



# The Role of Universities in Achieving Global Equity

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# Equal access to higher education is a human right

*'...higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit' [Article 26, Universal Declaration on Human Rights, 1948]*



# Outline

1. Universities and developing areas
2. Universities as global actors
3. Dimensions of equity
4. Modes of engagement
5. Towards an agenda for action



# 1. Universities and developing areas

- INRUDA
- New roles for universities worldwide
- Still weak global agents for global equity



# INRUDA

- International Network of International Network on the Role of Universities
- Born over concerns that universities were misunderstood and overlooked as agents in development
- ‘Areas’ because our interests are at the institutional, regional and supra-national scale not only with national systems



## Universities now more recognised for

- innovation, productivity and economic growth
- skills formation,
- generation of knowledge
- capacity to adapt that knowledge to local conditions,
- build institutions and structures of governance
- increase social capital and
- promote social cohesion (Ramphela 2002)



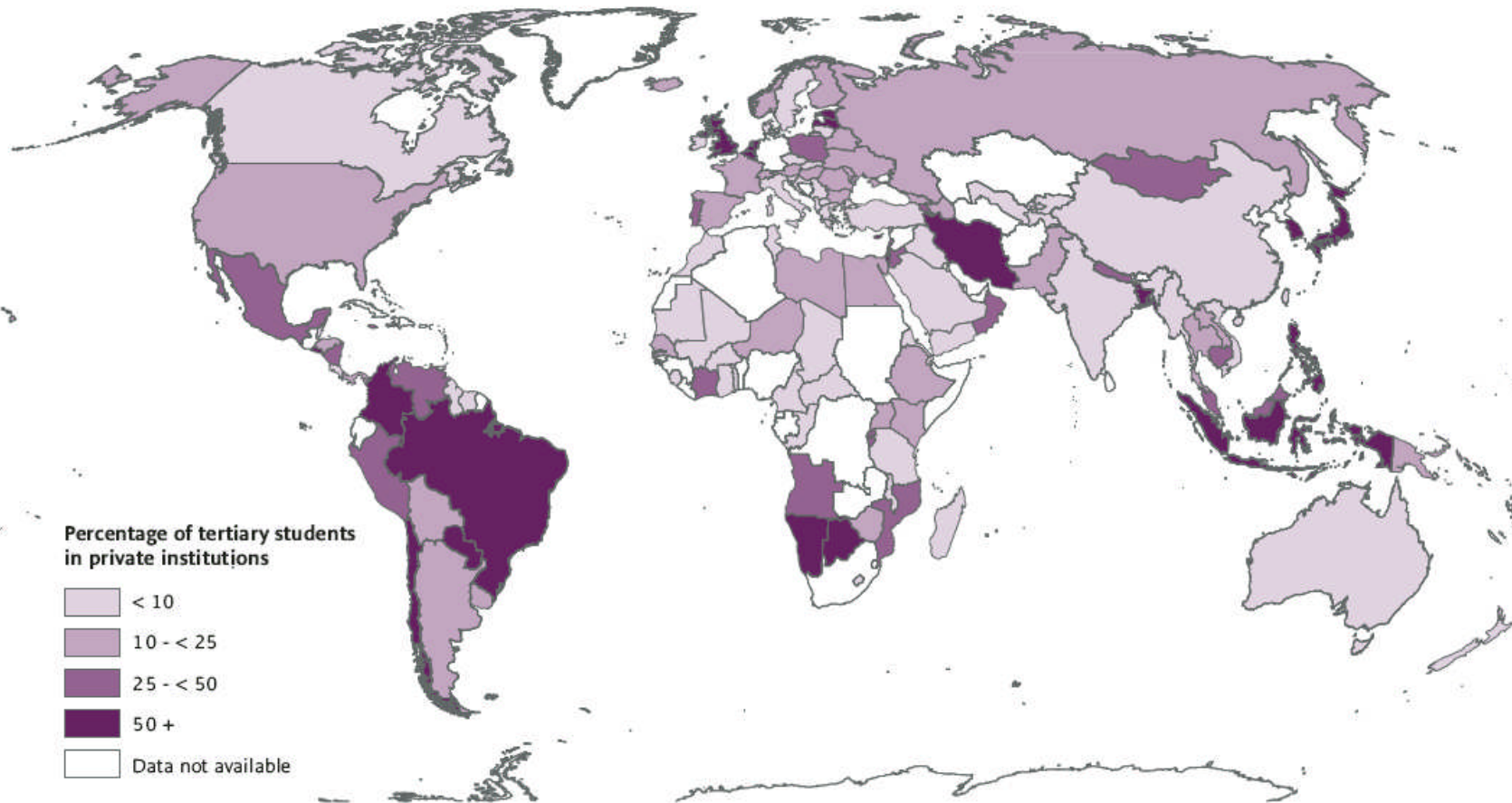
## ...but still weak global agents

- Pursuit of equity including the elimination of extreme poverty
- Seen by governments, development institutions and across civil society as part of the problem, reproducing élites,
- Low level of engagement of institutions and their representative bodies in global equity movements – implementing the MDGs

## 2. Universities as global actors

How prevalent is the private sector in tertiary education systems throughout the world?

Percentage of tertiary students enrolled in private institutions, 2004



Coverage: 156 out of 207 countries, 90% of the world population.

Notes: Data for 3 countries refer to 2005. Data for 43 countries refer to 2003. Data for 20 countries refer to 2002. Data for 18 countries refer to previous years.

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Statistical Table 8.



# Trends in higher education

- movement in many systems from élite to mass education
- problems with quality assurance arising from this growth
- irrelevance of many programs to economic and social needs
- impact of ICT and the growth of distributed learning,
- poor governance and management of systems and institutions
- crippling resource constraints
- Security and continuity - keeping campuses open
- Rise of private, cross-border and online provision



# Overlapping definitions

- Post-compulsory
- Post-secondary
- Tertiary education
- Higher education
- ‘Universities’ an untidy definition
  - Defined variously by jurisdictions, many ‘university’ protocols and accreditation regimes
  - Most engage in vocational education, commercial activities, consulting and other businesses



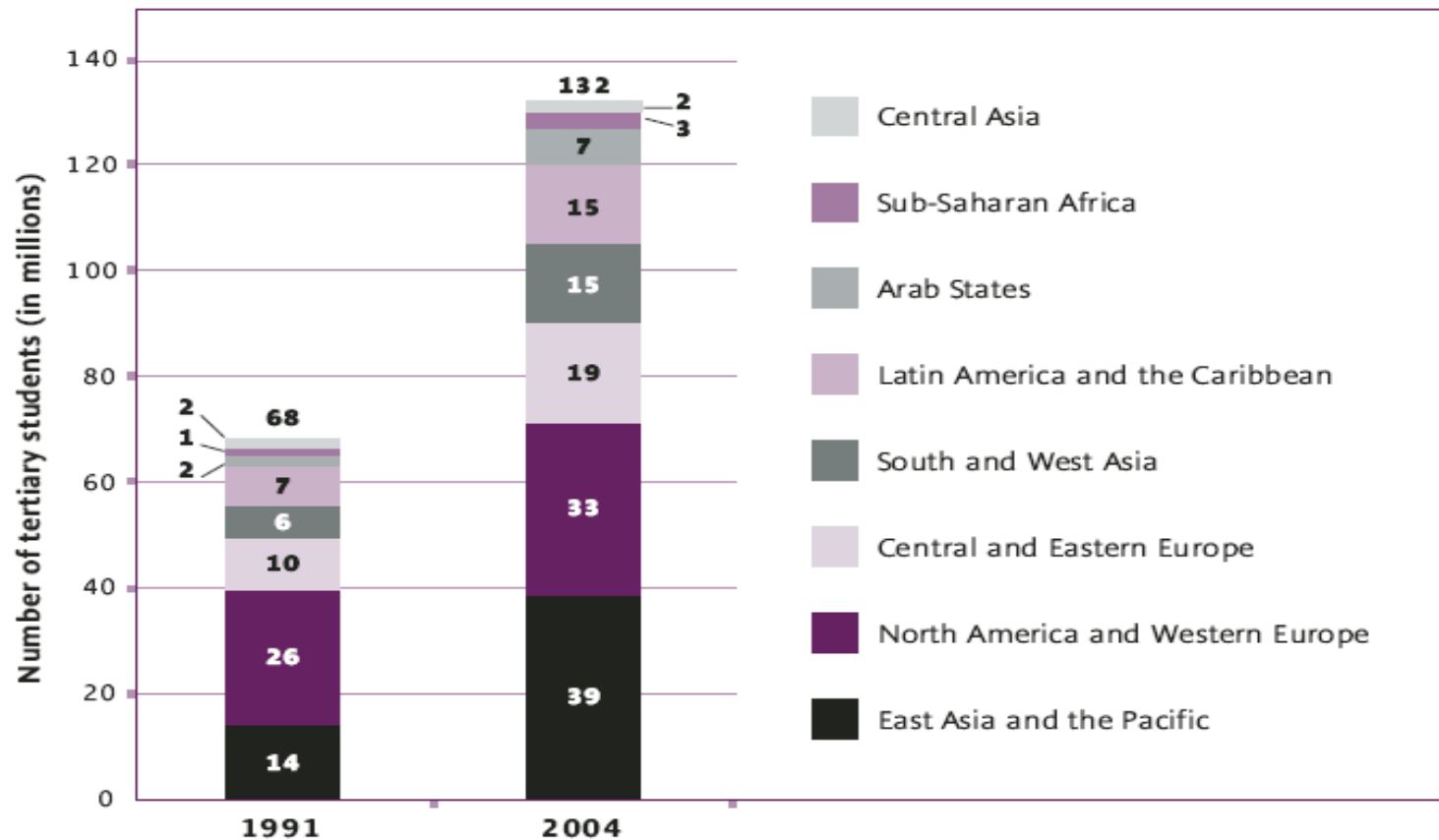
## 2.1 International scale of tertiary education

- 2004 engaged 8.475m teaching staff and enrolled 132m students (up from 68m in 1991)
- private higher education sector alone spent over USD350bn a year
- pace of growth accelerating, rising 7% per annum now cf 4 % early 1990s.
- International movements of students growing as fast as the system overall, with 2.455m tertiary students studying in another country in 2004

# Tertiary education growth fast and uneven

## Growth in the number of tertiary students worldwide since 1991

Absolute number of tertiary students, 1991 and 2004, in millions



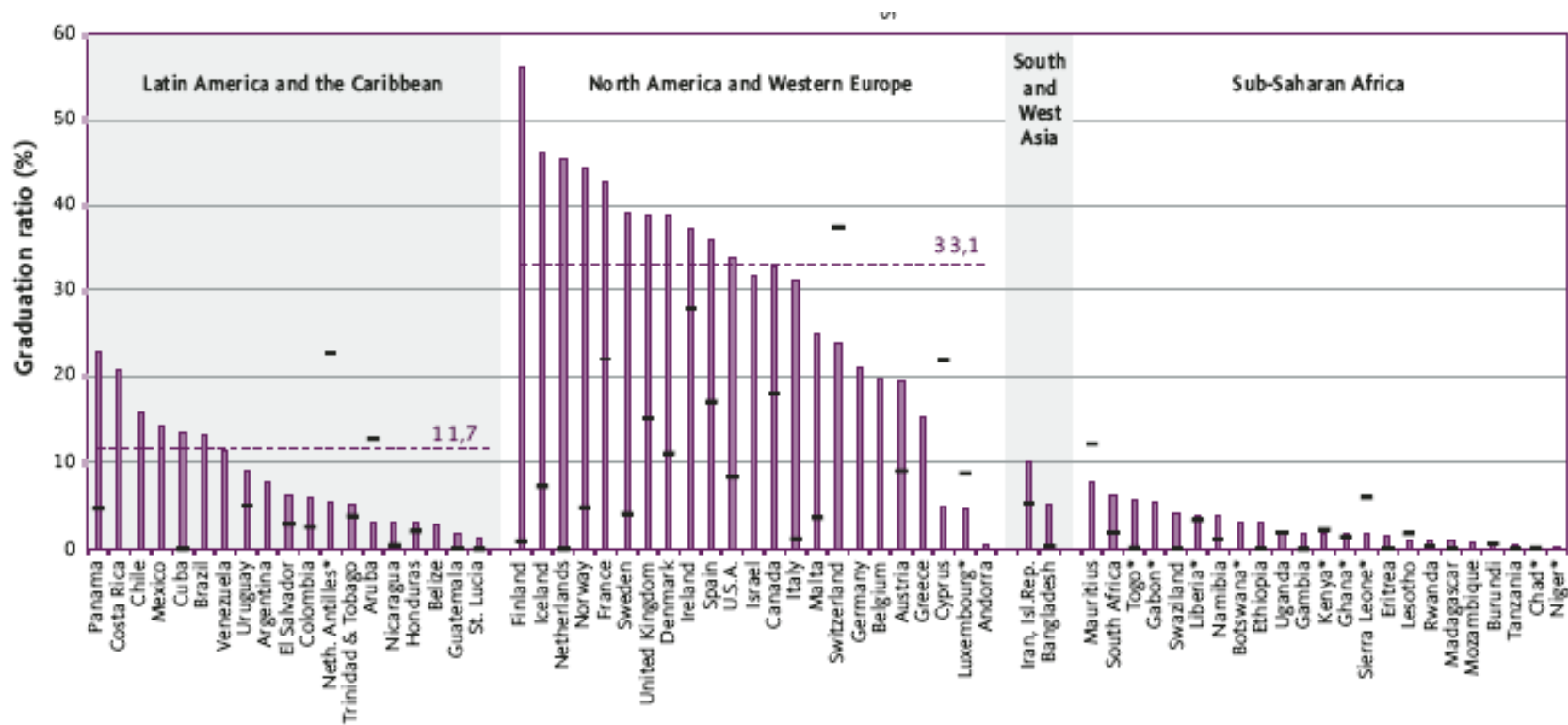
Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics database.



# Stark disparities

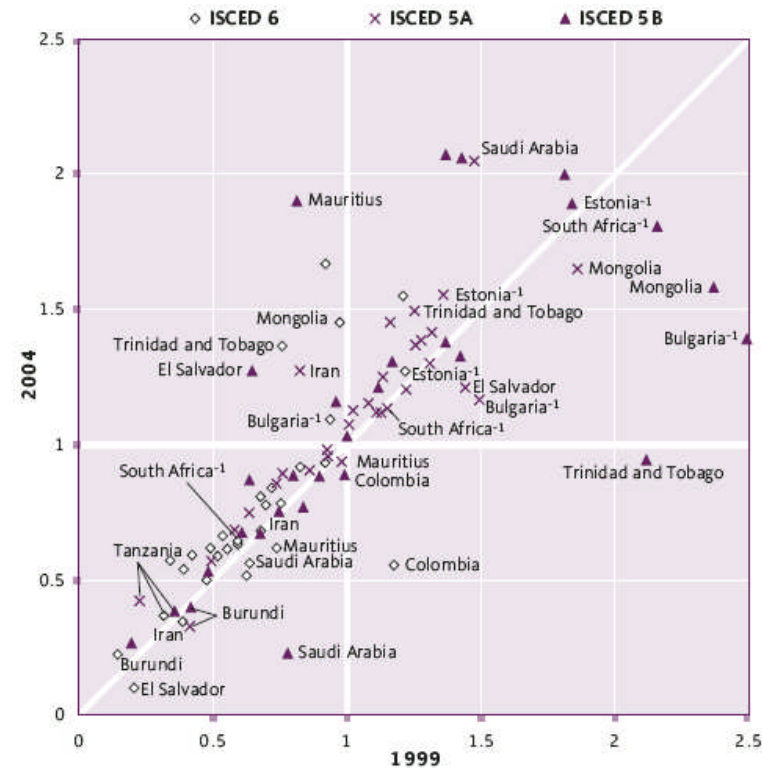
- Chasms between demand and supply: incalculable waste of human potential
- Gaps among the least developed, less-developed and OECD countries getting wider
- In north America and western Europe 69% of tertiary age enrolled cf 5% sub-Saharan Africa and 11% in south and west Asia
- Arab states improved from 11% in 1991 to 19 % in 2004, and China from 25% to 29% just 2001-04.

# Wide country spread of gross enrolment ratio



# Improving women's participation

1999 - 2004 a gender parity index improved at all tertiary levels to the benefit of women in lower academic and higher levels for over 77% percent of countries and in lower professional levels for 56%



Notes: <sup>-1</sup> Data refer to 2003.  
This figure includes only those countries where the GER was less than 40% in ISCED 5A.  
Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics database, 2006.

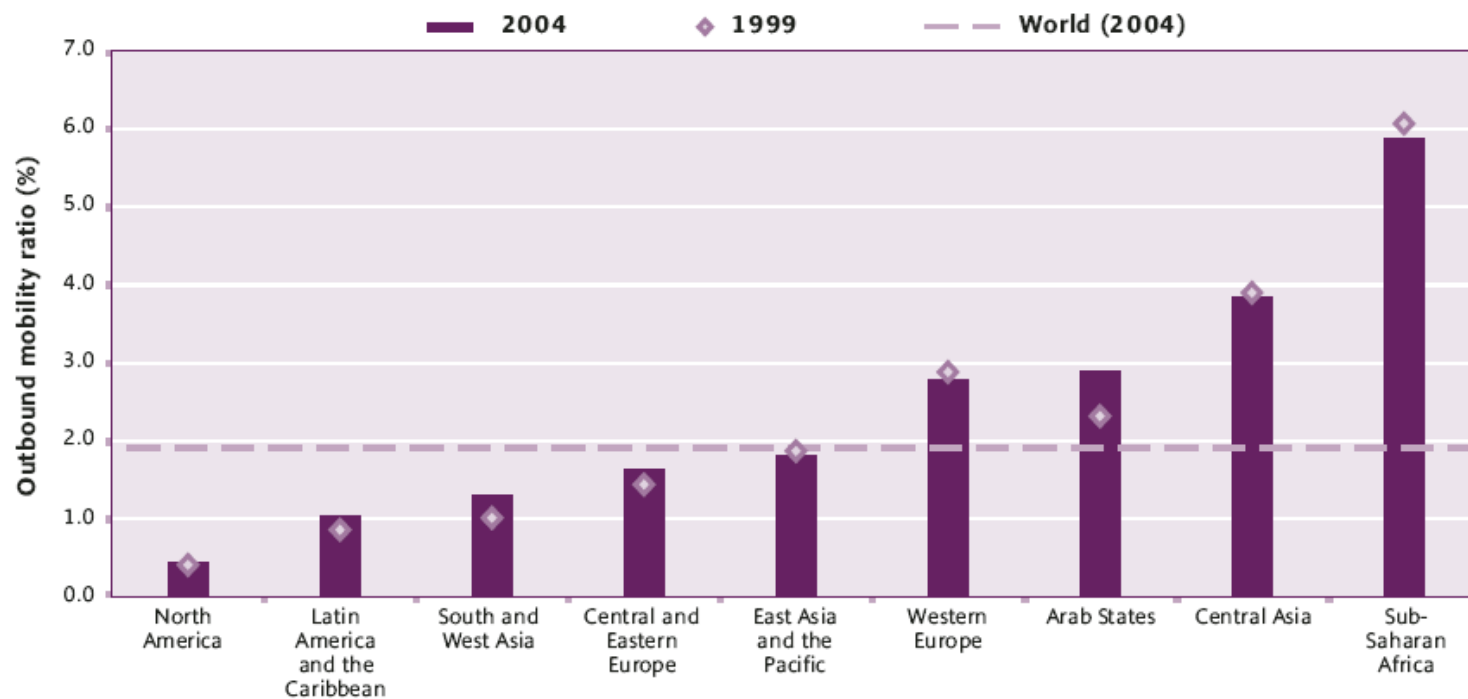


## 2.2 Globalisation of higher education

- Universities always been cosmopolitan forces
- New international character of scholarship
- Growth of cross-border provision through movement of programs, commercial presence, academics, students and other clients
- Global knowledge economy forming
- 2.5m tertiary students enrolled outside their home country, an increase from 1.75m in 1999, a 41% increase

# Labor migration, brain drain and gain

Mobile students from a given region as a percentage of tertiary students enrolled in that region (outbound mobility ratio), 1999 and 2004

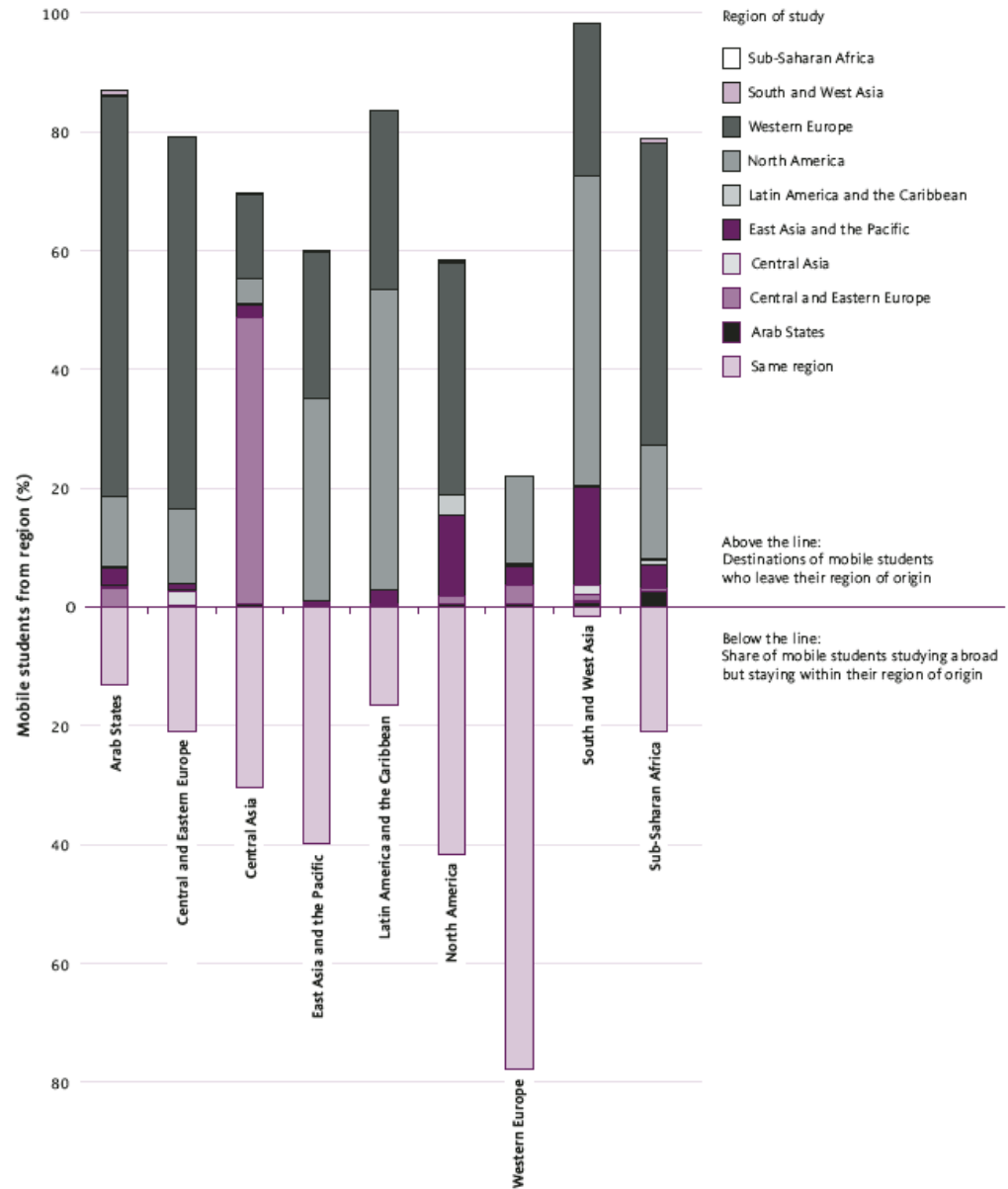


**Coverage:** See Figure 13. Mobile students not classified by country of origin are excluded. They account for 12% of mobile students in 1999 and 10% in 2004.

**Note:** Data partially imputed from other years. See note on Figure 13.

**Source:** UNESCO Institute for Statistics; reference year 2004: Statistical Table 10; previous years: UIS database.

# Very different destination preferences and patterns



Coverage: See Figure 13. Mobile students not classified by country of origin are excluded. They account for 7.5% of all mobile students.  
 Note: Mobile students from a given region studying abroad are expressed as a percentage of total mobile students from that given region.  
 Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Statistical Table 9.



# Global universities' presence

- Associations such as IAU, IE, IAUP, AUCC, ACE, IUS, ACU, OIF, INRUDA.
- The role of global equity in these movements is present but not strong. United Nations University and the African Virtual University have been established with a specific mandate
- Efforts to build capacity (IMHE, CEPES), and to manage institutional accreditation, assure quality and encourage student and scholar mobility (e.g. GATE, CHEA, NARIC, UMAP)



### 3. Conceptions of equity

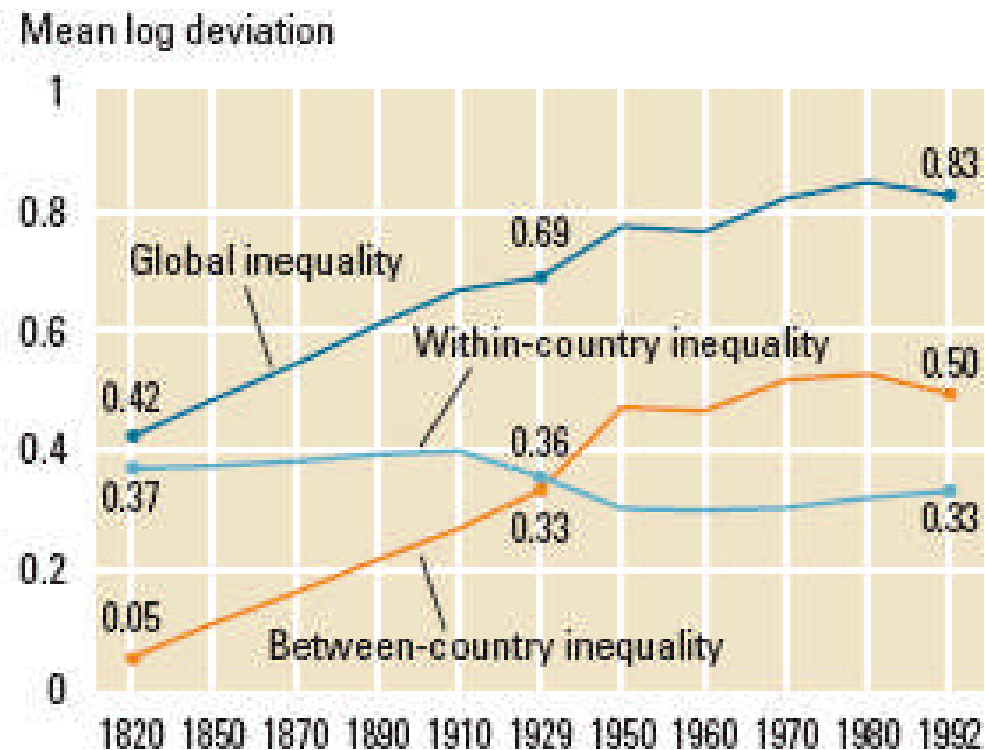
- dual definition of the World Development Report [World Bank 2005: 2], ‘that individuals should have equal opportunities to pursue a life of their choosing and be spared from extreme deprivation of outcomes
- of global equity from international equity.
- Sen / Rawls – new plural affiliations neither ‘grand universalist’ nor ‘national particularist’



## Measures of equity (WB WDR)

- Global inequality, in which people, households or establishments are compared without regard to country boundary
- International inequality, in which each person or measured entity has that country's mean income or unit of measurement, and
- Inter-country inequality, in which each country has one representative at its mean income or unit of measurement
- Extreme poverty - MDGs

# Improved total (China, India) disguise widening S of Sahara and intra-country disparities



Source: Authors' manipulation of data from Bourguignon and Morrisson (2002).



# Extreme poverty the global equity challenge for universities

Universities worldwide often seek to attract students and staff representative of income groups and regions, and to pursue economic and social justice through all their programs.

Much more difficult for universities in less developed areas

Don't underestimate the social assets and intrinsic wealth of the very poor, whether or not there are fortunes at the bottom of the pyramid.

But numbers of people living in extreme poverty, including in the slums of the world's cities, grow rapidly, their life chances miles away from tertiary education as it is presently provided.

Any discussion of global equity must include what universities are doing for, and with, urban slum dwellers and the rural poor.



# Higher education inequities

- prior family income,
- gender
- caste,
- ethnicity,
- language,
- region
- disability,
- use of languages such as English and French
- reservation of places for relatives of academics
- discriminatory admissions
- eg bias towards private secondary schools,
- the means of providing lodging,
- sexual harassment of women
- location of campuses and learning centres
- under-representation of women on teaching and research staff
- affirmative action policies in favour of majority groups
- corrupted distribution of scholarships, loans and financial aid,



## **4. Modes of engagement**

### Measures of equity

- 1. Producing knowledge**
- 2. Human capital formation**
- 3. Social and political development**



## 4.1 Producing knowledge

- research and development core but not universal
- Some countries use separate institutions, many non-research universities
- Huge disparities among institutions on normal measures of scholarly production wider than differences in teaching programs eg OECD countries generating 85 percent of investment into R&D from all sources



## Equity agenda in knowledge production is complex

- Obvious range of missions and combinations of disciplines
- Structures of global knowledge-based industries are changing rapidly, each new wave can expand or reduce equity eg digital divide genomics divide nanodivide – grounds for hope
- But universities will have to change radically



# Bias and underestimation

- systematic underestimation, in both senses of the term, of innovation and discovery undertaken by universities in developing areas
- less formalised and internationalised knowledge embodied in local and indigenous know-how eg knowledge resources of traditional medicine,
- Thus making global knowledge production – and its economic benefits – more equitable involves reconstituted definitions of knowledge and intellectual property, not only a redistribution of presently defined opportunities



## 4.2 Human capital formation

- The most universal role of universities is to educate and train men and women for their participation in the workforce and in productive lives
- rising knowledge-intensiveness of modern economies creates skill shortages wide gaps between rich and poor universities, between developed and developing countries, between well-endowed regions and those without tertiary education opportunities, hold back global equity greatly
- fast-growing numbers of young people can create demands that risk social upheaval without education and training



# Economics of investing in universities

- University education a mixed good: rising social rates of return on HE investment, strong individual returns and privatisation
- But questions arise: oversupply of graduates unmatched to work, and newly disputed gains to education eg Wolf
- Externalities of HE provision; WB suggests perhaps 15-20% of education budget



# Equity in human capital formation

Programs to students from disadvantaged sectors of society, and through universities in low-income regions and countries are the core tasks of promoting equity in higher education.

This means substantial investment in tertiary education systems through

- higher aid priority
- incentives for non-profit and for-profit sectors to expand targeted programs
- cost-effective modes including e-learning

Institutions have choices around equity-driven programs and priorities, whether and how to support the millennium development goals through teacher and principal training for example, admission and retention policies and practices, and measures to reach into the K12 sector

Localising the MDGs to universities

The curriculum, its social inclusiveness and engagement with global equity. .  
Expansion of universities as they are may do little for global equity



## 4.3 Social and political development

- Many guises: engagement with government, industry and civil society, covers institutions' roles in national and regional development, social cohesion and global affairs, CSR
- Issues of global equity becoming more important in the community engagement of universities in developed countries/ capacities of poorer universities to provide any extension services or community engagement are limited



# Universities have diverse impacts

- Regional development
- research and innovation draws funding and investment into region
- new products and processes, company startups.
- major employers - payrolls and job multipliers.
- buy goods and services in the region, construct campuses and ICT infrastructure.
- Development assistance, projects, NGOs and campaigns
- Student spending and their impact on property market and region's reputation
- community services and support social access and participation
- scholarly publication, public lectures and continuing education, arts and culture, alumni and retired staff.



# Not optional in the developing world

- For universities in the developed world like a form of corporate social responsibility
- For institutions in emerging less developed economies can be issues for their survival and for character of civil society – eg hosting social movements and political development, including under conditions of political or physical repression,
- Focus in discussion should therefore be on the means of ensuring that university community, social and political engagement is more strongly driven by the principles of equity, and that institutions in poor or otherwise disadvantaged areas can improve their capacities to provide such forms of extension and political engagement themselves.
- Lest this be seen solely in utilitarian terms, the intrinsic worth of scholarship as the highest value is reflected in some national education plans eg Vietnam.



## 5 Towards an agenda for action

- **The role of universities**
- **The role of higher education systems**
- **The role of international development**
- **Opportunities for global action**



## 5.1 The role of universities

- Expanding knowledge of global equity
- Strengthening research in lagging countries and regions
- Teaching global equity and practicing it in teaching
- Practicing access and equity
- Strengthening dedicated higher education institutions
- Joining knowledge institutions in the cause
- Private universities that are equitable



## 5.2 The role of higher education systems

1. Investing in equity
2. Social justice a stronger driver
3. Equity in governance



## 5.3 The role of international development

- **International institutions**
  - **Multilaterals**
  - **Tri-sector models**
  - **Bilaterals**



## 5.4 Opportunities for global action

1. **Trade and investment for equity / fair trade**
  - **GATS and gains from trade misunderstood**
  - **Elements of fair trade and investment**
2. **Universities associating for equity; issues for discussion**



## 5 Conclusion

- Gaps between rich and poor countries on key indicators of global equity are growing and tertiary education even more so. The number of people living in extreme poverty are growing faster than most measures for reaching the MDGs indicate, and the contribution of universities in the developed and emerging and less developed countries to alleviating their conditions of life are small and not up to the task in the future. Universities in the developing world, while producing knowledge more than the measures of the wealthy countries show, are not equipped to bridge the growing divide on research and innovation. The consequences of these growing divides are not only lost human potential and avoidable human suffering, but risks to social solidarity, health and security around the world.