquith Commission on Higher Education of the British colonies. It was founded on the urging and efforts of Ghanaian scholars and politicians led by the late Dr. J.B. Danquah. It was initially affiliated with the college of the University of London, which supervised academic programs and awarded degrees. The University of Ghana gained full university status in 1961 when the College Council requested the Government of Ghana through legislation to change the University College into a University with the power to award its own degrees. It was after an International Commission had examined and recommended that University of Ghana was approved by an Act of Parliament on October 1, 1961 (Act 79).

The University of Ghana is the oldest and largest of the seven Ghanaian public universities in Ghana. According to the bulletin on the institutions website, the current enrollment is about 29,754 students representing male/female ratio of about 2:1. The breakdown in terms of programs is as follows: Post-Graduate students – 1,816; Bachelors Degrees – 26,154; Sub-Degrees – 1,784. International students currently enrolled in the University are also about 1142. Senior members engaged in research and teaching is about 865 with a senior administrative and professional staff totaling about 128.

Even though the original emphasis of the university was liberal arts, social sciences, basic science, agriculture, and medicine, successive educational reforms have expanded the curriculum to also provide technology-based and vocational courses as well as postgraduate training. The University campus is located at Legon, about twelve kilometers northeast of Accra but its medical school located at Korle (also a suburb of the city of Accra) has also been upgraded to a teaching hospital.

Participant Selection

Only female students were purposively selected and interviewed to share their day-to-day schooling experiences. Five girls from each educational level were interviewed. The girls from the JHS level were between the ages of 13 and 15 years, those from the SHS level were between 16 to 18 years of age, and those from the university were 21 and 28 years old. The availability and preparedness of these girls and young women for interviews was taken into consideration. At the JHS and SHS levels the teachers were very helpful in identifying and recommending girls from which I did my selection. My selection was based on the ability of girls to articulate and understand the questions and speak eloquently in English. I selected only five students each at the JHS and SHS among the lists of students who were prepared to participate in the study. The girls I selected were among the smartest in academic work and were also very comfortable with their communication skills.

At the University, I was able to contact students and recruit participants with the help of a former colleague who currently lectures at the University of Ghana. I initially contacted the few students through telephone calls before I met them in person. When they agreed in principle to be part of the study, we agreed on a date and time to conduct the interviews. At the first contact, I described the purpose of the study and asked them if they were interested in participating in the study. Due to busy schedules and the pressures of approaching examination week, only two agreed to the interview. However, these two ladies, whom I interviewed earlier, were able to refer me to other students. This snowball effect helped to get three more respondents for my interviews. Initially, I had about eight university students who were prepared to participate but due to time constraints, resources and scheduling difficulties, I was finally able to get the number of respondents I needed for interviews.

Ideally, it would have been desirable to interview diverse members of the school community such as boys, parents, teachers and administrators. But, since the intention of the study is to unravel schooling experiences pertinent to girls, it was appropriate to focus only on this target group.

Collection of Data

Collection of data for the study came from both primary and secondary sources. Data collection is an important but time-consuming process in any research study. The primary data

was collected from in-depth semi-structured interviews and discussions conducted with 15 female students. I also conducted ten different non-participating observations in classrooms and during extracurricular school activities. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) defined a semi-structured interview as a mix between a structured and an open-ended interview. I used structured questions form the focus of the interview but the tone of the interview is conversational. The interviewee was encouraged to provide additional information that may or may not be addressed in pre-determined questions, and this allows the researcher to probe further.

Borg and Gall (1989) noted that

> semi-structured interviews have the advantage of being reasonably objective while still permitting a more thorough understanding of the respondent's opinions and the reasons behind them than would be possible using mailed questionnaires; ……and they are generally more appropriate for interview studies in education because it provides a desirable combination of objectivity and depth, and often permits gathering valuable data that could not have been successfully obtained by any other approach (P. 452).

Yin (2003) concurs with the fact that, the advantages of interviews are that, they are targeted with a direct focus, and they can lead to insightful and causal perceptions. On the other hand, he also cites several possible weaknesses such as bias due to the poor construction of questions, possible response bias, inaccuracies due to the poor recall of the interviewer. To check for such inaccuracies I conducted a member check with each interviewee.

The fieldwork began with a visit to schools that were purposely selected. I presented introductory letters from the department of education of Miami University to school principals indicating the purpose of the study and my institutional affiliation. A follow up visit was done to familiarize with teachers and students, and I also spent a lot of time in the school to build rapport, confidence and trust among students and teachers prior to interviews. According to Glesne and Peshken (1992), "Time is a major factor in the acquisition of trustworthy data. Time at research site, time spent interviewing, time to build sound relationships with respondents--all contribute to trustworthy data" (p.146). Even though I wish I could have spent more time on the school campus to do more classroom observations and follow-up on some of the stories I heard, my time was very limited.

I provided to students (especially those in the junior and senior schools) that I selected to participate in the interviews with letters to their parents and guardians stating the intent of the study and that it is voluntary, but needs parental consent. Participants were assured in writing

about their privacy, confidentiality and protection of identity. I pledged to participants to uphold the trust and be ethically responsible as required by Institutional Review Board (IRB). Respondents were also assured that the materials and information they provided as well as the observations I gathered during pre-interview visits as well as during interview discussions will be protected in a safe secured place under lock and key. I also promised them that that their identity would be anonymous and their names would not appear in anywhere of the dissertation. To validity my information in the data collection process, I decided to gather complimentary information from different sources, which includes interviews, observations and documents to ensure triangulation

Interview Protocols

Silverman and Atkinson (1997), assert that "we now live in an interview society" because of the extensive use of interviewing as a major technique to acquire information. An interview is basically a data gathering method in which there is an exchange of information (Dunn, 2000). Interviews involve face-to-face verbal exchange of information in which one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information or expressions of opinions and/or belief from another person or persons. It is not merely the exchange of questions and answers but a process where two or more people are involved in the exchange of ideas through collaborative efforts (Fontana & Frey, 2005; Atkinson & Silverman, 1997).

Fontana and Frey (2005), identifies five main types of interviews. These are structured interviews, unstructured interviews, group interviews, postmodern interviews, and gendered interviews. Three of these interview types, structured, unstructured, and semi-structured interviews (Dunn, 2000), are categorized based on the way the questions are framed. Structured interviews are made up of pre-established questions with a limited set of response categories (Dunn, 2000; Fontana & Frey, 2005). There is generally little room for variation in the responses and the questions are always asked in the same way and in the same order with each respondent. Unstructured interviews are more of a discussion. Typically, the questions asked in an unstructured interview are open-ended questions which seek to generate an in-depth discussion, often at the discretion of the interviewer (Malinowski, 1989). The interviewer uses follow-up questions to elicit detailed answers to the topic being discussed. This type of interview tends to be informant focused as the respondents do most of the talking with the interviewer eliciting for

elaboration or clarification. An example of unstructured interview is oral history and individual in-depth interviews.

Semi-structured interviews take a middle position between the structured and unstructured types of interviewing. This type of interviewing has some degree of pre-established questions but still ensures some flexibility in the way questions are asked and answered (Hay, 200). Fontana and Frey (2005), argue that in each of these types of interviewing there is still an element of structure to some extent because there is always a setting, identified informant, moderation of the questions to elicit the desired responses, and also responses can clearly be discernible. Each of these types of interviews has its own strengths and weakness. A combination of two or more of the interview methods in a research process will be very effective to generate the desired information in a detailed process.

To investigate the schooling experiences of girls, detailed semi-structured interview discussions were conducted with fifteen (15) students (see Appendix B). Before every interview session, respondents under the age of eighteen years were made to provide their signed parental permission and consent forms in accordance with IRB stipulations (see Appendix E). For ethical reasons the researcher ensured that questions did not harm the feelings of interviewees by asking questions that only sought to extract information on issues relating to school and classroom experiences. The interview questions and discussions only centered on female students' perceptions, opinions and understanding of their schooling situation. English is the official language and medium of instruction in Ghana so there was no need for a translator.

Prior to each interview session participants signed informed consent forms and were made to understand that they are at liberty to refuse to answer any question and/or withdraw completely from interviews at anytime (see Appendix C). The interview sessions were conducted at specified locations that were convenient and agreed upon between researcher and respondents. The maximum time spent on each interview was two hours. Questions were clearly stated and the researcher sometimes provided clues and cues to aid understanding of questions for in depth response. Respondents were allowed enough time to answer every question exhaustively and were also encouraged to call on the researcher at later date to either add or retract any information they have previously given. Respondents signed permission slips if they agreed to the researcher audio taping interview discussions before interviews proceed (see Appendix D). The researcher stayed in contact with all participants even after the interviews for an opportunity

to capture any additional information that might have escaped respondents during the interview discussion process. From the interview discussions the researcher double-checked with interviewees to verify the accuracy of the information recorded. The researcher was the only person responsible for transcribing the audio tapes and hence the confidentiality of respondents was assured.

Observations

Observation is described as the fundamental base of all research methods in social science. Observation is essential as it enables the interviewer to note the body language of the interviewee to obtain a complete picture of the situation, especially in studies that rely mainly on interview as a basic data collection technique (Alder & Alder, 1994). The Oxford English Dictionary defines observation as "an accurate watching and noting of phenomena as they occur." This definition implies that observation has unconstrained quality in whatever condition. Social scientists observe both human activities and social settings in which activities take place (Angrosino, 2005). Primarily, there are two types of observations in social science: participant observation and complete observation. Participant observation is closely associated with anthropology (Sanjek, 1990). It offers the researcher the opportunity to observe behavior through participation. In this process, the researcher takes part in whatever activity the respondents engage in and the presences of the researcher does not alter the natural behavior of the researched.

Complete or non participation observation is the type that the researcher just observes behavior, patterns, or trends in order to assign meaning to those observed trends, behavior, and patterns. In each of these types of observation the most important element is the ability of the researcher to pay attention and take notice of the details of the subject. Paying attention and taking notice of the details of the subject is an important tool for this research.

Gaining access to the social settings, community, and for this research the school environment can be challenging in research fieldwork. Phenomenon that takes place in public settings where anybody can have access to the space without interference is easy to observe while phenomenon that takes place in exclusive social settings usually require permission and for one to gain access to such social settings, it is usually through a gatekeeper (Kearn, 2000). A gatekeeper facilitates entry and helps to identify key individuals who can contribute to the research's agenda. The researcher keeps a record of the processes observed. Lofland and Lofland

(1995) refers to the recording of events in a research process as “logging data,” a technique that is important for remembering all the processes observed and also to attach meanings to data collected as body languages are also observed and recorded.

As a primary source of data collection, I engaged in non-participant observations of classroom and extracurricular activities in the schools. As an alumnus of the University of Ghana and former teacher at Chemu senior high school, the researcher was very much informed about the nature of the schooling environments and what goes on within them. According to Burns and Grove (1999) “observation is a fundamental method of gathering data . . . and the aim is to gather first hand information in a naturally occurring situation” (p. 358). As a non-participant observer, I did not take part in any of the activities observed including classroom lessons and other school activities. The best illustration of a non participating observer is perhaps the case of a researcher sitting at the back of the classroom or as a spectator of an event coding activities in every five seconds on verbal exchanges between the teachers and the students by means or about what was happening with structured set of observational rubrics.

In total, I did observations which include: six classroom and four extracurricular activities. At the Tema First Baptist JHS, I observed two classroom lessons in Social Studies and Mathematics, and also two general school activities at the canteen and a morning assembly session. At the Chemu SHS, I observed two instructional activities in English language and a science laboratory class on chemistry, as well as two general school activities on morning assembly and an athletic competition. At the University of Ghana, I observed one lecture on POLI 418: Politics of Identity in Ghana and also the celebration of a hall week.

During these observations I was able to capture and code recurring themes that were visibly evident in gender relations, engagements, interactions and participation. The overarching interest was to find out how female students cope and navigate themselves during these school activities. I attended and sat in each of the classes for the entire period that these lessons under observation lasted. In the JHS and SHS levels classes lasted for about forty minutes and at the University, the lecture was one hour twenty minutes. The extracurricular and school activities I observed on canteen breaks and morning assemblies lasted between twenty to thirty minutes. But, for the hall week celebration and athletic competition, I observed these activities for about one and half to two hours.

The school principals and teachers granted permissions before I did any observations at the JHS and SHS levels, and at the university I asked the lecturers' permission to sit in the class. Merriam (1991) suggested that, field notes based on observation need to be in a format that will allow the researcher to find the desired information easily. The format varies but a set of notes usually beginning with the time, place, and purpose of the observation is worthwhile. The different sources of observations combined provided in-depth information on the totality of girls schooling experiences.

Data Recording

Data recording is an important step toward effective data collection and analysis. Almost all the interviews were recorded using a tape recorder after permission was granted by participants. In certain instances, the researcher took notes alongside during the interviews and sometimes simply listened and took notes afterwards. The limitation with the use of audio voice recorder was its inability to capture important information that was observed. To address this limitation I often recorded such information in my field notebook and also took pictures. The field notes consisted of descriptions of participants, description of the school physical settings, observations, accounts of particular events and activities to provide explanations of my interactions with respondents (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996). Using questions such as "Who was observed?" "How many people were involved?" and "What was going on?" are helpful guides for intentional observation. This guide helped a lot in the documentation of important events that were observed (Fraenkal & Wallen, 1996).

I also had a personal diary in which I recorded my reflections and thoughts about the field experience. This diary helped me to distinguish between my observations and personal opinions or reactions of an event. Also, a periodic review of reflection notes is useful in reducing biases about accounts and experiences reported by participants. This technique was quite helpful in sorting out contradictions in observations and information provided in the literature and from interviews.

In the field notebook, I recorded key words and phrases while I was in the field and also noted the sequence in which a situation occurred. However, I ensured that I recorded the time and place in my notes, (such as the date, time and location of observations) and when necessary duplicated notes for safety reasons (Berg, 2001). Taking field notes helped me to increase the

accuracy of my data collection, and thereby increased the validity of the study. I was careful to record data directly and immediately as the incidents occurred in order to reduce the possibility of forgetting important information and also providing a means for further probing.

Documents

Secondary data were mined from the literature and documents acquired from a variety of sources including the Ministry of Education, Ghana Education Service, library, newspapers and brochures on female students' educational experiences. Stake (1995) acknowledged that gathering data through the study of documents should follow the same line of thinking as observation or interviews. This is crucial especially when the potential usefulness of different documents is estimated in advance and time allocated for its study is judiciously spent (p. 57). Further, the research questions should be carefully developed in advance so that appropriate documents and materials could be sought for the research to stay on focus and on track.

However, the reliance on documents has its limitations in case study research. Stake (1995) noted that because documentary data have not been adequately developed for research purposes, some of the materials that are available may be incomplete for research purposes. Stake was also clear that, sometimes whether they are personal accounts or official documents, the sources may not provide representative samples. This happens because some documents were not produced for research purposes and that the information available comes to the researcher in a form he does not fully understand. In short, such data may not fit within the concepts under scrutiny and hence may not correspond with the conceptual model of the study (Stake, 1995).

These limitations notwithstanding, the strengths for sourcing documentary data are that, documents of all types are very helpful to researchers as they uncover meaning, develop understanding, and discover insights that are relevant to the research study. Also, documents may address some of the problems being sought even though, they may not have been written with a particular research agenda in mind. Merriam (1991) however asserted that, while documents are usually produced for reasons other than research and therefore are not subject to the limitations that apply to interviews and observations, they are in fact a ready-made source of data easily accessible to the imaginative and resourceful investigator (p. 87).

Photography

Photography is a technique of data collection which has successfully been used by researchers in many research studies. The two basic uses of photograph in research are (a) the use of still photographs as methodological tool in social science research and (b) the use of photography as means of presenting social research (Schwartz, 1989). The use of still photography as a medium of data collection tool has successfully been applied by researchers like Caldarola, (1985); Wagner, (1979); and Becker, (1974).

The use of photography to present data or support data analysis is what is important to this research project. Photographs are supposed to be a replica of a real situation in an unmediated and unbiased way. According to Clancery (2001), it is the best means of recording, keeping and presenting data. Indeed, using photographs as a means of presenting data is an important way of trying to depict the data in its nature setting. Rose (1997) and Crang et al. (1997) used photography extensively to explore the relationship between the construction and analysis of visual representation of place. Images from photographs, according to them, help to shape people's understanding of culture. Haywood (1990) also argues that "photographs are highly important because they reveal something about us…..how we see and interpret the world and people and places in it, and all the meanings and associations we conjure" (p. 25). In this sense, photographs can be used as a technique in research to provide a fluid and fruitful context for understanding and presenting data gathered.

This technique was used in the research because it provides the partial picture of the reality and reduces the epistemological gap between lived experiences of those under study and subsequent interpretations provided by the researcher (Markwell 2000). From this point of view, photographic analyses are legitimate ways of acquiring and presenting data.

Triangulation

The main reason why interviews, non participant observation, documents and photography were used in the study was to ensure triangulation and validate my data gathering processes. According to Berg (2001), "triangulation does not merely involve a combination of different data collection methods; rather, it is aimed at relating the different methods in order to counteract the threats to validity identified in each method" (p. 5). The opinions and views collected from respondents' at all three educational levels were added to observations and

documents to identify common trends and emerging themes. On the use of triangulation, Patton (2002) concluded that, "some studies inter-mix interviewing, observation, and document analysis. Others rely more on interviews than observation and vice versa. Still there are studies that use multiple methods in which different types of data provide for cross-data validity checks (p. 248)."

Analysis of Data

Organizing, transcribing, analyzing, and making sense of available data sets from qualitative research poses special challenges for students. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2003) qualitative data analysis is "working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others" (p. 145). It is the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the mass of collected data (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). Data from interviews, observations, and documents are usually voluminous and therefore needed arrangement, categorization and reduction to make sense to readers.

The following shows the step by step procedures I used in constructing meaning from the data gathered for the study. I co-opted the procedures provided by Carol M. Roberts' (2004) in her book titled, *The Dissertation Journey: A Practical and Comprehensive Guide to Planning, Writing, and Defending Your Dissertation.* This instructional guide was important in regards to how I organized, analyzed and interpreted my data. Her five-step procedures are:

Step 1: Transcription and Initial Reading of Transcription

In this first stage, I ensured that data from all 15 audio interviews, non-participant observation, and documents that I have retrieved were transcribed. I also added data that I had from the field notes, diary on my reflections from field experience and transcribed them. This copious data provided me with a lot of information which I decided to cut, paste, sort, code, and categorize them in the analysis process. It was very useful that I transcribed all the data by myself and also prioritized the importance of the different sets of data available in regards to their quality and for possible coding to identify emerging trends and themes.

I began by reading all the transcripts thoroughly to identify themes, patterns and categories to string them with responses, observations and documented notes. The data from interviews, field observations and documents were very useful for describing and explaining the phenomena rather than measuring and quantifying data (Johnson et al., 2000). The data

transcription ensured that themes were grouped into categories from which meaningful explanations emerged (Wimmer and Dominick, 1997).

Step 2: Coding and Categorization of Responses

In the second stage, I ensured that all transcribed materials were coded with different colors and tied them to the research questions. This enabled me to retrieve and categorize the data into simple and less cluttering form. According to Patton (2002), unless there is some sort of classification and categorization of raw data, "there is chaos and confusion" (p. 463). For Merriam (1998) coding "is nothing more than assigning some sort of shorthand designation to various aspects of your data so that you can easily retrieve specific pieces of the data" (p. 164).

With each research question assigned to a short phrase and a color code, I highlighted responses as I read through the transcripts and allocated corresponding color code and phrase. After going through all the transcripts and coding every possible response, I categorized and grouped the responses according to the color code. In many instances, there were more than one color codes for each research question. This was because, there are several themes that emerged or were identified under each research question. Qualitative descriptive methods allows for comparing and contrasting coded responses within and between categories and groups. Hence, each selected theme and coded responses were tabulated so that conclusions could be drawn from observed patterns.

I also found Chi's method of coding and analysis of verbal data which consists of the following eight functional steps very informative: (1) Reducing the data; (2) Segmenting data into units; (3) Categorizing; (4) Operationalizing evidence (for coding) in the coded data; (5) Depicting coded data; (6) Seeking pattern(s) and coherence; (7) Interpreting the pattern(s); and (8) Repeating the whole process if necessary. During this process, different colors of markers were used to mark predominant themes and patterns. The frequency counts were also done to tally the number of times certain ideas were stated in different interviews. Interview responses of students from different levels of schools were coded in different colors to distinguish one from another within emerging themes. Additionally, Chi's (1997) verbal analysis method was also employed because it is a method for qualifying the subjective or qualitative coding of the contents of verbal utterances that the researcher has tabulated and counted in order to draw relationships between the occurrences of different kinds of utterances and reduce the subjectiveness of qualitative coding.

Step 3: Organization of Patterns and Themes

At the third stage, I looked for patterns and themes to tie to research questions and the theoretical framework by sorting highlighted codes. According to Bell (1998), "a hundred separate pieces of interesting information will mean nothing to a researcher or a reader unless they have been placed into categories…groupings, patterns and items of particular significance" (p. 137). According to Chi (1997), the method of coding and analyzing is the most appropriate means to analyze interview responses and generate pattern from responses of participants. I was able to organize and reduce the data into segments or units to categorize into coherent patterns and themes that emerged from the verbal analysis and triangulate them with observations and documents. The clear emergent themes allow analysis to validate other sources of data to confirm or deny research findings to others findings.

Qualitative interpretive analysis was also used to ensure "thick descriptions" (Geertz, 1973) and to explain the context within which girls experiences manifest in schools. The conclusions drawn were teased out of patterns that emerged from the themes and categories identified. This technique helped to unravel similarities and differences among girls' within and between educational levels. The patterns that emerged from responses and observations were related to theories, concepts and models for greater understanding of the situation and experiences of girls. Girls' narrative and voices were used in the write up to present the stories the girls tell forcefully and accurately without adding and taking anything out in the final report.

Step 4: Final Review of All Transcripts to Validate Patterns and Themes

At this stage, data were already organized so as to make sense and draw meaning out of the data. It was necessary that I read the transcripts several times again to complete the final coding and to validate my findings. During my review new codes, themes, and patterns that were identified were added to my findings. The data which was analyzed generated empirical explanations to questions that were posed and helped to make common-sense inductions (Wengraf, 2001).

Step 5: Completion of Data Analysis and Report of Findings

The last step in the data analysis process was to present the findings. And Chapter 5 presented the findings on the questions posed and how the data collected and collated answered these questions. I continually made comparison in the study's findings to relevant literature in order to ascertain whether the findings of the study is supported or contradicted in the literature

on girls' educational experiences (Roberts, 2004). The chapter also presents detailed findings of the study based on emerging themes, patterns, and categories that were derived during the data analysis process. The emerging themes were largely categorized and based on the research questions. It is important to mention that pseudonyms were used to maintain anonymity of all participants.

The interpretative and content analysis methods allowed me to see and treat social actions and human activities as texts or as a collection of symbols expressing layers of meaning (Berg, 2004, p. 266). This method may sometimes be laborious and time consuming because the narrative accounts should be presented in such a manner that ensured that researchers remain very close to the words of respondents with very minimum interpretations and not jumping to conclusions (Cookson, 1994).

Validity and Reliability

Maxwell (1996) describes validity in qualitative research as "the correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation, or other sorts of account" (p. 87). The researcher sought for validity by ensuring that trustworthy of the information is established with the students by listening not to what was to be expected or to be heard, but what students genuinely had to say. The researcher was cautiously alert not to impose personal interpretations of the events or let personal biases impact on the analysis of the data. A triangulation of methods (interviews, observations, documents, photographs) analysis helped to also insure validity and reliability of data.

Validity and reliability of the study was also achieved through comparing interpretations of what students of different education level said and what was observed and provided in documentary analysis. According to McMillan (1996), ensuring reliability in qualitative research is quiet different from that of a quantitative approach because rather than looking for consistency of behavior, qualitative researchers focus on the accuracy of their observations. Hence, reliability is the extent to which what is recorded as data is what actually occurred in the setting that was studied (P. 250).

Reliability is therefore improved by the use of detailed field notes, accurate comprehension and recording, use of audio tapes, use of participant quotations and literal descriptions, and an active search for discrepant data. In short, LeCompte and Pressler (1993)

points to qualitative research as a personal endeavor and that no investigator does research just like another (p. 341). The above discussions show that the study is evidently reliable.

Limitation of the Study

This study largely focuses on girls' educational experiences in the Greater Accra-Tema school district of Ghana. Since there are 110 districts in Ghana and 6 districts in the Greater Accra Region, the results of this study cannot be generalized to the whole of the Ghanaian population. Additionally, the participants involved in this study were not randomly selected and therefore, their views may not always be the true reflection of the entire schooling district. Even though, the participants of the study were not randomly sampled, the findings are important in our understanding of policy implications on girls' educational experiences. The study is a snippet of what happens to girls within the schooling environment and hence will take further research to confirm its gravity across the country.

Another limitation of the study has to do with the limited timeframe for the fieldwork. There was not sufficient time to either involve many more participants in the study or to do more follow-up interviews with participants. Again, the study did not collect opinions from other diverse groups and stakeholder such as teachers, administrators, and parents who would have brought different perspectives to the study. The two months on the field was not long enough to interact and observe more on girls' experiences in different settings. The time constraints of my academic schedule did not allow me to extend the period of my fieldwork. Limited budget enabled me to spend less time in Ghana on interviewing larger sample size as well as more classroom interactions and observations. Also, because most schools were preparing for the final examinations, many of the girls did not keep with their appointments for interviews.

Summary

The chapter described the methods and procedures that I used to investigate and study girls' educational experiences in the Greater Accra-Tema Region of Ghana. As a qualitative inquiry, I drew on feminist perspectives to unravel and present opinions and views of girls about their day-to-day experiences in schooling. Qualitative research entails approaches that ensured that interviews, observations, and documents are presented within the feminist approach to case studies. The feminist perspective ensures that girls' voices are centered in the study because their

voices and stories are often marginalized or missing in mainstream policy documents. The overarching intention of the study is to capture the opinions, views, and perceptions of girls through their own voices and narratives at three different educational levels within the Greater Accra–Tema District and in order to show the difficult situations girls find themselves in spite of all the educational reforms ongoing in Ghana. The next chapter presents detailed findings of the research study.

CHAPTER FIVE: RESULTS AND INTERPRETATIONS OF FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings and analyses collated from interview discussions conducted with 15 female students selected from Junior High, Senior High, and University. The analyses focus on narratives of girls' educational experiences conveyed in their own voices as they responded to semi-structured interview questions. Documents, observations, and photographs are also used to corroborate some of the issues raised by participants. The research objective is to understand girls' schooling experiences given the context of the gender specific education reforms policies including the FCUBE program. In this process, girls' stories, narratives, and voices are privileged in the analysis process and presented as an alternative lens to help policy makers and stakeholders in education understand the reality of girls' education in the Accra-Tema district.

The study also hopes to understand educational discourse and practices as perceived by girls to uncover disconnects in policy and practice. It brings to the forefront issues not addressed by reforms and provides the leverage from which changes could be effected to make education more gender friendly and responsive. As an alternative lens to mainstream policy analysis, it does not only unearth the silenced and marginalized position of girls, but also ensures that the voices of girls are centered in this policy conversation. To accomplish this study, girls' knowledge and understanding of ongoing educational reforms, opportunities, and challenges in school, classroom interactions, and relations were discussed.

This research is driven by a framework of progressive education (Westbrook, 1991). Thus, it is my duty and moral responsibility to ensure that the interview discussions, observations, and the stories that girls provided are presented accurately and forcefully. I therefore listened and observed attentively during the fieldwork, and was cognizant of my obligation to reflect and report accurately the stories and views girls told, the documents I read, the observations I did, and the photographs I took. I referred to other sources of literature on girls' educational experiences to find out if the stories and findings are consistent with or different from other researches.

The main research question was, "Given the recent efforts to improve girls' education through comprehensive policy reforms in Ghana, how do girls make sense of their formal schooling experiences in relation to their knowledge of policy reforms, opportunities, challenges,

interactions and relations with teachers and peers within the Tema – Accra school district of Ghana?"

Portraits of Participants

While the core objective of the study is to understand girls' educational experiences, it is also intended to empower and provide girls with the opportunity to speak to issues that concern them as they navigate the schooling environment. Generally, girls given such platforms to tell and narrate their own stories become empowered and privileged to articulate the challenges, opportunities, and other issues without the fear of being intimidated. There were 15 participants purposively selected from three school levels. Five each were selected from the Junior High School (JHS), the Senior High School (SHS) and the University (U), to tell their own stories about their day-to-day schooling experiences. The five girls selected from the JHS level were aged between 13 and 15 years, the five from the SHS level were between 16 to 18 years of age, and the five from the university were between 20 and 25 years old. A brief description of their background is provided in the following section.

Junior High School Participants

The five girls purposively selected for interviews came from the Tema First Baptist Junior High School. These girls were among the brightest, smartest, and dedicated students in the school according to the principal who was instrumental in identifying these participants. The parents of these girls gave their approval by signing the consent forms before any contacts were made with participants. For the purposes of anonymity, I refer to participants with pseudonyms: Abena, Araba, Afua, Adjoa and Ama. They were all residents of the Tema Metropolitan Area.

Abena is a 14-year-old girl and resides with both parents and two siblings in Community 6 suburb of Tema, which is about a mile from the school premises. Abena's father is a public servant working with a government institution and her mother is a bank clerk with a leading financial institution based in Accra. Abena sees her parents as very supportive of her education and hopes to study hard to become a lawyer in the foreseeable future. She was pleased that her parents provide for her educational needs and were also very involved in her day-to-day schooling progress.

Araba is 15-years-old and the only child of her parents. She lives with both parents in Community 5, a suburb about a 20-minute walk from the school. Her father owns a Clearing and Forwarding Agency located near the Tema Harbor and her mother is involved in the distribution of imported consumer goods to many retail clients. Araba was very satisfied with her parents' involvement and support in her education because they pay for all her schooling needs. She is determined to excel academically to become a gynecologist in the near future.

Afua is 14-years-old and lives with her mother, stepfather, and three siblings in Community 2 suburb, which is about four miles from the school. Afua's stepfather is a police officer and her mother is an elementary school teacher. She was happy that her parents support her education, and as the oldest child she hopes to become a role model for her siblings by working very hard academically. Afua's wish is to gain admission into a good Senior High School and proceed on to become a pediatrician at the university.

Adjoa is 13-years-old and lives with her grandparents in community 5 suburb, which is within a walking distance to the school. According to Adjoa, since both parents are domiciled in the USA, she hopes to join them after graduation from high school. She was happy of the financial and moral support she receives from grandparents and parents. All her educational expenses, including the extra classes in math and science, are paid for. Her ambition is to study hard to gain admission into a college at the USA and become a journalist.

Ama is 13-years-old and lives with her uncle, his wife, and son in Community 10 suburb, which is about five miles from the school. She admitted not really knowing her birth parents since her father and mother both died in a fatal car crash when she was ten months old. She is grateful to her uncle and wife for the love, care, and support they provide her. Ama's uncle owns a building construction company and her aunt owns a wholesale distribution outlet dealing in everyday consumer goods. Ama hopes to graduate from college in business administration and help in the family business. By Ghanaian standard, the parents of these girls are either of the middle or upper class status and could afford private education, which are usually more expensive than the public option.

These brief portraits on girls selected from the Tema First Baptist JHS show the caliber of students selected for the research study, their socio-economic backgrounds, and the possibility of their chances of qualifying for senior high school education. All these girls were highly motivated with aspirations to pursue medicine, law, journalism and business administration at the

university. Araba for instance was the girls' head prefect. Afua was the assistant girls' prefect, and the others were model students with excellent academic and behavioral records. Evidently, all of them have parents who are capable and could afford a very expensive private education when compared to children attending public schools. My interactions and observations with these five students confirmed that they were very smart, candid, focused, and determined to achieve academically and to fulfill their future career goals. Three of the five girls interviewed were excellent students in science and math subjects and the remaining two were the top students in English and social studies.

All five girls were optimistic that they will excel in the upcoming Basic School Certificate Examination (BSCE) and will gain admission into highly rated senior high schools of their choice. They were also optimistic about the professions they want to pursue in the future and were grateful for the financial and moral support they receive from their parents and guardians. The socio-economic statuses of parents of these girls will obviously determine girls' future educational aspirations because education cost is getting more and more expensive as they move up the academic ladder. In addition, these will have to cope and navigate many challenges and obstacles prevalent in Ghanaian education that overtly or covertly stifle girls' access and participation in courses of their choice and general school and classroom activities. They will also have to confront systemic cultural attitudes of gender stereotypes in education that marginalizes their equal opportunities to achieve and graduate like their male peers.

Senior High School Participants

At the SHS level the five girls selected and interviewed were also high academic achievers. They are anonymously called in the study Effie, Esi, Emefa, Edem and Enyinam. All of them lived within the Tema Metropolitan Area and commute to school on a daily basis.

Effie is 16-years-old and in her first year at the Senior High School. She lives with her parents in Community 10, which is about three miles from the location of the school. She is the youngest and the only girl among her siblings. Her parents as well as her three older brothers provide her with the inspiration to succeed academically. Effie's three brothers are pursuing the following programs in the USA: Masters Degree in Chemical Engineering, Medicine, and Biochemistry respectively. Her father, a medical doctor, owns and operates a private hospital. The mother, who is a nurse, works with her father. According to Effie, her parents are supportive

of her academic development so that she can become a registered nurse and help with the family business in healthcare.

Esi is 18-years-old and in her final year at the SHS level. She lives with her mother and an older brother in Community 9 suburb, which is about ten miles away from the school. According to Esi, after the death of her father 10 years ago, her mother who is a nurse, has been responsible for her education. Her brother, who works with a leading commercial bank, also helps with tuition and school supplies. She hopes to become an electrical engineer to preserve her father's profession and memory.

Emefa is also 18-years-old and lives with parents and a younger sister in Community 8 suburb, about four miles from the location of the school. Her father operates a privately owned mini transport bus and her mother owns and operates a convenience store within the neighborhood. Emefa sees her parents as not rich, but very grateful for their support in her education. She was optimistic that her parents will support her to succeed in school so that she can in turn take care of them in the future. She points out that parents pay for her to attend extra classes in order for her to become the Laboratory Technician she so desires to be.

Edem is 17-years-old and lives with her mother's sister, her husband, and their three children. Her own parents reside in her hometown which is a village about 300 miles from where she is living now. Her aunt brought her to Tema so that she can get a good education. She lives in Community 4 and very close to the school, which is a five-minute to walk to school. Edem's auntie is a petty trader, while her husband is a pastor of a Pentecostal church. Both of them support her education and she is hopeful that her hard work will certainly help her to become a teacher in the future.

Enyinam is also 17-years-old and lives with her mother and two siblings in Community 7 suburb, which is about two miles away from the school. Enyinam's father died two years ago, which makes her mother the sole provider for the family. According to Enyinam, her mother sells fresh food produce in the central market to care for her schooling needs. She had to combine her school work with her house chores. Sometimes she has to go to the market to help her mother in selling her produce. She agreed that she had to struggle a lot in paying her tuition and other user fees. This notwithstanding, Enyinam is optimistic and determined to complete her Senior High School education and pursue a law degree at the university.

Some of these girls I can speculate will be vulnerable because of the socio-economic background of their parents and caregivers. The rising cost of higher education may prevent some of these girls to either opt for vocational training or other two year tertiary institutions. These five girls at the SHS are however, optimistic and determined to work hard in school to achieve their ambitions in spite of their parents' socio-economic status. It is obvious that Effie comes from a family with a higher socio-economic background will not be concerned so much about how to finance her college education. Apart from her, the rest of the students' backgrounds indicate that their parents and caregivers struggle a bit to meet the needs of their children.

Even though the school they attend is not one of the prestigious and expensive schools in Ghana, the school is increasingly becoming recognized for its academic excellence within the Greater Accra region. Many parents prefer their girls to attend a day school instead of boarding schools to monitor their progress in academics and social behaviors. Cynthia, in spite of her socio-economic situation, is the girls' prefect and the others are very serious students in the subjects they do. One important observation was that, irrespective of the socioeconomic background of these girls, they are talented, determined and confident that they will do very well in their final SHS examinations to pursue their individual dreams.

University Participants

The five university students interviewed were aged between 20 to 25 years. The pseudonyms assigned to them are Dede, Koikoi, Adarku, Koshie and Korkor. These ladies are confident and very articulate in expressing their views and opinions on education. All five ladies were in their senior year and due for graduation in Bachelor of Arts degrees in law, political science, sociology, geography and psychology.

Dede, a 23 year-old-lady lives with parents and two brothers in Kumasi, but has to travel about 150 miles to Accra for her college education. According to Dede, both of her parents work with the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly. Her father is an accountant and the mother a clerical officer. They have both been supportive of her education through the four years at the University. Dede majored in Geography and minored in Psychology and hopes to secure a job with either the government or private institution after graduation.

Koikoi is a 22-year-old woman who lives with her father, stepmother, and a sister on the university campus. Her father is a professor at the University and her stepmother is a partner of a

law firm. Koikoi, who majored in Political Science and minored in Communication Studies, is determined to pursue Law. She attributed her inspiration and determination to her parents who serve as role models and also support her morally and financially.

Adarku is also 22-years-old and lives with her mother and sister in a suburb of Accra called Madina. According to Adraku her father who was a lawyer died two years ago. Since then, her mother, a Program Manager for a Non Governmental Organization, has single-handedly catered to her education. As a law student she is determined to complete her two-year postgraduate studies to enable her work with a reputable law firm.

Koshie is 25-years-old and lives with both parents and two siblings in Community 12 suburb in Tema. According to Koshie her father is an accountant with a major investment bank and the mother who is a teacher by profession, is currently at home nursing her newly born baby brother. She majored in Psychology and minored in Sociology, and is determined to pursue postgraduate studies in Psychology to become a college professor in the near future.

Korkor is 24-years-old and currently lives with her grandmother in Labone, a suburb in Accra, because her parents are presently residing in the Great Britain. According to Korkor, her parents are very supportive in her educational quest. She regularly visits them during vacations and being the only child she received undivided attention from parents. Korkor majored in Mass Communication and minored in English, and is very determined to pursue a professional career studies to become a journalist and newscaster.

From the information provided, it is evident that the parents or caregivers of these ladies are able to support them in their university education. Some of the participants lamented that their parents are not able to give them more than the minimum funds needed to cater for tuition and residential user fees. Others, however, said that their parents provide them with funds that are always in excess of the amount they need to pay university expenses. They are therefore able to use the extra monies to buy other luxuries that make their stay at the university more pleasant and comfortable. The issue of socio-economic disparities again is very critical for girls' education in Ghana and that, many girls from poor backgrounds are usually vulnerable to higher education because their parents and families cannot afford. The government backed social security loan program for students is the only source for poor students to harness funds for their education but that too is not enough to cover all the expenses of students.

Summary

The profile was intended to give a brief overview of the socio-economic backgrounds of the girls interviewed and seek for their educational and professional aspirations. The discussions above strongly show a pattern of girls at the basic level overwhelmingly determined to pursue sciences. However, as they move higher on the educational ladder something happens that makes most of the girls shift from their initial aspirations in science to more liberal arts courses. This pattern is shown in this profile with more JHS girls opting for science, this gradually reduces at the SHS level and at the University almost all of them were into liberal arts. This observation is crucial to our understanding of what girls' experiences in terms of choices available to them and also, the perceptions they have of their curriculum and schooling environment. The following findings and discussions help to unravel and also peak our understanding of the nuances of girls schooling experiences.

Knowledge and Understanding of Education Reforms

As I have articulated in earlier chapters this study intends to examine girls' knowledge and perception of ongoing educational reforms including the FCUBE program which was developed on the basis of three cost components:

- To improve the quality of teaching and learning through the review and revision of teaching materials, new measures on teacher incentives, and a focus on in-service teacher training.
- To strengthen management of education at the central and district level offices; and
- To improve and encourage girls access to participate in primary education (Ministry of Education, 1996).

To access this information the first research question posed to participants was: *What is your knowledge and understanding of the FCUBE and ongoing education reforms, and how have they affected your education?* This question solicited response on girls' knowledge and perception about the FCUBE and school reforms to unravel policy effect on their education. Table 5.1 show the number of participants who responded to knowing about FCUBE and ongoing educational reforms.

Table 5.1: Knowledge of FCUBE and Education Reforms

Response	JHS	SHS	University	Total
Yes	**5**	**3**	**5**	**13**
No	**0**	**2**	**0**	**2**
Total	**5**	**5**	**5**	**15**

(Source: *Fieldwork, 2009*)

Table 5.1 shows that 13 out of the 15 respondents had knowledge of the FCUBE program and other school reforms. Quizzed further to explain their knowledge and awareness, they unanimously responded that the FCUBE is a public education program. Two respondents at the SHS level responded that they did not have any knowledge of what FCUBE was all about and not aware of any ongoing educational reform programs. It was evident that although many of the girls were aware of the FCUBE program in particular, they could not provide substantive in-depth knowledge and understanding of what the policy provisions were and how these provisions affect their schooling experiences.

Among the 13 girls who had some knowledge of FCUBE, the five participants at the JHS level responded that the policy does not directly benefit them because they attend a private school. Responses from the three SHS and five college students also indicated that the FCUBE and other reform programs have been beneficial to them. On hindsight, there are ample reasons to conclude that many of these respondents had limited knowledge and understanding of what these reform programs were all about. The limited knowledge of girls about school reform programs can be attributed to the lack of information from the ministry and departments of education responsible for disseminating policy provisions to students and citizens of the country. Many of the girls indicated that the core of their knowledge and awareness of ongoing school reforms was gained from brief mention by teachers in social studies lessons and hearing about it from the news media (Newspaper, TV and Radio).

Even though some of the girls agreed to have attended private schools, which do not benefit from free tuitions and textbooks made available by the FCUBE program in public education, they acknowledged the progress in girls' enrollment in schools. They also added that changes in the education climate with more people attending school has brought about keen competition in academic performance and admissions into top notched educational institutions

around the country. Girls, in particular, would not only have to compete among themselves but with boys on order to gain admissions into schools of their choice.

While the assertion by some respondents that attending a private school denied them of the opportunity to benefit from free tuition and school supplies are true, it is also true that all schools, whether private and public, benefit one way or another from policy provisions that regulate and standardize education in Ghana. Even though private schools may not directly benefit from free tuition and school supplies they benefit from the curriculum, syllabus, instructional materials, teaching pedagogy, standardized tests and administrative procedures that are required by law for the operation of schools in Ghana.

According to a Ministry of Education (1998) document, Article 39 of the Ghanaian constitution mandates specific divisions within the Ministry of Education to regulate sectors of the education system. These include the Ghana Education Service which regulates and administers pre-university education; the National Council on Tertiary Education; the National Accreditation Board; the National Board for Professional and Technician Examinations (NABPTEX); and the West African Examinations Council (WAEC), which is responsible for developing, administering, assessing and evaluating standardized examinations for all JHS and SHS school whether private or public.

The implication is that every educational institution (private or public) are mandated to follow the set guidelines, regulations and standards articulated by the Ministry of Education. While children in private schools may not be aware of these indirectly benefits there is strong indication that ongoing reforms have changed the educational landscape in students enrollment, and achievement, teachers' responsibility, curricula expectations, community involvement and school administration accountability.

While indirect benefits of ongoing reforms may not be seen or understood by private school students, the regulations and guidelines in both public and private schools provide the framework for effective academic and social skills development for children. Respondents were therefore unable to effectively connect and justify how the policy has affected them in one way or the other. In general the girls were very appreciative of the bold step the government has taken to ensure that many more girls and poor children are offered the opportunity to have at least basic education.

Responses from further probe into girls understanding of reform program and how it has impacted education is show in Table 5.2 to illustrates and capture their perceptions of the FCUBE program. The table shows the number of girls who responded to particular themes.

Table 5.2: Girls Understanding of FCUBE and School Reforms

Responses	JHS	SHS	U	Total
Promote education and help children to go to school	4	3	5	12
Assist the poor and less privileged children with public education	5	3	5	13
Increased enrollment of children especially girls in schools	4	3	5	12
Provide free tuition, textbooks and uniforms for public school children	4	3	4	11
Help parents and caregivers to get involve in children's education	0	0	4	4

(Source: *Fieldwork, 2009*)

As shown on Table 5.2, twelve of the fifteen respondents saw the FCUBE and reform programs as an attempt to promote education by offering opportunity for every child to be in school. Thirteen girls responded that the program assist the less privileged and poor children especially in rural areas of Ghana with education. Twelve of them said that the FCUBE policy has led to increased school enrollment for children and especially for girls. Eleven of the respondents said that, they understand FCUBE to provide free tuition, textbooks, and uniform for especially the rural poor. Only four respondents from the university identified the program as encouraging parents to partake and be involved in the education of their children.
Adjoa, who is a JHS student, articulated the following as her understanding of FCUBE:

> "The FCUBE is an education program administered by the government for all children in public schools. It is in accordance with the children's act 1998, which promotes the right to education and well being. And that no person shall deprive a child access to education. This program is to enable every child of school going age to have access to basic education, and also help to achieve the twenty first millennium goal."

When participants were asked to connect the implication of FCUBE reforms on their education, the following responses were collated. All the girls at the JHS were not able to connect or draw any meaningful relationship between the reform programs and their education because they felt that they have not beneficiaries. They insisted that they do not benefit in any way from the FCUBE program because the program was specific to public schools and not

private schools like the one they attend. With their limited knowledge on the provisions of the reforms they were also unable to connect the changes that have occurred within their schooling environment to FCUBE and hence their experiences.

For example, within the broader educational system, the JHS girls were not able to identify the replacement of the former 17 years pre-tertiary education with the present 14 years pre-tertiary education. They were also unable to identify the many changes in school curriculum, teaching practices and other changes that make schools function effectively and efficiently. They failed to connect the fact that students in both private and public schools use similar curricula offerings, take the same BCCE examination, and are held to same responsibility, accountability and expectations. The difference here is that private schools are more expensive to attend and parents who can afford to pay do so in expectation of quality teaching, instructions and excellent academic performance. Parents of public school students are usually from poor socioeconomic backgrounds and have no choice but enroll their children in public school to access the support from government.

In sum, the perceptions and understanding of girls at the JHS level on the FCUBE program is limited. The conclusion I draw from this analysis is that these JHS girls have not had adequately informed about policy provisions for them to understand the indirect benefits that the program provides. Institutional changes and regulations that have occurred to transform the educational landscape such as increasing students' enrollment and achievement, teaching responsibilities, curricula expectations, community involvement and school accountability could not be captured by these girls. The girls are however justified for not knowing that much about indirect policy implications on their education since it is the responsibility of the sector ministry to educate every member of the society about ongoing education reforms and their benefits for both private and public schools.

When the three respondents at the SHS level who knew about the FCUBE program were pressed to explain how the program impacts them, they responded that it has definitely helped to improve girls' enrollment and education in Ghana. They pointed to evidence in their various classrooms where the numbers of girls to boys have narrowed considerably. My personal observation in a science class confirmed their assertion when I counted 18 girls and 22 boys. The assistant school principal provided me with data on total school enrollment and subject offerings

based on gender. I was impressed when I found that the gender gap has narrowed considerably with student enrollment of 1015 boys and 854 girls.

At both the JHS and SHS sites, the number of girls doing science, math, and technical subjects has increased and many of them plan to pursue them at the tertiary levels. It was obvious that many of the girls interviewed at the JHS and SHS levels were enrolled in math and science subjects and this has given them confidence and respect from teachers and male peers. The trend of girls' enrollment into math and science can also be attributed to changes in curriculum brought about by school reforms. The changes in the curriculum ensure that every student at the JHS and SHS level take a core science and math as a requirement for graduation.

All the five respondents from the university responded to have some knowledge and understanding of the FCUBE program. While they all agreed that FCUBE is a government program aimed at improving education for all children, they also pointed out that it is free and compulsory to those in public schools. They mentioned that the program has indeed encouraged more girls to enroll into schools than it was previously.

The sentiment to capture this was expressed by Dede when she said:

> "During my schooling years at the basic level, I was not even aware of the existence of the FCUBE program until I became a teacher during my national service. It was that time that I learnt a lot about the FCUBE program. The program encourages people to go to school especially girls. This is because many Ghanaians in the past did not place much emphasis on women's education. At that time, they taught education was not for women and so, did not see why money should be spent or wasted on the education of girls. But, since the introduction of the free education, a lot of people and parents are encouraged to send their girls to school."

All the five respondents at the University acknowledged that the free and compulsory component of basic education has allowed many boys and girls whom otherwise may not have had the opportunity to get education to be in school. Many parents who are not able to afford the rising tuition cost of education can now send their children to school. They recognized that the free tuition, textbooks and school uniforms aspect of the program has been of great benefit to many poor parents in Ghana. Adarku thinks that the government has done well in raising public awareness about the importance of education in general.

She said:

> "The FCUBE program has encouraged many poor parents to send their children to school free of charge. Initially, the program provided only free tuition but as time

> passed, the government realized that it was still a financial burden for many parents, so the government decided to provide for free textbooks, uniforms and school supplies. Recently, the government has also added free lunch for children in school. I am sure that these are all incentives designed to increase enrollment in public schools."

In addition to some of the issues participants have elucidated, documentary records obtained from the Ghana Education Service show that the FCUBE program and other reforms have had positive impact on school enrollments at every level of education, and most importantly for girls. The Girls' Education Unit handbook (2006), point to increases in enrollment recorded after the implementation of the Capitation Grant (CG). The report documents positive increases in enrollment brought about by the fact that every child enrolled in public school received approximately $3 per year to help pay for incidental school expenditures that was not covered under free tuition and free textbooks provided by the FCUBE program. The Capitation Grant specifically pays for students' expenditure on extra levies and fees charged by school districts and which many parents are unable to afford. Table 5.3 below shows the enrollment figures during and after the introduction of the Capitation Grant at the basic level of education.

Table 5.3

Enrollment Figures after Capitation Grant

Sex	2004/5	2005/6	Increase	Percentage
Girls	1,754,539	2,075,864	321,325	18.31
Boys	1,943,909	2,239,023	295,114	15.18
Total	3,698,448	4,314,887	616,439	16.67

Source: Girls Education Unit, 2006

As indicated in the table, the total enrollment for boys and girls increased by 16.67 %. The percentage increases for girls and boys between 2004/5 and 2005/6 were 18.31% and 15.18% respectively. While the Capitation Grant cannot solely determine or be responsible for increases in students' enrollments, it has definitely contributed to the improvements that policy analysts can capitalize on to draw positive correlations and conclusions.

In actual fact, enrollment figures alone cannot be used as yardstick to draw conclusions on school improvements or on girls' education. Other salient factors must be considered as equally crucial for achieving gender equity in education. Increasing girls' enrollments is a part of the process but after girls' are enrolled into schools their stay and completion id dependent on

school discourse and practices that ensure gender inclusiveness as an integral part of school culture. That is, teachers must be trained to be sensitive gender issues in instructions, attitudes and relations in order to respond to the needs of girls in particular. The school curriculum must be redesigned to include and respond to issues of women and girls so that they can identify with it. The schooling environment in general should be made more gender friendly by providing facilities and amenities that support and encourage girls to learn and achieve.

While the data in Table 5.3 may offer credible quantitative insights into progress made in girls' enrollments, they do not necessarily tell us about the experiences and challenges girls encounter in schools. The figures do not show girls' academic performance, attendance, promotion or retention, or how these variables impact on their schooling experiences. According to Saihjee (2004), enrollment figures become effective indicators for universal education when accompanied with regular school attendance by children. It is known that, while erratic and discontinuous attendance cannot compare to dropping out of school, they are known to have serious long-term implications like poor academic performance and intellectual capabilities, which can subsequently lead to increased school dropouts (p. 202). In effect, care must be taken to avoid unnecessary reliance on enrollment statistics alone to draw important conclusions because they may not provide adequate data and information for understanding girls' educational experiences and improvements.

Furthermore, one cardinal objective of the ongoing school reforms articulates for efficient management of schools by involving parents and the community. This important provision was only mentioned by four university respondents. There is conclusive evidence to say that many of these students truly lack of information to understand and clearly articulate policy provisions at the JHS and SHS levels. With inadequate information, the knowledge girls provided are sketchy at the lower levels but the college girls had better insights about reform provisions due to a number of reasons.

Koikoi summed it up this way:

> "I gained most of my knowledge and understanding of the FCUBE program at college because our lecturers discuss topics about school reforms with us. I remember to have written a research paper on FCUBE when I was in my second year. In truth, I did not have much information on FCUBE when I was at JHS or SHS. But now, I am very sure that I understand what the program is all about and can see the changes occurring in the whole educational system."

Similar view is shared by the other college interviewees since college education provide the space for students to seek and know more about ongoing issues within the country by way of classroom discussions, research or assignments. At college, students also have the freedom to explore, learn, know and be critical of information not readily available at the JHS and SHS levels of education.

According to Adamu-Issah (2007) the School Management Committees (SMCs) and Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) which were part of a broader implementation strategy for school efficiency is designed to ensure community involvement, ownership, responsibility, and participation in education delivery. This idea is gradually evolving and shaping the management of schools by the community. The Whole School Development (WSD) program which was implemented was aimed at encouraging communities to participate in the decision-making and management of local schools. This was to ensure that public schools function effectively and efficiently. While the WSD program is gaining momentum in isolated areas of the country its drawback relates to the fact that in many situations, a few elite members of the community usually hijack the democratic process and denies ordinary community members of their voice and effective participation.

Other intervention programs such as Education Strategy Plan (ESP) and Growth Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS) have also been implemented to help increase enrollment and performance of students. One drawback I have about all these different intervention programs is that information about them have not been adequately disseminated to the general public and students and many people do not really know or even heard of them. It is the responsibility of the government and its education agencies to make sure that every citizen is adequately educated on ongoing reform programs in education.

On parental and community involvement in schools management, Adarku had this to say:

> "The government hopes to inform and give parents/communities the right to get involved in the affairs of schools. But, this has become a joke for a couple of reasons. First, I can say with certainty that parents of students in private schools do a better job at engaging and monitoring progress of teachers and administrators than in public schools. I don't know why, but I suspect that parents of kids in private schools are invested, more enthusiastic and prepared to monitor school authorities to function effectively. This may be due to the fact that many of the parents of students in private schools are educated and financially capable compared to parents of public school students. While parents of private school students have a "say" in how the school is run, school authorities in public school usually disregard the views and contributions of

> parents on the assumption that they are poor and barely educated. For this reason, many parents with kids in public schools become apathetic and accuse public school authorities for only being interested in convening PTA meetings to demand payments of school levies and other indirect fees. In effect, parents of students in public schools feel silenced and marginalized and hence refuse to participate in PTA meetings or have anything to do with the school."

The college students also acknowledged that besides the FCUBE program ensuring that basic education is free and compulsory, additional and incidental fees are charged. Poor parents are unable to pay for these levies and charges which may include the cost of additional textbooks, fixture and fittings, extra classes, renovations or new buildings etc. Nonpayment of levies and fees has led to rampant and incessant dismissal of children from school. For this reason, the Ghana Education Service circulated a memo to all public school administrators to desist from sending children home or denying them of education because of nonpayment of school levies.

Even while the ban on student dismissal is in effect, many poor parents still cannot afford fees for extra classes to improve their children's academic performances. Some parents through their frustrations withdraw especially their girls from school and become disinterested in the affairs of community schools. The implementation of the Capitation Grant was exactly aimed at offsetting this problem that many poor families encounter when burdened with increasing cost of educating their children. The government realized that without any financial support for these poor families, many of them would withdraw their children, particularly the girl child. It can be argued that these intervention programs were aimed at reducing school dropouts especially among girls.

The college respondents also acknowledged that while the FCUBE program may have targeted the basic level of education, other reforms such as structural changes and interventions have occurred at the high school and tertiary levels to accommodate the expanding educational system in Ghana. Aside structural changes that reduced the number of pre-tertiary years of education from 17 to 12 years, there has been reforms in teacher education training programs to meet the challenges of the new reform agenda. School curriculum has undergone immense changes to reflect the changing dynamics of the country. There have been changes to admission procedures at the tertiary levels and universities now use the quota system to ensure a percentage of girls and boys are admitted into faculties and departments.

There has been massive expansion in the construction of school building at all levels of education to accommodate the increasing number of people enrolling into schools. At the tertiary levels, more hostels are being constructed and departments are expanding their facilities to cater for increases in students' enrollment. There have been more than ten new private colleges and universities in operation to support the few public universities. However, participants at the university also responded that while the education reform have had incredible impact at the basic level, its impact at the high school and tertiary levels have not been that intensive. Hence, a lot of improvements is required so that girls are not only enrolled and left to their fate but are protected in all aspects like in selecting subjects like science, math and engineering that are dominated by males.

Implications

It was obvious that the girls at the JHS and SHS did not have enough information and knowledge about the reform programs. They were not able to tease out the specifics as well as policy implications on their educational experiences. However, the college students were more knowledgeable and had a better understanding of the programs and how they impact on their education. By deduction, the Ministry of Education, Ghana Education Service, Regional, District and Local school offices are not doing a good job in disseminating to students the contents and provisions of reforms and outline student expectations. This attitude emerges from the Ghanaian cultural attitude and practices of power which arrogates authority to elders, chiefs, politicians, policy makers etc (who are usually male), to make decisions without consulting those to be affected by the decisions. It is not negotiable when the decision affects children and females who by convention should have males make decisions on their behalf without their consent.

The marginalized position of women in Ghana compromises their involvement in any form of engagement or consultation on issues that affect them. The absence female contribution leads to policy contradictions and hence failures in reforms to promote gender equality in education. This is consistent with arguments made by proponents of the change management perspective in policy making. They assert that, contradictions, tensions, and disconnects are bound to proliferate in the process of policy making if policy makers, implementers, change agents and policy recipients are not effectively engaged and in sync with one another (Fullan, 2001; Huczynski & Buchanan, 2001; Everard & Morris, 2004).

Also, the girls' lack of knowledge on policy provisions attest to the limitations that cultural practices place on females to perpetuate gender and power relations in Ghana (see Amuah – Sekyi, 1998). Biased gender relations usually normalize the superiority of men over women and arrogate to men the power and authority to make decisions for and on behalf of women and children without their consent. The prevalence of male hegemony is experienced in education where male teachers and administrators assume the power and authority in the control of students. Girls, in particular, are limited in their ability to questions the authority of teacher or on issues that affect them.

The lack of adequate information on reforms by girls did not even seem to be a problem among the respondents. The reason is that, these girls have encoded in them that authority figures like parents, teachers, and government should make the best of decisions for them. Many of them simply refused to even think or entertain the idea of questioning or being critical of the reform programs because of their belief in authority figures to do the right thing. Boylan and Ing (2005) blame adults for failing to find out from children about their interests, opinions and experiences on issues that affect them.

The implication of this cultural attitude on girls' capability to know and be able to question authority and power about what are entailed in policies, who decided on them and what part they are to play in relation to their needs, concerns, and challenges are farfetched. Girls' silenced position at school and at home are perpetuated by systemic and sustained gender relations unleashed by patriarchy. Even during interviews, most of these girls were very cautious about their complaints concerning male teachers and on other issues like gender stereotypes, sexual abuses, and discriminations made towards them. Without efforts to provide girls the platform to question and challenge many of the issues they encounter, dominant discourses and practices couched by men will continue to shape the quality, quantity, and content of education made available to girls and to determine their future in society (Kelly & Elliot, 1982, Mbilizi, 2008).

Perceptions of Opportunities in School

To understand some of the opportunities availed by comprehensive educational reforms a second question was asked: *What are some of the opportunities made available by FCUBE and ongoing reform programs?* The implementation of the FCUBE program in particular, and subsequent school reforms were expected to improve enrollment, access and participation of all children in education. They were aimed at bridging the cyclical recurrence of gender inequalities in Ghanaian education, reduce cost of education to government and ensure effective school management. Table 5.4 captures some of the main responses provided by girls who were interviewed. While it was apparent that respondents believed strongly that their own personal efforts have contributed immensely to their individual academic achievements, they were also quick to recognize the impact these reform programs have had on their education. They unanimously agreed that ongoing reforms have opened up many educational opportunities for them and many girls around the country. Schooling, they articulated, have become much easier for girls to attend these days and made it possible for girls to fulfill their careers and dreams.

Below is a tabulated response to capture what girls identified as important contributions of school reforms for Ghanaian children especially girls. The respondents feel that ongoing reforms have not only helped to improve girls' enrollment and academic achievements, but also made teachers more respectable of girls' academic achievement.

Table 5.4: Opportunities availed by School Reforms

Responses	JHS	SHS	U	Total
Increased enrollment and graduation for girls	5	5	5	15
Improved access to science, math and technology courses for girls	4	3	2	9
Improved participation in classroom and extracurricular activities for girls	4	4	3	11
Increased confidence learn and compete by girls	5	4	3	12
Increased respect for girls education by teachers and male peers	5	5	5	15

(Source: *Fieldwork, 2009*)

According to respondents, ongoing school reforms have made the possibilities of girls' education a reality even though there is more to be accomplished. This state of affairs has given a sense of hope to many girls to learn harder so that they can achieve their career dreams. Nine of the fifteen girls think that ongoing reform programs have helped enabled more girls to pursue

science, math and technology subjects and courses in school. As more girls enroll into courses that were once dominated by males girls are feeling more comfortable in taking these subjects at the tertiary levels. A significant number of respondents said that their fear of math and science is subsiding as they gain more confidence that girls can do what boys do. Increasingly, such confidence is slowly being translated into their increasing participation in classroom and extracurricular school activities. The following comments capture directly some responses provided by girls at the JHS level.

Abena for instance stated:

> "I am very happy that the school reforms have provided an opportunity for me to participate in classroom and debating club activities. Being a member of the debate club has helped to improve on my spelling and sentence construction. I am thankful to the teacher who had faith in me. He works tirelessly to coach us on debating skills. Presently, there are four girls in the debate club which composes of twelve students compared to last year when there was only one girl. The debate club experience has given me more confidence and hope that I can accomplish great things in future."

This example shows how some girls are gaining access into certain school activities that were restricted to boys and provided opportunities for them to participate in both classroom and extracurricular activities in school.

Araba added her voice to the increased girls' participation in school by saying:

> "The schooling environment now is better than it used to be for girls because more and more opportunities are made available for girls to learn and excel. For instance, I can now feel the respect girls are getting from especially male teachers and boys in the classroom and on the school campus. This does not mean that everything is okay with girls, because there are still few male teachers and boys who continue to disrespect and demean girls. But on the whole, I can say that the support and respect that girls are getting in general these days inspire us to interact and learn much better."

Ama agrees, but added that ongoing school reforms have brought some changes in the attitudes of many teachers and how they instruct and interact with girls with the classroom. She stated:

> "A majority of male teachers' are becoming more sensitive to issues of girls and are doing their best to help improve and develop the social and academic skills for girls. These groups of teachers are very patient with us through their instructions, interactions and advice. They ensure that we understand the lessons they teach and sometimes even organize extra classes to make sure that we understand the topic. I also admire teachers who use simple teaching techniques to relate complex theories to our practical life and things happening around us. I am very thankful to this one teacher who makes me understand his lessons because I can connect what I learn from his lessons with my own experience and things happening outside the classroom."

This is indeed fascinating as well as refreshing because many of the classrooms I observed were not very engaging, but at least it is worthwhile to find out that there are some teachers who are really doing a good job at relating lessons with students' experiences.

Adjoa, who sounded rather poetic, added that:

> "As a girl, I can absolutely see and feel the changes happening within my school, and if this is the results of the ongoing reforms then I am really happy for that. In fact, one big opportunity for girls these days is that, many girls are going to school and graduating just like boys. This reminds me of the saying by Dr. Kwegyir Aggrey, "If you educate a man you educate an individual but if you educate a woman you educate a nation." I am hopeful that the vision of Dr. Aggrey will soon come true for many girls as possible but this can only happen if the ongoing reform program succeeds. I have the feeling that the FCUBE is just the first step in this process and that more changes will be made so that many more girls get education and make Ghana a better place in the future."

The implication of what Adjoa said resonated with me because I also strongly believe that the education reforms must continue in its efforts to improve girls' education, build their morale, and confidence so that they can achieve in whatever careers they want by given them the opportunity to learn just like their male peers.

While the SHS students alluded some of the sentiments expressed by the JHS girls to, they also gave other interesting responses. Effie, after a long silence retorted:

> "For me, being in school is a big blessing which I thank God and my family for. I will make sure that I don't disappoint my parents and teachers. One opportunity that I think this reform has brought about is the change in attitude about girls' education in general. Nowadays, many people recognize and understand that girls' education is as important as that of boys. People have come to realize that girls can equally do as good as boys when they are given the same opportunities. In my class for example, there are many of us who are girls doing exceptionally better academically than boys. I think the reason is that, some of the boys are not serious with their academic work and for that matter many teachers have decided to help girls rather than wasting their time on boys who are not serious. On a personal level, I have received help from my teachers, and this has made me confident and serious with my school work. I have developed a sense of trust and respect for my teachers and consult them, seek advice, and interact with them like in a parent – child relationship. By doing these things my academic and social life has improved tremendously."

Some of the respondents were of the opinion that the reforms have brought added advantage and helped girls to catch up or even surpass boys in academic achievements. Teachers in general are also favorable and very selective in punishing students.

Emefa pointed out that:

> "The gender of a student sometimes plays a big role in the kind of punishment he or she is given. Usually, teachers are softer on girls than on boys for similar offenses. There are many instances where punishments given to girls are very light duty and easy to accomplish while those given to boys are tough and difficult. I think teachers punish boys harshly because of the lousy and unruly misbehavior they commit in classrooms. Again boys are the ones that mostly disrespect teachers and girls as well as disrupt the learning environment."

In support of this assertion, Edem recalled an incident between her and another boy which landed them at the Assistant Principal's office.

> "We were both punished for our bad actions but my punishment was far easier. I was punished to sweep the staff common room in the morning and after school for two days, and the boy was made to cut a sizeable portion of overgrown grass and weeds behind the main office and this took him about a week to complete."

This form of gender biased punishment regime is grounded on the physiological makeup of male and female but also tied into socio-cultural construction of stronger males and weaker females within the Ghanaian society. Females are therefore seen as fragile and weak as compared to males how are viewed as strong and aggressive.

For Eyinam, the opportunity to be in school has been a life changing experience for her.

> "As a girl, being in school is an opportunity that has opened my eyes and mind in many ways. I have come to appreciate the importance of education and I have committed myself to learn as hard as I can to achieve my career in the future. At this stage of my education I have gained knowledge, broadened my view of the world, learned the dos and don'ts in life, set my expectations and responsibilities, and learned the etiquettes of an educated woman. In fact, this opportunity has made me a stronger and better person for the future. "

This is exactly what I think education for girls needs to accomplish. To make girls critical, stronger, and responsible for their careers and not to be dictated for or marginalized in their quest to achieve their future ambitions. At the college level, responses given agreed with many of those earlier expressed by JHS and SHS students. However, there are some important points they also stressed which included affirmative action and supportive schooling environments that I need to be pointed out.

All of the ladies interviewed asserted that being at college is an honor that many females in Ghana would never have the opportunity to experience. They therefore cherish every moment, experience, and opportunities currently available for them as a result of the school reforms.

Korkor reiterated,

> "I think that the affirmative action clause in the university admission process has not only helped to increase the number of girls in many departments and faculties but also enabled companies become interested in hiring female graduates. The governments' support and encouragement in female education and gender inclusion in work places is gradually taking shape. For instance, fifty plus girls were interviewed this semester by a number of companies during a recent job fair organized here on campus. We were given the chance to interview with recruiters from Banks, Corporations, Civil Service, Public enterprises and NGOs. For me this process is in the right direction for girls to quickly gain employment as interns or as permanent workers after graduation. I am therefore optimistic that the ongoing reform is done properly can have a lasting impact on both education and jobs security for girls."

The affirmative action that places quotas on the percentage of girls to be admitted into tertiary education has indeed made girls enrollment into faculties and department improve substantially. While this has not narrowed the gender distribution in certain departments, it has surely made some improvements. Generally, most of the tertiary institutions, including the universities, have seen an unprecedented growth in female admissions over the last decade. As at 2009, the student population for the five public universities in Ghana was about 29,754. This conservative figure represents a ratio of 2:1 for male and female respectively, with the component of females increasing at 100% increase from last 10 years figures. The increases in female admission have benefitted girls and improved their numerical strength in higher education and subsequently as members of elite work force within the country. The improvements made in the admissions of girls at the tertiary level can be attributed to the affirmative action mandated by the government under pressure from progressive and women's groups. Currently, the stipulated guidelines ensure that 60% of the female applicants and 40% of male applicants should be admitted into tertiary education annually. This is aimed at closing the wide gender gaps in tertiary education

The implication of this gender parity guideline at higher education enrollment has indeed changed the nature of admission requirements for boys and girls. For example, girls are required to obtain a maximum aggregate of 15 in the Senior High School Certificate examination to be considered for admission into tertiary education. Boys on the other hand are required to obtain a maximum aggregate of 12 to be considered. This differential admissions requirement is designed to balance the overall gender distribution in tertiary enrollments. It is evident that increased

female enrollment into the university also help girls to overcome some of the stereotypes and fears of discriminations associated with girls education. As the interviewees pointed out, they can now adjust and fit into the student population without fear of intimidation or low self esteem because of their numerical strength. Their sheer numerical strength female students provide a sense of belonging, community and stability among them, and also provide them with confidence and empowerment in their access, participation and interactions within the schooling environment.

Dede was very grateful of the college opportunity and expressed these sentiments:

> "Yes, female students are heavily considered for university education these days compared to years past. For instance, during the 2004/5 admission year, the cutoff or minimum aggregate required for admission for girls was 13 in my course area while that for boys was 10. This policy, I think, is to bridge the wide gender disparities that had existed at the department for decades. I am sure that without this gender parity policy I would not have gained admissions. I am very convinced that the gender quota system in admissions is good for the promotion of female education in Ghana and this will go a long way to correct gender biases and subordinations of women which is prevalent within the Ghanaian society."

Dede continued that:

> "I think that, the idea of professors and doctors being men in the country changing. For instance, I attended the graduation ceremony for medical school during the 2007 school year and was happy to see that the overall best student was a lady. She picked up seven of the thirteen awards. At the school of dentistry too the overall student was a lady who picked up five of the ten awards. They were showcased in the front pages of all national newspapers and this was a clarion call to encourage girls that everything is possible if they work for it. The graduation function was chaired by the managing director of an investment bank who happens to be a woman. These are few examples of the stories that motivate me to even work hard no matter the obstacles."

However, this policy does not mean female are preferred over male students. What this does is to improve the higher education of females and balance the gender ratios of men and women graduating from the university. This policy is also to open door for females to pursue certain specific courses that were previously restricted to men.

Adarku agreed with this assertion and said:

> "There are so many opportunities for girls these days to gain admission into college to pursue courses in medicine, engineering and technology etc. With more girls enrolling and graduating on top of these courses has made people to change their mind and recognize that women are as good as men. This change of attitude among people in

addition to government policies has reduced stereotypes and improved the respect for women especially when they graduate from the university."

There was also a general feeling among respondents that with more girls gaining admissions into tertiary institutions they are also gaining certain advantages over male students.

Korkor said,

> "While this may sound flimsy, it is an experience that made me realize how girls and boys are treated differently by some male professors. I recollect a day when I was fifteen minutes late in submitting my assignment. I went to the professor's office and explained my situation to him and he gladly accepted my assignment. But, I was shocked that he refused to accept the assignment of a male student who was five minutes late and was even in his office before I arrived. Amazed as I was, I began to wonder why this happened. Was it because I was a girl or what? Was the professor sending me hidden cues or what? In as much as I see this practice as unfair, biased and discriminatory to the male student, I cannot really explain if this is discrimination or simply an act underline with ulterior motives. This said, I think I had an advantage over the male student for which I cannot take for granted no matter how controversial it may seem. "

While this revelation is interesting and very hard to understand, it is clear that this professor discriminated against the male student no matter the reasons underscoring his actions. It is however very consistent with traditional culture for men in authority to favor women over men for a variety of reasons I cannot speculate. While I cannot certainly provide answers to this strange behavior of the professor for accepting a late assignment from a female student and not the male student is morally wrong and unethical for academic integrity.

On her part Koikoi submitted that,

> "Many male professors in my department are very cordial and friendlier with female students than to male students. Strangely as it may sound the two female professors in the department are rather unfriendly to female students. I cannot understand why but my personal encounter with them was unpleasant. They were very harsh and vindictive toward me for reasons I cannot wrap my mind around. Even though, I cannot generalize their attitude toward other female students but I can conclude that they despise female students from my experience with them. They were only friendly to girls they had some kind of family ties with. In all honestly I initially thought that as women they would understand me and be role models for me but I was wrong because that wasn't the case."

This is a classic case of female students expecting to be favored by female professors without any questions or doubts. This compares to the situation where the male professor

discriminated against a male student. What I gather from these experiences is that playing gender affiliations does not guarantee good relations as shown by these two examples. It is important to notice that good relationships between teachers and students are to be earned and not a given (more on relations/interactions at later sections).

Summary

In summary, the narratives from female students at different levels of education indicate that there are benefits and opportunities in ongoing school reforms for females in Ghana. Apart from the fact that there are increases in girls' enrollment at every level of education, girls are also becoming aware of their potentials and conviction that they are capable of achieving their dreams if they work hard at it. Females, who experience many forms of discrimination in the subject choices and selections, are now free to pursue them in accordance to their capabilities. Respondents also feel that girls are now enrolling into science, math, engineering, and technical courses than previously experienced.

This assertion notwithstanding, observations, and figures still point to nominal reduction the number of girls pursuing courses in science, math, engineering and technology at higher levels of education. Polling of participants for this study clearly show that while all of the girls at the JHS and SHS do science and math subjects, these subjects are usually compulsory and are required for graduation. However, none of those interviewed at the university was into science, math, or technology as a field of study. While this finding may not reflect the general trend, it supports Daddieh (2008) assertion that girls are likely to enroll into the social science, law, and liberal arts departments than into science, math, engineering, and technology faculties at colleges in Ghana. Apparently, the number of boys offering science, mathematics, technology, and engineering courses at the tertiary levels is far more than the number of girls.

Challenges in School

The third question examined *the challenges that girls encounter in school and how these impact on their education?* When asked about some of the challenges they encounter in school, the respondents provided a variety of responses dependent on their level of education, needs and concerns. Almost all respondents felt fortunate and proud to be in school, but they were also worried about issues like gender stereotypes, attitudes, behaviors, practices that subordinate them. In addition they were also concerned about the lack of school amenities and facilities which negatively affects their learning and successful graduation. They argue that these challenges have negative implications on their capability to equally access, participate, interact and learn like boys in school. Table 5.5 illustrates captures the main concerns that were raised by girls at the junior high school level.

Table 5.5: Challenges for Girls at Junior High School Level

Responses	Frequency
Lower expectations for girls (especially in Science and Math)	5
Gender stereotypical attitudes from some male teachers and students	5
Pressure to improve on academic performance.	4
Ethnic discriminations	1
Lack of books and school amenities	5

(*Source*: Fieldwork, 2009)

As shown in the table above, all the respondents mentioned that the low expectations teachers of girls by teachers especially in math and science subjects is part of a broader gender stereotype that pressure them to work hard in order to excel academically and prove critics wrong. Many of them are concerned that the lack of commitment from male teachers in particular is not helping in their academic performance. Girls are therefore skeptical of some male teachers' commitment especially in subjects that are traditionally seen as male turf. Respondents were very unhappy about comments that some male teachers' make to demean them as unintelligent as well as other attitudes that disrespectful females in general. Some of them indicated that because of the attitudes expressed by some male teachers consciously or unconsciously, have made boys to think that they are better and superior than girls.
Abena recounted what a male teacher said during a math lesson:

> "As boys, you should never allow a girl to top this class anytime because that would disappoint me. When the teacher made this statement I was really hurt within, and I vowed to even learn harder and prove him wrong that girls can equally learn and even perform better than boys. Since that day, I have never liked the teacher. This kind of comments and attitudes are prevalent among male teachers who still think that the woman's place is in the kitchen. However, this does not take away the efforts of many other good teachers (male and female) who respect girls and always encourage us to work hard because they believe girls if given the help can achieve and succeed in anything just like boys."

This is an example of how few male teachers stifle the confidence of girls in especially math and science classrooms and perpetuate the traditional view about girls' inability to excel in these subjects. While some of the girls were disgusted about attitudes of few male teachers, there was also a finger pointed at one female teacher whom one respondent blames for her dislike and poor performance in math.

According to Ama,

> "This female teacher had not been helpful at all because she does not care about girls' improvement in her math class. I don't know why but she is so indifferent to our needs and when we complain to her that we do not understand what she was teaching she gets angry."

Ama recounts her experience and an exchange she had with this female teacher one day:

> "Madam, please can you go over and explain what you mean by that? She replies, which part of the lesson don't you understand? When I pointed out that I am having trouble understanding the whole thing, she got furious and responded that, why and what don't you understand? Where were you when I was teaching? After this exchange, she continued with the lesson without explaining or even finding out later if I still needed help. Because of her insensitivity to the problems of the girls in her math class, most of us pretend to understand whatever she teaches when in actual fact we don't. All I do in her class is to sit and listen to avoid any further confrontation or punishment. I have to take an extra class with another teacher or sometimes consult with friends to understand the topic. In fact, I believe that she has contributed to my weak performance and dislike for math."

Another challenge that respondents did not mince words in mentioning is the stereotypical attitudes that male students have of girls. For a variety of reasons many boys even though respect girls, they still feel proud to seek help from girls because they have encoded and accepted the idea that men are superior to women that some male teachers continue to reinforce within the schooling environment.

Adjoa was furious when she expressed this concern:

> "I am very disappointed that most of the time, boys find it difficult to come to girls for help with school work even when they are fully aware that we could help them solve and understand the problem. I don't know why, but I think many of the boys feel that coming to girls for help is a sign of weakness and unacceptable especially when some teachers have made them to think so. Few male teachers who teach science and math continually tell boys not to allow girls to outperform them and this to me must be stopped."

This kind of expression of male hegemony and superiority over females is a traditional cultural construct that have diffused into schooling environment to structure and reproduce systemic marginalization of girls into subordinate positions that society continues to perpetuate.

While Araba supports sentiments expressed by Adjoa and Ama, she was the only respondent who pointed to ethnic discrimination as a big challenge for students from the minority culture.

Araba retorts,

> "Statements by teachers which put boys over girls are sad and unfortunate but I am also very concerned about the way the majority ethnic speaking "Akan" students treat those of us from the minority "Ewe" ethnicity. There are several instances where students (both boys and girls) of the majority ethnicity refuse to talk, relate or even help me with topics I desperately need assistance simply because of my ethnicity. This sort of ethnic discrimination is a big concern for me and sometimes makes me feel that I do not belong to the school."

This is an important issue that the majority of respondent missed to mention because of their privileged ethnic dominant position within the school. This is similar to all other marginalized groupings that are discriminated by sexuality, gender, race, or religious affiliation in many other situations.

Generally, all respondents agreed that they are under a lot of pressure to prove skeptics wrong by learning very hard to improve their academic performance and achievement. They were also of the opinion that situation could get better if the government pass laws and regulation to ban such discriminatory attitudes in school.

Afua, who was the girls' school prefect, commented that,

> "The misguided pronouncements of some teachers make me feel challenged to even learn harder. In fairness many of the teachers and principal treat boys and girls equal and fairly. I don't personally take some of these demeaning comments seriously because my hard

> work in both science and math classes has paid off and I am proud to say that I performed better that all but one boy. I know in my heart that, there is nothing wrong for being a girl and that every girl has the potential to excel in all subjects including math and science."

Finally, all the girls' responded to the lack of school facilities such as library, science, and computer laboratories, visual arts and home economics equipments, classroom repairs and toilet amenities as hampering their learning. I have to point out that the lack of school facilities is not only a challenge for girls but for boys as well but needs mentioning because of the implications it has on their schooling experiences.

Abena pointed out that:

> "The school library is too small and need to be expanded and provided with more books and computers for the growing number of students. The sick bay also needs improvement so that people who get sick in school can be catered for before they are sent to hospital."

Araba feels that

> "Without a science laboratory their knowledge and learning is affected. As a practical person I like to see, smell and do hands on stuff in the science laboratory to help me understand and develop my skills. But since there is no permanent building for a science laboratory this impacts on my learning. It is a shame that we take our visual arts and home economics classes in a regular classroom and there is only one gas cooker for the whole class of 50 students. In visual arts classes there are no instruments and tools to use for our projects and all of these are very challenging in the development of our knowledge and skills."

Respondents were particularly disgruntled about the absence of a science laboratory to help students who would like to pursue sciences with a stronger foundation. Afua complained:

> The few science experiments we have done so far were all done in the classroom instead of at a laboratory, and this has not helpful to me because I am determined to pursue science in college. Furthermore, the absence of a school bus has limited the number of field trips and excursions we can do yearly and this is not good for us.

Ama feels that,

> "The lack of recreational facilities such as athletics and sports fields for physical education activities on the school campus is a great disservice to girls' health and physical development as a whole."

Adjoa was destruct and commented that,

> "The state of some classrooms needs repair in order to stop water leakages that occur when it rains. Also, sharing bathrooms with teachers is not a good idea since girls are

> intimidated by the presence of teachers in the bathroom. The two toilets available are inadequate for the number of girls in the school not forgetting the bad smell of the place when they are not properly cleaned and disinfected."

It is evidently clear that girls at the junior high school level face many challenges. The notion that some male teachers demean and disrespect them through their comments and attitudes in subjects like science and math is a travesty. The girls do not dispute the help they receive from many good caring and loving teachers who are resourceful and assist them in their academic pursuit. Many of them were also disappointed that their school lacked certain basic school facilities that are crucial for their learning needs. These notwithstanding, the respondents were also optimistic and determined to work as hard as they can to achieve academically in order to fulfill their educational aspirations.

At the SHS respondents raised similar concerns to those articulated by the JHS students but for different reasons. Table 5.6 illustrates the responses provided by girls from SHS.

Table 5.6: Challenges for Girls at Senior High School level

Responses	Frequency
Gender stereotypes, disrespect and indifference by male teachers	5
Discrimination and bullying from some male peers	4
Sexual advances and abuses from male teachers and peers	4
Lack of instructional materials, equipments and facilities	5

(*Source*: Fieldwork, 2009)

As shown in Table 5.6, gender stereotypes, discrimination, low expectations, bullying, sexual abuses, and the lack of school amenities were some of the major challenges girls said they confront at the senior high school. Most of the respondents were frustrated with the attitudes and behaviors that certain male teachers and peers. As adolescents they wished that they are treated with respect and dignity by teachers and male peers. One main concern they had was why some male teachers always question their intelligence either through their actions or the way they talk to them. They view such subtle messages and codes expressed by these teachers as very biased aimed at conforming to gender stereotypes existing within the Ghanaian society. The teachers and male students who usually engage in such discriminatory practices add to the challenges and obstacles that girls confront in school to further subordinate and make girls experiences very appalling within the schooling environment.

Effie points to the attitude of one male teacher to make her point:

> "This particular male teacher does not teach effectively to my understanding because I cannot even ask questions when he constantly reminds us that the lesson is too complex and difficult for girls. I don't know why this selfish insensitive man is my teacher. He is not concerned about my needs. Also, I don't know why male teachers especially, after arriving late for class decides to go on teaching even after the period are over. On several occasions students have to remind him that his period is over and instead of leaving he accuses us for not being serious with our academic work."

This is an example of a typical male figure exerting his power and authority over students irrespective of the consequences. Again, many of the respondents mentioned that the actions and practices of some male teachers in particular, convey hidden messages of gender biases and stereotypes. Their utterances in classrooms consciously or unconsciously, demand high expectations from boys than from girls. This often happens in science and math classrooms. I observed a science class and was astonished that the teacher called on only one girl to answer a question for the entire period. Throughout the period the girls were mere spectators and silent and the teacher did not make any effort to engage and include them in the discussions. He showed his bias and called on boys to answer questions and participate in discussions even though the class was evenly composed of boys and girls. This kind of embedded gender stereotyping was very common in many of the classes I observed. This is a problem that I think overtly or covertly inform and perpetuate girls continued marginalization in schooling. .

Emefa agreed with the sentiments shared above and pointed out that:

> "Most male teachers in my science and math classes do encourage boys to work hard but remain indifferent to girls. This is not fair to me because it makes me feel that I am not good in science and math. This does not happen to me in English, Social studies and Home economics classes. Sometimes, I believe what the teacher is saying because when I look around and watch the television, all I see is that most of the doctors, engineers and scientists are male."

She continued:

> "One thing I have noticed is that male teachers sometimes intentionally pose difficult questions to girls and when we are unable to answer, they castigated and criticize us in front of the class. This is a painful experience that happened to me one day in class when I tried to avoid the teachers' question. Many girls in this teacher's class have once in a while faced his wrath just like me. Because of his attitude we are usually withdrawn and no prepared to participate for fear of being ridiculed."

While many of the respondent point to their lack of interest in science as a result of poor teaching and lack of equipments, a couple of them shared their experiences. Esi feels that she was doing well in science and math subjects but not in physics in particular. Asked why she feels that way, she attributed her lack of interest in physics to the teachers' performance and lack of adequate laboratory experiments.

Esi stated that:

> "For me laboratory experiments bring practical understanding to the theory we learn in class, and the lack of it makes my understanding of the topic a bit difficult. The physics teacher comes to class and writes down formulas and begins to teach without making himself very clear to me. When I asked that he explains further he queries me for not paying attention. When he explains again I get more confused because he does not take his time to make issues clear. I am very disappointed in the way he teaches. Sometimes I also blame the boys in the class for their unruly behaviors that infuriates teachers. The boys who sit at the back of the class usually chuckle, giggle, and make funny noise while class is in section and teachers sometimes retaliate by refusing to either answer questions or explain themselves to our understanding."

While some of the girls are science enthusiasts, they also complained of the lack of laboratory equipments and limited experiments as hurting their understanding in fundamentals of science. Edem opined,

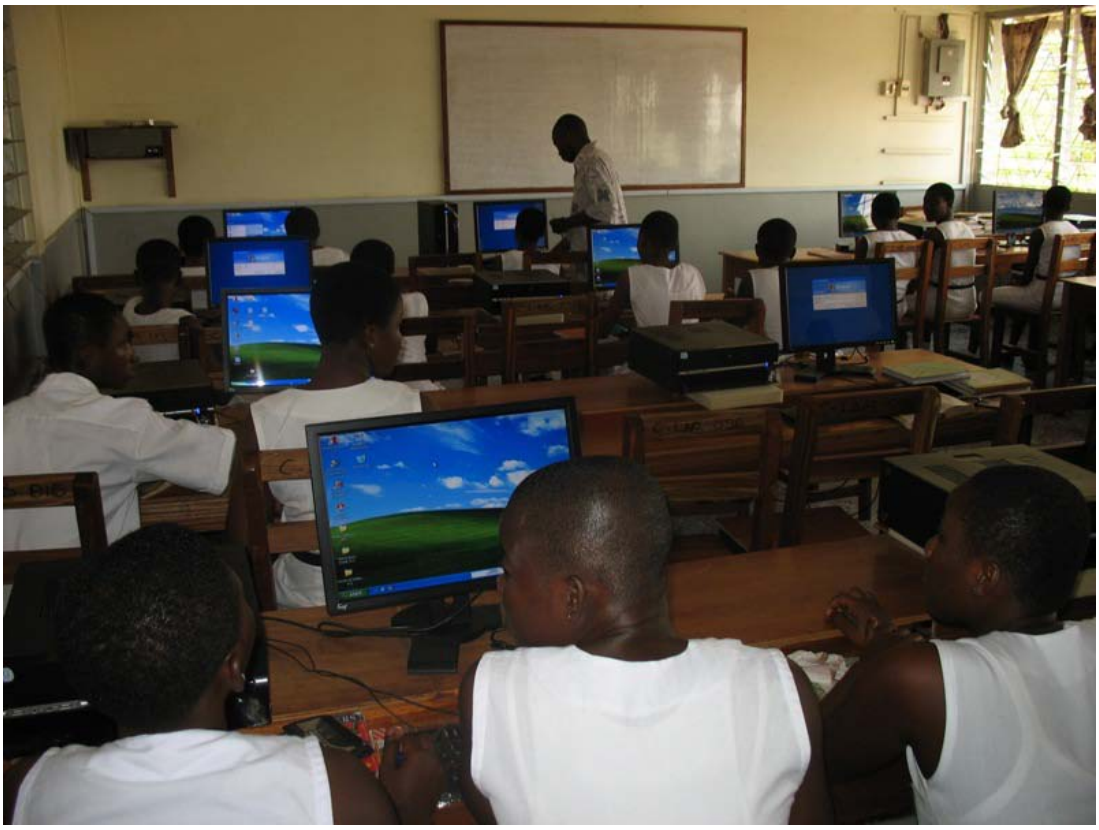
> "It will surprise you to learn that we had only two laboratory exercises in physics and three in biology for a whole year. This is not good because it affects my performance in these subjects. I am aware that experiments are an important component of science which helps to understand theories but without many experiments my understanding is limited. The limited instruments and equipments at the laboratory makes individual experiments impossible about six students are made to use one instrument and this is not good."

The respondents also pointed to the lack of school amenities and facilities as a challenge to their academic experiences. Among the amenities they mentioned include computers, science laboratory equipments, library books, toilet facilities and general classroom improvements. Edem mentioned that,

> There were only six computers for the use by a class of 40 students at any one time during the computer class last year. But, the situation has improved with the addition of twelve more computers bringing the total number of computers to eighteen. Even the eighteen computers are not enough for the student population. During computer classes, it is common to find two or more students sharing one computer.

I noticed during my observation that the number of computers available for student use is woefully inadequate compared to the student population of about 1,700. As shown in the photograph, a class of forty students is usually separated into two groups to take turns for lessons in computer. Even when grouped, two or three students are made to share one computer during the class. This is the state within which many senior high schools in Ghana are situated when it comes to the learning and training of students in basic computer skills.

Figure 1: Students in the Computer Class at a Senior High School.



(*Source*: Fieldwork, 2009)

The respondents also pointed out that the after school extra classes have become another way by which students pay teachers to acquire extra tuition. While extra classes are helpful to many of them in understanding and academic performance in science and math they were unhappy that they had to pay extra money for these services. Teachers therefore capitalize on extra class to do shoddy job during the regular school section and ask students to come for extra classes for in depth understanding. Many of the respondents bemoan this tactics and the lack adequate learning facilities and resources such as books at the school library as very unfortunate.

Edem commented that,

> "The school library is too small for the number of students in the school. The books are old and there are computers to use at the library. The library which is supposed to be the best place to read and learn is always noisy during lunch breaks and from the sounds of cars that drive by schools. While I would have preferred to learn at the library before going home the library closes just about the time school ends. At home, I have to do my chores and usually do not have enough time to learn and do my homework. For this reason I am sometimes late in submitting my homework."

The photograph in Figure 2 captures a high school library to show the space and number of books available for use by students. Respondents were absolutely correct that the library facility needs a lot of improvement if it is to cater for the entire student population. It is evident that only a handful of students can access the library at a point in time to learn and do their homework.

Figure 2: Students at the Library at a Senior high school.

(*Source:* Fieldwork, 2009)

Two of the girls shared similar sentiments about the challenge they had to go through to pay for their tuition, books and other school supplies on time. While these girls tearfully tell of

the struggles they and their parents had to endure to get the money needed to pay for tuition and schooling expenses it shows how ones socio-economic background is a indicator of the future choices they make in school.

Eyinam recounted how the death of her father has brought hardship to her family:

> "My mother had to single handedly take care of my two siblings and I by selling fresh produce and foodstuff in the market. As the oldest daughter, I always have to join her in the market after school to peddle some of her produce before coming home to do my chores. I am always late in paying my school fees and the stress from going to the market after school has affected my performance since sometimes I don't learn nor do my homework."

Other respondents viewed the size and condition of their classrooms as appalling and unfit for teaching and learning. They pointed to poorly ventilated classrooms, poor lightening systems and inadequate tables and chairs for students to use. Effie was is disappointed that the school administrators are slow in fixing problems relating to classrooms with poorly ventilation, or replacing broken ceiling fans, or make classrooms with about 40 students more comfortable. Effie reiterated:

> "During the afternoons our classrooms is like oven and very humid. Students have no option but to use books and handkerchiefs to serve as fan to cool down and wipe the sweat from their faces. In this situation both teachers and students loose concentrate on the lesson. Sometimes, I have to ask permission to go to the bathroom only to spend about 10minutes to cool down. Classroom activities get distracted when students are only focused of cooling themselves down instead of paying attention to instructions."

Esi added,

> "Our classrooms are not large and the desks are very close together. The number of desks and chairs are insufficient because those that get broken are not immediately replaced. Some students had to stand at the back of the classroom during lessons because they don't have any desk and chairs to sit on. In addition, the lightening system is not bright enough and therefore the classroom gets dark during cloudy days. The ceiling fans are not in proper working conditions to cool the classroom when it is hot. Finally, water leaks from the roof anytime it rains. These are all issue that makes the classrooms uncomfortable for learning and it's a big challenge for me."

Emefa was very concerned about the poor conditions of the toilets and urinal and said:

> "The toilets smell of strong odor because they do not disinfect the place very well. Sometimes because the water is not running the facility had to be locked down due to the awful nature of the place. I barely use the toilet facility because it is unhygienic and do not want to contract any disease from this place."

Edem said bluntly,

> "I always pretend to be sick when I am in my menstrual period because the conditions in the toilet facility are not safe and sanitary for me during this time."

As I have already pointed out the challenges that girls mentioned in relation to school facilities and amenities are not solely experienced by girls but by all students including boys. However, this goes to show that issues affecting the school in general are also issues that girls are concerned about. By their mentioning of these as challenges then it means that their redress would not only benefit girls alone but the entire student body.

There were four out of the five respondents who were concerned that sexual advances and abuses from especially boys and sometimes male teachers are a challenge that they encounter daily in school.

Eyinam who looked much matured for her age was emphatic that:

> "I have been ridiculed by some boys and a teacher for rejecting their proposal to me for a sexual relationship. This particular teacher humiliated me in front of the class and gave me low grade in his class. I was brave enough to report the matter to the school counselor whom I think talked to the teacher before his witch hunt stopped and his attitude towards me changed. I have to confess that there are a few bad teachers who exploit girls for sexual relations and my coming face to face with one of them was a very scary experience I will never forget."

Research on girls and women education in Sub-Saharan Africa indicate the prevalence of discriminatory acts and practices, gender stereotypes, low academic expectations and sexual abuses from male teachers (Bloch et ., 1998). These acts and practices are obvious products of endemic patriarchal system of Ghanaian culture (Amua-Sekyi, 1998). The ingrained gender and power relations that characterizes the institution of education enable males who dominate the institution to enforce, regulate, control and shape school discourses and practices without including the views and experiences of females.

Many of the actions and practices in school only subordinate girls to boys and limit their capabilities in accessing and participating fully in school activities. Girls, who feel marginalized in school, are always silent, never ask questions, or engage in classroom activities. They lose the fortitude to partake in existing male norms and discourse within the school and continue to show signs of docility and silence. In effect, they are not able to critical engage the status quo which

must be challenged, usurped and dismantled for gender equality and democracy to prevail in schools.

On the whole, senior high school girls were unanimous in speaking to the lack of basic school amenities such as library resources, laboratory equipments and computers, poor toilet facilities and deteriorating classroom conditions as critical to their education. They were also concerned about the attitudes and practices of teachers who stereotype girls' as low achievers to be abused sexually and discriminated against on a daily basis at school. These challenges notwithstanding, these respondents were very optimistic about the onerous effort on their part to be determined and work hard to overcome these obstacles in order to achieve their desired academic and career goals.

The responses on school challenges from college students is presented on Table 5.7.The major concerns they raised included proposal for sexual relationships from male lecturers, poor library resources, administrative bureaucracy, limited housing and transportation facilities, gender stereotypes and competition among female students.

Table 5.7: Challenges for Girls at the University Level

Responses	Frequency
Sexual proposals, abuses and victimizations from lecturers	5
Lack of Library resources and Instructional equipments	5
Administrative bureaucracy and high user fees	5
Poor housing and transportation facilities	4
Stereotypical attitudes about female students' capabilities	4
Competition among female students	5

(*Source*: Fieldwork, 2009)

As shown on the Table 5.7, nearly all students mentioned these challenges as major to their educational aspiration. That does not imply that there are not other problems.
According to Korkor, she nearly became a victim when she approached by a male lecturer to inquire about why she had such low grades in the course.

> "Without knowing the intentions and nefarious practices of this lecturer, I agreed to meet with him at his office at an appointed time. In his office, he told me that he is very interested in being a friend and if I agree with his proposal my grades will be rectified. I responded that I will not be able to honor his proposal and left his office. When I told my roommate about the encounter, she informed me about the habitual predatory sexual

> practices of this particular lecturer. Later on, I learned of his habit of taken advantage of desperate girls. According to reliable sources, he makes his victims clean, cook, and engages in domestic chores while have sexual relations with them. He is not the only perpetrator because I am also aware that other lecturers in other departments who intentionally punish girls for refusing their proposals by given them lower grades in the course they teach."

Adarku's encounter with a male lecturer made her see how some of them disrespect girls.

She pointed out that:

> "My experience and encounter with this male lecturer had thought me the gravity of situation of sexual abuses at the university. This lecturer, whom I saw as a mentor, invited me to accompany him to a function only to find out that he was interested in having a sexual affair with me. I pleaded with him to reschedule that date and reneged. This got him very mad with me and for that reason I avoided taking any future class which he teaches for fear that he might victimized me, or try to trap me again or resort to penalizing me with lower grades. This kind of attitude is becoming a big problem and distracting many girls who are genuinely interested in learning and achieving on merit."

Other respondents however, were quick to equally blame some female students for taking advantage of vulnerable lecturers by seducing them in sexually relations with the intent of improving on their failing grades.

Koikoi commented that,

> "There are rumors circulating about few female students who intentionally seduce lecturers by extending sexual favors and in return get higher grades. This is what my friends and I call "negative advantage". Many attempts to find the accuracy of such rumors are usually unsubstantiated or denied by alleged female students. While I cannot validate these stories I am very certain that some female students and lectures are engaged in sexually activities."

The respondents also mentioned that the library facilities and resources at the university are grossly inadequate. The lack of computers, books and research materials have serious negative impact on students' learning and academic work.

According to Korkor:

> "Finding a reference or recommended books for research purposes at the library is very frustrating. On many occasion, I go to the library with the intent to get a book required for assignments only to find out that the book is not available. This is because the lecturer of that course may have the only copy or a lousy student has hidden the book somewhere within the library so that other students do not have access to it. The only option left to complete the assignment is to ask friends who might have completed their work for their copies and tweak them for submission. Even though, I am aware that this practice is un-academic and unethical, I had to resort to this approach to pass the class.

I would have wished to do an independent research but this is a matter of survival to me."

Koikoi added,

> "The librarians are also to be blamed for the habit of taking longer lunch breaks than required. They normally take two hours lunch break instead of thirty minutes and this reduces the number of hours available for students' library use. I don't know whether it a university policy or not but, during their lunch breaks students are made to exit the library until they return from break. The library operates for only ten hours a day and with two hours used on break, students have only eight hours to use the library. I am surprised they cannot operate a 24hour shift so that students who do not get access in the day could come at night. Access to the library is indeed a challenge to many of us because of its limited seating capacity, time and resources."

Koshie also commented on the lack of learning materials and resources at the university and complained:

> "The main university library is in deplorable condition and lacks learning space, desks, books and computers etc. The department and residence hall libraries are also poorly stocked and equipped. Most books are old with torn or missing pages making their reading impossible. Resources for learning are woefully inadequate and this is not helping me academically. These libraries need refurbishments and upgrades so that they are able to service the needs of the growing student population. The newly constructed ICT center which provides computer services for student is not large enough to accommodate many students at a time. Students had to wait in queue for several hours to use computer to download course materials unto a pen drive or access internet which is slow for even those with laptops that have wireless connections. I normally visit an Internet Café for my Internet needs. There is the growing pressure for every student to own a laptop of a pen drive on which academic work can be stored and those of us from poor backgrounds are always the ones that suffer."

There was also the mention of the lack of instructional equipments like microphones, computers, and projectors in lecture halls and they challenge it poses to effective instructional delivery, especially when the class has a large number of students.

Adarku contended that:

> "The lack of modern instructional equipments such as computers, overhead projectors and other forms of media in the lecture halls seriously impacts on teaching and learning. In the psychology department, overhead projectors available are old and do not function properly making teaching and learning very frustrating. Normally, our classes are large with about 100 students and the use of these instructional devices such as microphones and speakers, overhead projectors and screens and televisions would be of crucial importance but they are not available. Students who are late and get the back seats hardly hear the lecture, and when students get frustrated they register their protest by hooting

> and disrupting lecture proceedings. To avoid such discomfort and discontent, many of the lecturers prepare handout copies on the course which they sell to students."

Koikoi added,

> "The problem with instructional delivery has to do with the lack of quizzes and assignments to prepare and test students' knowledge and understanding in the course. For instance, in my political science class, the lecturer never administered a single home work, assignment or test for a whole semester. I don't know whether it was due to the class size of about 300 students was too much for him or not. Lecture sessions are always chaotic with student not having seats to sit on and standing throughout the lecture period. Taking notes in the lecture is also impossible and they barely allow students to ask questions. If a student by chance asks a question, he responds that all such questions will be answered at the tutorial session by Teaching Assistants. The number of students in one class is too large and for that matter anyone who is late will have to stand throughout the whole lecture period. Another disturbing trend common in large classes is that the boys get away with making fun and nasty comments about girls and at times the lecturer. Any attempt to ask them to keep quiet will result in verbal abuses, ridicules and curses. These are challenges that I go daily and it is sometimes better that I stay in my room than to go to a lecture where I have to stand, don't hear anything being said and no interactions between the teachers and student."

In fact the growing student population at the university including female students has indeed put a lot of pressure on existing residential hall facilities and rendered them inadequate. Many of them are in disrepair and need urgent attention.

According to Adarku,

> "While efforts have been made in the building of new halls of residence, the situation particularly at older halls is in dilapidated conditions. In these halls, the number of students per room has increased to six and ten in bigger rooms. Facilities like dining halls, cafeterias, libraries and bathrooms are overstretched and are in severe disrepair. There is a chronic and acute water shortage to service bathrooms and broken fixture and fittings leading to filthy unhygienic bathroom and living conditions for students. These appalling conditions make students living in residence halls uncomfortable because their privacy and health are compromised."

Another challenge that reverberated with respondents was the slow administrative and bureaucratic procedure at the university in the payment of user fees, registration of courses, checking of final examination grades, applying for transcripts, or requesting letters of acknowledgement from the university. These processes are painfully slow and time wasting.

Korkor was very angry when she pointed out that:

> "It took about five hours to register for one course at the beginning of the semester. The procedure is tedious and time wasting because students would have to go to each department before s/he can register. The frustrating thing is that these departments are located far apart and students are to walk over 5miles to get registered for each course. With improvements in technology, I expected that the university will improve its computer facilities to allow students to register online and save them from the hassle of standing in long lines to register for their courses. Even securing a copy of your transcript is worse because it takes weeks and the fees charged are too high for many students to afford."

Students also complained that the transportation system is very poor because of the lack of more buses to take students from one point to the other. This is compounded by the fact that driving your own car on campus has also become expensive due to surcharges to be paid. For instance, a monthly user fee of 50 Cedis is charged to students' use their own cars campus and this has dissuaded many students to drive on campus.

Adarku pointed to this problem by saying:

> "When it comes to transportation on campus, people without personal cars like me have to rely on close friends with cars or school bus to attend lectures. Without that I will have to walk from one lecture hall to another on foot. And this is not easy because the departments are far apart from each other and the time in between lectures are short. On many occasions I would be 10 to 15 minutes late into lectures. Relying on the school bus is even worse since they are few and are always full by the time they get to my stop. The halls of residence do not have bus terminals and students have to walk to designated places some distance to the main road to catch a bus which is not guaranteed whether the bus will show up or full on its arrival. The only option is to walk long distances across campus from one lecture hall to another."

Most of the respondents agreed that increased admission of female students into the university have provided a sense of calmness, strength and security among girls. Courses that were previously dominated by males have seen trickles of females, and in the Arts, Social Sciences and Law, faculties more female enrollment have made them vocal and active participants in classrooms. However, they are cognizance of the fact that a collection of girls had led to gossips, unnecessary fashion, and competition among them. Fashion has become a big trend and a challenge for many girls who come from poor households.

Koshie acknowledge that coming from a middle class working family,

> "I have always felt comfortable with my skin and most of the girls from the upper rich class families who exhibit extreme opulence. Many boys look down and would not associate with me because I don't own a car or wear fashionable clothing. I can confess to you that even though I have been at this school for four years I have only a handful of friends because I do not belong. The trend is that, many of the students only associate with those who are outspoken, own a car, dress fashionably, have contacts in high places and from privileged backgrounds. These challenges notwithstanding, I am grateful that I have concentrated on my studies all these years with the modest support I get from my parents. The competitive nature of fashion and those who travelled abroad during vacation is too much and I can confidently tell you that many girls have fallen victims to this crave by doing whatever it takes to acquire these material possessions. I know of a few course mates from poor backgrounds who have adapted very bad habits and lifestyle by dating older rich men in order to be able to afford expensive clothing, laptops, cell phones and even cars. This is a challenge that put a lot of pressure on girls at the university."

Dede added that the increased female population at the university has brought about unparalleled competition among female students.

> "I am even surprised sometimes to find out that girls are competing for a particular boy friend, or about the latest fashions, or the one travels abroad during vacations, or the type of cars they use, or the kind of computers or electronic gadgets they have. This is ridiculous because I was expecting them to instead compete on academic matters and not on material things. But, that is the reality now for girls from affluent backgrounds. However, this crave to belong attitude is increasingly perverting innocent girls from poor humble backgrounds to resort to prostitution in order to make money and compete. The desire to own material things is making many girls vulnerable to bad behaviors which demean the status of college girls."

Dede was very upset and concerned about how people perceive and stereotype females and the kind of courses they have to pursue.

> "She retorted that when it comes to courses like math and science most people still believe that it is men who have to do those courses. And so, anytime people hear that I am into science they just write me off and view me as a "Tom boy" trying to do what is meant for boys or men. This sort of attitude is very intimidating even as it also urges me on to prove to the skeptics that women can be as good as men in all aspects of life."

The responses provided by girls at the university provide enormous insights into many of the issues that are both personal to them and for the entire student body at the university. The researcher agreed to many of the concerns raised particularly in relation to the dynamics of gender and power relations that shape gender stereotypes and sexual innuendos perpetrated by

few elements within the university faculty. There was also the problem of institutional magnitude that affects all students including respondents and hampers their experiences and academic improvements.

Summary

In sum, the responses provided by girls from the university show that issues relating to gender stereotypes, sexual innuendos by few male lecturers, lack of library and instructional resources, poor housing and transport facilities, and unnecessary competitions among female students are major challenges that respondents mentioned. On the whole, respondents from all levels of education point to gender stereotypes perpetuated by some male teachers and peers as very disturbing because it only reinforces existing gender relations within the broader society. It is hoped that in the 21 century educated people should know better and desist from acts of discrimination or subordination based on gender. If unfortunately such kinds of attitudes and practices are happening in major cities in Ghana then what would the situation of girls and women in rural communities look like?

The respondents were very concerned about the attitudes and practices of few male teachers who continue to hold unto archaic ideological beliefs that females are less intelligence and low achievers who could be exploited sexually and discriminated against as a normal socio-cultural practice. The girls pointed out that women and girls deserve the respect and recognition like their male counterpart and not be treated as second class citizens. Another concern that traverses all educational levels was the lack of adequate school facilities and instructional materials for quality education. On this issue all the respondents argue that lack of or limited library resources like books, computers and laboratory equipments affect their academic output. They were worried about the deteriorating conditions of school facilities such as toilets, canteens, and classrooms which are not conducive for effective learning. These challenges do not only hurt in the development of the sense of identity, security and self worth of girls but to the impact these challenges have on their performance and future career goals.

School Interactions and Relations

In order to examine and understand the nature of interactions and relations that exist within the schooling environment, I posed the question: *What is the nature of your interactions and relations with teachers and peers, and why?* This question unraveled the nature and kind of interactions girls have with their teachers and peers and also, the reasons they assign to such relationships. Table 5.8 gives a snapshot of the tally from girls' responses to their relations and interactions with teachers and peers.

Table 5.8: Interactions and Relations with Teachers and Peers

	Teachers		**Peers**	
	Good	**Poor**	**Good**	**Poor**
JHS	5	0	4	1
SHS	4	1	3	2
University	2	3	4	1
Totals	**11**	**4**	**11**	**4**

(Source: Fieldwork, 2009)

Table 5.8 shows that 11 of the 15 girls view their relations and interactions with teachers and peers as good while the remaining 4 said it was poor. However, the number of students who responded to have good relations or interactions with teachers reduces as girls move up into higher levels of education. On the other hand, respondents with poor teacher relations or interactions increase with higher levels of education among girls. On peer relations and interactions, more than 3 respondents said it was good while 2 or less answered that it was poor. The respondents emphasized that their view of the poor relations with peers has to do with especially the male peers.

The total number of respondents from each school level may not necessarily tell a detailed story about the nature of such relations or explain reasons why they think that relations are good or poor. What it certainly shows is that girls in general have favorable relations and interactions with teachers and peers on the whole than poor relations. It does not however take away the resentments and reservations some of the girls have with the kind of relations and interactions that occur within the school environment. The views and opinion expressed by these girls concerning their relations and interactions with peers and teachers have a lot of implications on the confidence, trust and disappointments that girls have of themselves in relation to others.

Upon further probe to understand the reasons behind girls' choices for good and poor relations with teacher and peers, a couple of themes emerged. Table 5.9 captures some of the

main themes that emerged when girls explained the reasons why they responded the way they did.

Table 5.9: Themes Mentioned by Respondents

Reasons mentioned	JHS	SHS	University
Teacher Attitude and Influence	5	5	5
Teacher Care, Affection, Respect and Helpfulness	5	4	3
Teacher Support and Cooperation	5	3	2
Teacher Detachment and Lack of Responsibility	1	2	4
Student Hostility, Rudeness and Disrespect	2	3	2
Students Friendliness, Respect and Concern	4	3	4

(Source: Fieldwork, 2009)

Table 5.9 shows some of the reasons girls assigned to the reasons why they relate or not relate with teachers and peers. It is clear that the teachers attitude and sense of care, affection, respect, cooperation and support for girls are crucial for their positive view of the teacher and subsequent relations or interactions at all levels of education. They also agreed that teachers who are detached, self-centered, and lack the sense of responsibility towards them usually register in them as unconcerned, which negatively affects the way they relate and interact with them.

Many of them agreed that teachers, who show concern and are prepared to help them academically and emotionally, do influence and shape their level of relations and interactions they have with them. Most girls overwhelmingly agreed that they have strong positive relations with many of that peers, but then a few of them agreed that they do not associate or interact with especially boys because of despicable attitudes, acts of hostility, rudeness and disrespect that they sometimes express towards girls. All of them mentioned that they bond with peers irrespective of gender if they show compassion, friendliness and respect for them. Even though there are differences in experiences among individual respondents, they were unanimous in their response of satisfactory interactions/relations they have with the majority of their teachers. They also expressed concerns about few of the teachers whose attitudes toward them made it impossible for them to relate/interact positively with them.

The following stories and narratives capture the varied responses girls at the JHS level expressed in connection with their relations/interactions with teachers and peers. Girls at the JHS level were very positive about the good interactions and relations they have with their teachers and peers, but also recognize that there are pockets of instances that make their relations and interactions with some teachers and peers very poor.

Abena commented:

> "Many of our teachers treat girls with respect and fairness in their classrooms. Their unbiased attitude toward girls makes me get closer to them for help and advice. But, I also have problems with two of my teachers whom I think are too harsh and really don't care about girls. They are the only teachers I don't relate or interact with."

To support her assertion she narrated her experience with a female science teacher and how her strained relations affected her likeness for science.

> "One day, my friend and I went to our science teacher to ask for help with some lessons she taught in class before we take her tests the following week because we did not understand. To our surprise she refused to help us and instead told us that she was busy and cannot waste her time on us. We even pleaded with her if we could come later but she dismissed us and asked us to leave the staff common room. From the day she treated us that way, I decided to avoid and have nothing to do with her. I have also remained quiet in her science class. Her attitude is bad when I compare her to our math teacher who is very caring and helpful. She encourages us to learn and ask us to come and see her whenever we encounter problems. She is like a mother to me and I relate and interact with her very well."

Abena continued that,

> "Even though our teachers have the power and influence to shape the subjects we will like to do in future, their compassion and support is important to building our interests in the subjects they teach. When I find out that a particular teacher is not interested in helping me to do well in his or her class, I get disappointed and refuse to relate with that teacher. I like those teachers who would give me suggestions, praise or criticism to make me a good student. But, there are also a few teachers who pride their selfish feelings over that of their students, academic success and they are the ones I never want to associate with."

Abena concluded that,

> "While the majority of boy's do behavior respectfully to girls, there are always a handful of them are very rude and hostile toward girls. Such boys do not want anything to do with girls and sometimes feel that they are superior to girls. Behaviors like this regularly manifest in acts that sometimes embarrass girls. When I get frustrated in the process I just stay away from them."

This articulation points to how students are quick to gravitate to teachers who show concern for their welfare and interests and vice versa. Generally, the feeling of good relations/interactions by girls with majority of teachers and students is evident because it gives them opportunity to learn. They point to the excellent work of some teachers who ensure that girls are fairly treated and included in classroom activities and engaged without being bullied or ridiculed by boys.

Araba was excited to identify her male social studies teacher as very supportive of girls.

> "This teacher makes it so easy for girls to contribute in class and encourage us not to be shy or timid but speak up in class. He always challenges us to feel confident in class. So far, he is one of the best teachers I have ever had and all the students both boys and girls interact and relate very well with him."

She continued by mentioning that,

> "Most teachers have influence on students and know their strengths and weaknesses. I believe that a good teacher is the one who is helpful, caring and with the ability to teach to my understanding and shape my future career and interests. My math teacher for example, takes her time to explain difficult issues in very simple ways for me to get it. She inspires me by telling me that, "if I were not capable of doing math I will not have been in her class."

Araba thinks that the gender of a teacher affect the way he/she relate/interact with students and said,

> "Female teachers do not only serve as my role model but they also inspire me to feel that I can do it. My math teacher is understand me because she is a woman, she makes sure that everyone in the classroom understand the lesson and will go all over again to explain if we ask her to. I cannot see why male teachers are comfortable relating and interacting with boys and female teachers doing the same with girls."

Araba concluded that

> "It is very painful and annoying when I see boys verbally abusing or physically attacking girls on school campus. These attitudes by a few rowdy boys do not however sway my good relations with many boys who are courteous and respectful of girls. On day, a boy's comment that, the bible even attest to the godly and superior nature of males over females raised a heated debate. Since that time, I have worked hard academically and developed a strong resistance to the domineering attitudes of boys."

Afua was particularly impressed with teachers who really care and respect students. Referring to the math teacher, she points out:

> "Our math teacher is always ready to help us with their math problems. He encourages us to overcome our fear of math and I like him for that. He is also kind and trusts us to make the right decisions and makes sure that we understand what he is teaching. For these reasons many of us have good relations with him and have developed the likeness for math. This is not that case with our science teacher whose teaching is difficult because he is not able to explain complex things into simple things for me to understand. There are other teachers who are also inspirational to me because they are always available to help me. These teachers encourage me by telling me that I am capable of doing anything I set my mind to do. With few months to do my BCCE exams, I sometimes get scared but they keep assuring me that I am capable and the only thing is to continue learn for the exams."

Afua summed her response by saying that:

> "While it is very common to find girls and boys relating and interacting very well in school, I am also disappointed that on many occasions it is the girls who approach boys for help with school work but not the other way around. Boys usually don't come for help from us, they would rather go to another boy to seek the help they need and this is not right."

Ama contended that teachers' attitude and support is very crucial for girls' relations and interactions with them.

> "As a girl, I want my teachers to care and support me like they will do to their own daughters. While I relate with the majority of teachers, there are two of them whom I have strong attachment because they are like parents to me. My science teacher has supported and helped me to understand and do well in science. He gives me his full attention and makes every effort in class to make students understand what he is teaching. My English teacher also cares and supports me by given me advice to take my studies seriously and to refrain from bad company. They are the only two teachers I trust most and go to when I encounter academic and personal difficulties."

Ama continued:

> "My relations and interactions with students depend on their attitudes toward me. Generally, students who bully and ridicule others are not my friends because I only relate and interact with students who behave appropriately and respect the rights of others."

Adjoa agreed that her relations and interactions with teachers are cordial but her relations with boys are based on how civil and respectful boys are to her.

> "I barely relate or interact with boys who disrespect and belittle the intelligence of girls. But I also have a problem with teachers who jump to unfounded conclusion when they see that girls and boys have strong relations. When they do that they only drive a wedge between boys and girls in the school."

Adjoa also alluded to the role of teachers in influencing her academic choices and school behavior.

> "My teachers make me work hard in science and math because I told them that I want to become a medical doctor in future. My math teacher for instance, told me to work very hard in math, science and English if I want to achieve that goal. My effort has paid off because they point out my strengths and weaknesses, and helped me to improve and realize my potential and now I am doing very well in science and math, and progressing in English."

Generally, the girls at the SHS level responded that they have good relations/interactions with teachers and peers even though some of them pointed to certain instances that led to poor relations/interactions with peers than with their teachers. In her response Effie reiterated that her relations and interactions with teachers are good, but there are some boys who consistently disrespect girls and for that matter are not friends.

> "Some boys get involved in silly acts that get them into trouble with teachers. Under normal circumstance, teachers treat girls and boys fairly but they are sometimes hostile to boys especially who disrupt lessons or break school rules."

Effie acknowledged that teachers are very influential to her academic and social development because they make sure that we learn to improve ourselves. She said,

> "Some teachers are very helpful with their teaching and learning strategies because they ensure that every student in the class fully participate in asking and answering questions. This approach has made me very attentive and involved in class discussions. Sometimes the teachers post grades on tests on the notice board for viewing and this has really made some of us serious in order not to be characterized as a low achiever. I however have my reservations for few male teachers whose attitude and actions show their bias toward boys in science and math. These teachers condone the idea that boys are better than girls in science and math, and show that in their teaching and interactions in the classroom. As girls we easily see through such agenda and because we cannot resist in any way we get frustrated and simply avoid answering questions in their class."

This is one way that I feel girls are resisting oppressive male teachers, but I strongly believe that if their given the voice or they are able to voice their displeasure without fear of intimidations the better it would be for the conversation to forge ahead rather than resigning and burying ones head in silence.

Esi admitted that the majority of teachers are fair to girls even when boys are outperforming girls in their class.

> "What some teachers are good at is that, instead of abandoning girls to their fate, they rather encourage, help and advice us to overcome our difficulties. What I see about these great teachers is that, they want every student to succeed in school, obey rules and show respect for others. They are very patient with students who are prepared to learn and don't tolerate the attitudes of students who are not serious in school work."

According to Esi, she relates better with girls than with boys because there are so many things that she has in common with girls but a lot of difference with boys. For instance,

> "I can discuss with girls many things from private matters to school work which I can never discuss with boys. Added to that, some boys may only interact with you because they intend to have an intimate relationship which I am not prepared or ready to do. Many time rejecting such proposals leads to very aggressive behaviors from boys. I am better off not associating with many of the boys because you never know what is on their mind once you make nice with them."

Esi concluded that,

> "There are also some teachers who are bias toward students they personally like in the classroom. I have observed on many occasions teachers who show their biases in class by only engaging their favorite students and leaving the rest of the class as observers. Some even go to the extent of making nasty comments about students in the classroom. I do not agree with such teachers because their approach to teaching does not help many others. Teachers who behave that way usually have very little interaction or relations with students."

Emefa thinks that most teachers interact with boys and girls differently based on their own experiences and biases. She explained that:

> "During instructions teachers expect students to pay attention and engage in the lessons but when students disrupt class, boys will be punished severely than girls. For this reason girls are normally friendlier to teachers and interact better with them than boys do. On the whole, teachers are fair and friendly in their relations with students but also very strict with school work and discipline. My chemistry teacher is a perfect example of teachers who challenges all students especially girls to work hard and backs it up with the attitude of care, support and teaching to students understanding. When I compare his way of teaching to other classes, I wonder why other teachers don't adopt his approach to teaching to make their classrooms interesting like that of the chemistry teacher. I have to say that, I interact and relate better with teachers whom I feel safe, secured, supported and cared for than those who are detached from me."

Edem feels that while teachers in general may not be biased, sometimes they are biased in terms of how serious a student is with school work. Students who are high achiever are usually liked and interact better with teachers than those who are normally seem as not serious with school work.

> "For instance, our chemistry teacher always tries to involve all students in his teaching but our biology teacher only relies on a couple of boys whenever he is teaching without involving girls. Maybe I am overreacting but I still don't understand why he does not want girls to contribute in his class even when they raise our hands to do so. He is part of the reason why I have lost interest in biology."

Edem further pointed out the authority and influence teachers command in the subjects they teach and the way they execute their teaching.

> "The chemistry teacher has really made me interested in the subject because he makes sure that every student is engaged and understands what he is teaching. It all started when I went to him during my first year at SHS to tell him that I am interested in doing chemistry in future. He challenged and encouraged me to learn and work hard. Since then, I have become one of the best students in his class, and I am very grateful for his influence and support. Another teacher who has had a big influence in my life is my English teacher who is like a mother to me. She advices me to take my studies seriously, behave appropriately, and respect school rules and regulations, and motivate me to be a better person."

Eyinam explained the normal practice in school where girls form groups to counter boys groups. However, sometimes a handful of boys are able to join the girls to form a group either as a study group or purposively for doing assignments, but it is difficult for girls to join boys group. There are more reasons that I suspect make boys and girls don't want to interact/relate in school. Apart from recreation, sports and entertainment activities many informal interactions/relations are restricted to gender lines. Teachers and students relations/interactions mostly occur during classroom instructions whether the parties involved like it or not. She explains further:

> "Teachers are obligated to instruct and care for the learning needs of students but many of them are not interested in students who absent themselves, fail to participate in activities, are notorious, disobedient and don't dress properly. Boys are the ones who usually fall foul to school rules and regulations because girls are always well dressed, well behaved, speak politely and respect the authority of teachers. All of these come to explain why teachers like to interact/relate better with girls than with the boys."

While not all teachers may fit the mold of good relations/interactions, the majority of them show that they care and are very professional in their teaching and solving of students problems. Teachers, I must say, have influenced my subject choices through their inspiration and teaching. Such teachers are easy to approach for help even though there are a few who simply do not want to have any interactions with students. I do and most of them really inspire girls to work hard. With my peers, I only relate with students both boys and girls who respect me as the girls' school

prefect and obey my command when giving. I don't interact or relate to boys who are rebellious to my authority.

At the university level, girls generally agreed that their relations and interactions with lecturers are not that close because of the impersonal nature of the school environment. Classes usually have large number of students and lecturers sometimes shield themselves from close relations with students. Contrary, peer relations and interactions at college is better than at any level of their education for a variety of reasons. Comparatively, girls interact less with lecturers than boys because we normally want to avoid the suspicion of intimate sexual relations with lecturers. Many girls would rather prefer to keep their distance from especially the male lecturers. Correspondingly, some male lecturers also create barriers to avoid being seen as having intimate connections with girls. The following narratives give an in-depth account of girls' relation and interaction experiences at the university.

Korkor posited that,

> "From my perspective, student interactions with lecturers are very limited because of the fact that most of our classes have large number of students and having a person relations with many of the lecturers does not occur. Lecturers barely know my name since there are over 1,000 girls in our department. I was expecting that female lecturers will be more accommodating to girls than to boys but I was wrong. The only female lecturer in my department refuses to be nice with girls for reasons I cannot understand. When I took her course last semesters, I was hoping to get closer to her but she never gave me the opportunity to do so. She is always detached from especially girls and complains about the kinds of dresses girls wore to lectures. She always finds faults with girls to complain about and many girls in the department hardly relate or interact with her. The male lecturers who are similarly detached from students never complain about the dress girls wear. Lecturers in general keep the minimal of relations and interactions with students."

She added that,

> "Even though, lecture – student relations and interactions may be limited they still have influence over students' in the courses they teach. I remember that when I was assigned history, political science, theater arts and linguistics at level 100, I contacted my course advisor to discuss my interests and challenges. He was helpful in pointing out to me that, if I wish to pursue law at the graduate level then I have to drop history after level 100, theater arts after level 200, and then combine linguistics with political science at the level 300 and 400 for graduation. He explained to me that linguistics would help develop my English language skills in phonetics, morphology and word pronunciations and political science is required in law. His advice and directions was very helpful to me and have since developed good relations with him."

In conclusion Korkor said of peer relations and interactions:

> "My relations and interactions with peers are far better than with lecturers. In the hostel, students interact through social gatherings and in study groups. Such interactions in small grouping are very intense and effective in creating lasting impact on me. It is within this type of interactions that I gained most of my friends. One important thing I noticed is that at the university we see ourselves as young adults and therefore we treat each other with respect and dignity both in academic and social matters. I can only mention a handful of male and female students I have avoided because of their bad behaviors and attitudes."

Four out of five respondents were concerned with scandals that have rocked the university in relation to sexual affairs between some lecturers' and female students. These rumors or speculations have impacted on the healthy student - lecturer relations/interactions. Presently, there are only a few lecturers who are openly friendly with female students within many departments since the majority of them are keeping their distance to avoid being tied to these scandals. Added to the frustration of some of the respondents, female lecturers in some of the departments are not supportive as they have bought into the view that girls these days are willing accomplices of infidelity and promiscuity. Female students find it difficult to have honest and credible relations with lecturers in general and this has impacted negatively on the academic and moral integrity of girls.

Drawing on her experience, Koikoi reiterated that,

> "A lecturer I had an appointment with cancelled the meeting without any reason and suggested that I meet with his teaching assistant who was unable to address my problem. The two female lecturers in the department whom I hoped could help where indifferent because of the bad image few girls had created in the department. The female lecturer were visible distraught as well as concerned about the immoral behaviors of girls dating male lecturers. Increasingly, the window of opportunity to build healthy relations with our lecturers is nearly closed. Now, the only medium girls could communicate or interact with lecturers is in the classrooms where there are large number of students, and making it impossible to engage, exchange and seek support from lecturers."

She contended that:

> "Currently, I think that our level of communication and interactions with lecturers is low due to reasons I have already stated. Lecturers barely meet one on one with us to help in resolving our academic challenges. In many cases they state in their syllabus and courses outlines that their offices are open at certain hours for student consultations but many a times you don't find them in their offices."

On peer relations and interactions on campus Koikoi was upbeat and responded that:

> "I strongly feel that peer relations on campus are very cordial and good. However, I sometimes get frustrated by some of the boys who still have the mentality that math and science is too difficult for girls to do. In my economics class, a couple of boys still have this conception and are always reluctant to help me whenever I approach them with a problem. This stereotype persists because there are only few female students in these departments. The only way to change these attitudes of gender stereotypes is for the university authorities to admit more female students and hire more female lecturers into these departments."

Koikoi concluded:

> "On the whole, my interactions and relations are best fostered among students I participate and engage within study groups than in tutorial sessions. My friendship with members of the study group is much stronger and reliable because they are always there to share their knowledge and understanding on issues with me. I like this medium of learning than tutorial sessions where large number of students makes it impossible for every individual student to contribute effectively to the learning process. One experience I will never forget occurred in one of my tutorial sessions when I was selected to present my opinion on the issues under discussions. Being a shy and quiet person in the presence of about fifty students made me stammer, tremble and could not articulate my views impressively."

Koshie, while agreeing with many of the issues raised by others, was also concerned that the lack the one on one relation and interactions with lecturers is hurting students.

She pointed out that:

> "The large numbers of students in a class deny girls, who are normally shy opportunity to ask questions, seek explanations and contribute to the topic under discussions. I don't feel comfortable stand up in class or tutorial session to ask questions when I am aware that there are boys in the class ready to poke fun at me."

She told a story of a matured lady in her psychology class who because of her consistent asking of questions in class, was labeled "too known" by some of the boys. Such name calling did not deter her from engaging the lecturer to make her understand what he was talking about.

Koshie admitted:

> "I really admire her courage in standing against all odds to ask her question without fear of intimidation from male students. The interesting twist to this is that these male students would never ask questions but only sit at the back of the class to make fun of serious girls who muster the strength to seek clarifications on what the lecturer is teaching."

Koshie feels that the deteriorating girls –lecturer relations at the university can also be blamed squarely on some unscrupulous male lecturers who in a position of authority use poor judgments and abuse their power by engaging in sexual relations with female students. It is therefore not appropriate for all of us to be affected by the actions of a few because no matter the situation I feel that it is wrong and unfair for every girl to be punished for the transgressions of a few students. She also thinks that among the student body the relations and interactions between male and female students are very good in spite of few incidences where boys misbehave to drive a wedge between them and female students.

She recounted:

> "I am very concerned about acts of hooliganism displayed by some of the male students at the halls of residence. In my hall of residence for example, there are a couple of male students who continually hoot and make funny noises or commentaries whenever girls use the main thoroughfare. This kind of behavior is so embarrassing that my friends and I normally avoid these routes. There are also a few naughty male students from rich backgrounds who are only interested in having fun without regard to their academic work. I am very cautious of this group of boys who are proud of their family backgrounds and will not interact with some of us from modest backgrounds."

Dede even though agreed that there have been improvements in the methods of teaching and instructions she was very disappointed by the limited lecturer – student relations and engagement. She said,

> "At this university, teachers come to class to only lecture without taking questions or engagement students in discussions. I think we are being spoon fed with what the lecturers wants us to know without questions or explanations. My suspicion is that maybe because the lecturers are not paid well they are not motivated to waste their time on students. The limited interaction of lecturers and students is not helping us in anyway."

After pondering for a while Dede added,

> "I am shocked to still find pockets of male teachers and peers at this university who still subscribe to the idea that women should not bother themselves with too much education or even think of pursuing higher education since they will end up in the kitchen after they get married. Such people are consumed with cultural ideologies that subordinate women and assume that it is a man's responsibility to care for the woman. I was hoping that educated men would know better but I was wrong. People of this mindset barely relate and interact with women they feel would challenge their authority, and as an educated woman I would never succumb to such archaic ideological whims."

From the following discussions it is evident that the relations and interactions of lecturers and female students are not that strong. Aside institutional setup that sometimes does not foster an environment for greater interactions and relations among faculty members and students, many of the respondents were also apprehensive about their relations with lecturers. Rumors of sexual impropriety among some female students and lecturers have strained good student –lecturer interactions. Hampered teacher – students' relations and interactions does not augur well with the development of a healthy environment for effective communication between teachers and student which ultimately impacts on learning. In conclusion the experiences of the university students about their relations with teachers contrast that of JHS and SHS students.

Adarku reminisced for a while and said,

> "I have been very surprised that teacher - student interactions are better at the basic and secondary levels than at college. I can say with certainty that I used to interact and relate very well with my teachers and peers in those days than it is now. Even though, I can do anything about the situation I wish university authorities learn from the success of relations and interactions that occur at primary and secondary levels. When I was at JHS and SHS, I always feel cared for and supported by teachers and friends but now I feel so lonely and upset."

While most interviewees feel that they relate and interact better with peers who are girls than to male peers, Adarku was an exception who feels her interactions with male students is stronger than with female students and lecturers. Her reason was that many female student exhibit and show competitiveness in fashion and other material things that usually lead to jealousy, false gossips, and altercations with one another. For her to avoid these false gossips and rumors that can sometimes affect ones academic work she has decided to have only few female friends and rather be more interactive with male students who respect and care about her.

In sum, it is obvious that reasons behind girls' relations/interactions are multifaceted and grounded on their perception about the level of affection, care and trust they receive from teachers and peers. The realization that girls relations/interactions with teachers dwindle as they move up the educational ladder is troubling but also an indication of how girls in school are either dependent or independent at a stage in their life. This also shows how girls at early stages of their education have no choice but to respond to the dedication, care, and affection of their teachers. Sometimes girls' interactions are not reciprocal but forced response that can be traced from traditional norms and values embedded in adult-child relationship within the Ghanaian

culture. The customary conventionally is that a child should be respectful and respond positively to adults because of their power and authority.

The response from girls at the university however challenges these traditional values of dependent relations to a more reciprocal one. Also, the students mostly see the lecturers at the university as detached and unconcerned due to institutional arrangements. This weak relation is contrasted when it comes to girls' interactions and relations with peers in general. Girls usually will not relate/interact with male students who are hostile and disrespect them and vice versa. It is also important to note that girls as they become mature, independent and make decisions for themselves also become aware of their rights and responsibilities. They are then able to filter through actions and behaviors that they feel are unacceptable to them and decide the kind of relations and interactions they wish to have with teachers or peers.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the narratives, stories and experiences of girls in their own voices within the Accra-Tema school district area. From the conversations and interpretations, it seems that girls at all levels of schooling within the district have many challenges to confront in their educational pursuit. These include their lack of adequate knowledge on education reforms that continue to shape their schooling experiences. The implications for the lack of knowledge of reform policies are that, girls are not be able to know and understand what is expected on them and also, what they have to expect from teachers and school administrators. Without their understanding of the policy provisions, girls with not be able to demand accountability or even assess if the intended policy provisions have been met. With the lack of knowledge teachers and school administrators can do anything and get away with it.

Girls also complained about the lack of many basic school amenities and logistics that make schools function properly. For instance, they complained of the lack of repairs in their classrooms or the fact that the classrooms are too small for the number of students. Fixtures and fittings in classrooms and libraries are in deplorable conditions and need either repairs or replacement. There are inadequate textbooks and instructional materials to help in academic work. There are no laboratories and those who have laboratories lack essential instruments and equipments. Facilities like toilets and canteens at primary and secondary are poorly maintained

or are in the state of disrepair. At the college housing, transportation etc are very poor and need improvements.

Girls' response to their relations and interactions with teachers and peers were mixed. Most girls at the JHS and SHS level have better relations/interactions with teachers but college students' interaction with teachers was poor. However, girls' relation/interactions with peers remained steady through all the levels of education. One caveat that resonated was that girls are likely to reciprocate and relate/interact with teachers and peers who show them affection, respect and compassion but not those who are hostile and disrespect them.

These notwithstanding, girls agreed that the reforms have opened doors of opportunities for them to access and participate in schooling and subjects of their choice. They reported that there have been increases in the number of girls enrolled in school and that, gender gaps in classrooms especially at the primary and secondary are closing than at the university. In sum, girls alluded that they were happy to be enrolled and are determined to work hard to complete their education and fulfill their future career aspirations. This said, the researcher believes that it would take bold and decisive actions on the part of government to collaborate with stakeholders to initiative gender equity policies to transform schools into healthy and friendly environments for girls.

CHAPTER SIX – FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to examine girls' schooling experiences to uncover their knowledge and understanding of ongoing education reforms, the opportunities, and the challenges they face in school, as well as the interactions/relations they have with teachers and peers. Centering and privileging the narratives of girls to capture their stories and experiences in their own voices accomplished the study's mission. Evidently, girls were able to speak to the challenges, concerns, and deep-rooted issues that needed redress in order to promote their education. The persistence of socio-economic and cultural barriers, biased school discourses and practices, and the display of unequal gender relations were some of the major limitations to the promotion of girls' education in Ghana. The in-depth information and data gathered in this study will be an addition to literature and efforts aimed at transforming schools and ensuring that the vision for education for all by 2015 is achieved. This final chapter provides the major findings, conclusions and recommendations for future research to promote gender equity in Ghanaian education.

Findings of the Study

Analyzing the responses provided by girls to understand their schooling experiences the researcher is disappointed that the comprehensive education reforms had not necessarily addressed many of the educational needs and challenges that girls confront in schools. In this section, I present a brief summary of the findings that emerged from interviews, observations, and document analysis done in the study. The first section discusses specific findings drawn from the articulations of girls about their schooling experiences. This includes girls' lack of knowledge and understanding of ongoing reforms, the pervasive cultural attitudes and practices that subordinate girls, students' unawareness of indirect policy benefits, and the silenced position and experiences of girls. The second section discusses the researcher's general findings from study observations and document analysis.

Lack of Knowledge and Understanding of Ongoing Reforms

Many of the respondents especially those at the JHS and SHS levels had very limited knowledge and understanding of ongoing educational reform programs. The fact that 13 of the 15 girls responded to have some knowledge of the FCUBE program did not materialize in their understanding of the provisions of comprehensive reforms. Almost all of the JHS and SHS

students who knew or have heard about the FCUBE program had very limited knowledge compared to those at the university. They were therefore unable to connect policy provisions to their schooling experiences and how these inform the opportunities and challenges available for them. There was ample evidence to conclude that girls' limited knowledge about education reforms is partly due to the failure of the sector ministry and departments of education to disseminate information to educate the general public and students about policy provisions.

Apart from limited advertisements and announcements on televisions and radio, the sector ministry failed to design pragmatic information delivery system to educate students affected by policy discourses and practices. It was not surprising to find that girls, who claimed to have some knowledge of ongoing reforms, knew very little information, which they either received from social studies class, or through the news media (newspaper, TV and radio). The university students however, had better understanding of ongoing reforms because they either gained more information from personal researches or during class discussions.

The implication for the lack of knowledge at the JHS and SHS levels is that girls are unable to demand accountability from teachers and administrators, and also assess their expectations. With limited knowledge, girls never question policy provisions as well as the discourses and practices they unleash in schools. Critical questions that probe into policy decisions such as who decided it, what part are they to play or are there provisions in there that will change their educational future are not asked. For these reasons all of these questions are lost and unanswered because girls are ignorant of policy provisions and how they impact on their education.

Pervasive Cultural Attitudes and Practices that subordinate Females

From the comments of girls, pervasive cultural attitudes and practices couched on patriarchy tend to perpetuate gender stereotypes that continue to prevail in schools. According to respondents, few male teachers and peers still act and behave in ways that disregard and belittle girls' intelligence and importance in school. These attitudes usually lead to girls' marginalization and subordination with consequences on girls self worth, confidence, and competence within the classrooms and on school campuses. Girls complained that they are unable to ask or answer questions, and effectively engage in class activities because of the harassments and ridicules they constantly face in classrooms. The silenced and subordinated position of girls within classrooms

only reinforces and reproduces gender stereotypes and inequalities prevalent in the broader Ghanaian society.

The researcher observed during the interview sessions that some girls were reluctant to talk about attitudes and practices of teachers in general and male teachers in particular for fear of victimization. The majority of respondents pointed to few male teachers' who exhibit tendencies of sexual harassments, advances, and abuses on innocent girls. It is important that girls are provided with the tools and platforms to speak out, question, challenge, and resist certain practices within schools that make their experiences uncomfortable. If nothing is done, girls' education will continue to be dictated and controlled from male discourses and practices to define the quality, quantity, and content of education made available.

Many of the respondents were concerned about attitudes and behaviors perpetrated by few male teachers and students who have the mindset that girls are inferior to male. This socio-cultural construction is not given girls the leverage they need within the classrooms and until girls are afforded the respect and decency as equal to boys this archaic ideology will continue to perceive women as housewives, child bearers and homemakers "whose place is the kitchen."

Lack of Understanding of Policy Benefits

The argument whether the FCUBE program benefits private schools or not came up with interviewees who attend or had previously attended private schools. All respondents at the JHS level were of the opinion that the FCUBE program does not benefit them because it is aimed at public education. Even though respondents did not benefit from free tuitions and textbooks, they acknowledged that the reform has encouraged more children, especially girls, to gain access not only into all levels of education but also in subjects and courses such as science and math.

From my inquiries and observations I came to the conclusion that private schools benefit indirectly from reform provisions that outline the guidelines and standards for school operations. Usually, the Ghana Education Service is charged with the regulation of the nature of curricula, teaching pedagogy, examination requirements, and management practices for schools. These regulations are issues the students were unaware and hence understand. The provisions and legislation for the establishment of any educational institution mandate that schools (private or public) abide by set guidelines and regulations. Government oversights ensure that all school adopt and use mandated curriculum, teaching and instructional practices, parent and community participation and school management and accountability.

Marginalized and Silenced Position of Girls

Girls mentioned that there are many actions and behaviors within the schooling environment that silences and marginalizes them in classrooms and on school campuses. These include unruly behaviors, ridicules, harassments, and intimidations perpetuated by teachers and male peers. These negative pressures often lead to girls being labeled as weak, inferior and slow learners compared to boys which also impact of the nature of their relations/interactions.

Other general findings include lack of financial resources to provide school buildings, repair dilapidated classroom facilities, books and computer for libraries, train teachers and effectively monitor and evaluate reform outcomes.

Lack of Financial Resources

Research reports and documents on the state of Ghana's education indicate that girls' enrollment, access, and participation have steadily improved. However, the lack of financial resources is hampering efforts to construct modern laboratories and school facilities, repair or replace dilapidated fixture and fittings, provide books and computer for libraries, train teachers and effectively monitor and evaluate reform outcomes.

The limited financial situation of the country has hampered the promotion of gender equity education. The government has cut back on its social responsibilities by cutting back subsidies to support education. Many studies point to financial constraints as one of the most important factor in the promotion of girls' education in Sub-Saharan Africa (Hyde, 1993). Consequently, girls' education is negatively affected because poor parents are likely to withdraw their children from school, particularly their girls.

Lack of Policy Emphasis on Gender Equity Education

While there is a growing sense of awareness and consensus that girls' education has many positive implications on the development of a country, there also seem to be a lack of emphasis on gender equity education in policies designed in Ghanaian education. The ongoing comprehensive reforms and intervention programs are usually designed to increase students' enrollment. However, these programs do not necessarily target the central issue of gender equality because schools are still embedded with biased to reproduce gender inequalities. Until now, gender equity related issues in schools such as teacher training; textbook designs, curricula and instructional delivery have not been integrated into policy provisions or implemented. School discourses and practices continue to discriminate, marginalize and subordinate girls.

There is also a hidden curriculum that overtly and covertly tracked girls into courses and vocations that are viewed as feminine. A survey of the fifteen participants show that while all of them were mandated to take science and math at the JHS and SHS levels they somehow end up in liberal arts or social studies faculties at college. According to three of the college girls they were forced to drop science and math related subjects through the recommendations of their teachers to their parents. The other two saw science and math as very difficult and had to drop them for subjects they were comfortable with. None of the college respondents was doing math, science, engineering or technology related courses. They were reading social science and law, a typical finding consistent with Daddieh (2008) assertion that girls in Ghanaian colleges are likely to enroll as social science, law, or liberal arts students than in science, math, engineering, and technology students.

Lack of Research on Girls Education

Most studies done to promote girls' education in Ghana are executed with mainstream approaches and agendas. Their findings barely include, center or privilege the voices, stories and experiences of females. Credible researches that accurately capture and present the challenges girls encounter in their own voices are hard to find. For this reason, the circumstances within which girls learn and navigate schooling are poorly examined and documented. The absence of feminist research to investigate girls' schooling experiences hamper efforts to understand girls schooling needs and contradictions inherent in policy implementation and outcomes. For these reason policy makers, educators, and stakeholders are not able to get accurate data and information of the reality of girls' education and make the necessary changes to promote equality in schools.

Alternative Forms of Education for Girls

The study found that government has collaborated with churches and NGOs to expand informal and non-formal education to girls who dropout of the formal system. In urban centers, girls are provided informal education in vocational training in textile printing (tie & dye), hairdressing, tailoring, computer skills, soap making, and in the development of basic skills. In rural areas, girls are trained in specific knowledge content to meet their immediate needs. Programs such as cooperative farming, micro managing, and financing, health and childcare, and adult education have mushroomed in many villages. These programs are usually made possible through intensive dissemination of information and education of the rural communities to create

awareness on a variety of issues that pertains to women and girls' education. Most of these non-formal and informal programs are financed with the assistance of international development partners, NGOs and churches that collaborate with local women's groups to make these a reality.

Lack of Creativity in Classroom Instructions

In my classroom observations I saw that many teachers were using the "banking method" of instructions. So, the teachers were usually the all-knowing authority figure and students were the subservient learners whose duty is to listen with any form of engagements. I witnessed in one classroom in which the teacher involved students in group discussions and cooperative learning. Aside that, all the other classes lacked creativity in instructions and this form of teaching usually limits students' ability to critical think. The Ghana Education Service has documented that the development of students' knowledge and critical thinking capabilities is dependent on their involvement and engagement in classroom activities.

In addition, classroom discourses and practices amply reflect the power and gender relations within the school setting. I saw how the teachers' power and authority deploy discourses and practices that are in use, who is permitted to use them, who can or cannot speak during the class period, and in which capacity or about what situation can students speak. The discourses and practices of power were at work on even how and where girls sat in the classroom, which or whose voices were heard and whose were silenced during lessons. Many teachers' either consciously or unconsciously were authoritative and this intimidated girls in particular. During lessons it is common to find boys monopolize the class and in response girls are reserved and silent for most of the class period, the very reason that makes them to be viewed as unintelligent, lazy, and slow.

Limitations of the Study

There are a couple of limitations in this study that must be pointed out. The use of open-ended questions through interview discussions sometimes made participants repeat themselves. Another deficiency had to do with respondents' honesty to questions that were posed because sometimes, there were differences in their interpretations and understanding of questions when I restated the questions for more insight. There were also problems with the clarity with which some of the girls answered questions. While some respondents merely articulated their

perceptions, views and opinions, there was the likelihood that some answers were influenced by other variables that the study may not have considered.

The researcher believes that some of the respondents were so trapped in their marginal and subordinate positions that they feel their voices don't count or cannot make any difference. I sensed during interview sessions that some of the girls were very shy and timid in talking frankly about the some of the negative things perpetrated by male teacher and peers within the school for fear of being intimidated and victimized. All these culminated in some of the girls' belief that their voices and opinions are unimportant when it comes to decision making both at home and in school. A few of them were apprehensive and question whether their contributions to the study would change anything at all. I share their concern and understand their frustration as they resign their faith for changes in their learning situations to the power and authority of male figures within the school and society. This embedded hegemonic attribution makes girls feel that they cannot be agents of change in their education. I assured them that their voices are powerful and need if any change for gender equity education is to happen in the near future.

Aside the concerns the researcher had on respondents there are other limitations that I have to reiterate. The study mainly focused on girls in a small part of the Greater Accra-Tema school district and the findings cannot be generalized to reflect girls' educational situation in Ghana. Also, the majority of the participants in this study were from middle class background and hence their experiences, perceptions, and views may differ entirely from those from poorer backgrounds and especially girls living in the rural areas in Ghana. Therefore the views of the respondents are not always the true reflection of the entire schooling district or the country.

Another limitation of the study has to do with the limited time frame within which the data was collected. The lack of time and limited budget affected the extent and number of participant to be included in the study, involve more participants, and do more follow-up interviews. The study did not collect opinions from other diverse groups such as teachers, administrators and parents who would have brought different perspectives and opinions to the study. Time constraints due to academic schedule did not allow me to extend my stay on the field to collect more data. Also, the fact that schools were preparing for their final examinations led to many girls reneging on their promise and not making their appointments for interviews.

Policy Recommendations

Several policy recommendations are required if the promotion of girls education and gender equality is to be achieved by the year 2015. From girls' interview responses the study suggests a comprehensive gender specific policy in education to transform schools into environment that include, respect and acknowledge girls as equals to boys. Such a policy must take into account the challenges and concerns of girls in order to address them effectively through policy designs and implementations.

Comprehensive Gender Specific Policy

For comprehensive gender specific policy to thrive and succeed in Ghana the central government should commit adequate resources to address the multifaceted nature of the challenges and concerns of girls in education. Massive financial resources are needed in addition to institutional and human capacity to support specific issues of girls in order to change school discourses and practices that marginalize, discriminate and subordinate them. Comprehensive policy must incorporate all sectors of education, the ministry of women and girls' affairs, women's groups, educators, and stakeholders in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Gender specific policies should contain and outline the following provisions:

- Strategic approach to disseminate policy information on girls' education and equality to the general public through media outlets, brochures, community meetings etc must be aggressively pursued.
- Education of all students especially girls on policy provisions, expectations and responsibilities so that they gain adequate knowledge and understand what the policy is all about and how it impacts on their education.
- Passing of strict laws to ban sexual abuses, intimidations, and discriminations within schools and society. The law should make any form of discrimination based on gender illegal and also set punitive measures, which include firing or imprisonment of male teachers and students who indulge in such misconducts.
- The policy should ban any form of tracking of girls into supposed "feminine" courses and instead design effective ways of enrolling and providing the space and platform on which girls are encouraged to do math, science, engineering, and technology courses in school.

Integration of Central, Regional, and Local Offices

For the comprehensive gender specific policy to overcome institutional challenges efforts should be made to integrate policy activities of the central, regional and local education offices and make them accountable. The responsibility of these departments is to work in coordination to avoid policy contradictions which is a common occurrence and prevalent in policy-making and execution. It is also important that gender equity policies are sustained and consistent even when changes occur in government or departments. It is not ideal to completely abandon programs already in existence when resources, time and efforts have been invested in the process. Rather, programs in existence could be redesigned to suit the latest agenda.

The Ministry of Education should integrate the gender equality vision with regional and local realities by working together to overcome obstacles that hamper girls' education. Programs which are not feasible or nor working should be eliminated and new ones implemented to address new challenges. The regional and district offices should engage and involve parents within the community and include them in the decision making process. It is evident that informed parents within a community who collaborate with educators in planning and executing policy provisions would take ownership and responsibility to promote girls' education.

Effective Supervision, Monitoring and Evaluation

Another important aspect of comprehensive gender equity policy is supervision, monitoring, and evaluation of policy outcomes. The lack of supervision, monitoring and evaluation by participating education offices contribute to policy failures in Ghana. On several counts, coordination among program implementers and departments at different organizational levels are done haphazardly. For example, the Tema District education office, which is responsible for school supervision, monitoring, and evaluation, is not adequately equipped with the human capacity and resources to execute their work efficiently. A personal visit to the office showed that they do not have enough vehicles for supervision visits as well as professionals to handle such work.

Aside their limited numbers, coordinators for girls' education are not well integrated with stakeholders. There is a chronic lack of connection between these offices and the school, and the lack of effective supervision by coordinators to evaluate girls' progress or decline in schools is not documented. A lot of work needs to be done to develop a more cogent database where daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly reports on girls' education can be documented and monitored. Such

reports should include girls' attendance, enrollment, performance, retention, extracurricular activities, and social behaviors. District coordinators for girls' education should periodically undergo professional development training to be effective as resource persons in the training of teachers on gender sensitivity. This recommendation can be effected by a policy directive in which the Ministry of Education provide the necessary leadership, commitments, logistics, and the standards of operations needed to supervise, monitor and evaluate girls' education.

Teacher Training and Professional Development

The study revealed that some teachers' attitudes and behaviors toward girls impact negatively on their educational progress. It is therefore incumbent of government to institute policies that outline strict professional code of conduct and how to improve gender relations within the schooling environment. This policy should change the nature of instructions and curriculum used in training teachers to equip them with skills that support girls' education. Also, conscious effort should be made to recruit more female teachers to serve as role models and mentors to girls. Teachers should be given incentives such as housing and car loans to augment their low pay so that they can commit to the profession.

Private Sector Investments and Civic Participation

While private sector investment in education complements efforts of government civic society participation in public school is in decline within the Accra-Tema District. It behooves on government to involve more private sector participation by incentivizing people who invest in education because the government cannot meet the growing demand for education in Ghana. Initiatives by private individuals, churches and NGOs, which contribute to education of girls must be supported with tax break incentives.

Civil society involvement, engagement and participation in promoting girls' education are critical. The government needs to collaborate with civic society by tapping into the power of grassroots community organization to promote girls' education. The government should encourage Kings and Chiefs of various ethnic grouping in Ghana to mobilize resources to establish educational funds to help build schools and award scholarships to deserving girls within local communities. More communities should be encouraged to follow the examples of Otumfuo Osei Tutu, the King of Ashanti kingdom, who has established the Otumfuo Educational Trust Fund, the King of Abuakwa, who has also set up the Abuakwa Educational Trust Fund for citizens of the Akim Abuakwa territory. Another notable trust fund is the Northern Education

Trust Fund that supports peoples of the northern region of Ghana. In effect, the mobilization of local leadership with the support of community members is a powerful avenue in which girls' education and gender equality can be promoted.

Formation of Girls Organizations

Another policy initiative that could foster gender equity in schools is the formation of girls' societies. Apart from changing curriculum, textbooks, and teacher attitudes, the formation of girls' organizations within the school campuses will potentially help girls in many ways. Such organization could be used to develop girls' sense of self, belongingness, confidence and also motivate girls to believe in themselves. The ministry for women and girls affairs should play a role in ensuring that every school has a girl's society.

Even though the Ghana Education Service presently has a handbook on girls' education many teachers are not familiar with its use. The formation of girls' societies within every school could help girls to learn about school curriculum, career options, learning strategies, public speaking, and personal responsibility. In such spaces, girls can share experiences and collectively in one voice seek redress to their displeasure with existing structures of power that marginalize and subordinate them. This empowering process will help girls speak to issues they genuinely care about toward their educational success.

In essence, the agency of girls could be nurtured to improve their participation in education. When girls are engaged or given the platform to interact with others in support of a cause, they get motivated and empowered to collectively resist, challenge, and undermine the status quo. It is true that the school environment may serve as a place where girls' voices and agencies are suppressed but schools can also be place where girls' clubs could provide the space that could change the landscape within which girls learn and plan individual and collective actions.

Recommendations for Future Research

There is very limited research on gender equity education in Ghana and this study raises questions about and also contributes to the promotion of girls' education. More research is however needed to better understand the challenges of girls' schooling experiences with a larger sample to unravel data that can be effectively included in policy reforms. In reality, a longitudinal study to understand the dynamics of girls schooling experiences in rural, urban and

diverse socio-economic status will be appropriate in shedding light on the gravity of challenges girls encounter in education. Longitudinal studies should provide comparative and detailed analysis on both macro and micro dimensions and how they impact on girls' education to include in policy designs and implementations.

Also, given the limited use of feminist research approaches in the investigation of girls' educational outcomes in Ghana this study unravels many unanswered questions about girls' education. When girls share their schooling experiences and their stories and voices are centered and privileged, the research becomes much more authentic in representing the views and opinions of marginalized girls. Mainstream research culture that usually subordinates the views, voices, and experiences of women and girls must change if the intent of research is to present accurately the reality of girls' education. Feminist research approach used in this study enabled girls to articulate their views and opinions as well as empower them as agents of change both in research and practice.

In conclusion I recommend that all future research on women and girls' education centers their stories, experiences and voices to capture the reality of their situations. This is the most credible research approach that can contribute to social change and transform policies and practices that shape girls' education in Ghana. Feminists have developed critical theories and methodologies to gives the disenfranchised and marginalized in society the voice and agency to effect changes to their situation and Ghanaian education is no exception.

Conclusion

It is conclusive by the study that there is more work to do if Ghana is to achieve its goal of Education for All (EFA) by the year 2015. It was also clear that some progress has been made in the promotion of girls' education with improved enrollment at all levels of education when compared to the previous decades. Yet, girls are faced with many other challenges and problems in school which makes it difficult to attain gender equality. These obstacles to girls' education that have been highlighted in the study needs urgent attention otherwise girls will continue to experience underachievement, be marginalized or even dropout of school to contribute to the growing illiteracy rate among females in Ghana.

The promotion of girls' education is crucial to the progress and development of every country and hence, inexcusable for government, community leaders, educators, parents, and

stakeholders to renege on their responsibilities. The stakes for inaction are too high and costly compared to the benefits to be derived with investments in equal and quality education for girls. As Dr. Kwegyir Aggrey reiterated a century ago, "if you educate a man you educate an individual but if you educate a woman you educate a nation" is as relevant today as ever. A similar sentiment was also expressed by Nelson Mandela when he said, "Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, a son of a mineworker can become the head of the mine, and a child of farm workers can become the president of a great nation. It is what we make out of what we have, not what we are given, that separates one person from another."

The objective of the study was to uncover the challenges and opportunities to girls' education by listening to the stories and experiences of girls in their own voices. The purpose of the study was to employ postmodern feminist research approach to challenge existing dominant ways of doing research. Jonathan Kozol (1992) cautions us that "we have not been listening to children in our summit conferences and reports on education...and that, the voices of children are usually missing from the whole discussion" (p. 5)

The education system has not been responsive, effective, appropriate, and comprehensive enough to promote gender equality in Ghanaian education. The FCUBE and subsequent policies that have shaped ongoing school discourses and practices are usually contradicted in terms of intensions and outcomes. Policy-makers and stakeholders are therefore required to collaborate and work together as a team in the policy-making and implementation process to ensure that policy intentions and outcomes are streamlined. The involvement and engagement of local communities is also critical in the success of school reform programs aimed at promoting girls' education in Ghana.

The lack of government commitment and leadership over the years in the promotion of girls' education is partly to blame for the current state of affairs. Efforts must be made to provide the financial resources so that polices aimed at providing quality and equal education to girls are effectively supervised, monitored, and coordinated among and within participating stakeholders. Tony Blair's Commission on Africa report, *Our Common Interest: Report of the Commission for Africa (2005)* reiterated that, "the problems in Africa are interlocking, in vicious cycles and reinforces one another. The solution for redress is to tackle them together with comprehensive plans from many fronts consecutively. International partners must therefore work collaboratively

together in their implementations and be committed to persevere with each focusing on how each can effectively contribute to the process" (p. 13).

As a researcher, it is my hope that the findings of this study generate maximum interests on discussions about the promotion of gender equity education in Ghana. The conversations must be aimed at including the stories, voices, and experiences of girls in educational research to understand the reality within which girls live and learn in school. In effect, transforming schools into gender equity environments require that policy makers and implementers listen and act on the voices of girls. While most of the girls interviewed were skeptical about the impact their voices would make in changing the status quo, I assured them that one lonely voice can make a big difference. These girls feel silenced and rejected by mainstream discourses and practices, but it is the responsibility of progressive researchers to bring attention of their plight and change the nature of policy conversation from one that reinforced gender inequalities to one that prioritizes girls' equality in education.

Finally, it is my fervent desire that this study opens the dialogue on how best girls' views and experiences could be centered and privileged in policy making and research processes. This should be the starting block in addressing the challenges and obstacles girls confront in education in Ghana. I therefore call on the international and local community, government, educators, parents, and all interested parties to be proactive in the quest to make education for girls quality and more equitable. The benefits of girls' education to the country will be a mirage if nothing is done to reverse gender discrimination and marginalization in schools. The vision for Ghana now is to sustain the efforts to promote gender equality in education ensuring that girls enrollment, participation, access, achievement and graduation levels are at par with that of boys.

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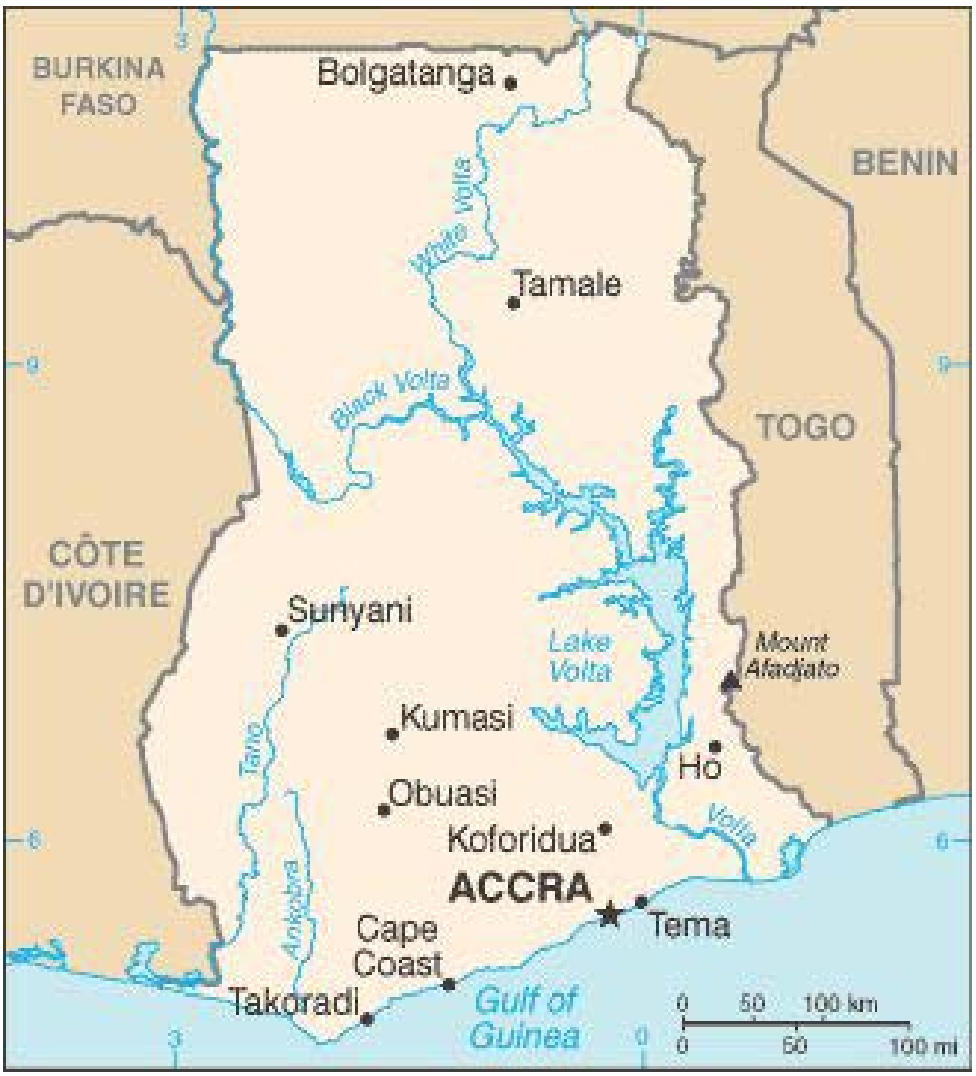
Appendix A: Map of Ghana showing Study Area



Source http://geography.about.com/od/findmaps/ig/Country-Maps/Ghana-Map.htm

Appendix B: Interview Protocol for Girls

How old are you?

Can you give me a brief description of your family?

In your opinion what do you know about the FCUBE and ongoing school reform programs?

What are some of the problems, challenges and obstacles you experience at school?

What opportunities has the FCUBE program brought to your schooling experiences?

Tell me about some of your classroom and/or school experiences?

Do you have access to every subjects or courses, and how has reforms changed that?

What frustrations (if any) do you experience in subjects or courses selection?

Which subjects or courses do you (or don't) like and why?

How do teachers handle issue of gender in school?

How do teachers relate to boys and girls in the school?

Do teachers influence students in their courses and career choices? How?

Do you think a teachers' gender is important to your like or dislike for a subject? How?

Are teachers fair to all students or not and why?

In what ways do teachers inspire or demoralize girls in the classroom?

How do male administrators, teachers and peers relate to you in school?

What is your perception of the school environment to your learning and career choices?

Is being a girl an influence on the subjects or courses you choose and why?

Tell me about your relations and interactions with teachers and peers?

In what way do your relations/interactions help or hurt you socially and academically?

How adequate are school facilities and resources and what improvements to you wish to see?

How helpful are teachers in addressing personal and social problems in school?

What changes do you wish occur in school culture, curricula and teaching?

What are your general observations and comments about girls schooling experiences in general?

Appendix C: Consent Form for Research Study Participation

Kweku Siripi Ocran, Project Investigator

Date:

Purpose of Study

This interview discussion is part of the research study to be conducted by Kweku Siripi Ocran (hereafter referred to as the investigator) for the completion of a Doctoral Dissertation research in the department of Educational Leadership, health and Society at the Miami University in Oxford Ohio, USA. The purpose of this study is to examine the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) program and its effect on girls and young women in the Tema school district area of the Greater Accra region of Ghana. The study intends to analyze policy effects on female students' in order to understand the nature of their problems and to recommend ways to expunge these problems from Ghanaian schooling system. To fulfill this purpose, I have decided to conduct this interview discussion with girls from three different categories of school levels (JSS, SSS and the University and Tertiary Institutions) to find out the nature of these challenges to ensure equal participation of boys and girls in schools.

Duration of Interview Discussions

The interview discussions will be limited to a maximum of two hours, with a minimum of one hour follow up interview (if need be) and depending on participants' willingness to add or remove statements made in the first session. The interview discussion and/or questioning may be terminated (by you) at any time in order to ensure your convenience.

Participation

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. It is your decision to engage in this interview discussion. **You have every right to refuse to answer specific questions**. If you wish to terminate the interview discussions for any reason, do not hesitate to do so. In addition, if you do not wish to be a part of this study, you may discontinue your participation at **any** time.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality will be a priority. You will not be identified in the analysis by your name. Outcome of the interview discussions will be aggregated during the analysis. The investigator will be the only person who can access the data and the sheet will only use pseudonyms to identify interviewees.

Questions or Concerns

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the interview discussions or the research, please feel free to ask me. If there are any questions and concerns after the completion of the interview discussions contact me at (513) 664-8943 or (513) 461-1618. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Lisa Weems, at 513-529-6835.

If you have any further questions or concerns about the rights of participants in the study and, or any other information about the research or the investigator, please feel free to contact the Miami University Office for the Advancement of Scholarship and Teaching (OARS) at (513) 529-3600 or at humansubjects@muohio.edu.

Appendix D: Permission to Audio Record Interviews

Please read the following statements and initial in the spaces provided if you agree

I allow Kweku Siripi Ocran to tape record this interview discussion. Mr. Ocran has explained to me the reasons he wishes to have the discussion tape recorded. He has also explained the process he will use in examining the tapes to me and that he is the only one who will have access to the tapes. _____

I understand that Mr. Ocran will not use my real name in this research project, and that I will not be materially compensated in any way for my participation in this project. He has also explained to me that I can refuse to answer specific questions or withdraw my participation in this project at any time _____

I hereby grant consent to be interviewed regarding the above project.

Signature of Interviewee: _____

Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____

Date: _____

Appendix E: Permission Slip for Girls below Eighteen years of Age

Dear parents and/or guardians,

My name is Kweku Ocran and I am a doctoral student at Miami University of Oxford in Ohio, USA. I am conducting a study to examine the impact of the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) program on girls and young women experiences in school. I am hoping that my research will unravel the challenges and problems female students confront in school and recommend ways to improve girls' education in Ghana.

Students will be engaged in an interview discussion to respond to general questions about their schooling experiences in areas of curricula, teaching, courses, interactions and future career options. This interview discussion will take approximately two hours. There are no foreseeable risks to your child, but there will be benefits. I intend to share findings of this study with policy makers, stakeholders and the academic community so that necessary changes can be effected for girls to enjoy the same level of access, participation and graduation like their male counterparts.

Your daughter's responses will remain completely anonymous and her name will not appear anywhere in the research document. Their teacher(s) and administrators will not see the interview notes or audio recordings and the students will not be graded on their responses. Participation is completely voluntary. The choice not to allow participation for your child will not involve any penalty. In addition, your child will be permitted to skip any specific question or decline participation without any penalty.

If you have any questions related to this study, please feel free to contact me, at ocranks1@muohio.edu. You can also contact my advisor, Dr. Lisa Weems at weemsld@muohio.edu. If you have questions about your rights as participants you can contact the OARS department of Miami University at humansubjects@muohio.edu or (513) 529-3600. The approval number for this study is 08-438

If your child can participate in this study please sign and return the section below by_____. You may keep the top of this slip for your records.

Thank you for your time,

Kweku Ocran

My child,_____has permission to take part in the interview discussions on her schooling experiences and understanding of education policy and practice in Ghana.

Appendix F: Letter of IRB Approval

Date: 03/11/2009

To: Mr. Kweku Siripi Ocran, Educational Leadership
Dr. Lisa Weems, Educational Leadership

From: Dr. Leonard S. Mark, Chair
Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research

Re: Human Subjects Project titled:
An Examination of Female Students' Schooling Experiences in an era of Educational Reforms in Ghana: A case study in the Accra –Tema School District

Thank you for submitting the above-referenced protocol to the Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research along with the requested documentation. The committee has reviewed and approved your proposal as Expedited Status.

Your proposal approval number is: 08-438

Approval of this project is in effect until: March 11, 2009

If you complete your project before the date listed above, please send an email to humansubjects@muohio.edu that your project is complete.

Should you decide to change your procedures relating to the use of human subjects in the above project, you must obtain approval from the Committee **prior** to instituting any changes.

Miami University policy requires periodic review of human subjects for all ongoing projects. If your project will continue beyond the approval date mentioned above, you will need to submit an Application for Continuing Review so that the committee may review your application in a timely fashion.

Please submit your next application for continuing review by: February 8, 2010
March 10, 2010

On behalf of the committee and the University, I thank you for your efforts to conduct your research in compliance with the federal regulations that have been established for the protection of human subjects. Thank you for your attention to this matter, and best wishes for the success of your project.