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**Causes of the Gender Gap in Education:
The Case of the Northern Region of Ghana**

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Dedication

I dedicate this little contribution of mine into the universal body of knowledge to my parents Baba Azzika Tanko and to my mother Mma Ayisheitu Zakari for having laid my childhood foundation upon which am solidly building on. Little did I know that their tough and harsh principles of childhood discipline, during my early years of socialization could carry me to all this far. If for anything, they have taught me that 'the palm wine taper does not stop tapping palm wine as his source of livelihood, because he once fell from a different palm wine tree'.

Finally, this work is dedicated to all young girls in Northern Ghana and to All Women in Africa who are making great efforts in their daily lives to reroute obnoxious traditions and culture and to transform societal attitude for the benefit of all.
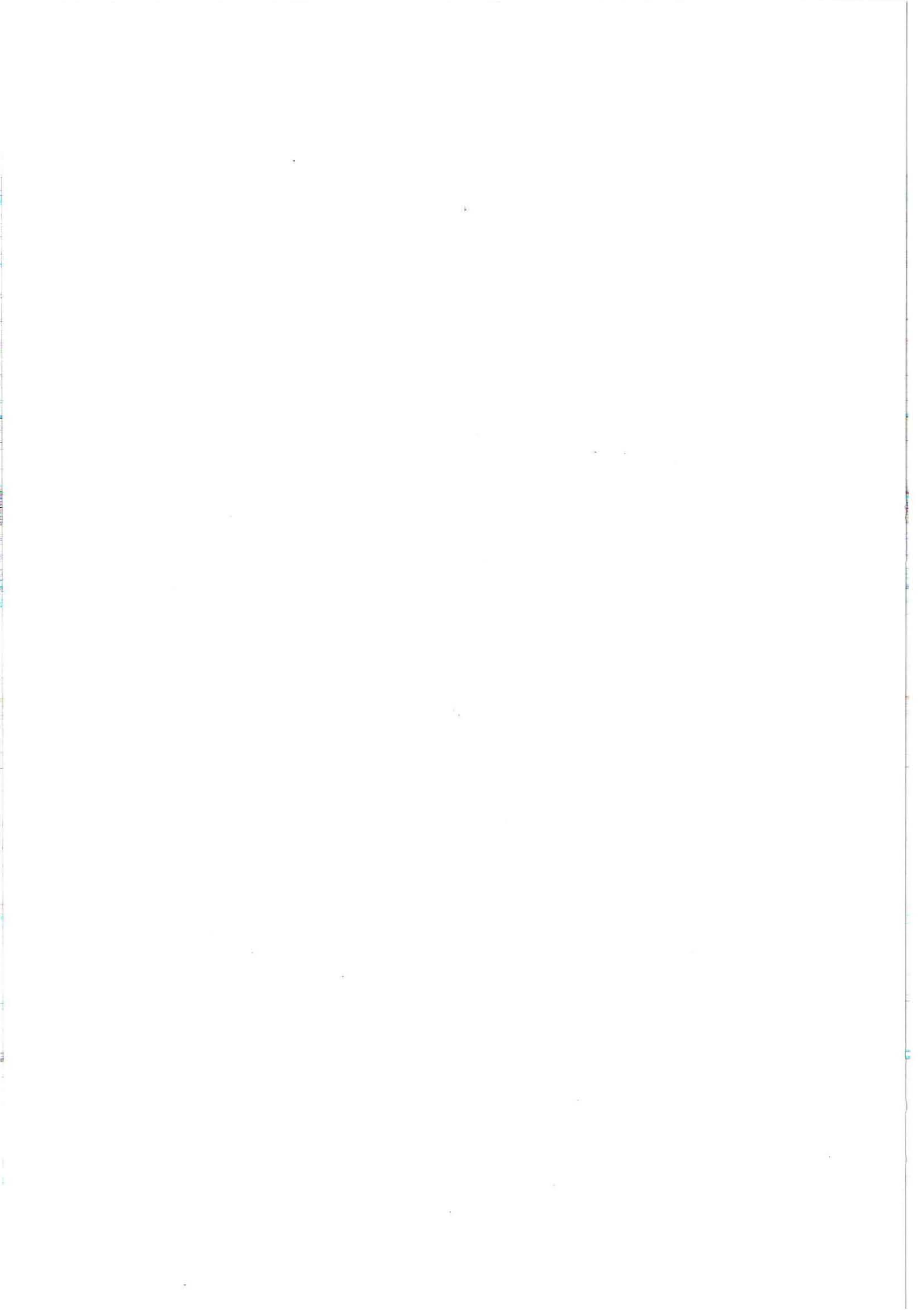
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"I have been able to see all this far, because I rest on the shoulders of giants of whom you are the pillar". **Shakespeare**

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List of Acronyms

ACDEP-Association of Church Development Projects

BESIP-Basic Education Sector Improvement Programme

BPOA-Beijing Platform of Action

CAMFED-Campaign for Female education

CBO-Community Based Organisations

CEDAW-Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

CRSP-Catholic Relief Services Report

CSO –Civil Society Organisations

CWI-Core Welfare Indicators

CYD-Children, Youth and Development

DAC-Development Assistance Committee

DFID-Department for International Development

DHS-Demographic and Health Survey

DANIDA-Danish International Development Agency

ECD-Early Childhood Development Centres

EDPPGMC-Education Development Program of Ghana Muslim Communities

EFA-Education for All

EMD-East Mamprusi District

FAWE-Federation of African Women Educationalists

F'CUBE-Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education

GAD-Gender and Development

GER-Gross Enrolment Ratio

GES-Ghana Education Service

GEU-Girls Education Unit

GLSS-Ghana Living Standards Survey

GNA-Ghana News Agency

GOG-Government of Ghana

GPHC-Ghana Population and Housing Census

GPRSP-Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper

GSS-Ghana Statistical Service

HIPC-Highly Indebted Poor Countries

ICPD-International Conference on Population and Development

ILO-International Labour Organisation

ISODEC-Integrated Social Development Centre

JSS-Junior Secondary School

MDG –Millennium Development Goals

MOE-Ministry of Education

MRAG-Muslim Relief Agency of Ghana

MTEF-Medium Term Education Framework

NCCE-National Commission for Civic Education

NCWD-National Council for Women and Development

NFED-Northern Framework for Education Development

NGO's-Non Governmental Organisations

NNED-Northern Network foe Education Development

NRG-Northern Region of Ghana

NUR-Northern and Upper Regions

PLA –Participatory Learning Appraisal

PRA-Participatory Rural Appraisal

PTA-Parents Teacher Association

SAP –Structural Adjustment Programmes

SMEP –Science and Mathematics Education Program

SND-Savelugu/Naton District

SSS-Senior Secondary School

SWOT-Strength Weakness Opportunities and Threats

TD-Tamale District

UNCRC-United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

UNDP-United Nations Development Programme

UNESCO-United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organisation

USAID-United States Agency for International Development

UEWR-Upper East and West Regions

UWER-Upper West and East Regions

WID-Women in Development

WUSC-World University Service of Canada

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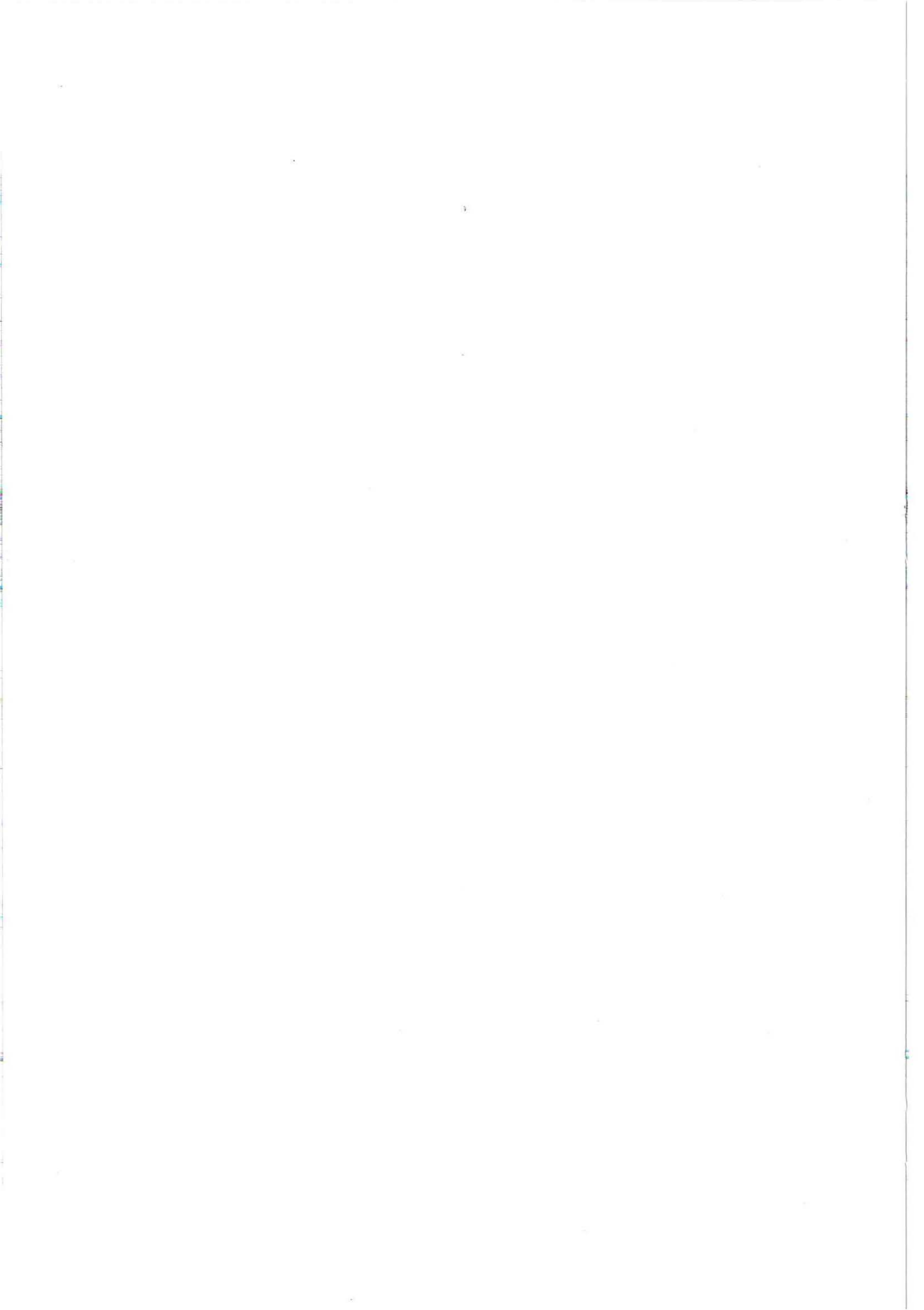
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Chapter One: Introduction

"Social research unlocks the potential of individuals for fuller life, not just economically, but also culturally and socially" (ibid, as cited in Stevens 1998, p14)

1.1 Background to the Study

This paper examines causes of the gender gap in education in Northern Region of Ghana. The education of girls has been heralded as a crucial step in the right direction for socio-economic development. Education of women affects fertility and child health. Despite this recognition, females' access to educational opportunities is still constrained more than their male counterparts.

According to the 2000 population census, Ghana has a population of about 20 million; the males constitute 49.5% of the population and females constituting about 50.5%. About 75% of girls have access to formal primary education nationally, less than 60% of girls' complete primary schooling with far less than 50% in the Northern and Upper Regions (NUR). Only 30% of the latter complete Junior Secondary School (JSS), 20% for Senior Secondary School (SSS) and about 18% tertiary education.

According to the Core Welfare Indicators (CWI) only one in eight women in Ghana, complete six years of primary schooling, and over 50% of the population is illiterate of whom 75% are women (NFED 1993, GSS 2000). A current Ministry of Education (MOE 2004) report shows that Ghana is now at a parity of 0.93% and this represents a major improvement, but the figures when disaggregated regionally show an unhealthy trend.

Female access to education in the deprived Northern Region is constrained. Access to formal schooling is measured by participation rates. But aggregate enrolment rates often do not reveal the substantial variations in girl's and women's access to education both within and between countries, and then also fail to show participation and completion rates (Sutton 1998). This study examines barriers to girls' education in the Northern Region of Ghana together with an as assessment of the gender gap.

1.1.1 Motivation and Significance of the Study

My motivation for undertaking this study stems from the fact that in my early years of schooling, I often saw my colleague female students, among them my own sisters dropping out of school as we moved up the academic ladder and at that tender age I knew that there were problems and I wanted to know why. As for reasons they experienced but could not explain saying that "experience is the best teacher". But being an equally disadvantaged student, I also wondered and failed to understand why, this aroused my curiosity to explore the barriers that constrain female education in the area.

Additionally, statistics on children's education generally show that girls often lag behind and this has been recognised by the Millennium Development Goals and the EFA Project. For instance;

> "Whereas only 32 countries were formerly believed to be at risk of not achieving the EFA goal of universal Primary education on the basis of enrolment rates, use of completion rates raises the number to 88 countries, out of the total 155 for which data were established. Some 35 countries are unlikely to meet the goal of eliminating gender disparities at the Primary level by 2005, even when the goal of simply universal Primary enrolment is used and not universal Primary completion." (IMF/ World Bank, April 2002, cited in Leslie Casely-Hayford 2002, p7)

From the above view, Ghana is one of the 35 countries likely to miss the EFA goal of universal primary education and removal of gender disparity as year 2005 is the target year. Aware of the fact that education empowers women and enhances their abilities to overcome dominant patriarchal powers in society, their low participation in formal schooling can no longer be gloss over. This has motivated me to look into the barriers responsible for the causes of gender disparity specifically in the Northern Region.

In this region, the economic and social impact of women is now a growing concern to be recognised. Women play multiple roles as mothers, farmers, office workers, traders, care givers (Brook et al 2004) or what Moser (1995) term the triple role of women as production, reproduction and community roles. Their survival, education and well-being has a multiplier effect on the well-being of the child, the family, the community and general fertility trend, and this further enhances their value in the labour market.

1.2 Problem Statement

In Northern Region , the proportion of girls in primary school in 1998/99 was about 39.1%, it had increased to 40.4% percentage and 41.6% respectively in 1999/2000 and 2000/2001. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for the region was 61.6%, while that of girls was only 28.8 % (MOE 2004). About 50% of children in the region are out of school, majority of whom are girls. The dropout rate in the region is 25%; the transition rate through formal schooling to other vocational schools is very low, with equally low participation of women (25%) in the teaching field (MOE 2004). The above scenario shows that female access to education is complex and compounded. Education needs to begin with gender sensitive policies. If development without consideration of gender is a "half good" (Harvard Role theory Model) and "development if not engendered is endangered" (UNDP 1997), then it could equally be said that education if not engendered is "catastrophic" (World Bank 2001&2002).

Some empirical studies attributes the lag of female education in the region to patriarchy as boys are often given the needed attention because they are seen as future family security, and possible heirs of their communities (Takyi & Oheneba-Sakyi 1994). But a critical examination reveal that the culture and practices of this region are similar to those of the neighbouring Upper Regions which also practice a patrilineal system of inheritance and marriage, yet their enrolment rate for girls still fare better than the Northern Region.

Moreover, the migration of young girls from the region to the South as "Kayayie" (street head potters) may also be a factor responsible because other studies report that the two neighbouring Upper regions have many young girls who move South in the same pattern. There is therefore a need for further study of the cause's gender gap in education in the region. It seems to be assuming multi-causal and muilti-sectoral dimensions and thus needs a multi-disciplinary approach.

The figure below shows the regional GER of Ghana in the 2000/2001 academic year.

Figure 1.REGIONAL GROSS ENROLMENT RATIO 2000-2001(%)
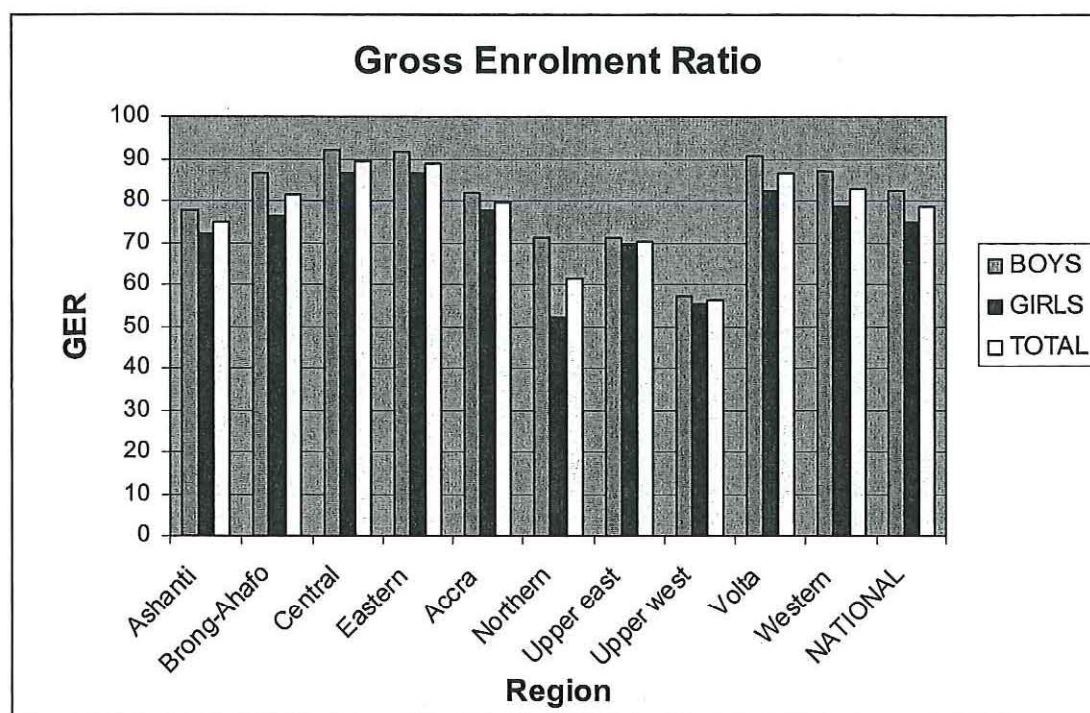
Source: MOE/SRIMPR Division EMIS May 2002 Report

The national GER for the academic year was 82.2% for boys while that of girls was 74.8%% giving a total national GER of 78.6%%. The Northern Region recorded an enrolment of 71.2% for boys compared to 51.9% for girls.

Despite recognition of the benefits of female education and widespread advocacy for girl child education in the NR, the gender gap is still noticeable. Progress towards quality education for all is still very slow despite global recognition of the benefits of female education to society. From education as a basic need in the 1970s through to education as a right of recent decades, there lies a challenge to make universal access to education a reality irrespective of gender, age, class and ethnicity. Against this backdrop, barriers to

female education in regions like the Northern Region of Ghana become a crucial issue to be studied empirically.

1.3 Justification

In Ghana, the government is currently adopting an agenda for development dubbed as the 'Agenda for Positive Change'. Focus is on a three pronged strategy which has identified a 'Vigorous Human Resource Development' as the priority (GOG, Ghana web page, 2005). Northern rural literacy is 13 % (GSS 2000) but the adult literacy rate is less than 5%. The region harbours only 10% of Ghana's population but presents unique problems of which the gender education gap deserves special attention. About 30% of girls in the region compared to only 19% of boys were not in school (MOE in Sutherland Addy, 2002)) while 45% compared to 36% of boys could not make it to the JSS level.

It is further dissatisfying to note that while 73% of boys could make it to the University level, only about 28% of girls could get to the tertiary level making it clear, that it is not only low enrolment rates but even the transition and retention of the few girls enrolled is also problematic (Sutherland-Addy, 2002).

It has been interesting in carrying out this study that much of the research that has been undertaken takes a partial approach to the problem by concentrating on the North-South development disparity to explain gender problems in NR. This paper argues that this explanation is incomplete and that spatial explanations alone cannot fully explain the causes of the gender gap in the region. Attempts to ensure educational equity between the North and South often reflect geographical focus without a gender lens.

The gender order that existed during the colonial era does played a role in the educational status of women in the North. It was therefore not surprising when after independence the government adopted a Free Universal Basic Education Policy in its Ten Years Development Plan for the North as a compensation for their historical underdevelopment and subordination. Education is not only a need, but a basic human right and a key ingredient in development. Investment in female education will not only directly raise the

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well-being of individuals, but will also raise their human capital and capability to function and acquire means for the satisfaction of other basic needs in the region.

Female education is seen as a means of reducing inequality, as a mechanism that makes other investment more productive and as an avenue for social and political development in the Northern Region in particular. Some progress has been achieved as evidence shows that the gender gap in education is narrowing in the region, but further finding is necessary for any social policy intervention.

1.4 Objectives

The objective of this study was to examine the causes of the gender gap in education in the Northern Region of Ghana. Specifically, the paper;

1. Assessed the causes of the gender gap in terms of participation and examine specific constraints in girl child education in the Northern Region; and

2. Based on these finding, come out with some policy recommendations.

1.5 Research Questions

The study focused on the following questions;

1. What barriers constrain female education in the Northern Region?

2. What efforts have been made by the state and non-state institutions to respond to these barriers?

1.6 Methodology

The study was mainly based on secondary data in examining the barriers to girls' education in Northern Region of Ghana (NRG). Data was drawn from the Ministry of Education, Civil Society Organizations working in the sector in Ghana, the Ghana Living Standards Survey, and the DHS, the GPRS, the Core Welfare Indicators (CWI) and the Vision 2020 policy documents in Ghana. Use was also made of the data bases of UN agencies, USAID and the World Bank.

These sources of data form the basis of major empirical findings of facts and figures in this sector which aid the assessment of constraints and opportunities that militate against and or in favour of female education. Further disaggregated data from the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service are used. The latter have helped assessment of enrolment and retention rates and policy constraints to female education in the region. Despite primary data constrain the study looks to field studies on the Northern Region to enrich the data. Findings of this paper serve as a springboard for empirical verification in the field through primary data in the Northern Region of Ghana.

1.7 The Limitation of the Study

The paper was practically constrained by having to deal with limited time and the readiness of available data since additional secondary data had to be collected from the study area. It would have been an added quality if the views of those who are been studied, stakeholders, the civil society and the political authority could have been taken into account in this research. The very fact that the study depended on only secondary data from the on set poses a big challenge for the analysis's and the drawing of conclusions. Individual research bias can therefore not be excluded since different research findings were used. To overcome the lack of primary data much use was made of the secondary data sources enumerated and that specifically done on the Northern Region.

1.8 Conceptual Frameworks

For every social phenomenon, concepts help in understanding and analysis for informed decision making. The study used the following concepts that have emanated from debates of education and gender for problem conceptualisation.

1.8.1 Education as a Right

As far back as 1948, the need for girl's education was recognised by the League of Nations in the universal human rights for all. Since the Third Development Decade of the UN (1980s), a trend emerges that women should be seen as equals, as agents and beneficiaries in every sector and at all levels of the development process. In 1979,

CEDAW came into force recognising as a priority the elimination of all forms of violence and discrimination against women by setting up legal enforceable parameters. Several World Conferences have been organized from Jomtien (EFA 1990) to Dakar in 2000 down to the present day Millennium Development Goals (MDG's 2003). In each case woman's agency and status often ranked high on the agenda including a view from the UNCRC (1989) that education is a right and should be provided as such irrespective of class, gender and political affiliation. The CRC comprehensively recognises and commits Nation States to education and gender issues. But even thought the convention is near full ratification with Ghana being the first country to have signed it, major discrimination by gender still exists in many parts of the world as is the case of the Northern Region of Ghana.

While treaties echo legal authority, declarations only carry political weight when they are implemented, and without implementation they become empty rhetoric. Constraints to girl-child education and the existence of a gender gap have thus grasped the attention of recent development actors. According to UNESCO (2004), education as a right requires equal access to quality delivery for all in a child friendly schooling environment. It is important that girls are fully given these inalienable rights so they can acquire knowledge as young girls and influence later political decision making as educated adults.

1.8.2 Quality Education for Girls

According to UNESCO (2004), there is no society in which women enjoy equal opportunities with men. Girl's access to education and performance are both a consequence and a cause to this disadvantage position of women. The ground-breaking ICPD of Cairo (1994) and the Beijing Plat form of Action (1995) recognize that most young girls miss out in quality education provisioning and place emphasis on mainstreaming gender in current development language as a transformation tool to bring about equity and equality in all human endeavours. These conferences have extended the quality dimension of education to which states already committed themselves in the late 1980s. The World Bank, however partially, focus on education as a strategy for poverty reduction through fertility or what is often term as "schooling as contraception" (Heward

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1999). Equally both the MDG's and the Dakar Framework of Action call for primary education of high quality for girls (UNESCO 2003) and that such a framework should emphasis the teaching of life skills and making the schooling environment a friendly one. Okwany (2005) emphasised that these arguments are often found wanting to the neglect of the wider and complex realities of women's lives. What clearly emanates from all these debates is that the underlying obstacles that militate against female education often defy the conventional definition of quality education, making it a prerequisite for a broader definition to enhance enrolment, retention and survival rates of girls at school (as is the of the Northern Region of Ghana). UNESCO (2003) refers to quality education as that which aims at ensuring and improving measurable outcomes of learning in literacy and crucial life skills to be enjoyed by all.

1.8.3 Patriarchal Privileges and Dividends

The Northern Region of Ghana is a highly patriarchal society with women highly subordinated. Men are seen as the breadwinners of the family, deserving much power and privilege. Being born a male already places the men at a level higher than the female.

Men gain a dividend from patriarchy in terms of honour, prestige and the right to command. They also gain a material dividend too (Connell 1995:82). Renewed interest in masculinity or masculinities has led gender reformers to forge an alliance with pro-feminist researchers with a focus on negotiating for a friendly masculine space for education (Kenway 1995). Due to this status of men vis-à-vis the power dichotomy, women rarely have the privilege and autonomy to dialogue or decide responsibly on when and who to send to school, how many to care for. The have less power traditionally to negotiate for even safe sex and birth spacing.

Sunderland-Addy (2002, cited in Hayford 2002, p46) reports that mostly girls are often held back by the power of traditions of patriarchy, household dynamics, enduring stereotypes and labour market inequalities in the region. Males also influence reproductive decision making in terms of sex preference and girls when unfortunately born may not be given education. This already dividend enjoyed by men leads them to dominate their women not only in education, but even in reproductive decisions, as a

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woman may never rest and would continue to be overburdened by a benign man in so far as she continued to bear female children.

1.8.4 Education, Empowerment and Masculinity

Masculinity is used to refer to the innate qualities and properties of men that distinguish them from women. In this view, masculinity often helps to explain not only differences but also inequalities between the sexes. The schooling of girls empowers them and brings many social outcomes and quality to society. It improves their world view, enhances their status and opens unexpected chances (World Bank 1993). There is therefore a dialectical relation between empowerment and education. When girls are educated, they get empowered which has a spill over effect on household welfare. For instance female education encourages healthy safe motherhood measures, reduces communicable diseases, fertility and infant mortality trends and pays rich dividends to society.

Evidence further suggests that when families have fewer children, investment on child education and time for care is higher and social and economic outcomes are extended. According to Alliance 2015 Campaign and the Millennium Project, education of girls is the single biggest investment that yields maximum benefits for sustenance and development. Educated girls raise healthy families, avoid contracting HIV/AIDS, contribute to decision making processes and can negotiate for their rights and renegotiate for their responsibilities and get training to help them generate income for their own participation in development to be felt (FAWE 2000).

Efforts to redistribute the burden of domestic labour toward men within households or socializing the cost of child and maternal care or other types of caring labour are necessary both to reduce women's time and poverty and to help them participate fully in formal education. Women usually have fewer opportunities than men when it comes to receiving education because they are often viewed as outsiders. Men viewed as heirs or eventual breadwinners of the family. Programmes that rely on reaching women through the same channels as men have typically had serious difficulty in reaching women entirely (UNICEF 2000).

Traditionally, quality measures have aimed at examination systems, policy management and planning. Methodological issues such as content and the context of education curriculum and the type of skills to be acquired so that relevance of education reflects the realities of modern world. Quality education requires proper teaching and learning methods, availability of relevant text-books and a friendly schooling environment that recognises and pays attention to gender differentials at school. These dimensions were extended to cover sustainable development, human security, and quality of individual lives that reflects societal as well as global levels of living. Borrowing from these debates, this paper in its assessment of the causes of the gender gap in the Northern Region has no doubt that, rights to education at policy level and quality provision could influence family decision-making with regards to sending the girl child to school.

1.9 The Scope and Structure of the Paper

This paper examines the causes of the gender gap in education in the Northern Region of Ghana and makes possible recommendations for social policy. Chapter two present the socio-economic profile of the area with regards their standard of living and Chapter three presents critical review of literature relating to gender and education debate. The major findings of this study are presented in chapter four and conclusions and recommendations based on the findings are then drawn in chapter five.

Chapter Two: Socio-Economic Profile of Northern Region

2.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the socio-economic profile of the Northern Region of Ghana. It also looks at the main livelihood mechanisms adopted in the area. This socio-economic and socio-cultural profile sets the context for revealing factors that perpetuate the gender bias unique to the area.

2.2 Historical Background of Northern Region of Ghana

The earlier known inhabitants of the area were probably the Komas but have since disappeared as a distinct tribal group. A good proportion of the 2 million population of the region consist of indigenous people and expatriates, but about 95% of the population belongs to the indigenous tribes in the region. It is not a monolithic block however. It consists of some tribal groupings identical in customs and languages. But the Northern Region is a mutlti-ethnic region and the medium of instructions in schools is English as the national language even though vernacular is unofficially spoken by teachers as a mcdium of instruction at lower primary school (Fredua-Kwarteng, Ghana web, 2005)

2.3 Culture and Tradition

The main dialects spoken in the region are Dagbani, Ganja and Mampruli with a small number of the Ashanti settlers from southern Ghana who speak Twi. Hausa is spoken among all tribes as a result of the people's historical experience with the Hausa settlers from Northern Nigeria, Niger and Mali. They practice a patri-local pattern of residence, although couples still maintain closed links with parents' in-law. It is very common for different generations to reside in the same compound. The region practices a partrilineal system and marriage is contracted exogenously (Fredua-Kwarteng, Ghana web,2005.

While it is recognised that there is legal age of 18 years for marriage it is worth noting that girls below the prescribed age were given in marriage as a cultural practice (GPHC 2000). Elderly, both men and women are revered for their wisdom and custom. Women are customarily forbidden to inherit their deceased husband property; such property goes to the elderly son of the decease.

The history of the people of the Northern Region and their socio-cultural practices are relevant for this study because it will help illustrate the subservient position women occupy in families. The betrothal system of giving young girls out for marriage would also help explain why boys over represent girls in school. With women not being able to own property, the schooling of the girl child could suffer because women have less say with regard to sending girl children to school since they are less involved in the decision making process and less heard by families and communities.

2.4 Education in the North, a Historical Perspective

Gaps in education in the North may have their roots deeply embedded in colonial policy. Colonial education policy was aimed at preserving the North to serve southern plantations and industries (Bening 1976). The British colonial administration not only refused to extend education to the North, but also prevented willing missionaries from doing so. For instance, between 1880 and 1888 there were 139 schools in the South of which only three were government school and none in the North. The North has its first primary school in 1907 with 26 pupils at Navrongo (Bening 1976). By 1932, there were only ten schools in the North compared to 614 in the South and it was not until 1960 that Northern Region recorded its first graduate from the universities in the South. By 1946 when about 155 students were on government scholarship abroad none came from the Northern Region of Ghana. Below is a table showing enrolment and school infrastructure of late colonial era in Ghana.

Table 1.Colonial Enrolment and Primary and School Facilities (1950)

Region	No. of schools	Total Enrolment	population	Percentage
Colony and Ashanti	2601	249376	2575000	8.7
Southern territories	315	26525	273000	9.7
Northern	83	5059	1093	0.5

territories				
Total	2999	280960	4241000	18.9

Source: P. Foster (1950), Table 6 page 117

As the above shows modern Ghana (formally known as Gold Coast) was basically comprised of three regions, the Ashanti and Colony, the Southern Territories and the Northern Territories. Out of about 3000 schools in the country the North had only 83 with an enrolment of about 5000 pupil compared to about a total of 280,000 students for the country. Between 1909 and 1925, the aim of education in the Northern Territories was to obtain standards of primary schooling compared to in the Ashanti and the Colony.

The Colonial legacy could also be a contributor factor to the lag of female education in North. For instance, Governor Guggisberg who has been credited for his comprehensive Ten Years colonial education policy term as 'Education, the Keystone' did not mince words in his intention about the type of education that the Northern Territories deserve. He stated in his description of the North that;

"Every man of the North is worth his weight in gold for the Southern mines, for private enterprises and for development of these schools. The completion of which are necessary to secure progress and development" *(Atakpa 1996, p11)*

Formal colonial education did not only de-colonised the North, but aimed at selecting some few men to be trained to serve southern mines and industries or as administrators to function in the urban areas to the neglect of women. Colonial authorities not only refused to establish schools in the area, but also prevented some willing missionaries from doing so. African societies have a long and rich history of education and training. Indigenous education among all groups remains an important transmitter of cultural identity from one generation to the next (World Bank 1993).

Furthermore, the negative colonial attitude towards educational provisioning for the North could stem from the fact that the North is sparsely populated unlike the South and

communities are located widely apart. This makes it difficult for all communities to be given educational infrastructure. When Lord Luggard one of the colonial governors of the Gold Coast introduced Indirect Rule[1] into the country, more power and attention was given to local chiefs whose conservative nature made it difficult to allow their subjects to be enrolled at school (Bening 1976). Those who were enroll in School were men,

with a view that the school is a place for the discipline of recalcitrant deviance .This coupled with a backlog of infrastructure unlike the South which enjoyed quality infrastructure also has a bearing on the level of education achievement in the North. When attempts were often made to send teaching staff to the North most of them were often Southerners who feel reluctant to go to the deprived North and those few accept postings do so with a lackadaisical attitude to teaching and learning. This Negative attitude of Southerners who feel superior to the Northern people in Ghana cannot still be ruled out even to date (Fredua-Kwarteng, Ghana web, 2005).

While African societies have their own education suitable to their needs and culture, the education system and the school curriculum introduced were not only alien to indigenous culture but were also aimed at fulfilling the needs and aspirations of the colonisers with women less favoured. Understanding the history, economic conditions and socio-cultural practices of the Northern Region is clearly essential for an appreciation of the root causes of gender and educational inequities.

2.5 Economic Activities and Livelihood Mechanisms

The Northern Region still suffer economically from their colonial legacy of extreme underdevelopment. Even today no real industrial developments have been made in the North to bridge the North-South development differentials in Ghana. The Northern Region is basically depended on rain fed agriculture for subsistence but petty trading is also done along-side fishing. There are great potentials for agricultural activities but with some small scale irrigation projects. As a result food production is limited to the single main cropping season.

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[1] This was a system of rule introduced by the colonial masters where the local people were being ruled through their own chiefs who strictly carries the directives of colonial masters to their subjects without any reservation, complain or suggestion.

Livestock is reared for subsistence and sold sometimes to augment family income and the predominant system of farming is mixed farming[2]. The region has only one agricultural season, compared to two in the South, and this encourages seasonal migration of youth to the south for work which also has a bearing on the participation of children at school.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has indicated relevant facts of the culture, practices and tradition of people in the Northern Region. Their system of marriage and inheritance are partrilineal with males often given priority attention because they are seen as the future breadwinners of the family. The region is agrarian; relying on rain fed agriculture and suffers seasonal migration of youth to the South. The colonial educational legacy favoured the South and the few services offered the North rather concentrated on educating males to serve on administrative duties for the colonial masters. The roots of the gender gap could thus be traceable to colonial policy and practices as well as the socio-cultural practices and economic marginalisation in the region.

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[2] Mixed Farming is the cultivation of crops and the rearing of livestock on the same piece of land and mixed cropping is the cultivation of more than one crop on the same piece of land. Food crops dwindle over the years as a result of adverse conditions such as reduction in soil fertility due to over cultivation and bush fires.
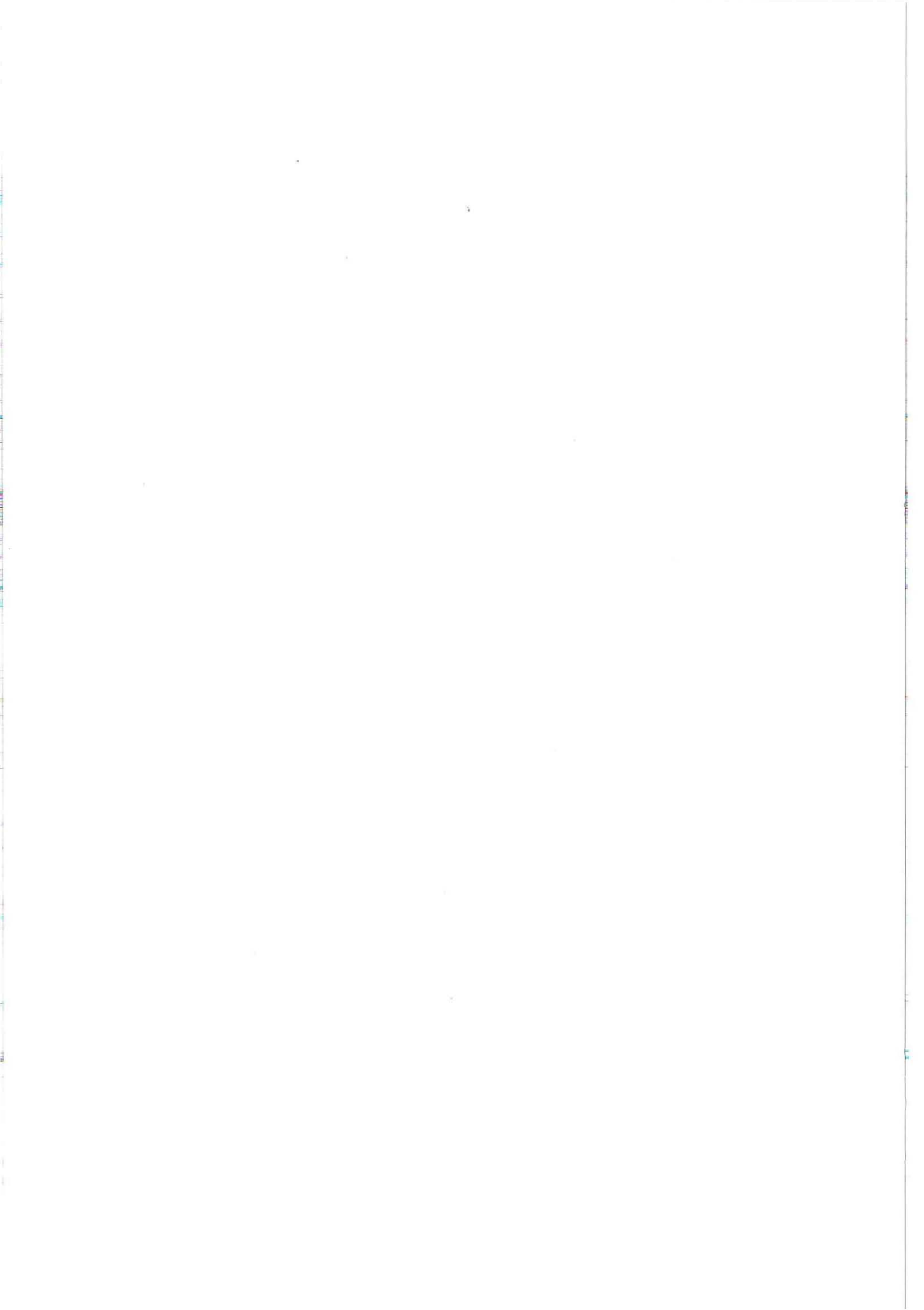
Chapter Three: Literature Review and Gender Analytical Frameworks

3.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews educational literature and presents an analysis of gender frameworks relating to the study. It presents a critical debate on gender and education issues for some scenarios to be drawn. This general review further helps to analyse the major constraints related to the causes of the gender in the Northern Region.

3.2 Analytical Frameworks

The study basically uses the Moser Framework and the Harvard Analytical framework of gender analysis, both of which were developed in the 1980s, to aid in its conceptualisations of the gender education gap in the Northern Region of Ghana. The Moser Framework was developed to counter the 1970s approach of treating women's issues as separate entities. The Harvard Gender roles approach was adopted in development circles for the integration of women work into the efficiency approach to gender analysis. Without frameworks, the social embeddedness of negotiation over gender relations means that low-level domestic struggles may not be explicitly articulated or acknowledged and will only be revealed by carefully probing into what may appear to be self explanatory changes (Candida et, al 1999).

3.2.1 The Moser Gender Analysis Framework

This framework sets gender planning as a component of planning in its own right. It identifies empowerment; women emancipation as the major goals towards equality and equity achievement but recognises that the achievement of these goals is context specific.

The Moser framework draws its strength from the fact women everywhere play reproduction, production and community roles and have some strategic and practical gender needs to be met. This conceptualisation often helps planners and policy makers understand clearly the circumstances that surround women's daily lives in society. Moser defines the reproductive role of women as household maintenance, bearing and caring, shopping and housekeeping (Candida et, al. 1999). Women, in addition to this, are also involved in the production of goods and services in both self-employment and formal

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employment. At the community level, women belong to associations and engage in the organisation of events such as festivities, ceremonies and in local politics (as is the case in Northern Region).The strategic needs are seen as those that, when met, will enable women to transform gender power relations between themselves and men. Practical gender needs, when met, on the other hand, aid women in their present circumstances and activities. The framework challenges planners in addressing unequal power balance, helps them judge the impact of projects on the specific needs of women and brings political circumstance into reality.

Although this framework is based on gender power transformation, its chosen language does not really address issues of power and politics. It makes women appear passive in its conceptualisations of their strategic and practical needs and the roles they play in society. Kabeer (1995, cited in Candida et, al. 1999) argues that the distinction between the roles played is clear, but the framework does not distinguish between who does what to produce what, and the quality of goods and services produced remains abstract. The framework also misses any explanation of the nature of the labour involved and it does not critically analyse the social relations that goes into determining gender dynamics and politics within the household.

The weakness of the framework notwithstanding, its usefulness and strength is worth applying in this study. In the context of the Northern Region of Ghana, the framework helps conceptualise issues of power and patriarchy, empowerment and the availability and access to control of resources within households. Its assessment of the triple role played by women is also useful to this paper because, women perform production, reproductive and community functions that constrain their access to education more than men. In the Northern Region for instance, men, women, boys and girls alike perform almost the same functions, but women and young girls perform reproductive and community roles more than men and boys. This helps explain factors that present obstacles to girl's education and the existence of the gender gap and highlight the key differences between opportunities and constraints under which men and women work in the region. Assessment of the strategic and practical needs for girl's education is often a

complex phenomenon mediated by the social, cultural and political context of patriarchy (Candida et, al 1999). Its analyses of the gender allocation of resources, gender based division of labour and the gender control of decision-making within households is useful. It is thus useful in its categorisation of the roles performed in society because an intervention in one area without a focus on the other affects the whole system.

3.2.2 The Harvard Analytical Framework

This framework aims to help in the efficient allocation of resources within projects for improved productivity. It highlights the differences of men and women in communities and argues that an economic circumstance dictates a case for resource allocation to women as well as men.

The Harvard framework provides useful gender roles toolkit for data collection at the household, community and organisational level. While the Moser Framework fails to capture issues of data organisation and disaggregation with regards to who does what, Harvard identifies and thus answers who does what in production and reproductive activities though it is project specific. The toolkit enables users to identify resources accessible to men and women, presents a profile of productive and reproductive activities, indicates who controls community usage of resources and who gets what and tries to show that access, control and usage are different things altogether. Access for instance gives you a license to use a resource or do an activity, control is another matter. The framework is also useful and beneficial to my study because it argues that education and training, legal parameters, community norms, social hierarchies, demographic and religious beliefs all influence the gender division of labour, access and control of resources. The framework does these conceptualisations by use of a checklist in project cycle analysis, design, implementation and evaluation.

These strengths not withstanding, it is weak that it considers only distant influencing factors to project management to the neglect of the immediate intended threats to gender in the design and implementation of projects. It provides indeed a checklist for project

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monitoring and evaluation, but this checklist however useful has not been contextualised to make it easy for planners to use.

While the weakness of this framework is recognised its strength in application cannot be discounted since it has helped my study to explore hidden processes of changing gender relations in the Northern Region. This framework helps the study analyse factors influencing girl-child education such as community norms and social hierarchy, institutional structures, demographic factors, the attitude of community to girl child education and the assessment of legal and political parameters that militate against access to educational opportunities in the region. It is based on the understanding that a household in which decisions are made on schooling of children is not an undifferentiated grouping of people with common production interest and consumption functions. The corner stone of this framework in this study is the gender lens it provides to highlight the fact that key differences between opportunities and constraints under which men and women work are influenced by a benevolent dictator in the family. This framework is useful because it provides a checklist for planners to ensure that obvious errors by policy makers and project planners do not recur in gender planning.

3.3 Gender and Education Debate

Female education is compounded by numerous problems one of them often being the high percentage of girls who dropout from schooling. The human rights of women and principle of equity and equality were recognized since the early history of the UN. In several recent studies evidence abounds that girls are not only neglected and denied universal right to education, but are also overworked, underpaid or unpaid.

Using time series data from Africa, Stromquist (1998) shows that girls bear the heaviest burden of both household activities and the care of siblings and adult. In most developing countries, poor access and the weak representations at school could be attributable to poor or low representation of women as teachers and as role models (Stromquist, Lee & Brirgit 1998). According to Stromquist daily issues about knowledge of oneself and instilment of self esteem, information about the political, legal rights and social status of

women are often deferred because students are deemed to be " young minds" they are often not covered later because the curriculum is 'over crowded'. It is therefore important for teachers to be aware of choice of language for instruction towards boys and girls and could be selective of words if necessary. Schools could be gender neutral, but the environment could create forces of gender in some situations in the class room, play time and in pupil choice of friendship given discretion to students.

Emphasis in primary and secondary education in most rural areas is on participation and less on general modification of curriculum content and mode of instruction. Sutton (1998) argues that the bulk share of the literature on girl's education in developing countries concentrates on the extent in which girl's access quality schooling and its changing patterns over time, the potential benefits of girl's education and the constraints on their full participation. These are what Sutton argues constitute the simple ABCs of girls' that need to be given attention in examining issues of gender and education. For women to become strong agents of change with agency, women every where should enjoy equal access to basic education. With basic education, the first step towards attenuating the enormous disparities affecting women, rural population, urban poor and marginalised ethnic minorities become promising. But in many societies' girls enter primary school later than boys and might have reached puberty before completing a full circle of primary schooling. According to Sutton "puberty is seen as a period of what is often called "cultural compression" by anthropologist in the lives of young girls. This sexual maturity often many at times comes with some societal restrictions on some activities with a much focus on preparing girls to enter marriage. These expectations could easily derail the young girls from schooling with parents rather expecting financial benefits from the schooling of their male children while raising their social prestige from the marriage of their daughters (ibid, cited in Okwany 2005,p25).

Arguably, issues of patriarchy need consideration towards the critical examination of masculinity and power and its consequence on the education of girls. This, according to Subrahmanian (2003) shifts attention to 'girls at risk' for the understanding of cultures, subcultures and the problematised matters of power, patriarchy and meaning (Adams &

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Savran 2002). Attention should also shift from primary consideration alone towards the consideration of secondary and non-formal education for girls and women (Sutton 2000, cited in Okwany 2005 p29).

Other arguments about the schooling of girls show that efforts to promote female education are often grounded in poverty reduction and fertility lowering making girls schooling to be seen as a form of contraception (Heward 1999 as cited in Okwany 2005, p 25). She argues that the World Bank's view of schooling only as a fertility determinant is a partial representation as it ignores the real complex nature of women's circumstance in society.

Economic constraints couples with socio-cultural norms too thus influence girls demand for education in low income households. Sutton (1998) view educational decision making by households as the daily enforcement of economic, social and cultural norms and values. These factors in addition to the distance to school, quality of education and other indirect and direct benefits and cost determine who enters, stay or leave formal schooling. And the higher the cost of tuition, transport, uniforms and the real benefits forgone, the more likely the choice of boys for education by households and families (Save the Children 1997, Sutton 1998). Families are thus more likely to keep girls away from school just as some guardians also adopt and foster girls for their domestic service and not as an aid of educating them for the giving family. Many guardians also do not have reliable source of income which pushes them to make decisive choice of which child to send to school and thus, this gender socialization of fostering families end up being just a preparation of the younger girls for their marital homes.

With regard to the gender gap in education, schooling itself could help in bridging the gap but it also operates as a selective social screening mechanism. It provides opportunities for some children's upward social mobility but ratifies the status of others (Farrell 1999). As such, children of poor families could be denied education and remain poor adults while children of well-off families grow into well-off adults, and thus the cycle continues.

The studies of Odaga and Henevald (1995), in some countries in sub-Saharan Africa revealed that the schooling system itself perpetuates the gender gap in education. They argue that teacher's attitudes, pedagogy, the type of school, the distance to school, learning environment and gender bias all influence the educational attainment, enrolment and retention levels of the girl child. These children further suffer from curriculum related bias, sexual harassment, pregnancy, general insecurity and lack of motivation. The literature of Odaga and Henevald showed that gender bias by teachers, including female teachers, also hampers girls' education.

Compounding this attitudinal problem is the low salary and status of teachers in most developing countries. In Ghana for instance teachers emoluments are often irregular and they have few or no bonuses leading some teachers to arrange extra classes for what are popularly known as 'side issues'. Many trained teachers absent themselves occasionally to look for greener pastures, while others opt for the better paid private schools. This impact on the student performance which is skewed in rural areas, with majority of teachers not wanting to accept rural postings and thus shutter the career dreams of willing parents and children for schooling in these areas.

The Rockefeller Foundation (1997), found that girl's lag in education could also be attributable to family perceptions of education. The foundation revealed that some poor families in the North perceive female schooling as unimportant and thus a drain on their resources. This perception was held because of the presence of short term local opportunities during harvest times than schooling could bring in the long run. Teacher punishment, excessive caning and threats, working on teacher's farms and household and other forms of aggressive behaviour was found among student respondents creating other barriers against their full participation at school.

UNESCO (1999) laments that "if the World expects education to ride to its rescue, it had better first come to the rescue of girl-child dropout". This review identified short sighted under-investment in critical units of education and in ways that makes schooling

attractive to the girl-child. The study revealed that misuse of school teaching time, inadequate supply of school materials, seasonal migration of parents and children, pupil behaviour, teacher supply and conduct, and school conditions directly and indirectly affect academic performance of pupils and draw their progression backward. Teachers are pedagogically seen as people with knowledge to fill empty headed children but are not seen as agents to motivate children to unearth their hidden potentials to become the best they are capable of being.

Additionally, ILO (2004) revealed that the issue of poverty is very important and needs to be considered for the education of children as this also pushes children into the job market to make ends meet. In most agrarian economies like the Northern Region, the majority of the people are poor, but they are worst off in rural areas in developing countries because most people are subsistent peasant farmers, and the produce from farms is just not enough to feed, cloth and educate the children in the family. The reason for child labour in many instances in developing countries includes poverty, making families push their children into early work.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has attempted a review of related literature about education and gender to show the argument surrounding girls' participation in education. This is intended to lay a foundation for data presentation about the causes of the gender gap in the context of Northern Region of Ghana. The arguments presented in this chapter show that barriers to female education are multifaceted, interrelated and multi-disciplinary.

Chapter Four: Data Presentation and Analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses and presents the major causes of the gender gap in education in Northern Region of Ghana. The chapter concentrates on the identification of the major constraints that militate against female education to clearly situate the analysis. The chapter further provides background information about the policy scenario of education in Ghana since independence and description of the major education reforms in Ghana that has attempted to arrest the situation especially in the North.

However, since the finding of this research is based on secondary data sources, the evidence may not point to a conclusive end. It is against this backdrop that I intend to undertake further primary empirical verification in the field to either support or refute some of the evidence presented in a future study.

4.2 Policy Scenario of Education in Ghana

Since independence in 1957, Ghana has made attempts to reroute the education structure to meet its development needs. In the 1966, recommendations of the Kwapong Committee led to the establishment of technical and vocational schools. In 1974, a new structure in content of education was developed emphasising an elaborate and comprehensive programme of basic education from kindergartens through primary, junior secondary and senior secondary school. The government adopted another reform in 1987 with the objective of improving the quality of education. The rationale behind this was lowering the opportunity cost of education to improve access and quality. This led to a revision of the curriculum to include teaching in native languages and the reorientation of teacher training towards skill orientation. With the realizations of the need for gender inclusion, the 1992 democratic constitution gave birth to the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (F'CUBE) policy to help mainstream education.

4.2.1. Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education Policy

The Free Compulsory, Universal Basic Education (F'CUBE) policy of Ghana aims at providing quality education for all children irrespective of gender or geographical

location. Chapter 6, section 38 subsection 2, states that "The government shall within the next ten years provide Free Compulsory Basic Education" for all children of school going age (Ghana Republican Constitution 1992).The F'CUBE was heralded as a major policy towards enhancing access and participation of girl's in formal education, improving management efficiency through decentralization. The policy also aims at achieving high levels of equity, efficiency and quality within the stipulated time. The F'CUBE is comprehensively designed to provide quality basic education for all Ghanaian children of school going age by the year 2005.

Despite the fact that the year 2005 is its target year, the policy still lack focus on gender mainstreaming. Poor teaching and learning, weak management capacity and unsatisfactory financial management have been reported as a bane on the programmes success (Sibbons & Seel 2000). A lesson to be learnt here is that, lack of commitment could be a hindrance to education reforms objectives in Ghana. The policy according Sibbons and Seel was not initially designed to improved quality as stated, but access and participation, which are still poor. As such the poor teaching and learning, resulting to poor performance has been its major constraint along with the fact that the policy lacks focus on gender, and this has a bearing on the low representation of girls at school.

4.2.2 BESIP and Gender Gap in Education

The Basic Education Sector Improvement Project (BESIP) was outlined as a tool to improve the management and finance of the sector towards the full implementation of F'CUBE but, from its inception, this programme was already assumed to miss the issue of gender and quality because it was promoted as rather a tool to lobby for World Bank credit. This, according to the findings of DFID (2000), was not a programme for quality improvement, by, for and through state structures as initially depicted by government, but a direct donor sponsor project. In this regard the scope for discussion about girl's and women's issues is positive but varies considerably although these does not always lead to strategic policy implementation. A scrutiny of the education strategic plan which started in 1999 has shown no reference to gender apart from a showing that girls are more poorly represented in enrolment (DFID 2000). This programme being led by the World Bank is

said to be coherent and well coordinated in unity with the F'CUBE but Sibbon and Seel (2000) have found that the programme is rather paralleled and even out of favour to other donors because of the monopoly of the Bank. BESIP was however very instrumental in the bringing of the GEU.

4.2.3 The Girls Education Unit

Girls Education Unit (GEU) was established under the Ghana Education Service (GES) to take care of problems of access to education by the girl child with regards to content and curriculum reforms. While as there is a rapid move for gender mainstreaming in the country, the tools and issues of gender mainstreaming are often misunderstood to mean the inclusion of women or the girl child in education. Ability to discuss gender issues vis-à-vis girls or women's issues varies considerably. To deal with the bias of the curriculum, where some designated areas of science were seen as "no go" areas for girls the GEU has instituted the Science and Mathematics Education Programme (SMEP) to woo the interest of girls to science and mathematics courses.

Long before this programme, there was a notion that young girls were weak in calculus and science related courses and they were often counseled and encouraged wrongly by their teachers and families to pursue vocational courses and those related to home economics and care leading to feminization of vocational education and home science. The GEU does not deal with gender mainstreaming in the education sector but it does have an influence, for the origin of the SMEP was in its romance with the GES. There is a current trend where by the GEU is now supported by the Girls Education Task Force which has direct government funding from donors. Even within this unit, the major issues dealt are access and participation to the neglect of quality and retention.

4.2.4 State Civil Society Response

Civil society is often recognised as a tool for complementing government efforts because of their commitment to reach the underserved population. Civil Society Organization (CSO) and NGO's began to mushroom in the 1980s in the development community on the premise that governments were no longer effective in bringing about the needed

development for all. Some communities have few or limited knowledge of even their own rights. These organizations are often instruments in the mobilization of broad based constituencies for advocacy issues. But more often civil society justifies their existence by the failure of the state to deliver. The latter has therefore become the site of contestation not only between different groups, but also different views of masculinity and feminity that militate either in favour or against gender and education. And Kabeer (1994) would add that the most influential and pervasive understanding of development is that it is a planned process of change in which techniques, expertise and resources are brought together to achieve higher rates of economic growth.

In as much as the Civil Society Organization helps, their coverage is limited because of the piece meal initiatives they offer (Tiefjen 1991 in Okwany 2004).Lack of strong accountability measures and obnoxious practices constrain the civil society efforts with most NGO's lacking gender sensitive programmes, adopting them only as an after thought measure, societal indifference and a political economy exacerbates the situation (Wazir 2000).

In Northern Ghana the government has created an enabling environment for the operation of several Civil Society Organisations to aid in girls education and such organizations include the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE), Oxfam GB International, ActionAid Ghana, World Vision International, Catholic Relief Service, Care International, Integrated Social Development Centre (ISODEC), School for Life, DANIDA, UNICEF and UNESCO. One major step towards the delivery of quality education is first understanding the local context in which an intervention is needed .As Sen (1994) put it, adults and children's differences in need of care are often a matter of degree and not kind and women are often the primary providers of this care.

Growing social complexities have deepened the situation even more. Barriers then interact and intertwine to impede quality access to education by children especially by girls and both the state and the NGO's have lost systematic focus to bridge the gap (Okwany 2004). Despite the above policy effort by the Government, NGO's and CSO's,

levels of educational achievement are still low especially in the Northern Region (NR). Below is an analysis and presentation of the barriers responsible for the causes of the Gender Gap in education in the context of NR.

4.3   Gender Gap in Education, what the figures say

The gender gap[3] in practice seen as a measure of relative disadvantage of one sex over the other (UNESCO 1995). The Northern Region has a negative gender gap in education. MOE data reports that 47% and 53% of girls and boys respectively were enrolled between 1999/2000. This shows an improvement over 1997/1998 figures of 45% and 52%.In terms of gender and geography the gap is wide and deep (GES 2004).The enrolment for Northern Region is 44% of total in Primary one, decreasing to 36% by primary six .Even in districts with higher enrolments in the region, pockets of lower girls' enrolment exist with high dropouts' rates. The table below provides insight into the enrolment of girls in the Northern Region comparative to National context.

Table 2.Trend Enrolment Percentages of Girl Students (1996)

Region	1988/89(%)		1990/91(%)		1991/92(%)		1992/93(%)	
	Prim	Sec.	Prim	Sec	Prim	Sec	Prim	Sec
National	**44.9**	**32.68**	**44.86**	**32.96**	**45.46**	**33.09**	**45.69**	**33.48**
G/Accra	48.89	39.65	49.22	39.75	49.23	39.54	49.54	39.65
Northern	**32.85**	**19.03**	**33.41**	**21.94**	**32.11**	**22.12**	**35.63**	**22.85**
Upper/East	37.53	24.45	38.55	30.00	38.98	32.38	40.01	33.80
Upper/West	39.08	26.98	40.28	31.28	31.14	31.14	43.21	32.17

Source: MOE, 1994, (PBME, Atakpa 1996, p9)

Looking at the data above, the trend since 1988 shows that the Northern Region has never fared better than any other region in girl child enrolment, though the situation is

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[3] Mathematically when the gender gap is equal to zero (G=O), it is an equal gap, a negative gap means male over female while and positive means female over male. The Gender Gap in the Northern Region is a negative one.

improving. With a total national enrolment of about 45%, the Northern Region scored only about 33%% with a secondary enrolment of 19.03% as the lowest in the country. There was some improvement after 1989/90 with a figure of about 33% and 21% for primary and secondary enrolments respectively. Despite this low levels of enrolment of the girl child, the region records highest dropout rates as the district data below shows;

Figure 2 Dropout Rates According to Districts in Northern Region, Ghana (2002)

District Dropout Rates,Northern Region,Ghana
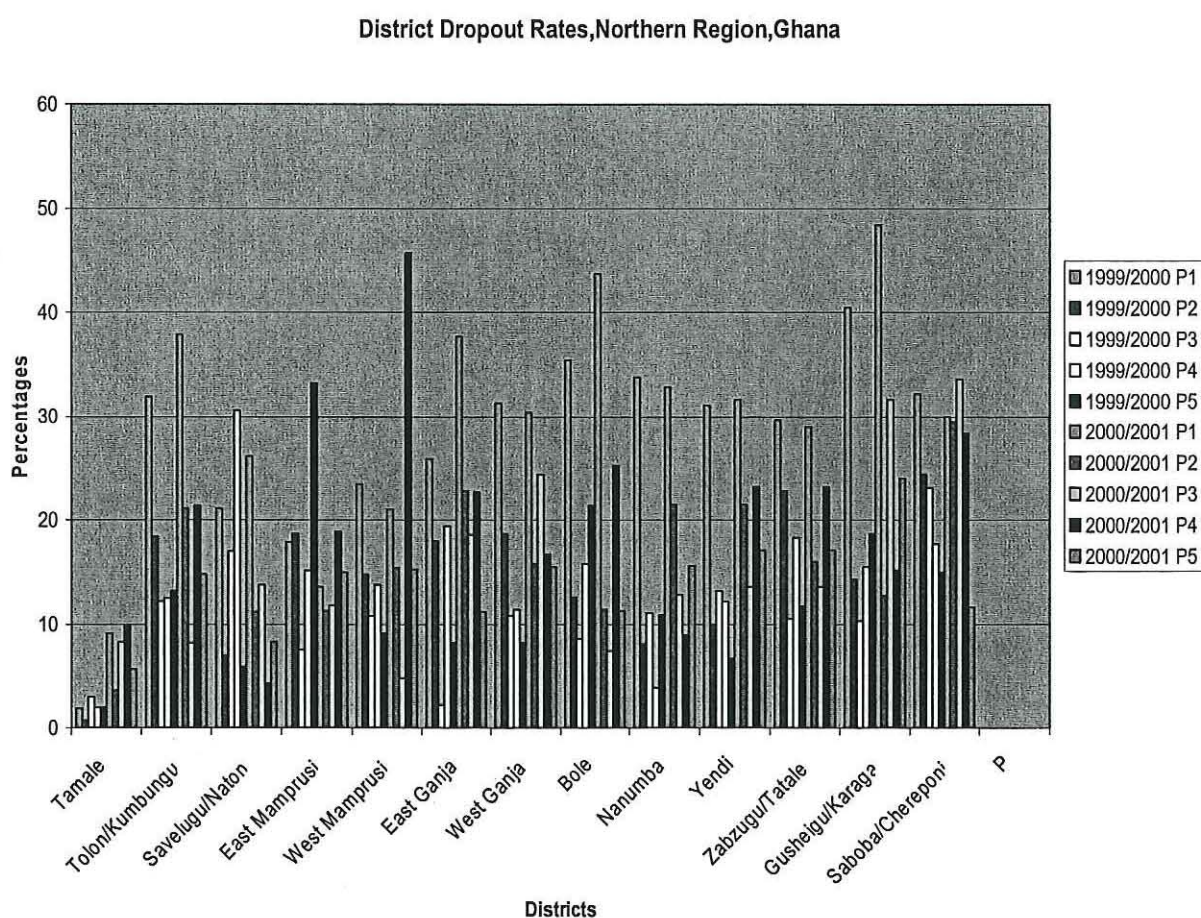
Source: Primary Education Sector Review, GES 2002

From the above figure, Tamale District (TD) has registered the lowest dropout rate in the region in 1999/2000 academic year. While East Mamprusi (EMD) district registered the highest in that same year. In the 2000/2001 academic year TD again registered the lowest dropout rate, followed by the Savelugu/Naton District (SND) with a rate of 8.3% with the

Gusheigu/Karaga district also registering a highest dropout rate of 24%. The lower rates of dropout in the Tamale District could emanate from the fact it is the regional capital, and thus advantaged over others. But generally, enrolment rates are low with high dropout rates. This low enrolment rates but high dropout rates culminate into low educational status of women in the region as shows below;

Figure 3. Regional Educational Indicators of Women, Ghana (2003)
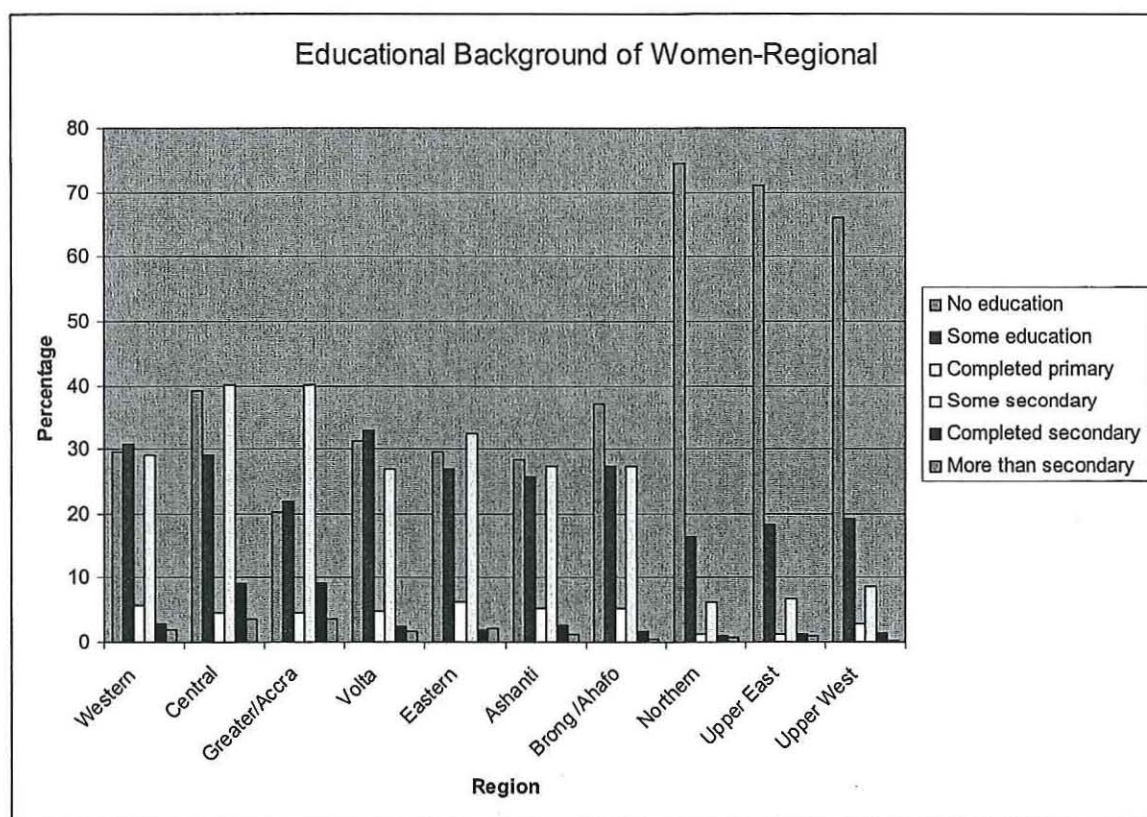
Source: DHS, 2003.

As can be seen from figure above, the Northern Region registered the highest number (74.4%) of women with no education. Only 16.4% had some education with a primary school completion rate as low as 1.1%. the same year, Greater Accra and the Central Region registered Secondary School completion rates of 3.6% and 3.6% respectively,

where as the Northern Region registered only 1% Secondary completion rate with its neighbouring Upper West Region (UWER)' registering as low as 0.3%.The table below presents a view of the gender parity specifically in Northern Districts;

Table 3.Gross Gender Parity and Enrolment in Selected Districts in Northern Region

District	Gross (%) enrolment ratio	Percentage(%) of Girls
Savelugu/Naton	51.7	32.6
Tolon/Kumbungu	51.2	33.8
Tamale	84.5	47.5
Saboba/Chereponi	59.5	33.1
Zabzugu/Tatale	58.8	32.9
Nanumba	47.1	27.5

Source: EMIS Project, MOE of Ghana, October 2002

The national GER[4] is about 70% and a parity rate of about 0.93%.But when disaggregated Gender Parity[5] data is undertaken regionally; it is highly skewed against females and in favour of males. In the Northern Region none of the districts have registered a parity level above 0.50%. The highest parity rate of 47.5% that has been achieved was registered from Tamale district with a parity rate as low as 27.5% registered by the Nanumba district. Parity is comparatively lower for Savelugu/Naton and Tolon/Kumbungu districts. Girls are either not enrolled initially or have to dropout after being enrolled. In the Nanumba district for instance it is estimated that only about 27.5% were enrolled in school between 2001a and 2002.

Generally, all districts have a higher proportion of girls out of school as compared to boys. The scale of gender marginalization in education in the region is thus alarming. In

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[4]GER which is the Gross Enrolment Ratio is the total Gross Enrolment divided by school aged children

[5] Gender Parity in education refers to the levels of participation and achievement between boys and girls in formal schooling

spite of increases in enrolment, girls' education remains a concern in the region, in particular is the six districts above regarded as "severely hurt" by the Ministry of Education.

4.4 Analysis of the Causes of the Gender Gap

Clearly from the statistics, girls form the majority of children out of school in the Northern Region. In a synthesis of several studies in Northern Region, barriers to girl's education could be categorized as socio-cultural, economic, school based and policy barriers or what Boakye (1997 as cited in Wilson 2001) terms as "political-policy syndrome[6]".

4.4.1 Socio-cultural barriers

4.4.1.1 Traditional Norms and Practices: Socio-cultural barriers relating to the beliefs, norms and practices about marital relationships and values of families in the area have been widely reported in the literature (Prah 2002) as one of the major causes of the gender gap in education as was also found by Sutton and Stromquist (1998) .In the Northern Region, most studies suggest that girls are "reared to serve" their husbands and that their performance at matrimonial homes reflects the training, respect, prestige and honour of her family and she becomes the husband's property once married (Oppong 1971,Blackmore 1976,Svanikier 1997,Korboe 1998,Wolf/Odonkor 1998 as cited in Casely-Hayford 2000). Being influenced by the absence of role models, families place low premium on the education of the girl-child which makes them to give girls into betrothal or early marriage. The process then takes several months to complete because of the involvement of the extended family which also makes it difficult for those wanting to return to school after marriage or child birth (Nukunya 1992 as cited in Stevens 1998, p46).

The dowry system also serves as a motivational factor for parents, families and guidance to encourage early marriages of their daughters with a view that the benefits of education

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[6] Boakye et al (1997) uses this terminology to underscore the fact that social policy is often adopted not based on need or prior feasibility studies of the needs of future beneficiaries, but for political benefit of the present.

are long term with a common saying among the people that the 'poor man can hardly wait'. The dowry is then seen as a source of resource and wealth accumulation which encourages families to contract girls into early marriage. Thus

"It seems then that it is not just market place, but also custom and culture are also important determinants of life situations in society" (Colclough, 1994 as cited in Stevens 1998, p45).

4.4.1.2 Teenage Pregnancy: Apart from early marriage, teenage pregnancy has also been found as a major cause of girl child dropout from school in the region but evidence as to the magnitude of the problem has been very little. In a recent survey conducted by the Northern Network for Education Development, those who often escape this marital trap and enrolled at school finally get pregnant along the way and about 76% of this case girls do not go back to school after birth (NNED 2004). Child bearing in the region seems to be a women's destiny and not her choice (Akparibo 2004). But contrary to Heward (1999), the data have not revealed a link between fertility and schooling in the Northern Region. In this process sexual and reproductive rights which complicate young girl's access to education are often ignored and these compound the problem of female education. Young girls are thus trapped in pregnancy and poverty; these become complicated in families without regular source of income. These also have a negative effect on their future children's education thereby continuing the cycle of poor education or illiteracy.

4.4.1.3 Religion: Religious norms and dogmas especially the Islamic religion dictate whether a girl is enrolled and retained in formal schooling (GES 1998-2000). The general attitude of the Muslim community to female education is based on a deep seated prejudice attributed to the fact that the first Muslims who had a taste of secular education became so disoriented that they lost a good deal of their values. While others got converted into Christian faith, the rest were regarded as lost to their parents, relatives and the entire Muslim community. NR came into contact with Islam through Dyula traders who are influenced led to the conversion of the Mamprusi, Ganja and Dagomba tribes who form the dominant tribes in the North. Attitudes hardly change and habits die hard.

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The 'Islamic Makaranta System[7]' and the dual educational obligation in the system are also influencing variables of female education in the area. Makaranta is a Hausa word meaning "reading place". Until the development of the English/Arabic schools which have witnessed a tremendous expansion since the 1973 when government started sending teachers to the Makaranta schools , Muslim girls had to face the burden of dual educational obligation. They attended formal school during the day and spent the early mornings, evenings, and weekends and the school holidays at Makaranta. This arrangement naturally proved burdensome to some of the young girls who had to combine this dualism with domestic chores but in many instances secular education was thus sacrificed because of the Islamic teachings (EDPGMC 1998-2000). This practice has been found to present major obstacles especially in the formal schooling and retention of girls at school. But despite its shortcomings, it is heavily patronized and in fact preferred by most parents to formal schooling system due to its teaching about submission of the females to the male in marriage and other social endeavours (MRAG 2000). Atakpa in this respect point out that;

"Some Muslim parents believed that formal education is satanic and can never lead you to heaven other than the Arabic teachings, and drives children into social vices as drug abuse, early sexual practices and subsequent teenage pregnancy"(Atakpa 1996,p12)

Furthermore, the Islamic 'Sunna[8]' is another religious obstacle that constraint female education in the North. This practice permits that a man can marry up to four or even more in so far as he can cater for them. This is deemed important among the Muslims for it does not only gives a man access to all time rotational sexual contact with the wives, but also makes the man secure with more children produce to augment family farm labour and for the generation continuity of family lineage (MRAG 2000). Children than compete for family resources and support to be educated and the male child is more often

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[7] This has been used to refer to the Islamic schools where Arabic memorization by pupils as early as 3 years takes place. This system which is solely based on Islamic religious teaching use not to prepare students fit into Ghana's formal education system until of recent times(MRAG 2000)

[8] The Sunna is a practice or belief in the fact that Muslims can marry more than one wife in so far as they are capable of fulfilling their social and economic needs and wants without discrimination and have the same right to give birth to the number that one wants and can cater for.

preferred to be educated as formal education until of late was seen in the region as a tool of eroding the Islamic values of the Muslim girl-child. Coleman (1988) argues that as family grows bigger parental attention is either becoming lesser or is likely to be divided among the children and gender bias cannot be ruled out entirely.

4.4.1.4 Patriarchy: The Northern Region is a patriarchal society and boys are often viewed as future breadwinners of families and more premiums are placed on their needs more than girls. As an extension to the finding of Subrahmanian (2003), patriarchy in NR is extended to cover even ownership of women in the region by men. This negative perception serves as a barrier to girl's education once husbands are not interested in schooling, and girls who even have the interest in schooling are not able to do so for lack of support (FAWE 2001). In some typical traditional settings in the North there are even fears that a girls marriage prospects could be deemed very slim when she become educated to the highest level (Brook, Rose and Cooper Le Van 1994). If the view of some traditional elders in the Northern Region about girl child education is anything to go by, then it can be summed up as follows;

"Men are more energetic, more resourceful, more helpful and less quarrelsome, have more leadership qualities and therefore need to be highly educated. Educated women are likely to bring conflicts to families and communities" (GES/DAE 1995, as cited in Wilson et al 2001).

Stevens (1998) revealed that some parents and community elders has a negative view of educating the girl child. Some elders in a focus group discussion concluded that;

"girls become rebels should they get education, the worse happens if she is a bit grown and gets to the higher level, she will not farm and will rather prefer loitering about aimlessly" (Stevens 1998).

Young girls are not only poorly represented in schools as a result of these cultural and religious believes about the socialization and capabilities, but they are seen and suspected as potential sources of conflicts and quarrels while being weak with less leadership qualities and benefits to society as compared to boys. Stevens further found out that the traditional role of women and their authority in the domestic setting and changing

attitudes towards girls and their treatment was dictated to a maximum level by patriarchy. Religion is thus seen one of the major influencing factors of child education and a hindrance to girl's access to education.

4.4.2 Economic Constraints: Female education, enrolment and attainment levels also reflect the level of poverty and resource constraints in the region. The major economic constraints in this respect include low economic opportunities, high opportunity cost of girls education and generally low standards of living in Northern Region.

Poverty is the common lot of many Ghanaians. National Poverty Average[9] is at 39% while that of NR is 69% (Abagali 2002, CRSP 2004). This low standard of living with few economic opportunities is a major problem in the rural North, families and parents are likely to prevent the girl-child from starting or staying at school in the midst of dwindling family resources (Casely- Hayford 1996, Svanikier 1997, Quaisie 1997, Stephens 1998, Avotri et al 1999, Hayford 2000, UNICEF 2001). This relatively high level of poverty serves as barrier for parents to support children educational needs to be able to retain them at school. The view expressed in a focus group discussion interview of some elders in the Tolon Kunbungu district in the Northern Regions summed it up below;

"We the people of the North will be willing to enter an agreement with the government or any other body which will assist us to increase the production on our farms so that we can assist our girls in schools. But poverty is our lot and major disease" (Stevens 1998, p85)

Quaisie (1997) and Casely-Hayford (2002) reports that low standards of living in NR coupled with perceived high opportunity cost of girls education also contributes to low attainment rates in the sense that parents with low economic opportunities prefers to send the boy child to school in the face of resource scarcity because the education of girls is not only recognized as a "lottery" but girls are further recognized as outsiders and their benefits in the long term would be accrued to the matrimonial homes .Women and young girls in this region as related by Moser (1985) performs triple roles as production,

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[9] Ghana Vision 2020 Policy document describes the social conditions of Ghanaians as thus "majority of Ghanaians are still characterized by poverty, low living standards and generally poor quality of life

reproduction and community roles which compounds their schooling time in the midst of economic hardships due to low opportunities for females (Abu & Oppong 1987, as cited in Wilson et al 2001).In addition to Moser, women perform abstract duties and responsibilities which are neither recognised nor valued. Often hardly hit are girls who are deemed as 'economically at risk[10]'(Stevens 1998).To support their mothers, the work of girls in these communities include tending children, fetching water and fuel and schooling often deprived families these needed domestic service of the girl child creating a high opportunity cost to households. Apart from this opportunity cost, maintenance of girls at school is difficult for parents to bear. Below is the educational cost borne by parents to maintain children at school;

Figure 4. Proportion of Educational Cost per Component that are Borne by Parents, (Total Number of Respondents=641), (1996)
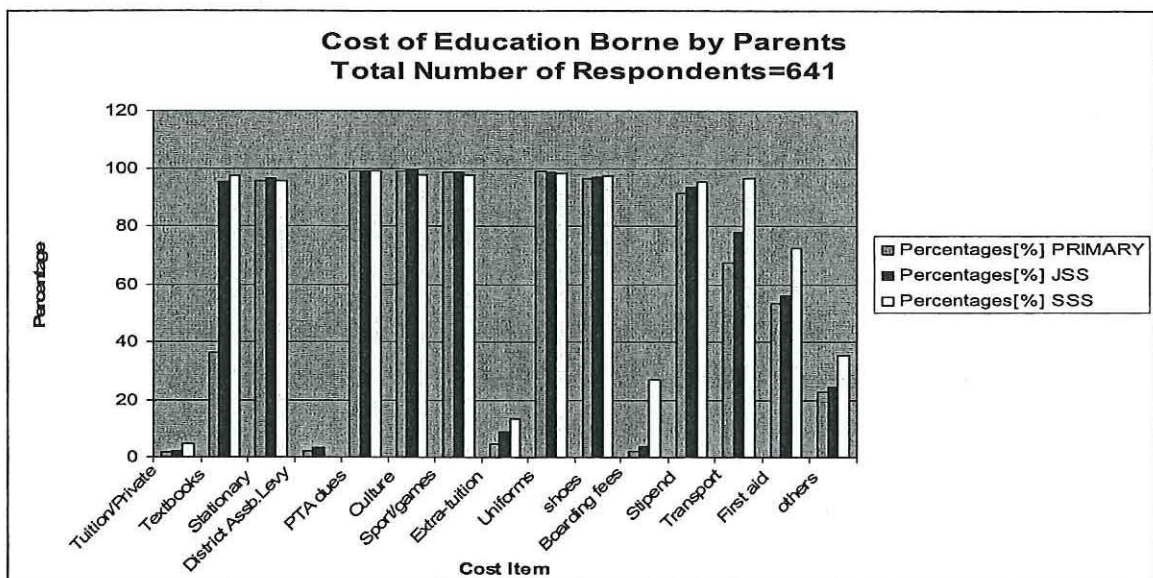
Source: Atakpa 1996, p10

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[10] Those young girls who comes from homes where one or both parents are deceased, ill or not working or working but else where with the care of the girl left in the hands of Aunt who easily push them into early marriage as a form of livelihood mechanism.

The as shown above, parents still pay minimum amount of maintenance fees because the government takes care of tuition payments in all public schools, but textbooks, stationary, PTA, cultural dues and other hidden fees as related by Stromquist (1998) are still being paid, which post bigger problems to parents in the midst of the economic constraints in the region. At the primary level parents contribute about 36.3% to tuition, 91.4% of stipend, and 67.4% of transport and in some cases transport is fully borne by parents.

Assumed low wages for females as a result of low formal labour market opportunities place the education of boys over that of girls. Wilson (2001) also reports that lack of economic opportunities in addition to ignorance and low self esteem on the part of girls manifest itself in "lack of parental care". This makes it very difficult for parents to invest in the basic needs of the girl child and this force them to engage in what he calls "transactional sex"[11] with its attended consequences. Coalition of Northern NGOs (2004) in education also reports that inadequate emphasis on girl's education, low economic premium and low participation of females in decision making also contributes to widening the gender gap in education.

The lack of opportunities in the North also pushes more desperate families and young women to move to the major cities in resource endowed Southern Ghana to engaged in what is called "kayayo"(city head porters).Females who appreciates the need for education are more likely to stay in school at all levels and would often perform well. There is therefore the need for girls themselves to be educated to appreciate the importance of education and urge to be serious in school (CRS/OXFAM, CAMFED, ACDEP, NNED, and CARE 2004).

4.4.3 School Based Barriers
Another important galaxy of barriers that constraints female education in the North manifests in the school environment and post a challenge to quality education. Boakye (1997) in a synthesis of 54 research data review for GES concluded that the causes of the gender disparity are multifaceted and interrelated but categorised school based

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[11] A situation where willingly or unwillingly young girls are lured into sexual activity by boy friends or elderly people (sugar daddies) for an intended or unintended material benefits which.

constraints to children education as achievement, access and retention .peer teasing and harassment (Atakpa 1996), low counseling and guidance services, bias at class room arrangement (WUSC 2000 as cited in Wilson et al 2001,p31) and low self esteem were empirically found to be the causes of the low upward mobility of girls up the educational ladder.

Retention barriers include lack or inadequate sanitary facilities, teacher's attitude (FAWE 2001) and proximity to physical class room structures. The unfriendly nature of schools, physical and sexual harassment were additionally found to constraint female education in NR (Wilson et al 2001). Teachers and students alike also have a negative perception of repeater children which makes it difficult for them to make an easy come back to school after dropping. Children according to Stevens (1998) are viewed as suspicious characters and seen in the face of teachers as lazy and non serious when in actual fact there are genuine reasons that kept them from schooling. Those who even start at over-age are regarded as 'skuul mama'[12] or 'skuul sister'. Atakpa (1996,p14) in a related study in the North found that 41% of respondents found unattractiveness of the school environment for non attendance,24% poor staffing and 18% the long distance to school.

Apart from this, Teachers generally perform poorly but blames it on the non cooperative attitudes of communities but their attitudes also denies them community respect and support to work. This finding also echoed the language of one elder as Wilson reports;

"Teachers do not respect themselves, so how can we the community respect and trust the care of our children especially the curious young girls into their hands, the teachers are not regular at post, we have offered them accommodation but they prefer to stay in Tamale the regional capital to enjoy life, when we complain then they blame their absenteeism and low commitment to lack of motivation which they try to satisfy with side jobs in town."(Chief of Bongnayilli in Tolon Kunbungu District, Tamale Northern Region, Stevens 1998, p127 -145)

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[12] This is a term use to tease overage girls who attend school along far younger ones in the same class or school

This attitudinal nature of teachers (Wilson et al 2001) creates a disinterest among parents to send their children to school. This disinterest and lack of willingness on the part of parents leads to low female attainment levels, which culminates into low female teacher representation in the North (Wilson et al p31).Paradoxically, those few who are trained often do not accept posting to the deprived areas where their services are highly needed. The story below from a female teacher in the North depicts the situation as it pertains in the North;

"one of our major problems up here in the North is our female teachers follow their husbands, if the husband is posted to the village the female teacher will go-but if he is not she will not go. It is our culture that the woman should be nearer the man". (Girls Education Officer, Tamale Vocational Training Centre, Northern Region, Wilson et al 2001)

As shown by the female teacher above, lack of social amenities in the rural areas coupled with the fact that women are socialized to be nearer their husbands complicates the situation. The situation become complex as female teachers who could serve as role models to the rural folk end up remaining in the cities where they can enjoy modern amenities with husbands and Those who often accept postings then develops unwelcome attitudes to teaching as lack of interest and absenteeism.

Furthermore, a case scenario by Oxfam Ghana below presents a glaring complex nature of the situation since 1999.

"Bowku Village is one of several typical villages in Northern Ghana. It has a three-class room primary school built by the community through communal labour and community levying and the government provided the roofing sheets. There are still no chairs, blackboards or other teaching equipment to aid learning. Some children take their own stools to school where they are available the rest sit on a log put across in the class. The community hopes to rehabilitate and thatch another three class-room block soon to get a complete standard six class room to ease the pairing of class-rooms.

But some classes for children are still held under mango trees which often mean a holiday when there is a downpour or heavy storm and which the building itself cannot withstand. And there are no toilets or urinary places for convenience of both boys and girls. There are two male teachers educated to middle school level for the six classes in the school. The teachers estimate enrolment rate to be less than 40%.

Both teachers live in the village and are able to assist the younger pupils in their own local language and since wages are generally low both teachers supplement their income with farming while students are a reserve of special labour for use when it rains ".(Oxfam, Country Report Ghana 1999).

Scenarios of this kind are not uncommon in the Northern Region as schools still operate under some conditions which compromise quality. Other school based factors that affect girls' enrolment are identified as low community awareness about the value of education and negative perception about the schooling of girls including parents, religious leaders and teachers (Sibbons & Seel 2000).Accordingly, policy and capacity constraints for female education in NR include; lack of focus on external funding, weak accountability measures, no single agreed integrated approaches and lack of commitment and resistant to change among professionals. In the midst of these finding about the policy constraints, the strength and weakness of the educational polices of Ghana since independence are discussed below.

Additionally the Northern Region coupled with poor quality of teaching and learning also has the lowest representation of female teachers in Ghana and due to lack of modern social amenities as electricity, portable water, telecommunication and accommodation, they in turn refused postings to the rural areas (Casely-Hayford &Wilson 2001)..

4.4.4 Policy barriers

Despite the constitutional provision of a Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (F'CUBE 1992), Casely-Hayford and Prah (2002) reports that basic education is still not free in the true sense of the word. Formal school fees have been abolished only to be replaced by 'hidden school fees" as cultural, sport, PTA dues and community facility fees are still been borne in most schools in the country notwithstanding additionally, the high cost of female school uniform in the face of scarce family resource is a constraint . Marginalized families who cannot foot these fees make rational decisions on their part to send the boy child to school rather than the girl child.

The education policy itself cannot rule out bias in provisioning and this could be found in what Sutton (1998) terms as the "hidden curriculum" of schooling. In this informal

curriculum there is a set of knowledge transmitted through roles played by men and women at the schooling environment, the staffing of schools, teachers treatment of female children and the way and manner of which adults interact with each other. Other important aspects of these curriculum is the differential vocational counseling given to girls in particular, household roles, behavioral norms and modes of discipline and the re-creation of notions of masculinity and feminity in the school environment.

In the rural North in particular one major serious schooling problem which also contributes to the low performance of the girl child could also be lack of policy on the provision of early childhood development centres to prepare children for further enrolment into the mainstream primary school. The North unlike the South also lacks secondary schools that specifically target the needs of the female as a special group needing special care and attention. There is also no balance within the various levels of education because Emphasis has been more on basic education which leads to fewer role models completing the education cycle up to the tertiary level.

In policy planning, socio-political forces often underpin choices of content and pedagogy and formal curriculum is often biased and functions only to legitimize existing political order and knowledge of dominant groups. Education itself is not neutral and in some situations perpetuates existing inequality if policy is adopted without the prior assessment of the needs of intended beneficiaries. In the findings of Stevens (1998), one parent who doubles as a key informant elder did not hide his disappoint in the current system of schooling as it is in the North;

"I think our time was better than now. This is because we were not many in school and government supported us with materials .So even if your books got finished you could go to office for a new one. But now if your father can't buy books for you, then you have to stay out of school" (Focus Group Discussion with Elders, Stevens 1998p127).

Thus, the lack of teaching and learning aid leads to "low quality of teaching and fragmented public provisioning which lower the quality of schooling and pushes the middle and the upper class to the private schools creating a general societal indifference,

as they move with their influence and power to lobby the government for better quality"
(Okwany 2005)

4.5 Prospects of Education in Northern Region

Ghana enjoys an enabling environment which should mean that commitment to girl's education should be possible resource wise. In 2000, the budget share of education was 29.5% according to the MOE. The data further shows that in 1998 for instance 64% of the education budget was earmarked for basic education, which includes primary and Junior Secondary Schools. Of this total budget, 9% was spent on administrative and text book invest cost, while the remaining 91% was spent on teacher and administrative salaries. Even with the text book development, Watson et al (1997) found out that more money is spent but still it fails to meet its major requirement of Right Place, Right Book at the Right time. Ghana and the Northern Region for that matter may have several constraints for female education, but an accommodating environment thus exist with some opportunities when undertaking can help encourage access, participation and the quality needed for the retention of girls at school. Below is the Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis towards a comprehensive girl's education policy in the region.

Table 4. Swot Analysis, Gender Mainstreaming In Education, Northern Region, Ghana

STRENGH	WEAKNESS	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
• Capable of Producing a single consistent strategic plan supported by all actors in the sector • Avoid effort duplication and Encourage	• Weakness on one unit slows that of the Northern Region • Donor coordination dictates priority and capacity	• Willingness of donor partners to work together • Capacity building and transfer of skills from development	• No one single education policy exist for girls a threat to focus • Low state commitment hence limited

efficiency in the resource management • Enforce coordination for common basket programme irrespective of change of government.	building • Low institutional, governmental capacity building to deal with broader complex issues	partners • Integration and coordination of different units to plan together • An enabling environment for donor support	funding from government • Severe poverty in the rural areas • These constrain Girls access and participation at school

Source: Adapted from DFID, 2000

From the above SWOT analysis, but donor coordination for funded projects is still a problem and need to be looked. With current decentralization system, regions and districts should be empowered resource wise to promote the education of girls at all levels.

Even the attitudes of the people themselves to female education are positively changing as can be seen below in an interview with a local chief of Chogu a suburb of Tamale the regional capital;

"Women generally were regarded as people of lesser abilities, but now we have seen that women too could be of help to their communities through education...so everyone now tries to send everyone to school irrespective of sex" (Chogu Naa, Stevens 1998, p 66).

Despite this awareness of the value of female education in the region, progress is slow and much still needs to be done to bring the needed change .The districts needs to be the focal points and each district assembly should have a gender desk officer responsible for the budgeting locally for girls' education. Desk officers should then established links with District Girls Education officers at the district directorate of education.

4.6 How the Poor get Poorer

Drawing scenarios from the literature review in chapter three and the critical analysis of the data in the early part of this chapter, the study has revealed a correlate between levels of girl child participation in education and levels of economic and relative deprivation .As one moves to the Northern interior the poverty gap widens so it is with the gender gap as girls enrolment and retention also begin to diminish. The deprived poor see their future security in education if many of their children can attain higher education. But conditions socially, economically and culturally mean this dream is unlikely to be realized (Casely-Hayford, 2000 as cited in Wilson et, al 2001).This link was further found at the district level, where districts with low female enrolment were also identified to have high levels of deprivation. Interestingly while as it is the poor in this region who are assumed to need education the most, they see it as a gate to escape own poverty, but they continue to get poorer because they are already poor and have to cater for the schooling needs of their children, especially those of the girl child.

As stated earlier, in the background and the problem statement of the study it s often hard to understand why looking at geography the Northern Region, Upper East and West Regions, all of which are located around the savanna belt with almost same levels of relative deprivation. Yet the Upper Regions rather fare better in educational achievement compared to the North. Wilson and Hayford (2001) argue that these two Upper Regions does better than the Northern Region in education because of the influence of the Catholic Church. The Church apart from supporting and establishing mission schools also counter some of the obnoxious Islamic religious practices which holds girls backward to enjoy educational opportunities.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has analysed and presented the barriers of female education in the Northern Region of Ghana. The major barriers identified have been categorised into socio-cultural economic, institutional and policy barriers. The chapter also provided an analysis of the major education reform policy of the country since independence. Through SWOT analysis, the data has shown that despite the relative deprivation of the area, the region

enjoys an opportunity of being a safe haven for a myriad of NGO actors to operate for quality education provisioning, although it suffers some threats and weakness of lacking a single strategic education policy for support by all NGO's coupled with weak state institutions to coordinate the effort of all actors in the sector. The outstanding and comprehensive policy that has helped in bridging the gender gap in the North has been the F'CUBE Policy. But clearly, the policy has lacked gender focus since its inception and its main objective has been to encourage enrolment and retention levels without giving much consideration to the quality of education.
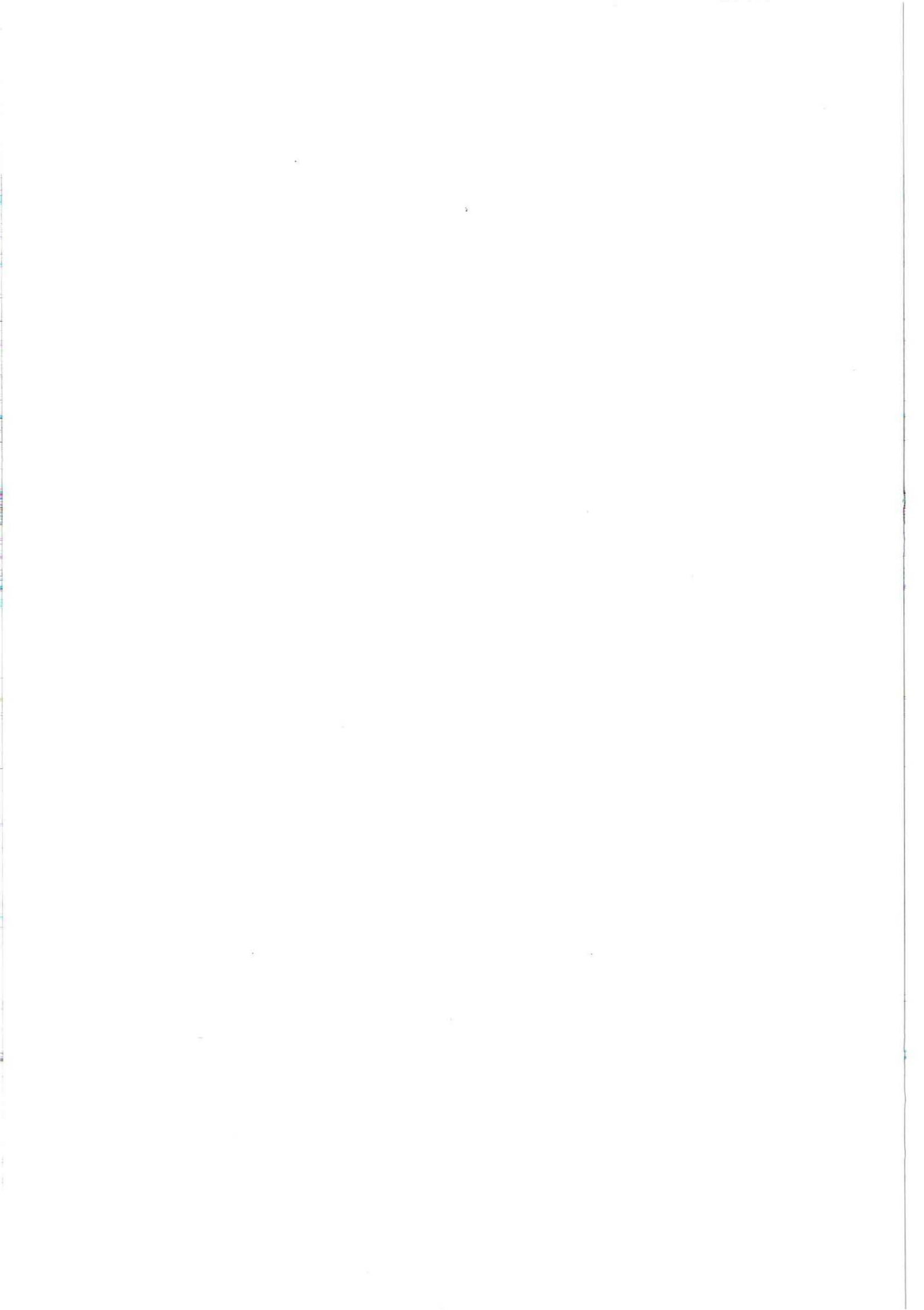
Chapter Five: Summary and Recommendations

"No development strategy is better than one that involves women as central players. It has immediate benefits for nutrition, health, savings and re-investment at family, community and ultimately country level. In other words, educating girls is a social development policy that works .It is a long –term investment that yields an exceptionally high return....We need those with power to change things to come together in an alliance for girls education: governments, voluntary progressive groups, and above all local communities, schools and families" – (*Kofi Annan, UN Secretary General, World Education Forum, 2000).*

5.1 Introduction

The main objective of this concluding chapter is to provide a summary of findings and recommendations for policy.

5.2 Summary

This study examined barriers to female education in the Northern Region of Ghana. The findings revealed that these barriers are multifaceted and interrelated but could be categorised socio-cultural, economic and policy constraints. Socio-cultural factors include betrothal and early marriage, societal perception about the position of women, child fostering, patriarchy, negative religious beliefs and practices and attractive dowry system.

The economic constraints that under pin female education have been identified as poverty, the lust for fashion, low job market opportunities, lack of parental support, generally low standard of living which leads to the migration of young girls from the North to the South for work as 'Kayayie'.

The policy and school based constraints include poor quality of education, misplacement of priorities, geographical stretch of communities, unfriendly school environment, ignorance on the part of both parents and girl-child themselves, unfavourable attitude of teachers to teaching and learning and inability or refusal to pay school fees and parental irresponsibility. Throughout the findings universal access to education was emphasized without focus on quality education in the region. Throughout the finding, quality

education is often misconstrued to mean increasing access and participation for all children of school going age.

In the assessment of the F'CUBE education policy, it is evident that there is no agreed framework among actors in bringing quality education to the girl-child. Besides lacking a gender focus the policy has not strategically tackle education of the girl child as a right. Prospects of girl-child education in Northern Region in particular are glaring, but there is then a challenge not just to universalize access, but focus should be directed towards quality, equity, relevance, learning acquisition and the outcome of education within a context that accommodates social, cultural, political and economic as well as international cooperation. We need to go beyond the rhetoric on the importance of girl child education and embrace education as a live long interactive learning process.

5.3 Policy Recommendations

> *"The challenging task ahead is to reform education systems so that they offer equal opportunities to all children and produce citizens who can participate on an equal footing in the development of democratic, non discriminatory and non sexist societies. A first step in this direction is to ensure that EFA plans are gender sensitive and responsive, have fixed objectives and pertinent strategies and have allocated the necessary fund and human resource to implement and monitor the progress towards these goals". (UNESCO's Guidelines for Preparing Gender Responsive EFA Plans, cited in Leslie Casely-Hayford 2002, p46)*

In view of these difficult but necessary to tackle issues, a broader understanding and knowledge on inherent learning variation and curriculum content, method of teaching and learning and engendering the class room organisation is necessary . Greater technocratic knowledge within organizations and agencies is thus needed in Ghana to challenge male dominated paradigms at the higher echelon of schooling and creating awareness about them at management, decentralization and grassroots levels. A single voice in leading education programs is needed between MOE and its implementing agencies as GEU and the MTEF. Uniformity in commitment and understanding to education sector programs is also crucial

The FCUBE policy also needs some re-evaluation because its initial intent of increasing access made it to loose sight on gender, buttressing a point that policy documents are rhetorical devices but do not often address reality. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made for a gender equitable provisioning of education in the Northern Region;

5.3.1 Awareness Creation and Social Mobilisation

This awareness creation could help bridge the socio-cultural barriers that impede girls' education in NR. This campaign should specifically be geared towards mobilizing communities and sensitizing them on the need for attitudinal change towards girls' education. This will help reduce the obnoxious cultural and traditional practices that impede girl's education. There is the need for community programmes that aim at sensitizing families on the education of the girl-child as equal capability holders. Community open days and workshops to assess the needs of girl children and families should be of utmost importance here. This sensitisation could also take the form of durbars of chiefs and community members, seminars, conferences, workshops, using models of women and girls within communities projected by the local media. The involvement of religious leaders and concerned citizens will also be very crucial in sustaining the awareness. The Northern political and parliamentary caucus should set the non-education of Northern girls as a project and canvass for government support to turn the stakes round.

Secondly, the reintroduction of sex education in schools is necessary to make adolescent girls beware of sexual maturation and dangers of teenage pregnancy. Sexual harassment, rape and assault needs to be addressed to ensure girls feel safe and secure to attend school. Men and boys should directly be involved in matters of gender; a teacher in each school could professionally be trained as gender education officer. Schools should also have links with social welfare offices, CBO's, NGO's and special education units to give maximum attention to girls who might need special care. Increasing the participation of girls in the development process and concretizing them so to generate a 'hunger for education' feeling.

Additionally, Community watchdog committees should be formed to monitor teacher people relations at school by regular visits to schools with role models to interact with children and teachers. This is deemed necessary because since experience is the best teacher, role models have the potential of telling a better story to their female colleagues. According to Wilson (2001), these good role models should be characterised by regular attendance, proper dress, avoidance of absenteeism, humility, good relations with community and willingness to take up responsibilities in the community.

5.3.2 Addressing Economic Constraints of Families to Support Girls Education

The Northern region is basically agrarian and economically deprived with low livelihood opportunities for parents to earn income to support girls in school. In such a situation parents often consider the labour of children very crucial to enable families to overcome some livelihood constraints for girls' education. Parents who can not afford the needs of girls at school see formal schooling as an obstacle that denies them the services of the girl child entirely for other activities. There is thus the need for flexible scheduling of the school calendar to help accommodate local needs without denying the services of children to parents during marketing and harvest times. Formal schooling fees have been abolished but hidden fees are still paid by parents was found in the analysis. To enhance the livelihood capacity of families, there should wider targeted and achievable poverty alleviation strategies at the decentralized level for parents to earn income to be able to cater for the schooling needs of girls. The wealth of a mother often has a bigger spillover effect on the life chances of the daughter. Support to parents and guardians in the form of income generating activities for women to support for school levies while award schemes for needy children be encouraged.

A holistic and multi-sectoral approach involving government, public-private partnership, donor organizations and civil society is necessary to the problem in the North. This will not only put pressure on government for quality provisioning, but clear cut priorities with political commitment will enforce coordination of aid and support between government and donors and among donors themselves.

5.3.3 Establishment of Community Schools and Counselling Centres for Girls

Each local community in the North needs to have a well-resourced community school supported by government, NGOs and local business partners operating. Strong and friendly enabling environments needs to be created to promote the establishment of community schools. Cost effective local materials can be use for building the structures within the community the ease the problem of girls having to travel considerable distance to access education. This has a multipurpose advantage of reducing distance traveled for schooling while and easing the plight of parents for having to pay transport stipends of their children in addition to providing daily breakfast and lunch to children. These centres should also create opportunities for parents and families to negotiate for proper counseling for their children based on the capabilities of the child and the educational needs and future plans of the family. Well trained career counseling officers should be motivated and stationed at the community level to provide skills development in mathematics and sciences during and to woe the interest of parents and girls into these courses which can also help reduce the feminization of vocational education.

5.3.4 Sponsorship for Deprived Girls

Strategic policies should be put in place for the identification of needy girls and girls at risk for their schooling to be supported through scholarship schemes. To sustain these schemes, the government should holistically commit resources to these schemes with an appeal to civil society organisation for logistic and financial support. These schemes have the tendency to motivate deprived but willing parents to send girls to school and to raise the self esteem of girls to participate in school. World Bank has suggested that the most innovative and promising approaches suggests that inclusive education is low cost but very effective. And the issue is being clear and courageous about mainstreaming the participation of girls in education. This sponsorship packages should be broad to cover school fees, provision of text books and school uniforms support parents to send their daughters to school. In this regard girls experience and family history is necessary for the identification of the brilliant but needy girls for support.

5.3.5 Provision of Motivational Incentives for Teachers

Teachers especially in the deprived areas in the North still consider their status as very low due to lack of motivations and incentives apart from their monthly salary. Community trained teachers should be encouraged to go back their local community after training to help cater for the refusal of postings to the rural areas for lack of amenities. The non-attractiveness of the teaching profession means that most of them pay little attention to the culture of the class room or attitudes of children towards teaching and learning. There is the need to improve the teacher's position which requires not only better conditions of service but also the development of professional practices within the schooling development. The district education officers and circuit supervisors need to support head teachers and staff to be able to recognise the performance of children at school and to treat those who have unique educational needs with special care. The participation of girls can be increased by stimulating demand and sensitizing teachers to help provide extra assistance and encouragement for the girl-child.

Incentive programmes for female teachers could also serve as ways of encouraging them to accept rural postings. Such packages should cover transport and housing schemes, medical insurance and access to portable water. Formal teacher commitment is the fostered to make the government current policy of providing each district with a school of excellence a reality. The education of the female also deserves moral attention of stakeholders and key informants. Related study by Casely-Hayford and Wilson (2001), revealed that most Northern female teachers were guided and encouraged by priests and community leaders to come back to serve their own communities after having been trained as professional teachers. But once if Village lacks people of this caliber, this is no longer possible.

5.3.6 Establishment of Early Childhood Education Centres

Presently, early childhood education centres in Ghana are only located in the cities. Only few enlightened communities in the North have these centres to the neglect of the deprived interior communities. It is important for every community to have such centres to provide solid foundation for girls, encouraging them to climb higher on the educational

ladder. As a way of giving strong educational foundation, the government policy of school of excellence should be broadened to cover Early Childhood Development Centres (ECD). Mentioned of this is missing in the program and without these it could be short sighted in addressing wounds rather than symptoms.

Childhood is a very crucial stage in a person's life (O'Neil 2000, Oudenhoven 2003). Most rural communities in the Northern Region have no early childhood centres to nurture children into formal primary schooling but it forms a strong foundation for an enlightened basic education since good beginning also helps avoid poor performance which has been found to be one of the reasons for the dropout of girls from school. This strategy, when well implemented, will facilitate the National Vision of having girls well taught by qualified and quality trained teachers who will understand girls and their needs, enable them to learn, remain in school for smooth transition to higher levels, enabling them to unearth their full potential and become useful and productive citizen. At early childhood foundations, the purposes of education should be to make the child a life long learner who seeks to be responsive to community and family needs and those of the girls themselves.

5.4 Conclusion

With clearly stated priorities and political commitment to targets set, it is possible to bridge the gender gap in the shortest possible time, not only in education but also in other aspects of life that confront the realities of women of today. One important issue that needs to be taken seriously and remains food for thought is the extended family system and its influence on Northerners. Children, especially girls, benefit from the support of family members but become vulnerable and at risk once the network begins to break up or the nuclear family breaks down, this needs consideration in aid targeting to those in real need and closer collaboration is needed to help identify the real children at risk.

The sustainability of policy often depends on commitment for gender equality at the macro level which has a bearing on individual actors. Capacity building for individuals will also be necessary if the competence needed to do gender-sensitive analysis, conduct-

inclusive stakeholder consultations, create gender-sensitive policies and budgeting, provide gender responsive services and do gender sensitive monitoring and evaluation are to exist. Strategic initiatives targeted directly at men are necessary and complementary, but mainstreaming does not preclude deliberate initiatives targeted at women in so far as they promote gender equality.

In the light of the barriers to girl's education in the context of Northern Region, child right programming is necessary so that the girl child has well gendered space in which to tell her own story since experience is often the best teacher. Ghana was the first country to ratify the UNCRC, but education as a right is the least enforced in the country. In addition to agreeing to all articles of the CRC without reservation, the government provided for free universal education constitutionally. But structures to make this legal document enforceable are very weak. Education should therefore be recognised as a right to be enjoyed by all children, irrespective of geography, age, gender and class.

The watch word towards mainstreaming girls access to quality education should be a sector-wide transformation throughout the Ministry, from organizational structures, administration and management ,finance, budgeting, attitudinal change of parents, teachers and learners and the community at large (Sibbons & Seel 2000).

We need to begin with literate girls to sustain the gains of development with educated women tomorrow. Girls and women are not passive recipients of aid and support, they can also be well-informed resourceful people capable of generating solutions and ideas surrounding their own life realities; it is up to the policy maker, the politicians and stakeholders to listen to the experiences of the young girls and the solutions that they themselves in their own circumstance provide (Stevens 1998).

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