Widening Participation in Higher Education in Ghana and Tanzania: Developing an Equity Scorecard

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Why This Research is Important
The Knowledge Economy

Higher education seen as a central site for:

- facilitating skills, knowledge and expertise essential to economic and social development in low-income countries;
- generating research and analysis to improve effectiveness of government policy and services.

A Political Economy of Participation in Higher Education

Lack of data on:

- Higher education, poverty reduction and the Millennium Development Goals;
- How different structures of inequality intersect e.g. gender and socio-economic background;
- Private higher education and widening participation;
- Socio-cultural theory in context of African higher education.
Challenges in African Higher Education

- The rise of private higher education;
- Management and governance;
- Inclusiveness as a dimension of public accountability;
- Massification = social inclusion?
- Policy implementation;
- Gender in terms of participation, service delivery and employment;
- Quality and relevance of the curriculum;
- Brain drain;
- Research capacity;
- Languages and indigenous knowledges;
- HIV/AIDS.
Higher education may affect poverty by:

- raising the incomes of those with education;
- fostering high level skills, knowledge and competencies, to promote economic growth.

Poverty increasingly perceived as capability, as well as material deprivation (Sen, 1997).
Mass Higher Education?

- Student enrolment worldwide:
  - 13 million in 1960
  - 82 million in 1995
  - 132 million in 2004

Capacity Challenge

- Africa has:
  - 54 countries
  - Over 700 million people
  - 300 universities

(Teferra and Altbach, 2004).
African Participation Rates in Higher Education

- 24% globally
- 6% in Sub-Saharan Africa
- 3% in Ghana
- 1% in Tanzania

(UNESCO, 2006)
Policy Constructions: International and Supranational Convergence?

- UNESCO World Declaration on Higher Education (1998);
- World Bank (2000; 2002);
- UK’s Africa Commission (2005)
Interventions

- Quota systems for:
  - scheduled castes and tribes (India)
  - ethnic groups (Malaysia)
  - black students (South Africa)
  - aborigines (Australia)
  - deprived regions/schools (Ghana, Nigeria and Sri Lanka)

- Affirmative action programmes and scholarships for women (Uganda).

- Pre-sessional programmes for women (Tanzania).
Theorising and Operationalising Widening Participation
Widening Participation Discussed in Terms of...

Sociological Discourses
- human/ citizenship rights
- social justice, inclusion and equality
- habitus, doxa and social/cultural capital and deprivation
- social reproduction/social construction e.g. of aspirations
- modernisation/ detraditionalisation
- redistribution
- capabilities

Economic Discourses
- human capital
- sustainable economic and social development
- international competitiveness and wealth creation
- globalised knowledge economy
The Nature of the Barrier in the UK

- Features of the compulsory and post-compulsory education systems;

- Economic factors, particularly the impact of the labour market and of unemployment;

- Influence of social and cultural factors;

- Notion that individual “deficits” are to blame for non-participation.

(Thomas, 2001)
Barriers in Africa

- Triangle of family, school and community;
- Micro-level decision-making;
- Socio-cultural barriers;
- Educating women perceived as unproductive;
- Poverty;
- Low participation rates in schooling;
- Under-investment in HE;
- Violence, war and disease;
- HE as a public and private good. Cost sharing. Who pays?
- Access to what?

(Kwesiga, 2002; Morley et al. 2006)
Criticisms of WP Research

- **Functionalism:**
  - dichotomises material and cultural experience;
  - locates barriers in value orientations of social classes;
  - depicts working-class culture as pathological;
  - theorises disadvantage, rather than privilege;
  - ignores social processes within education.

- **New Sociology of Education:**
  The relationship between
  - class background
  - university participation
  - social reproduction
  argued without evidence from quantitative methods.
Challenges of International, Comparative WP Research

- Transferability of theories, concepts and research methodologies;
- Dangers of post-colonial imposition, misrecognition or deficit constructions;
- Lack of datasets.
Dichotomous Notions

- enablers and barriers;
- cultural and material;
- middle and working class engagements with HE;
- structures and agency;
- participants and non-participants.
A Neo-liberal Project?

- Is widening access simply a part of the neo-liberal project of self-improvement and social mobility in which subjectivities, aspirations and desires are constantly aligned with changes in the labour market?

- Does access to HE involve invoking shame and disconnection between past and present, education and community?

(Walkeridine, 2003).
Our Theoretical Underpinnings

- Influence of social processes;
- Some enable and some impede differential participation in, progression through, and outcomes for under-represented social groups;
- Factors and structures are inter-related and contextualised;
- Intersectionality of identity and continuity of experience.
Who is Participating?
Participation is Increasing
Who is Participating in Ghana?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic quintile</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rich</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interview Findings from Ghana

- Poverty (impeding access and completion of education, child labour, social deprivation);
- The Role of Mothers and Fathers;
- Gender (maths, domestic responsibilities, academic achievement and role models);
- Motivations for entering HE (career aspirations, self-improvement, escaping poverty);
- Mature students (as ‘other’, life/work balance);
- Decision-making (strategic, late for mature students);
- Emotional Engagement with HE (fear of failure, joy of success, anxieties of transition).
Who is Participating in Tanzania?

The chart shows the percentage of adults who completed higher education by economic quintile in Tanzania. The data is presented for males (light blue) and females (red) respectively. The quintiles are labeled as Poor, Q2, Q3, Q4, Rich, and Total. The percentage for males varies across quintiles with the highest percentage for the Rich quintile at 1.1%. For females, the percentage is consistently 0.2% across all quintiles and Total.
Interview Findings from Tanzania

- Private HE as 2nd choice;
- Gender (women entering ‘non-traditional’ programmes, domestic responsibilities, motherhood, equality);
- Agents of support (extended family, peers, colleagues, teachers, academic staff);
- Academic Identity
- Pedagogy (independent learning, remoteness of academic staff);
- Influence of early years’ experiences (schooling, urban/rural, previous family members entering HE);
- Impact of HE (skill development, social networks, confidence, status).
Gender and Age in Higher Education

- In Sub-Saharan Africa, 38 per cent of students in higher education are women (UNESCO, 2006);

- Tanzania & Ghana national statistics are not disaggregated by age of students.
What the Project is Doing
Methodology

- **Quantitative methods:**
  - international, national and institutional statistics
  - Equity Scorecard

- **Qualitative methods:**
  - analysis of policy documents
  - life history interviews with students
  - interviews with staff
Research Sites

Public Universities

✓ University of Cape Coast, Ghana
✓ University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Private Universities

✓ Central University College, Accra, Ghana
✓ Tumaini University, Tanzania
Quantifying Inequalities
What is an Equity Scorecard?

- A **Scorecard** provides quantitative measures of critical moments in complex processes.

- An **Equity** Scorecard compares these measures for different groups.

- Datasets can be explored in multiple ways;
  - e.g. what proportion of all drop outs are women….?
  - …..What proportion of women drop out….?
## An Example of a Framework for an Equity Scorecard

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Equity indicators</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Deprived schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Proportion of all students enrolling in BSc Commerce</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retention</td>
<td>Proportion of all students who withdraw during first year</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>Proportion of all students who achieve a first class degree</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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:

- Programmes of Study e.g. medicine, management
- Institutional Sites e.g. public and private HEIs.
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;
✓ whether gender, socio-economic status and age shapes resources, capital and educational aspirations.
Why Life History?

- Participation in HE can be influenced by long-term factors in students’ lives.

- Inequalities in participation in HE are evident throughout the lifecourse of participants and non-participants.

- Opportunities in the early stages of education can play a key role in whether HE is an option.

- Life history interviews can deepen understanding of how disadvantaged learners overcome barriers to participation, and how they negotiate their identity as learners in HE.

(Gorard et al. 2006; Reay et al. 2001; Archer and Hutchings 2000).
Interviews with Staff

- 100 policy-makers per country;
  - in Ministries with responsibility for higher education;
  - in national organisations with an interest in higher education / equity / poverty reduction;
  - in the case study sites.
Research Findings to Date
Enrolment in HE is rising – but are participation rates increasing?

Participation by women has increased; 35% of students in Ghana, and 30% in Tanzania, are women (compared to 21% in Ghana and 17% in Tanzania in 1991);

Participation by women is higher in private HEI (around 40%);

Women’s participation is highest in education, the social sciences and arts;

Women’s participation is lowest in science, engineering and agriculture;

Patterns in applications to programmes by access route reflect the status of the programme;

Students applying through the mature route are over-represented in certain programmes (e.g. BEd. Primary Ed).

Students’ socio-economic background is strongly correlated with the school they attended (You are the school you went to).
Working Towards...

- Constructing knowledge that can contribute to the democratisation of higher education.
Acknowledgements

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