

# INSTITUTIONALISING GENDER AND WOMEN'S STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST IN GHANA

**Akua Opokua Britwum**

*Institute of Development Studies, University of Cape Coast, Ghana*

**Georgina Yaa Oduro**

*Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Cape Coast, Ghana*

**Mansah Prah**

*Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Cape Coast, Ghana*

---

## Abstract

*The University of Cape Coast (UCC) is credited in Ghana for having the first female Vice-Chancellor, yet it experiences gender disparities. The establishment of a Centre for Gender Research, Advocacy and Documentation (CEGRAD) in 2013 provides the university a tool for addressing the disparities. Based on the results of our meta-analysis and interviews with key management players in the university, this paper discusses gaps in existing gender equity initiatives in the university, challenges associated with operationalising existing initiatives and strategies for promoting CEGRAD as an interdisciplinary focal point for providing a theoretical grounding for gender and women's studies at UCC. Available research findings are replete with cases of gender disparities resulting from internal and external factors. It is argued that engagement with the gender dynamics at play within the university environment is paramount for CEGRAD's success. The paper provides evidence to justify the establishment of CEGRAD and recommends strategies for making it operational in the university.*

---

**Keywords:** Ghana, Gender centre, Institutionalizing gender, Advocacy, Women's studies & Gender sensitization.

## Introduction

The discourse on feminist epistemologies brought up the arguments that knowledge creation has been male dominated, creating a 'malestream' (Harding: 1987, Smith: 1987, Stanley 1990); Pereira (2002) specifically critiqued the 'malestream' in African scholarship. Universities, though important sites for the generation of knowledge, not surprisingly, are gendered places. Mama writes that women have never been excluded from Africa's post- independence universities, a fact to be proud of, however one cannot take pride in the fact that universities have remained highly male dominated spaces, culturally and numerically (Mama: 2007; see also Tsikata: 2007). Gender inequalities abound in various aspects of life: in gender-blind governance policies, student, worker and faculty numbers, and institutional cultures that objectify women as sexual. African universities have responded to such challenges in a variety of ways, some have established gender equity units, others have attempted to mainstream gender in teaching and governance, and some have attempted to strengthen women's and gender studies.

The University of Ghana was the first public university to institutionalize gender studies in Ghana. It's Centre for Gender Studies and Advocacy (CEGENSA) was set up in 2006 to "initiate, advise, monitor, evaluate, organize and disseminate information on gender" (Adusah-Karikari, 2008: 131). Some public universities continue to work to establish similar centres on their campuses, while others have not yet begun the process.

This paper seeks to analyse the process towards institutionalising gender and women's studies at the University of Cape Coast (UCC). It has three sections: the introduction, which gives background information and the context, the second part which serves as a gender audit outlining female and male locations within UCC, and

the final section which examines attitudes and the expectations that key persons and members of the UCC academic community have for CEGRAD.

The need for UCC to establish an institutional structure with oversight responsibility for gender and women's rights within the academy received a boost in 2005 when vice-chancellors and their representatives at a World Bank Institute sponsored workshop resolved to set up gender centres. Later in 2006, a follow up workshop affirmed the previous year's decisions and commissioned a curriculum for a foundation course in gender and development. UCC was represented at these two workshops by key officers, the Pro-Vice Chancellors, the Registrar and personnel responsible for data processing. In 2008, UCC appointed its first coordinator for a gender centre and tasked her to set up modalities for running a foundation course on gender and development for undergraduate students.

The absence of an institutional structure with a physical location for coordinating the course posed several challenges and on the insistence of the coordinator the then Vice-Chancellor set up a committee in 2009 to submit proposals on the structure, mandate and activities of a gender centre. The report submitted in 2010 was never tabled for discussion at any of UCC's decision making forums. Rather the foundation course which had run successfully for one year covering 3,404 level 200 students was scrapped in 2011. A new Vice-Chancellor who assumed office in 2012 decided to pursue the matter of establishing a gender centre. On his request a revised version of the earlier proposal was submitted through the Faculty of Social Sciences and received the approval of the Academic Board in 2013. The outcome was the establishment of the Centre for Gender Research, Advocacy and Documentation (CEGRAD) whose substantive head assumed office from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2013. CEGRAD among other things is expected to operate as an interdisciplinary focal point providing a theoretical grounding with a political edge for Gender and Women's Studies at UCC.

Efforts to deal with gender disparities at the University of Cape Coast (UCC) were till 2013 guided by unwritten norms and conventions. Visible gender equity interventions remained differential entry points favouring females seeking admission into undergraduate programmes and a sexual harassment policy. In terms of curriculum the Department of Sociology and Anthropology as well as the Institute for Development Studies were the only academic institutions that had on offer to students gender related courses. These courses remain as electives and are undersubscribed. Earlier studies exploring its gender environment documented attitudes that claimed that UCC was a gender neutral institution and blamed existing gender disparities on factors external to UCC as well as the attitudes and behaviours of female members of the university community.<sup>1</sup> Others maintained that gender issues should remain the domain of women.

It is obvious from developments so far that there is some level of awareness at the highest level of decision making on the relevance of a gender centre. What is not clear however is how far this enthusiasm is shared at other levels of operations within UCC decision making structures and the expectations held for such a centre. Thus the official backing to its establishment notwithstanding, the reception of various constituencies at

---

<sup>1</sup> See for example Britwum (2002) on the gender profile of UCC as well as Prah (2002) exploring the gendered environment in which women academics and administrators operated on the UCC campus.

UCC remains uncertain. Barnes (2007, p. 20) made the point that 'given the fact the majority of administrators and managers in African universities are male it is important to understand their perspectives on gender and institutional development. This observation remains deeply relevant for UCC. For CEGRAD to function effectively it is essential to outline the dynamics at play within the university environment and map out a corresponding response strategy

We build on studies conducted in 2002, 2004 and 2012 by exploring the attitudes of key personnel who set the framework for the Gender Centre at the UCC. Other sources of information are statistics on students and staff as captured in the 2012 Basic Statistics that accompanied the VC's annual report to the 44<sup>th</sup> Congregation at UCC (UCC, 2012). This paper notes that the multifaceted efforts at institutionalising gender equality and women's rights at UCC will have to continuously engage structures that challenge the legitimacy and relevance of CEGRAD as an academic institution. CEGRAD is also set to confront a system that believes that the success of the centre relies more on the ingenuity of its founding personnel and less on the facilities provided at its inception by the academic leadership eager to live up its political responsibility to such a centre.

Several studies have drawn attention to the gendered nature of universities in general (Acker: 1994, Arnot and Fennell: 2008, Reay 2004). Others have singled out for deeper interrogation African universities in general and in particular Ghanaian ones as well (Adomako-Ampofo: 2002; Britwum: 2002; Pereira: 2007; Britwum, 2005; Manuh, Gariba, and Budu: 2007). While relying on numbers to tell the story (Britwum: 2002) (Britwum: 2005), studies such as Tsikata (Tsikata: 2007), Adomako-Ampofo (2002), Mama, (2003) Gaidzanwa (2007) and Pereira (2007) have turned their attention to internal cultures as well as institutional structures. Others have explored how gendered the situations are within the university environment for senior female personnel, academic and non-academics (Endeley and Ngaling: 2007; Prah: 2002). They have noted that far from being neutral, universities in Africa as social institutions perpetuate the gender asymmetries represented in society (Diaw: 2007; Shackleton: 2007).

In their examination of institutional cultures and the career trajectories of women faculty Odejide (2007), Prah (2002) as well as Tsikata (2007) noted differences in the experiences of respondents indicating the existence of a gender climate capable of slowing down women's academic progression. For Diaw, (2007: 7) the general claim universities make about their academic neutrality, is only but 'a façade for the inequality that determines gender relations'. Mama (2003) shows how African universities at independence took up the general struggle for setting a distinctive African identity to provide answers to critical questions of nation building. This mission was however short lived, exterminated by structural adjustment policies long before it had time to materialise. The nationalising mission just like the commodification of tertiary education which followed in its wake, were all deeply patriarchal, all entrenching African universities as sites of struggle over gender.

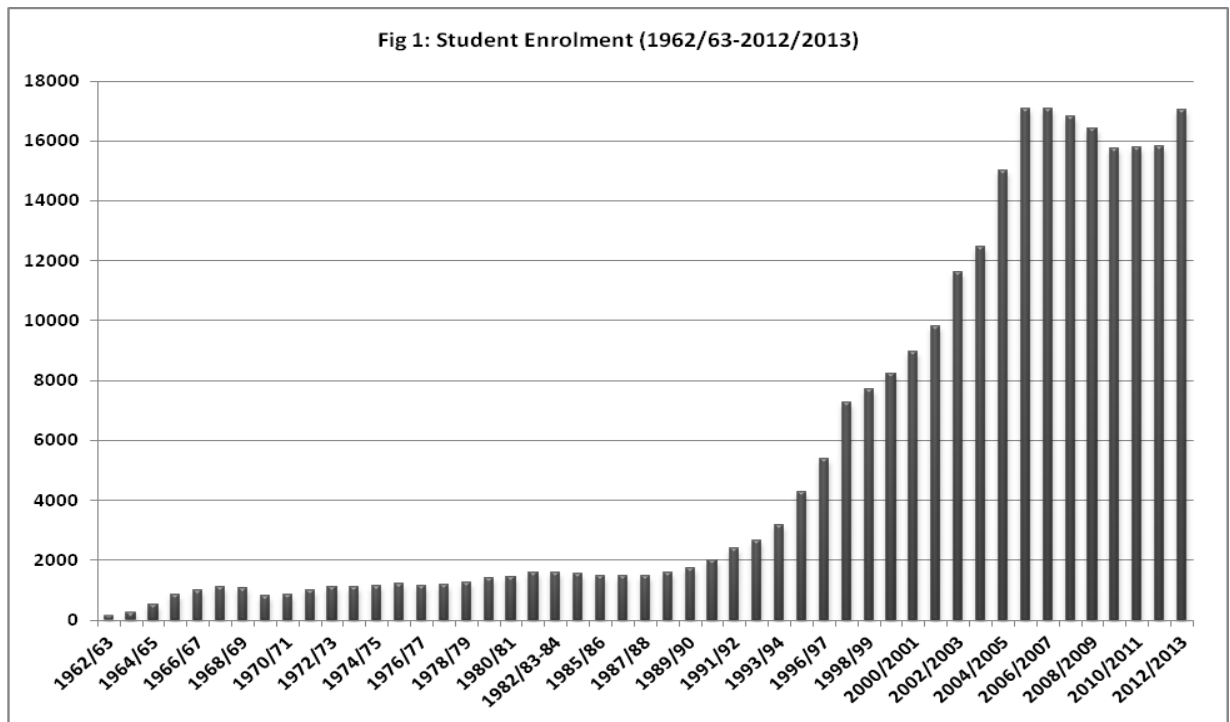
There have been various attempts by different universities in Africa and elsewhere to deal with the near absences of women within their structures. These efforts spurred by two currents, first female activism on campus as well as institutional responses to foreign donors, have had varying fortunes. In a second of a two

volume feature of the journal *Feminist Africa*, devoted to exploring the state of gender and women studies in African universities, Barnes and Mama note 'the range of contradictory and ambivalent responses in dealing with feminist activism' presented in the contributing articles (Barnes and Mama, 2007: 1). Feminist activists usually carry the burden of success for university based gender studies centres (Mulugeta: 2007). A process identified as an invitation for 'dedicated' female academics to 'increase' their 'own exploitation' (*ibid*). Their efforts have been directed first at the knowledge production enterprise of university seeking to engender curriculum or to engage gender and women studies. Other areas of work are around sexual harassment, supporting women in the challenges that work and study in the academy imposes as well as their working conditions within university structures.

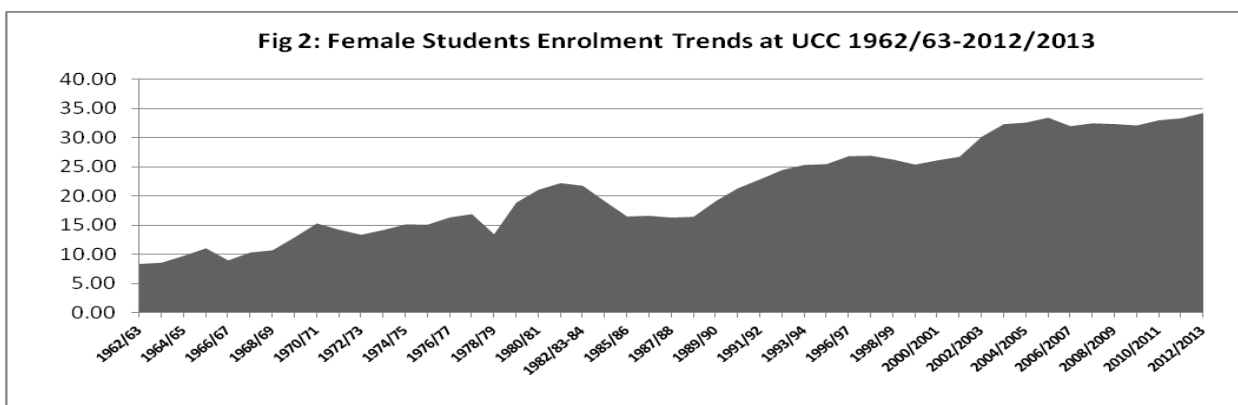
As we explore the expectations and attitudes of key UCC personnel to the CEGRAD we note that existing literature has usually pointed to contradictory and ambivalent responses to resisting feminist activism on some campuses in Africa. These mixed responses however have in some instances allowed centres devoted to women and gender studies to be established in ways that muted their effectiveness (Diaw: 2007; Shackleton: 2007). For Shackleton (2007) the problem arises from the low institutional priority accorded gender in universities. Such low prioritisation arises out of ignorance about gender issues, an absence 'of serious engagement with the realities of gendered power relations or theorisation around gender in the workplace' (Shackleton, 2007: 36). These attitudes which underscore institutional cultures in the university she was studying result in a persistent institutional reaction that tend to neutralise attempts to confront 'specific gender challenges' (*ibid*, 36). Findings such as these tend to confirm that in spite of official approval, gender centres have to continuously engage institutional cultures expressed in personal attitudes and actions of key persons within the university administration in order to avoid marginalisation or outright rejection. Such observations provide useful warning signposts that inform the conceptualisation of CEGRAD at UCC. We now provide an overview of the gender profile of UCC over the years.

### **The Gender Profile of UCC**

UCC, like all institutions of higher education everywhere as observed by Mama (2003) has no formal practices that bar women entry. This seeming 'equality of access' still leave UCC in conformity with like institutions everywhere 'highly male dominated in space and culture' (Mama, 2003). Thus student enrolment at UCC has seen an astronomical increase in the last two decades. It took UCC nearly 30 years to reach an enrolment level of 2,000 students (1962 to 1991). Enrolment passed the 10,000 mark in 11 years. Its 2012/2013 enrolment stands at 17,034 (Fig. 1). The rate of increase in female proportion though has not been as rapid. From a paltry 8% of the first batch of the 155 students who enrolled in the 1962/63 academic year female enrolment five decades later stands at 5,820, 34% of the total student population of 17,034.



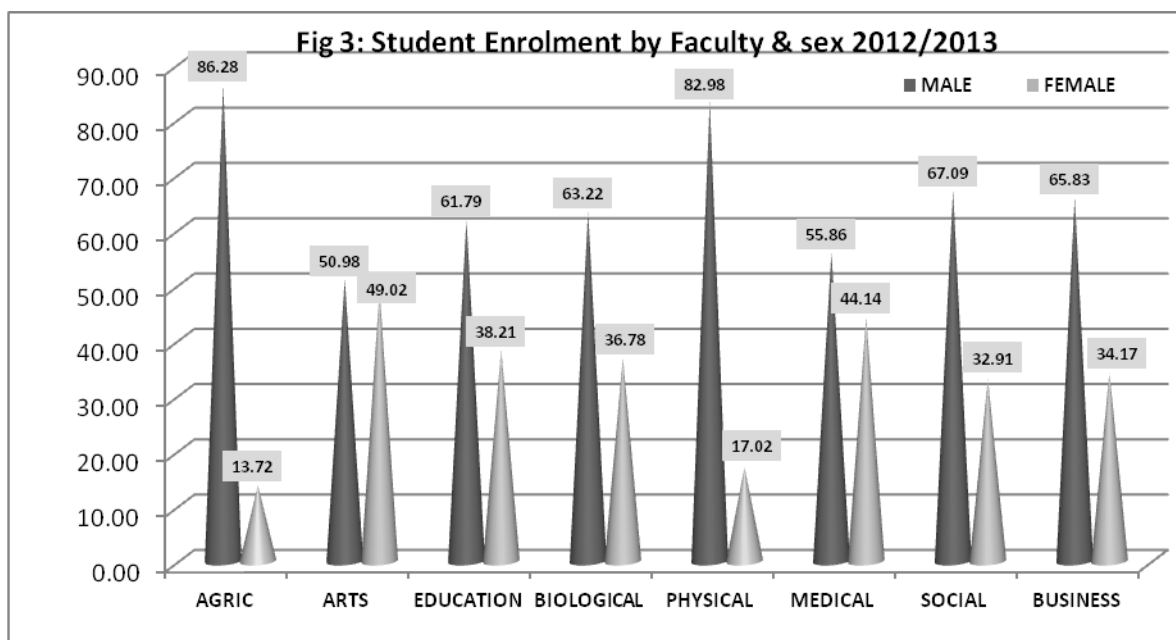
Female enrolment reached 30% in 2002/2003, but took 10 years to pass the critical threshold of 33.3% (Fig 2). The rate of increase has been unsteady (See Fig. 2). This wavering pace of increase raises questions about the effectiveness of the affirmative action practice that grants admission to females with 2 points lower than males. It was introduced about two decades ago to shore up female student enrolment level. It is important to note that it remains a norm and never a written policy. In some faculties it has been abandoned altogether.<sup>2</sup>



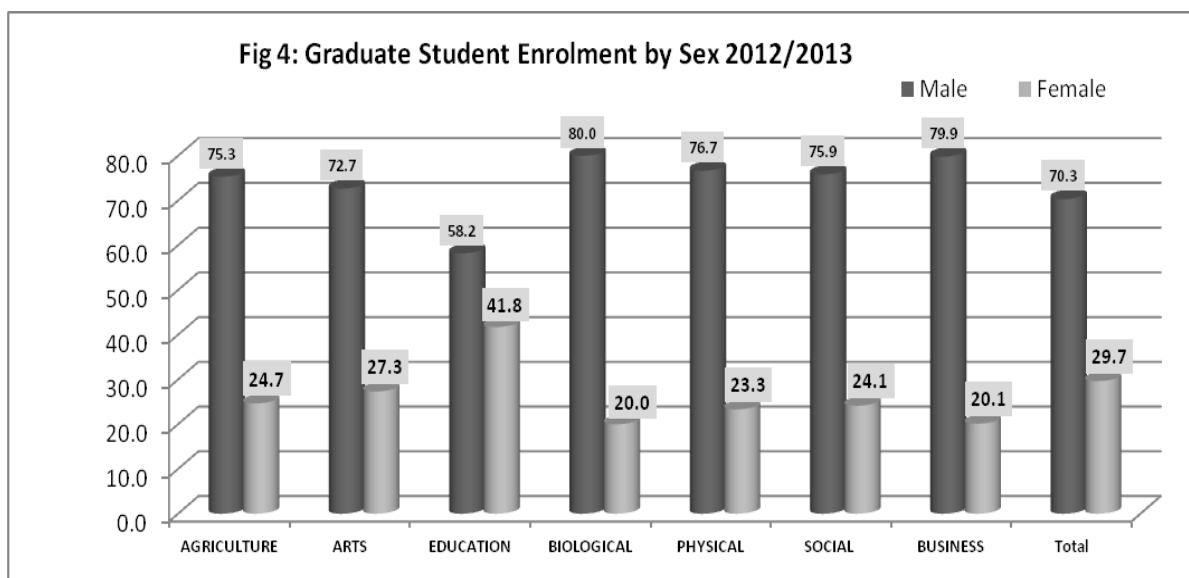
Female enrolment in various disciplines also conforms to known sex stereotyping (Fig. 3). Whereas female to male enrolment in 2012/2013 is about to reach parity in the Faculty of Arts (49%), in the natural

<sup>2</sup> The Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, during the interview session, explained that the volume of applications seeking admission to the Faculty of Social Sciences renders the practice of reducing admission cut offs for females impractical to implement.

sciences it tends to be lower with the physical sciences (17%) even lower than biological sciences (37%). At the undergraduate level the proportion of female students enrolled at the Faculty of Education is higher than that at the School of Agriculture (Fig. 3). Some surprises however are enrolment at the School of Agriculture which has the lowest female proportion of 14%. The Medical School a recent addition at UCC however appears to have started well, females constitute 44% of enrolment in 2012 (Fig. 3). This programme however happens to be fully fee paying. Students in this instance are not benefiting from state subvention on offer in public universities in Ghana.



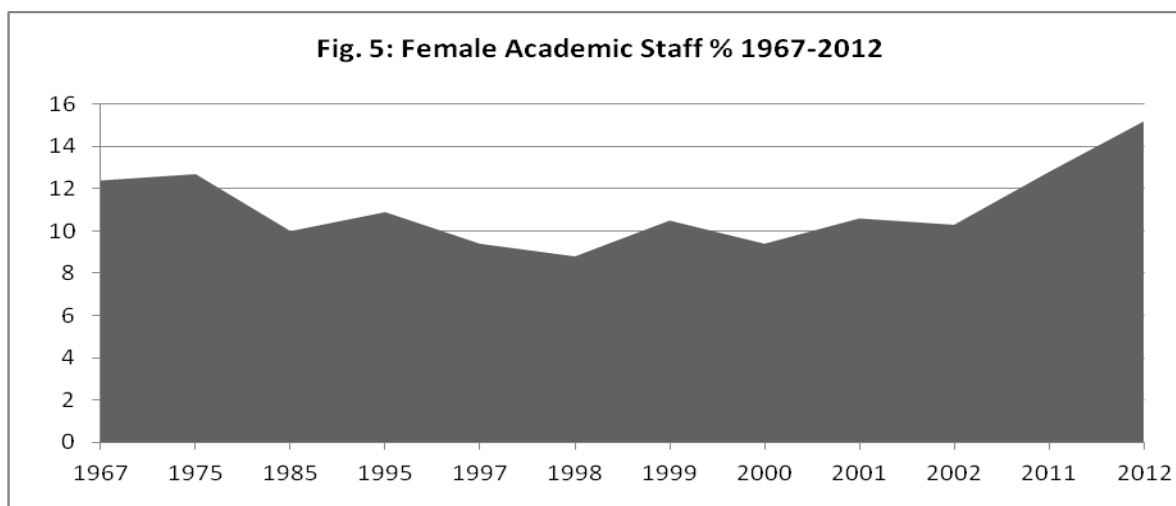
Female graduate enrolment at UCC shows a different trend altogether. The Faculty of Education has the highest proportion while the School of Biological Sciences has the lowest (Fig. 4). The Arts Faculty's female graduate enrolment proportion which stands at a little over 27% is far lower than its undergraduate enrolment. This situation raises questions about why females who pursue Arts at the undergraduate level are not turning up for graduate studies in the same numbers. Higher undergraduate enrolment does not guarantee that females will progress to higher levels of academic pursuits.



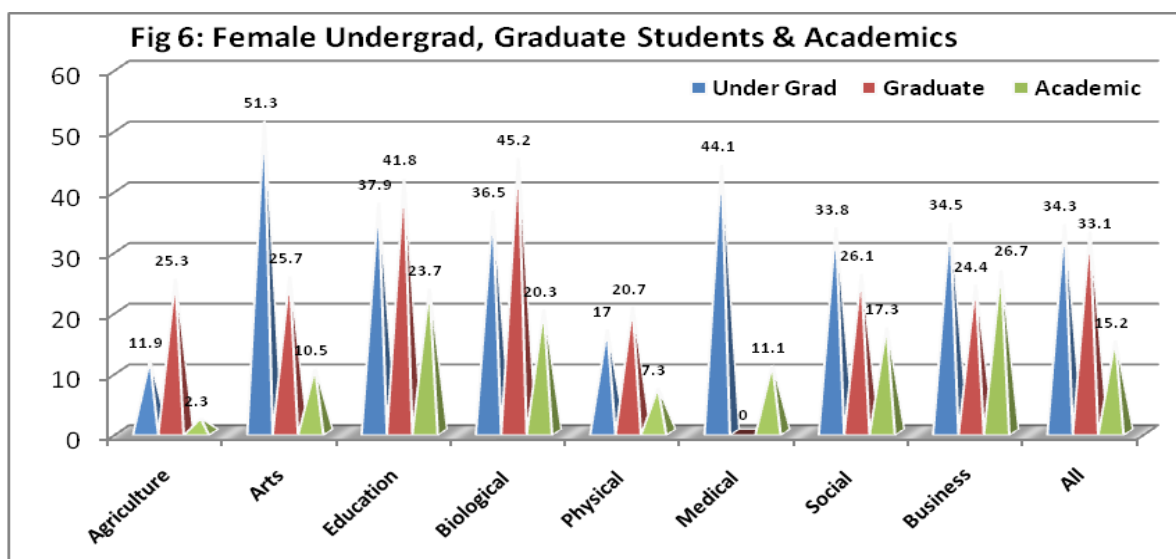
Graduate studies serve as recruitment grounds into academia and if women are not enrolled in large numbers there will be still fewer seeking academic positions at UCC. Statistics examined so far show that UCC is far from achieving gender parity in enrolment. We now examine the employment profile of UCC to see what trends emerge in terms of female/male participation.

### Employment Profile

UCC prides itself as an equal opportunity institution that 'seeks alternative ways to respond to changing needs'. This mission statement further seeks to offer an environment that motivates faculty and administrative staff 'to respond effectively to the development needs of a changing world'. Again the corporate strategic plan of UCC released in 2013 has its 10th strategic thrust devoted to creating 'a conducive working environment which recognises equal opportunities for faculties, staff and students' (UCC Corporate Strategic Plan, 2012). All key persons interviewed reiterated this fact and were at pains to show that employment is based on merit informed by standards applied everywhere for recruitment into universities. If UCC is to retain its position as a centre of excellence, such standards they explain should not be compromised. Few admit to the fact that the university environment could be gendered, posing constraints to women's career progression generally and even more so within the academic profession.



Our examination of the statistics confirms that female academics are in the minority. This proportion is by far lower than for student enrolment. The proportion of female academics has increased over the years rising in ten years from 10% in 2002 to 15% in 2012 (see Fig..5).



Increasing enrolment by females in undergraduate and graduate studies is important only to the extent that studying at these levels form recruitment grounds into academia. We compared the statistics to determine whether or not there is the scissors effect, a situation where the rate of attrition is higher for females than males to prevent the gains made at a lower level of the educational ladder translating into gains at the next level (Fig. 6). Thus it is the expectation that as increases in undergraduate enrolment are attained the proportions at the graduate level will in turn increase and impact on the numbers seeking to join the university as academics in the various disciplines. Fig. 5 reveal the scissors effect is at play in some disciplines. The proportion of females failing to make it to the next level tends to be bigger in some disciplines than others for example the School of Agriculture, Education and the Biological Sciences are faring well and delivering higher proportions of female enrolment than they did at the undergraduate level. The head start gained in the stereotyped female disciplines in the Arts Faculty, is lost at higher degrees in graduate studies (Fig. 6). The proportion of female to male



students enrolled in graduate studies is higher in Agriculture despite the low undergraduate proportion. Yet very few women are joining the School of Agriculture as academics. In fact the situation is same for all but the School of Business. The School of Medical Sciences is yet to commence a graduate programme and we wait to see what high female proportion at the lower levels will translate into at the higher levels in future.

Decision making at UCC is gendered with men as usual dominating in all decision making spaces. As noted in an earlier report (Britwum, 2002) the university system is governed through committees and boards and their membership set in the statutes of the university. Out of a total of 68 committees and boards through which the university is administered only 3 have female proportion beyond the critical 33.3% mark. The committee with the highest, (57%) is the sexual harassment committee, the second the Ad Hoc Committee has 44% and the third, the Joint Admissions Board has 33%. Ten have no female at all and 17 have proportions below 10%. The highest decision making organ the University Council has a female proportion of a little over 5%. All principal officers, the Vice-Chancellor, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, the Registrar are all men. The immediate past Vice-Chancellor was a woman who served a four-year term before her retirement in 2012. Her appointment marked the only time a woman has held this position in Ghana. Thus the gender profile of UCC conforms to known situations everywhere. Women operate as a minority in all spaces. Though they are beginning to make inroads more as students and junior staff higher levels of university academic engagement as decision making for the moment remain male. We turn to explore what attitudes feed the institutional environment of UCC and what the corresponding expectations such attitudes present for structuring of CEGRAD in this male dominated space of UCC.

### **Establishing CEGRAD**

In this section we report our findings from interviews with key personnel of UCC. These findings are presented around concerns that gender centres elsewhere have had to contend with. Here we are interested in official reasons for establishing CEGRAD and what principal officers at UCC envision as its role and functions. The perspectives covered are those taken from the Vice-Chancellor, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, the Deans of the Faculties of Social Sciences (FSS) and Arts, the Registrar and one of the deputies in charge of Human Resource at UCC. The interviews were conducted in August 2013. All but one of the key personnel the Dean of Arts was female.

Responses from key person interviews identified a concurrence of factors as facilitating the establishment of CEGRAD at UCC. The first is derived from the vision and mission of UCC. Most key personnel recognised that the CEGRAD's goals falls in line with the overall policy and mission statement of UCC; the fact we stated earlier about UCC deriving pride as an equal opportunities institution was reiterated by the key persons interviewed. More interesting however was the appropriation of this mission statement by the current Vice-Chancellor. The current VC is noted to have made a personal commitment to the appointing authority to address gender issues at UCC. This is a fact that came up strongly in the interviews and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor as well as the Dean of FSS corroborated it. The VC notes '*it was one of my missions and immediate projects*'. For the

Pro-VC *'The establishment of the centre falls within the vision of the present VC and we want to work towards the achievement of this vision. The Dean of FSS adds that: "The VC had the establishment of the Gender Centre and promoting gender studies as part of his vision and mission for the University. In actualizing it, he sought for the proposal from the Faculty. So the centre has become a Faculty issue and not an individual thing".'*

Key persons give credence to what others have done in the past to enable the current VC realise his vision and mission. They pointed out several initiatives by the central administration as well as individuals particularly female senior academics to prepare the grounds. The Deputy Registrar believes that the long wait was ... *because there were not people who thought of the gender problems in the university community or they did not see it as a problem but when people like ... came with advocacy the awareness was kindled.* In addition to efforts by individuals to prepare the ground, the realisation by large sections of the UCC community that such a centre was needed to serve a need was an important factor. A need UCC had to fill otherwise *'it is not complete if it does not have a gender centre'* (Pro-VC). There is the strong belief that implications of existing social gender relations pose serious challenge to efforts at developing communities in Africa. The need for a university based institution to deal with gender issues is therefore appropriate.

*I think Gender studies is important to our discourse in view of all the things we have been hearing about men and women issues in the newspapers on daily basis. Also the cultural issues in the country demand gender response. .... We cannot afford to leave one half of the sexes behind disadvantaged, illiterate, sick and uneducated. Gender studies have become a central policy discussion (Dean, FSS).*

Timing then was an essential ingredient in the story of the emergence of CEGRAD at UCC. According to the Pro Vice-Chancellor the emergence of the CEGRAD is *'a question of the university being ready now. ... indeed ... a culmination of what others have done in the past'*. Commitment for setting up the centre has been embraced at the highest level of decision making and according to the Registrar *'Council will be demanding reports on how far the centre is achieving its goals and objectives and how management has assisted in making sure the centre becomes a reality.'*

CEGRAD therefore is recognised as an amalgamation of efforts and a culmination of events at a particular point in the history of UCC. The events outlined connect local needs to national and even international demands. Thus not only is it politically 'correct' to have such a centre; UCC sees itself as responding to a need for such an establishment This belief tends to shore up its credibility and standing as an academic institution giving this all- male leadership some sense of responsibility to ensure its successful establishment. The extent this sense of responsibility extends will be further explored in their expectations for CEGRAD which we discuss in the next section below.

### **Expectations**

We explored the expectations of key management because of our position that expectations reflect personal convictions, ideals or actions about how things should be done. The expectations should provide a framework for action and assist CEGRAD design programmes and activities to deal with these anticipations. The expectations for CEGRAD as outlined in the various interview sessions with key personnel of UCC are derived from notions of

the kinds of activities or operations CEGRAD should focus on, a system that should structure its operations within the institutional framework of UCC, or channels of communication system for pursuing its functions and mandate. In general, key persons interviewed expect the Centre to live up to functions as outlined in its name. Highlighting its name they insist the centre should set out to educate, inform and conduct gender related research. There was repeated caution about keeping CEGRAD focused on research and advocacy or gender sensitisation and not to mounting and teaching courses.

One key concern was the need for CEGRAD to promote gender sensitivity among students and staff and in addition promote gender rights, the centre should concentrate on *'research and provide advocacy based knowledge for both staff and students'* (Dean, FA). There was the perception that gender sensitivity on the campus is low and therefore senior members especially should be educated. CEGRAD was seen as an opportunity for UCC researchers as well the members of its surrounding communities irrespective of their sexes to be gender sensitive in their outlook and understand the importance of incorporating a gendered analysis in their teaching and research. For the academic community the expectation was expressed that CEGRAD will work at making the faculty gender aware. Such an exercise was important for removing the erroneous impression that *...gender was about women*. CEGRAD is also expected to seriously get involved in education on gender issues by impacting on the university community in general as argued here, *'the lives of members of the university should be touched by the centre; their marriages, child upbringing etc'* (Pro VC). Beyond creating the required level of gender awareness was the expectation that CEGRAD would provide a *'platform for discourse and discussion [that] lecturers would make use of'* (Dean, FSS).

The general expectation therefore was for CEGRAD to create a heightened awareness of gender on the UCC campus and in addition bring to the fore gender issues that beset the university. Here again the Dean, FSS was certain that CEGRAD will *'be having workshops and seminars that will help promote and project gender issues'*. An important community that was identified for gender sensitisation was the student body and in particular female students *'I also wish you have plans and structured programme of reaching out to the students on their rights and responsibilities as female students'* (Dean, FSS). Another expectation was that CEGRAD would address gender issues of UCC. For the Dean of Arts, CEGRAD

*"...should also have tailor made programmes for various faculties and departments to be able to meet their needs. ... you cannot carry out the same programmes for the physical sciences which are made up of a lot of males in a different department full of females. You can also liaise with Faculty Boards to know of the specific needs of the various faculties. There should also be constant appraisal of programmes at the centre, awareness raising and dissemination of information".*

The operations of CEGRAD it was clear to key persons will not be limited to UCC alone but communities in its immediate environs as well as the nation. Thus education on gender for staff and students it was expected *'should affect all our relations even within our homes'* (Pro-VC). All key persons covered believe that CEGRAD was set up to address gender issues at UCC and ensure that members of the UCC community

were sufficiently gender sensitive. Sexual harassment in particular, was an obvious concern; *'The Centre should take up the challenges faced by the sexual harassment committee'* (Pro-VC). Thus CEGRAD is expected to team up with the Counselling Centre in the promotion of gender sensitisation and sexual harassment issues.

During the interview sessions key persons were at pains to underscore the need that *'the centre should be adept and carry out research that provide solutions to the problems of the university community; so the university community will be happy with it'* (Pro VC). The VC expects that CEGRAD, will serve as research unit for all of us to engage in based gender research so that we can understand better the concept of gender and advocacy so that we can hammer home this concept of gender parity, gender equity and the equal opportunity. But the research should also shore up the image of UCC and perhaps the nation as whole *'We want the centre to do research that will promote the image of the university internationally'* (Dean of Arts).

It was also the expectation that the CEGRAD will go further to provide guidance for research. Thus for the Pro VC, *'research ethics should be key to the centre, our recent efforts to fashion out research ethics brought up some gender issues and some clauses called for consideration of gender relations. Undertake research, and work on affirmative action policies like the existing one on admission. The expectation is that the CEGRAD's research will inform policies as well as teaching at UCC. In justifying his expectation that CEGRAD should focus on research the Dean FSS explained that 'Gender studies has become a central policy discussion. So we need to focus on research, documentation and inform the University community and the society about gender issues.*

Some expect that the centre will cater for the welfare of women and children and others add *'even men'*. There were in addition those who envisaged that CEGRAD will take up women's maternity concerns in the workplace, but more importantly serve as a mouth piece for women workers at UCC, in particular female junior staff. Others expect that CEGRAD will see to the enactment of a gender policy for UCC. The expectations of key persons tend to be directed at changing attitudes and ensuring a gender sensitive UCC environment. These expectations hold prospects for CEGRAD suggesting that the various sections of the UCC community will be disposed to gender sensitization programmes and support policy alterations to promote gender equality and women's rights in academia. But questions still remain about the extent to which key persons are ready to provide all the investments to ensure that CEGRAD succeeds in changing patriarchal attitudes at UCC. We turn to examine some contestations and their implications for CEGRAD's ability to change attitudes at UCC.

### **Contestations: giving meaning to commitments**

Areas of contestation emerging centered on what should be an appropriate focus of CEGRAD, is how to overcome its funding problems and who has final responsibility for its success. One area of contestation however is whether the centre should focus on women to the neglect of men or both. Most insisted on the need to give attention to female members of UCC community and beyond *'We should emphasize women because we believe that they are the most disadvantaged ...Should empower women (students) [and] ...educate community so women will feel emboldened and feel less intimidated'* (Pro-VC). This position was in several instances tagged with a caution because they will insist *'gender cuts across whether man or woman'* (Deputy Registrar, HR). The

VC insists that the *centre is not about women alone* and it should *'cater for the welfare of women and children and even men'*. But beyond contesting whether CEGRAD should focus on women or men is its political orientation. Here the traditional fear of the 'f' word emerged. And in the words of the VC *'people erroneously equate gender issues with feminism, but gender issues should cover a broader perspective.'* Its focus was expected to be a challenge and here the Pro-VC cautioned *'expect resistance from colleagues, the fear that too much attention will be paid to women'*. Clearly then the political orientation of the CEGRAD is bound to be a site of constant contestation whether women come prime concern and the use of the word feminism. Feminism however is the grounds on which we intend to frame interventions and measure the intended transformatory impact.

But perhaps funding CEGRAD promised to be a site of major contestation. All key persons interviewed admitted that funding CEGRAD will be a major challenge. Like all African universities UCC has to contend with dwindling finances from the national purse. Coupled with constant reduction in state subvention is the irregularity with which funds are released to public universities in Ghana. Several universities in search for solutions now mount fee paying courses in response they say, to the direct needs of industry. Zeleza (2003) over a decade ago noted the development of new epistemological and organisational forms of university education largely driven by the commodification of African universities. They are he notes predicated on interdisciplinary partnerships and collaborative ventures beyond the traditional government relations. These non-academic players like industry, NGOs and foundations now assume important places, shaping the production of knowledge in African universities. The result is what he terms the corporatisation of university management, where universities are increasingly managed through of business models. Strategic plans are the hallmark of these forms of university administration. Education, in particular at university turns from its immediate post independence era objective as a social or public good available to all nationals to an economic investment that those with the necessary incomes can access. The process of marketisation or commodification renders university education and research as endeavours whose returns are calculated according to market and proprietary principles (Zeleza, 2003). The popular amongst the methods employed to commodify university education, are programmes that admit self-sponsored students either in special targeted courses or the regular programmes.

The VC and the Pro-VC admit that it is UCC's responsibility to provide funding for CEGRAD. *'You are starting from ground zero with nothing at all. We need to provide a starting capital for the day to day running of the centre'*, (VC). The Pro-VC contends that *'Like any other centre, the university should have a budget and make sure that money is available for its work'* (Pro-VC). Despite these stated convictions UCC failed to provide a dedicated budget line to CEGRAD in 2013, the inception year. The VC therefore promises *'a proper budget for 2014'* which *'will be a composite part of the university's budget'*. But the specific allocation of this budget is yet to be determined. Student's subscriptions called the academic facility user fee (AFUF) constitute a major source of funding for teaching departments at UCC. This source will be available to CEGRAD on condition that it is a teaching department. Most key persons interviewed warned CEGRAD off teaching. The Dean (FSS), for example did not want the *'centre to... design courses... it should not be bogged down by teaching'*. Alternative funding

solutions were charging a small percentage of AFUF from all departments to CEGRAD or introducing a levy on students' fees. In a significant number of instances there were suggestions that CEGRAD raises its own funds from mounting short courses and writing proposals to source funding from external sources and offer consultancy services. The Pro-VC was expecting that *'the centre might become a consultancy centre to advice members on the gender issues in research'*. The challenge presented is a source and quantum that will make CEGRAD sufficiently independent to determine its own programme of activities in ways that will allow it to respond to the perceived needs of the UCC community as they expect.

### **Building on prospects: the price of existing support**

There was no doubt about the groundswell of support for CEGRAD from these key persons. Not a single key person was in doubt about the utility of CEGRAD to UCC as an institution and the benefits it stood to gain from the presence of such a centre. They all also recognised the need for UCC to provide all the support required to ensure that it operates as a centre of excellence. The Pro-VC best expressed the wish of management when he noted that:

*No doubt it will be a centre of excellence and I have every confidence that the leadership entrusted to set it up has the capacity to do so; I know that the VC and I are very interested in ensuring that it will be successful. What is expertise without support? We will provide all the necessary support to ensure that it grows (Pro-VC).* The support however was not available to take it must be earned by the head and staff that will be assigned to assist the present head. All respondents pointed to the fact that although the centre has a great future, the responsibility to realise this future rests on the head. Below are the responses to this effect. *'I envisage a centre that will be growing in the next two years but this depends on the commitment of those who lead the centre. I think they would have to do a lot of advocacy and with innovation. I expect them to make it. The centre is going to be a big one, if well established (Registrar).* The Dean of the Faculty of Arts shared this feeling when she made the point that, if CEGRAD is;

*"... able to get adequate personnel and undertake research, advocacy and training then the centre will be one of the best in the country. I know this because if UCC puts itself to something they do it very well and everyone in the next 5years will want to come to UCC to find out how to set up their centre". (Dean FA)*

So the modalities for realising this bright future *'will depend on the centre. As it is established it is up to you to make sure it survives. So the centre should work hard and be proactive to make sure it works'*. (Deputy Registrar Personnel).

Such attitudes we have noted very early in this paper have been characterised by Mulugeta (2007) as inviting female academic activists to validate their self exploitation. The absence of resources to run the centre at its inception stage for example cannot be enough cause to delay work and it becomes the responsibility of the founding head to identify where the resources are located and make use of them. How this is done and what

demands it imposes on her time as an academic becomes a secondary matter. There is good will and she must find it.

## Conclusion

Prospects abound for institutionalising the gender and women's centre at UCC, suggesting the grounds for structuring CEGRAD seem fertile. The combination of factors outlined so far appear to lay claim some element of a bottom up involvement. This is evidenced through the recognition that efforts of female academics working to inject the gender aware discourse into the policy framework of UCC have contributed some measure to the birth of CEGRAD. But the CEGRAD's emergence at this moment in the history of UCC remains a top down initiative of the upper echelons of the UCC decision making hierarchy. The institutional commitments transcend visible personalities such as the VC and his Pro-VC to the UCC Council. These commitments are documented in the vision and mission of the university which then legitimise CEGRAD. The supporting beliefs that should push commitments into concrete actions are circumscribed by attitudes that shift the responsibility resourcing CEGRAD to its head.

The other area of possible contestation that might serve to hamper the institutionalisation of CEGRAD is funding to support its work. In terms of expectations key persons stress the need for research and advocacy directed at serving the gender needs of UCC and the nation as whole. All agreed on the usefulness of CEGRAD to UCC and admit that it should focus on transforming attitudes and promote the rights of women through research and advocacy to inform policy and engender curricula, the suggestion to teach on the other hand is motivated by the need to raise funds for CEGRAD's work. The contestation around funding holds itself as an interesting site that require careful strategising in order to avoid a possible distraction from the real needs of tackling the myriad of gender issues that women at UCC in particular face as students, workers and academics.

## References

- Adomako-Ampofo, A. (2002). Introduction: "Teaching and Learning in Ghana": Historical and Contemporary Perspectives. *Ghana Studies* 5.
- Acker, S. (1994). "Gendered Education": London: Open University Press.
- Adusah-Karikari, A. (2008). "Experiences of Women in Higher Education": A Study of Women Faculty and Administrators in Selected Public Universities in Ghana. Electronic thesis. Retrieved from <https://etd.ohiolink.edu>. 29/09/2013
- Arnot, M and Fennell, S. (2008). "Gendered Education and National Development": Critical Perspectives and New Research. *Compare: a Journal of Comparative and International Education*. Vol. 38. (5),515-523
- Barnes, T. (2007). "Politics of the Mind and Body": Gender and Institutional Culture in African Universities. *Feminist Africa* (8), 8-25.
- Barnes, T., & Mama, A. (2007). Editorial: "Rethinking Universities II": *Feminist Africa* (9), 1-4.
- Britwum, A. O. (2005). "Gender Mainstreaming in Ghanaian Universities". *World Bank Research Report*.
- Britwum, A. O. (2002). "The Gender of the University of Cape Coast": The Ghana Universities Case Study.

*Unpublished Research Report.*

- Diaw, A. (2007). "Sewing Machines and Computers": Seeing Gender in Institutional and Intellectual Cultures at the Cheikh Anta Diop University of Dakar, Senegal. *Feminist Africa* (9), 5-22.
- Endeley, J. M., & Ngaling, M. N. (2007). "Challenging Gender Inequality in Higher Education": Attitudes and Perceptions of Teaching Staff and Administrators at the University of Buea, Cameroon. *Feminist Africa* (9), 63-84.
- Gaidzanwa, R. B. (2007). "Alienation, Gender and Institutional Culture at the University of Zimbabwe": *Feminist Africa* (8), 60-82.
- Harding, S. Ed. (1987). "Feminism and Methodology": Social Science Issues. Bloomington: Indiana University Press
- Mama, A. (2003). "Restore, Reform, but do not Transform": The Gender Politics of Higher Education in Africa. *Journal of Higher Education in Africa* , 1 (1).
- Mama, A. and Barnes, T. (2007). Editorial. "Rethinking Universities I": *Feminist Africa* (8), 1-8.
- Manuh, T., Gariba, S., & Budu, J. (2007). "Change and Transformation in Ghana's Publicly Funded Universities": Accra: Woeli.
- Mulugeta, E. (2007). "Trajectory of the Institute of Gender Studies at Addis Ababa University": *Ethopia. X Universities*: Accra: Woeli.
- Odejide, A. (2007). "What can a Woman do?" Being Women in a Nigerian University. *Feminist Africa* (8), 42-59.
- Pereira, C. (2007). "Gender and the Making of the Nigerian University System. Ibadan": Heineman.
- Prah, M. (2002). "Gender Issues in Ghanaian Tertiary Institutions": Women Academics and Administrators at Cape Coast University. *Ghana Studies*, 5.
- Reay, D. (2004) "Cultural Capitalists and Academic Habitus": Class and Gendered Labour in UK Higher Education. *Women's Studies International Forum*. Vol. 27 (1), 31-39
- Shackleton, L. (2007). "Lost in Liberalism": A Case Study of the Disappearance of the Gender Agenda at a South African University. *Feminist Africa* (9), 23-42.
- Smith, D. (1987). "The Everyday World as Problematic". Boston: Northeastern University Press.
- Stanley, L. Ed. (1990). "Feminist Praxis": Research, Theory and Epistemology in Feminist Sociology. London: Routledge
- Tsikata, D. (2007). "Gender, Institutional Cultures and the Career Trajectories of Faculty of the University of Ghana": *Feminist Africa* (8), 26-41.
- UCC. (2012). "44<sup>th</sup> Congregation Basic Statistics": Cape Coast: SRMIS.
- Zezeza, P. T. (2003). "African Universities and Globalisation": AGI GWS E-Journal (Launch).