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# CHAPTER 16

## ENSURING EQUITY AND INCLUSION IN HIGHER EDUCATION PROVISION: GHANA'S APPROACH

Patrick Swanzy, Patrício V. Langa and Francis Ansah

### ABSTRACT

*The current economic stage of the world is argued to be that of a knowledge economy. This refers to a shift from the dependence on natural resources to a new paradigm where the production and use of knowledge are paramount. Countries all over the world are striving to have full participation in the knowledge economy by providing opportunities for equitable access to higher education in order to provide advance knowledge to all citizens. Ghana is striving hard to achieve equitable higher education and use it as the agency for spearheading its full participation in the global knowledge economy, but so far, Ghana's approach to equitable higher education, which is worth sharing, has not been synthesized and shared with the scholarly community. This chapter analyzes and synthesizes the various initiatives Ghana has undertaken to promote equitable higher education, draws attention to the gaps between rhetoric and realities, and makes recommendations for improvements in the initiatives.*

**Keywords:** Equity; higher education; Ghana; approach; inclusion; Access

## INTRODUCTION

The current economic stage of the world is argued to be that of a knowledge economy. This refers to a shift from the dependence on natural resources to ones where the production and use of knowledge are paramount. Higher education is seen by many as a key driver in this endeavor (Cloete, Bailey, Pillay, Bunting, & Maassen, 2011). As a result, many countries worldwide are striving to provide opportunities for equitable access to higher education in order to provide advance knowledge to their citizenry. Equity in higher education provision does not mean that all must be treated exactly the same or there should be precise equality of representation in all areas of higher education (Martin, 2010). Equitable higher education system is that which ensures that access to, participation in, and outcomes of higher education are based only on the individuals' innate ability and study effort (Martin, 2010). In other words, it ensures that educational potential is not the result of personal and social circumstances such as socio-economic status, gender, ethnic origin, immigrant status, place of residence, age or disability (Santiago, Tremblay, Basri, & Arnal, 2008). The concern with providing opportunity to access and success in higher education for all (EFA) persons is not a new phenomenon. In the Global North interest in this arose strongly in the 1970s and underpinned higher education policies of most of the countries which belong to this fraternity (Martin 2010). It is acknowledged that this allowed formerly underrepresented groups in higher education to gain increased access in these states (Clancy & Goastellec, 2007). Similarly, equity concerns in higher education in the Global South including countries in Sub-Saharan Africa can be traced to the past (Tsikata, 2009); however, a serious attempt to deal with this menace is recent. In Ghana interest in equity seems to have heightened in 1992. The country enshrined equitable higher education provision in its 1992 constitution but delayed its implementation till 1993 (Samoff & Carol, 2003). Through a World Bank funded project dubbed 'Tertiary Education Project (TEP)', Ghana reformed its higher education systems in order to improve the sector and enhance equity (Samoff & Carol, 2003). Additionally, Ghana seems to have undertaken various initiatives to make its higher education systems equitable and these are worth sharing. However, this is not yet part of the scholarly discourse on equity higher education provision. The deficit in knowledge created by the non-characterization of Ghana's effort at providing equitable higher education to its citizens in the scholarly discourse is what we seek to address in this chapter.

## COUNTRY PROFILE

Ghana is a sovereign state located in the sub region of West Africa. Covering a land mass of 238,535 km<sup>2</sup> (92,099 sq mi), Ghana is bordered by Côte d'Ivoire in the west, Burkina Faso in the north, Togo in the east and the Gulf of Guinea in the South (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012). The country is administered by a democratically elected executive president with an elected parliament and independent judiciary (United Nations Development Programme, 2012). The population of Ghana is estimated to be around twenty-five million, nine hundred

and five thousand (25,905,000) with females comprising 51.3% and males 48.7% (World Bank, 2015). The country's adult literacy rate is 74.1%, while 3% of the population have some form of disability (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012). Ghana is rich in natural resources such as oil, gas, gold, diamonds, manganese ore, limestone, silica sand and bauxite (Africa Infrastructure Country Diagnostic, 2010). The country is also endowed with agricultural potential, including forests and significant tracts of savannah land with high agricultural value but these are not being fully exploited (Africa Infrastructure Country Diagnostic, 2010). Ghana is currently classified by the World Bank as a lower middle level income country (World Bank, 2015) and seeking knowledgeable workforce via offering equitable higher education to its citizenry to facilitate her participation in the knowledge economy.

## HIGHER EDUCATION PORTRAIT

The responsibility for higher education lies with the Ghanaian Ministry of Education (MOE) but this mandate is carried through its agency, the National Council for Tertiary Education (Government of Ghana, 1993). Ghana operates a binary system of higher education. The sector is made up of universities and non-universities. Ghanaian universities are a mix of public, private, national and international institutions while the non-university sector includes polytechnics, nurse training colleges, colleges of education and several national or international specialized colleges (National Accreditation Board, 2016). The universities are mainly teaching focused but government is mounting pressure on them in recent times to intensify research. The universities offer academic programs at Bachelor, Master and Doctorate levels, while the non-university institutions offer sub-degree professional higher education (certificates and diplomas) (National Accreditation Board, 2016). Higher education is mainly funded by the government but funds allocated by the government have been reducing in percentage over time (Duwiewua & Newman, 2014). Ghana allocates 23% of its budget to higher education (Ministry of Education, 2012). Though this percentage is high, it falls short of the funds required for the sector. Enrollment in Ghana's higher education sector has also changed drastically. For example, in 1992, enrollment in the higher education sector stood at 9,997 but this catapulted to 179,998 and 396,264 in 2009 and 2015 respectively (National Accreditation Board, 2016). However, this growth represented the same persons from the same pool of candidates as before, instead of opening up to other social sectors (Budu, 2017). Ghana's gross enrollment ratio also surged from 2.9 in 1999 to 6.52 in 2007 and 16.23 in 2015 (Times Higher Education, 2017) depicting a positive sign. Currently, Ghana's higher education participation rate is around 16% (Times Higher Education, 2017). This is among the highest in Sub-Saharan Africa but still far below the global average of 26% (Times Higher Education, 2017) indicating that a greater percentage of potential students are excluded from pursuing higher education in the country. Budu (2017) presents females, rural dwellers, graduates of less endowed senior high schools, persons with disabilities

(PWDs), persons from low income families and science, technology and mathematics graduates of senior high schools as minority groups in Ghana's higher education requiring the need for Ghana to intervene and steer its higher education systems toward equity provision. These commitments have been categorized under international conventions, national and institutional initiatives and are explained in subsequent sections.

## INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS

Ghana's goals toward achieving equity in higher education are guided by its commitment to international conventions. Key among them are: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), 1948; The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) 1979; World Declaration on EFA (1990), The Millennium Development Goals, 2000; United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) (2006); and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights ([Ministry of Education, 2015](#)).

Article 26 clause 1 of UDHR enjoins Ghana to acknowledge higher education as a human right and promote equitable access to all on the basis of merit ([United Nations, 1949](#)). Since signing on to this convention, Ghana has shown commitment toward increasing higher education participation among its citizenry through varied national and institutional strategies. These include adoption of legal frameworks, policies, action plans and implementation of programs ([Tsikata, 2009](#)). The outcomes of these efforts have been positive. Ghana's higher education sector has seen expansion as well as growth in enrollment in the past three decades. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have increased from 3 in 1993 to over 100 in 2016 ([National Accreditation Board, 2016](#)). In 1992, enrollment in the higher education sector stood at 9,997 but surged to 179,998 and 396,264 in 2009 and 2015, respectively ([National Accreditation Board, 2016](#)). Currently, Ghana's higher education participation rate (16%) is among the highest in Sub-Saharan Africa ([Times Higher Education, 2017](#)). This notwithstanding, some practices in Ghana's higher education sector make it hard to make a case that Ghana fully recognizes higher education as a right. The high cost of accessing higher education linked to liberalization, non-access for underprivileged groups and the non-inclusiveness of Ghana's higher education sector are all threats to the enjoyment of education as a right in Ghana.

Additionally, by acceding to CEDAW, Ghana is legally bound to put CEDAW provisions into practice. These provisions explicitly obligate signatory members to ensure the realization of equality between women and men via equitable access to higher education. Ghana's proof of adherence to these provisions manifests in the introduction of affirmative actions to address gender equity. These include provisions demanding that certain quantitative or qualitative targets for females be reached through admissions to HEIs and special programs such as that which seeks to improve higher education access for girls (e.g. Science workshops for girls) ([Tsikata, 2009](#)). Upsurge in female enrollment in Ghana's higher education

sector is evident. For example, female enrollment increased from 25% to 34% in 2007 (Budu, 2017) but this is far below the national target ratio of 50:50 for male and females, respectively. This seems to suggest that Ghana's attempt to adhere to the provisions of CEDAW is slow. Ghana appears to lack a comprehensive framework to execute the provisions of CEDAW. Ghana's effort to address gender equity is also challenged by social and cultural practices.

Widening access and supporting full participation of PWDs in higher education in Ghana seems to have been stimulated in part by 'the Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy and Practice in Special Needs Education' (UNESCO, 1994) and the UNCRPD adopted in 2006 (Ministry of Education, 2015). These conventions mainly enjoin Ghana to:

- promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights including higher education by all PWDs;
- design and implement educational programs to accommodate persons with such backgrounds; and
- ensure that PWDs have access to regular schools and are not secluded.

Joining in the ratifications of these conventions suggest Ghana's willingness to make higher education more accessible to PWDs. Ghana has factored these provisions in its 1992 constitution, Disability Act, 2006 Act 715 and its EFA policy. Ghana's constitution explicitly protects the rights of PWDs as part of a general guarantee of equality in all aspects of life including higher education (Government of Ghana, 1992a, 1992b). The Disability Act, 2006 Act 715 protects the rights of PWDs including access to higher education without discrimination (Government of Ghana, 2006). The EFA policy required all schools, including HEIs to adhere to the principle of universal design for learning by 2015 (Ministry of Education, 2015). However, putting these into practice seems to have happened at a slow pace impacting negatively on higher education access for PWDs. Currently, most of the curriculum and learning environment of HEIs are not disability friendly. Tudzi, Bugri, and Danso (2017) confirm this by asserting that, HEIs in Ghana are not as accessible as they ought to be for PWDs. Available statistics indicate that only 1.4% of PWDs have had access to higher education. This 1.4% hardly find decent employment after successfully completing their programs (Naami, 2015) even though there are pieces of legislation that promote and protect their right to employment.

## NATIONAL INITIATIVES

In addition to signing up to international conventions and working to implement them, Ghana has her own national-level initiatives to achieve equitable higher education provision for her citizens. These initiatives are grounded in national constitutions and associated legislation policies and programs. Such initiatives are supposed to be more culturally responsive compared to international conventions.

*The Constitution of Ghana*

The present national effort toward ensuring equitable higher education systems in Ghana begins with the constitution (Government of Ghana, 1992a, 1992b). Article 25 clauses 1c and 2 of the 1992 constitution state respectively:

- Higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means and in particular, by progressive introduction of free education.
- Every person shall have the right, at his own expense to establish and maintain a private school or schools at all levels and of such categories and in accordance with such conditions as may be provided by law.

These statements showcase a firmer commitment of Ghana toward equity in higher education provision. Since 1993, Ghana has made frantic efforts to realize these commitments enshrined in her constitution by reforming her higher education sector. These manifests in the growth of HEIs, increase in student enrollment, and provision of many academic programs. Ghana requires knowledgeable workers to enable it to perform competitively in the knowledge-based economy. Yet the opportunity to pursue higher education eludes most Ghanaians due to limited investments by successive governments (Times Higher Education, 2017). This could be linked to a lack of explicit provisions in the Constitutions requiring governments to make specific statutory budgetary allocations to higher education. Government's funding allocation to HEIs in real terms continues to plummet (Duwiejua & Newman, 2014). As a result, HEIs charge high fees in order to sustain their budgets. This situation prevents many Ghanaians from low socio-economic backgrounds from accessing higher education. The low investment by governments has also contributed to limited available spaces for prospective applicants. Even in instances where spaces are available in academic programs such as medicine and law, they are left for persons who can afford denying persons from low socio-economic background access to such programs.

*The Disability Act 2006, Act 715*

Commitment to protect the rights of PWDs and to ensure their equitable participation in higher education is emphasized in the Disability Act, 2006 Act 715 (Government of Ghana, 2006). Statements under sub-sections of the provisions on education read:

- The Government shall provide free education for a person with disability.
- A person responsible for admission into a school or other institution of learning shall not refuse to give admission to a person with disability on account of the disability unless the person with disability has been assessed by the Ministry responsible for Education in collaboration with the Ministries responsible for Health and Social Welfare to be a person who clearly requires to be in a special school for PWD.
- A public library shall as far as practicable be fitted with facilities that will enable PWD to use the library.

Act 715 was received with enthusiasm because it signaled an end to discrimination and removal of barriers to higher education access for persons with such backgrounds. Presently, there are attempts by some HEIs to retrofit their physical infrastructure, develop ramps and create access on campus for PWDs (Swanzy, 2017). Few HEIs have also established disability units to offer services for persons with such backgrounds. These seem to have resulted in improvement in the enrollment of persons with such background though at a snail pace. Most HEIs have been slow in reforming their curricula to make it inclusive. This confirms Tudzi et al. (2017) assertion that the learning environment, academic programs, and delivery modes of most HEIs in Ghana are not diverse enough to cater for all PWDs. Twelve years after the enactment of the Disability Act, it appears Ghana has little to celebrate with regard to ensuring HEIs adhere to the provisions in the Act.

#### *The National Accreditation Board Act 2007, Act 744*

Government of Ghana's interest in equity higher education provision is manifested in the law establishing the National Accreditation Board (NAB) (PNDC Law 317 of 1993). This law has since been replaced by the National Accreditation Board Act 2007, Act 744 (Government of Ghana, 2007). The law established a national quality assurance agency, the NAB, with the responsibility to monitor and control the academic activities of HEIs to improve access, equity and quality in the sector (Njoku, 2012). As part of its functions, NAB is mandated to ensure the following:

- Admissions into to HEIs (both public and private) are offered to applicants who satisfy minimum admission requirements set by the NAB.
- All HEIs adhere to the principle of universal design for learning.
- HEIs have well-equipped resource centers and personnel to support students with special educational needs.

NAB monitors the adherence of HEIs to these requirements through accreditation and re-accreditation procedures and periodically via academic audit (Swanzy, Langa, & Ansah, 2018). The focus of the activities undertaken by NAB during these processes usually is to ensure that HEIs meet minimum input and process standards in achieving equity in higher education provision. However, it appears NAB gives more attention to quality standards than equity standards in its compliance monitoring activities for HEIs. For example, NAB's quality assessment tools for HEIs hardly question HEIs on their equity initiatives in the area of curriculum and assessment. This is why so far equity progress seen in the HEIs is in the area of retrofitting physical infrastructure.

#### *Higher Education Reforms*

Equity underpinned Ghana's 1993 higher education reforms funded by the World Bank through TEP (Samoff & Carol, 2003). Through the reform, Ghana expanded its higher education sector via regrouping, rationalization and upgrading of existing post-secondary institutions to tertiary status, and the establishment of new



ones. Currently, Ghana's higher education sector is heterogeneous. It includes universities and non-universities as either publicly or privately owned (Swanzy & Potts, 2017). From 3 public universities in 1993 the sector can now boast of 9 public universities, 8 technical universities, 2 polytechnics, 27 public nurse training colleges, 46 public colleges of education, and over 65 private tertiary institutions (National Accreditation Board, 2016). These institutions seem to have been strategically positioned in the country to improve access and to ensure equity of provision so that persons who hitherto were constrained by geographical remoteness are now served (Ansah, 2015; Swanzy, 2015). Presently, most rural communities have HEIs closer to them. Nonetheless, socio-economic and cultural beliefs constrain rural dwellers, particularly women, access to higher education.

The desire to achieve equitable higher education delivery in the country has also been pursued through changes in modes of delivery of study programs. In addition to the traditional face-to-face delivery, study programs are now offered through distance, online, evening and weekend sessions (Swanzy & Potts, 2017). This has led to the emergence of non-traditional learners such as mature and part-time students. These strategies seem to have changed the enrollment trends in the sector in the past three decades. For example, enrollment in the sector increased from 9,997 in 1992 to 396,264 in 2015 (National Accreditation Board, 2016). Though the increase in enrollment trend is impressive, particularly for non-traditional learners, the attrition rate for the non-traditional learners is reportedly high due to inadequate learner support services (Ohene & Essuman, 2014).

#### *Privatization of Higher Education*

National efforts toward achieving equity have also included liberalizing the higher education sector as part of the reforms. This has allowed individual entrepreneurs and non-governmental organizations to invest in the sector by setting up HEIs (Swanzy & Potts, 2017). Currently, private higher education institutions (PHEIs) play a vital role in Ghana's higher education system. PHEIs complement the efforts of public HEIs to absorb the huge number of high school leavers seeking tertiary education (National Accreditation Board, 2016). The PHEIs particularly absorb qualified applicants who are unable to gain access to the subsidized public HEIs and can afford to pay unsubsidized fees (Obeng, 2012). Ghana government's data suggest that PHEIs admit over 26% of students who complete senior high schools every year (National Accreditation Board, 2016). This equity gap filled by PHEIs is commendable but PHEIs are unable to close the gap for persons from low socio-economic background and rural areas. PHEIs charge high fees making it difficult for persons from low socio-economic background to access their services. They also over concentrate in urban areas and deny prospective rural students the opportunity to access their services.

#### *Student Loan Trust*

Ghana government's quest to ensure that persons from low-income families have access to higher education introduced Student Loan Scheme (Government of Ghana, 2011). The scheme is to help students who need financial support to be

able to go through higher education successfully. The loan is given to students to use to supplement the payment of fees, accommodation, books, computers and accessories and personal living expenses and repay after graduation ([Government of Ghana, 2011](#)). The Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT) operated the student loan scheme. To give the scheme an added priority and improve the scheme, government established a statutory agency, the Students Loan Trust Fund (SLTF) ([Government of Ghana, 2011](#)). The object of the SLTF is to ensure the sustainability of the student loan scheme in providing financial support to students of accredited HEIs in order to promote and facilitate the equity ideals enshrined in articles 25 and 38 of Ghana's 1992 constitution ([Government of Ghana, 2011](#)). Since its establishment, SLTF has tried to simplify its processes and eligibility requirements to enhance the accessibility of loans by students. Key among them are the following:

- Reduction of SSNIT guarantors from three persons to one person.
- Acceptance of recognized religious bodies, metropolitan, municipal, district assemblies and corporate bodies, which are members of the Ghana Club 100 or listed on the Ghana Stock Exchange as guarantors for loan applicants ([Laing, 2018](#)).

SLTF offers loans to students at a rate of 12% per annum which is cheaper compared to the rate of other financial institutions ([Laing, 2018](#)). SLTF loan also comes with flexible terms of repayment. SLTF loans have assisted students who otherwise could not have been able to afford higher education to have access to higher education ([Laing, 2018](#)). In 2017, about 90,000 student beneficiaries were on the SLTF's portfolio ([Citifmonline.com, 2017](#)). SLTF is also on record to have attracted an average of 15,000 new borrowers per academic year in the 2014/2015, 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 academic years ([Citifmonline.com, 2017](#)). This notwithstanding, some students fail to secure SLTF loan and this prevents them from accessing higher education. Admittedly, the student loan scheme has facilitated the equity higher education agenda, although the amount a student receive is tagged as insufficient compared to the cost of higher education. Additionally, it is only accessible after a prospective beneficiary has paid and registered to become a student in an accredited higher education institution. This means those who are unable to pay the initial fees required to be registered in any HEIs, cannot access any loan from the student loan scheme. This implies people from low socio-economic backgrounds are still denied access to higher education for financial reasons intended to be addressed by the student loan scheme.

### *The Disability Common Fund*

Government of Ghana's endeavor to support PWDs is evident in the introduction of the Disability Common Fund (DCF) in 2005 ([National Council on Persons with Disability, 2010](#)). The DCF is a 2% allocation of the District Assemblies Common Fund (DACF) for PWDs living within a metropolis, municipality or district in Ghana ([National Council on Persons with Disability, 2010](#)). The DACF is

a pool of resources created under Article 252 of Ghana's 1992 constitution which is supposed to be quarterly from the central government to the local government authorities ([National Council on Persons with Disability, 2010](#)). DCF is used for a variety of purposes including financing PWDs to pursue higher education. A directive from the Common Fund Administrator in 2018 requires local government authorities to reserve 10% of the fund solely for the payment of education fees of PWDs ([Business Ghana, 2018](#)). The DCF has enabled some PWDs to access higher education, even though there seems to be no accurate national data on the beneficiaries of the scheme. The DCF initiative is commendable except that it faces liquidity challenges and thereby disrupting regular disbursement of funds to its beneficiaries. The main financier of DCF, the government of Ghana normally defaults in transferring the funds to the local authorities ([Business Ghana, 2018](#)). Additionally, the internal processes of most local government authorities for disbursing funds are riddled with red-tapes which create unnecessary delays in the release of funds to PWDs to cater for their higher education expenses. These situations prevent some PWDs from accessing higher education and worsen the higher education equity gap in Ghana.

#### *Member of Parliament's Share of DACF*

The Member of Parliament's (MP) share of the DACF is another means through which Ghana responds to disparities in higher education access. Presently, MPs are given 3% of the DACF for development projects in their constituencies ([Ahowi, 2011](#)). MPs especially those from rural and poor urban constituencies are known to use about 1% of the fund to assist students from low socio-economic background in their constituencies to enable them to access higher education. For example, the MP for Kumawu, a rural constituency in the Ashanti region of Ghana is on record to have spent GHC 160,000 (Equivalent \$34,520) on school fees from 2012 to 2017 ([GhanaWeb, 2017](#)). The MP for Abirem, also a rural constituency in the Eastern region of Ghana, is also known to have spent Fifty thousand Cedis (50,000) (Equivalent \$ 10,788) to support needy students to access education in 2010 ([Kpesese, 2010](#)). This fund has enabled many rural dwellers and urban poor students to receive financial support for higher education. It is instructive to note that this practice of supporting needy students with MPs' share of DAFC is at the discretion of the individual MPs and not a State directive. Thus in most cases, MPs give priority to functionaries of their political parties who are considered as economically disadvantaged. This initiative could be improved by requiring the local government authorities to institute objective criteria for selection of beneficiaries. In any case, the convention of giving a portion of DACF to MPs is being challenged at the Supreme Court of Ghana because it is said to lack constitutional basis ([Nyabor, 2017](#); [Ahowi, 2011](#)).

## **INSTITUTIONAL INITIATIVES**

The pursuit of equitable higher education for Ghanaians through national level initiatives has been complemented by interventions emanating from HEIs

themselves. Notable among the institutional level initiatives to provide equitable higher education in Ghana include: setting up satellite campuses and implementation of affirmative actions.

### *Satellite Campuses*

HEIs in Ghana are keen to widen higher education participation through satellite campuses. Those chiefly involved in this endeavor are University of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, University of Cape Coast, University of Education, Winneba and Valley View University (Ohene & Essuman, 2014). They make their services available to students living in other parts of Ghana through the establishment of satellite campuses. The University of Education, Winneba, was the first to adopt this strategy in 1996 followed by the University of Cape Coast and the University of Ghana in 2001/2002 academic year and the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in 2005 (Ohene & Essuman, 2014). Currently, these Universities have learning centers dotted across Ghana extending higher education access to non-traditional learners. In 2007, the University of Ghana offered admission to 1,000 students at its satellite campuses but this increased to 2016 students in 2017 (GhanaWeb, 2007). Similarly, the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology admitted 3,892 students in 2012/2013 academic year to study at its satellite campuses (Frimpong, 2012). Out of this, 1,628 students pursued postgraduate programs while 2,264 were undergraduates (Frimpong, 2012). In 2017, the University of Education, Winneba admitted 8,935 students with females amounting to 4,893 (University of Education, 2018). Through this strategy, HEIs have opened up Ghana's higher education space and offered access to many Ghanaians who ordinarily would not have had access to higher education. This notwithstanding, there are concerns as well. Programs offered at satellite campuses are priced higher than those on main campuses. This creates affordability issue for learners from low-income families who are already constrained by geographical limitations in accessing higher education. The learning environment of the satellite campuses are less conducive compared to the main campuses. Students studying at the satellite campuses hardly get the same support given to students on the main campus. This suggests that the students enrolled in these learning centers are inequitably served.

### *Affirmative Actions*

Affirmative action is used by some HEIs to correct imbalances in higher education access (Yusif & Ali, 2013). The University of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology and the University for Development Studies are known to have special admission packages for graduates of less endowed secondary schools and female applicants (Budu, 2017).

Out of the 872 senior high schools in Ghana, almost half is classified as less endowed (Budu, 2017; Yusif & Ali, 2013). Less endowed secondary schools are schools that lack basic amenities and are sited in rural areas and poor urban communities. Graduates from these schools hardly obtain competitive grades that

allow them to compete favorably for their choice of study programs in HEIs. The principle behind the affirmative action is to compensate for the unequal opportunities given to persons from less endowed schools and who are academically capable but do not have competitive grades to access higher education and study programs of their choice (Budu, 2017). In this case, concessions are made in study programs that are highly competitive for the less privileged individuals in society who meet the minimum requirements. In Ghana, there appears to be consensus on the capacity of affirmative action to redress inequity in the higher education sector (Tsikata, 2009) even though this policy has been criticized in other parts of the world (Tinker, 2004). Through affirmative action, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology offered admission to 1,948 graduates from less endowed schools, comprising 1,423 males and 525 females between 2003 and 2010 (Yusif & Ali, 2013). Similarly, in 2004, the University of Ghana adopted affirmative action targeted at less endowed school graduates. The University for Development Studies affirmative action rather targets gender equity and is acknowledged to be the most successful intervention ever to occur in Ghana's higher education sector (Abagre & Bukari, 2013). In 2004, the University established a Gender Mainstreaming Unit to initiate Bridging Programs with the aim of facilitating admission of females into the University (Abagre & Bukari, 2013). Females who participate in this Bridging Program are offered intensive classes and reassessed. The results from the Bridging Program are added to their West African Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination results to enable them gain entry into the University (Abagre & Bukari, 2013). This assisted University for Development Studies to increase female enrollment by 61% in 2004, 8% in 2005, 56% in 2006, 41% in 2007, and 27% in 2008 (Abagre & Bukari, 2013). It is clear that affirmative action is helping to increase the participation of graduates from less endowed schools and females but it has not solved entirely the inequality in higher education participation. This is because affirmative action strategies adopted by HEIs have not been commensurate with the inequality gap in higher education participation. Females still form the minority in university campuses and even worse in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics programs indicating the need for coordinated nationwide affirmative action in the higher education sector in order to correct this anomaly.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter has synthesized and discussed Ghana's approach to equity higher education provision as a way to maximize its human resource potentials and move away from its long-standing dependency on natural resources which is not paramount in the knowledge economy. It is evident from the discussions so far that Ghana recognizes the role of equitable higher education in building a knowledge economy. As a result, the country has demonstrated relentless efforts toward achieving equitable higher education system to ensure full participation of all her citizens. The country has demonstrated its commitment through national and institutional initiatives on providing equitable higher EFA women and men in

the country. These initiatives pursued by the various governments and the HEIs have not occurred in a vacuum but underpinned by the provisions in international conventions the country has accented to. Indeed, there are positive signs indicating that Ghana is making steady progress toward equitable higher education that needs to be acknowledged.

This notwithstanding, obvious gaps exist between rhetoric and realities when examining the various initiatives with regard to equitable provision of higher education in Ghana. For example, personal and social circumstances such as socio-economic status, gender, and disability still constrain equitable provision of higher education in Ghana. This chapter recommends the following: a need for a national unitary strategy to take account of all equity groups based on a robust regime of implementation, monitoring and evaluation; a fair financial arrangement for equity groups; sensitization of HE stakeholders on equity groups and NAB focusing on equity indicators to make HEIs to become more equity responsive.

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