

Dear Friends,

In my articles this spring I have been explaining some of the important cultural/religious practices of the Ghanaian people, especially those from our mission village of Akrampa. I've talked with you about marriage, birth, naming of children, and funerals. As you all know, FLC built a school in Akrampa, and that has blessed the children with education. Although this was not always the case. This article is a bit of "background" on the education system in Ghana.

Under traditional circumstances, the average Akrampa child will not begin attending school until between the ages of five and seven years old. In more recent times, there has become a need for some homes to have their children start schooling early, by sending them to creche, through kindergarten and then into primary.

Until the last thirty years, it was mostly only male children who attended school. Most female children would never attend school. The female child was supposed to stay home to allow the male child to attend school. Even if a female child was fortunate enough to be considered, she rarely had the benefit of tertiary education.

The 'unreasonable' reason given for this was that the female child would only grow up into a woman, wife and mother and be confined to keeping her home and raising her children. So parents, particularly fathers, hesitated and were less interested in 'wasting' (so it was thought) the money on education/school for the female child.

The female child stayed home to be 'educated' by her mother and grandparents in the ways of becoming a wife and mother. As early as age four, she will begin 'classes'. Her first lessons will be in the kitchen and with other household chores. She will be made to learn how to take care of her brother, whether older or younger; cooking and doing his laundry. She will be introduced to some kind of economic activity, for example, in petty or retail trading of wares and other commodities. This is to teach the female child the virtue of being supportive of her future husband to provide for their family.

This kind of discrimination led to a national crusade (in Ghana) in the 1980's, against this practice, dubbed "send your girl-child to school". Eventually it led to the development of a governmental department solely for the promotion of children's rights, particularly that of the girl-child.

In the meantime, the male child will start school between age five and seven, depending on his circumstances. If he belongs to a farming community, the father would also start 'educating' the boy. He would be taught to work hard, provide for the home, ensure the security of the family, and be taught what will be expected of him as he becomes a man. The male child will do all of this while attending school. This means that, except on Sunday, the male child is engaged in school and on the farm. Similarly, if he belongs to a fishing community, he will also receive education from his family to equip him to become a man and provide for his future family. All of this type of training may be done by either biological parents, grandparents, or uncles and aunts, depending on where the child lives.

It is a joy in these modern times to see the girl-child in the Akrampa mission school, learning, right next to the boys!

Blessings, Pastor Ben

Send your girl-child to school