

# Assessing Gender and Educational Opportunities of Females in the Northern Region of Ghana

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## To cite this article:

Eliasu Alhassan. Assessing Gender and Educational Opportunities of Females in the Northern Region of Ghana. *International Journal of Education, Culture and Society*. Vol. 8, No. 5, 2023, pp. 211-220. doi: 10.11648/j.ijecs.20230805.11

**Received:** August 14, 2023; **Accepted:** September 1, 2023; **Published:** September 14, 2023

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**Abstract:** The concern with gender and educational opportunities has affirmed that equality of males' and females' in education is key to every society. This concern has noted that development requires more than the availability and the creation of educational opportunities for males' and females' to earn sustainable livelihoods. It again requires the creation of an enabling and, a serene atmosphere for males' and females' to capitalise these opportunities. Qualitative methods and procedures for sampling, data collection and data handling were employed and in some cases, tables were used to illustrate percentages. The study found that many factors in the northern region has influenced gender education and created many opportunities for males' and females'. These included Staffing in schools, subjects taught by male and female teachers, portrayal of women's in the curricula materials, silence in the curricula on women's issues, hidden messages in the administrative structure, gender differences in the hidden curricula, hidden messages in the instructional techniques, sex-related language in school, differences in academic performance and differences in occupational outcomes and economic rewards. The study therefore recommends vigorous sensitisation by the district assemblies on the need for gender, mainstreaming in all educational curricula, educate parents' and the people by the district assemblies the need to encourage their females' to attend school, and provide their females' educational needs when the need arises. It can be concluded that females' today in the region have more balanced access to educational opportunities than males'. The gender gap is no longer as explicit as it was in school in the past. Also, ignoring girls' education in the Northern Region is equal to ignoring one of the most important solutions to Northern development. There is therefore, a need for effective collaboration between school authorities and the teachers to monitor females' performance in schools and also, the policy on affirmative action in schools should be enforced by the government and all stake-holders in education.

**Keywords:** Gender Equality, Opportunities, Education, Access

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## 1. Introduction

Development is not only quantitative improvement of peoples' livelihood and provision of more and better schools but also as a matter of urgency it includes equal access to education for males and females [11]. Development again needs democratic governance that ensures that males females have equal opportunity and say in decision-making and policy implementation and making sure that gender issues in development cannot be left out.

Gender is often used by many people to mean sex, that is biological defined as male or female. However, the term is also used especially by contemporary researchers to mean, the socially imposed differences of females and male roles

and character traits. Sex is biological while gender is social cultural. The difference is very important which is sometimes, ignored by unconcerned supporters of the status quo who think that cultural norms of males and females are natural that is directly and predominantly determined by biology [19].

Children gender influences the ways in which they are socialized by their immediate families and later by their school peers and teachers just to learn what are considered to be appropriate for male and appropriate for female roles. Different ways of behavior and actions are learned by boys and girls through interaction and communicating with their parents and peers. Sex-role tagging occurs when children are taught to behave primarily in ways that are considered to be gender appropriate. For example, girls may be encouraged to

be nurturing and cooperative, while boys may be encouraged to be aggressive and competitive. These socialization patterns lead to different and unequal expectations of males and females in this society. The differential patterns of socialization and treatment which females receive in schools puts them in positions very similar to educationally and economically disadvantaged minority groups. Although they are not a minority in the numerical sense since females constitute over 51 percent of the population of Ghana [15].

According to [7], females do fit our definition of minority status. Attributes of minority group status are identifiability, differential treatment and group awareness, one of the first sociologists to utilize an understandings of race relations to create a theoretical framework for examining gender relationships argued for the inclusion of women in minority group studies. Similarities between women and ethnic minority studies in terms of group openness and marginalisation in the labor market, stereotypes attributed to them by majority members and their accommodation to such treatment suggest that knowledge derived from other minority groups could be helpful in understanding women.

One of the methods to overcome obstacles to women's development is to develop and exchange visible and material resources as well as courses in the areas of women's studies. At a meeting in Ottawa, Canada, in October 1990, the Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs specifically mandated the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) to develop a strategy to address the needs and wants of women in the Commonwealth countries of the South [35].

Children identities as well as their school experiences are shaped by their membership in socioeconomic class. Students from less endowed families or low socioeconomic groups have less access to equal educational opportunities. Professionals concerned with equity in education generally direct their attention to the ways in which categories of race, ethnicity and socioeconomic class affect equality of access and treatment for students in schools [1].

However, gender also directly affects the experiences children have in schools. It has been common for researchers to study only the effects of race, class and gender on school experiences. More recently, researchers have called for examinations of the ways in which these three categories together affect children experiences. While it is impossible to separate the effects of ethnicity, social class and gender from one another where real people in schools are concerned, we have organized this book in order to examine each category separately. It is essential to remember as you read that each student comes to school both as an engendered person and with membership in a particular ethnic group and social class.

Sex, like ethnicity, can be seen and usually constant identifying attributes which are acquired right from birth. It is also the physical characteristics associated with being male or female, while gender is a broader term which includes not only biological characteristics, but also learned cultural behaviors and understandings. Stronguist [29] summary of the differences between sex and gender is quoted in a Feminist Dictionary.

Research data, and according to [17], the attention and treatment females receive in schools is neither equal nor the same to males, just as other categories of students considered to be minorities- the socioeconomic disadvantaged, handicapped and culturally different, also receive unequal and different from people who are members of the mainstream, able bodied middle class. Despite a growing body of literature detailing sexist practices in schools, gender is a sorely neglected category in recent reform literature calling for equity and excellence in schooling. Report that gender is virtually ignored, as a category for concern in equity issues in schooling, by at least eight of the major commission reports. While the reports call for more attention to the needs of particular groups such as minorities, language minorities and handicapped students, they make no mention of gender.

Chaudhry [9] noted that gender is not an important category in the outcome of excellence performance in schools. When gender was considered, it becomes to merely, embellish cultural and traditional, and also male portrait of the school. The proposed vision for excellence performance in the schools is for the male student in the public and productive sphere, because, gender, is a relevant concept completely absent in issues of gender in relation to policy, students, curricula, and faculty which are all not identified nor treated as educational problems to be solved. The goal of excellence does not even have the female student in mind.

Children learn what it means to belong to all societies through a socialization process which begins in infancy. Children, interacting with family members and other caretakers, learn behavior and action appropriate to the cultural norms. As part of this process, they learn how to be males and females [24].

Finally, males and females are socialized to different lifestyles through childrearing practices which involve differential expectations. Despite learning a common language, they differ in their verbal and nonverbal expressions. Males and females are socialized to sex-segregated social groups, wear gender appropriate clothing, prefer activities and toys associated with one sex or another and develop different competencies based on those activities. [20].

In preschools and kindergartens, girls are more likely to be found playing in the doll corner while boys spend their time with the building of blocks and trucks. Televisions and other forms of media play a crucial role in transmitting the culture's sex role behaviors and values. Children learn how to be men and women in American society by watching television and movies, looking at advertisements and listening to popular music [20].

## 2. Theoretical Explanation

There are many explanations for the position of females and males in society, the study focuses on four prominent theories in the literature and these include, the classical modernization theory which dwells so much on economic

development of females, the more current human development perspective which focuses on freedom and cultural change that give rise to gender-egalitarian attitudes, perception and self-expression values, the historical legacies view which focuses on the influence of cultural and political traditions, and the institutional design view which emanates from a political engineering paradigm [13].

Relative to gender equality and inequality the approach believes that economic development is central and core to advancing the pool of women qualification for positions of social and economic power. The researchers have established that an increased economic development correlates with a wide based distribution of educational and occupational resources and materials and greater access and opportunity to educational and employment resources increases females' chances of career and professional development, creating a larger and larger pool of females eligible for power and influential positions such as political office [32].

Higher levels of economic and social development bring much social services to societies through their alleviation of the costs in labor and time [32]. Everyday task given is related to care and attention giving, for example child-upbringing and domestic work enhances in these services free up time for social pursuits in females lives. Many researchers' and studies confirmed these hypotheses, showing that developmental measures put in place such as countries' levels of non-agricultural development, per capita gross domestic product, women in the workforce and women college show positive on the percentage of women in their parliaments [31].

Human Development Paradigm or view focuses and explains the conversion of economic and social development into a cultural process of human development that gives rise to a freedom and an emancipative worldview, which are reflected in self-expression values that demonstrates human choice including, the choices and autonomy of females [31]. This according to [18], rise in emancipative orientations develops mass and much expectations aimed at making the elites more responsive and more inclusive. In this way, rising emancipative values lead to increases in females' empowerment and emancipation throughout society and in parliament [18].

The human development theory according to [28] links social and cultural modernization to freedom and emancipative values through qualitative and quantitative changes in existential constraints. The theory makes emphasises on changes in modern societies particularly, conducive to females' freedom and empowerment, and therefore establishes a link between cultural modernity and publics, that value greater equality between males and females in the society. Apparently, [34], ties the modern human resources, very important to the human development sequence to economic development, but in this view, the effect of economic development is more indirect. Studies by [5] shows that cultural modernity is true, that is positive consequences for women.

Modernization comes in many forms according to [35] while all issues relate in some way to females' empowerment,

the strongest and effective most consistent findings show that gains in gender equality are most dramatic in countries with high levels of development and strong emancipative values. Thus, strategies of economic development should strongly and effectively relate to the measures of females' development, emancipation and empowerment. With respect to relationships between the processes, given that the human development approach stresses the role of increasing human resources and development in expanding the scope of social inclusion and human choice, economic modernity will more strongly explain the initial stage of females' emancipation and empowerment while cultural modernity will become more central to explanations of the higher stages of economic development [14].

Again, human development theory and the classical modernization paradigm offer conceptual frames to explain why modern societies are more conducive to gains in gender equality [14]. The developmental trends of social modernization may face legacies of path dependent cultural and institutional organization that affect societies' abilities to enhance females lives [23].

It is noted that the emergence of institutions and organisations whether cultural, social or the result of policy, sometimes consists of types of social organization that have a continuous and somewhat determinant influence on phenomena relevant to those institutions far into the future [25]. This can take the form of an inertial tendency where institutions and organisations affect very important phenomena that would have otherwise changed due to other social forces, like modernization. [25]. The study takes into consideration four measures of path dependent processes highlighted in the literature as those capable of affecting gender equality in the Society and these includes: Protestant religious traditions, a very long and wide tradition of female subordination, a state tradition of investing into welfarism rather than coercive forces, and a tradition of leftist dominance in government formation [2].

Depending on the nature of their traditions, religions vary in opportunity for females' development and emancipation. For instance, relative to other religious beliefs, researchers find that a Protestant religious heritage improves the status of women in a country [27]. With its tradition of sectarianism and volunteerism, Protestantism holds a tradition particularly hospitable to democratic values, such as respect for individualism, reciprocity and popular sovereignty. Researchers also approach the impact of religious legacy on women's empowerment through measures of publics' levels of secularization [4]. As societies secularize there is greater deference and protection to rationality and expertise, and this typically gives rise to the modern state and widespread social services. The trend typically happens from the pre-industrial or traditional through the industrializing or modern phase of societal development. During this transition, traditional units and organs restrictive of female development such as the church and the family lose their authority, as individuals place greater emphasis on rationality, particularism and individualism [34].

In addition to religion, [10] maintains that path dependent processes with respect to female suffrage policy may affect the potential to increase gender equality in particular societies. Suffragist policy represents instances when elites and dominant political groups open the system of political representation to former, politically constructed out-groups [10].

Countries with earlier suffragist policies for reforming females' formal political and economic exclusion are likely to have a stronger institutional legacy of women's formal political inclusion. Several studies hypothesize and establish a positive link between earlier suffragist policy and women's empowerment in parliament [21]. State-financed welfarism policy is another tradition that studies on gender equality emphasises, as central to societies' progression in gender equality. Much studies confirms that, a key barrier to females, full social inclusion, emancipation and autonomy has been and continues to be institutional and organisational arrangements that restrict governments role in caretaking and domestic responsibilities [22].

Welfare policy is strong and capable of addressing all these barriers by expanding the scope of the state's involvement in these everyday household necessities through, for instance, state supported childcare [22]. Others studies focus on the extent and the degree of exclusivity between state welfare investments and military investments in explaining the positive role welfare policy plays in women's lives [30]. This trade-off in state policy with respect to welfare verses power orientations is additionally important for gender equality. Investments into forced state power are investments into activities that are largely male-dominated, while investments into social welfare favor activities in which females play a more prominent role [6]. Thus, state legacies with relevant to welfare policies are an additional form of historical institutionalism that could potentially offset the empowerment modernization brings to women. Finally, an important role has been assigned to the traditional dominance of leftist parties [6].

The Institutional Design theory, while theories of modernization explains the impact of economic resources and values on female empowerment in society and historical legacies explains the effects of cultural and political traditions, researchers typically stress other factors to explain the representation of women in government. These studies highlight the importance of the characteristics of political institutions and organisations as causal factors. This study holds that variation in institutional characteristics mediates mass support and attention for female empowerment and the pool of females eligible for political office in ways that either enable or constrain females' attainment of political leadership.

Three aspects of the political system find support in this literature: the strength of democracy, the electoral system, and gender electoral quota systems. In comparison to autocracies, it is not surprising that scholarship on explanations of females social and political empowerment highlight the role of democratic institutions and organisations. The argument is rather straightforward. The oppressive, unequal treatment of women clashes with the democratic idea

of human equality [26]. As societal foundations that preserve and socialize free and equal citizenship, democratic institutions and organisations supply females with more rights and more channels for making their voices heard. Research indeed shows that the strength of countries' democratic traditions empowers their women [16]

### 3. Methodology

The study used case study design which emphasises qualitative methods and procedures for the study. It included purposive sampling technique as well as convenient sampling. The criteria for these sampling techniques was that teachers' who were male or female and teaching in any of the Public basic schools as well as teachers who were teaching Senior High Schools in the Region. It was difficult getting the sample frame hence convenient technique was used in this regard.

Due to the homogeneity of the sampled population, two (2) schools from the basic schools were selected and two (2) from the senior high schools. These schools were located in urban areas and rural areas of the region respectively. The total number of teachers interviewed were 120, thirty (70) teachers from the Basic Schools and fifty (50) teachers from the Senior High Schools. This was due to the homogeneity of the population under study. Group discussions with a section of teachers was conducted and the purpose was to get the general opinion of the teachers on gender equality in educational opportunities in the schools in which they teach. The table below shows the selected schools for the study:

*Table 1. Showing the number of schools, teachers and district selected.*

Schools Selected	Teachers Selected	District Located
Bagabaga Demonstration Junior High School	35	Sagnarigu District
Kunbunu Junior High School	35	Kunbunu District
Kalipohini Senior High School	25	Tamale Metro
Gusheigu Senior High School	25	Gusheigu District
Total	120	

Source: Field work, 2022

Both primary and secondary data were used. The primary data was sourced from the interviews conducted as well as the observations and group discussions, while the secondary data was sourced via the internet and published studies of authors on relevant topics especially, on gender and equality or inequality. In some case report of the districts were considered for the purposes of references. The data were analysed thematically with relevant headings and quotations from respondents especially, key informants' views like the heads of the selected institutions were used to support some assertions made by some respondents.

### 4. Results and Discussions

#### 4.1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The composition of teachers in the Northern Region was

largely male dominated. Table 2 below shows the responses of teachers in the four selected schools in the Northern Region by gender.

**Table 2.** School Teachers' Responses by Gender.

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Males	60	50
Females	56	46.7
Male Heads	3	2.5
Female Heads	1	0.83
Total	120	100

Source: Field work, 2022

It is very clear from table 2 that males dominated in the selected schools in the Northern Region of Ghana which is an indication that, the dominance of males gives them the advantage more than their counterparts when it comes to educational opportunities in the region. The differences in terms of enrollment recruitment of teachers reflects on the enrolment of boys and girls in the basic and Senior High Schools in the region. These inequalities continued even in search of equal job opportunities.

**Table 3.** Marital Status of teachers in the selected schools.

Marital status	Frequency	Percentage
Single	52	43.3
Married	63	52.5
Separated	1	0.83
Divorced	1	0.83
Widowed	2	1.67
Living together/Cohabitation	1	0.83
Missing value		0.04
Total	120	100

Source: Field work (2022)

Table 3 shows that more than half of the teachers were married; they formed 52.5% of the total respondents. All the respondents have also experienced some form of marriage, for instance those divorced and separated constituted 1.66% percent while those living together and those widowed formed 2.50 percent. Some singled teachers were also interviewed. They formed only 43.3 percent of the respondents. The data shows the importance attached to marriage in the region. Traditionally, in the Northern Region of Ghana, a man is not regarded as a man if he has no wife. Married men and women are highly respected in the society and the expectations are that when one gets marry, he must ipso-facto have children and qualified as an ancestor after his death. Unmarried men and women are not allowed to take part in decision-making or even attend meetings which affect the region.

This clearly shows how important the marriage institution is. As part of the findings more females were married as compared with the males hence, many males were in the single category. Even though the difference in marriage were eminent, it played less important role in determining educational opportunities in the region. Women who are grown and without husbands are not respected and are sometimes mocked at. It is therefore not surprising that out of

120 samples, more than half of the respondents were married and the majority were females. In the light of this, parents sometimes withdraw their girls from school just to get married thus lessen their educational opportunities in life.

**Table 4.** Percentage distribution of levels of education of the respondents.

	Frequency	Percent
Teachers Certificate A (Diploma)	85	70.8
Teachers Certificate A (Degree)	16	13.3
First Degree	9	7.5
Post Graduate Degree	10	8.3
Total	120	100

Source: Field work 2022

Table 4 shows that 70.8% of the respondents had teachers certificate 'A' which was the majority in terms of teachers' certifications in the schools visited. It was observed that all these teachers certificate 'A' teachers completed teacher training colleges in the country and they had intention to pursue higher qualifications when interviewed. It was also found that out of this number, 72.3% of theme were males indicating that, the males because of their majority had chances more that the females when it comes to educational opportunities.

From the table, it can be found that only 7.5% of the teachers had first degrees. These category of teachers were untrained, they were engaged by Ghana Education Service to teach after their first degree and majority of these teachers were males indicating again that, there would have more opportunity outside the teaching field as compared with their female counterparts.

Those with post graduate degrees were also found in the schools most in the senior High Schools in the Region. About 90% of the were males, indicating that they were far ahead of the females in pursue of job opportunities in the region. The reasons attributed to the low post graduate certification in the region were that, education in the Northern part of Ghana started very late. According to the director National Culture for Civic Education, in a lecture delivered in 1999 at the University of Ghana, Legon, northerners had their first University graduate in 1957 at the very time that Ghana was celebrating her independence. The second university graduate completed in 1960, which coincided with the republic of Ghana. In the light, one can confidently say that the low pursuance of higher education in the region, is one of the reasons why the dropout rate and non-enrolment rate are very high in this part of Ghana [3].

Differential socialization behaviour and patterns in the region lead to differences in the goals and purposes of schooling for males and females. Since males and females are expected to play different roles in the culture, they are trained to fulfill these roles. One of the headmasters' said:

*'Our socialisation process has make us not have confidence as girls when are even enroled in schools, at infancy our parents always allow us to always assist them in the kitchen while the boys are outside playing football or doing their homework. This differences as a result of*

*the attitude of our parents make it difficult for us to compete with our boys' counterparts when it comes to opportunities in education'.*

It was found that one way to examine changes in the opportunities for schooling of females is to look historically at educational practices, since the turn of the century, dramatic changes have taken place in the education provided in public schools for females in the Northern Region of Ghana and based on actual experiences and observations, many factors account for differences and the opportunities available for females and males in the Northern Region of Ghana.

The study reflects on the experience that females are likely to be favored than their male's counterparts in the school curriculum, gender identified subjects, gender based staffing, portrayal of women in curricular materials, silence in the curriculum, gender differences in hidden curriculum, hidden messages in the administrative structure of schooling, hidden messages in school organisation, hidden messages in instructional techniques and sexist language.

#### 4.2 Gender Differences in the Formal Curriculum

It was found that the formal school curriculum serves as the core for daily activities of teachers' and students' in every school in Northern Region of Ghana. It was in the selected that more girls were found in the home science and Arts classes while more boys were schooled in the sciences. In today's schools, because of changed perceptions of gender roles, schools should permit males and females to be able to study the same curriculum. However, gender based differential patterns of enrollment perpetuate inequalities in the ways girls are portrayed inferior in the formal curricular in Ghana. This was supported by [12].

One of the headmaster said:

*'the curriculum today has made it in such a way that both girls and boys are given the equal opportunity to choose subjects they want to pursue as they advance in the educational ladder but more girls as compared with boys prefer the home sciences and Arts. They consider them 'soft' and this affect them most since the country is now making emphasis on Science and technology'*

#### 4.3. Gender Identified Subjects

It was again found that tradition categorises curricular content areas by gender. Mathematics, Science, and many of the vocational subjects historically, have been considered by educators, parents and students as subjects more appropriate for males. The humanities and a few of the vocational areas are perceived to be more relevant for females. As stated earlier, fewer girls than boys were enrolled in courses in the quantitative fields of math and science in all the senior high schools. A recent report by Researchers in Mathematics, Science, and Technology revealed that more girls need to encouraged to pursue Mathematics, Science and engineering courses all schools in Ghana. This will assist close the inequality gap in the sciences. It was also observed that More

males in the region than females take computer programming courses at the university and go on to high paying positions in the computer industry.

Studies of ten public schools in the northern Region of Ghana by [2], determined the effects of gender differences on ability grouped Science classes. Based on an analysis test scores, it was found that females are more likely to be missioned to ability groups than males. Girls with high aptitude in Science were less likely to be assigned to high-ability Science groups than boys with similar suggestion that the teachers' placement decisions may reveal discrimination based on gender expectations. This study supports the earlier notion that quantitative subjects belong to males.

#### 4.4. Gender Based Staffing

It was found that more males than females go into quantitative subject matter teaching areas, there are more male teaching in these content areas in schools as compared with female. Teaching staffs are segregated by subject matter with more females teaching in languages and other Arts subjects like Religion and Moral Education, our world, home economics and to some extent Social Studies, while men dominate in Mathematica, Science and Computer in the Northern Region of Ghana.

**Table 5.** Subjects taught by Male and Female Teachers in the schools.

Subject	%males	%females
Home economics	0	100
English Language	26.5	73.5
Religion and Moral Education	33.3	66.7
Social Studies	35.4	64.6
Our World	15.5	84.5
BDT	46.1	53.9
Agricultural Science	100	0
Social Studies	76.8	23.2
Science	85.4	14.6
Industrial arts	95.4	4.6
Mathematics	100	0

Source: Field work, 2022

As shown clearly on the table, the percentages of males teaching the core courses in both the junior and Senior high schools selected were more for the male teachers than the female teachers in in all selected schools. This is an indication that the inequality in teaching in those schools in terms of the subjects place the females at the disadvantage when it comes to job opportunities in these areas.

Also, along this subject matter lines. It reinforces the already clear message about what is appropriate knowledge for males and females in courses selection.

#### 4.5. Portrayal of Women in Curricular Materials

Another important finding was the way in which females have been depicted in textbooks in Ghana. Feminist criticism of curricular materials in Ghana has pushed publishers to portray female characters in more diverse roles. It provided a number of female role models in the reading texts as teachers, nurses and housewives more than to depict females as

doctors, engineers and scientists.

At the Senior High level, changes in the treatment of females in textbooks is not as clearly evident. Many secondary texts continue to ignore the roles of women and portray them in stereotypic ways. In addition, secondary classrooms in the Northern Region are still predominantly taught by men as revealed. Recent figures from Ghana Education Service show that 90 percent of the of male teachers in all public Training Colleges in Ghana hold Master's Degree and out that only 20% of females can be put in this category.

One of the head teachers said:

*'In an examination of the formal curriculum, the message which comes through clearly is found not in what is presented about females, but what is omitted'.*

It can be interpreted that, what is left out in the text, sends a clear message to students as to what is important and what is peripheral knowledge. Studies on the portrayal of females in school texts, reports that females, rather than sharing central roles with men, are either ignored or relegated to domestic roles.

The question of gender equity in the curriculum goes beyond the formal curriculum to incorporate the implicit messages teachers give to students and this includes the ways in which ideas about sex roles are transmitted daily in the organizational structure and instructional techniques used in schools.

#### **4.6. Hidden Messages in the Administrative Structure of Schooling**

It was again found that the structure of schooling has been described by educational historians as the educational harem, that's is something given to the lord because it relies heavily on a hierarchical system in which male administrators manage female teachers as supporting staff.

One of female heads said:

*'Our administrative structure is full of males hence their dominance. There was a time I was looking for a female teacher to assist in the administration of the school but could not get because, all my female teachers were below the rank'*

According to her, this type of structure continues to be the norm today, as we have argued earlier that. schools are organized so that males dominate in policy decisions which affect the daily running of the school. Additionally, traditionally administrators in the Northern Region of Ghana have been male and consequently females in schools often find themselves in subordinate positions.

This type of administrative structure clearly tells students that men hold positions of authority and power in society and women play subordinate roles in which they have control over only the children in their classrooms.

#### **4.7. Hidden Messages in Classroom Organization**

The sex of students is often used as an organizational tool for structuring activities. In Junior High Schools in the

Region. In all schools as observed, boys and girls are called on to line up separately in order to attend to the dining hall for meals because of separate dormitories for boys and girls. Some teachers as observed ask the students to stand separately during parades. Although this practice may seem innocuous, separation by gender as an organizational strategy is unnecessary and results in differential treatment based on gender. Even though these may be necessary in many instances it generates the notion of subordination of females in the society.

One of the head teachers said:

*'Organization and distribution of classroom jobs may be based on teachers' perceptions of appropriate sex roles, despite increasing awareness of sex role stereotyping, we tend to treat boys and girls differently in schools according to gender expectations'*

It can be said in the above analysis that gender and educational opportunity provides us with two clear messages, what is good for males is not necessarily good for females the system as the society want us to believe, and if a choice must be made, the education establishment will base policy and instruction on that which is good for males as argues by [23] that the school organization will better fit the needs of females if single sex schools are more established rather than coeducational schools. This argument is based on research which has found that females perform better in single sex than in coeducational schools. They exhibit higher self-esteem and are more involved in the academic life of the school with increased involvement in a broad range of social and leadership activities.

It was clear from the group discussions that the structure of schools as well as the curriculum mirror male rather than female development especially when it comes to educational opportunities.

#### **4.8. Hidden Messages in Instructional Techniques**

It was revealed that male students receive more attention in all kinds by teachers that is more praise, more time, but also more reprimands and harsher discipline. The attention given to males is much different from that given to females. For example, [13] found that teachers are more likely to assist male students in performing a task, but are more likely to do that task for the female students. Teachers give more criticism to males, so that consequently they learn to handle criticism.

Female students are neither reprimanded nor praised by teachers, they rather tend to be ignored in classrooms. However, high achieving females who receive the least attention of all students are on few occasions encouraged by teachers. Both majority and minority females learn that their opinions are not valued and their answers to questions not worthy of attention, and they come to believe they are not smart or important. If they do well in school, it is because of luck or hard work rather their own abilities as students. School interactions "reinforce societal message that females are inferior.

One of the head teacher said:

*'There are gender differences in the ways men and women interact in social settings outside the academic world. Men speak more often than women and frequently interrupt them. Women are less active verbal participants in conversations, but they provide supportive and passive nonverbal cues by smiling and gazing at the speaker'*

It was again found that Male students receive more attention of all kinds by teachers- more praise, more time, but also more reprimanded nor praised but tend to be ignored in classrooms, particularly high achieving females who receive the least attention of all students. Both majority and minority females learn that their opinions are not valued and their answers to questions not worthy of attention.

#### **4.9. Sexist Language in Schools**

In the group discussions with teachers it was revealed that sexist language was one way in which gender stereotypes continue to affect beliefs and attitudes about females. Although there has been an increased awareness by many educators, sexist language continues to be used in many Northern schools. Many institutions have written and implemented policy which discourages the use of sexist language in courses and in student writing, but these guidelines are often ignored by many teachers in the Northern Region of Ghana. The use of sexist language in schools at any level is unnecessary and potentially debilitating to females. It is another way in which women are socialized to see themselves as subordinate to males [28].

when a male student uses sexist language, the silence can be deafening, few teachers even code it as a problem, and many of the insults are poured down on the girls from teachers and administrators themselves. After all, boys will be boys and girls will continue to receive their schooling.

It was found that the process in which males and females are treated differently in junior and senior high schools leads to differential outcomes for pupils and students based on gender. There are clear differences in the academic performances of males and females as well as their later occupational attainment.

#### **4.10. Differences in Academic Performance**

When a question was asked as to what the gender differences exist in pupils and student performance in the schools in the region. It was explained that female pupils achieve higher grades throughout public schooling and do better on language related subjects such as reading, writing and literature while males do better in mathematics and science subjects. One of the female headmistress said:

*'Any time we receive West Africa Examination Council results, and after the results analysis, I always realise that majority of the students who fail in Science and Mathematics are females and sometimes the best performance in English is a female'*

The head added, although secondary school girls sometimes in overall make better grades than boys in the language subjects, males tend to elect more of the optional

science and mathematics courses which the society prepare them for careers in science related area. This was collaborated by [18, 8], when they explained that females are less likely to participate in gifted programs and less likely to participate in special programs and less likely to take mathematics and science courses even if they are academically talented, because they are less likely to believe themselves capable of pursuing mathematics and science in secondary schools.

Females tend to attribute their failures to internal factors such as their own lack of intellectual ability, while successes are attributed to external factors such as luck. In a study of secondary retention and attrition in mathematics and science courses. Studies by [28], found the differences in the ways men and women dealt with their failures in these fields. Men were able to disengage their self-images from their academic performance; rather than question their own abilities, they viewed their failures as a lack of fit with the field of study. Females internalized their failures, questioning their competence as learners in general, not specifically in this content area.

#### **4.11. Differences in Occupational Outcomes and Economic Rewards**

When a question was posed as to whether there was equality of educational opportunities. The respondents explained that the question can be answered in two ways and that is, equal access to education and equal treatment of pupils and students in schools. Females' have achieved equal access to educational opportunities by law. However, equal treatment of women in schools is not a reality and this is mirrored in the cultural beliefs about appropriate roles for males and females. Ghana like other western countries, is highly patriarchal in that, males are politically, economically and socially dominant. Although there have been significant changes in both educational and economic opportunities for females, the workforce continues to be sex- segregated with females holding subordinate positions in the economy. According to [20], females earn less than 60 percent of males' income and regardless of job categories, females are concentrated in the lowest paying jobs in both public and industrial sectors of the economy. They are segregated into occupations which permit very little upward mobility.

According [1], unequal educational treatment in schools coupled with culturally determined notions of what is appropriate for females work continue to produce unequal job opportunities in the economic structure despite movement into traditionally male dominated fields such as science and engineering.

At the bachelor's degree level, females continue to concentrate in education, fine and applied arts, languages, health professions, home economics and library science. These are all traditionally female professions [29]. In addition, although, greater numbers of females are now earning master's degree and doctorates, a lot of them are now becoming university lecturers in the Northern Region of Ghana.



It was again found that females' education was part of initiative which focuses on the progress achieved by females over the past 25 years. This initiative shows that girls' enrollment rates in primary and Junior High levels of education in the Northern Region have almost doubled and that the gender gap in primary enrollment has been halved. It also shows that the pace of change is not fast enough. At the present rate, getting every girl into primary school will only happen in 2050 [1].

One of the heads master said:

*'In my school today, girls out-numbered girls in all the lower primary but the number dwindles at the Junior High Level and this is what the government and all stakeholders in education should be worried about'*

This can be interpreted that, in the Northern Region of Ghana today, more girls are now enrolled in primary school, but less progress to the Junior high school and, this was attributed to external factors such as early marriage, lack of parental care, lack of parental education and poverty among others.

## 5. Conclusion

Females today in the region have more balanced access to primary education than males. The gender gap in primary enrollment is no longer explicit as it was in primary schools in the past. Also, ignoring girls' education in the Region is tantamount to ignoring one of the most effective solutions to provision avenues for equal educational opportunities in future.

When girls are properly educated qualitatively, education, they will be able to break the social stereotypes that hold back their progress and development in the society. Equality opportunities in all sector of the economy especially in education will also give them the tools to better navigate future life-altering choices on pregnancy, childbirth, and health challenges which claim millions of children's lives around the world. Northern Region cannot achieve the world without the education and empowerment of all females in education. Gender inequality in educational opportunities has become a developmental scourge that bedeviled the region for many years, many hands are therefore needed on desk for effective solution.

The following recommendations were made:

## 6. Recommendations

1. Encouraged by the district assemblies in the northern region of Ghana since many young girls in the society are now on social media day in day out.
2. Vigorous sensitization by the district assemblies on the need for gender, mainstreaming in all educational curriculum, educate parents and the people by the district assemblies the need to encourage their females to attend school and provide their females educational needs when the need arises.
3. Partnership with multiple girls' education crusaders like the NGOs, Government, and members of

parliament should be encouraged. This will to help advance the commitments made on education.

4. District Assemblies should organise campaigns and calls on girls and teachers to add their voices to call for change by saying what they would want to improve on girls' education for the next generation.
5. There is the need for a gender balanced curriculum which also looks at ordinary female's everyday lives in traditional roles as well as their efforts to move beyond these roles. These can be championed by the Parents and Ghana Education Service.
6. The introduction of affirmative action on job opportunities should be legislated by the government such that more equal jobs should be reserved for females. This in a way encourage more women to aspire to fill in those vacancies.
7. There is the need for effective collaboration between the school authorities and the teachers to monitor females' performance in schools and also the policy on affirmative action in schools should be enforced by the government and all stakeholders in education.
8. Lastly the Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) secondary schools set up by the government is good but more girls should be encouraged to attend those schools in order to brighten these future opportunities in the world of work.

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