

BROOKINGS

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Gender Inequalities in Tertiary Education in Ethiopia

Mediating the transition to university through the development of adaptive competencies



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Outline

- 1. Research question on girls' high dropout in university**
- 2. Rationale for the study**
- 3. Gender parity in education in Ethiopia**
- 4. Transition from secondary to tertiary: dramatic and transformational**
- 5. Hypothesis**
- 6. Research and potential policy impact**

Research Question

Why are at least 25% of girls dropping out of university in Ethiopia (compared to 8% of boys), with the majority leaving university during the first year?

Assumption: *Transition* from secondary to tertiary level is a dramatic event characterized by discontinuity and transformation.

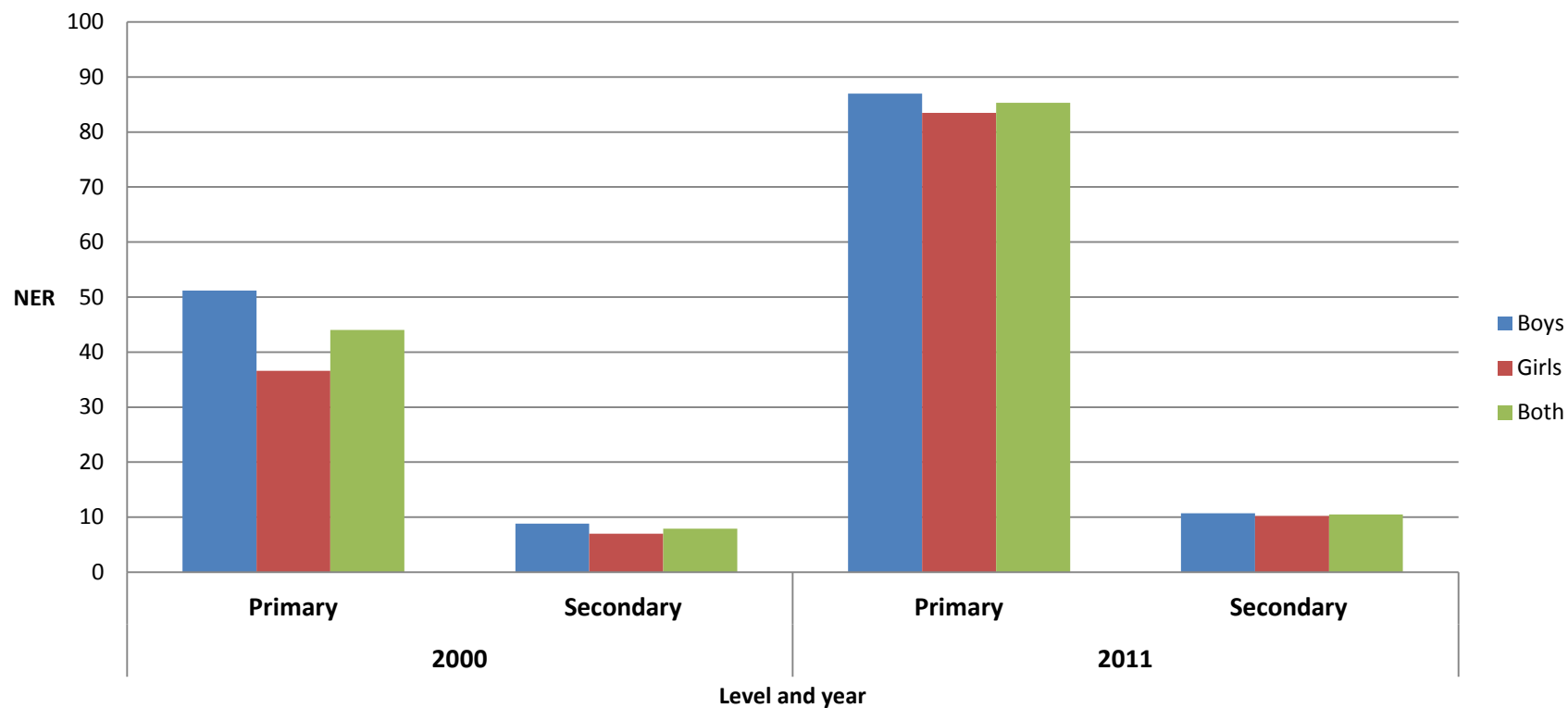
Hypothesis: Effective transition requires *adaptive competencies* that can be applied to the academic environment and Ethiopian girls are less equipped than boys as a result of their different life experiences.

Rationale: It is critical to understand why girls are failing at the tertiary level

- 1. Ethiopia has practically achieved gender parity at the primary and secondary level (despite pockets of marginalization).**
- 2. Ethiopia has not made similar progress in gender parity at the tertiary level.**
- 3. Girls only represent 25.6% of the student body (fewer in later classes).**
- 4. Girls are at greater risk of dropping out, especially in their first year, although attrition data is collected inconsistently.**

Ethiopia made great gains toward gender parity at the primary and secondary level*

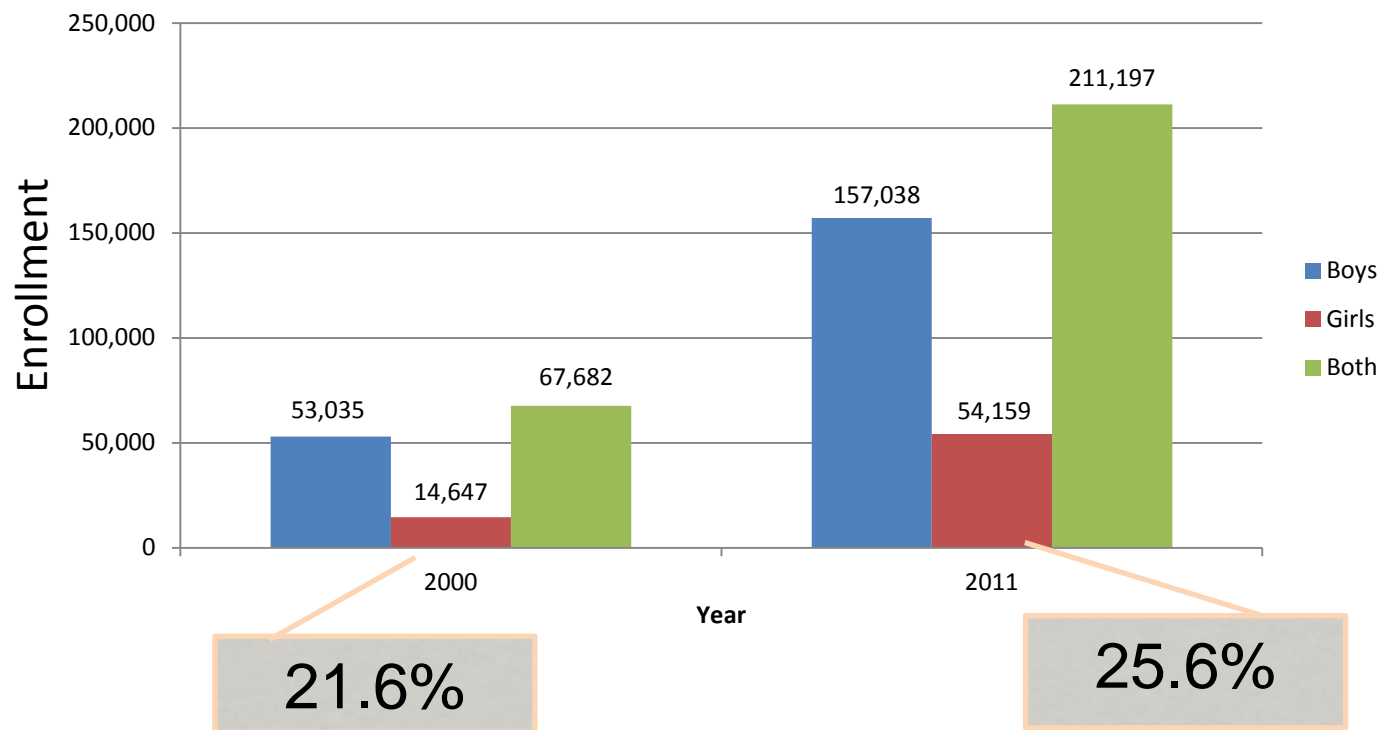
Primary and secondary Net Enrollment Rates (NER) as of 2011



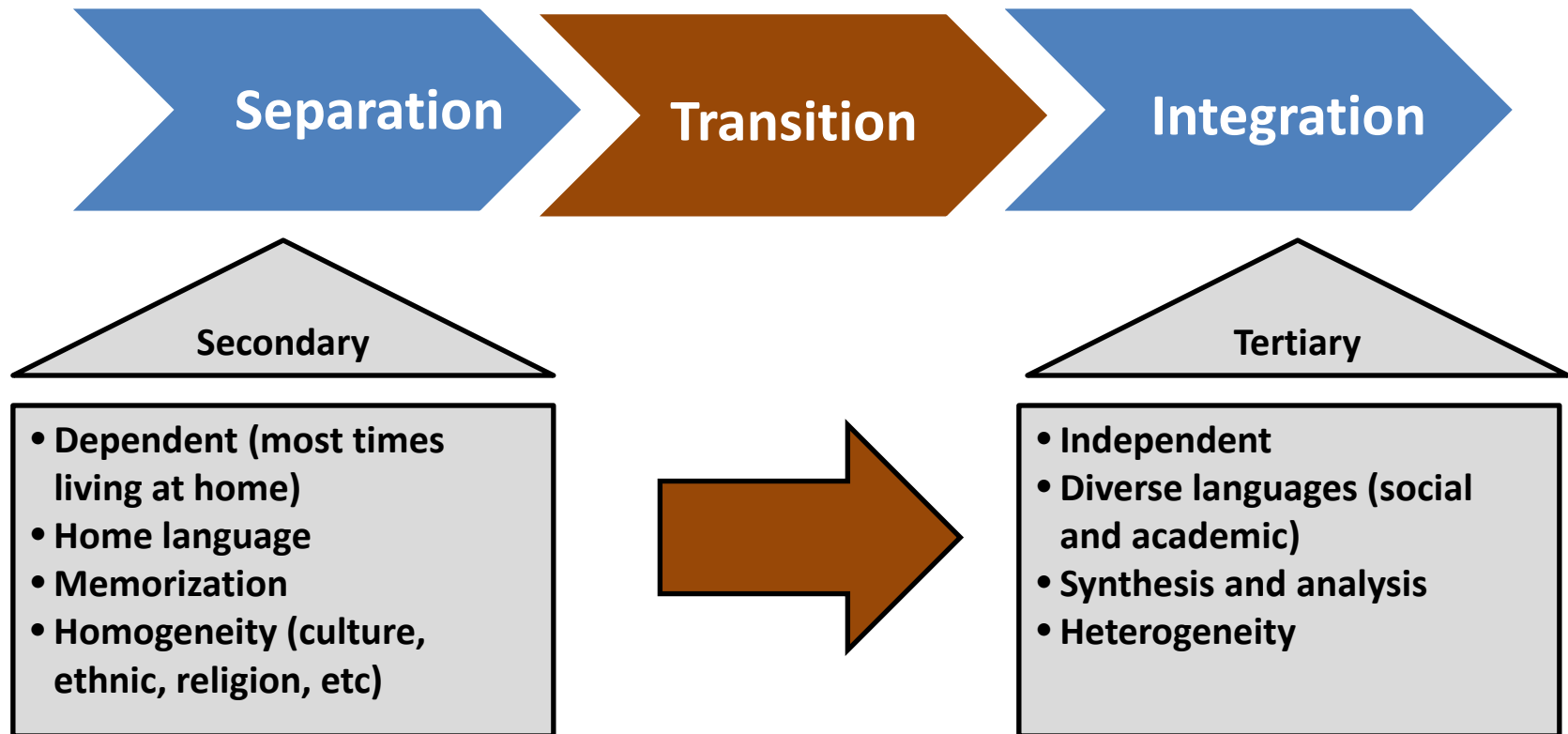
*despite continuing pockets of marginalization that need attention

Ethiopia has not made great progress in gender equality in tertiary education.

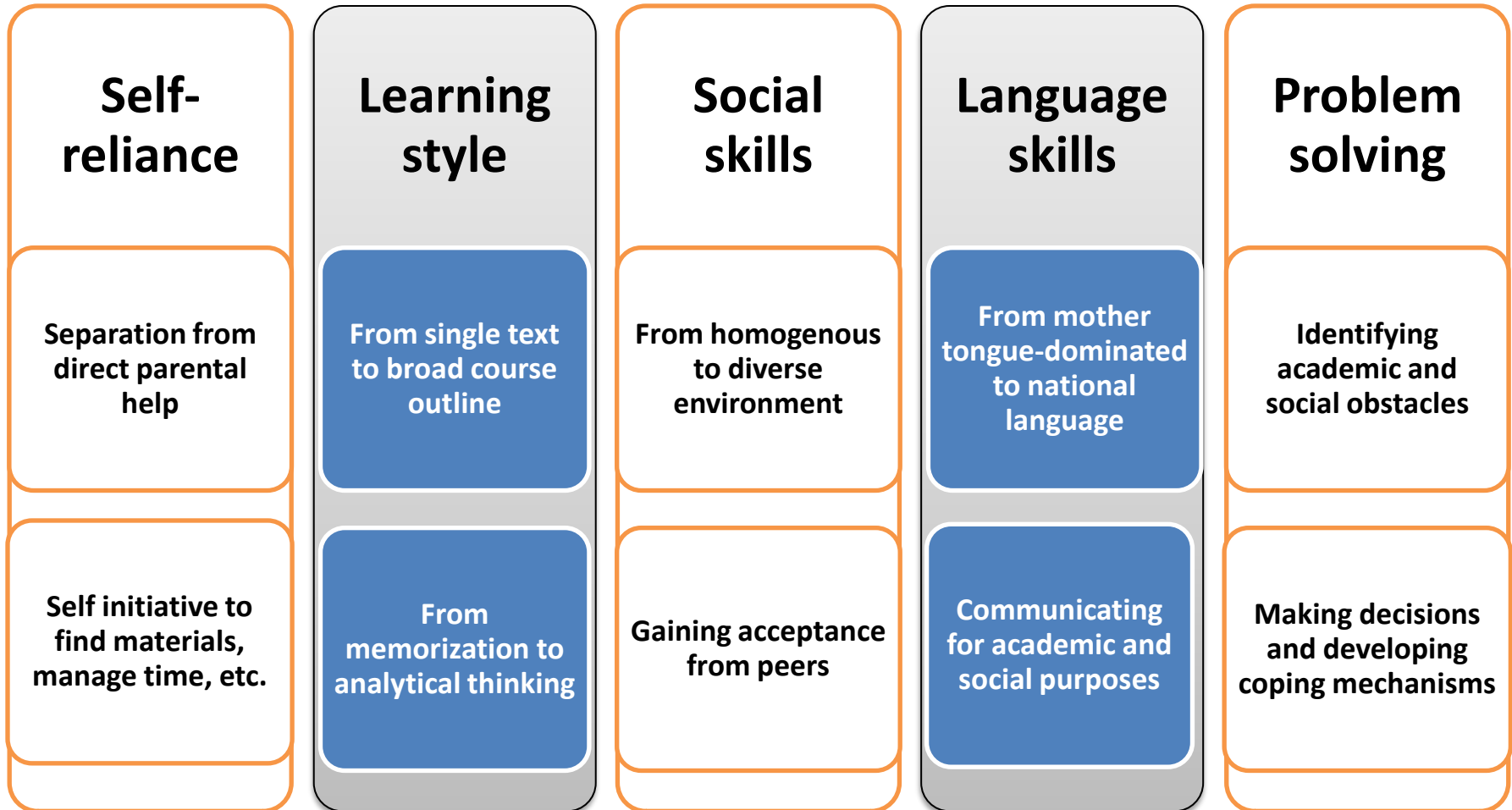
Developments in total tertiary enrollment between 2000 & 2011



Transition from secondary school to tertiary is a dramatic, discontinuous transformational event



Adaptive competencies: domains and examples of indicators in the academic environment



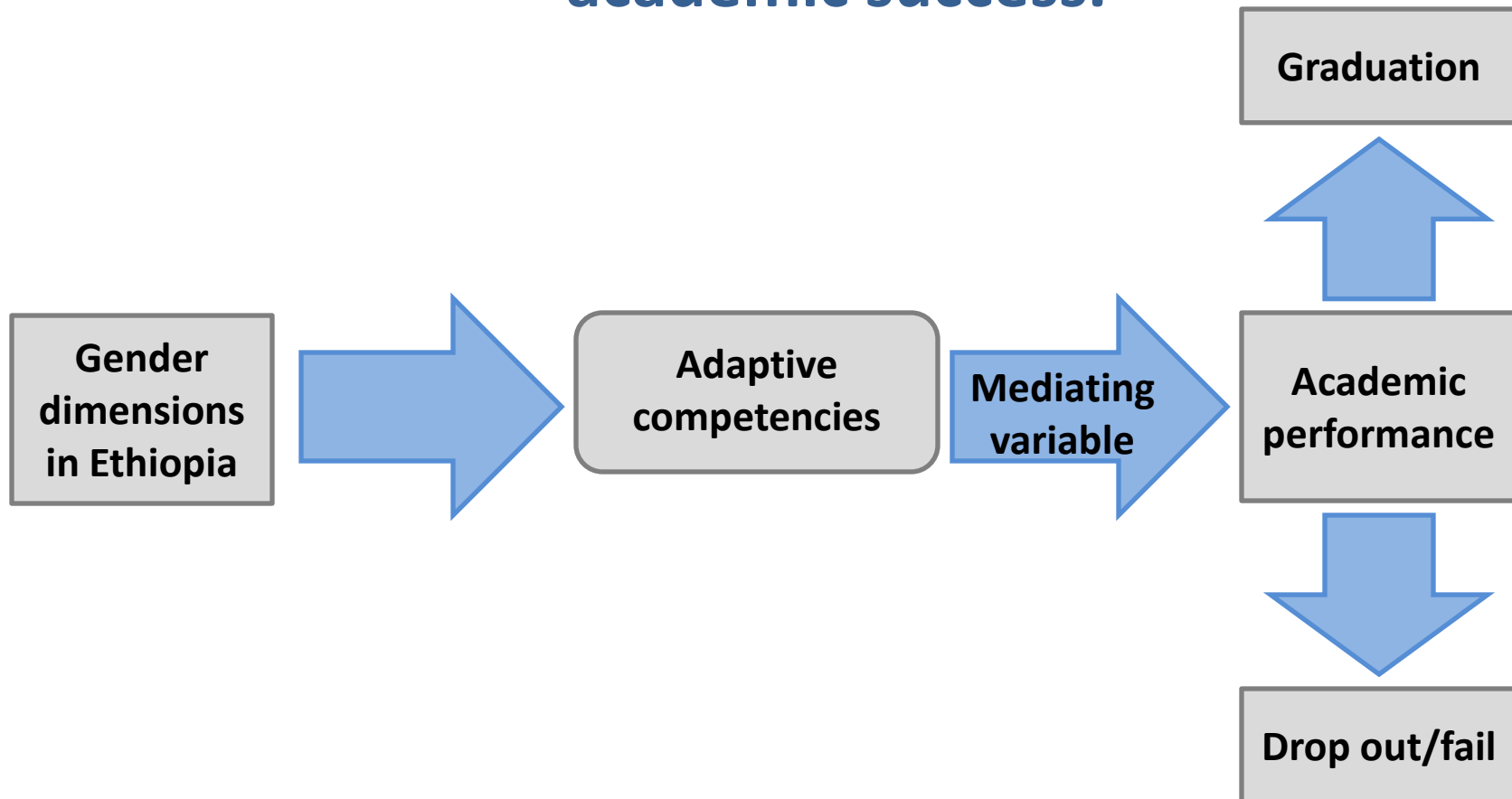
Girls may have less ability to apply adaptive competencies during academic transition than boys.

Why?

Some findings from literature and experience on gender dimensions in Ethiopia:

- **Self-reliance:** Adolescent girls are traditionally entirely financially and socially dependent on their parents, much more so than adolescent boys.
- **Learning style:** Boys have more opportunity to develop the foundation for analytical skills during secondary school because they can study more and are less burdened by domestic chores.
- **Social and language skills:** Girls have less opportunity to travel from their homes and meet people from different backgrounds.
- **Problem solving:** Protective culture and girls' dependence prevents exposure to independent problem-solving experience.

Hypothesis: *Adaptive competencies* mediate the challenges related to transition and promote academic success.



Research and Potential Policy Impact

Research

- Underlying causes of academic failure related to adaptive competencies
- Future research: institutional factors

Dissemination

- Ministry of Education
- Donors
- Academics

Policy change

- Assisting girls during transition
- Helping institutions assist girls

Longitudinal studies

- Monitoring progress on girls academic performance and transition

Conclusion: Why is this issue so important?

Improved girls' education at this level means:

- **Improved quality of education for all**
- **Ensured income equality**
- **Enhanced social development**
- **Increased opportunity to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)**

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Thank you so much!

