

Feminist Passions and Pedagogies: what is the future in the global academy?

This paper is an attempt to contribute to theorising affect in academia from a feminist perspective. I am interested in exploring the shaping of professional identities and subjectivities, educational and career aspirations, social and pedagogical relationships through changing organisational cultures and practices of global higher education. The expansion of higher education both globally and locally has encouraged and thereby influenced the participation of women as students, both undergraduate and graduate, and as academics as teachers and researchers. But this process of so-called 'massification' has had complex and contradictory effects on such gendered participation and yet has also contributed to our greater understanding of the psycho-social aspects of subjects and subjectivity in academia. The initial project of enhancing equal opportunities in higher education coincided with the wider political processes to enhance citizen and human rights through social democracy. This was also associated with social movements for equal rights, including for women, especially linked with the global student movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Second-wave feminism, to distinguish from first-wave feminists of the suffrage movement at the turn of the 20th century, was both a political activist and more academic analytical project to develop curriculum materials, personal pedagogies and critiques of the traditional curricula of higher education. The initial feminist academic project of developing women's studies and feminist pedagogies in higher education through passionate and political engagement was associated with changing political ideas about the university and the traditional subjects of a university education. It was clearly associated with the liberal-humanist conception of university education, and the idea of academic freedom. Yet at the same time, the expansion of higher education was linked to economic growth and competitiveness, and developments towards a knowledge economy. In this complex melee of the feminist project of the personal and the project of embedding higher education in the global economy as part of the process of 'academic capitalism' (Slaughter and Leslie 1997) feelings and emotions ran high. Nevertheless the feminist project of developing feminist knowledge and pedagogies was exhilarating and exciting. 30 years on, those early feminist academics are finding sustaining the enthusiasm and energy for feminist curriculum change and development difficult: they are both despondent and despairing. And there have been major challenges to this as a necessary project with critiques of the feminisation of higher education and the successful achievement of gender equality in higher education (eg HEPI 2009). These paradoxes of feminist pedagogies and practices and gender equality in higher education are affecting adversely the development of the curriculum and knowledge in the global neo-liberal university. What are the prospects then for pedagogies and practices, or challenging curriculum change for the university of the future?

Drawing on material collected for my book *Feminism, Gender and Universities: politics, passion and pedagogies* (SRHE/Routledge forthcoming) from over 100 international but mainly Anglophone academic feminists I will explore their ambivalent and ambiguous feelings about both becoming a feminist in academia and being within academia. What are the different and diverse feelings of those feminists who entered academic life at different stages of its development and in particular types of academic institution and subject, although all within the arts and social sciences? What were and are the opportunities for personal and pedagogical

development and maintaining and developing feminist knowledge, curricula and pedagogies that remain committed to personal and inclusive pedagogies? I will also relate these current feelings and effects to their initial feelings of anticipation and excitement, fear, frustration. I will use a number of case studies of individual international feminists to develop and provide evidence of the array of affects invoked in the changing global academy. Starting with my own bittersweet experiences of negotiating a book contract alongside a research grant bid for this study, I will reflect on how my own experiences map onto others' feelings in the new audit and austerity culture and the changing global context of higher education and its likely future. I also have considerable evidence to illustrate how collaborative a project second-wave feminism initially was and whilst there were struggles to enter the global academy and embed feminist pedagogies as based upon personal experience this was also a supportive environment, given the collective approach, especially within the humanities and social sciences. Of course, this was also because the culture of higher education, albeit elite, was also conducive to collective research and teaching endeavours. There was no culture of metrics and audit on the scale that has occurred over the last 30 years, and in the case of the UK, since the first Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) of 1986. On the other hand, the question of the value of feminist work, and women's studies, was also rather tenuous in the academy, but pleasures were gained from the involvement in a wider political process.

Fast forward, to the 21st century, and the culture of the academy, in terms of research and teaching, is entirely other. Whilst there have been major moves towards the incorporation of feminist and personal pedagogies, these have not always been with their recognition or acknowledgement. There is now an abundant feminist literature and knowledge across the arts and social sciences but the question of how the 'feminist canon' (Davis and Evans 2011) is interrogated is more subject to fragility and contestation. Accounts of the ways in which feminist work is now challenged and derided are replete in the stories that I have gathered from these international feminists. Some illustrate how tenuously feminists have felt about their place and positioning within the global academy, albeit that academic life has become a privileged place, and that of academic feminists also very privileged. Nevertheless, the relative inequality with academic peers remains a major source of continuing frustration given the insensitivities of the organisational culture of academia. Finally I will also draw on attempts to develop or think through pedagogies for the neo-liberal university of the future or to contest this form of higher education as inimical to feminist scholarship and knowledge.

References

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