

No pending national elections, who cares? What newspaper publications reveal about local efforts towards Millennium Development Goal 3.

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The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) has become a catch phrase in development discourse. This study is an assessment of the MDG 3: to promote gender equality at all levels of education in Ghana. The Daily Graphic (a newspaper in Ghana) which is Ghana's prominent newspaper was reviewed from 2000 to 2011 to determine the frequency of articles pertaining to addressing gender disparity at all levels of education and their sources. Also, we compared the rural and urban geographical emphasis of the articles. Findings demonstrated that primary level of education received the largest emphasis with the least number of writings on tertiary education. The articles were mainly authored by NGOs, politicians and education practitioners, and the majority referenced rural communities. It appeared that national elections influenced the frequency of the articles that The Daily Graphic published over the review period. We conclude that monitoring systems are central to keeping governments on track. Similarly, efforts that encourage the public to make their voice heard by frequently sending in articles can keep the state and other development agencies continually challenged and motivated until they deliver on their promises.

Introduction

Generally, gender issues in education have occupied an important position in global policy since the last two decades. This was marked by the responsibilities concerning gender and education contained within the Beijing Platform for Action at the Fourth World Conference on Women in September 1995. Action on closing the gender gap in education became prominent with the ratification of the

Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All (EFA), and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (North, 2010; Unterhalter & North, 2011; Subrahmanian, 2005). The United Nations (UN) in 2000 enunciated a series of goals towards the reduction of poverty which they named the MDGs. The MDGs which has become a catch phrase in development studies and allied disciplines seems to be a well-embraced framework for almost all developmental problems. The MDGs were developed (drawing on a sequence of UN resolutions and agreements made at world conferences) from the recognition that while considerable developments in living conditions have occurred in developed countries, enactments have been unbalanced and sluggish in most of developing countries. The MDGs were meant to help nation countries align their development efforts to the goals and to facilitate measurement of performance on them (UN, 2000; Sahn & Stifel, 2003; Alston, 2005).

The eight goals according to UN (2000) are to:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV / AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development

Each of the goals has either a target or a set of targets to be achieved and the deadline for most of the targets is 2015. In all, there are 18 targets. The third goal is to promote gender equality and empower women with the target of eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education

not later than 2015, which is the focus of this study is adopted from EFA. Many have debated that it is unfair to use MDGs to measure socio-economic progress in developing countries because it is not as candid as outlined (Easterly, 2009; Sahn & Stifel, 2003). Others also maintain that, considering the rates of socio-economic development in Africa, south of the Sahara, it is the only region that will not meet any of MDG targets by 2015 (UN, 2007; Blair Commission for Africa, 200; Igwe, 2011). Furthermore, others indicated that the MDGs were put together without much consultation of the locals (Manning, 2009; Sumner & Melamed, 2009). Whatever the argument is, the MDGs have been implemented and therefore the impacts of the goals on the people of developing countries need to be understood.

To achieve the target of MDG 3, some governments in developing countries have reinforced their prevailing educational policies and/or introduced new policies of which abolition of fees has been dominant (Kadzamira & Rose, 2003; USAID, 2007; Inoue & Oketch, 2008). For example, in order to improve enrolment in primary schools in Ghana, the Government of Ghana (re-) launched the policy of free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) in 1995. In principle, FCUBE policy aimed to eliminate school fees in order to increase the demand for schooling (MOE/GES, 2001). In facilitating FCUBE and meeting the MDG 3, the Government of Ghana rolled out two pilot primary education improvement policy initiatives - the Capitation Grant (CG) scheme and the School Feeding Program (SFP) in the 2004/05 academic year. Several other African countries implemented similar educational policies to better position themselves in achieving the MDG 3. Among them include Tanzania, Lesotho and Kenya. For example, to accomplish universal primary education, fees were abolished in primary schools in Tanzania, Lesotho and Kenya in 2001, 2000 and 2003, respectively (Kadzamira & Rose, 2003).

Even though there has been remarkable achievement in educational enrolment since the ratification of MDGs, more still need to be done. Lewin (2009) and UNESCO (2008) maintain that since the last two decades, gross enrolment rates in primary education in Africa, south of the Sahara on the average has been increased from 78% in 1990s to 97% in 2008. However, despite the success, over 32 million children still remain out of school, and the dropout rate increased from grade one to senior secondary with more girls than boys dropping out of school (Lewin, 2009). Lewin (2009, p.171) found in Africa, south of the Sahara that "...gains in enrolment in Grade 1 have not been matched by similar increases in higher grades in subsequent years. This is a considerable concern since despite expansion, it means that many children fail to complete a full cycle of basic education".

With regards to gender distribution in schools, UN (2010) noted that disparity still exists in girls' and boys' enrolment in primary and secondary schools. However, according to Lewin (2009), gender disparity in enrolment in some schools in Southern Africa is no longer existent. This is not surprising because South Africa is more developed than any country in Africa and has characteristics of developed countries. In the tertiary arena, access to university education remains extremely imbalanced in Africa, south of the Sahara and Southern Asia with 67 and 76 women per 100 men enrolled in tertiary education, respectively. Completion rates also tend to be lower among women than men (Lewin, 2009).

With reference to Ghana, country target set for 2005 and 2009 to attain a gender parity index (GPI) of 1 at the basic level were missed (Tagoe, 2011; National Development Planning Commission, 2006; Republic of Ghana, 2005). GPI of 0.96 and 0.92 were achieved at the primary and Junior High school levels, respectively (MOESS, 2008). For

secondary and higher education, the dropout rate ratio among girls is higher than boys (Tagoe, 2011). Also, the enrolment ratio at tertiary level in Ghana is 54 women per 100 men (Hausmann *et al.*, 2008).

Thus, the discourse on the MDG 3 to date suggests that the progress is not enough, and more needs to be done. In addition to policymakers taking actions meant to eliminate gender disparity in school participation, the public including rural and urban dwellers of developing countries need complete awareness of the targets, the reasons for failing to achieve them, and governments' policy intentions for better results. Also, policy statements that reflect equal interest in closing gender participation disparities at all levels and between urban and rural areas are important for assuring the public of governments' unbiased commitment. This becomes more pertinent given that generally there is biasness towards urban schooling (see Qian & Smyth, 2007; Akyeampong, 2009; Al-Samarrai & Reilly, 2000).

Information about the MDGs can be effectively shared through mass media. The role of mass media in engaging and eliciting the support of the public and reporting progress on development matters is instrumental to community development. Fawole & Olajide (2012) and Van den Ban & Hawkins (1996) observed that mass media which is a significant communication orifice can lead to positive change in society. Newspapers, a subcategory of mass media can play this important role because it is durable, very widespread, can be read at ones' convenience, and allows for a more complete understanding of mass contents (Fawole & Olajide, 2012). Furthermore, newspapers facilitate information exchange among information seekers (Lightfoot, 2003). Thus, newspapers can be an effective and essential means of engaging and informing the public about policy issues, including policy strategies to facilitate achieving the MDG 3 target.

With only three years left of the 15-year target of MDG 3 (i.e., to attain gender parity in education at all levels), and using Ghana as a case study, the goal of this study was to determine the extent to which newspapers have been used as a medium to disseminate information highlighting gender issues in education and efforts to attain gender parity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005 and in all levels of education not later than 2015. Although women empowerment is another focus of MDG 3, it is not the focus of this study.

The questions that the study addressed were:

What was the frequency of articles on matters relating to eliminating gender disparity at all educational levels by newspapers?

Who were the advocates of matters that speak to eliminating gender disparity at all educational levels?

What does the location of emphasis of articles reveal about rural versus urban differences (if any) on matters relating to the elimination of gender disparity in education?

Ghana and its Educational Policies since 1990s

Ghana educational system was the case explored in this study. Free Compulsory Universal Basic Educational (FCUBE) policy was introduced in Ghana in 1995. The FCUBE policy in principle was to eliminate school fees in order to improve the demand for schooling. This policy was put forward on the premise that the right to education was undisputable and school fees should not be an impediment to the gratification of this right. Additionally, the FCUBE sought to improve girls' school enrolment (MOE/GES, 2001).

The World Bank supported the Government of Ghana to finance FCUBE on two main activities – demand and supply. On the demand side, the Bank helped financially to increase instructional time, reduce fees and levies and

improve school supervision among others. On the supply side, investments focused basically on improving physical infrastructure and building additional classrooms and schools (World Bank, 2004).

But the FCUBE did not succeed in sending children to school because students still were charged additional fees for school amenities and infrastructure. Despite the policy of free tuition in basic schools, many district education directorates charged levies as a means of raising funds to take care of school repairs, and cost of cultural and sporting activities among others. Many parents/guardians could not afford to pay levies that the schools charged, thus, some children still could not be in school.

Due to the challenges associated with the FCUBE program, the government produced a White Paper on Education Reform in 2004, which outlined a portfolio of reforms and objectives spanning the entire educational sector. Strategies adopted to operationalize the policies included the introduction of the Capitation Grant (School Fee Abolition), expansion of Early Childhood Development services, and promotion of measures to improve gender parity in primary schools, which were in line with MDG 3.

Under the Capitation Grant (CG) system, selected public kindergarten, primary school and junior high and senior high received a grant of about GH¢3.30 per pupil per year during the 2004/2005 academic year. The quantum of financial resources to schools is dependent on the school population. The amount is distributed as follows: GH¢0.60 (about \$1.00 US =GH¢ 1.90) for sports, GH¢0.30 for cultural activities and the remaining GH¢2.10 for other expenses like the minor repairs, teaching and learning materials, in-service training for teachers and so on. These amounts were chosen based on an analysis of the average fees charged at basic level nationally. Schools were therefore not permitted to charge any fees to parents/guardians (Kattan, 2006).

Another program that the government launched in 2005 is a School Feeding. The School Feeding Program (SFP) which was formulated in 2004 was meant to provide free lunches to primary school children. The objective of the program among others is to increase school enrolment, attendance and retention – and eventually, a closure to the gender gap in primary schools (Ghana Government, 2006). The United Nations Hunger Task Force (UNHTF) was of the view that the SFP could increase school attendance, especially of girls (UN, 2005).

Currently, Ghana's educational system operates a 6-3-3-4 model. That is six years for Primary School, three years for Junior High School, three years for Senior High School and four years for University Bachelor's degree. Ghana's official language of instruction is English. Students are to be taught in the local languages for the first three years, and thereafter English becomes the medium. All textbooks are written in English, except text books for Ghanaian languages.

Conceptual Framework: Critical discourse analysis (CDA)

The study was driven by critical discourse analysis (CDA) which is a political research agenda that involves interrogating the function of language about the issues of power in the effort to unveil hidden assumptions and to understand what is not said. In essence CDA gives space to different voices and searches for alliances across differences (see Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999). In CDA, it is believed that discourse and language in everyday life are not neutral; embedded in discourse and languages are vested interests. They are used to construct truths about this world.

The role of language for meaning making is vital to CDA. Both linguistic structure of texts, words and oral language hold meanings. As Graham (2011) noted:

Language is the tool through which people communicate ideas, and successful communication between individuals and especially groups of individuals relies on the definition and specification that language allows. In the English language, we have many words that all sound the same: e.g. threw and through; and to, two and too. Placing these words differently can completely alter a sentence and the meaning of the exchange. Therefore, in written communication we depend on the spelling of these different words and the other words used alongside them to guide our understanding of what is being said. In oral communication we rely on context and our ability to comprehend. The more specific our language, the more accurate we can be in conveying and understanding meaning (p. 668).

Therefore the aim of CDA is to challenge commonsensical and taken-for-granted depiction of the social and biological world as natural (Fairclough, 1995) by analyzing texts to disrupt or expose other possible meanings. According to Luke (1995), critical discourse analysis is a political act in itself, an intervention in the apparently natural flow of talk and text in institutional life that attempts to 'interrupt' everyday common sense ... Such an analysis has the potential to destabilize 'authoritative discourses' ... and foreground relations of inequality, domination, and subordination (p.12).

The CDA stems from the post-structuralists' respect for uncertainty and multiplicity of knowledge and meaning. According to Humes & Bryce (2003, p. 180), poststructuralists argue that "...the search for clarity and simplicity of meaning is seen as illusory because there will always be other perspectives from which to interpret the material under review. To seek a definitive account is, thus, a misguided undertaking". They are driven to question what is seen to be natural or normal. "Their aim of poststructural analysis is not to establish a final 'truth' but to question the

intelligibility of truth/s we have come to take for granted". This is not to say that there is no truth. Their position is that truth is always subjective and subject to scrutiny (Graham, 2011, p. 666).

The role of discourse cannot be overemphasized. Discourse shapes the world, shapes language, shapes participants, and shapes possibilities for future discourse, future purposes and its medium, and vice-versa. Since the analyst decides what counts in discourse, implies that analysts are careful of what to omit or keep because a transcript, for example, does not capture all of the discourse. However, an omission of an aspect of discourse might have theoretical underpinnings or practical motivations especially because this study is grounded in critical theory with emphasis on the analysis of domination in our quest for positive change (see Johnstone, 2008). In critical discourse analysis, one questions what a word or statement is doing when said.

Discourse has dual purposes in the pursuit of knowledge. As Johnstone (2008) indicates that in relation to knowledge, discourse is a means and an end.

Critical discourse analysis:

allows a detailed investigation of the relationship of language to other social processes, and of how language *works* within power relations. CDA [critical discourse analysis] provides a framework for a *systematic* analysis- researchers can go beyond speculation and demonstrate how policy texts work (Taylor, 2004, p. 436).

As people make generalizations about discourse they engage and apply their prior knowledge from discourse in creating new discourse. This implies that the structure of discourse and its function needs to be examined in a variety of ways for meaning. This is by systematically asking several questions or performing different tests and breaking into

parts or functions – to understand connections and describe observations. Understanding that meaning is an inherently unstable construct negotiated by and through the “cultural politics of the sign”. Despite this, it is recognized that the reader has the ultimate authority over interpretation or meaning, not the author (Graham, 2011, p. 666).

In light of the CDA, we examined communication via newspapers on the issue of gender parity in education to understand the language practices and the intent of advocates, and what these suggest from a critical point of view to highlight other possible meanings. The communication frequencies, the language elements and the hidden assumptions and purposes of the communication provided in the newspapers are examined. Also, the coverage is assessed in terms of its rural and urban focus to decipher any inequalities and communicative justice in the two spaces.

Method and study object

The most popular newspaper in Ghana - *Daily Graphic* was the text analyzed. The newspaper is published daily from Monday to Saturday, inclusive. This particular newspaper was selected for this study for several reasons. First, the *Daily Graphic* is the oldest newspaper in Ghana. Second, it is perceived to be a credible source of information on development issues. Third, it is said to have the most readership than any other newspaper in Ghana. Fourth, unlike many privately owned newspapers with a political agenda as their paramount pre-occupation, the *Daily Graphic* is state-owned and attempts to produce a fair and expansive coverage on matters. Also, as it is owned by the state, it is likely to cover national and international matters, such as MDG 3.

Newspaper review was the main source of data for this analysis. Topics and articles that tackled efforts to close the gender gap in school participation, potential future

challenges that can ensue due to gender disparity in school participation, and any other issues on gender inequality in schools – from primary to tertiary levels were considered from September 2000 to December 2011. Our review started with papers from September 2000 papers because that was when the MDGs were ratified. The focus was on: the date of publication of the issue(s), where it was said, who said it (i.e., – female or male), the advocacy group, for example, NGO, politicians, and the educational level(s) addressed– primary, secondary and tertiary. The data collected were analyzed with the help of Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) version 16.0.

Limitations

Newspapers were unavailable for a few days for the timelines investigated. On the average, two papers were inaccessible in each of the months. However, we anticipated that this will not significantly affect the conclusions. This is because the newspapers generally contained considerable reporting on the subject matter within a span of one month. For example, on the average, the newspapers were available for review for 28 days every month. Thus, about 93% of the *Daily Graphic* for each month was reviewed.

Results

Coverage of gender inequality on various levels of education

Over the period investigated, writings on gender parity were predominant at the primary educational level. The coverage was determined by frequency of the subject matter being featured in the newspaper. There were generally 132 writings on gender inequality/ the need for gender parity. However, matters of gender inequality in primary education featured more than any other level of education. Articles that tackled primary education consisted of 33.3% (Table 1) of all the

gender and education related articles. Those that were devoted to gender issues at both primary and secondary levels amounted to 2.3%, whereas primary and tertiary was 0.8%. Those addressing all three levels (i.e., primary, secondary and tertiary) were 5.3% of all the subject writings in the newspaper. Thus, combining the frequencies of all articles by educational levels that authors addressed during the period investigated, primary education- focus was the most popular (42%) (Table 1), followed by secondary education and tertiary education, respectively. For about 36% of the gender-education-type issues presented, the educational levels targeted was not specified (Table 1). Table 1 is statistically significant at 0.00 level with chi-square value of 122.76.

Table 1
Coverage at various educational levels

Educational Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Primary	44	33.3
Secondary	21	15.9
Tertiary	8	6.1
Primary and Secondary	3	2.3
Primary and Tertiary	1	0.8
Primary, Secondary and Tertiary	7	5.3
Not stated	48	36.4
Total	132	100.0

Most of the publications on gender matters in education were not evenly spread over the period investigated. Their frequency has declined over the years and somehow responsive to proceeding national elections. The years 2004, 2005 and 2006 saw about 50% of all the coverage over the 12-year period (Table 2). Again, there were more

writings about primary education than others within this 3-year period. Categorizing the 12 year period under consideration into two periods where *period 1* is from 2000-2005 and *period 2* is from 2006-2011, it was observed that about 42% of all the 55 publications about primary education level was in the first period. The yearly averages of publications indicate that generally, 2006 onwards saw a decline in the publications and they started to pick during post-elections in 2009 and then sharply declined.

Table 2
Yearly coverage

Year	Frequency	Percentage (%)
2000	2	1.5
2001	5	3.8
2002	16	12.0
2003	4	3.0
2004	20	15.2
2005	21	16.0
2006	23	17.4
2007	5	3.8
2008	9	6.8
2009	18	13.6
2010	1	0.8
2011	8	6.1
Total	132	100

Advocates for gender equality in education

Politicians and representatives of NGOs were the main advocates of issues on gender inequality in primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education in the *Daily Graphic* (Table 3). Accordingly, while about 33% of the advocates were politicians, 32% worked with NGOs. Approximately 23% constituted education practitioners (e.g., lecturers and

teachers) and the remaining 12.9% were journalists, bankers, clergy, opinion leaders in communities, UN officials and student leaders (Table 3). Table 3 is statistically significant at 0.00 level with chi-square value of only 33.99. There were slightly more male advocates than female advocates - 45% males and about 39% females. The sexes of about 16% of the advocates were unidentifiable from the newspaper.

Table 3
The advocates

Advocates	Frequency	Percentage (%)
NGO	42	31.8
Politician	43	32.6
Education practitioners	30	22.7
Others	17	12.9

The information published in the *Daily Graphic* over the period investigated was in various formats and from various sources. This included information on the topic from interviews of key informants by the *Daily Graphic*, and comments and discussions at community gatherings, such as festivals, workshops/conferences and seminars. Another category was individuals who sent articles to the paper for publication. Discussions at workshops/conferences/seminars were a dominant (i.e., 39%) source. This was followed by community gatherings (24%), then individuals who sent in newspaper articles (23%) and the *Daily Graphic's* interviews with individuals (14%).

Speeches of political leaders, education practitioners and researchers on special occasions were also sources of discourse to the public on the subject. The speeches at the occasions often informed the public of government's achievements. These occasions included girl scholarship ceremonies, sod-turning for the construction of amenities for

girls, and ribbon cutting events to open infrastructural projects (e.g., girl hostels). The Minister of Local Government and Rural Development in a ceremony to award stipends to 500 girls from poor households to help to pay their school fees for four years indicated:

recent policy initiative by the government to resource the district assemblies with the introduction of Local Economic Development programmer with an objective of creating more jobs, supporting locals industries and facilitating intra and inter-district trade was on course.

Also, an education practitioner who is also Adansi South District Director of Education addressing a three-day workshop on girl-child education “ appealed to the parents to pay more attention to the education of their daughters by providing them with all their needs so that unscrupulous men would not lure them with money into sex”. A member of parliament who was handing over a newly constructed girls’ hostel to a senior high school assured Ghanaians “... that the government was working hard to restore hope in the country’s economy”. These and others similar comments were generally referenced in the newspaper.

Rural-urban coverage

The majority of the content on gender and education in the *Daily Graphic* over the review period was pertained to education in rural locales. Generally, the comments, articles and information from key informants pointed to rural educational matters and efforts to address the rural-urban gap in educational participation. While 58% of the publications had a rural focus, 17% was on urban education with 25% unspecified.

Discussion of Results

Disparities in the coverage at various educational levels

Gender inequality matters within primary education saw a dominant focus in terms of reporting among the three levels (i.e. primary, secondary and tertiary levels) of education in Ghana. In other words, primary education was the topic that the majority of individuals, advocates and governments focused their efforts to bring to the public's awareness the happenings, ideas and thoughts around its advancement. This disproportionate focus on primary education is not surprising given that the government did not fare well on its initial target to attain a GPI of 1 by 2009 (see Tagoe, 2011; Republic of Ghana, 2009). It appears that the series of public contributions to feature gender matters in primary education in the *Daily Graphic* was their attempt to challenge the government or hold them accountable for failing to deliver on their promise of achieving the gender parity target for at least primary education by 2005 (same target for secondary education) - thereby stirring considerable discourse on the issue especially at the primary education than at other levels.

Also, the high national mood for primary educational matters during this time could account for the interest of the news agency to publish relatively more stories on primary education. This observation is not limited to Ghana. Generally, it appears that governments of developing countries are somewhat more interested in closing the gender inequality gap within primary education than any other level – by increasing enrolment at the primary level, especially being traditionally the starting point for any progress on educational equality. For example, Lewin (2009) indicated that within the last decade, access gross enrolment rate in primary education in Africa, south of the Sahara has increased from 78% to 97%. Such a huge success is probably the result of greater emphasis on promoting enrolment in primary levels than other levels. Also, perhaps the State found the *Daily Graphic* an expedient avenue to communicate to the public their policy agenda and efforts on education.

Policy initiatives and effects on coverage about gender parity in education

The coverage of issues on gender inequality was higher for periods when new policy initiatives were introduced. The Capitation Grant (CG) for lessening levy burdens on parents/guardians since 2004 and the School Feeding Program (SFP) in 2005 meant to increase primary school enrolment and attendance (Kattan, 2006; Hausmann *et al.*, 2008), were publicized via the newspapers. Consequently, the *Daily Graphic* coverage in three successive years from 2004 to 2006 was considerably higher than any other year. For example, while 20, 21 and 23 issues were covered in 2004, 2005 and 2006, respectively; it was 16 and 18 in 2001 and 2009, respectively.

Differences in coverage between two periods: 2000-2005 and 2006-2011

There was minimal coverage on primary and secondary levels of education in the first period (2000-2005) than the second period (2006-2011). For example, the coverage on primary and secondary levels of education during the first period was 42% and 43%, respectively. It is quite absurd that emphasis was not on primary education (including secondary) in the first period of the MDG 3 (2001-2005) given that the MDG 3 anticipated closing the gender participation gap at both levels by 2005. Instead, the emphasis (particularly on primary education) picked up a year before expiration of the target and a couple of years after when the government's target to achieve gender parity in primary education participation by 2005 was missed. Although failure by 2005 could potentially discourage efforts on the target, it rather encouraged more advocacy by citizens and government initiatives (visible in their reporting) in striving to achieve some progress on the missed target.

Politics and gender inequality in schools

It is unclear if the political or pre-election environment influenced this sudden upsurge in activity and reporting on gender parity. Or could this be triggered by international assistance that Ghana may have received (for example, CG, SFP)? The coverage in 2003 was far less than the preceding (2002) and successive (2004) years. This disproportionate distribution could partially be attributable to pre-election campaigns where the State typically would put forward persuasive points, attempt to resurrect failed projects and targets (e.g. MDG 3), propaganda and other publications in the newspapers with the aim to influence voting behavior of citizens. Similarly, the *Daily Graphic* may have deliberately devoted to reporting on the foregoing issues and the issues of interest, of which the State's targets on education cannot be overemphasized. Also, the coverage was lower in 2007 than 2006 and 2008 possibly because of the reasons explained for 2003, and similarly for 2007 being another election year.

Low tertiary coverage

Generally, access to university education remains extremely imbalanced against females in ASS. The findings from the study of relatively low coverage on tertiary education when compared with other levels, validates the persistently poor attention to this level of education in the literature. In this study, only about 6% of the coverage was on tertiary education. Given that the ratio of females' enrolment to males' at the tertiary level is lower than other levels, it is logical to expect more discussion/coverage on gender inequality matters at the tertiary level than others. Hausmann *et al.* (2008) reported on global gender gap and urged that it must be a concern to all. Their studies showed that while females' to males' enrolment ratio in primary and secondary school in Ghana in 2008 was 0.97 and 0.91, respectively,

female to male ratio at the tertiary level was as low as 1:0.54 in disfavor of women.

Rural-urban gap

The literature maintains that gender inequality among urban schools is lower than in rural schools. Also, there is a biasness towards urban schooling in developing countries (Qian & Smyth, 2007; Akyeampong, 2009). This study has, however, demonstrated that rural education seemed to have received greater attention in the newspaper than urban schools. As high as 58% of the coverage was on rural and only 17% was on urban. One major reason for the frequent featuring of rural education matters is the new educational policies at the time. For example, the Capitation Grant and School Feeding Program that the government brought on to facilitate closing of the gender inequality gap that largely targeted rural areas (typically facing high needs due to poverty) were communicated via the *Daily Graphic* newspaper. This partially contributed to enormous coverage of rural issues than the urban.

Conclusion and Implications

The *Daily Graphic's* coverage over the 12-year period on issues relating to closing gender inequality gap at all levels of education has shown that more emphasis was put on primary level than other levels of education. The frequency of publications on the topic appears to be triggered not by accountability to citizens on the targets established. Rather the calculated interest and timing of publications from the State and general public suggests that election politics is a considerable force that steers action on government policies.

Supposing the frequency of publishing on this matter is a measure of efforts devoted towards the MDG 3, we can fairly conclude that the target, especially for primary and secondary education, was inadequately pursued until shortly

before and after its expiration. The silence on the part of the public and external development practitioners during this time when probably little occurred to advance gender parity in primary education suggests that external agencies working with Ghana on the MDGs (e.g., UN) and the state operate within similar management frameworks – a framework that lacks implementation and monitoring systems. The responsive nature of the rate of recurrence of educational matters in newspapers to election politics reveal little or no regard for project targets and timelines. Besides, the public seemed apathetic during this time. However, NGOs and education practitioners demonstrated a leadership by drawing attention to the issues and holding governments responsible. Poor participation of others (including the public) in bringing awareness to educational issues and progress is concerning.

A number of interventions are necessary to facilitate communication and its benefits in moving development agenda forward. More monitoring processes are pertinent for ensuring incremental progress on the MDG 3 rather than leaving it to the whims of national elections. Citizens' voice is critical to keeping the state focused on its promises. While citizens may be communicating with the governments and their counterparts through other mediums of communication (such as verbal exchanges on radios), their formal participation by providing articles for newspapers has the capacity to keep record of information and enable governments to follow up on this information. We urge newspapers agencies to actively solicit and encourage the public to submit articles that will continuously raise awareness of issues and progress on the education and gender parity agenda of MDG 3. .

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