

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.

(Roberts, 2005; UNESCO, 1998; World Bank, 2002; 2005; Commission for Africa, 2005).

A Political Economy of Participation in Higher Education

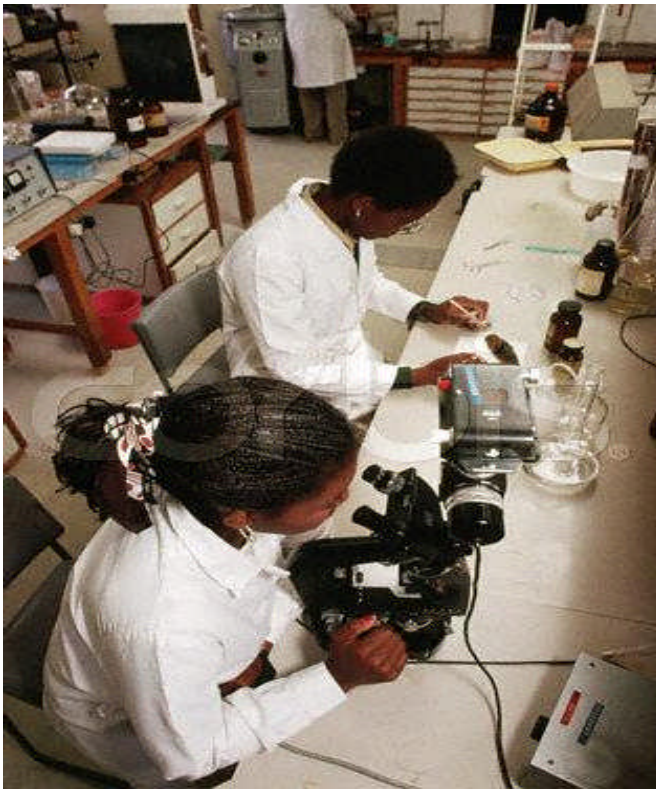
Lack of data on:

- **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 and Poverty Reduction



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

(UNESCO, 1998; UNESCO, 2006).

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?

(Walkerline, 2003).

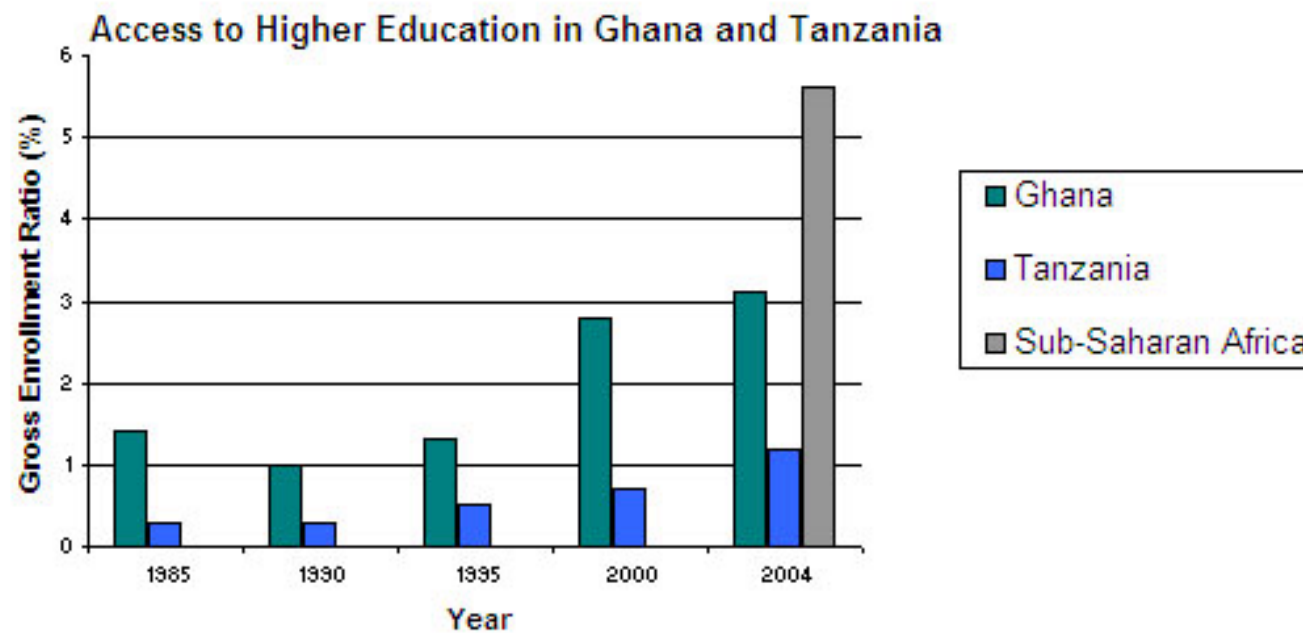
Our Theoretical Underpinnings

- 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.

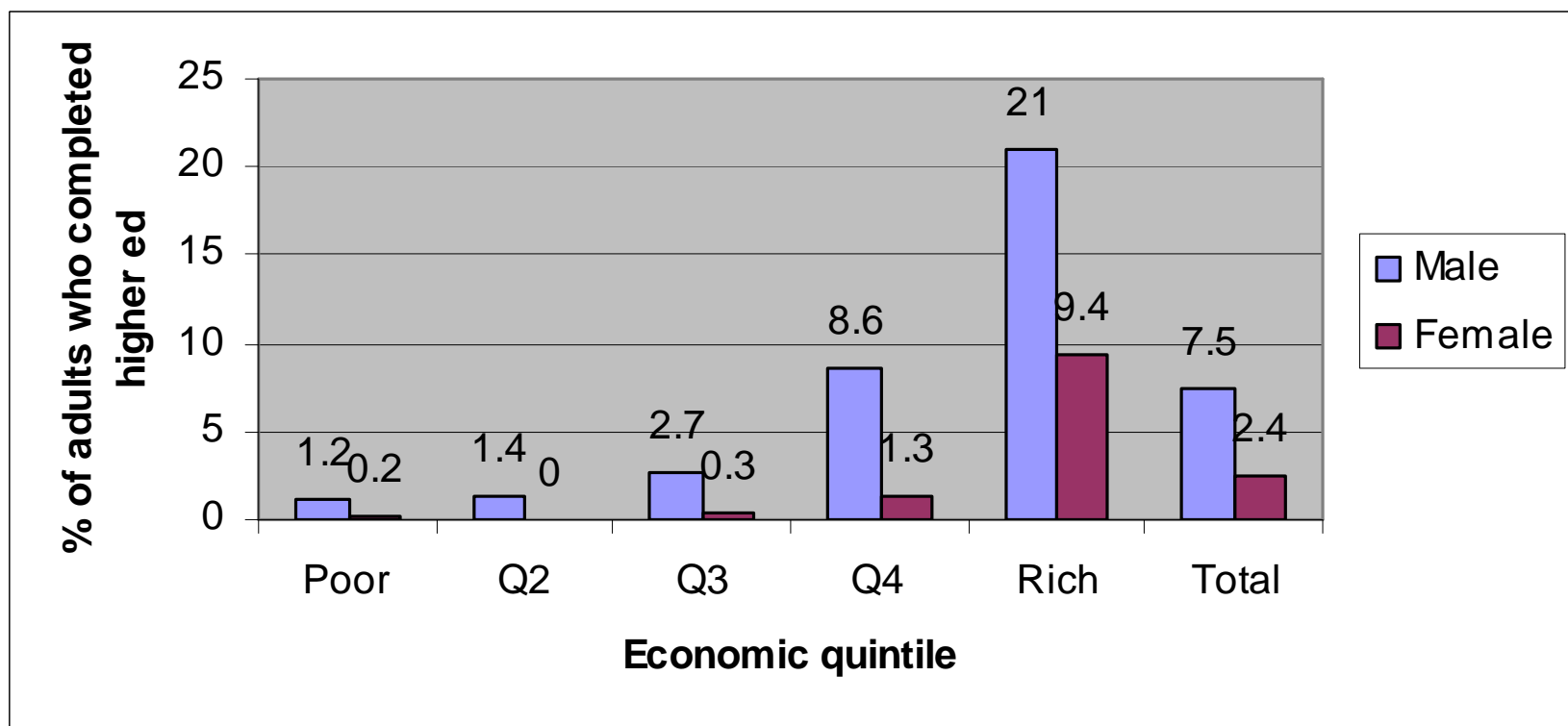


Who is Participating?

Participation is Increasing



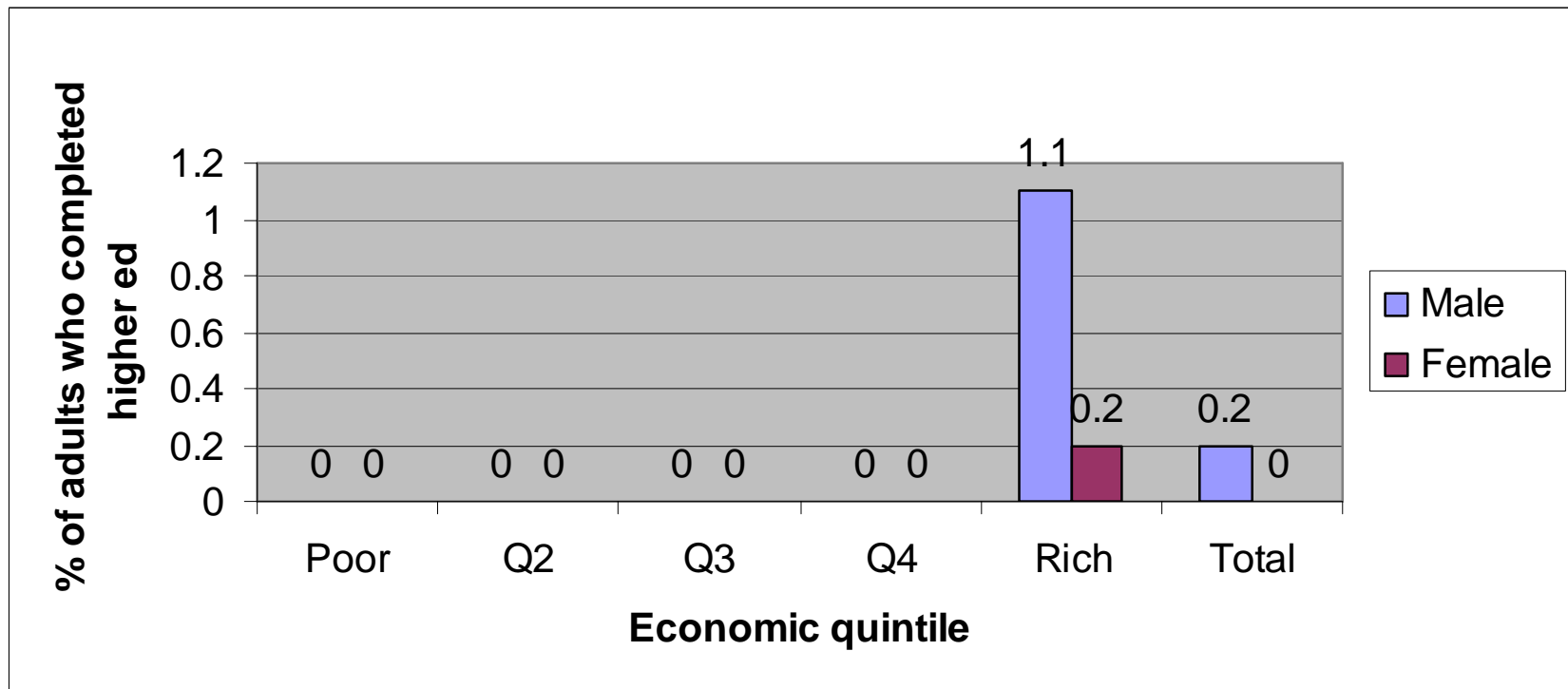
Who is Participating in Ghana?



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?



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



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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

Domain	Equity indicators	Women	Rural	Deprived schools
Access	Proportion of all students enrolling in BSc Commerce	10%	2%	0.3%
Retention	Proportion of all students who withdraw during first year	30%	80%	5%
Achievement	Proportion of all students who achieve a first class degree	2%	1.5%	4%

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

Sounds and Silences: Emerging Patterns in Ghana and Tanzania

- 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.

Website

www.sussex.ac.uk/education/wideningparticipation

Acknowledgements



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