

Access, Participation and Retention in Africa: evidence from a survey on tertiary institutions

Access to Success: Fostering Trust and Exchange between Europe and Africa

**Workshop on Access and Retention: Comparing best practice
between Europe and Africa**

17-20 November 2009, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

I. Introduction

- higher education plays vital role for economic and political advancement of nations;
- In Africa in particular higher education can make immense contributions towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs);
- In an increasingly globalized world, it is only rational to think in terms of viewing tertiary education from an international perspective;
- higher education needs global cooperation in different forms;

The 2009 World Conference on Higher Education accorded special emphasis on promoting African higher education as an important tool for enhancing development in the continent (UNESCO, 2009)

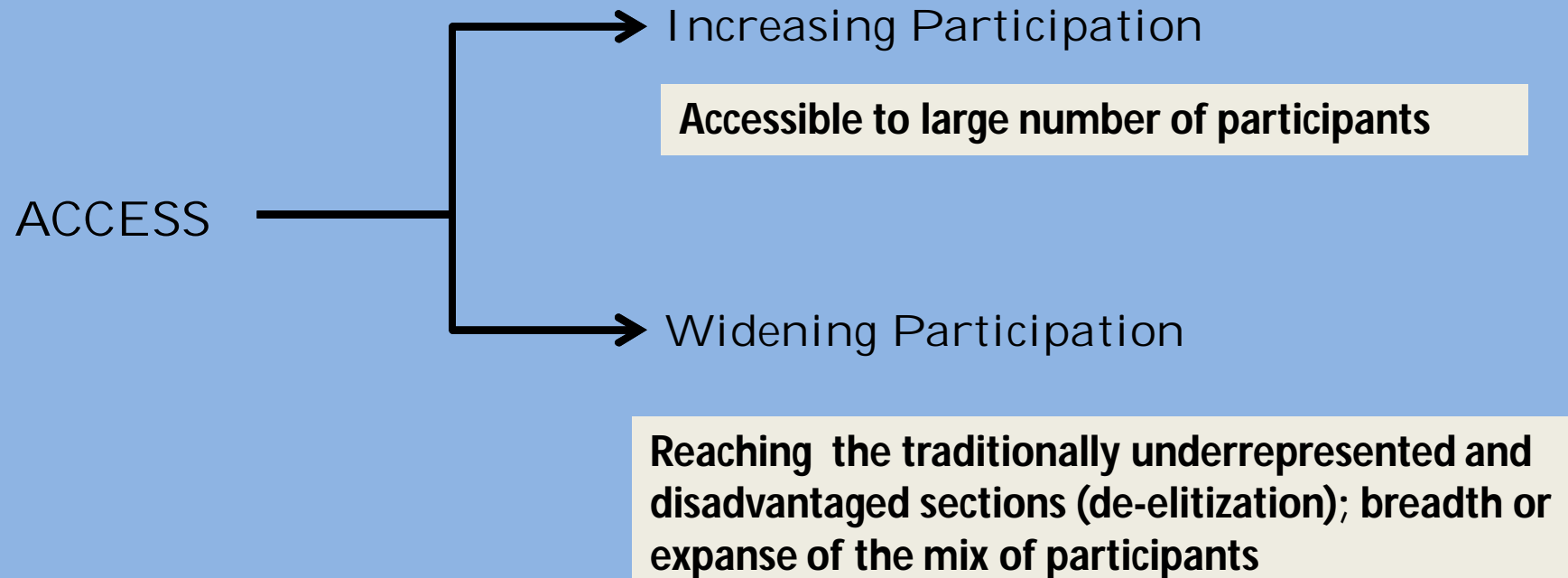
The expectations from African higher education are wide-ranging, and the challenges are equally mounting (access, student/staff retention, financial constraints, infrastructure, policy, quality, collaborations)

- **The belief that primary education has more contribution towards economic growth and poverty reduction has resulted in relative neglect and underfunding of African higher education (by international community and governments)**
- **This view has been challenged and improvements have been seen.**

II. Access and Retention

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 26

'Everybody has the right to education' '... higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit'



In spite of the large scale expansion sub-Saharan Africa remains much behind other regions:

- Worldwide average: 26 percent of the age cohort participate in tertiary institutions
- Sub-Saharan Africa: 5% of the age group has access to higher education (Africa lagging by big margin)
- Good improvement, though: in 1965 only 1% had access; now it is 5% (and take into account the population expansion)

Innovative and aggressive methods (affirmative action, quota, reservations, distance learning, financing schemes) have been used to ensure access to underrepresented sections. However, the results have not been as good particularly in view of socio-economic and political discrimination that existed for generations in most countries.

“Truly providing equal access to higher education means overcoming the social and economic inequalities within each nation and the corresponding disparities that result” Altbach et al., (2009, p.39)

III. Student/Staff Retention

Access does not automatically guarantee success and completion of studies.

Evidences suggest that there is strong correlation between student sections like those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, students from less economically developed regions, and female students, and drop-out rates not only at the level of tertiary education but also below.

"...school completion rates and school achievement levels are closely correlated with social class." James (2007)

A study conducted at Debu University in Ethiopia show that the larger proportion of student dismissals is made up of female students (Tesfaye, 2005).

Student retention methods need to be complemented by parallel measures of staff retention. Many higher education establishments in Africa have been struggling with retaining their staff for a variety of reasons (poor pay, unfavorable working conditions).

IV. Tuition fees and student loans

With lower rate of participation and ever expanding secondary school graduates, demand for higher education in Africa (particularly sub-Saharan Africa) is expected to get higher and higher

Higher education is relatively more expensive per student

Governments may try hard but the financial pressure is so high that it is more likely to be beyond their budgetary means, particularly in view of the expanding demand and competing needs for funds. The more likely options are Student Fees and International support.

The most usually cited example of a success story in introducing tuition fees aggressively is Makerere university of Uganda

V. The Study

S. No.	Institution	Country
1	University of Burundi	Burundi
2	University of Lubumbashi	CDR
3	Catholic University of Bukavu	CDR
4	University of Kinshasa	CDR
5	National Education University	CDR
6	Hawassa University	Ethiopia
7	University of Ghana, Legon	Ghana
8	Kwame Nkrumah University of science and Technology	Ghana
9	African Council for Distance Education	Kenya
10	The Catholic University of Eastern Africa	Kenya
11	Maseno University	Kenya
12	The African Virtual University	Kenya/Senegal
13	National University of Lesotho	Lesotho
14	The Seventh of April University	Libya
15	Islamic University of Niger	Niger
16	Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike	Nigeria

S. No.	Institution	Country
17	University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Ogun State	Nigeria
18	Benson Idahosa University, Benin City	Nigeria
19	Federal University of Technology, Minna	Nigeria
20	University of Port Harcourt	Nigeria
21	Osun State University	Nigeria
22	National University of Rwanda	Rwanda
23	Cheikh Anta Diop University of Dakar	Senegal
24	University of Sierra-Leone	Sierra-Leone
25	University of Fort Hare	South Africa
26	University of Johannesburg	South Africa
27	Stellenbosch University	South Africa
28	University of Limpopo	South Africa
29	Makerere University	Uganda
30	University of Lusaka	Zambia
31	National University of Science and Technology	Zimbabwe
32	University of Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe

Data for this study have been collected online from 32 African universities located in 16 countries

Main focus of the study:

- i. Access, retention and underrepresented student groups;**
- ii. Institutional relationships with Europe and European universities;**
- and**
- iii. Policies and priorities of African higher education institutions**

- **Year of Establishment: Range from 1918 to 2007**
- **Ownership: 25 of the 32 are under public ownership; the remaining privately owned (mostly not-for-profit)**
- **Tuition Fees: Of the 30 universities who responded to issues related to tuition fee, 22 charge tuition fees on all their domestic students and 5 on some domestic students.**
- **Average number of students of Public Universities: 18386 (86.6 % Bachelor degree; 11.7 Master's Degree; 1.4% Doctoral)**
- **Staff-to-Student Ratio (public universities): 30 to 1 (20.8 UK 2003; 20.5 Australia 2005)**
- **Administrative staff to student ratio: (public universities) 13.4 to 1**

VI. Access, Retention and Underrepresented Groups

25 of 30 universities give 'HIGH' priority to improving ACCESS; 4 provide 'MEDIUM' , and 1, 'LOW' priority to ACCESS.

Institutional objectives in widening/increasing participation

Options	Number of institutions (N=29)
Increasing overall student number	22
Increasing students from underrepresented groups	13
Increasing students from disadvantaged groups	19
Reducing barriers to completion and improve retention rates	20
Improve gender imbalance	21

More inclined towards increasing participation?

Underrepresented student groups

Underrepresented student groups (options)	Number of Universities (N = 30)
Students from Lower socio-economic backgrounds	17
First generation students	5
Students from ethnic/cultural minority backgrounds	5
Students from migrant families	4
Students from remote or economically under-developed regions	17
Adult students	7
Female Students	12
Male Students	1
Refuges/asylum seekers	7
Religious minorities	2
Students with physical disabilities	19
Students with learning disabilities	7
Students affected by sickness or illness	8
Others	2

Socio-economic Status; Disability; Gender

Factors contributing to lower participation rate (of underrepresented groups)

1. Government Related

Factors	Number of institutions (N=30)	Average Weight of Factor
Lack of government policy and support for these groups	25	4.24
Lack of legislation in support of these groups	23	3.57
Inability on the part of the state to identify these groups	22	3.14
Lack of financial support for these groups	27	4.78
Lack of information on financial support for potential students	24	4.08
Lack of financial support and incentives for universities	26	4.85
Others	3	3.67

2. Institution Related

ARU...

Factors	Number of institutions (N=30)	Average Weight of Factor
Lack of institutional policies in support of these groups	25	4.52
Lack of effective support services in institutions	27	4.89
Lack of Institutional financial support for these groups	29	5.24
Lack of outreach /promotion for these groups	24	4.33
Study programs inadequate for the needs of these groups	24	3.46
Insufficient infrastructure	27	4.63
Lack of student housing	25	4.24
Lack of facilities for students with disabilities	24	5.08
Negative attitude of staff towards these groups	24	2.50
Lack of academic staff	25	3.28
Lack of administrative staff	22	2.55
Too few higher education institutions to meet demand	25	4.28
Institutions not physically accessible to those who live far	25	3.76

3. Student/Family Related

ARU...

Factors	Number of institutions (N=31)	Average Weight of Factor
Personal financial difficulties	31	5.71
Low motivation/low aspiration	26	3.69
No cultural/family history of higher education	26	3.65
Lack of parental guidance for potential students	27	4.41
Disease or health issues	26	2.73
Hard to access information on higher education	27	3.74
Physically too far away/cannot get to institution	27	3.15

Institutional Response to support Access (increasing and widening)

Institutional Response	Number of Institutions (N=28)	Average weight of factor
Adopting Flexible Admission Policy	18	5.06
Recognition of Prior Learning	19	4.16
Offering Flexible learning paths	17	4.41
Offering Special Programs	17	4.76
Outreach to schools in deprived areas	17	3.94
Working with employers /industry	18	4.11
Working with NGOs and other organizations	14	4.14
Providing financial support to students	18	4.06
Offering visits to potential students	20	4.30
Offering information visits to students' parents	11	3.55
Adopting non-discrimination Policy	20	5.45

Difficulties faced while promoting access (institutional level)

Difficulties	Number of Universities (N=27)	Average Weight
Lack of support from senior management	4	2.50
Lack of support from academic staff	12	2.83
Commitment from staff but lack of time/resources	21	5.05
Lack of knowledge and expertise	8	3.50
General resistance to change	16	3.81
Staff not properly trained to deliver	11	4.18
Lack of financial resources	25	5.24

Drop-out rate of Underrepresented Groups

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Student Groups	Average Drop-out rate (%)	No of Universities
All Students	17.68	19
Bachelor Students	20.55	15
Masters Students	17.04	13
Doctorate Students	10.69	7

More Representative

Correlation between Student Groups and Drop-out rates

Student Groups	Number of institutions (N=27)
Students from lower socio-economic backgrounds	20
Students from ethnic/cultural minorities	8
Students from migrant families	5
Students from less economically developed regions	14
Adult students	5
Female students	10
Refugees/asylum seekers	3
Religious minorities	1
Students with physical disabilities	3
Students with learning disabilities	8

V.II Internationalization and Global Cooperation

Type of Relationship (with Europe/European Universities)	Number of Universities (N=25)
Many students go to study in	17
Engagement in development projects with European partners	21
Faculty undertake research in	15
Faculty undertake Teaching in	7

Erasmus Mundus supported projects, VLIR-IUC partnerships, EDULINK, IFS, Nuffic, Nufu, EU/ACP, NORAD, DELPHE, DFID, SIDA,

VIII. Institutional Policies

Institutional Priorities and Policies

Issues	Number of Universities (N=32)	Average weight of issue	Number of universities confirming existence of institutional policies on the issues (N=27)
Environmental issues	29	4.66	NA
Development cooperation	30	5.03	18
Lifelong learning	28	4.79	13
Innovative approaches to teaching/learning	31	5.32	18
Industry cooperation	31	5.39	18
Working with local/regional communities and NGOs	31	4.94	18
Distance learning	28	4.11	12
Internationalization	30	5.20	18
Widening participation	28	5.21	16
Increasing participation	28	4.96	17
Retention of students	31	4.97	15
Retention of staff	32	5.22	16

Thank You