

Promoting Affirmative Action in Higher Education: A Case Study of the University for Development Studies Bridging Programme

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Abstract

Despite various campaigns for gender equity through affirmative action programmes, there still remains the challenge of bridging the gender gap in education, especially at the tertiary level. In view of the idea that mainstream literature has much to offer on advocacy issues on affirmative action for gender equity in education rather than reports on progress, this paper contributes to filling this gap by presenting a descriptive coverage of practical application of the concept of affirmative action by a case study report on the University for Development Studies' Bridging Programme for girls. Methodologically, this paper is an outcome of both descriptive and applied research methods, in the sense that it describes the implementation process of the gender gap bridging programme for university admissions through a female centered approach by the University for Development Studies, by adopting existing research methodological procedures such as interview and review of secondary data. The findings were also presented using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The major findings indicate that before the implementation of the affirmative action measures in the university, there was a very wide gap between the male and female student populations in favour of males, but after the bridging programme, there was a reduction in the gender gap. It was also observed that though female beneficiaries came in with weak academic backgrounds; usually from poorer households and/or deprived rural areas, they competed favorably with those who were admitted with the normal admission requirements once mainstreamed into the system. The paper concludes that affirmative action is an important tool for bridging the gender gap in education, and recommended that the local government should support affirmative action programmes such as that of the University for Development Studies by sponsoring needy female students to benefit from the programme.

KEYWORDS: Affirmative Action, Gender Parity, Enrolment, Gender equality.

Introduction

Girls' education is receiving high profile policy attention in Ghana today. The attempt to create an enabling policy environment for female education at the national level is being complemented by a growing number of interventions undertaken by local and traditional authorities and civil society organizations such as the District Assemblies, chiefs, queen mothers, churches, welfare organizations and girls' associations (Education Strategic Plan, 2007). Very little has however, been explored about gender sensitive strategies in the educational institutions themselves beyond quota allocations in enrollment. Even with this, the task of determining whether educational institutions especially at the tertiary level, come out with the proportional distribution of gender on enrolment lists only after admissions have been granted, or that they follow laid-down principles to ensure equity in distribution by gender, breeds much grounds for further enquiry.

In response to the urgent need for the promotion of equity in higher educational attainment by gender in the country, the University for Development Studies (UDS), established a Gender Mainstreaming Unit which initiated the Bridging Programme for Girls in 2004, with the main objective of bettering the chances of girls in terms of educational empowerment (Office of the Registrar-UDS, 2009). In this respect, this paper presents a picture of the programme in terms of the category of beneficiaries, the stakeholders and their roles, the implementation process, the achievements and challenges; as these are necessary ingredients for programme feed-back and review.

Problem Statement

Gender-based affirmative action campaigns have persisted at the international, national and local level domains for far too long, and the observation that academic debates on the subject in the area of education in particular

have continued unabated, is a reflection that records on the achievements of affirmative action strategies fail to meet the expectations of gender-based development activists and other stakeholders. In particular, gender inequality in university enrollments still remains a problem, and though various universities in Ghana express awareness of the situation, not enough has been covered on what policy frameworks and implementation strategies are available for redress.

The UDS Bridging Programme for girls has so far been the most dramatic intervention at the tertiary educational level in Ghana, yet reports on the progress and achievements have remained shallowly expressed in congregation hand-books and unpublished academic records, rather than results of comprehensive descriptive research activities purposively designed to yield adequate information (Kumar, 1999). This paper therefore fulfills this aspect by coming out with a comprehensive report on the UDS Bridging Programme for girls to fill the gap in mainstream literature on the achievements of affirmative action in female educational empowerment at the tertiary level in Ghana.

Research Question

The research question this paper sought to answer is: *To what extent is the University for Development Studies contributing to meeting the elimination of gender disparity in university education?*

Literature Review

This section presents some reviewed secondary information with some policy issues and conceptual underpinnings in the sphere of gender-based affirmative action in education, which served to provide direction for the discussion of the results of the current study.

Girls Education and Policy influence in Ghana

Female participation in education at the pre-university level in Ghana has improved remarkably over the period with the attainment of a gender parity index in primary education of 0.96 for the period 2006/2007 from 0.93 for 2003/2004 (Education Strategic Plan, 2007). However, the dropout rate of girls from school is still higher than that of boys; while about 47% of boys enter the SHS after the basic education level, only 38% of girls do so. Illiteracy rate is not only higher among females in Ghana than males, but the rate of change is also very low (Education Strategic Plan, 2007). Consequently *one* out of every *three* young women aged 15-24, still remains illiterate, and this does not only reduce the number of females who can proceed to tertiary level educational institutions, but also restricts the opportunities for females to enter public life.

In view of these challenges, attempts are being made to promote female educational empowerment at the pre-university level (especially basic school level) so that they can progress to the secondary and tertiary levels to fill the gender gap, which has often favored males. Accordingly, Ghana as a member of the international community has adopted the Millennium Development Goal 2 (MDG 2) which aims at achieving universal primary education by ensuring that all children of primary school age enroll beginning from the 2000, and by 2015 all children of school going age must have been in school. The government has shown this commitment through policy directives and interventions like the Education Strategic Plan (ESP) for 2003-2015, the Growth Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS), and the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE). Strategies used to implement the policies include the introduction of the Capitation Grant (School fee Abolition) and the nutrition and school feeding programmes. However, there is still the lack of gender specific approach in these policy provisions as they remain general. As such, for the country to achieve gender parity in education, considerable strides have been made towards increasing the number of girls attending school. For example, in 1997 a girl's education unit was established as part of the Basic Education Division (BED) of Ghana Education Service (GES) to co-ordinate the implementation of activities related to girl-child education. All the above have resulted in significant progress in the basic educational sector, especially in the past years.

However, an appalling picture is observed as one investigates the proportional distribution of enrollment records by gender as we progress from the basic to the tertiary level. For instance, the enrolment of girls recorded of the total student population in 2006 stood at 84.5% at the primary level, 68.7% at the JSS level and 43.5% at the SSS level. At the tertiary level, within the same year, female participation was 33% of the total student population (Ministry of Education, Science and Sports (MoESS), 2006). This shows that female enrolment in the tertiary institutions of Ghana is very low. Some reasons advanced for this situation include early marriages, socio-cultural beliefs that limit the acquisition of higher education by females in view of the notion that women are traditionally supposed to be responsible for home-making (Apusigah, 2004; Bukari, 2009) and poverty on the part of parents, for which reason they prefer to spend the limited resources on the males (based on the factors enumerated earlier). Other reasons include lack of opportunities and/or the lack of awareness of some

existing opportunities elsewhere.

The quest for the quality of the products of tertiary institutions, especially at the university level and the influence of the job market in determining the demand for university graduates, generates competition among the universities for quality assurance, with attendant effect of very competitive admission requirements, which most females fail to meet as a result of the combination of household chores with academic work at the pre-university levels. Thus, one of the immediate ways to reduce the gender gap at the tertiary level is by affirmative action. The challenge however, remains as to how to promote higher educational attainment of women without compromising the quality assurance drive of the Ghanaian universities. This paper therefore furnishes this question with results of a case study of the UDS.

Conceptual Underpinnings

This study was guided by some basic concepts relating to gender and affirmative action, with a focus on how they influence educational attainment.

The Concept of Gender

The concept of gender can be understood in many different ways, making the usefulness of the concept dependent on the purpose of usage and the intellectual tradition in which it is being introduced (Robeyns, 2006). Dewar (1989), in his contribution, looks at gender in a different construct. First, when gender is defined in biological and behavioral sciences, it is examined as a personal attribute and the focus is how differences between males and females explain the gap in their performance levels. Second, when gender is defined in socio-cultural sciences, it is viewed as a social issue and the focus is on the analysis of the ways in which boys play games and sport have been socially constructed to produce and legitimize male hegemony.

How the concept of gender is considered as an issue of sexual differences makes meaning only when we begin to examine how social systems consider this in their operations. Do social institutions just understand that males are different from females and yet expect similar outputs from both sexes when subjected to the same operational principles? If so, why is the concept of gender necessary in theory and practice? In response to these questions Robeyns (2006), argues that to adopt a gender perspective is to distinguish between what is natural and biological (knowing the difference between male and female) and making use of this knowledge in social and cultural institutional constructionism. This means that institutions should operate in manners that recognize the different gender groups on the basis of the natural and biological determinisms in their participatory roles, and more importantly, ensuring equality by compromise or trade-offs (some level of favoritism for identified vulnerable groups). These may differ from one society to another, from place to place and over time.

In this paper the concept of gender is the focal issue of analysis, and attention has been geared towards the examination of disparities in educational participation and what is being done to remedy the situation at the tertiary level.

Society's Construction of Gender

‘‘From the moment a girl infant is wrapped in a pink blanket and a boy infant in a blue one, gender role development begins. The colours of pink and blue are among the first indicators used by society to distinguish female from male. As these infants grow, other cultural artifacts will assure that this distinction remains intact. Girls will be given dolls to diaper and tiny stoves on which to cook pretend meals. Boys will construct building with miniature tools and wage war with toys and tank.... The incredible power of gender socialization is largely responsible for such behaviors. Pink and blue begin this lifelong process’’ (Lindsey, 1990: 36) as cited in Nung (1996).

From the above statement, gender roles are learned through childhood to the adult stage. In the typical Ghanaian socio-cultural context, the definition and assignment of reproductive and productive roles to females and males respectively, exemplify the picture presented in the literature, and how the re-thinking of the value of reproductive and traditional roles of females in particular, are generally placed higher than the achievements like education and career, is finding solutions to the gender disparities in tertiary education (to be more specific), constituted the basis of enquiry in this paper, with affirmative action in the perspective.

Brief Introduction of Affirmative Action in Ghana

The development and application of the concept of affirmative action in relevant realms of the socio-economic development of Ghana is not alien in mainstream literature. Ghana was a member of the General Assembly which adopted the UN convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against women in 1979, and ratified in 1986. She also participated in deliberations of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in

1995 (WILDAF,2010). What generates interest in research is how such international policies are being transformed to reflect in various spheres of national development where they are applicable.

At the cabinet level in Ghana, a statement of policy was issued to provide a set of guidelines for the systematic and sustained implementation of the aspects of Affirmative Action towards equality of opportunities for women in Ghana. The deliberations and the ratification of these treaties also yielded policies to enhance the establishment of a more clear-cut administrative framework to ensure appropriate representation of women on all advisory bodies to mainstream women's issues and initiate action to satisfy women's interests in the political, economic and social aspects of life (Bekaako, 1998). The lack of deliberate and adequate administrative systems or frameworks to effectively machinate this policy provision makes it difficult to identify what goes into the implementation process, why such considerations must be taken, where they are to be carried out, and how they should be done. This situation could lead one into a hasty conclusion that affirmative action in Ghana is haphazardly implemented.

Rather than be at sea in the search for all areas of application of affirmative action in Ghana, an identification of a specific field where some advances have been made could lead to the development of a model picture of the concept. Thus, the call for affirmative action is observed to have injected some level of transformation into the educational system: The PNDC Law 42 (1987): providing for social justice and equality of opportunities for all, seems to have been adequately imbibed by all institutions under the various ministries of the country, and of particular interest in this study is the educational sector. In the field of education, affirmative action in Ghana is an option practiced to enable educational institutions to address the policy requirement for gender equity in enrolments.

While held to be widely practiced at the tertiary education level, particularly with respect to admissions to science-based courses, it is not clear whether all the institutions do so as a matter of discretion or in pursuance of a well-defined or state policy. According to Sutherland (2002), senior officers of tertiary institutions particularly the Universities, indicate that there is active positive discrimination in favour of female students. Indeed the School of Medical Sciences in the University of Science and Technology indicated that it reserved 20% of places for female students. Even with this, the question of the effective implementation of such a policy by university administrators to ensure the achievement of academic excellence on the part of such female beneficiaries has not been answered. This is because there is lack of adequate information on model programmes being implemented by individual institutions. One way to fill such a gap is by the adoption of descriptive research approaches such as the orientation of this particular study, with the University for Development Studies in focus.

Methodology

The study was largely descriptive in nature, which depended on both primary and secondary sources of data, such as participant interviews and desktop study of texts from books, journals and institutional academic records. The use of quantitative and qualitative approaches with the other methodological procedures mentioned above made the adoption of applied research non-exclusive in the character of the study. The study design was cross-sectional; in other words after purposively selecting beneficiaries and administrators of the UDS bridging programme as the study population, a sample size of 14 was taken as a cross-section. The determination of the sample size was non-statistical, it was judgmental; based on the rational decision of the researcher (Branner, 2007). In particular, in view of the ideas that the beneficiaries were fewer, unwilling to disclose their identity and difficult to locate, snow-balling was used in a two-day exercise to obtain 10 students for interview. The narrowed nature of the implementation process also meant that only a few university senior officials were involved. Thus, a Research Assistant of the Gender Mainstreaming Unit, a Senior Administrative Assistant of the office of the Registrar, the Dean of the Faculty of Applied Sciences and one facilitating lecturer of the programme (4 university staff) were also interviewed. Table 1, presents the breakdown of the sample distribution.

Discussions

The rest of this paper looks at the of the results of the study.

The Origin of the UDS Bridging Programme for Girls

The concept of gender sensitivity in the UDS follows an existing norm for all universities in Ghana. Considerations usually center on quota or proportionate allocation of total enrolment by gender and/or for more difficult programme areas where normal admission requirements are taught of as not being in favour of females, and so requiring positive discrimination (Meena, 2004; Tamale, 2004), such as the physical sciences. The realization that females generally constitute an unsatisfactory proportion of fresh enrolments each year in the

applied sciences generated the need for the introduction of the UDS Bridging Programme for girls in 2004, which was facilitated by a Gender Mainstreaming Unit established by the university. The main objective of the programme was to better the chances of girls in terms of female educational empowerment (Source: Gender Mainstreaming Unit, UDS, October 2008). This was in pursuance of the norm of 50:50 ratio established by the National Commission for Tertiary Education (NCTE) (2006) for male and female enrolments in all the universities, in order to achieve gender parity. On choice of subjects, it is provided that the total enrolment for science should be 60% and the remaining 40% for the humanities for all public universities, except for the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology which was to admit 75% for the sciences and 25% for the humanities. The composition of such enrolment records by gender is of paramount interest in this paper.

Female enrolment out of the total number of students admitted from five public universities in Ghana (the University of Ghana, the University of Cape Coast, the University of Science and Technology, the University of Education and the University for Development Studies) in 2000/01 academic year, ranged from 38% in the University of Ghana to 15% in the University for Development Studies; an indication of wide gender inequality.

In terms of percentage composition by gender, for the sciences, enrolment records for the 2001/2002 academic year indicated that the percentage representation of females for University of Ghana, University of Cape Coast and the University for Development Studies were 24.1%, 17.3% and 22.3% respectively (NCTE, 2006). These three universities could therefore not achieve the 50:50 target for the period beyond the 2000/2001 academic year.

Apart from the general 50:50 admission ratio set for both gender groups, there is no policy indicator as to what percentage of females and males should be enrolled in the sciences. But it can be seen from the above that females still lag behind males in their participation in all disciplines. In the 2005/2006 academic year for instance, the male to female enrolment ratio was 65:35 for the universities and 70:30 for the polytechnics (NCTE, 2006).

In view of the above this situation, the UDS initiated the bridging program in 2004 to bridge the gender gap. To facilitate this intervention, a Gender Mainstreaming Unit was established at the Faculty of Applied Sciences, located at the Navrongo campus of the university in the Upper East Region of Ghana. The rest of this paper is focused on the implementation process, reasons why it was necessary for girls, the progress and achievements of UDS in that direction. A further step was taken to identify some associated challenges and suggestions made to address the challenges.

The Implementation Process of the UDS Bridging Programme for Girls

The programme was originally meant for female Senior High School leavers with weaker grades in mathematics and science from the catchment area (Northern Ghana), who could otherwise not have met the admission cut-down aggregate point for the sciences, but met the minimum aggregate for university admission. Table 2 presents two samples of results female students could use for enrolment into the bridging programme.

Interested applicants were to apply for enrolment into the programme by filling and submitting application forms, with the *West African Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination* (WASSCE) results attached, to provide the basis for short-listing. Other background factors considered in the short-listing process include females from schools in deprived rural areas and low-income households. Short-listed applicants were given an exclusive four weeks training in mathematics and science by lecturers from the Faculty of Applied Sciences, after the payment of tuition fees determined by the university (Vice Chancellor's Report, 2005).

Table 2 shows the WASSCE results of two female science students who benefited from the programme in the 2007/2008 academic year. It could be seen that both students obtained at least six passes, but either failed or obtained weaker grades in mathematics and other science subjects, for which reason they could not obtain university admission by the formal procedures.

The mainstreaming process involved successful candidates of the programme being given fresh set of university application forms to fill with the results of the bridging programme attached, in addition to the WASSCE results. It is the parents/guardians of the admitted students who paid the actual fees, while students receive some annual financial assistance from the MPs common Fund through their respective District Assemblies. Other opportunities include the Social Security and National Insurance Trust Student Loan scheme, which all Ghanaian students could apply for (Source: interview with beneficiary students, October 2009).

Reasons Why the UDS Bridging Programme for Girls was Necessary

The argument for favoritism of females through special gender-based strategies for their mainstreaming into the UDS could not be without examining the basis for its justification. It was established in the Vice Chancellor's

Report (2005), that apart from its location in the Upper East Region of Ghana, the bridging programme was also meant for girls in the catchment areas of the University (Northern Ghana). Findings on the sanity of this decision of the university indicated that, the three Northern Regions were the poorest regions in Ghana as at the time of the introduction of the programme (Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2002-2004), and that women and girls are the most vulnerable groups to poverty, especially in patriarchal societies like those of the Upper East Region, Northern Region and the Upper West Region, where resource ownership and use is male dominant (Apuigah, 2004). One explanation for the high incidence of poverty in these areas is that, the unfavourable climatic conditions, coupled with poor soil fertility makes agricultural productivity, which constitutes the major source of income to the people low (Kwamena and Benneh, 1988). This situation has an adverse effect on female education, as parents prefer to spend the scanty household income on the schooling of male children, since females would eventually marry and become part of their husbands' families.

The University's admission of females before 2004 in the sciences was appalling with many girls falling below the cut off point, due to their poor performance in mathematics and science subjects. This widened the gender gap in the physical sciences, and the situation motivated the decision for a pragmatic measure to bridge the gap.

Interviews with the sampled beneficiaries of the programme in UDS on further explanations for their poor academic performance as females yielded the following responses:

- Too much engagement in household chores by girls at home, making little time available for learning after normal school hours or during holidays.
- While parents spend on extra learning materials and extra classes fees for males, girls are denied from leaving home for extra classes organized in town for reasons like, they could be impregnated by their male counterparts and teachers out there, and the need to help their mothers at home with their reproductive roles
- Girls are supposed to grow and be married out to men who would take care of them, and so they do not need to learn too much to go beyond secondary school level. It is the boys who must do so because of their future productive responsibilities.
- Any time parents complain of lack of money and education matters come up, they give priority to the male children.

(Source: Interview with UDS Bridging Programme beneficiaries, October 2008).

Asked why they felt that tertiary education was necessary for them as women, the female beneficiaries expressed the views that:

- Ghana has a female dominated population, so it is necessary for more women to be involved in decision making at the national level on issues that affect women and children, and university education is one of the conditions under which women can qualify to reach that level, like the males in politics and administrative positions.
- The increasing cases of domestic violence against women by their husbands are because they are so dependent that they cannot contribute to family economy and cannot do without their husbands or male family members. Women who are in formal sector employment because of higher educational qualifications face minimal cases of domestic violence; their husbands and family members respect them.
- Most girls who fail to continue to the tertiary level after secondary school either become victims of early marriage or sexual abuse, leading to teenage and unwanted pregnancies, and these worsen their future prospects of developing themselves into responsible adult women in society.
- Girls are slow learners compared to boys, and the difficult nature of science and mathematics make such a programme for girls necessary.

(Source: Interview with UDS Bridging Programme beneficiaries, October 2008).

These responses by the beneficiary participants were consistent with the findings of Abagre (2012) and Bukari (2009) that socio-cultural factors militate against the educational attainment of females in northern Ghana, and for which reason very few qualify for leadership positions in the formal sector to participate in decision making that could liberate other women from the vulnerabilities to harsh socio-cultural and economic conditions. The UDS Bridging Programme for girls in this part of the country was therefore a good step towards addressing these problems.

The Progress and Achievements of the UDS Bridging Programme

A presentation of mainstream university and bridging programme enrolment figures over a period of time could reveal a picture of the progress of the programme, in terms of the gender ratios in UDS. Figure 1 shows mainstream university percentage enrolments by gender for nine academic years.

Figure 1, shows that percentage share of females in the enrolments was higher within the periods 2003/2004 to 2008/2009 academic years. For reasons to be discussed later, the programme period was within these same academic years. In other words it started in the 2003/2004 academic year and ended in the 2008/2009 academic year. Thus, 2002/2003, 2009/2010 and 2010/2011, were without special considerations for girls in UDS enrolment policy. The average percentage of females enrolled for these years calculated from Figure 1 was 15%, compared to 85% for the males. The influence of the bridging programme on the percentage ratios by gender for the various years could be felt by relating the data in Figure 1 to the figures in Table 3.

Table 3 shows that the bridging programme was contributing significantly to the number of students admitted into the mainstream university between 2004 and 2008, with percentage shares of the total female population of fresh students of 61%, 48%, 56%, 41% and 27% for 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008 respectively. The average percentage composition of female students from the programme over the period of intervention in the Faculty of Applied Sciences was 46%.

To present a clear assessment of the achievements of the programme, we now relate this finding to the data in Figure 1. It could be realized that within the intervention period stated above, percentages of females enrolled into the mainstream university were 24%, 25%, 21%, 20%, 25% and 17% (Figure 1), giving an average of 22% female composition (after the intervention) compared to 15% before the bridging programme. The gender ratio of males to females without the programme was therefore 85:15, and that within the programme period was 78:22. The UDS Bridging Programme for girls in the sciences was therefore contributory to bridging the gender gap between males and females in university enrolment.

Generally therefore, the programme can best be described as a step in the right direction. For example, a female student among the first batch who proceeded from the bridging programme to the mainstream university programme in 2004 and in the Department of Applied Biology made it to the first class category.

Challenges of the Programme

The challenges of the UDS Bridging Programme for girls could be explained under administrative and beneficiary categories. In terms of administrative challenges, the initial stage of compelling the District/Municipal Assemblies to cater for the cost of training beneficiary females from their constituencies was met by resistance. The reason given by District/Municipal Chief Executives were that, the Assembly Common Fund was not adequate to cater for such programmes (which cost up to GH¢450 in 2008 per student), (Office of the Gender Mainstreaming Unit-UDS, October 2008).

A second administrative problem was the inconsistency in female applicant population, but the general picture was that the number of females looking for university admissions but falling short of the requisite requirements was reducing. This was attributable to the increase in the length of the Senior High School duration from three to four years; with the positive effect that majority of girls who were slow learners as a result of integration with household chores, could now manage to improve upon their understanding of mathematics and science subjects to get good passes. These could enable them to gain admissions into polytechnics and colleges even if they did not meet university cut-down points. Consequently, in 2009, very few female students fell within the category to benefit from the bridging programme, such that it was not financially feasible to organize it. All female applicants of the Faculty of Applied Sciences in 2009 with such grades were admitted, forcing the bridging programme to come to an end (Interview with the Dean, FAS-UDS, August 2009)

Other parents could not meet the financial obligations of preparing the girls to go and stay for the four weeks of training. It was also possible for some girls to go through the training and to gain admission to the mainstream university, but would not be able to pay the actual university admission fee. According to some of the interviewees, this situation resulted from the fact that the double payment for training and admission fees was unbearable to some parents, and on the basis of this the programme could not be said to be pro-poor. In 2008 for instance, the training fee was GH¢450, while the admission fee for fresh Applied Science Students in UDS was GH¢650 for the same year. A student who gained admission through the programme in that year paid a total amount of GH¢1,100. Accordingly, of the 47 students who were given admission, two students could not report for failure to pay the actual admission fee.

Additionally, the participants were of the view that they were often over loaded with much difficult topics in mathematics and science within the short period of four weeks of training. This raised fear as to

whether they could be able to cope up with the actual course when mainstreamed into the main university course of study in the sciences.

Conclusion

Affirmative action in education provides initiatives that helped women to achieve levels of academic attainment that were denied to them until very recently. It prepares women for fields in engineering, medicine, business, mathematics and science, and other vocations which have been traditionally, and sometimes exclusively, occupied by men.

Dismantling affirmative action in education would result in severe backsliding, contrary to the national value of improving educational opportunities for all. It is therefore not out of place that gender parity in schools has become one of the policy issues in Ghana since the call for affirmative in 1975. UDS, Kwame Nkrumah University for Science and Technology and University of Cape Coast have adopted various programmes aimed at giving the females with weak backgrounds in science and mathematics, who could not have entered the University to be enrolled.

University for Development Studies in conformity with the ideals of affirmative action adopted the Bridging Programme to enable more girls to be enrolled into the University especially in the sciences. Thus in sum, *the research question is answerable with the results that*, the proportion of women in the total student population has improved since the introduction of affirmative action programmes in the University. Furthermore beneficiaries are measuring up to expectations with some ranking among the best students in the sciences.

Recommendations

District Assemblies should reconsider the use of the Assembly and MP Common Funds in the area of tertiary education with special provision for vulnerable groups, such as gender and level of socio-economic deprivation. The registration fee should also be reviewed to enable many students to enroll.

Apart from reviewing the syllabus for the program, the topics to be treated with respect to the duration of the program should also be given a second look. The program should not be limited to the Faculty of Applied Sciences alone. Other Faculties should be made to run the program. This is because passes in mathematics and science are not only pre-requisites for admissions into university science programmes, but also in the humanities.

In view of the positive effects of the programme on the gender ratio in UDS, the programme should be remounted and other universities should adopt it. Further steps should be taken to ensure that most Senior High Schools (SHS) in the country particularly those in the rural areas are made aware of the program for prospective applicants to benefit from it.

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Table 1: Sample Distribution of interviewees

Status of interviewees	Sex	Number	Percentage
Senior Administrative Assistant of the Office of the Registrar	Male	1	1% (approx.)
Dean of Faculty	Male	1	1% (approx.)
Admin Assistant of the Gender Mainstreaming Unit	Female	1	1% (approx.)
Facilitating lecturer	Male	1	1% (approx.)
Students/beneficiaries	Female	10	96%
Total	-	14	100%

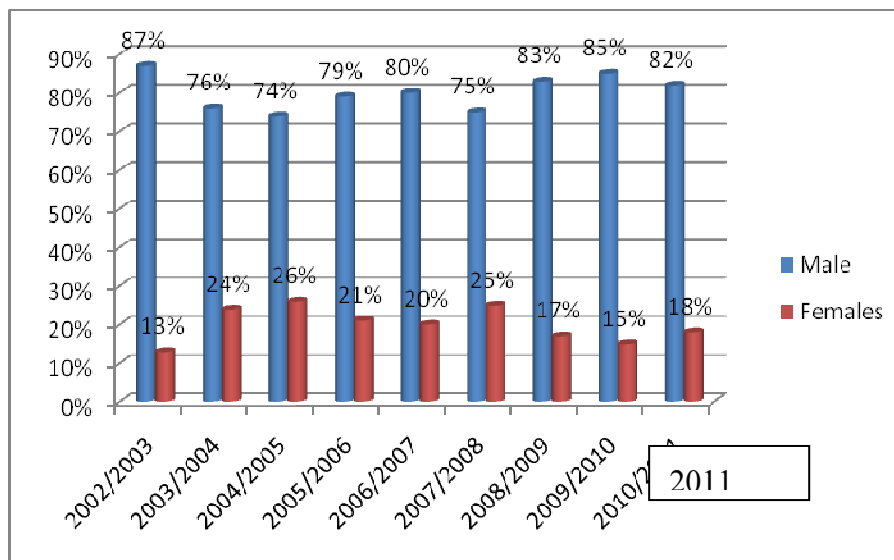
Source: This study, 2008

Table 2: Sample Results for Enrolment into the UDS Bridging Programme for Girls

Subjects	Grades	
	Student A	Student B
- Social Studies	D5	E8
- Core Mathematics	F9	D7
- Integrated Science	D7	E 8
- English	D5	D7
- Biology	D7	D8
- Chemistry	D7	F9
- Physics	E8	D8
- Elective Mathematics	F9	F9

Source: Gender Mainstreaming Unit-UDS, October 2008.

Figure 1: Student Admission by year and Gender in the Faculty of Applied Sciences (2002/2003 to 2010/2011)



(Source: Office of the Dean, FAS-UDS, October 2012).

Table 3: Admissions to the UDS Bridging Programme over five years

Year	Number of Applicants for the UDS Females Bridging Programme	No. Admitted	Percentage share of total females admitted
2004	31	28	61% of 46
2005	32	30	48% of 63
2006	34	34	56% of 61
2007	40	39	41% of 95
2008	47	45	27% of 163
2009	0	0	0
Total	184	176	

Source: Office of the Registrar (UDS-FAS, October 2008).