Gender Equality and widening participation in HE: changing the rules of the ‘numbers game’?

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The role of universities in social mobility

Summary of my presentation

• Questions of democracy and representation in changing funding policies for universities/HE
• Issues to do with both students (ug & pg) & academic staff
• Focus especially on equality - gender, class and/or ‘first-in-the-family’ or first generation (US term) to go to university
• Draw on both ESRC’s TLRP research on widening participation & my forthcoming book on feminist academics
• International evidence about changing forms of gender equality amongst students, doctoral researchers and academic labour market
Social science and feminist perspectives: a personal and passionate commitment to transforming education

• Address issues as a social scientist about ‘ways of understanding’ learning and teaching or pedagogies

• Feminist theories and reflexive methodologies about ‘the personal and political’, critiquing power and privilege, gender, families, education and global labour markets

• My passionate or moral and value commitment is to gender equality and social and gender justice

• Gender equality & justice is more than ‘numbers game’ – now have equal numbers of men & women as understudents
• Transforming ‘the [patriarchal] rules of the game’ in HE

(Louise Morley’s tribute to the late Diana Leonard in Gender & Education 2013 special issue ed. M. David & D. Epstein)
Gender and Education Association

- http://www.genderandeducation.com/
- Promoting feminist scholarship and practice in gender and education internationally, nationally and locally
- Promoting knowledge on gender and education
- Encouraging teaching, learning, research and publication on gender and education
- Providing a source of (feminist) expertise and knowledge for policy makers
- Policy officer
What role have women as academic researchers played in transforming the practices of Higher Education?

• *Improving Learning by Widening Participation in HE* (David et al 2009)

• ‘Over the last 40 years, the overall numbers of undergraduate students participating in some form of HE has quadrupled from half a million in 1965, to two million in 2005-6’ (HEFCE 2005a)...

• Moreover, over the years from 1996-7 to 2005-6, in absolute terms, women have outnumbered men and are 60 percent of full-time student population in UK universities
Improving Learning by Widening Participation in Higher Education

• HEFCE (2005) pointed to closed gender gap in HE ‘enrolments’ and raised issue about the reverse ‘gender gap’ - ‘gap talk’ – by involving young and disadvantaged men in higher learning

• Leathwood & Read (2008) argue this ‘anxiety’ is fear of a feminist future

• From the 7 WPinHE projects by predominantly women researchers shows that widening access to and participation within HE does not increase ethnic, gender or social equity (David et al 2009):
  • systematic forms of inequality for individuals and institutions across subjects and levels of education
Reflecting on transforming Higher Education and lifelong learning in changing contexts

- HE transformed to mass or ‘universal’: unevenly across subjects, regions and countries maintaining inequalities
- For students, as undergraduates and postgraduates, and for researchers and academics
- HE is now a central facet of the global knowledge economy or ‘academic capitalism’ (Slaughter & Rhoades 2004)
- Has it provided for greater social and gender equality for either students or staff? Our conclusion is NO.
‘Persistent inequality’ (Shavit et al 2007) despite ‘reducing achievement gaps’

- ‘equity and diversity ... processes lead to inequitable pathways for diverse and nowadays a majority of female students into highly stratified systems of HE (defined by international league tables or ‘metrics’).

- Pedagogies and practices of HE can lead to meaningful educational engagements... Through diverse practices and critical or connectionist pedagogies...

- HE can be meaningful in people’s lives, authentic, practical and relevant.... gender is often implicit not explicit ...[and] includes gender scholarship ...in new practices and pedagogies (David 2009 p.199-200)
Morley et al’s (2010) study of Widening Participation in Ghana & Tanzania

• The significance of prior educational experiences
• Social capital produces strategic choosers
• Poverty structures opportunities, but not aspirations
• Mature students' relatively high dropout rate
• Variability in completion rates relate more to programmes than to student identities
• 'Othering' of low SES students and mature students, especially women
• Gendered culture of HE
Comparison of TLRP research with Morley et al’s study of WP in Ghana & Tanzania 1

• TLRP research, like that in Ghana and Tanzania, shows that national and international *policy frameworks of fair access* need to be adjusted to prior and current educational experiences, especially for low SES.

• Using *Equity Scorecards is a rich approach* for developing critiques of HE/universities in the UK as part of global north, providing evidence to inform institutional and government policies and practices.
Gender equality in global HE now achieved through Widening Access & Participation: the numbers game?

‘Widening access opens higher education to people from an array of social class and educational backgrounds, but one of the most dramatic results of greater access is the expansion of enrolments by women, who now comprise a majority in many countries (my italics).’ (Altbach 2010: 50)
No: WP means Gender Inequality in HE is inevitable.

It might seem a contradiction that widening access would bring inequality to higher education, but that is exactly what happens. Institutions that cater to mass access provide vastly different quality, facilities and focus than do elite institutions, and this gulf has widened as access has expanded worldwide. Furthermore, mass higher education has, for the majority of students, lowered quality and increased dropout rates... (Altbach 2010:48)
Fiscal Constraints lead to Gender Inequalities in Access to Global HE: The reality?

...the reality of greater access to higher education in an era of fiscal constraint, combined with ever-increasing costs, is that inequality within higher education systems is here to stay...these issues constitute a deep contradiction for 21st century higher education. As access expands, inequalities within the higher education system also grow...

(Altbach 2010:48)
Reflects on feminists' activism in global academe last 50 years

What has been achieved by academic feminism as both a political and an educational project?

Has it transformed women’s lives in the direction of gender equality and gendered power relations?

What remains to be done, given paradoxical social and political transformations towards gender equality?

Given global neo-liberalism what should be undone and refashioned towards a feminist-friendly future?
Exploring feminist transformations in academe

• Social scientist, sociologist of education with a feminist perspective on gender and higher education

• Life history or collective memoir of international academic feminism and activism in ‘the global north’

• Conversations/interviews with academic feminists in education and social sciences across the generations

• Developed narrative account of academic feminism

• Critique of gender equality as misogynistic ‘numbers game’ and so not achieved in global academe, nor UK/England

• How transform ‘patriarchal rules of the game’ in neo-liberal global university for the future?
Feminist reflections on transformations in global academe

• Over last 50 years, massive changes in women’s lives – education and employment eg in UK Robbins report, 1963
• 50 years since the publication of *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan starting CR groups and NOW in USA
• *‘the problem that has no name’*: university-educated women’s dissatisfaction with lives as housewives/mothers
• By the early 1970s countless pamphlets and books
• Women as feminists began to enter academe as teachers and researchers: political project of women’s liberation?
• Part of much broader transformation of HE globally and nationally but where is gender equality in UK, & England?
Feminist reflections on transformations in global academe 2: Malala’s vital lesson?

Expansions of HE and ‘academic capitalism’ (Slaughter and Rhoades 2004) but is academic feminism secure?

• Gender-violence and sexual abuse or harassment: Malala Yousafzai shot fighting for girls’ education in Pakistan October 2012 miraculous recovery in Birmingham she is now being educated & has been nominated for the Nobel peace prize.

• The new US Secretary of State, John Kerry, (Evening Standard, 8.3.13, p. 14) Malala’s vital lesson for US foreign policy ‘the US believes gender equality is critical to our shared goals of prosperity, and peace, and why investing in women and girls worldwide is critical to advancing US foreign policy’.
The Evidence or Research on Global Equalities in Education

• In March 2012, UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) published its *World Atlas of Gender Equality in Education* for the first time ever. ([http://tinyurl.com/crqys2y](http://tinyurl.com/crqys2y)). This contains exciting and up-to-date information – in colour – about global educational opportunities. It signals how, as a result of women’s campaigning for educational change over the last 30-40 years, *gender equality is now firmly on the international agenda.*
The Evidence or Research on Equalities in Education 2

• The director-general of UNESCO, Irina Bokova, argues on the first page of the Atlas foreword:

• ‘... Girls and women remain deprived of full and equal opportunities for education. There has been progress towards parity at the primary level, but this tapers off at the secondary level in developing regions. The global economic crisis is deepening inequalities, made worse by cuts in education budgets and stagnating development support...’
UN commitment to gender equality in education

• A closely related theme ... has been that of gender equality in education. From the outset, the global community has recognized that educating girls and women is an imperative, not only as a matter of respecting a basic human right for half the population but as a powerful and necessary first step to achieving the broader goals of EFA.’
Overall pattern is clear: increasing enrolments in HE

‘...enormous growth in educational opportunities and literacy levels throughout the world over the last four decades...

the capacity of the world’s educational systems more than doubled – from 647 million students in 1970 to 1,397 million in 2009. Enrolments increased from 418 to 702 million pupils at the primary level, from 196 to 531 million at the secondary level, and

from 33 to 164 million in higher education... 1970-2009

(Atlas, 2012, p9) – A fivefold increase in global HE
Expansion of HE worldwide: women the principal beneficiaries in all regions?

Opportunities & Obstacles

• Female enrolment at the tertiary level has grown almost twice as fast as that of men over last four decades for reasons that include social mobility, enhanced income potential, international pressure to narrow the gender gap.

• Nevertheless, enhanced access to higher education by women has NOT always translated into enhanced career opportunities, including the opportunity to use their doctorates in the field of research.’ (2012, p. 75)
New challenges of gender equity in education: beyond the numbers game?

• Female enrolments have increased faster than those for males at all levels, most dramatically in tertiary education... Whereas the challenge of gender equality was once seen as a simple matter of increasing female enrolments, the situation is now more nuanced, and every country, developed and developing alike, faces policy issues relating to gender equality.
New challenges of gender equity in education: girls’ persistence

• Girls continue to face discrimination in access to primary education in some countries, and the female edge in tertiary enrolment up through the master’s level disappears when it comes to PhDs and careers in research.

• On the other hand, once girls gain access to education their levels of persistence and attainment often surpass those of males.

• High repetition and dropout rates among males are significant problems.’ (2012, p. 107).
Social & Economic Reasons for Gender Parity

• Over-representation of women in higher education is not necessarily the result of affirmative action in their favour, for such legislation is rare.

• Empirical research highlights several reasons for the growing participation of women in post-secondary education, beginning with the fact that higher levels of schooling are now required to attain social mobility and escape poverty. (2012, p. 84)

• Confirms Morley et al’s 2010 research
Women’s persistence does not always pay 1

• Even though higher education leads to individual returns in the form of higher income, women often need to have more education than men to get the same jobs.

• Globalization has led to more attention to gender egalitarianism. Finally, once women gain access to higher education they frequently exceed men in grades, evaluations and degree completion.’ (2012, p. 84)
Women’s persistence does not always pay 2
‘over-representation of women in higher education has yet to translate into proportional representation in the labour market, especially in leadership and decision-making positions. ....
Women continue to confront discrimination in jobs, disparities in power, voice and political representation and the laws that are prejudicial on the basis of their gender. As a result, well-educated women often end up in jobs where they do not use their full potential and skills.’ (my emphasis) (2012, ch 5 p. 84).
Exploring academic feminism on transforming HE in changing global contexts 1

– Questioned circa 110 (self-selected) feminists
– Majority currently resident in the UK but many geographically and socially mobile illustrative of changes
– All working (or recently retired) as university academics, feminist educators and activists
– Majority 82/110 ‘full’ professors in the US-sense
– Vast majority doctors 99/110 – PhDs, professional doctorates or by publication
– ‘Partial’ study in both senses – about feminism but only illustrative of education and social sciences
From ‘First-Wave’ to ‘Second-Wave’ Feminists and beyond in globalised HE?

- Olive Banks (1986) – a feminist sociologist of education studied ‘best known’ British first-wave feminists all born in 19th century, developing method of collective biography
- Jane Martin (2013) and focus on ‘breakthrough generation’ and Townsend and Weiner (2011)
- Using similar biographic method of cohort analysis study of academic feminists as second-wave in international HE
- Selection of academic feminists from various networks eg Bristol women’s studies and social sciences, AERA, BJSE, GEA, WSNA etc and across age cohorts
Exploring ‘the wave analogy’ of feminism on transforming HE in changing global contexts 2

Cohort 1 (born 1935-1950) - 66 (45 UK; 5 Australia/NZ; 6 Canada; 9 USA) - second-wave feminists?

Cohort 2 (born 1950-1965) - 32 (28 UK; 1 Canada, 1 Ireland; 1 USA) – riding the waves?

Cohort 3 (born 1965-1980) - 12 (10 UK; 1 Ireland; 1 Spain) - third wave feminists or second and a half wave?

Debates within and between the 3 cohorts about types of academic feminism as a political and educational project – all committed to feminist values
Exploring ‘second-wave feminism’ on transforming HE in changing global contexts

– Debates about the wave analogy from:
– Stevie Smith’s poem *Drowning Not Waving*
– To being on the same ‘air’/virtual ‘wave length’ to
– second and a half not third wavers in cohort 3?
Across all countries and 3 cohorts majority see themselves as [second-wave] feminists in academia & influenced by these ideological commitments, developing theories and teaching to sustain and expand gender equalities...

Majority from across diverse middle class family backgrounds, with a substantial minority having parents as either teachers or academics (this is particularly true of the participants from Australia and the USA who are all education feminists)

Majority are also ‘first-in-the-family’ (on a generational basis as many have siblings) to go to college/university...
### Table: 4.3 Social class families [including parental education] across the 3 cohorts

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<tr>
<td>Upper/Upper Middle Class</td>
<td>22 (33%)</td>
<td>7 (25%)</td>
<td>3 (25%)</td>
<td>32 (29%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Middle/Lower Middle class</td>
<td>30 (45%)</td>
<td>13 (40%)</td>
<td>5 (42%)</td>
<td>48 (45%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>14 (21%)</td>
<td>12 (38%)</td>
<td>4 (33%)</td>
<td>30 (27%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>110</td>
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Table 4.4 First-in-the-family or first generation to go to university

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<tr>
<td>‘First-in-the-family’</td>
<td>26 (39%)</td>
<td>21 (66%)</td>
<td>8 (75%)</td>
<td>55 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Class</td>
<td>14 (21%)</td>
<td>12 (38%)</td>
<td>4 (33%)</td>
<td>30 (27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Class</td>
<td>12 (18%)</td>
<td>9 (28%)</td>
<td>4 (33%)</td>
<td>25 (23%)</td>
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<td>‘First-in-the-family’</td>
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HE expansion has contributed to gender and social mobility for women

- Contradicts English minister for HE David Willetts’ claim that ‘feminism has trumped egalitarianism’ (The Pinch 2010;2011)
- ‘First-in-the-family’ are over 50% made up of:
  - Working class backgrounds over 3/5ths
  - Middle class backgrounds (including first girls in the family) are 2/5ths
- Increasing proportions of ‘First-in-the-family’ and/or working class across the cohorts but small numbers
- All full of passion for feminist project as an educational and political project
Critique of global academy for academic feminist research:
—Imaginative projects, despite forbidding austere contexts for girls as students and young people, viz:
—Sexualisation and girls’ ‘success’ through new media (Ringrose 2012)
—EU-funded Daphne project – GAP work – Improving gender-related violence intervention and referral through youth-practitioner training (Alldred and Cullen 2012-2015)
Being an academic feminist in global academe in changing global contexts

Across all cohorts critique of the global academy in terms of the possibilities of academic feminism:
– Intensification and individualization – ‘hideous’ academe
– Imaginative projects, for academe and leadership:
– Changing management and leadership (Burke, 2012; Hey & Morley, 2011 and 2013)
– Evidence of gender equality in HE as ‘misogynistic numbers game’ (Morley 2011)
– Question of subjects & students, including postgraduates
What is the future of feminist pedagogies and practices in global academe?

• The prospects for gender equity amongst academics in England & engaging in feminist pedagogies is uncertain.

• Yet passionate commitment to feminist activism and collaborative networking practices is a form of resilience and resistance to both the austerity culture and encroachment of further forms of academic capitalism and market forces.

• Importance of changing not only ‘misogynistic numbers game’ but also ‘rules of the misogynistic game’ and breaking the vicious cycle of male dominance in leadership and management of global academe (Morley, 2013).