

Democratising Higher Education in Ghana and Tanzania: Opportunity Structures and Social Processes



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Widening Participation Policy Discourses: Some Problematics



- A force for democratisation or differentiation ?
- Meritocratic equalisation or elite formation?
- Expansion of opportunities disproportionately for those who are already privileged (Shavit *et al* 2007).
- Redistribution or diversion?
- Does adding numbers to previously elite systems undermine or redistribute the power of socio-economically privileged groups?
- State interventionist approach to steering/ regulating higher education systems?
- Assumption that macro and micro level aspirations will overlap (Naidoo, 2006)?
- Neo-liberal project of self-improvement and social mobility in which subjectivities, aspirations and desires are aligned with labour market changes (Walkerdine, 2003).

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A Mass Global System?



- **Global enrolment in higher education in 2004 (132 million) was more than double the figure thirteen years earlier.**
- **In 2005, internationally, the global Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) was 24 % (UNESCO, 2007:124).**
- **The highest participation rates are seen in North America (70 % GER)**
- **The lowest GER in the world is in Sub-Saharan Africa where only 5.1 % enter higher education (UNESCO, 2007).**

Participating Women



- Participation rates for women have increased between 1999 and 2005 in all regions of the world.
- Gender Parity Index (GPI) for higher education is 1.05.
- Globally, there are more women than men in HE.
- This is unevenly distributed across regions and disciplines.
- In 2005 there were more women than for men in Northern America, Western Europe, Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America, the Caribbean, and Central Asia.
- There are more men than women in East Asia and the Pacific, South and West Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.
- Questions about which women, which HEIs and academic disciplines in a globalised knowledge economy ?

What Impedes African Women's Participation?

- The morphology of women's bodies.
- Biological development assumes social dimensions (Butler, 2006).
- This impacts on age-appropriate participation.
- Women perceived as a culturally conditioned social category.
- Gendered divisions of labour.
- Conforming to traditional female roles is a risk to educational opportunities.
- Non-conforming allows women to access education, but places them at risk socially.

Widening Participation in HE in Ghana and Tanzania



- This ESRC/DfID funded project is developing Equity Scorecards to intersect 3 structures of inequality:
 - ✓ gender
 - ✓ socio-economic background (measured via deprived schools' index)
 - ✓ age
- In relation to 3 Educational Indicators:
 - ✓ access
 - ✓ retention
 - ✓ achievement
- In 4 HEIs (1 public and 1 private in each country)
 - + illuminate statistics via:
 - ✓ 200 life history interviews with students and
 - ✓ 200 interviews with staff and policymakers.

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Equity Scorecard 1: Rates of participation on 4 programmes for different social groups in Ghanaian Public University



	% of all students who are women	% of all students from deprived schools	% of all students who are women from deprived schools
BSc Physical Science	15.3	2.2	0.6
B Commerce	28.8	3.3	1.0
B Education (Primary Education)	41.2	4.6	1.2
Business and Management Studies (BMS)	42	2.8	1.4

Multiple Markers of Identity



- Women, in general, have a low participation rate in sciences,
- This decreases for women from deprived schools.
- Do academic disciplines continue to be linked to gender and to socio-economic backgrounds?
- When gender gains are scrutinised, it seems that poorer women are not gaining access to high status disciplines.

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Equity Scorecard 2: Admission to 2 Programmes in Tanzanian Private University



Programme	% admissions women (2007/8)	Equity Index <small>% F Admissions / %F Enrolment (general)</small>	% admissions (M&F) aged 30+ (2007/8)
LLB (Law)	42.20	1.03	13.70
B BA	42.10	1.03	15.00

Equity Scorecard 3: Admission to 2 programmes in Tanzanian Private University



Programme	% of women admitted, under 30 years	% of women admitted, aged 30 years +	Equity Index (% mature women / % mature students)
LLB (Law)	91.70	8.30	0.61
B BA	80.00	20.00	1.30

Age-Related Norms



- Rates of access for women in Law and Business degrees at this private university are higher than the national average for women's participation in HE;
- Rates of access for women in Law and Business degrees at this private university are similar to their rates of participation in this university as a whole;
- **HOWEVER**, when gender is intersected with age, it is clear that gendered participation follows age-related norms in some disciplines but further increases inequity in others.

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Private Higher Education: Complex Material and Discursive Space



- Decoupling of HE from direct state control.
- Subjecting HE to market forces/ market colonialism.
- Redefining HE as a competitive private good.
- In Africa, the incapacity of the fiscal state to finance education has contributed to private sector growth.
- New forms of economic and political domination unleashed on developing countries.
- New opportunity structures or diversion for women?
- In Ghana, women comprise 32 % of the overall undergraduate population, but 41% of the students in private higher education.
- In Tanzania, 30 % of the overall undergraduate population is female, but 36 % of students in private higher education are women .

Faute de Mieux or New Opportunities?



- *I did not have any information about this university. I only came to know about it after applying to University of Dar es Salaam and could not get a vacancy (Female Tanzanian student).*
- *Actually, I wanted to go University of Ghana, Legon. .. my grade wasn't good so ... I came here (Ghanaian female student).*
- *I had a colleague here before I came here and she told me about the good parts of the school. The curriculum that they offer and their way of admitting students, such that they do not discriminate or disregard you through your previous grades. They give you a stepping-stone for you to prove yourself that you are really capable of making it in the university (Ghanaian female student).*

Core and Periphery Provision



- Numerous comments about poor quality provision, commercialisation of services, lack of accountability, facilities, attention to cultural aspects of HE.
- *The library is not that big enough to take the capacity of the students we have. So most of the time we have to hang around or stay outside the library...even in the rainy season...*
- *We cannot see our copies of exam scripts unless we pay.*
- *I always say that ... we don't have residence and we don't participate in any other activities but the fees are still high. Even like I always asked my friends "so apart from lectures that we do get, the examinations that we do write, is that all that we get for the money? For because we don't get any other benefit from it and moving from here to another campus is another surprise.*

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Equity Implications of Private Higher Education



- Some members of socially disadvantaged groups have fewer opportunities for consumer choices.
- Disrupting the (binaried) belief that markets promote efficiency and a successful economy and that the state protects equity.
- The development of new marketised provision can paradoxically offer new opportunity structures for new constituencies of students.
- Socially disadvantaged groups could be getting diverted/ re-routed into peripheral higher education.
- This reinforces stratification of the sector, social differentiation and reserves the higher-status universities for the elite (David, 2007).
- '*Buying* an education becomes a substitute for *getting* an education' (Kenway *et al.*, 1993: 116).

Summary

- **Opportunity structures in Ghana and Tanzania reflect social inequalities.**
- **The type of school attended influences access to higher education, the type of programmes selected and the age for participation.**
- **Material poverty does not necessarily mean aspirational poverty.**
- **Poor students are more likely to be in non-elite, private universities than those students whose parents had strategically mobilised multiple forms of capital.**
- **Difference is converted into educational disadvantage.**
- **The circular relationship between social identity, social capital and access to higher education is as evident in Ghana and Tanzania as elsewhere.**
- **Gender gains, when scrutinised, can often mask socio-economic privilege and age-related norms.**

Website



[www.sussex.ac.uk/education/
wideningparticipation](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/education/wideningparticipation)