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Momentum and Melancholia:
Gender Equity in Higher Education

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22 July, 2009

Is the Present the Future That We Imagined in the Past?

- Did feminism/ the left/ counter hegemonic advocates predict the scale of neo-liberal driven change?

- Did the traditionalists predict the industrialisation and massification of HE?

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Momentum and Melancholia

- **Pessimistic repertoire of challenges for gender equity in the academy.**

- **Gender and melancholy are often deeply connected (Butler, 2002).**

- **Loss, hurt, anger and grief often underpin studies of gender and power in higher education.**

- **Writing/ discussing gender equality means referring to something that does not yet exist.**

- **Desire, as well as loss, needs to be considered.**

- **Tendency to critique, rather than to celebrate or engage in futurology.**

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Discourse of Crisis, Loss, Damage, Contamination, and Decay

- the university in ruins (Readings, 1996);

- the 'degradation' of academia (Nisbet, 1971);

- the university 'in crisis' (Sommer, 1995);

- the death of autonomy (Dill, 2001);

- proletarianisation (Dearlove, 1997).

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Why Re-Imagine Higher Education?

Major site of:

- ✓ **cultural practice**

- ✓ **identity formation**

- ✓ **knowledge formation and dissemination**

- ✓ **symbolic control.**

Caught between:

- ✓ **archaism**

- ✓ **hyper-modernisation**

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Disqualified Discourses

- **John Denham's (UK Minister for HE) priorities (2008) for the next 15 years are:**

- ✓ **innovation, knowledge transfer exchange (techno-science?) and wealth creation (for others).**

X not inclusion and equalities .

Emphasis on:

- ✓ **knowledge liquification and optimisation**

X not power/knowledge or knowledge as pleasure.

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New Times/ Change Vocabularies

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- **Generative potential of the global;**

- **Academic hypermobility/ cosmopolitanism** (Kenway, 2004);

- **New ecologies of knowledge/ digitisation;**

- **Destabilisation of secure knowledge niches** (Appadurai, 2006);

- **Innovative ideas/practices from outside the North and outside of the academy** (Santos, 1999);

- **Knowledge transfer/exchange disrupting centres and margins** (Biesta, 2007);

- **Barriers dissolving between public and private** (Ball, 2008).

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Liquifying Higher Education

- **Higher education is becoming a single, world-wide arrangement (Marginson, 2006).**

- **Boundaries and borders are no longer stable.**

- **Democratising of knowledge or de-territorialisation of hegemonies?**

- **Nationalised knowledge in a globalised world.**

- **Are gender inequalities also globalised (Morley et al., 2006)?**

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Tensions Between Desire, Desiccation and Distributive Justice

- **Difference conceptualised as disparagement.**

- **Transformation driven by neo-liberal policies rather than academic imaginary.**

- **HE both commodified and commodifying.**

- **Need a sociology of absences (Santos,1999).**

The Underbelly of the Global Beast

- **Hyper-modernisation of global, entrepreneurial, corporate, commercialised universities and speeded up public intellectuals on the move.**

- **Underpinned by domestic/ private archaism of casual research labour, poor quality employment environments and conditions.**

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Disqualifying Gender

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Gender in Higher Education Policy Discourse

- **Gender = access, disadvantage and remediation.**

- **Women′s increased access = feminisation (Leathwood and Read, 2008).**

- **HE products and processes = gender neutral.**

- **Power and privilege = under-theorisation.**

- **Redistributive measures = social engineering.**

- **Equity = threat to excellence.**

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Feminising the Academy?

- **Participation rates for women undergraduate students in higher education have increased between 1999 - 2005 in all regions of the world.**

- **Global Gender Parity Index of 1.05 (UNESCO, 2007).**

- **Unevenly distributed across regions, disciplines, and socio-economic groups.**

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Moral Panic

- **Women's newly-found professional and economic independence blamed for:**

✓ **societal destabilisation**

✓ **a crisis in masculinity**

✓ **devaluing of professions/ academic credentials.**

(Evans, 2008; Quinn, 2003).

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The Feminisation Debate as Partial and Exclusionary

Excludes consideration of:

✓ **leadership in higher education**

✓ **whether quantitative change has allowed more discursive/less space for gender.**

✓ **intersecting gender with other structures of inequality including social class.**

Questions We Still Need to Ask?

- Is gender equality just about quantitative change?

- What are women accessing in higher education?

- Is gender mainstreaming working?

- Are feminists still speaking from the margins?

- How are gender differences relayed and constructed in higher education today?

- Is difference conceptualised as disparagement/deficit?

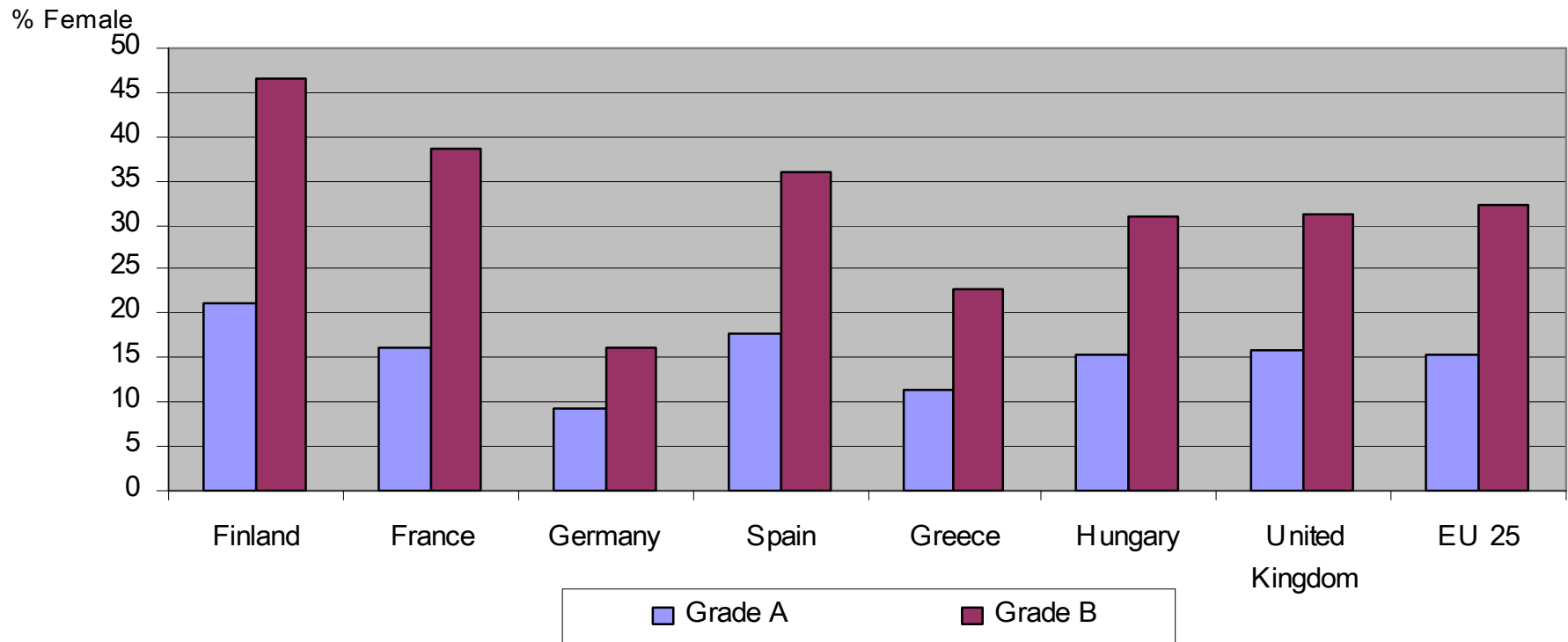- Is transformation driven by neo-liberal policies rather than academic imaginary?

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Gender Challenges

- **Gender insensitive pedagogy** (Welch, 2006);
- **Sexual harassment** (Townsley and Geist, 2000);
- **Gendered micropolitics** (Morley, 1999);
- **Limited opportunities for promotion and professional development** (Knights and Richards, 2003);
- **Gender and knowledge production and dissemination** (Hughes, 2002)
- **Gender Pay Gap** (EU, 2007)
- **Recognition and reflexivity** (Hey, 2009)
- **Gendered curricula and subject choices** (Morley et al, 2006).

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Missing Women (Sen, 2003)

- **Women's participation as undergraduate students globally has increased rapidly.**

- **Women's participation in senior academic and executive positions globally is increasing very slowly.**

- **Women disappear when power, resources and influence increase.**

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Proportion Of Female Academic Staff by Grade in The European Union, 2004 (EU, 2006).

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% Female

Legend: Grade A (light purple), Grade B (dark maroon)

Categories: Finland, France, Germany, Spain, Greece, Hungary, United Kingdom, EU 25

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Women's Participation In Management and Academic Leadership in Selected Commonwealth Countries, 2006 (Singh, 2008)
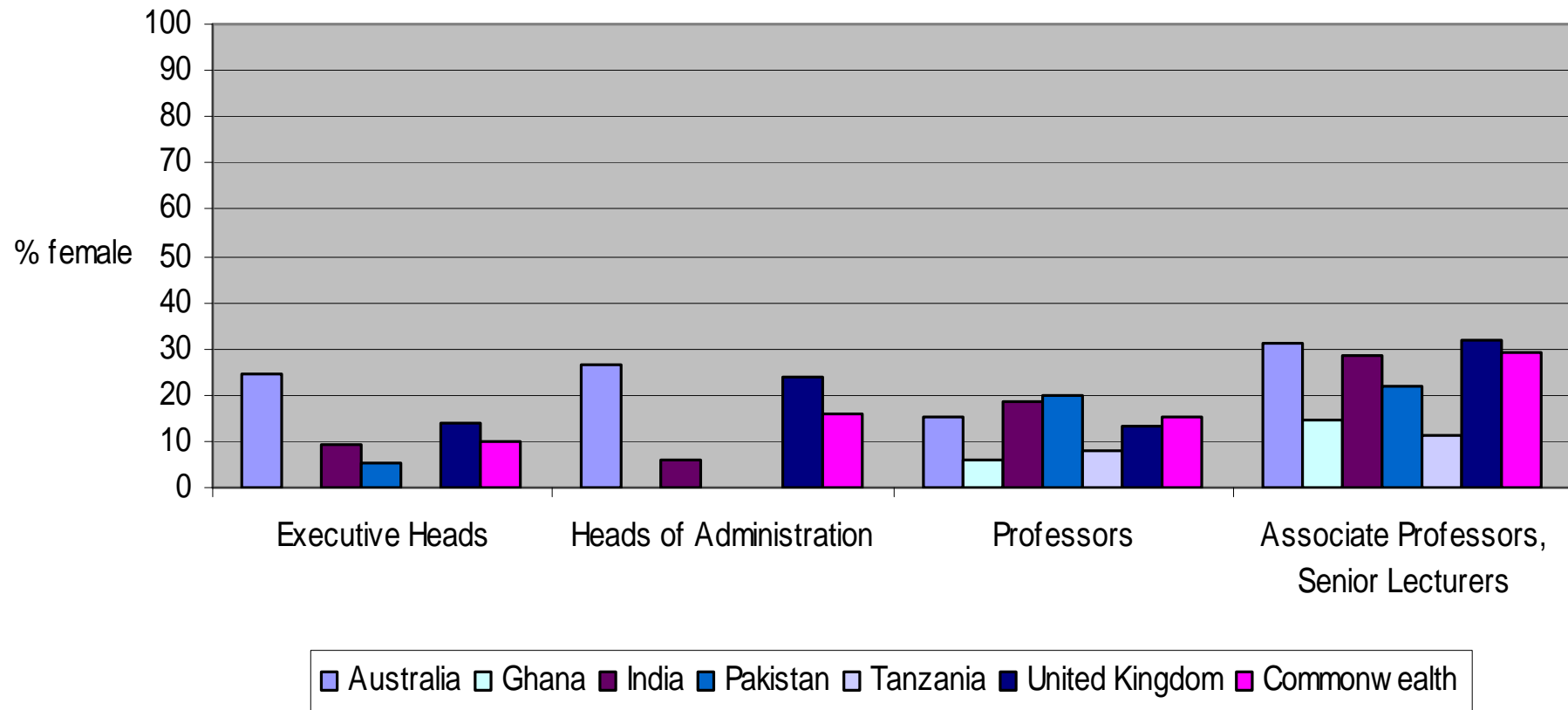
Equity Scorecards

- **Examine how diversity amongst students is translated into equity in educational outcomes.**

- **(Bensimon and Polkinghorne, 2003)**

- **Measure advantage and disadvantage simultaneously.**

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Widening Participation in Higher Education in Ghana and Tanzania

Measuring:

- **Sociological variables of gender, age, socio-economic status (SES)**

In Relation to:
- **Educational Outcomes: access, retention and achievement.**

In Relation to:
- **4 Programmes of Study in each HEI.**
- **2 Public and 2 private HEIs.**

(Morley, Leach and Lugg, 2008)
www.sussex.ac.uk/education/wideningparticipation

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Equity Scorecard 1: Access to 4 Programmes at a Tanzanian Public University

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Programme	% of Students on the Programme						
	Women	Low SES	Age 30 or over	Mature and Low SES	Women and low SES	Women 30 or over	Poor Mature Women
B. Commerce	34.22	5.18	1.67	0.00	1.67	0.17	0.00
LLB. Law	26.00	9.00	2.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.00
B.Sc. Engineering	27.45	6.99	0.87	0.00	2.18	0.44	0.00
B. Sc. with Education	16.43	12.54	5.36	0.71	1.07	0.00	0.00

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Equity Scorecard 2: Access to 4 Programmes at a Private University in Tanzania

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Programme	% of Students on the Programme					
	Women	Low SES	Age 30 or over	Women and low SES	Women 30 or over	Poor Mature Women
B. Business Administration	42.06	10.28	18.87	3.74	7.48	0.00
LLB. Law	13.02	12.74	68.84	1.40	4.65	0.00
MD. Medicine	42.81	9.90	13.42	2.56	3.51	0.32
B. ED. Maths	25.00	6.03	12.26	0.00	1.74	0.00

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Equity Scorecard 3: Registration of Second Year Students in a Public University in Ghana

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Programme	% of Students on the Programme					
	Women	Low SES	Age 30 or over	Women and low SES	Women 30 or over	Poor Mature Women
B. Commerce	29.92	1.12	11.36	0.55	1.39	0.00
B. Management Studies	36.36	2.02	67.68	1.01	21.21	1.01
B. Education (Primary)	47.06	1.27	7.14	0.42	3.78	0.00
B. Sc. Optometry	30.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

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Private Higher Education

- **Female enrolments are higher in private than in public institutions in Ghana and Tanzania.**

- **Core and periphery provision.**

- **Are socially disadvantaged groups getting diverted into lower status provision?**

- **Is the market reinforcing stratification of the sector and social differentiation?**

- '*Buying an education becomes a substitute for getting an education*' **(Kenway et al., 1993: 116).**

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'Now' Universities Built on Yesterday's Foundations

- Hyper-modernisation of liquified globalisation.

- Archaism of unequal employment and participation practices.

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Imagining the Gendered University of the Future...

- Challenge hegemonic messaging systems in higher education.

- Feminist reconstruction and develop new narratives of higher education.

- Find new conceptual grammars for theorising gender that go beyond quantitative (under)representation.

- Remember that gender is a verb, as well as a noun.

- Feminist theory to be applied to social practices.

- Need for a gendered cultural sociology of higher education that unmasks inequalities.

- De-parochialise research - geographically and theoretically.

- Globalise and systematise concerns with gender equity and participation.

- Find new and robust ways to research gender that recognises differences among women.

- Acknowledge, as well as a booming knowledge economy, the possibility of a knowledge recession.

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ESRC Seminar Series:

Imagining the University

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