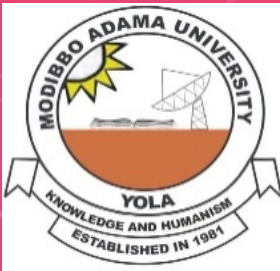


HOW DO YOUNG WOMEN NAVIGATE EDUCATION AND WORK IN RURAL SUB SAHARAN AFRICA?

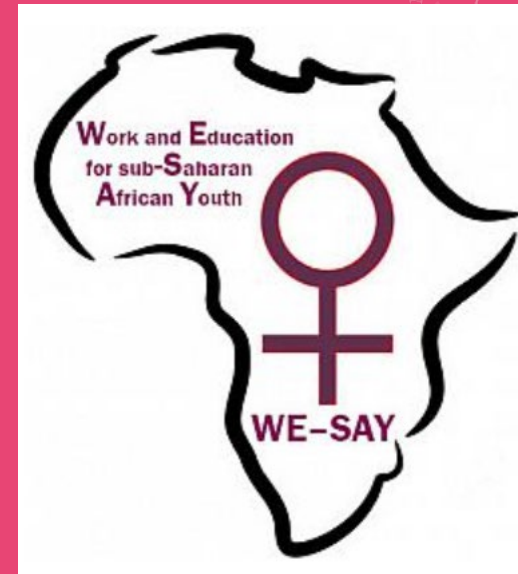
CONCEPTS AND CONTEXTS

SAFIYA ADAMU, NKONZO MKHIZE AND BARBARA CROSSOUARD



OVERVIEW

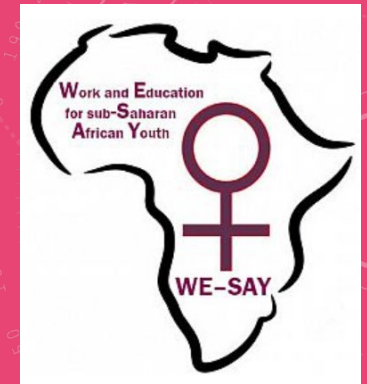
- The WE-SAY project and its partners
- Its conceptual framework
- The contexts of our research
 - Northern Nigeria (Safiya Adamu)
 - South Africa (Nkonzo Mkhize)



YOUTH, GENDER AND EDUCATION: CHANGING LANDSCAPES OF WORK IN RURAL SUB SAHARAN AFRICA

- Funded by the British Academy (GCRF /Youth Futures), 2020-2023
- Collaboration between the Centre for International Education, University of Sussex, the University of KwaZulu Natal, Durban, South Africa and the Modibbo Adama University of Technology, Yola, Nigeria

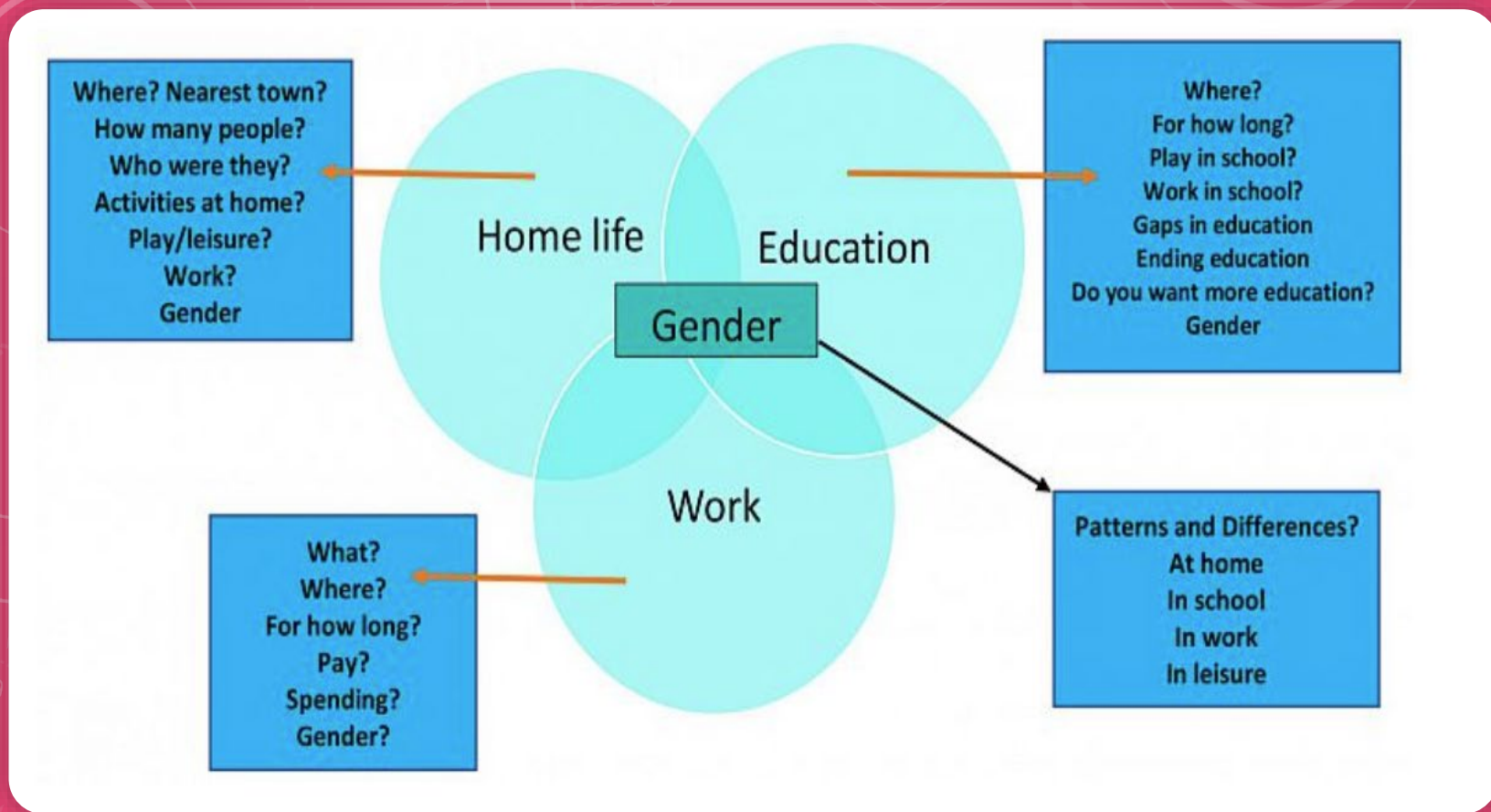
<https://www.sussex.ac.uk/research/centres/centre-for-international-education/projects/we-say>



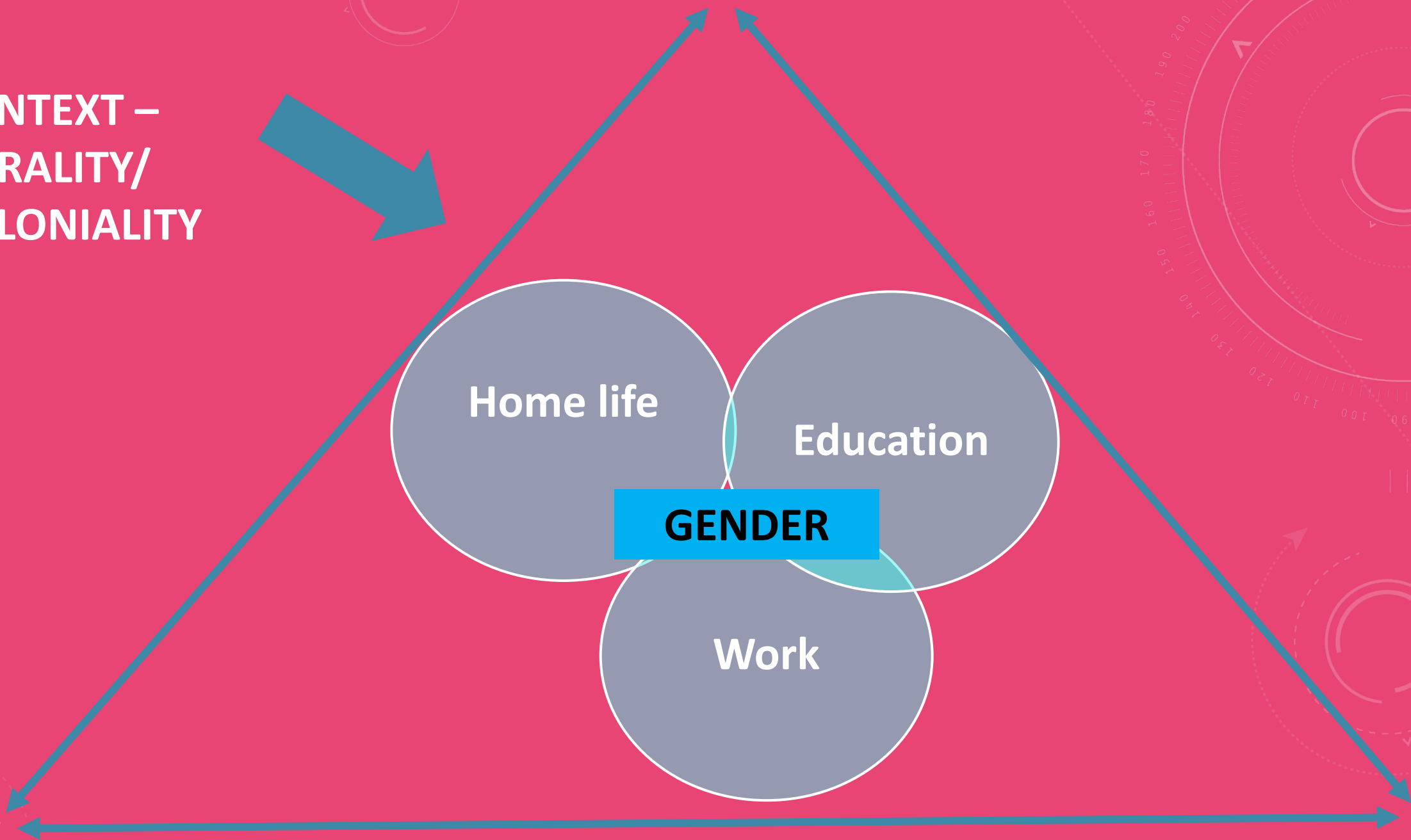
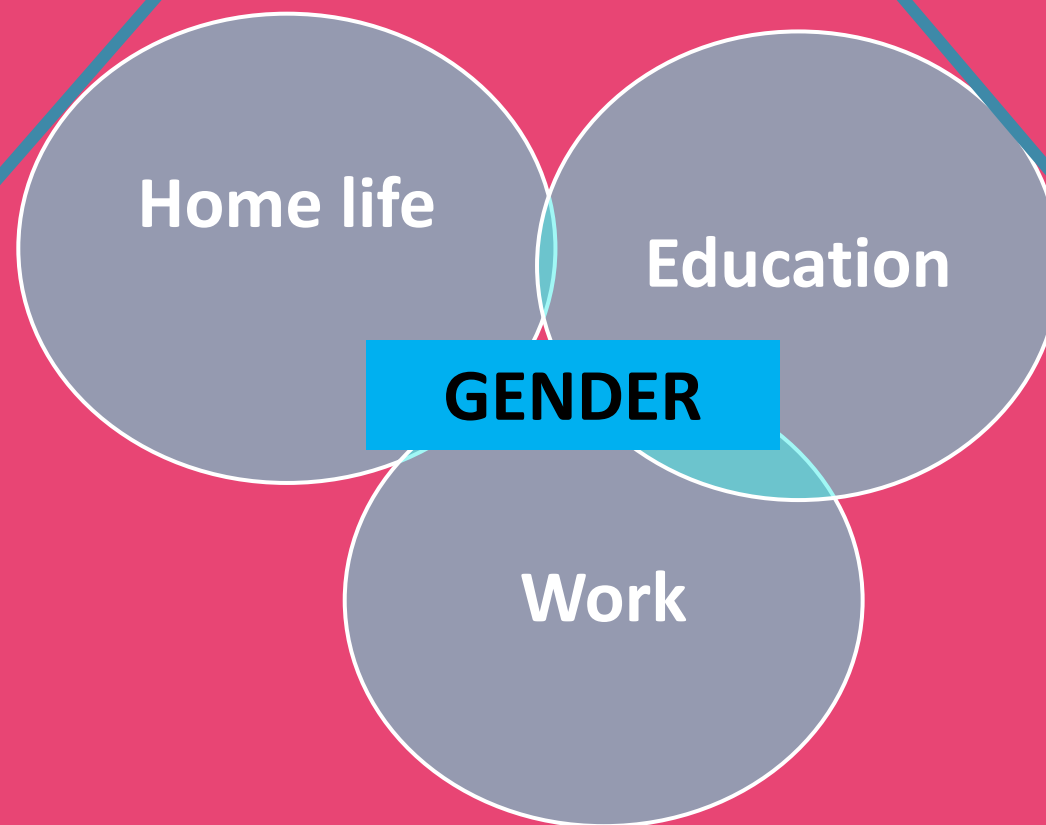
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How do female youth in rural contexts of Sub Saharan Africa understand 'work' and what significance does this have within their lives and imagined futures?
- How have these female youth navigated the demands of work and education?
- What are female youths' agendas for social change with respect to work and how their work is valued?

YOUNG WOMEN NAVIGATING THE DEMANDS OF WORK, FAMILY AND EDUCATION IN RURAL CONTEXTS OF SSA



**CONTEXT –
RURALITY/
COLONIALITY**



DOMINANT UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE RELATIONSHIP OF EDUCATION AND WORK

- Human capital theory has been the *dominant lens*
 - Developed by economists Schultz and Becker in the 1960s, based on US context at that time
 - Focus on rates of return of schooling in terms of *individual* benefits (improved life chances/higher salaries) and *wider* benefits to society/the national economy
- HCT has been – and still is - central in justifications for development of education, particularly within institutions such as the World Bank

CRITIQUES!!

- The development of HCT related to a very specific economic context – problematically assumed to be generalisable (Marginson, 2019)
- Despite changes in global economy, HCT is often now used in a *prescriptive* rather than descriptive way (Wheelahan et al, 2022)
- Its evidence base in Africa is flimsy (Bennell, 1996)
- HCT treats education as a ‘black box’ (Resnick, 2006) – in addition to the wider social and cultural capitals that contribute to educational success, it fails to recognize the histories of education and the relationship of postcolonial societies to the global economy (Crossouard and Dunne, 2021; McGrath et al, 2019)

YOUNG WOMEN'S WORK IN RURAL SSA?

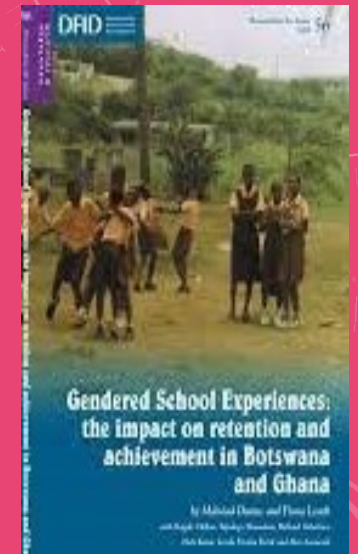
- HCT problematically assumes a linear, staged trajectory from education to work - assumes western / modern norms of childhood, youth, adulthood (Dunne et al, 2021) and constructs in deficit all those who do not meet those norms
- HCT assumes education is benign and equitable!
- It flattens gender to an outcome - a male/female binary - the gender regimes of work are just assumed
- It privileges *formalized* forms of wage labour
- It does not address (women's) unpaid reproductive labour and how the waged economy depends on this (Crossouard et al, 2021; 2022)

EDUCATION / SCHOOLING

- Learning happens in multiple places – home, work, church, community
- In schools we learn different subjects AND we also learn about our gender
- Alongside the ‘formal’ curriculum subjects in schools, we learn ‘proper’ ways of behaving (the hidden curriculum)
 - *We learn our gender – expectations of how girls behave and how boys behave*
 - *We learn expectations of the work that girls and boys should do*
 - *We learn respect for authority*
 - *We learn to respect timetables*
 - *In the most general sense, we learn our place in society, and how this is gendered*
- The outcomes of education (results in school exams) shape our life chances - with high grades, a successful pupil can progress to secondary then higher education, and (perhaps) to a well-paid job

EDUCATION AND WORK

- Schooling is *not separate from work* – many forms of work are demanded through both the formal and the hidden curriculum (Dunne et al, 2005)
- This work instantiates and reproduces **gendered norms** - it routinely involves **gender violence**, both symbolic and physical
 - Subject specialisms are gendered – boys are seen as having ‘natural’ abilities in maths/sciences
 - Organization of space is gendered – in classroom and playgrounds, boys and girls are segregated, boys are clustered around/controlling girls
 - Boys given tasks with more authority, while girls assigned domestic duties - girls clean classrooms and offices, boys ring the school bell, assume supervisory roles
 - Sex work – sex for grades



GENDER AND SCHOOLING



THEORISING GENDER

- Gender is **not** about being male / female, or ‘natural’, **biological ‘sex’** categories
- Gender is not something we ‘**have**’ – it is something **we ‘learn’**
- We **learn** our gender within **specific contexts**, such as the family, the school, the playground, religious practices, in work
- Acting as a ‘proper’ girl or boy is framed by **social rules /regulations** – about the ways we dress, how we speak, the games we play, who we can play with, the places we can go, what work we are expected to do.. etc
- The rules that frame how we do gender come together in a ‘**gender regime**’

MOVING FROM *GENDER BINARIES* TO *GENDER REGIMES*

- Gender is constantly *brought into being* through institutionalized power relations
- Institutions such as education (as well as family and work) actively reproduce gender norms
- They shape our sense of who we are, they legitimize / normalise particular imaginaries of gender, intersecting with age, SES, race .. etc
- These norms come together in what can be considered a '**gender regime**' (Dunne, 2007)
- Gender regimes are **context specific** but have deep histories – they are not easily disrupted – individuals risk misrecognition if they go outside how gender is normally done/performed in a particular context

METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

- ***Reject*** reductions of gender to male female binary!
- Requires a research design that engages deeply with context, to the processes through which different gender performances are valorised, others vilified, and gives space for local voices
- In-depth qualitative methods
- Research collaborations with partners within the context!