"We Too have Arrived": The shifting Gender Balance in the post-Basic Education System in Ghana.

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Abstract

Until a few decades ago, education for the girl-child in Ghana was frowned upon. Girls in many Ghanaian families were basically raised and groomed for marriage. At best, they were sent into vocational training, especially dress-making, and in recent timesin hairdressing. In effect, societal attitudes towards the girl-child underscored the axiom of a woman's place (office) being the kitchen. Very little was considered of the girl-child in terms of education, career or other ambitions. House chores, nursing of kid(s) as well as keeping the home or family were the ultimate contributions of the women who are assisted in large part by their girl-children for whom the effective and skillful execution of these household chores were seen as training grounds for grooming them for marriage. In a typical Ghanaian home, when the need arises for a decision to be taken as to whom to send to school, the male or female child, due to limited financial means, most often than not, the male child is chosen to be in school at the cost of the female child, who maybe academically good, if not better, than their male siblings.

The above situation and scenarios have shifted drastically, and very significantly over the past thirty years. More and more girls are enrolled in High Schools and post-secondary institutions and are pursuing careers in almost every discipline, even in areas previously considered as male professional bastions. This Participatory Action Research (PAR) study conducted on the campus of one of the largest and elite Universities in Ghana unearthed very interesting findings on the surge of girls into post-secondary education in Ghana, thus bucking the old and hitherto entrenched barriers to formal education for girls in Ghana. Recommendations are provided for the continuous support and policy initiatives of this trend to maintain gender equality in education for Ghanaian girls.

Key Words: Gender-equity, gender equality, Girl-child education, gender discrimination

Introduction

"If you educate a man, you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman you educate a nation"

Kwegyir Aggrey of Ghana

Women and girls continuously and systematically suffer from gender inequality around the world. These unequal treatment include child and forced marriages, gender-based violence, sexist policies, as well as barriers to participation in meaningful education and subsequent employment. Working towards achieving gender equity is crucial to meeting development goals, especially in developing countries like Ghana, to reduce human suffering and prevent women especially from being trapped and condemned to life-time poverty and misery.

Extensive discrimination against girls in education in many parts of Africa and Ghana in particular, continue to exist and has been well documented. It was only within the last three decades, from the 1990s that there has been determined efforts, backed by government policies to draw attention to the magnitude of the discrimination. The reasons for the educational gender exclusion, discrimination and difficulties of girls are extensively documented (Warrington and Kiragu, 2012; Arowoshegbe and Enoma, 2011; Hunt, 2008; Subrahmanian, 2005). These include socio-cultural factors, poverty and financial difficulties of families. If there were limited financial resources in families to sponsor children in school, the tendency was always to prioritize schooling for boys instead of girls.

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Access to formal education for girls is limited by the society's traditional gender roles and marriage expectations of females. This assertion is supported by De Silva-de-Alwis (2008:1) who posits that women's early marriage "… is one of the most pernicious manifestations of the unequal power relations between females and males". This practice has been fingered to be one of the factors negatively affecting girl-child education in many developing countries, especially in Ghana.

There is extensive literature that underscores the fact that formal education is the most relevant human development indicator, and this is even more important to girls because it can reduce poverty, lower birth and infant mortality rates, and promote gender equality (Liu, 2006; Michael, 2011). Other authors, including Abu-Ghaida and Klasen (2004) have also pointed out that "apart from its intrinsic values as a crucial development goal, education is also central to one's ability to respond to the opportunities that development presents" (p.2).

Educational researchers agree that educating girls has the potential of reducing poverty among girls, hence promoting gender equality and empowering women through formal education can improve women's negotiating positions and increase women's sovereignty by giving them a stronger decision-making role within families. This can also reduce the tendency for early teenage girls' marriage or even reduce the disturbing trend of teenage pregnancy (Arku & Arku, 2009; Oladeji, 2010).

In many Ghanaian homes, until recently, anytime education is thought of with a woman in mind, knowledge on how to keep a house clean, care for children, care for a man (husband) and most importantly satisfy a man (husband) sexually is what comes to mind. The goal of raising women to be intelligent, inventors and productive members of society in academia and the job field is mostly not considered. Some individuals to an extent consider educating women as an act to encourage insolence in the marital home. Women are to be "submissive" in all sectors of society. By this notion, women are expected to forego their aspirations and dreams and rather encourage and support their men (husbands) to be achievers.

Members of society with this view are of the fear that, if women get educated, empowered and secure income earning jobs, they (women) will be financially independent and free to act and pursue whatever they desire. In this state, it will be very difficult for their male counterparts to "control" them. This liberation is what the old generation feared. "What will be of us (men) if there is no one to cook our food, iron our clothes, tidy the house, care for the kids", etc for free. Traditionally, women took up these roles with no expectations in the form of monetary rewards or appreciation. Women devoted their entire life caring for the home. What then happens to their talents, dreams and ambitions? No one cared to know.

The above scenarios have changed significantly since the mid-1990s. A number of dedicated and passionate individuals, national governments, local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and development-focused agencies are joining the fray in assisting to promote girl-child education. At the international levels, there have been a number of agreements that are geared towards the promotion of girl-child education. Some of these are the Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 2 and 3, which are to acquire universal primary education; and to promote gender equality and empower women, respectively (North, 2010; Subrahmanian, 2005). Before the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), Ghana had taken steps to set up the Girls Education Unit with the mandate to champion and provide direction on issues concerning the girl-child education (MOE/GES, 2001).

Again, in Ghana, the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Educational (FCUBE) policy was introduced in 1995. Under this initiative, the FCUBE was aimed at abolishing some levels of school fees with the objective to improve the demand for schooling by all children, including girls. Additionally, the FCUBE sought to improve girls' school enrolment (MOE/GES, 2001). It was towards this end that the Girls Education Unit was set up in 1997 to better champion the cause of the girl-child. This Unit operates within the basic Education Division of the Ghana Education Service (GES).

This Free Compulsory Universal Basic Educational (FCUBE) policy was however limited to access to basic education at the primary levels, and at best to the Junior High School levels. Senior High School education and access to post-secondary education was mostly the preserve of the wealthy and the well-connected who had access to government-controlled post-secondary education scholarships and funding.

It has however, been observed that there has been a surge by girls into post-secondary education in Ghana and in some cases their numbers are outstripping those of boys in most tertiary institutions, both public and private in Ghana over the past twenty years.

It was against this background that this study was conducted on the campus of the second largest public University in Ghana, the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Kumasi, some 270 kilometers in the center of the country. This was the second public university that was established in Ghana after independence from Britain in 1957.

The nucleus of this University started in 1952 as the Kumasi College of Technology. It offered admission to its first students to the engineering faculty in that year, when an Act of Parliament gave the university its legal basis as the Kumasi College of Technology. The College was formed with 200 teacher training students who were transferred from Achimota College in the Greater Accra Region. Initially, the College was affiliated to the University of London, but it was granted full university status, four years after Ghana attained its political independent status in 1957. The early professional programs that were run by the University: Engineering, Pharmacy, Agriculture and Architecture, were all male-dominated bastions to which very little, if any, girls were admitted in its initial history (KNUST, 2021)

Methodology

This study was a Participatory Action Research that utilized a Qualitative Approach, which according to Creswell (2007), "begins with assumptions, a world view, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems enquiring into the meanings that individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p.37). The qualitative methodology was also deemed feasible for this study because it falls within the realm of phenomenology, which in this study is the study of the lived experiences of the participants.

The study specifically, and purposefully, targeted female students on this University campus, a purposeful sampling methodology to gauge their opinions on their own place in tertiary education in one of the prestigious universities in the country, and also the feelings of some of them as members of formerly male-dominated faculties at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. The University had a student population of 64,187 as at the beginning of the 2020 Academic year. It was ranked as Ghana's best University in 2019 and 2020 by **U.S. News & World Report,** an American media company that publishes news, opinion, consumer advice, rankings, and analysis. It was also ranked 12th best in Africa in 2020.

Sample size

The researcher was a student at this University for four years from 2015 to 2019, and thus had access with the earlier participants who were recruited for this study. The researcher recruited and conducted interviews with a large sample of three hundred female students from different Faculties, Schools and Departments in the Sciences, Technology and Liberal Arts disciplines. A snow-balling technique was used in recruiting participants through which girls and young women students who were contacted earlier spread the word to their friends, many of whom voluntarily contacted me and offered their participation in the study. In actual fact, the first part of the Title for this study (above) was suggested unanimously by the female student participants during one of two focus group discussions. One-on-one personal interviews were conducted with two hundred and seventy students and two focus group discussions consisting of fifteen students in each group over a one-year period, 2018 and 2019. Follow-ups and cross-checking with some participants were done in 2020.

Key Informants: The researcher, on the advice of the research participants (students) contacted the parents (Mothers) of some of the student participants who made contacts with their parents (mothers) and linked them to the researcher to be interviewed for the study. In all 20 parents of some of these students, who were classified as "key informants" were interviewed for the study. As will be seen in the findings section of this report, they provided very interesting perspectives on the need for higher education for their daughters which underscored the human capital theory, one of the Theoretical frameworks used for this study.

Theoretical Framework

This study relied on a number of Theoretical Frameworks as guides for the study and the lens through which the findings of the study were analyzed. The first of these Frameworks is the Liberal feminists' theory whose proponents in their writings about education use concepts of socialization, equal opportunities, sex roles and discrimination. Their strategies involve altering socialization practices, changing attitudes and making use of relevant legislation to alter the gender imbalance in education. In this study, important and relevant references are made to the Black feminism movements and their activism. Their activism and agitations were not only reactions to the racism that Black women experienced in the Women's Liberation Movement in the 1960s, contrary to what mainstream media and practitioners have portrayed. The history of the Black feminism movement can be identified and traced to as far back as the early 1800s when Black women abolitionists "campaigned for equal rights within the context of organized Black abolitionism" (Yee, 1992, p. 151).

In this study, conducted in a homogenous Black-populated nation, the feminist lens was used for its relevance to alter the gender imbalance in education, specifically in post-secondary higher education for young women. To quote Yee (1992), young Black women in Ghana have actually, albeit quietly, embarked on activism in academia to stress the need "to ameliorate conditions for empowerment on their own terms" (p. 235). This activism, on the part of young Black women in Ghana has been aimed to also address what Mullaly (2002), describes as the intersections of gender and age within the constructs of oppression.

In an ironic parallel, Casey (1993) opined that in a racist society "… to become educated is to contradict the whole system of racist signification … to succeed in studying white knowledge is to undo the system itself … to refute its reproduction of black inferiority materially and symbolically" (Casey 1993, p. 123). In the case of the Ghanaian situation under study, young Ghanaian women were by their quiet activism in the education field have been sending a strong message to the male-dominated Ghanaian society. Their message through their feminist lens reads thus: *to become educated in post-secondary institutions in Ghana is to contradict the entrenched system of male domination and female subjugation, and to succeed in this field is to undo the trappings of the society's entrenched patriarchy (emphasis mine).*

In the current global direction of knowledge acquisition and the changing labour market, it is essential to ensure unimpeded access to post-secondary-education (PSE) for all those with the desire to participate and the talent to do so, without regard to gender, and family background. Without question, every nation's future economic prosperity, the broader development of its population, and the assurance of equality of opportunity among all its citizens will depend on an educated population regardless of gender.

Two other theoretical perspectives that were deemed useful for this study were those that guide college/university access and choice for young women in Ghana. These are an economic model of human capital investment, and a sociological model of status attainment (Hossler, Braxton and Coppersmith, 1989; Paulsen, 1990). With regards to the Economic Model of Human Capital Investment, the focus is to enhance an individual's physical and mental health abilities, in order to enhance their productivity (Becker 1962). The Human capital theory posits that productivity increases are rewarded by higher earnings (Becker, 1993, Paulsen, 2001a). It also asserts that differences in productivity can also be attributable to differences in the investments that individuals, communities or nations make in their development efforts. For the purpose of this study, this can refer to the quantity and quality of their education, and the amount of on-the-job training they undergo during and after their higher educational pursuits.

Although other types of investments are known to increase human capital, education and training have been identified by most researchers in this field to be among the most worthwhile of human capital. In the realm of this study, Human capital theory becomes very relevant in the sense that embarking on additional years of education, especially post-secondary education, raises productivity, and earnings. This is because higher education surely provides knowledge, skills, and a better way of analyzing problems. Human capital theory assumes that additional years of education, and in this study of tertiary education, raise productivity and ultimately incomes, since they lead to the acquisition of knowledge and skills. The theory also predicts that in addition to the realization that investments in education yield greater financial and social status, there is also the fulfilment of a better and satisfying work environment, better health (physical and mental), longer life and lower risks and probabilities of unemployment in periods of economic slowdowns.

The Sociological-Cultural Approach

This approach to higher education choice emphasizes the ways in which the socio-economic backgrounds of potential tertiary education students influence students' decisions to pursue higher education. Status Attainment models are embedded in this approach. They predict that individuals with higher levels of academic preparation and subsequent achievement are likely to receive greater encouragement and support from "significant others" in their circles. These significant others include their parents, teachers, counsellors, and their peers. As shown by some researchers in this field (see Hearn, 1984, 1988; Hossler, Schmit and Vesper, 1999), this encouragement that students receive from their significant others has the tendency to promote higher educational aspirations.

Social Justice Theory: This study was also conceptually housed in the Social Justice Paradigm. Movements in the Social Justice arena are concerned with the ways in which the benefits and burdens in society are controlled and distributed. Brooks & Thompson (2005) underscore this point when they emphasized that social justice is a way to recognize and appreciate diversity, as well as promote equity. The process includes the fairness by which any society protects its citizens and provides them with the means and qualities that are required to lead a good life.

The role of education in achieving social justice

It is widely recognized that education plays critical roles in achieving social justice in any society. According to Bell, et. al, (1997), Social justice education is concerned with achieving equitable and quality education for all students. Bell, et. al (1997) therefore posit that:

"…social justice education is both a process and a goal. The goal of social justice education is full and equal participation of all groups in society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. Social justice includes a vision of society in which the distribution of resources is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure. We envision a society in which individuals are both self-determining (able to develop their full capacities), and interdependent (capable of interacting democratically with others)" (p.3).

The achievement of social justice for women in education is partly rooted in the patriarchal nature of Ghanaian society. A lot of proverbs in Ghanaian society reflects the thinking of males and the subjugation of women (Asimeng-Boahene, 2013). As Fayemi (2009) poignantly opines, proverbs are traditional moral and wisdom expressions that are handed down from generation to generation in most African societies. They are used as socialization and social engineering processes of girls and women. In so doing, they provide the men in these societies, unjustifiable excuses and tools for the gender inequalities, stereotyping and discrimination against women. These direct teachings transmitted through songs, proverbs, "wise sayings", and folktales all have the purpose of whipping the African girl-child and later woman into subjugation and subservience (Gyan, Abbey and Baffoe, 2020).

Gyan (2018) underscored this when he asserted that:
The African child is born male or female. The girl-child grows up as an African girl and later becomes a woman through the process of enculturation. This learning process leads to the girl-child internalization of both the derogatory and positive concepts, judgements and attitudes towards womanhood (p.71)

The following examples of typical Ghanaian traditional proverbs prove this point on the subjugation and expected subservience of women in Ghanaian society:

"*Obaa anuonyam ne se wa ware*" (marriage accords a woman respect). This is to say, in order for a woman to gain societal acknowledgement (respect), she ought to marry. This traditional notion is a contributing factor as to why young women (Ghanaian) rush into marriages without sparing time to build themselves or their career.

"*Woe betide you if you have no male figure in your family.*" This proverbial statement prioritizes male children over their female counterparts. The ideology behind this saying is that, the male child is capable of handling life threatening situations and can provide comfort in times of adversities. Hence one who gives birth to female(s) only is pitiful.

"The woman who has children does not desert home" (Dalfovo, cited in Mbiti, 1988). Traditionally, the Ghanaian society is one that believes in the extended family system. Couples live, give birth to children and the children also reproduce when they are of age. In most cases, all three generations will be dwelling together in 'a family house'. Hence what happens to the woman who is unable to give birth, they (the couple) remain 'lonely' at their homes especially when they are old.

"*The woman whose sons have died is richer than a barren woman*" (Barro, as cited in Mbiti, 1988). This saying stresses on the importance of childbearing. A woman's value is equated to her ability to bear children. Therefore if a woman is able to conceive, bear a child and loses the child to death, Traditionally that woman is pardoned relative to one who has never borne a child.

Consequently, people say, "*A barren woman never gives thanks.*" People who say this are of the view that barren women have nothing (no child) to be appreciative for, hence they lack the skills of showing gratitude.

Ghanaians also say, "*A serviceable wife is often blessed with the birth of a 10th child.*" This proverb is popular among the Akans of Ghana. The Akans are one of the groups that practice matrilineal inheritance. Hence when a woman from this tribe manages to birth her tenth child, it is interpreted she is filling up the family by bringing forth new members and to show appreciation, the family of the woman awards the husband a sheep for his good work done (impregnating their daughter to bring forth ten children). The man (husband) remains the hero here. The woman's effort is least acknowledged.

"*Obaa ton nyaadoa na onton atuduro*": Literally, 'a woman sells eggplant not gunpowder'. This statement sets limit for the girl child or woman. That is to say, some great achievements, jobs, decisions are left to be accomplish by men and men only.

Obaa to etuo a etwere obarimadan mu": This proverbial statement which literally reads 'If a woman buys a gun, she keeps it in a man's room' implies, women are not worthy of owning properties. For all they (women) manage to acquire must be protected or looked after by men.

Among the Akan of Ghana, women are least expected to take up leadership roles or become prominent members of society. A woman who decides to beat these odds is tagged with names intended to make them feel bad and at last redraw from progressing. Among such names are; *"obaaakokonini"* (a woman cock), *"Obaabarima"* (woman man), *"odeenden"* (tough cookie).

"The hen says, I have a voice to declare daybreak, but I listen to my husband". This saying is popular among the Ewes of Ghana. This saying ultimately leaves women at the margins of society. Women are left to be followers and not consider the idea of leading even if it's within their capacity.

"The man is the woman's honor." In communicating, women ought to do everything possible to make their man look good and presentable. It is only then that the woman will be praised.

The above traditional proverbs clearly underscore the subjugation of females in Ghanaian society, and it is within these contexts that this study was initiated.

Research Questions

Based on information gleaned from the relevant literature reviewed (see Asimeng-Boahene, (2013); Arowoshegbe and Enoma, (2011); Bell (1997); Brooks & Thompson (2005); Hearn, (1984, 1988); Hossler, Schmit and Vesper, (1999); Warrington and Kiragu, 2012; Hunt, 2008; Subrahmanian, (2005), among others, the study sought to seek answers to the following pertinent questions which guided the interviews with the research participants:

What were the socio-economic backgrounds of the student participants in this study?
What were the motivations of the student participants in pursuing University education?
What influenced the choice of programs of study of the research participants?
What have been their experiences during the course of their university studies?
What do they currently consider as their socio-economic status as university students compared to the periods before they entered the university programs?
What have been the attitudes of their male counterparts and university Instructors towards them in their various programs?

Findings and Discussions

The significant themes that emerged from the study are highlighted below. They are backed by some very powerful narratives of some of the research participants. The use and highlighting of these participant narratives are in line with Counter Story-telling, a tenet of Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT also offers a useful theoretical and intellectual tool for "deconstruction, reconstruction, and construction: deconstruction of oppressive structures and discourses, reconstruction of human agency, and construction of equitable and socially just relations of power" (Ladson-Billings, 2004, p. 51).

CRT was utilized as a theoretical anchor on account of its insistence on the recognition of the experiential knowledge of marginalized persons and their communities of origins in analyzing society (McDonald, 2003; Degaldo & Stefancic, 2001; Degaldo, 1995). In effect, CRT gives hitherto silenced voices to marginalized people the opportunity to tell their own stories and experiences within a theoretical framework where the epicenter of analysis is the narrative. The use of Narratives in research reporting is also a way to understand the lived experiences of the story-teller. This is the reason for the highlighting of the narratives of the research participants in this report.

Emerging Themes

The significant Themes that emerged from the study centered around the following:

- The desire to buck the old patriarchal cultural system of Ghanaian society which limited a girl/woman' place to the kitchen, and being raised and groomed for early marriage.
- The desire by the "modern" Ghanaian woman to acquire higher education and develop professional careers
- The desire of Ghanaian women to venture boldly into occupations previously thought to be the reserve for men, like the field of Engineering, Architecture and other higher levels in academia
- The determination of Ghanaian parents (women) to see their girls acquiring higher education and acquiring higher status in society

- The emerging economic power and economic independence of Ghanaian women thus bucking the old concept of men being the breadwinners and women being confined to the home and kitchen as housewives
- Motivation seeing other women and some relatives in highly respected careers especially in top echelons of academia
- Not pushed around or looked down by male student colleagues

Participant Narratives

In line with CRT's tenet of Counter-story telling, I produce below some eye-opening and insightful narratives from some of the study participants:

Engineering Student

There are three of us (children) in my family. I am the second born. My older brother was sent to Senior High School as soon as he completed Junior High School. No issues were raised. When I followed and finished Junior High School, my father started giving excuses although I passed the BCCE examinations with better results than my brother. He suggested I go to Vocational School to learn Dressmaking. I was demoralized. My mother did not agree to this, but she had no voice to counter my father's decision. I was very much interested in Science and wanted to become an Engineer in the future, but my father did not give me the opportunity. It became even more painful when my younger brother finished his Junior High School two years after me, and immediately, he was sent off to High School. Sensing how devastated I was, my Mum borrowed money and sent me to Senior High still in the face of opposition from my father who saw no need for higher education for girls. Ironically, I came on top of my graduating class in High School and was offered a scholarship to this university to study Mechanical Engineering. Ironically, my junior brother who was leap-frogged over me did not get good grades in High school to go to University. And here I am. I am determined to prove my father wrong and to make my Mum proud that she will soon have a female engineer when I graduate.

Town and Country Planning Student

I was scared initially when I got admission and entered the Planning Program. Of the thirty-two students in our cohort, there were only two young women among the male-dominated class. To my surprise and delight, they were all very supporting, encouraging and cooperative. The all-male Instructors were also very supportive as well. None looked down on us or questioned our capabilities to undergo that program. That was very refreshing and the two of us…the female students are currently among the top ten students in our cohort. Yes, we too have arrived.

Law student.......*oh okay, I had dreams and ambitions to change the world using the unique gift God has given me. I felt education gave me such a platform to harness my God-given gift and enlighten me too to know the world around me and how I can take advantage of the things around me for a better future. I was a good and strong debater in High School and my Mother encouraged me to go to University to read Law. Growing up, I saw a lot of male irresponsibility and unfair treatment of women around me. I wanted to be a lawyer because I felt that would allow me to bring all such male culprits to book and also to help women and girls who have been taken advantage of...that's why I'm reading Law!*

Sociology student... *Initially, learning how to read and write English was my concern....so after High school, I was satisfied with my attainment...Starting a family was my next goal...two years after high school, I got myself pregnant with a guy who had completed university as at then...he promised me a better life and other stuff but, he changed after sometime, two years into the relationship he wasn't giving me attention again. I confronted him and his reason was he needed a woman he can reason and plan with (someone who will give him suggestions on assignments or what to target next in life, someone who understands his academic goals) and I definitely wasn't that person. Eventually, he left me and the child.....life has been very hard afterwards, I tried petty trading and the profits were only enough for feeding...I couldn't save, I had no planned or assurance for my child's future.....and with my attempt to secure a profitable job, educational attainment always remained a barrier...mostly the minimum qualification is a degree holder...So I decided to further my education; first to proof my worth to my child's father and secondly to advance myself and secure a better job. I opted for sociology because it's a course I can relate with...it's centered on the happenings of society.*

Statistics student...*I think our system has been developed in a way that if you aren't in University at a point in life you're not regarded. If you don't have a degree, finding a better Job becomes difficult (even with the degree, look at how difficult it is)... And The second thing is, I always want to experience and learn things for myself... Not only academically but in every aspect of life in General...My brother had gone to school and spoken about how life was in the University and all... So I wanted to go and experience for myself how true it was...I chose statistics because of my interest in analysis, throughout my basic school, mathematics has been my favorite subject, it intrigues reasoning and I loved to do more...*

Disability studies student*...I've been most inspired by the impact I need to make in the world, which is to give a helping hand to the vulnerable and also empower my generation. This Inspiration led to the decision of pursuing higher education and also for opting for disability studies...This course will help me to be intellectually challenged and stimulated....It will also equip me with the needed skills to work in my chosen field.*

Female Student with Disability: *Ghanaian society looks down on persons with disability. For me, having a physically-impaired disability was very challenging throughout elementary and High Schools. Some of my family members tried to discourage my mother from sending me to school, they thought it was a waste of resources. I was hearing all those negative talks, and that gave me the motivation to rise above their expectations and prove them wrong. I have a passion to serve as a voice for the voiceless hence I enrolled in the Disability and Rehabilitation studies program here at the university. I have a year to complete and I aspire to be an advocate for the rights of Persons with Disability in Ghana. My mother is also physically-impaired and is a wheelchair user....this encouraged and motivated me to build and gain more knowledge in Disability and Rehabilitation studies*

Architecture Student: *One of my uncles was a Draftsman who drew plans for people who were going to build houses. I used to sit by him when I was in Junior High School and watched him draw those house plans. That was where I got my interest in this field from. Luckily, he offered to help my mother to pay for my university education when I got admission to university after High School. He felt proud that he had inspired me and that I will continue his profession when he "is gone". He is still alive although he has stopped working. I want to graduate as an Architect and make my uncle and mother proud. There are not many female architects in Ghana and I will feel proud being one of the few in this area. Yes, we women too are coming up*

Mother Participants

The perspectives of the mothers of some of the participants that were sought for this study provided some insights which supported the views and perspectives of the participating students. Narratives from of the mothers are provided below:

Mother participant 1 (A Trader)

I didn't go to school and life hasn't been easy at all...I don't want my daughter to be like me (suffering in the hot sun every day). So, every penny I make, I save towards my daughter's university education. She is a smart girl, and I hope God will help her to succeed. I will have a University graduate in my home.

Mother participant 2

I want my daughter to be a great person like those I see on TV. Sometimes, I wonder how it will feel to see your daughter on TV. First, she went to the School of Journalism for two years, but when she finished, she decided that she needed to go to University to study Communications. I am supporting her because it makes me feel proud. She will be the first girl in my family to finish university. I am proud of her

Mother participant 3

Actually, it was the determination of my daughter to go to University and my support for her education and dreams that broke my marriage. Her father and I had lots of disagreements over girls going to university. He felt it was a waste of money, but these days, everyone is making an attempt to send their children, boys and girls to school, everyone wants to see their wards succeed, I'm no different. And since that is her dream, I will support her. These disagreements led to the breakup of our marriage, but I don't regret it. …..(name withheld) has been a very good girl. She is studying hard and helps me with my trading activities anytime she is on vacation. She says "we will succeed" and I believe her.

Mother participant 4

My daughter is very brilliant, right from her basic school days her teachers always spoke well of her academic performance. I couldn't stand to let all that capability go to waste, so I had to work hard and sponsor her education, although I do not have enough money, but I am doing my best, and she is equally doing well in university. She is studying to be an Architect. I will feel so proud when she is done!

Recommendations and Directions for Future Research

This study has been a modest attempt at beginning an enquiry into a hitherto unexplored area on the social and educational scene in Ghana. The findings are an eye-opener. The study was conducted on just one university campus. There is the need for more and further studies into this area to cover many of the other Institutions of Higher Learning in Ghana, both public and private. Further studies in this area can also cover the Instructors (Faculty members, male and female) as well as University Administrators. Their perspectives on the changing gender composition of the student population on their campuses and its implications for the nation will be interesting to know.

Conclusion

Welcome to a new era: a place where Ghanaian women find themselves in classrooms, striving to be on top of the academic ladder and in respectable careers. Women no longer settle for the kitchen "office". Instead, they are occupying ministerial offices, making history in academia and impacting society in more professional ways.

This is evident in the employment sector, academia (publications), academic classrooms as well as hostels or halls of residence. The female populace in these sectors is on the rise. A typical example is my undergraduate class: the number of female students was twice the number of males.

The perspectives expressed by the mothers of some of the study participants provide an insightful window to the surging trend of Ghanaian women pursuing higher education. Most women in Ghana are bucking the traditional trends of keeping their girls at home and grooming them for marriage. They are assisted by the fact that women are involved in lots of economic activity, especially trading and thus command enough resources to finance their daughters' education, with or without their husbands' input. This is buttressed by *UN Women*, an entity for gender equality and women's empowerment when they stated that, "investing in women's economic empowerment sets a direct path towards gender equality, poverty eradication and inclusive economic growth" (Ighobor, 2019).

The number of female students at the Universities have been increasing every year, at least during the two years that this study was conducted. The authorities and Administrators at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology where this study was conducted have reacted positively to increased applications and admission of more female students by the building of new hostels or halls of residence for female students. In the course of the past four years, two all-male students' halls of residence were converted to mixed halls due to the increasing numbers of female students. The trend is continuing. Yes, Ghanaian young women are on the rise in academia. Yes, They "too have arrived". And as the iconic Dr. Kwegyir Aggrey rightly said more than a hundred years ago, *"If you educate a man, you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman you educate a nation".* Ghanaian women: young, middle-aged and older are "arriving", catching up and taking their place in building the nation Ghana.

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