# Democratising Higher Education in Ghana and Tanzania:

## Opportunity Structures and Social Processes

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# Widening Participation in Higher Education: Democratisation or Differentiation?

- meritocratic equalisation
- redistributing an unquestioned 'good' or diversion?
- reinforcement of social stratification processes
- mapping on to elite practices
- assumption that macro (neoliberal) and micro level aspirations will overlap (Naidoo, 2006; Walkerdine, 2003)?

# A Political Economy of Participation in Higher Education

Lack of data on:

- Higher education and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs);

- Private higher education and widening participation;

- How different structures of inequality intersect *e.g.* gender and socio-economic background;

- Motivations, subjectivities, educational trajectories and experiences of people from socially disadvantaged groups in low-income countries.

- Socio-cultural theory in context of African higher education.

In a globalised knowledge economy, the twin questions of who is participating and where demand analysis.

# Mass Higher Education?

- Student enrolment worldwide:

  - ✓ 13 million in 1960
  - ✓ 82 million in 1995
  - ✓ 137.8 million in 2005

(UNESCO, 1998; UNESCO, 2007).

# African Participation Rates in Higher Education



- 24% globally

- 5% in Sub-Saharan Africa

- 5% in Ghana

- 1% in Tanzania

(UNESCO, 2007)

# Participating Women

- 1999 -2005 Participation rates for women have increased in all regions of the world.

- Gender Parity Index (GPI) for higher education is 1.05.

- Unevenly distributed across regions and disciplines.

- Which women, which HEIs and academic disciplines in a globalised knowledge economy?

# Regional Variation

In 2005 there were more women than men in:

- ✓ Northern America
- ✓ Western Europe
- ✓ Central and Eastern Europe
- ✓ Latin America
- ✓ Caribbean
- ✓ Central Asia

There were more men than women in:

- ✓ East Asia
- ✓ Pacific
- ✓ South and West Asia
- ✓ Sub-Saharan Africa

# What Impedes African Women's Participation?

- The morphology of women's bodies.
- Biological development assumes social dimensions (Butler, 2006).
- Cultural prescriptions of age-appropriate participation.
- Women perceived as a culturally conditioned social category.
- Gendered divisions of labour.
- Investments in sons.
- Poverty.

# Risk

- Conforming to traditional female roles is a risk to educational opportunities.

- Non-conforming allows women to access education, but places them at risk socially.

# Intersectionality

- Multiple markers of identity that inter-relate;

- International HE policy e.g. UNESCO (1998), prioritise one structure at a time;

- In UK HE policy, gender is a disqualified discourse - emphasis on socio-economic status;

- Gender gains, in the form of affirmative action and access programmes, when scrutinised can often mask socio-economic privilege (Morley *et al.,* 2006);

- While policy interventions fracture identity, it is easy to demonstrate quantitative success in each category.

# Gender and Socio-economic Status

- When gender is intersected with socio-economic status, participation rates of poorer women are seen to be extremely low in both African countries in this study.
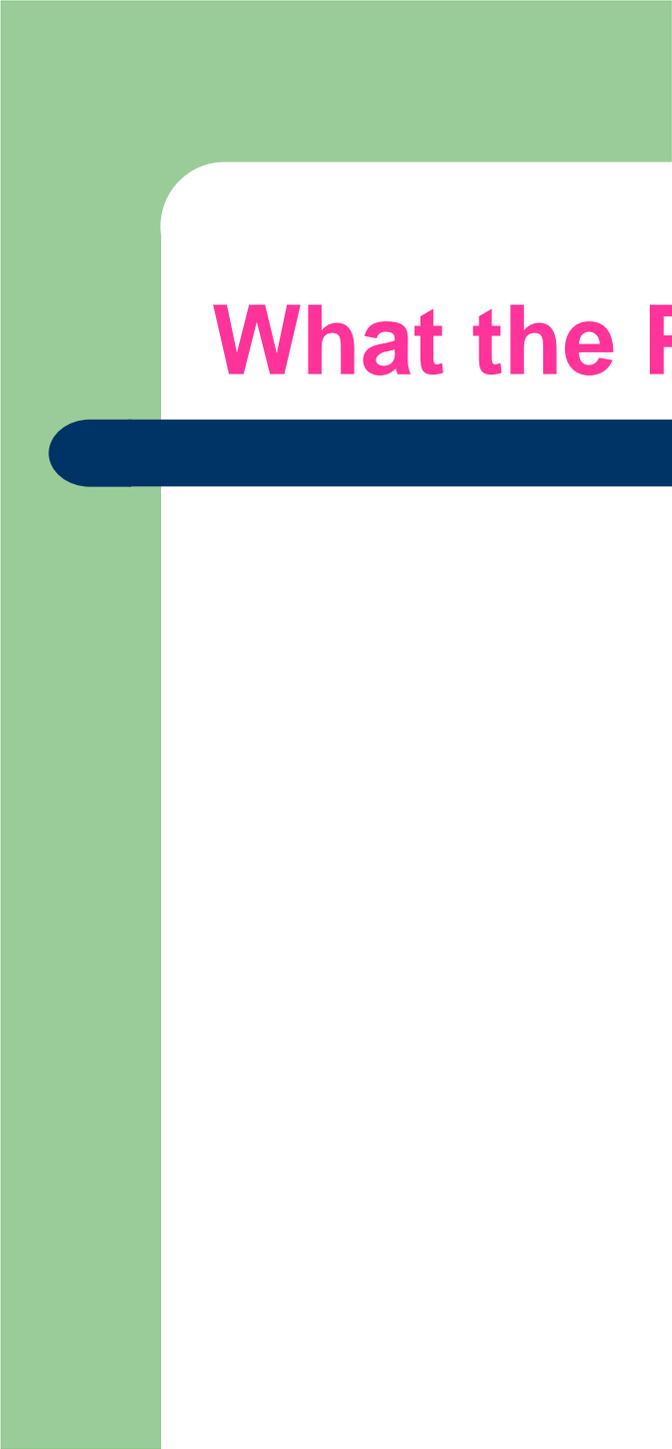
# What the Project is Doing

# Methodology

- **Quantitative methods:**

  - ✓ **international, national and institutional statistics**
  - ✓ **Developing Equity Scorecards**

- **Qualitative methods:**

  - ✓ **analysis of policy documents**
  - ✓ **200 life history interviews with students**
  - ✓ **200 interviews with academic staff and policymakers**

- **Research Sites**

  - ✓ **1 public and 1 private university in both Ghana and Tanzania**

# Quantifying Inequalities

# What is an Equity Scorecard?

- Examines how diversity amongst students is translated into equity in educational outcomes (Bensimon and Polkinghorne, 2003)

- Measures both advantage and disadvantage simultaneously.

# What We Are Measuring

- Sociological variables *e.g.* gender, age, socio-economic status

In Relation to:

- Educational Outcomes *e.g.* access, retention and achievement.

In Relation to:

- 4 Programmes of Study *e.g.* medicine, management, law, education
- 4 Institutional Sites *e.g.* public and private HEIs.

# Equity Scorecard 1: Participation on 4 Programmes at a Public University in Ghana by Gender, and SES (2006-7)

| Programme | % female | % deprived school | % female who attended a deprived school |
|---|---|---|---|
| B Sc Physical Science | 15.3 | 2.2 | 0.6 |
| B Commerce | 28.9 | 3.3 | 1.0 |
| B Education (Primary) | 41.4 | 4.6 | 1.2 |
| B Management Studies | 42.0 | 2.8 | 1.4 |

Data source: Project dataset: Enrolment on 4 programmes at Univ U, 2006-7

'Deprived schools' make up 31.5% of *all* schools in Ghana

# Equity Scorecard 2: Overview of Access to 4 Programmes at a Private University in Tanzania by Gender, SES and Age (2007-8)

| Programme | % female | % deprived school | % 30+ | % female & 30+ | % female & deprived school | % female, deprived school, & 30+ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| B Ed Maths | 13.02 | 12.56 | 68.84 | 4.65 | 2.4 | 0.0 |
| Medicine | 25.00 | 6.03 | 12.26 | 1.89 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| BBA | 42.06 | 10.28 | 18.87 | 7.48 | 3.74 | 0.0 |
| Law | 42.81 | 13.42 | 9.90 | 3.51 | 2.56 | 0.32 |

Data source: Project dataset: Enrolment on year 1, 2007-8, University T

Date of Scorecard: 14 May 2008

# Equity Scorecard 3: Measuring Intersection Through Indices. Access to 4 Programmes at a Private University in Tanzania, 2007-8

| Programme | Gender Index for Deprived School | Gender Index for Mature Students |
|---|---|---|
| B Ed Maths | 0.85 | 0.52 |
| Medicine | 0.0 | 0.62 |
| B BA | 0.86 | 0.95 |
| Law | 0.60 | 0.61 |

Gender Equity Index: Per cent F in group pop / percent F on programme

Source: Project dataset: Enrolment on year 1, 2007-8, University T

Date of Scorecard: 14 May 2008

If all women had the same opportunity for access, whatever their SES or age, the index would be 1.0

# Illuminating the Statistics

# Life History Interviews with Students

**Soliciting data on:**

- ✓ enablers & barriers to participation;
- ✓ social and learner identities;
- ✓ how identities might influence educational choices;
- ✓ linkages between auto/biographical, cultural, discursive, emotional and material factors;
- ✓ how gender, socio-economic status and age shapes resources, capital and educational aspirations.

# Interviews with Staff and Policymakers

- **Soliciting data on:**

  ✓ WP policy initiatives and implementation;

  ✓ Organisational strategies, challenges, monitoring;

  ✓ Barriers, enablers for access, recruitment and retention;

  ✓ MDGs.

# Interview Findings to Date

# Access: Gender

- Hegemonic codes of femininity and masculinity continue to influence subject choice (Lapping, 2005);
- Gender appropriate disciplines;
- Challenges for women to enter non-traditional disciplines/ women and 'hard' subjects *e.g.* STEM;
- Compulsory heterosexuality/inevitability of marriage and motherhood;
- Higher education perceived as disrupting hegemonic age-related marriage and motherhood norms;
- Reluctance to Educate Girls.

# Women in Antagonistic Relationship with STEM Subjects

- Conflict between codes regulating performance of femininity and codes regulating successful STEM academic performance.

- Liminality between female social identity and the required male academic and professional identity.

- Success constructed as crossing a gendered threshold to become more like a man, rather than removing the gendered code from the activity.

# Embodied Disciplines

- Certain body types are associated or disassociated with STEM disciplines:

  *Normally, when people see me, they ask me what course am I doing I say optometry then everybody laughs- like six years in this school! And moreover I'm a girl and I'm doing this course. They are surprised. They are very surprised because I'm also not that big. I'm smallish in nature and they are very surprised ...Because normally females read art courses and even in our class we are only four girls and the rest are males (Ghanaian female student).*

# The Hard/Soft Disciplinary Binary Reinforces Gendered Divisions

- Traditional view that STEM subjects require physical and cognitive strength (Morley *et al*, 2006).

- Cultural script if a subject is 'hard' it is unsuitable for women (see Larry Summers' comments).

*Interviewer: And what, what has it been like to be a female student on Engineering, in general terms, because Engineering is well known to be a male dominated area?*

*Interviewee:     Yaa, they are just claiming that the subjects in that field in fact it is difficult, so people have to fight. Maybe many females they don't want to work hard...to disturb their heads, maybe that is the reason for me to find that there few numbers of females in Engineering (Tanzanian female student).*

# Difference or Sameness?

*It was the moment when I was working with the carpentry workshop. When we started working on the filling locks...Things were very tough, but it was too hard to hold the jerk plane which we use to make the plain surface for the wood. It was too difficult. But when I came to finish that one, that is where it gave me the courage that I can do men's work (Tanzanian female student).*

# Women Carrying the Burden of Difference

- *I'm studying mathematics and in our level I'm the only woman, so sometimes they do tease me, they call me something, but I take them to be a joke or something...sometimes maybe I feel bad.* (Female student in Ghana)

# Affirmative Action as Reverse Discrimination

- *Last semester, we were doing this abstract algebra. Our lecturer was like he was so happy about the ladies that he always made sure we understood everything that he teaches. So being a lady has favoured me (Ghanaian female student).*

# Reluctance to Educate Girls

- *For sure my sisters are very bright but the issue is school fees, always school fees was a problem...We have an extended family, so the children of my uncles, aunties they also live with us at home....the girls didn't get {Education} actually....it is unfair and so disappointing...They were actually disappointed but they were forced to accept it because there was no way out (*Male Student at a Tanzanian Private University*).*

# The Inevitability of Marriage

- *Yes, an advice always to young girls, through my experience I advise them at this time when they finish their A-levels they shouldn't get married first, finish your education, complete your education then get married. (*Tanzanian, mature female student*)*

# Summary

- Widening Participation promoted at macro and meso levels;
- New constituencies of students are entering traditional power relations and practices in higher education;
- Socio-economic and gender privilege are coded as academic merit.
- Opportunity structures are constrained by cultural constructions of gender differences and age appropriate, heteronormative lifestyles.
- The higher educated woman is in antagonistic relationship to other discursive practices – especially in poorer communities.
- When gender is deconstructed and intersected with socio-economic status, poor women disappear.
- Quantitative targets to let more women into higher education can fail, or be meaningless while femaleness continues to be socially constructed as second class citizenship.
- Questions remain as to whether enhancing participation translates into poverty reduction and gains for wider civil society.

# Acknowledgements

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