

**Online symposium organised and hosted by the Interculturality for Diversity and Global Learning research group: *'Gender Equality in Higher Education in India'***

**Department of Education**

**CBASS**

**Brunel University London**

**Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2023 10am to 1.15pm (GMT)**

Chaired by Professor Maria Tsouroufli, Director of Research, ESRC GUDTP Education Lead, Founder and Lead of Interculturality for Diversity and Global Learning research group

10.00am to 10.15am: Welcome and Introductions, Maria Tsouroufli

10.15 to 10.30am: **A brief overview of a British Council funded study aiming to advance gender equality in HE in India**, Professor Tsouroufli and Dr Anagha Tambe, Director of Women's Studies Centre, Savitribai Phule Pune University, Pune, India

10.30am to 10.50am Dr Ourania Filippakou, Reader in Education, Brunel University London

**Global and local discourses of gender equality: the case of India's National Education Policy**

This article analyses the underpinnings and implementation of gender equality policies in India, within the National Education Policy (NEP) that was released on 31 July 2020, a document last revised in 1986. The aim of this article is to examine NEP's main recommendations for gender equality in higher education, analyse the language and content framed by the global higher education discourse and identify the challenges imposed by the local realities of the Indian higher education system. Examining policy narratives both nationally and locally, we show how the NEP's notion of gender equality is associated with a number of related concepts such as efficiency, excellence and autonomy as well as a set of governmental strategies linked with a neoliberal approach to politics, including a focus on the markets and a logic of positivism that shapes higher education policy. The paper also argues that the policy concept of gender equality cannot be sufficiently understood in a generalised abstract way, but has to be contextualised and is better viewed as an institutionalised discourse that brings together a number of different, and sometimes conflicting, values.

10.55am to 11.15am Dr Sneha Gole, Assistant Professor, SPP University, Pune, India

### **Higher education as space of contestation: Women ask for citizenship, Ladies get protection**

This paper attempts to examine higher education as a space of contestation, in a context when the physical space of higher education sees many more young women on campus along with persistent sexism and continuation of caste-patriarchal institutional structures. Reading interviews of girl students from diverse contexts and institutional settings, this paper seeks to centre intersectionality in order to complicate the established narrative of freedom versus safety/security that has come to dominate the discourse and practice of gendered spaces of higher education. This becomes even more imperative in the contexts of the debates around issues of harassment and the Dalit-Bahujan feminist critiques of the academia and attempts by young women on campuses to push for greater space through practices of insurgent citizenship. The paper would explore how ideas of 'respectable/good women' continue to structure institutions of higher education in the neoliberal moment.

11.20 am to 11.40am Dr Swati Dyahadroy, Assistant Professor, SPP University, Pune, India

### **Interrogating the narrative of Access: To Unravel Struggles of Young Adult Girls on the Site of Higher Education**

The site of higher education is going through rapid transformation in terms of the inclusion of those who were excluded from it. However higher education is inherently an exclusive field and hence its elitism is an integral aspect of its nature as it is built into its fundamental structures. Thus, it is important to document the struggle of those who are accessing higher education, especially their struggle to root themselves in this space and also get the necessary skills to transcend traditional constraints. This paper will attempt to understand the challenges and problems faced by women students while they struggle to get degrees and the way they process different constraints which are economic and social. Because these constraints resulted into lack of power to address challenges and aspire for a better future. Through the careful reading of narratives of young adult girl students, this paper will underline why there is a need to go beyond the narrative of access and it is important to question/challenge the given frames to understand the role of higher education in shaping aspirations and opportunities of these young adult girls, thus underlining the importance of serious deliberation on institutional practices both in the domestic space and on the site of higher education.

11.45am to 12.05pm Dr Gunjan Wadhwa, Lecturer in International Development, Department of Education and Social Work, Sussex University

**Adivasi women's narratives of Employment and Employability in the 'post'-pandemic Indian context**

This paper examines multiple understandings of work, employment and employability by focusing specifically on narratives of higher education of young women from Adivasi or Scheduled Tribe communities in the 'post' pandemic Indian context. It explores the work-education trajectories of young women to understand and capture the links and tensions between contemporary global trends, national (policy) imperatives and their lived experiences / realities. The paper foregrounds young women's views about their social positioning within the nation to illuminate connections with ideas of work/career/ideal jobs which shape articulations of the future, while being shaped by their citizenship encounters with the state, particularly through the site of higher education.

12.10pm to 12.30pm Dr Anagha Tambe, Assistant Professor, SPP University, Pune, India

**The Field of Gender: Reading Contestations within the Curricula of Gender**

The field of Women's Studies in India is complex and contentious; institutionalized and mainstreamed on one hand and at once critical and transgressive. Though one can map the different worlds of any academic discipline, the heterogeneity and contestation within the disciplinary field of WS is distinct. This paper seeks to map the multiple and conflicting ideas of women, gender and feminism that occupy a curriculum on gender. By reading diverse curricula of 'gender in disciplines' and also of 'disciplining of gender' or women's studies in India, it asks, what are these plural and contesting discourses of gender, and how do these exist alongside in a single curriculum? And further, what is the discursive field/s of academia (Ray, 1998) or structured academic environment in which women's studies curriculum emerges?

12.35pm to 12.55pm Dr Maria Tsouroufli, Professor of Education, Brunel University London

**Neo-liberal pedagogical discourses and practices in the context of gender and women's studies in higher education in India**

A plethora of studies mainly from Anglophone geographical contexts have been concerned with the gender and race politics of developing, accrediting, delivering and sustaining gender and women's studies courses with the patriarchal structures of higher education. However, less attention has been given to how neo-liberal logic has permeated and corroded pedagogical spaces and subjectivities of academics teaching on gender and women's studies programmes. In this paper we focus on the Indian context, where expansion of such programmes has not been seen to be coupled with revolutionising institutions and unsettling entanglements of gender

inequalities with educational policy and practice and wider societal hierarchies. This paper draws on qualitative data from a large mixed-methods, multi-regional study aiming to advance gender equality in higher education (HE) in light of the implementation of National Educational Policy (NEP) in India. Drawing on critical (Apple, 2011; 2019; Baviskar, 2008; Giroux, 2003, 2008), feminist (Burke, 2017; Rege, 1995, 2010) and Foucaultian theorists (Zembylas, 2013), we argue that there is an ethical imperative to abandon individualist expectations of criticality operating as symbolic violence, depoliticised pedagogical discourses, and gender equality and safe feminism as neo-liberal self-improvement. Engagement with critical reflexivity for dismantling gender and cast (among other) politics of the classroom and HE institutions and a shift to a/effective pedagogies for democratic citizenship and becoming public intellectuals might be an antidote to venomous neo-liberalism.

12.55-1.15pm **Questions and plenary**

<https://bruneluniversity.zoom.us/j/97896081315>

Meeting ID: 978 9608 1315

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