



International Seminar on
**Comparative Reflections on
Gender and Higher Education in India**
Special Focus on the NEP 2020 and
the States of the North East

March 5-6, 2024
Conference Centre, IIT Guwahati

Information Brochure

Organised by

National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration

(Deemed to be University)

17-B, Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi – 110016 (INDIA)

in collaboration with

Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati

Guwahati - 781039, Assam (India)

Knowledge Partner: Monash University, Australia



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Comparative Reflections on Gender and Higher Education in India: Special focus on the NEP 2020 and the North Eastern states of India

A Concept Note

National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi.

5-6 March 2024, IIT Guwahati

Introduction

The issue of gender in higher education is an important theme of inquiry and policy engagement in India, and in countries the Global South. Moreover, the action frameworks for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, call for integrated action across various goals, such that inclusive education of itself requires scholarly attention and sustained policy action from a gendered lens. Further, this emphasis helps reinforce aspects of equity and social inclusion in the current debates on reforming higher education in India. The current policy focus on reforms in the sector, as outlined in the ‘National Education Policy 2020’, is devoted, on the one hand, to increasing access—transforming higher education from an arena of ‘elite participation’ to one of ‘mass- access’. On the other hand, it has an inclusive vision on gender, where the Government of India takes the responsibility of establishing a “Gender Inclusion Fund” to build national capacities. To elucidate the arguments with data, as per the All- India Survey of Higher Education (AISHE) for India, the Gross Enrolment Ratios (GER-in Higher Education) have witnessed an overall rise, with a near gender- parity in enrolments. Yet, the overall participation is still low, as only a quarter of the eligible youth population of ages 18-23 years are enrolled in higher education in India (with a GER of nearly 27 percent, nearly 72 percent youth are outside the net of higher education). The hubris of parity in enrolments masks the barriers to full and effective gendered participation, that must receive scholarly and policy attention. Specific regions within India, such as the North East, provide for a nuanced variation on the All-India participation rates, and this scenario for the North East receives attention later on in this concept note.

India’s policy priorities now articulate a clear emphasis on the Global South, especially as India’s Prime Minister articulated at the recently concluded G-20 summit that India was becoming a voice of the Global South. The aspect of mass access has a special appeal to countries in the Global South— India and others, as these are countries have experienced direct colonial domination and its power play. Entrenched social inequalities, especially those of gender, caste, and tribes characterize the social sphere, and leave their imprint on formal institutional arenas as well. Here, modern institutions such as public universities, are an outcome of the contested colonial power politics. The process of democratic transformations and nation state building following formal independence from colonial rule lay special emphasis on building modern universities. However, most data indicators and sociological studies point to the relatively small base of participation and the persistence of higher education as an ‘elite sphere’. Further, gender is an important determinant of social exclusion, in India and in the Global South, although there are notable variations in terms of how this plays out in specific regions. The overlay of social and cultural identities, and of economic categories, increase gendered vulnerabilities in meaningful participation in higher education.

India: Understanding Gender Based Variations and Segregation

This theme of variation has special significance to understanding the specific nature of persisting inequalities in higher education, especially as it relates to gender. I know illustrate this with respect to the North Eastern states in India, the neighbouring South Asia region, and for select countries within the Global South, **Table 1** shows some of this variation across countries in the South Asia Region—Sri Lanka and India show higher participation for females. More than half the students enrolled in state universities in Sri Lanka are female. In Bangladesh, while the achievements on the MDGs have been noteworthy, and school participation rates for girls are very high, that on tertiary education is not that robust. This implies that gains made within school education by themselves do not lead up in any automatic way to gender parity in higher education. Invisible barriers to access remain, and require further deliberations.

Table 1: Gross Enrolment Ratio in Tertiary Education, South Asia, 2018/19

Country	Total	Female
Afghanistan	9.7	4.9
Bangladesh	24	17
India	26.3	26.4
Nepal	13.3	13.7
Pakistan	9	8.7
Sri Lanka	21.1	26

Source: UNESCO UIS; All India Survey of Higher Education

Within India, girls belonging to marginalised social castes and tribes (referred to as the scheduled castes and tribes) have significantly lower GERs—SC female at 23.3%; and ST females are the worst off at 17.5%—are distinctly lower than the all- India enrolment rates for females at 27.9 percent. Further, there is a geographical barrier as, rural scheduled caste girls, and scheduled tribe girls, especially in the designated fifth scheduled areas of mainland India, with a concentrated indigenous population, have the lowest opportunities for higher education. In urban areas, where there has been an enhanced supply of government (public funded) and low-cost private schools, school completion rates are high, and there is high aspiration amongst girls for going to college and to institutions of higher education. Notwithstanding the provision of ‘free’ public higher education, however, it is seldom the case that girls from segregated zones of urban marginalization make it to elite urban colleges. Informal social and cultural pressures keep girls from such zones of urban stigma away from participation in an ostensibly free and fair public system. So, the gender-parity ‘catch-up’ is by and large an elite phenomenon for girls born in urban, upper social caste-class families.

There are strong regional variations within India too, calling for a focus on regional variations within state systems. A cluster of states are distinct high achievers—these are the Southern states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, and the West Indian state of Maharashtra that perform significantly better than populous North Indian states such as Bihar.

Further, North-Eastern states in India speak of processes of gender exclusion that are at variance from mainstream Indian states, especially in their cultural and linguistic differences, differing experiences of peace and conflict, and within the North Eastern states, there are reported differences between the hill regions and others. **Table 2** provides an account of the variation in participation across North-Eastern states from the lens of gender. The average overall participation rates (including for girls) are significantly lower than the all-India average GER of 27.3 percent in three states—Assam (17.5%), Nagaland (17.3 percent), and Tripura (19.2 percent). Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur have higher than all India average participation rates, (33.7 percent and 37.8percent respectively), including higher levels of enrolment for girls as compared to boys. Two important priorities are therefore enhancing the base of participation, and ensuring gender parity.

Table 2: Gross Enrolment Ratio in Tertiary Education, North Eastern States of India 2020/21

States	Total	Female
Arunachal Pradesh	33.7	32.8
Assam	17.5	18.4
Manipur	37.8	38.6
Meghalaya	25.8	29.0
Mizoram	26.8	27.5
Nagaland	17.3	19.3
Tripura	19.2	18.4
All-India	27.3	27.9

Source: UNESCO UIS; All India Survey of Higher Education

Urban segregation and gendered exclusion pose a further conundrum—unlike the largely rural, forest-dweller scheduled tribe girl child, the urban population (and the girl child within urban marginalised zones) is not ‘remote’ to the mainstream and to processes of development. There is also an abundant ‘supply’ as the best and oldest public higher education facilities are concentrated in urban areas. Yet, enclaves within the urban create imaginary boundaries of stigma, and public facilities for higher education lie outside of it. Anirudh Krishna (*Broken Ladder: The Paradox and Potential of India’s One Billion*, 2017) speaks about ‘broken ladders’—the missed opportunities among slum communities in a system that does not allow pathways for further participation. Gender inequalities are a critical barrier in reaching education—basic and higher. The barriers persist even in their (the girl child’s) constrained access to work opportunities. Krishna (2017) calls for an understanding of both—the complexity of the everyday and the heterogeneity across states. One possible way of doing so is developing a “worms’ eye view” from the bottom up, based on lived experiences of the poor. But the silence on account of exercise of gendered power in communities makes the exercise of understanding barriers to access a challenging one.

Comparative Reflections within the Global South

The enabling conditions that have made for higher female participation rates in countries of the Global South—such as in Brazil (see **Table 3**), in the South East Asian state of Malaysia, and in India’s Southern states, demand special attention to the Global South. Table 3 also illustrates similarities in gendered participation rates for South Africa and India, calling for a deeper comparison of ‘similar’ systems. This is specially so as similarities of social structure and culture can facilitate cross-learnings within the Global South. The issues of ‘success’ with the MDGs in among many states of India and in the North East, demonstrates that there has been a ‘catch up’ in basic education, and school participation for the girl child has indeed improved. But lessons from neighbouring Bangladesh, as also many Indian states, show up the challenges in emulating or mechanically scaling up recent gains in school education to that at the tertiary level.

These comparative reflections—on the North Eastern states, from India’s neighbours in South Asia, and from the Global South more generally, call for a reflection on the social barriers that embed themselves within university systems and create barriers for gendered access. They also call for a comparative reflection on policy regimes and institutional mechanisms for effective gendered participation of women in higher education. It must be stated in a caveat the enrolment rates are but one way of placing the complex argument. Further deepening of these arguments is made when we reflect on higher education institutions as sites of gender- based exclusion, and as workplaces where academic hierarchies persist. Further, educational achievements do not by themselves lead to outcomes in the labour market, in sharp contrast to early assumptions of the human capital theory.

What are the specific reasons for lack of policy-transfer within subsectors of education? Further, the acute deprivation faced by the rural Scheduled Tribe girl child is another aspect for special focus and analysis. This indigenous population is that of forest dwellers, living in relative isolation from the mainstream processes of development, and has some amount of cultural and linguistic autonomy protected by statutory mandates.

Table 3: Gross enrolment ratio for tertiary education (%) in Select Countries of the Global South.

Country	2018		2021	
	Overall	Female	Overall	Female
India	27.4	28.2	30.3	31.6
Brazil	51.2	59.1	56.8	67.8
South Africa	23.4	27.9	25.2	31.4

Source: The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), Available online at: <http://sdg4-data.uis.unesco.org/>

From Access to Participation: Public Higher Education as a Site for Interrogating Gendered Inequality

Jeffrey et.al. (2007) note the masculine nature of ‘hanging around’ near public institutions of higher education in North India—a constrained ‘freedom’ where women cannot be seen as participating effectively. Also, the hanging around is an aspect of ‘waiting’—biding time—due to the prospects of unemployment (*Degrees Without Freedom: Education, Masculinities, and Unemployment in North India*, Stanford University Press, 2007). Sneha Krishnan discusses the restrictions on young girls as they participate in higher education in an elite College in Chennai and reside in its hostels. Women can hardly participate as equals if spaces of higher education (even public funded ones, overtly wedded to principles of egalitarianism) become overt assertion and display of masculine power. Alternatively, restrictions imposed on young girls, on account of their gender, internalise in them instincts of accepting subordination, and stopping short of questioning male power. Gender is constructed in peer groups, in leisure spaces of universities and colleges, and in academic hierarchies.

A perceptible and unfortunate outcome is to be seen in the academic hierarchies in public universities. Studies in organizational sociology note that hierarchical organizations (of which universities are an example) locate male dominance (Joan Acker, 1990). Female workers constitute the bottom—temporary or entry grade lecturers, and few rise up to the level of Professors, and even fewer lead the universities as Deans or Vice Chancellors. The All- India Survey of Higher Education gives detailed data accounts in this regard. I argue that the assumption of the pipeline—the theory of natural ascension to the top once they have entered the academic workforce—does not hold in the Indian university system. There are few women in leadership positions in Indian universities. Women from dalit social caste backgrounds find it that much more difficult to rise to the top. Further, women constitute a disproportionately high share of the casual workforce at the bottom—of temporary teachers on contract. The hierarchy of the academia thus constructs and consolidates gendered power, and the general discourse on inefficient academic bureaucracy fails to highlight this in significant ways. (See Manisha Priyam *Broken Pipelines or Fields of Power: Missing Women Leadership in Indian Higher Education*, 2019). The much talked about meritorious IIT system in India has hardly had women leaders rise to the top. Thus, the principles of merit and much valued science and technical education exclude women in invisible ways. Academic hierarchies exclude female leadership in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh as well.

No Neat and Tidy Transition to the Labour Market

Besides, we are also aware that there are no neat and tidy pathway of transition from higher education to the labour market. A lot of the degree earning is for ‘credentials’ alone, and workforce participation exhibits strong gender-based segregation. In India, workforce participation rates by levels of educational attainment in the Periodic Labour Force Surveys, show that 64.5 percent women with post graduate and above degrees do not find any employment, while men fare better in the labour market. It is indicative therefore that even from the narrow base of the female population that goes through high levels of education, structural constraints inhibit meaningful and productive employment. The invisible gendered barriers between university/higher education for women and world of works leads one to ask the question—enhancing capabilities for what? Does knowledge as human development include ‘women’? Persistent gendered segregation marks the world of higher education, notwithstanding claims of massification.

Further, the predominance of informal work opportunities, make for precarious work opportunities specially for girls from poor and rural backgrounds. Studies on social mobility ironically confirm the lack of it in rural areas and in urban slums. Anirudh Krishna's large -scale survey in rural areas and in urban slums conform this. The majority of the work opportunities being generated for the urban underclass is not in the 'call-centers', but in construction sites, that require circular mobility and put women at a disadvantage from free and fair participation norms.

While improving quality and enhancing the efficiency of universities as organisations has been a priority in recent policy landscapes for reforms, the focus of these efforts is largely institutional. There is an urgent need to shift the focus of the debate from access to widening participation and strengthening inclusiveness in higher education. Also, important is the need to have a clear view of what is being done to achieve diversity in student population, and equalize life-chances by providing fair opportunities that cut across inequalities—this is not clearly evident in what is being done in South Asia in this regard.

It is our belief:

- That massification in and of itself does not lead to gendered equalities
- That improved access to schools and better possibility of school completion following the policy emphasis on MDGs may have led to greater social demand for higher education, but not necessarily enhanced opportunities for higher education
- That rapid expansion, especially in state level universities and affiliated institutions have increased public bureaucracies in universities, and are not up to the mark on a gender gaze.
- Reform efforts have a focus on creating more efficient and accountable public systems and improving quality, with no overt focus on equality, or interrogating the social nature of these public organizations.
- That women remain invisible, underpaid, and excluded in the labour market, notwithstanding resource and policy investments in their higher education

Organisation of The Two-day Deliberations

These two-day deliberations will focus on an in-depth exploration of: data- based themes, conceptual and ideational themes, and subjective experiential ones on institutional sites of higher education.

The data-based themes will include:

- i. Exploring the gendered character of educational participation in India and it's the North Eastern states, and comparative reflections from the Global South.
- ii. Gender based variation in educational participation across disciplines: Humanities, Social Sciences, and STEM.
- iii. Educational achievements and labour market outcomes with respect to women

The conceptual themes will include:

- i. Exploring the intersectionality of gender with other social hierarchies such as caste, class, tribe and spatial marginalization.
- ii. Feminist ideas from the Global South, including decoloniality and higher education

The experiential themes will include gender on spatial sites of higher education, including interrogation of academic hierarchies.

Some thematic sessions that follow from above, include:

- The experience of gender in higher education institutions in India, specially states of the North-East
- The intersectionality of caste, class, tribe, and gender
- Gender, labour, and education
- History of Women's Studies and higher education in India

- Gender in the IITs
- Examining educational participation across disciplinary boundaries
- Conceptual discussions on Feminism in the Global South
- Comparative policy reflections

Further, the discussions will be framed within the thinking about “Southern Feminisms” such that we can reimagine a public university within the Global South with overt lenses of gender. Following the two-day deliberations, and comparative reflections, suggestions for policy interventions will be thought about. A publication of international standards will be considered to embed these learnings.

The Monash University Australia have provided knowledge support for this two-day deliberation on March 5-6, 2024, at the IIT Guwahati. Professor Sharon Pickering, Vice Chancellor and President, Monash University, Australia, Professor Craig Jeffrey, Deputy Vice Chancellor (International) and Senior Vice President, Monash University Australia, and Professor Adeeba Kamarulzaman, President and Pro-Vice Chancellor, Monash University Malaysia, have provided regular discussion time to deliberate on these conference themes, and envision a future round-table on Gender and Higher Education. This is in line with the Indian Government’s stated policy position in the NEP 2020, and at the G-20 Summit held in New Delhi in 2023. The UNESCO and UN India Office have also shown a keen interest to further these deliberations, as we move to creating a policy round-table.

The seminar is a collaborative effort of the IIT Guwahati—led by Professor Rajshree Bedamatta, Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Guwahati. Her invaluable time and ideas are acknowledged and appreciated.

Professor Manisha Priyam

Department of Educational Policy

NIEPA, New Delhi.

February 20, 2024.



PROGRAMME SCHEDULE

International Seminar on Comparative Reflections on Gender and Higher Education in India: Special focus on the NEP 2020 and the States of the North East

Day 1: Tuesday, 5 March, 2024 (Venue: Conference Centre, IIT Guwahati)

9:00-09:45	Registration and Tea/Coffee
09:45-11:00	Inaugural Session Welcome Address: Prof. Rajshree Bedamatta, IIT Guwahati Conference Concept: Prof. Manisha Priyam, NIEPA Opening Remarks: Prof. Rajeev Ahuja, Director (Officiating), IIT Guwahati Conference Keynote: Prof. Craig Jeffrey, Deputy Vice Chancellor (International) and Senior Vice President, Monash University, Australia Perspectives of a Woman VC: Prof. Ajanta Borgohain Rajkonwar, VC, Assam Women's University Reflections on Keynote and Conference Concept Note: Prof. Priyankoo Sarmah, HoD, HSS, IITG Chairperson: Prof. Sudhanshu Bhushan, NIEPA (<i>Chairperson's remarks</i>) Vote of Thanks: Dr. S. K. Malik, NIEPA
11:00-11:15	Tea/Coffee
11:15-13:00	Session 1: Women's Education in India: Histories, Ideas and Biographies Chairperson: Prof. Craig Jeffrey, <i>Deputy Vice Chancellor (International) and Senior Vice President</i> , Monash University, Australia Panel Speakers: 1. Prof. Mary E. John, Centre for Women's Development Studies (Former), New Delhi 2. Prof. Rekha Pappu, TISS Hyderabad 3. Dr. Priyanka Jha, Banaras Hindu University 4. Dr. Prabha Ravi Shankar, PG dept of JSSC, affiliated to the SNTD Women's University, Mumbai 5. Prof. Rohini Mokashi Punekar, IIT Guwahati 6. Prof. Liza Das, IIT Guwahati
13:00-14:00	LUNCH

International Seminar on Comparative Reflections on Gender and Higher Education in India: Special focus on the NEP 2020 and the States of the North East

14:00-15:15	<p>Session 2: Higher Education and Labour Market: Gendered Perspectives Chairperson: Prof. Sudhanshu Bhushan, NIEPA</p> <p>Panel Speakers:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ms. Mridusmita Bordoloi, Economist, IWWAGE, IFMR Prof. Mona Khare, NIEPA Prof. Vandana Upadhyay, Rajiv Gandhi University, Arunachal Pradesh Prof. Rajshree Bedamatta, IIT Guwahati Prof. Madhura Swaminathan (Online)
15:15-15:30	Tea/Coffee
15:30-17:00	<p>Session 3: Gender and the IITs Chairperson: Prof. Rekha Pappu, TISS, Hyderabad</p> <p>Panel Speakers:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Prof. Ravinder Kaur, IIT Delhi Prof. Nirmala Menon, IIT Indore Dr. Priyanka Tripathi, IIT Patna Prof. Sawmya Ray, IIT Guwahati
19:30-21:00	CONFERENCE DINNER
Day 2: Wednesday, 6 March, 2024 (Venue: Conference Centre, IIT Guwahati)	
10:00-11:15	<p>Session 4: Gender and Higher Education in the North East Chairperson: Prof. Mary E. John, Centre for Women's Development Studies (Former), New Delhi</p> <p>Panel Speakers:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Prof. Rakhee Kalita Moral, Cotton University, Guwahati Dr Sangeeta Angom, NIEPA Dr. V. Sawmveli, TISS, Guwahati Prof. Polly Vauquiline, Gauhati University Prof. Krishna Menon, Ambedkar University, Delhi Dr. Deigracia Nongkynrih, NEHU, Shillong
11:15-11:30	Tea / Coffee
11:30-13:00	<p>Session 5: Academic Leadership and Women Chairperson: Prof. Sudhanshu Bhushan, NIEPA</p> <p>Panel Speakers:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Prof. Ajanta Borgohain Rajkonwar, Vice Chancellor, Assam Women's University Prof. K. Ratnabali, Dean Academic Activities and Projects, Delhi University Dr. Pahi Saikia, IIT Guwahati Prof. Padmini Bhuyan Boruah, Gauhati University Prof. Manisha Priyam, NIEPA
13:00-14:00	LUNCH

International Seminar on Comparative Reflections on Gender and Higher Education in India: Special focus on the NEP 2020 and the States of the North East

14:00-14:45	<p>Session 6: Women in STEM Chairperson: Prof. Ravinder Kaur, IIT Delhi</p> <p>Panel Speakers</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dr. Bornali Bhattacharjee, Yale University (Online) 2. Dr. Shirisha Nagotu, IIT Guwahati 3. Prof. Bidisha Som, IIT Guwahati
14:45-15:45	<p>Session 7: University Spaces/University Voices Chairperson: Prof. Polly Vauqueline, Gauhati University</p> <p>Panel Speakers</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ms. Meenakshi Ravivanshi, NIEPA 2. Ms. Wajda Tabassum, NIEPA 3. Ms. Nayankhee Sarma, IIT Guwahati 4. Ms. Smita Choudhary, IIT Guwahati 5. Mr. Aijaz Ahmad Dar, IIT Guwahati
15:45-16:00	Tea / Coffee
16:00-16:45	<p>Session 8: Roundtable on Internal Committees in Higher Education Institutions Chairperson: Prof. Rakhee Kalita Moral, Cotton University</p> <p>Participants:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prof. Anamika Barua, IIT Guwahati 2. Prof. Shakuntala Mahanta, IIT Guwahati 3. Ms. Millie Hazarika, Advocate Guwahati High Court and IC member, IIT Guwahati
16:45-17:00	<p>Valedictory Session: Chairperson: Dr. S. K. Malik, NIEPA</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prof. Rajshree Bedamatta, IIT Guwahati - <i>Summing up the Workshop</i> 2. Prof. Manisha Priyam, NIEPA-<i>Future Directions</i>

Knowledge Partner: Monash University, Melbourne, Australia.



PROGRAMME PATRONS



Shri Mahesh Chandra Pant, *Chancellor*, NIEPA , New Delhi

Shri Mahesh Chandra Pant is presently Chancellor of National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA), New Delhi. He also served as the Chairman of the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS), He took significant steps to put the open schooling system in India on a sound pedestal. As Director of Education in U.P. and Uttarakhand he made substantial changes in the administration and management of School Education in these two States. As Chairman of the Basic Shiksha Parishad, he initiated steps to develop new curriculum for the primary schools. Prepared and implemented the District Educational Plans and submitted proposals for state sector allocation in education to the state government. The minute details of plan process commencing from collection of data and identifying local specific needs to meet the long-, medium- and short-term goals were taken into account. Among other things, these included the availability and allocation of resources and time, planning for successful implementation of different action plans to achieve the required goals. He Worked as Educational Planner and Administrator at District Level in the capacity of Basic Shiksha Adhikari as well as District Inspector of Schools. The experience gained was used while working as an educational administrator and as a Principal of Intermediate College in remote area of Nainital District. Introduction of Innovative scheme “Rajeev Gandhi Navodaya Vidyalaya” to identify talented children from remote and rural areas of state of Uttarakhand and provided the Residential quality schooling facilities to them. The rich experience acquired in teaching, school administration, preparation of institutional plans, development of curriculum and instructional materials, and monitoring and supervision of educational programmes was reinforced while working as the Director of Education in Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand.



Professor Shashikala Wanjari, *Vice-Chancellor*, NIEPA, New Delhi

Professor Shashikala Wanjari is presently Vice-Chancellor of National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA), New Delhi. She also served as Vice-Chancellor of SNDT Women’s University, Mumbai. Prof. Wanjari was conferred with the rank of Honorary Colonel in the National Cadet Corps in July 2018. Prior to this, she headed the Department of Education at RTM Nagpur University, Nagpur and led Nagpur Nagarik Sahkari Bank Pvt Ltd as Ex Vice-Chairperson. She has long years of teaching and research experience. She has many publications of research papers and articles to her credit. Prof. Wanjari has participated in several International and National conferences and delivered more than 200 expert lectures in different academic forums. She has served as a Chairperson of Syllabus cum Textbook development for Foundational Stage committee of NCERT. She is a member of different academic bodies. Prof. Wanjari also received award from Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration and Management (CCEAM) in 2014. She is recipient of Madam Marie Curie Award from Swadeshi Vidya, Bangalore. She is contributing in the capacity of Hon’ble visitor’s nominee at Central University of Punjab, Bhatinda, and Central University of Jharkhand, Ranchi. So far, she has successfully guided 16 PhD scholars in Education during her academic career.



A.K. Singh, Professor & Head, Department of Educational Policy, NIEPA, New Delhi

A.K. Singh is Professor & Head of Department of Educational Policy, NIEPA. He is Ph.D. (Education) from University of London with Master of Studies (Social Anthropology) from Oxford University; was on the Faculty of Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai; GOI National Scholar; published research papers and articles in national and international journals and books; conducted several research studies: Evaluation of Education Programmes and Schemes, Alternative Schooling through Maktabas, Community and School Linkages, Evaluation of Literacy Campaigns; consulted by the European Commission, Save the Children (UK), UNICEF, the World Bank; specializes in Education of the Disadvantaged, Decentralised Educational Management, Tribal Education, Policy Analysis and Programme Evaluation.



**Manisha Priyam, Professor, Department of Educational Policy, NIEPA, New Delhi
Programme Coordinator**

Manisha Priyam is Professor of Educational Policy at the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi. She is a Senior Academic and Researcher, and works on issues of development and politics. She has a doctorate from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), in International Development, where she examines the politics of education policy reforms in a comparative perspective.

Among her published books are *Reclaiming Public Universities: Comparative Reflection for Reforms*, Routledge, 2022, and *The Contested Politics of Education Reforms in India: Aligning Opportunities with Interests*, Oxford University Press, 2015. She has written the following book chapters: "Global Wars, National Legacies, and State Controls: The Dilemmas of Institutionalism of Public Universities", in Sudhanshu Bhushan edited *The Future of Higher Education in India*, Springer, 2019. "Missing Women Leadership in Indian Higher Education: Broken Pipeline or Fields of Power?", in Shamika Ravi (edited). *Difficult Dialogues: A Compendium of Contemporary Essays on Gender Inequality in India*, New Delhi: Brookings India, 2019, (pp102-25, Chapter 6) "From Clients to Citizens: Learning from Brazil Provides an Opportunity to Delhi" in N. Jayaram edited, *Social Dynamics of the Urban*, Springer, 2017. "Policy Reform and Educational Development in a Federal Context: Reflections on an Uneven Process of Change in Bihar", in Avinash Kumar Singh edited *Education, and Empowerment in India: Policies and Practices*, Routledge, London and New York, 2016. (pp. 159-178) She has also authored the piece Educational policy and development. In George W. Noblit (edited), *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education*. New York: Oxford University Press.

doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.203> Published online: 26 March, 2019.

Inaugural Session

9:45 - 11:00	<p>Welcome Address: Prof. Rajshree Bedamatta, IIT Guwahati</p> <p>Conference Concept: Prof. Manisha Priyam, NIEPA</p> <p>Opening Remarks: Prof. Rajeev Ahuja, Director (Officiating), IIT Guwahati</p> <p>Conference Keynote: Prof. Craig Jeffrey, Deputy Vice Chancellor (International) and Senior Vice President, Monash University, Australia</p> <p>Perspectives of a Woman VC: Prof. Ajanta Borgohain Rajkonwar, VC, Assam Women's University</p> <p>Reflections of Keynote and Conference Concept Note: Prof. Priyankoo Sarmah, HoD, HSS, IITG</p> <p>Chairperson: Prof. Sudhanshu Bhushan, NIEPA (<i>Chairperson's remarks</i>)</p> <p>Vote of Thanks: Dr. S. K. Malik, NIEPA</p>
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Rajshree Bedamatta, Professor, Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati.

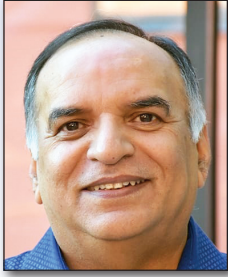
Rajshree Bedamatta is Professor of Economics at the Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati. Her current research interests are at the intersection of Development Economics and Public Policy in the domains of education, health, and food. She uses the feminist approach to studying and teaching economics at the undergraduate and post graduate levels at IIT Guwahati.



Manisha Priyam, Professor, Department of Educational Policy NIEPA, New Delhi

Manisha Priyam is Professor of Educational Policy at the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi. She is a Senior Academic and Researcher, and works on issues of development and politics. She has a doctorate from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), in International Development, where she examines the politics of education policy reforms in a comparative perspective.

Among her published books are *Reclaiming Public Universities: Comparative Reflection for Reforms*, Routledge, 2022, and *The Contested Politics of Education Reforms in India: Aligning Opportunities with Interests*, Oxford University Press, 2015. She has written the following book chapters: "Global Wars, National Legacies, and State Controls: The Dilemmas of Institutionalism of Public Universities", in Sudhanshu Bhushan edited *The Future of Higher Education in India*, Springer, 2019. "Missing Women Leadership in Indian Higher Education: Broken Pipeline or Fields of Power?", in Shamika Ravi (edited). *Difficult Dialogues: A Compendium of Contemporary Essays on Gender Inequality in India*, New Delhi: Brookings India, 2019, (pp102-25, Chapter 6) "From Clients to Citizens: Learning from Brazil Provides an Opportunity to Delhi" in N. Jayaram edited, *Social Dynamics of the Urban*, Springer, 2017. "Policy Reform and Educational Development in a Federal Context: Reflections on an Uneven Process of Change in Bihar", in Avinash Kumar Singh edited *Education, and Empowerment in India: Policies and Practices*, Routledge, London and New York, 2016. (pp. 159-178) She has also authored the piece *Educational policy and development*. In George W. Noblit (edited), *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education*. New York: Oxford University Press. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.203> Published online: 26 March, 2019.



Rajeev Ahuja, Director (Officiating), IIT-Guwahati

Rajeev Ahuja has joined IIT-Guwahati as an officiating director from November 07, 2023. He is the Director of IIT Ropar from 2021. He is also a Professor of Computational Materials Science at Uppsala University, Sweden. He is one of the most highly cited researchers and among top 5 materials scientists in Sweden & India. He did his Ph.D. from I.I.T. Roorkee in 1992. Same year he joined Uppsala University Sweden as a postdoctoral fellow. He became Assistant Professor in 1996, Associate Professor in 2002 and become Professor in 2007 at Uppsala University.

His main area of interest is computational materials science with focus on energy, Hydrogen Storage & production, sensors as well high-pressure physics. Sir has supervised 30 PhD students, more than 35 postdocs. He has published more than 1150 scientific papers with H-index of 100 & numbers of citations more than 47000 in peer reviewed journals.

He has been recently elected the fellow of Royal Society Chemistry, London, APS-Fellow by American Physical Society, USA and Appointed in the advisory Board of Journal of Materials Chemistry A & Materials Advances from Royal Society of Chemistry.

He has been awarded many prestigious awards from KVA and KVS Sweden and an elected member of the Swedish Royal Society of Sciences (KVS). He has been awarded Best Alumnus award from IIT Roorkee for excellence in research for 2021.



Craig Jeffrey Deputy, Vice Chancellor (International) and Senior Vice President, Monash University, Australia

Craig Jeffrey is the Deputy Vice Chancellor (International) and Senior Vice President, of the Monash University, Australia. He leads the University's international engagement including the development and implementation of the University's International Plan, which will expand Monash's international reach and impact. His responsibilities include supporting the University's global network of campuses comprising Monash University Malaysia, Monash University Indonesia, Monash Suzhou in China, the IITB-Monash Research Academy in India and the Prato Centre in Italy, as well as Monash's international alliance network. He also oversees the Networks of Excellence program that provides seed funding for research and education collaborations between Monash academics and international partner institutions, as well as the University's international agreements and transnational education activities. Professor Jeffrey is an internationally-recognised researcher, educator and leader with nearly 30 years' experience in the higher education sector across four continents. Over the course of his career, Professor Jeffrey has worked closely with industry, governments and universities to shape policy and practice around issues of youth, education and social change in India. He was engaged by the Indian Government to review their new National Education Policy, and has worked with large enterprises in India on their social engagement. He has also advised the Group of Eight on matters relating to international engagement and undergraduate and graduate education, and was influential in developing the submission to the Australian Government on the proposed establishment of a new Centre for Australia-India relations. He has also been instrumental to the Australian Government's discussions on how to respond to India's new National Education Policy. Professor Jeffrey has a breadth of contemporary research interests including politics, education, youth and social change, particularly in South Asia. He has authored eight books, more than 70 articles and book chapters, and is a frequent authoritative voice in the media on local, national and global issues related to India, youth, international development, and higher education. Since 1996, Professor Jeffrey has carried out a total of four years of ethnographic research in rural and small-town areas in Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh in northern India. He has mainly conducted research with marginalised communities, working in Hindi or Urdu, both of which he speaks fluently.



Ajanta Borgohain Rajkonwar, Vice-Chancellor, Assam Women's University

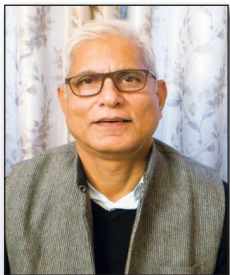
Ajanta Borgohain Rajkonwar is Vice Chancellor of Assam Women's University. Dr. Rajkonwar has formerly served as the Dean of the School of Commerce and Management Science, Dibrugarh University. She has also held the position of Chairperson at the Centre for Management Studies, Dibrugarh University.



Priyankoo Sarmah, Professor & HoD, HSS, IIT Guwahati

Priyankoo Sarmah is Professor of Linguistics in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati (IITG). He is actively involved in the Center for Linguistic Science and Technology at IITG. Prof. Sarmah received his PhD in Linguistics from the Department of Linguistics, University of Florida. Before joining IITG in 2011, he worked in the Department of Linguistics and Cognitive Science at the Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, South Korea (2008-2011).

His research interests are phonetics, speech analysis, speech perception and speech technology development. He is passionate about production and perception of tones and have worked on tones in Bodo, Dimasa, Mizo, Paite, Poula, Rabha and Tiwa, and on the sociophonetics of Assamese and Angami.



Sudhanshu Bhushan, Professor & Head, Department of Higher and Professional Education, NIEPA, New Delhi

Sudhanshu Bhushan is Professor and Head of the Department of Higher & Professional Education in the National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA). He specializes in Internationalisation of Higher Education, Policy issues in Higher Education and Educational Planning. His recent contributions include Quality Assurance of Transnational Higher Education: Australia and India Experiences, Public Financing and Deregulated Fees in Indian Higher Education, and Restructuring Higher Education in India. He is the co-editor of a book on Teaching and Learning in Higher Education in India and Australia published by Routledge in 2018. His book on the Future of Higher Education in India has been published by Springer in 2019. Book on Governance of Higher Education in Bihar: Influence of Power Canters is published by Routledge in 2021. His present responsibility is to conduct and guide research and to provide policy support to the Government. He is the recipient of Amartya Sen Award 2012 for distinguished Social Scientist, an award instituted by Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi. He is the Managing Editor of Indian Economic Journal. He is also the Academic Editor of Pariprekshya, Hindi journal of NIEPA.



S.K. Mallik, Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Policy, NIEPA, New Delhi.

S. K. Mallik Ph.D. (Sociology) from Institute of Social Sciences, Dr B.R. Ambedkar University, Agra. Area of specialisation is School Education under the Management of Panchayati Raj Bodies. Trained at International Institute of Educational Planning (IIEP), UNESCO, Paris. Prior to joining the organization, he was working under the National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development, New Delhi; on deputation to National Council for Teacher Education, Eastern Regional Committee, Bhubaneswar. Published number of articles and book reviews in journals of national repute.

Session 1

11:15 - 13:00

Session 1: Women's Education in India: Histories, Ideas and Biographies

Panel Speakers

1. Prof. Mary E. John, Centre for Women's Development Studies (Former), New Delhi
2. Prof. Rekha Pappu, TISS Hyderabad
3. Dr. Priyanka Jha, Banaras Hindu University
4. Dr. Prabha Ravi Shankar, PG dept of JSSC, affiliated to the SNDT Women's University, Mumbai
5. Prof. Rohini Mokashi Punekar, IIT Guwahati
6. Prof. Liza Das, IIT Guwahati

Analysing the New Educational Policy in the Context of Higher Education, Where is Gender?

Mary E. John, Professor, Centre for Women's Development Studies (former)

Abstract

This paper offers a preliminary analysis of the New Education Policy document 2020 that was released by the government after considerable delay. Since 2016, the government has been trying to bring out a policy document on education, and NEP 2020 is at the end of several attempts that fell by the wayside. The context for the present discussion is that of the unprecedented expansion in higher education among students in recent decades. Within the emergence of a heterogeneous student body, the presence of women students – which has even reached parity in mainstream disciplines at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels – has somehow escaped public attention. The NEP document, especially the section concerning higher education, has to be read with care in order to go beyond its welcome aspects, such as those of multi-disciplinarity and holism. What is disturbing is evidence of a tiered differential structure that is likely to have negative effects on the kind of access that women have achieved. The hard question before us is whether the unprecedented entry of women across social groups that recent decades have witnessed, however poorly recognised or understood, will see a reversal in the wake of the lack of interest in questions of equity that the NEP vision document demonstrates. With the important exception of issues of sexual harassment on campuses, the overall neglect of the meanings and purpose of women's increased claims on higher education bodes ill for the future.



Mary E John was formerly Professor at the Centre for Women's Development Studies, New Delhi. She was Director of the Centre from 2006-2012 and before that the Deputy Director of the Women's Studies Programme at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi from 2001-2006. Her most recent publications include the co-edited volume *Women in the Worlds of Labour: Interdisciplinary and Intersectional Perspectives* and the monograph *Child Marriage in an International Frame: A Feminist Review from India*. She was the co-chair of a Task Force set up by the University Grants Commission to look into sexual harassment on Indian campuses and brought out the report *Saksham: Measures for Ensuring Safety of Women and Programmes for Gender Sensitization on Campuses*. Her

areas of interest span the fields of women's studies and feminism within the social sciences, with particular interest in studies pertaining to marriage and family, education and labour, as well as a more philosophical interest in the concepts and frameworks of feminist theoretical analysis.

Gender and the Curriculum in Higher Education Institutions

Rekha Pappu, Professor, School of Educational Studies, TISS Mumbai

Abstract

The presentation will primarily engage with two questions: (i) how, or in what manner, are gender issues addressed in the curricula of teaching programmes in higher education institutes in India? and (ii) what are the considerations that are involved in the inclusion of gender concerns in the curriculum of different programmes offered in higher education?

The presentation will begin with an overview of the attempts made in India to introduce gender into the curriculum of programmes offered by higher education institutions. Since the effort is historically linked with the emergence of women's studies, the various considerations and challenges involved in the introduction of women's studies as an area of enquiry in the Indian context in the 1970s and the 1980s will be reviewed. In fact, it is in this initial phase that the curricular objectives of women's studies are discussed much more extensively than at any later point and the period is therefore of particular significance to the present discussion. Moving ahead, the issues that emerged at the turn of the century after women's studies was institutionalized and accommodated within higher educational institutions provide grist for reflection on the implications of women's studies/gender curricula getting mainstreamed. The presentation will therefore discuss these aspects as well. In conclusion, the paper will reflect on the possibilities through which transformative gendered understanding and knowledge frameworks can be included in the curriculum of programmes in higher education.



Rekha Pappu is a Professor at the School of Educational Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences in Hyderabad. She is an academic with interests in education, sustainable development, women's studies, and cultural studies. She has a strong publication record in academic journals, anthologies, magazines, and newspapers. She has co-edited the two volumes of *Handbook of Education Systems in South Asia* (2021), published by Springer. Before joining TISS, Rekha Pappu held leadership roles at Anveshi Research Centre for Women's Studies and Andhra Pradesh Social Watch. She has also been a Fulbright-Tata Visiting Fellow and a Fellow at institutions like the University of Michigan and the University of Sussex. Rekha Pappu has conducted studies and assessments for diverse

organizations, including governmental bodies and national / international organisations. Her research focuses on education policy, the history of education, pedagogy, teacher professional development, childhood studies, and EdTech.

Emancipatory and Decolonial Pedagogies: Mainstreaming Gendered Intellectual Herstories of Ideas

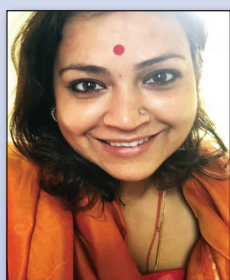
Priyanka Jha, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Banaras Hindu University

Abstract

The inclusion of gendered traditions of Ideas is crucial and significant for societies, in their pursuit of a just and egalitarian normative. The NEP 2020 emphasis on gender parity and modes of gender inclusion, provides significant opportunities for transformation. Yet, in many ways would be limited, if the focus rests on the numbers, as in its present form, NEP 2020 suffers from the limitation, with its focus on participation rates and enrolment ratio.

For it to be truly emancipatory, egalitarian and inclusive, it will have to take cognizance of the very nature of the 'western', 'elitist' and 'patriarchal' syllabus and pedagogy, which have been disseminated and routinised for decades in the Indian University system. Despite the ample evidence of Women shaping histories, through their voluminous contributions, and significant interlocutions in key debates in the nation making are replete and absent from the pedagogy and syllabus. A close look and reading of the syllabus of the Political, Social and Economic Thought, across Indian universities testifies to the unequal and male-centric courses. However, it is important to mention that this is not a unique and peculiar problem of India but finds a global resonance. In the present form, the syllabus of many universities both public as well as private suffers from the overtly ;male canonical imprint , as they are based on the works, ideas and philosophies of the routinised tall Men and even if there are women thinkers, they are all Western. This needs to be rectified and corrected as encompasses numerous problems. Some of the significant ones entail, denial of women as thinkers, erasure of their agency, non-acknowledgement of their multiple contributions and interventions and most importantly taking away from the 'girls' and the female students', their exemplary pasts; the past that was shaped by emancipatory gendered traditions and inspirations.

This presentation attempts to elaborate on a possible framework of a 'transformative gendered pedagogy', which shifts beyond the much conventional 'add and stir' formulation. Focusing on my area of research and work, I want to present, a gendered syllabus of Political Theory, Philosophy and History of Political Thought. Centering on the diverse and plural women voices and thinkers, and their interventions on values and concepts. This gendered revision, rectification as well and reconstruction is also a project of Decolonization of knowledge, as it challenges the constructed notion of the derivative and borrowed; nature of Indian feminism as well as womens intellectual traditions. In my presentations, I would like to showcase how this can be done, based on my recent exercise with the Department of Higher Education, Uttar Pradesh for syllabus revision for the State Universities and affiliated Colleges (2020-2021) and the recent attempts in teaching electives on Indian Political thought and Political theory at the Department of Political Science at Banaras Hindu University, sharing the challenges, obstacles and the many possibilities.



Priyanka Jha teaches in the Department of Political Science, at Banaras Hindu University. She is interested in Political Theory and Thought and Gendered Intellectual History of Ideas.

Dr Jha is interested in recovering the absent and marginalized women thinkers and Intellectuals from Modern South Asia in reconstructing Indian as well as Global Political thought. She has published extensively on the theme of Intellectual History of Ideas and

Indian Political Thought and theory. Her most recent publication, 'The Shaping of the Political: A gendered Intellectual History of Ideas in Modern India' was published in Journal of Women Philosophers (Brill). Dr Jha's edited Volume, Talking about Global Inequality: Personal Experiences and Historical Perspectives (Palgrave) has most recently been published in 2022. Her textbook on Ideas and Thinking: Political Thought in Modern India is under review and shall be published in 2023. She is also the Series Editor of the De Gruyter Series on Women in Heritage, focusing on the section on Indian and South Asian Women's political works. She is also Board Member of the International Association of Women Philosophers and Scientists (IAPH), based at the University of Paderborn, Germany. One of the significant collectives dedicated towards the works, ideas and philosophy of women thinkers and Philosophers. (Brill). Dr Jha's edited Volume, Talking about Global Inequality: Personal Experiences and Historical Perspectives (Palgrave) has most recently been published in 2022. Her textbook on Ideas and Thinking: Political Thought in Modern India is under review and shall be published in 2023. She is also the Series Editor of the De Gruyter Series on Women in Heritage, focusing on the section on Indian and South Asian Women's political works. She is also Board Member of the International Association of Women Philosophers and Scientists (IAPH), based at the University of Paderborn, Germany. One of the significant collectives dedicated towards the works, ideas and philosophy of women thinkers and Philosophers.

Annie Margaret Barr (1899-1973): Pioneer Educationist in the Khasi Hills, Continuity and Challenges

Prabha Ravi Shankar, Associate Professor, PG dept of JSSC, affiliated to the SNDT Women's University, Mumbai

Abstract

Annie Margaret Barr (1899-1973) was an outstanding English Unitarian Minister, an honorary member of the General Assembly and a pioneer educationist in the Khasi Hills in Assam (now in the State of Meghalaya). Her students included many girl children and some boys who were poor and had no proper living, let alone education. She arrived in India in 1930, met Mahatma Gandhi at Wardha and was determined to follow the path of constructive work set up by him, especially his philosophy of education for the poor. Her sister Mary was already doing Gandhi's work in the Indian villages. Unlike many other missionaries, Annie was a firm believer in respect for all religions and brotherhood and kept away from people who denigrated the indigenous religion. Soon she met Hajom Kissor Singh, the founder of the Unitarian church in Shillong, Meghalaya, who helped her to understand the local culture as well as the Khasi language. By 1933, she set up her own small home Khasi Hills and became deeply involved in providing education; the impact of this was probably immeasurable. The Women's League in the U.K. supported her work until her death in 1973. In 1949 when the government of India took over the schools in Shillong, Margaret shifted to the Kharang village further up the hills and started a rural centre called Kharang School for poor children concentrating on education and health care. It was something similar to Gandhi's basic education system along with self-reliance and dignity of labour. The Women's League continues to support projects in the Khasi Hills through the India Fund.

Annie Barr deserves to be remembered as a courageous, hard working and enterprising woman who dedicated her whole life to the noble work of providing education. Her autobiography *My Dream Came true-the Story of Kaharang* (1974) gives us an idea of the struggles she encountered in villages totally bereft of education in the beautiful and culturally- diverse region of the Khasi hills and how she overcame these challenges. The central government took some initiatives such as the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (education for all) and the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan aiming to provide free and compulsory education to all, which with the help of special ministry for North Eastern states have given new hopes of development. Despite this, Lack of economic development and human resources, teachers and teacher training institutes and proper infrastructure stand obstruct the progress of education. The latest National Educational Policy (NEP) holds great potential for Meghalaya, especially in key areas such as multidisciplinary education, vocational education, preservation of language and culture, integration of technology, teacher training development, human resources, equal access and opportunities for all including women and marginalized communities. The aim of this paper mostly based on primary sources is to critically analyze Annie Margaret Barr's pioneering work for education and the new challenges of Meghalaya in articulating the NEP suggestions particularly regarding women's education.



Prabha Ravi Shankar is Associate Professor, in the PG Dept. of JSSC, affiliated to the SNDT's Women's University, Mumbai. She has been the Recipient of Pandit Sethu Madhavrao Pagdi Fellowship (2003), ICHR Senior Research Fellowship (2008), and the Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Shimla Associateship (2014). She is the author of *British Committee of the Indian National Congress, 1889-1921* (Bibliophile South Asia, New Delhi, 2011), a monograph jointly authored with Professor J.V. Naik entitled *The Jervis Brothers: Founders and Guardians of the Asiatic Society of Mumbai* (Mumbai, 2014) and a recent publication entitled *G.A. Natesan and National Awakening* published by Bibliophile South Asia, New Delhi, 2015. She is currently working on a book entitled 'Gandhi and the Polaks.

Aspiration for Education: Tracing a Historical Context

Rohini Mokashi Punekar, Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences,
IIT Guwahati

Abstract

My presentation will attempt to locate subaltern aspiration for education in India within the political changes to Indian society and culture ushered in by colonial policies. It will attempt to examine missionary interventions in education as well as the connections between developments in education and the growth of Indian nationalism. Questioning Said's influential ideas on Orientalism, my presentation will attempt to understand what Braj Ranjan Mani has termed the "seductive and collaborative" role played by Indian elites in influencing the framing of colonial educational policy in India, and in the making of the Oriental stereotype of Indian culture and civilization. My presentation will then focus on the subaltern articulation of the right of access to education which began to be consolidated into a movement in the Bombay Presidency under the leadership of Jotirao and Savitribai Phule. It will briefly examine this intrepid couple's interventions made in the bilingual public sphere of western India.



Rohini Mokashi Punekar is Professor at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati. She is the author of *On the Threshold: Songs of Chokhamela* (Altamira Press, 2005 and The Book Review Literary Trust, 2002); *Untouchable Saints: an Indian Phenomenon* (Manohar, 2005) which she co-edited with Eleanor Zelliot; *Vikram Seth: An Introduction* (Cambridge University Press, 2008); and *The Third Eye and Other Works: Mahatma Phule's Writings on Education* (Orient Blackswan, 2023). She is currently engaged in translating medieval Varkari poetry from Marathi, an anthology of which will be published by Penguin in their Black Classics series.

'Global South' and 'Feminism' as Conceptual Categories: Some Reflections

Liza Das, Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Guwahati.

Abstract

The talk seeks to contribute to the conference thematic "Conceptual Discussions on Feminism in the Global South." The terms "Global South" and "Feminism" are problematized in the presentation with a view to enabling new knowledge production through insights from spatial theories and feminist discourses and to encourage possible new epistemological breakthroughs in future. It argues that the term 'Global South' which replaces 'Third World' as a category may also suffer from cognitive simplification and reification. Nuanced spatial theories, like those by Edward Soja, for instance, may help open more analytical engagements within feminist political geography. The presentation looks at a recent few publications (2020 onwards) that point towards new conceptual, theoretical and empirical discourses in both political geography and feminist discourses. Insights from these emerging discourses will aid more nuanced and differentiated research in the field of women and higher education too.



Liza Das is Professor of English at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Guwahati. Her areas of teaching and research include Literary and Cultural Theory, Indian Aesthetics, and Assamese Literature.

Session 2

14:00-15:15

Higher Education and Labour Market: Gendered Perspectives

Panel Speakers

1. Ms. Mridusmita Bordoloi, Economist, IWWAGE, IFMR
2. Prof. Mona Khare, NIEPA
3. Prof. Vandana Upadhyay, Rajiv Gandhi University, Arunachal Pradesh
4. Prof. Rajshree Bedamatta, IIT Guwahati
5. Prof. Madhura Swaminathan (Online)

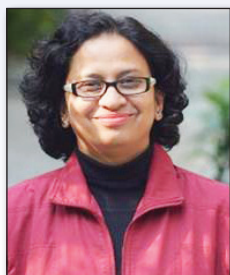
Women's Transition from Education to Employment in India's North-Eastern States

Mridusmita Bordoloi, Economist, IWWAGE, IFMR

Abstract

During 2021-22, four out of the eight North-Eastern states had higher gross enrolment ratio (GER) in higher education than all India average. Further, females performed better than males in terms of enrolment levels at higher education in most North-Eastern states, except Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura. While the gender gap in higher education enrolment has become negligible, the same is not true in the case of labour market outcomes. During 2022-23, while five states had higher female labour force participation rate (LFPR) compared to all India average of 40%, three states performed quite poorly. Assam had the lowest female LFPR in the region at 21%, which was also the third lowest in the country after Lakshadweep and Delhi. Assam, the largest state in the region, also had the biggest gender gap in labour force participation with males registering LFPR at 93% in 2022-23. This reflects how women in Assam are lagging much behind in economic empowerment than men in the state, in spite of similar enrolment levels. Both supply-side and demand-side factors are responsible for lower work participation of females. The complexities of NER's labour market, characterized by its unique geographical location, susceptibility to natural calamities, insurgency, cross-border tensions, and internal political conflicts, add to the challenges of job creation in the region. This is reflected in relatively higher unemployment rates among females in this region than prevalent in most other states of the country. During 2022-23, except Tripura, the unemployment rates (UR) among females in all other north-eastern states were higher than national average. Again, UR among females was higher than that among males in Meghalaya, Assam, Mizoram and Sikkim, with Meghalaya registering highest female UR in the region at 8.2%. The highly informal nature of jobs further adds to the unemployment challenge especially among the educated youth whose aspirations do not always match with the jobs available in the market, contributing to discouraged worker effect. At the same time, gender-based segregation of the labour market, gendered socio-cultural norms putting high burden of care work on women, safety concerns regarding women's mobility for work purposes, and lack of employability, are some of the key supply-side constraints.

The wide variation in the status of labour market indicators, and the socio-cultural contexts across the eight states, calls for adoption state- specific policy interventions for creation of decent jobs and improvement in women’s economic empowerment.



Mridusmita Bordoloi is an Economist at IWWAGE, an institute within LEAD, IFMR Society. She has more than 20 years of research experience, primarily in the areas of India’s labour market, school education sector, child protection, and household sector income & consumption patterns. Her work has been primarily based on quantitative analysis of official large-scale surveys, macro-economic datasets, and India’s public finances. She has extensive experience in conducting primary surveys. She has focused on understanding the status of provisioning of public welfare services, outcomes related to social sector development and related equity issues. Her work has also involved understanding governance structures and processes in implementation of government policies and schemes. In education and child-protection sectors, she has studied public finance allocations and budget utilization related to centrally-sponsored schemes. In the area of labour market, she studied financial returns to education, informality, social security of unorganised workers, linkages between education and labour market, and gender-gaps in labour market outcomes. Her current work involves understanding challenges related to women’s participation in labour market in India and enablers of women’s economic empowerment.

Gender Budgeting in Indian Higher Education: The Need for Shift in Focus

Mona Khare*, *Professor and Head*, Sandhya Dubey, Sonam Arora

Deptt. of Educational Finance, Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education,

Abstract

Gender equality has been a critical issue globally from a very long time. Though women have made tremendous progress toward increasing their participation in higher education, they are still under-represented in several ways. In India, the issue of gender inequality in higher education has been of significant concern. Despite substantial improvements in enrolment rates, women encounter various obstacles that hinder their access, retention, and achievement within educational institutions. These hurdles encompass a wide array of factors such as inadequate infrastructure, incidences of gender-based violence, societal norms and stereotypes, as well as limited financial resources.

Gender budgeting has emerged as an important tool aiming to ensure an equitable distribution of resources towards addressing gender-related concerns. By integrating a gender perspective into financial planning process either at national or local level, policymakers can effectively allocate funds targeted at closing existing gender disparities and promoting gender equality.

With almost two decades of Gender budgeting being done in the education sector in India, time is ripe to take a more informed course of action in deciding the priority areas for plugging persistent Gender gaps. Gender Budgeting to become effective needs to be evaluated against the trilogy of generating matching funds for three purposes. These being Adequacy objective, Responsiveness objective and Impact objective (Khare 2020), each answering three important questions ---- whether the budgetary provisions earmarked for women are adequate to their (pupils and teachers) needs; to what extent does the national education budget respond to the felt needs of women in HE and how it is impacting the desired reduction in gender imbalances? Our chapter tries to unfold and answer some of these questions for India.



Mona Khare is Professor & Head, Department of Educational Finance and Director of University Grants Commission – MMTTC at National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi, India. Member 15th Finance Commission for Education sector funds estimation, Govt. of India. Consultant and expert with various international forums like UNESCO, UNICEF, Asian Productivity Organisation, British Council, Commonwealth, SAARC, World Bank and Govt. bodies. She was member of the Commonwealth Education Ministers Drafting Committee of post-secondary forum for SDGs and Member signatory to the Declaration of Research between India and Germany.

Invited speaker and Policy Analyst across the world. Technical Expert for Child Budget Committee, Gender Budgeting, Govt. of Karnataka among many others. Twice been conferred with the ‘Young Economist Award’ by the Indian Economic Association and awarded by Madhya Pradesh Govt. for their Distance Education Programme (EDUSAT).

She has many publications to her credit being author, reviewer and editor for renowned publishers like Routledge, Emerald, Springers, Sage, Cambridge, Oxford etc. Her latest book on “Sustainable and Dynamic Graduate Employability: A comparative overview across geographies” is being published by Routledge She is co-author of The INDIA HIGHER EDUCATION REPORT 2020 on Employment and Employability.

Fellow, International Congress of Environmental Research, Editorial Board of the Journal of Educational Planning and Administration, Former Vice President of M.P. Economic Association and Former Associate editor of the Indian Economic journal. She holds advisory position in different committees of Universities and colleges, acts as advisor UPSC and as resource person in training programmes for Central, State Govt. Officers, banking and teaching professionals across the country and abroad. She has organized innumerable academic programmes, supervised about 15 doctoral (Ph.D.) and more than 50 M.Phil. dissertations. Her current areas of research include employability skills of educated youth, Financing of Education, educational internationalization and regional and spatial disparities in educational development.

Educational Disparities across Gender and Social Groups in Northeast India

Vandana Upadhyay, Professor, Economics, Rajiv Gandhi University, Arunachal Pradesh

Abstract

The human development scenario in northeast India presents a diverse picture across gender and Social groups in various states of the region and also across different human development indicators. Although the performance of north-eastern states on the human development front is far from satisfactory, there are few states which have attained significant improvements in educational attainment. In most of the states of North East India, access to formal education has proved to be an important tool for achieving a better quality of life in the context of the rapid transformation and modernisation of the economy, the society and the polity. However, though the past decade has seen visible improvement in overall educational attainment in the north-eastern states, the gender gap in literacy prevails. Another cause of concern is the drop-out rates of children in several of the states in the region. These gaps not only reflect on the human development indicators in the region, but have also impacted the pace of socio-economic transformation in several parts of the region.



Vandana Upadhyay is a Professor of Economics at Rajiv Gandhi University, Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh. Currently she is also the Coordinator of the Centre for Development Studies, (CDS). Her research focuses on gender, labour and employment, human development, migration, rural livelihoods in mountain economies and the informal sector. She was a Commonwealth Visiting Fellow, attached to the Department of International Development, Queen Elizabeth House, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK. She has several research publications to her credit such as authored and edited books and articles in prestigious journals of national and International repute. She has co-authored *The Unfolding Crisis in Assam's Tea Plantations: Employment and Occupational Mobility* (Routledge, 2012) and co-edited the book "*Rethinking economic Development in North East India: The Emerging Dynamics*" (Rutledge, London/New Delhi, 2017). She has also contributed to the *Arunachal Pradesh Human Development Report* (2005), co-authored the *Situational Analysis of Women and Girls in Arunachal Pradesh* (NCW Report, 2005), *Arunachal Pradesh State Development Report* (2010), *Assam Human Development Report* (2016) and the *NCW Gender Report on Social, Economic and Political Empowerment of Women in North East India* (2017). She worked as a national coordinator in a (UGC STRIDE) NITI Aayog study on *Enumeration and Valuation of the economic impact of Female Labour in the Hills: A Study of the Indian Himalayan region* (2022) and co-authored the report. Currently she is working as a principal investigator in a National Commission for Women (NCW) study on the *Women migrant workers in Arunachal Pradesh: Issues and Challenges*.

Gendered Human Capital – What are the Social Sector Outcome Indicators Telling Us About India’s Northeast?

Rajshree Bedamatta, Professor of Economics & Development Studies, Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati.

Abstract

Is the NER more gender egalitarian than rest of the Indian states? Human capital formation, through the processes of health and education investments are known to have enhance labour market outcome indicators. Often outcome indicators highlight gendered patterns of growth and development. In this paper, we put together the health, education, and labour force indicators for the northeastern states of India. Based on broad parameters, and estimates drawn from official data (such as Periodic Labour Force Survey and NSS) and household level primary surveys, we carry out a situation assessment of the status of human capital for the NER.



Rajshree Bedamatta is Professor of Economics at the Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati. Her current research interests are at the intersection of Development Economics and Public Policy in the domains of education, health, and food. She uses the feminist approach to studying and teaching economics at the undergraduate and post graduate levels at IIT Guwahati.

Understanding Concerns about Women in Higher Education

Madhura Swaminathan Professor at the Economic Analysis Unit,
Indian Statistical Institute, Bangalore

Abstract

In understanding concerns about women in higher education, I shall talk about employment opportunities for women, especially for rural women.

First, I will talk about methodologies for estimating women's work using time use surveys. I then argue that the lack of suitable employment opportunities may result in women withdrawing from the work force. This phenomenon can be linked to the drop out from higher education. In short, visibility of women in the work force I argue is important for women to continue in higher education and seek better employment opportunities.



Madhura Swaminathan is Professor at the Economic Analysis Unit, Indian Statistical Institute, Bangalore. She has a doctorate in Economics from the University of Oxford and works on issues pertaining to food security, agriculture and rural development. Her book publications include *Weakening Welfare: The Public Distribution of Food in India* (2000), *Agrarian Studies: Essays on Agrarian Relations in Less Developed Countries*, with V. K. Ramachandran (2002), *Financial Liberalisation and Rural Credit*, with V. K. Ramachandran (2005), *Socioeconomic Surveys of Three Villages in Andhra Pradesh* with V. K. Ramachandran and Vikas Rawal in 2010, and *Dalit Households in Village Economies* with V. K. Ramachandran (2014). She was a member of the Government of India's High-

Level Panel on Long Term Food Security. She has been elected to serve on the Committee of Development Policy of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations for the period 2013-2015.

Session 3

15:30-17:00

Gender and the IITs

Panel Speakers

1. Prof. Ravinder Kaur, IIT Delhi
2. Prof. Nirmala Menon, IIT Indore
3. Dr. Priyanka Tripathi, IIT Patna
4. Prof. Sawmya Ray, IIT Guwahati

Missing Women at the Elite IITs: An Exploration

Ravinder Kaur, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Delhi

Abstract

The prestigious IITs, India's elite engineering institutions (also known as "Institutes of National Importance"), charged with producing outstanding research and innovation, along with imparting state of the art education to students, are curiously characterized by the most severe gender gaps among STEM institutions in India. Gender imbalances characterize not only the student body (at all levels), but also faculty and scientific staff, giving the institutions a very masculine character with implications for the lived experiences and equal participation of girls and women in science and engineering. The lack of gender diversity also impacts the kind of research and innovation that is generated. Further, the lack of female faculty and women in leadership positions reproduces male hegemony and the masculine character of the institutions. Fewer female leaders emerging from the IITs deprive younger women of role models who can shape their aspirations to be scientists and engineers and who can challenge stereotypes around women's abilities, especially in STEM fields. Within the institutions, we find a skewed gender representation of women in various branches of science and engineering with so-called "hard" engineering fields such as mechanical, electrical, civil and applied mechanics (and even computer science) being dominated by men while more women are seen to cluster around the so-called "soft" biosciences and bioengineering. Interestingly, while the percentage of female PhD students in STEM at IIT Delhi is around 36%, key departments such as mechanical, civil and electrical engineering, computer science and chemistry have barely any female faculty. This makes one wonder why the substantial number of women PhD students do not make it to academic careers at IITs. Based on my experience of spearheading IIT Delhi's DST-GATI (Gender Advancement for Transforming Institutions) project that carried out a gender self-assessment of the Institute, I unravel some facets of how gender functions within these elite STEM institutions and what can be done to make these important institutions more inclusive and gender equal for the overall betterment of society and STEM.



Ravinder Kaur is Emerita Professor of Sociology and Social Anthropology at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, where she had taught for 28 years. Prior to IIT Delhi, she taught at Delhi University and New York University. Her research areas are the sociology of gender, family, marriage, kinship, middle class, technology, and women in science and technology in higher education. Prior to focusing on gender issues in STEM higher education, her research examined gender imbalances in India with a comparative focus on China. Her work in this area spans gender-biased sex selection and its relationship with fertility, education, work, crime, marriage squeeze, bride migration and class mobility. Her ethnographic

work on bride shortages and long-distance marriage migration in Haryana has been foundational to research in this area.

She is co-author of “Planning Families, Planning Gender: The adverse child sex ratio in selected districts of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Punjab”, 2008, Books for Change, and co-editor of “Marrying in South Asia: ‘Shifting Concepts, Changing Practices in a Globalising World’ 2014, Orient Blackswan Ltd. and editor of “Too Many Men, Too Few Women: Social Consequences of Gender Imbalance in India and China” 2016, Orient Blackswan Ltd. Her journal publications can be found at - <https://iitd.academia.edu/RavinderKaur>

She recently completed a project on “Femtech and the Possibilities, Pitfalls and Politics of Digital Reproductive Health Management in India: Envisioning Better Reproductive Futures” and is currently the co-lead on a major Women in STEM project “Fixing the Leak: Advancing STEM Innovation and Inclusion in India, One Woman Scientist at a Time.” Her projects on researching diverse gender inequalities in society have been supported by various funding agencies such as ActionAid, SIDA, DST, IIT Delhi, ICSSR, UNFPA and the Co-Impact Gender Fund.

She is a founder-member and first convenor of IIT Delhi’s gender unit, IGES (Initiative for Gender Equity and Sensitization) where she has led many of its initiatives to create an equal, inclusive and gender-just educational environment. As Nodal Officer and PI of the DST-GATI (Gender Advancement for Transforming Institutions) project, she was responsible for implementing the first-ever gender self-assessment of IIT Delhi, for which the institution has received the “GATI Achievers” award.

Women in/of a Digital Age

Nirmala Menon, Professor, School of Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS), IIT Indore.

Abstract

In *Algorithms of Oppression*, Safiya Umoja Noble challenges the idea that search engines like Google offer an equal playing field for all forms of ideas, identities, and activities. Data discrimination is a real social problem; Noble argues that the combination of private interests in promoting certain sites, along with the monopoly status of a relatively small number of Internet search engines, leads to a biased set of search algorithms that privilege whiteness and discriminate against people of color, specifically women of color. In two separate papers from our lab, we argue that it is time to raise questions about ethical AI- in this talk, I will talk about the specific gaps both ontologically and epistemologically in looking at AI and gender.



Nirmala Menon is a Professor in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS), IIT Indore. She leads the Digital Humanities and Publishing Research Group at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Indore, India. Prof Menon is the Chair of the newly established J P Narayan National Centre of Excellence in the Humanities at IIT Indore and is currently Affiliate Research Professor at the University of Oxford, UK. Menon is the author of *Migrant Identities of Creole Cosmopolitans: Transcultural Narratives of Contemporary Post-coloniality* (Peter Lang Publishing, Germany, 2014) and *Remapping the Postcolonial Canon: Remap, Reimagine, Retranslate* (Palgrave Macmillan, UK 2017).

She edited and published the first ever anthology of *Electronic Literature Vol I from India* in 2024. Apart from the books, she has published more than 50 research papers in numerous international journals (Oxford University Press, Taylor and Francis, Sage among others) and speaks, writes and publishes about postcolonial studies, digital Humanities and scholarly publishing. She mentors research scholars and runs DH projects from the research lab at IIT Indore. Her research group works on Digital Projects relating to Cultural Heritage through both creation and curation of Archives and Databases. She is the Project Director for KSHIP (Knowledge Sharing in Publishing), an Open Access Publishing platform in collaboration with Ubiquity press, UK. Dr Menon has received various national and international grants and awards (MHRD, SPARC, UKEIRI, Academia European among others). She has also hosted Fulbright Scholars in her lab and she along with her students have received international awards such as Charles Wallace Fellowship, Zubaan Saaskawa Publishing prize and ASEM-DUO fellowship. She has given more than 50 lectures and keynotes at various national and international forums and lead or facilitated workshops in Digital Humanities in India and internationally. She is currently completing a monograph tentatively titled "Decolonising Knowledge Infrastructures: Scholarly Publishing and Open Access in India to be released in 2025.

Towards Equity: Promoting Gender Inclusivity in Indian Higher Education

Piyanka Tripathi, Associate Professor, IIT Patna

Abstract

Gender inclusivity in Indian higher education has become a focal point of discussion, especially in the context of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which underscores the imperative of providing equitable access and opportunities for individuals of all genders. This presentation endeavors to examine the manner in which various states in India have tailored their course offerings and pedagogical frameworks to cultivate gender inclusivity within the higher education sphere, drawing upon the overarching principles articulated in NEP 2020. Through an analysis of diverse strategies and initiatives implemented across different states, it seeks to illuminate the methodologies deployed to mitigate gender disparities and foster an environment conducive to inclusivity in learning. Moreover, this discourse will delve into the specific measures undertaken by the North Eastern region of India to address the gender gap in education, with a particular emphasis on the integration of NEP 2020's directives into its educational curriculum and practices. Employing a reflective stance, the objective of this exploration is to elucidate the nuanced challenges and prospects inherent in advancing gender inclusivity within Indian higher education, thereby furnishing valuable insights for scholars, researchers, and policymakers engaged in this domain.



Priyanka Tripathi is an Associate Professor of English at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Patna (India). She is also the Co-Executive Editor of the *Journal of International Women's Studies* (published by Bridgewater State University). She was awarded a Visiting Research Fellowship (2022-23), by IASH, the University of Edinburgh for her project titled, "Optimizing Caste Intersectionality: A Decolonial Reading of Gender-based Violence in Select Subaltern Fiction in India". She has published extensively in *Indian Literature*, *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics*, *Geo Humanities*, and *Economic and Political Weekly*. Her monograph with Bloomsbury is titled, *The Gendered War: Evaluating Feminist Ethnographic Narratives of the 1971 War of Bangladesh*. She works in the area of Gender Studies and Indian English Fiction.

Her email id is priyankatripathi@iitp.ac.in and ORCID ID is <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9522-3391>

Studies have Established Gender Disparities in Higher Education including in the Field of STEM.

Sawmya Ray, Professor of Sociology, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences,
Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati

Abstract

Studies have established gender disparities in higher education including in the field of STEM. Affirmative actions in the recent times by Government of India (GoI) has attempted to address this gap by bringing in more women to STEM. This has gone a long way in addressing gender gap in science and engineering education. The very presence of women students in significant numbers in institute campuses addresses the abysmal sex ratio and importantly brings in a whole lot of much needed experiences into its everyday life which was earlier absent. However, it is essential to understand if and how the institutional set up is prepared to accommodate and understand these different experiences, ways of doing, and new necessities arising from such compulsory inclusion through policies. In what ways does the institution's dealing of its women students and their needs in turn impact their aspirations and achievements? Keeping these aspects at the center, taking a reflexive approach and drawing from my experiences of working and teaching sociology and gender studies to both engineering and social sciences students, I will attempt to elaborate on a thought/concept note on the need to study gender in academia when physical access to the educational institution is not the primary hurdle for women students.



Sawmya Ray teaches Sociology in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati (IITG). Areas of specialization include Sociology of Gender, Sociology of Law, Human Rights and Gender, Sex Trafficking and Sex Work, Caste Studies.

Session 4

10:00-11:15

Gender and Higher Education in the North East

Panel Speakers:

1. Prof. Rakhee Kalita Moral, Cotton University, Guwahati
2. Dr Sangeeta Angom, NIEPA
3. Dr. V. Sawmveli, TISS, Guwahati
4. Prof. Polly Vauquiline, Gauhati University
5. Prof. Krishna Menon, Ambedkar University, Delhi.
6. Dr. Deigracia Nongkynrih, NEHU, Shillong

Teaching Feminist Literature in the University: Abilities, Diversities and the Politics of Gender in NE India

Rakhee Kalita Moral, Professor & Dean, Faculty of Arts, Cotton Univeristy, Guwahati

Abstract

Teaching Literature in the Academy has its new imperatives with questions of inclusion, diversity and ability-regimes threatening to collide and challenge each other. They are also fraught as they intersect concerns of gender where the politics of equity or representation gets re interrogated in the scramble for new directions in academia, particularly in the aspect of environment, posthuman and the critical new humanities. I shall refer to an ecological novel from NE India and one from Western literature to make this point and attempt to understand these new positions and perspectives adopted in the pedagogy of literary studies.



Rakhee Kalita Moral is Professor of English at Cotton University, Guwahati, India and researches at the intersections of critical humanities theory, gender and Northeast India. She has recently authored *Once Upon the Hills: A Handbook of Naga Women's Voices and Visions* (Heritage Publishing House, 2022) and has published widely on postcolonial studies and Northeast Indian literature and cultures including *Women Peace and Security in NE India* (Zubaan, 2017). Her co-edited volumes include *At the Frontier and Beyond: Literature and its Relations* (Macmillan, 2005) and *Gender and Society in Northeast India* (Cotton College Publications, 2011), while her monograph, *Under the Shadow of the Red Sun: Women Rebels, Mobilities and the Politics of Gender* on NE India feminist politics is forthcoming (2024). A former Fellow of Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Teen Murti, New Delhi, she has most recently edited the *South Asian Review's* special issue on *Northeast Indian Anglophone Literature* (Fall 2023) with Dr Amit Rahul Baishya (Oklahoma, USA). Other recent interests include environmental humanities, Anthropocene literature and posthuman cultures.

Moral is the recipient of the Dalai Lama's Foundation for Universal Knowledge WISCOMP *Saahas Prerna Award* for championing gender education in NE India (2020) and is currently the Chair, Centre for Women's Studies at Cotton University.

Access and Equity concerns of Higher Education in North East India

Sangeeta Angom, Associate Professor, Department of Higher & Professional Education, NIEPA,

Abstract

One of the recent changes in the education scenario of our country is the exponential growth of the institutions. Despite unprecedented growth, the expansion of higher education has been extremely uneven. North East India comprising of eight states namely Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura contains an area of 262179 square Km (7.98% of India) and share population of 46 million (2011 Census). The states in the region are very different in many ways from other parts of country as far as their developmental needs in the education sector are concerned. There are concerns regarding providing the quality education in most of higher education institutions in the region. Some of such issues are such as, low motivated students, underpaid teachers, outdated curriculum, and lack of visionary academic leaders. However, status of women in terms of their participation in higher education is quite appreciable in comparison with other parts of the country. Despite improvements during the last two or three decades, female participation in higher education is generally low especially in the professional and technical subjects. Not only in terms of enrolment at higher education, their participation in higher education management is also strikingly low. In this background, the paper will try to explore access and equity concerns of higher education in North East India in the light of NEP 2020. Access in higher education will be explore in terms of number of institutions per lakh population and number of institutions specialisation wise. Equity in higher education will be explore in terms of gender and social category wise. It will also highlight some of the government policy to address access and equity issues. This paper will be mainly based upon secondary data and authors views will be reflected wherever applicable.



Sangeeta Angom is currently an Associate Professor in the Department of Higher and Professional Education, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA), New Delhi. She has completed Master Degree in Education (Gold Medallist) and PhD in Education from North Eastern Hill University, Shillong. She has undergone training in Educational Planning and Management (EPM) at IIEP (UNESCO), Paris in 2016 and attended Leadership Institute for mid-level career individual (IFE) organized by East West Centre (EWC), Honolulu, Hawaii, at Suan Dusit Rajabhat University, Bangkok, Thailand in 2010. She has contributed various research papers on areas relating to Indian higher education at seminars/conferences conducted at National, International and

regional levels. She also published an edited book and several research papers in journals, books (chapters) and proceedings etc. She has completed two national level research studies-A Study on Private Universities in India (2013, NIEPA funded) and Study on Indian Private University Acts and Regulations of Fees (2020, MHRD funded) besides other short-term surveys. She is also part of the investigator team of the recent Survey on “UGC Fellowship and Scholarship Evaluation” conducted by NIEPA (UGC, funded), “Third party Evaluation of Institutions of Eminence Scheme” funded by the UGC, 2022, and “Evaluation Study of the Central Sector Scheme “Higher Education Statistics and Public Information System (HESPIS)” of Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development. Currently, she is undergoing a research study titled, “Library Facilities in Indian Undergraduate Colleges and its impact on Student’s Academic Performance (NIEPA funded)”. She has successfully organised various workshop/training/Seminars both at national and international level and also organised field based programmes in collaboration with University of Mysore, Goa University, Manipur University, North Eastern Hill University, Savitribai Phule Pune University, and Manipur University.

Why Education Matters?: A Conceptual analysis of Gender and Education Northeast India

V. Sawmveli, Assistant Professor, TISS Guwahti.

Abstract

The paper attempts to look at the conceptual understanding of education policies and how it impact gender realations. It is crucial to understand in what way education matters. The paper will attempt to draw an example from Tribal community from Northeast India where education is considered as the keystone of upliftment. It is crucial to explore how education empower women from tribal community.



V. Sawmveli currently teaches at the Centre for Sociology and Social Anthropology and Centre for Under Graduate Studies. She is the former Chairperson of Centre for Sociology and Social Anthropology and she is currently the Chairperson for Peace and Conflict Studies. She is currently the Convener of Women and Gender Development Cell (WGDC) at TISS Guwahati. Dr. V. Sawmveli completed he Ph.D. in Sociology from Centrel University of Hyderabad. She was awarded ‘Mary Duke Biddle Travel Award’ on the topic ‘Law, Religion and Gender’ in the international ‘Feminist Theory Workshop’, Duke University, North Carolina, USA, March, 2011. She was also the recipient of ‘Linnaeus-Palme Grant’ as Guest Teacher from 2nd to 29th September 2016, Gothenburg

University, Sweden. She had pusblised article in peer review edited books and had participated in both national and internation worskhop and seminars. Her research interests include Sociology of law, religion and gender, Cultural Studies, Research Methodology (qualitative), Gender and Sexual Violence issues especially in North-East India. The role of state, public institutions, legal and religious institutions.

Women's Studies/Gender Studies Got Institutionalised in Higher Education

Polly Vauquiline, Professor and former Head, Department of Women's Studies, Gauhati University, Guwahati

Abstract

Women's Studies/ Gender Studies got institutionalised in Higher Education in different parts of North East India more than 30 years ago. However, the growth is not uniform and the struggles are not the same. Some did not grow as a prominent academic discipline as expected and few of them could overcome their major hurdles. The presenter intends to share her insights of the successes, constraints and challenges faced by these centres and also the way forward for gender inclusive academia in North East in particular and India In general.



Polly Vauquiline is a Professor and former Head in the Department of Women's Studies, Gauhati University. Her area of specialisations is Gender Geography, Women's Studies, Gender & climate change, Ecofeminism and Gender Based Violence. She was awarded her Phd from NEHU, Shillong for her thesis on Gender Related Crimes in Greater Guwahati Urban Area in 2006.

She has published various papers in International and National publications as well as presented papers in national and international seminars namely USA, Singapore, Spain, Sweden and Bhutan.

She is engaged with organisations and institutions like US Consulate, Kolkata, Uppsala University (Sweden), UGC, New Delhi, National Commission for Women, Assam State Commission for Women, North East Network, earth&us (Aruvilla), IOC, UN Women, OKDISCD, Banglanatak dot com etc. for research and academic works.

She completed research projects on; Surrogacy, Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace, Socio-Cultural, Political and Economic Status of Women of North-East India and Water Conservation and Menstrual Hygiene Management amongst Female Student of Assam. She was engaged with a collaborative International research project as a Research Consultant with UN Women, Unilever and McLeod Russel on Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls Programme in Assam in the Tea Estates of Assam. She was engaged as a Mentor for the Assam Care Program of Government of Assam during the COVID 19 pandemic.

She was awarded the *Gender, Place and Culture Award 2009*, for new and Emerging Scholars, by Gender, Place and Culture, A Journal of Feminist Geography, by Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

She was a part of T20 of G20 which was held in Bhopal on 16th and 17th January 2023.

When Gender Studies Encounters ‘Indian Knowledge System’: Some Preliminary Thoughts on Decoloniality and Higher Education

Krishna Menon, Professor, Gender Studies School of Human Studies.

Ambedkar University Delhi E-mail: krishnamenon@aud.ac.in

Bindu KC, Assistant Professor, Gender Studies School of Human Studies.

Ambedkar University Delhi E-mail: bindukc@aud.ac.in

Abstract

This paper is a preliminary set of questions and concerns that two teachers of Women’s and Gender Studies located in a public university in north India encounter when asked to frame courses that are guided by the mandate from the UGC to ‘incorporate the Indian Knowledge System into higher curricula for systematic study and research of various disciplines’. Engagement with the debates on decolonization of the university in general and social sciences, in particular, formed the backdrop of this tentative attempt. Epistemic power consolidated by colonial subjugation needs to be challenged and the university is an appropriate site for this. However, what does it mean to incorporate the Indian Knowledge System into the PG curriculum of Gender Studies- does it require a complete eschewing of all that is ‘Western’, in that case, what is to be replaced with? Would it result in a romanticization of decolonized Indian knowledge? If decolonization is about confronting subjugation, then critical assessments of all forms of subjugation, including local, would be essential - we are searching for answers to such questions and thus, we raise more questions than have answers.



Krishna Menon is Professor, Gender Studies, and former Dean, School of Human Studies, Ambedkar University Delhi. She taught Political Science at Lady Shri Ram College for over two decades and was the Director of the Centre for Peace at Lady Shri Ram College. She received her B A (Honours) in Political Science from Lady Shri Ram College, University of Delhi, MA and MPhil degrees in Political Science from the Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University and PhD from the University of Delhi. She has published books, papers and articles on debates within political theory, issues in Indian politics, and feminist theory and politics. Her co-edited book titled ‘Doing Feminisms In The Academy: Identity, Institutional Pedagogy And Critical Classrooms In India And The

UK’ (Zubaan, 2021) is based on a joint research project funded by the UGC UKIERI with the University of Edinburgh. Her latest co-edited book published by Routledge India in 2023 is titled The Gendered Body in South Asia. She was the co-editor-in-chief of the International Feminist Journal of Politics and has been a prolific writer, having published many papers, articles, books and book chapters, in addition to monographs and reports and blogs. Her co-authored paper ‘Social Sciences Teaching and Research: Its Resilience and Relevance in Times of the NEP and Pandemic’ was recently published in the Journal of Educational Planning and Administration. Her co-authored paper Unbearable Weight: Women and the Shaping of Political Subjects through the Politics of Corporeality (2022) was published in the Journal of International Women’s Studies. She is the recipient of the Teacher of Distinction award from the University of Delhi in 2009 and the Saahas Pragya Award for her contribution to higher education and gender knowledge from WISCOMP in 2021. She was awarded the AURPIS award for ‘Good Researcher’ by Ambedkar University Delhi in 2022 and 2023. She has received training in Bharatanatyam and Carnatic vocal music for several years. she was awarded the AURPIS award for ‘Good Researcher’ by Ambedkar University Delhi in 2022 & 2023.

Education and the Labour Market Experiences of Women in North East India

Deigracia Nongkynrih, Associate Professor, Department of Economics, NEHU, Shillong

Abstract

Empirical exposition on the interaction between education and the labour market has revealed a positive correlation between the two. Attainment of higher education, for instance, not only leads to greater opportunities in the labour market but also improves the prospect of earnings as postulated in the Schooling Model. However, issues of discrimination in the labour market have also been highlighted by researchers. The Oaxaca theory of discrimination, for instance, has sought to provide an exposition to this effect – gender discrimination in the labour market in spite of men and women having the same educational level. Given this theoretical background, the paper attempts to examine the interface between education and the labour outcomes of women in North East India, by using secondary data sources including the Census and NSSO.

Key Words: Education, Labour market, Women, North-East India



Deigracia Nongkynrih, is Associate Professor in Department of Economics at North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong. Her areas of interest and specialization includes Labour Economics; Gender Issues; Issues and Economy of North East Region, Rural Studies. Her current area of work is Issues related to North East India: Employment, Unemployment, Informal sector, Rural Studies.

Session 5

11:30-13:00

Academic Leadership and Women

Panel Speakers:

1. Prof. Ajanta Borgohain Rajkonwar, Vice Chancellor, Assam Women's University
2. Prof. K. Ratnabali, Dean Academic, Delhi University
3. Prof. Pahi Saikia, IIT Guwahati
4. Prof. Padmini Boruah, Gauhati University
5. Prof. Manisha Priyam, NIEPA



Ajanta Borgohain Rajkonwar is Vice Chancellor of Assam Women's University. Dr. Rajkonwar has formerly served as the Dean of the School of Commerce and Management Science, Dibrugarh University. She has also held the position of Chairperson at the Centre for Management Studies, Dibrugarh University.



K Ratnabali is a faculty member in the Faculty of Law, University of Delhi since 2004. She has taught international humanitarian law and its correlation with Human Rights in the University for more than 15 years. She has also been teaching Ph D scholars and LL M students the Research Methodology. Her research areas also include indigenous peoples' right to land and their sacred natural spaces, rights of nature etc. Prior to joining the teaching profession in the University of Delhi, she had interned with the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, New Delhi and State Human Rights Commission, Manipur.

Negotiating Gendered Cultures: Women in Leadership Positions in Academia in Higher Educational Institutions

Work in Progress

Pahi Saikia, Professor of Political Science, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati

Abstract

Educational restructuring and policy making are 'discursive representations' central to democratic nation-state making. Such nation-state making exercises essentialize power relationships in the academia that is constitutive of gendered hierarchies and indicate a complex web of interactions between the socio-cultural structures and the positionality of women as leaders in the academia in higher educational institutions. Furthermore, previous studies conclude that social relations are key to gendered identities in leadership positions in the academia. Women's under-representation in leadership roles is not about the lack of capacities or interest among women but is an interplay of various socio-economic, cultural and institutional barriers as studies suggest. Against the background of these established writings, the paper seeks to explore the two important and interrelated questions: while educational reforms and policies seek to 'promote gender-sensitive curricula' and at the same time 'ensure sensitisation on gender-identity issues' in state funded higher educational institutions, (a) how do women vying for or being in leadership positions negotiate with the gendered cultures embedded in such institutions and (b) to what extent the practices of inclusion by merely counting the number of women in leadership positions in the existing academic structures alter deeply rooted gendered knowledge relations in such institutions?



Pahi Saikia teaches Comparative Politics and International Relations. She is the author of *Insurgency in India's Northeast: Identity Formation, Postcolonial Nation/State-Building, and Secessionist Resistance* published by Routledge, UK, in 2023, with Professor J.S. Chima at Hiram College, USA. Saikia is also the author of *Ethnic Mobilisation and Violence in Northeast India* published by Routledge, Delhi in 2011. She has co-authored and co-edited *India and Myanmar Borderlands: Ethnicity, Security and Connectivity* from Routledge, Delhi in 2019 with Dr Anasua Basu Ray Chaudhury. She was a fellow of the Indo-Shashtri Mobility Programme to Canada in 2018 and was the recipient of the Canadian Commonwealth Fellowship in 2004 for the PhD program at McGill University.

She has published several articles in peer-reviewed journals including *Political Psychology*, *India Review*, *South Asian History and Culture* on political behavior, democratic contestation in policy sphere, ethno-federalism, identity-digital media nexus, women in post-conflict zones and India's security and multilateralism.

Gender Constructions through Language: Submitting Gendered Discourse in the Higher Education Space to Interrogation

Padmini Bhuyan Boruah, Professor and Head, Department of English Language Teaching (ELT), Gauhati University, Guwahati

Abstract

Dominant discourses and inquiry on the issue of gender inclusivity in higher education in India and the Global South focus - and rightfully so - on tangible themes such as rates of enrolment and participation, social mobility, labour market outcomes and other sites of gender discrimination. However, little attention is paid to intangible discriminatory practices such as construction and perpetuation of gender-biased identities and positionality through gender-unfriendly language. In this talk, I critique such discriminatory and exclusionary practices in the higher education space that infiltrate cognitive constructions of gender and keep women and other non-male higher education stakeholders in a state of perpetual vulnerability. By interrogating gender constructions through language, I hope to encourage conversations on how teachers, non-teaching personnel and students in higher education organizations can dismantle gender hegemonies and stereotypes, and create a space for gender-inclusive practices.



Padmini Bhuyan Boruah, PhD is Professor and Head of the Department of English Language Teaching (ELT) at Gauhati University, India. A Fulbright Teaching and Research Fellow at the University of San Diego, California (2019–20), she has 26 years of experience as a teacher, trainer and researcher. She serves on state and national government language education policy framing committees and has been associated with the UGC initiative on Capacity Building of Women Managers in Higher Education for many years. She actively promotes gender-friendly initiatives at her institution through her writing and other media. Her recent publications include a co-authored book on *The Politics of English Language Education and Social Inequality: Global pressures, national priorities, and schooling in India*, and chapters on English as a medium of instruction in South Asia and English language education in India and the neoliberal agenda.

Broken Pipelines or Fields of Power? Missing Women in Academic Leadership in India

Manisha Priyam, Professor, Department of Education Policy, NIEPA.

Abstract

The general sociological theory of hierarchical ascension in professional careers assures ascendance up the ladder by way of merit promotions. These are presented as value neutral career advancements, and not affected by ascriptive status of gender, race or caste. However, the data of career advancement and leadership in academic organization in India counter any such intuitive understanding. Women form a large proportion of the casual employment at the base of the hierarchy. Gender parity on entry is soon relegated in career advancement, and mostly men proceed up the ladder to become full professors, and selective (discretionary) roles as Vice Chancellors in universities. I present some data and field vignettes in this regard. And conclude with the need for a sustained policy focus on advancing women's leadership in academic hierarchies.



Manisha Priyam is Professor of Education Policy at the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi. She is a Senior Academic and Researcher, and works on issues of development and politics. She has a doctorate from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), in International Development, where she examines the politics of education policy reforms in a comparative perspective.

Among her published books are *Reclaiming Public Universities: Comparative Reflection for Reforms*, Routledge, 2022, and *The Contested Politics of Education Reforms in India: Aligning Opportunities with Interests*, Oxford University Press, 2015. She has written the following book chapters: "Global Wars, National Legacies, and State Controls: The Dilemmas of Institutionalism of Public Universities", in Sudhanshu Bhushan edited *The Future of Higher Education in India*, Springer, 2019. "Missing Women Leadership in Indian Higher Education: Broken Pipeline or Fields of Power?", in Shamika Ravi (edited). *Difficult Dialogues: A Compendium of Contemporary Essays on Gender Inequality in India*, New Delhi: Brookings India, 2019, (pp102-25, Chapter 6) "From Clients to Citizens: Learning from Brazil Provides an Opportunity to Delhi" in N. Jayaram edited, *Social Dynamics of the Urban*, Springer, 2017. "Policy Reform and Educational Development in a Federal Context: Reflections on an Uneven Process of Change in Bihar", in Avinash Kumar Singh edited *Education, and Empowerment in India: Policies and Practices*, Routledge, London and New York, 2016. (pp. 159-178) She has also authored the piece *Educational policy and development*. In George W. Noblit (edited), *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education*. New York: Oxford University Press.

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Session 6

14:00-14:45

Women in STEM

Panel Speakers:

1. Dr. Bornali Bhattacharjee, Yale University (Online)
2. Dr. Shirisha Nagotu, IIT Guwahati
3. Prof. Bidisha Som, IIT Guwahati

My Experiences in Academia

Bornali Bhattacharjee, Research Associate Scientist, Yale School of Medicine

Abstract

I was born and bred in Shillong, Meghalaya and was among the first batch of female students to have been accepted to St. Edmunds College in 1997 for a bachelor's degree in Biochemistry. A course considered to be lucrative then. However, back then, students of acceptable scientific acumen were expected to get into medical/ engineering colleges and in spite of graduating summa cum laude from the University, I had already lost the first leg of the relay race among the middle-class brethren. In 2000, I joined the University of Calcutta for a master's degree in Biochemistry. It was a large class of 75 students, and I was among four who had been inducted from other states. The Department of Biochemistry is one of those places where I developed my passion for science. My father had wanted me to start a coaching center thereafter to support the family. Much to his disdain, I instead joined the Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata as PhD candidate in 2002. Thereafter, I trained in the US between 2009 & 2014 as a postdoctoral fellow at University of Massachusetts Medical School and finally started independent research at the National Institute of Biomedical Genomics in 2015 after being awarded the Ramanujan Fellowship by the Government of India. Unexpectedly, independence came at a price. Despite publishing well, my tenure applications were rejected twice. No intramural support was provided even to cover publishing costs. At this abysmal juncture, I would often spend my after-work hours in the laboratory painting with bacteria and one of the art pieces was awarded by the American Society of Microbiology in 2018. I finally started as an Associate Professor at Amity University, Kolkata in 2021 and relocated to the US upon being offered a position at Yale University.



Bornali Bhattacharjee hail from the north-east part of India and currently work at the Yale School of Medicine, USA as a Research Associate Scientist. Her role is to lead, coordinate and manage clinical projects that are geared towards understanding the pathogenesis of post-acute infection syndromes (PAISs). Her training and research interests lie at the interface of pathogen genomics, molecular microbiology, and evolutionary biology. She received her PhD in Epidemiology & Molecular virology from the Indian Statistical Institute & University of Calcutta and post-doctoral training in Viral Genomics and Evolution from University of Massachusetts Medical School, Worcester. Following my training, She successfully obtained the “Ramanujan Fellowship” awarded by the

Department of Science and Technology, Government of India. She have more than 14 years of experience as a biomedical research scientist. Her longterm goal is to develop genome-based “anticipatory” diagnostics of bacterial and viral infections that can help in the prescription of more resilient antimicrobial treatments.

Women in STEM: Bridging the Divide is Essential

Shirisha Nagotu, Assistant Professor, Department of Biosciences and Bioengineering, IIT Guwahati

Abstract

Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields are widely regarded as critical to national economy of any country. Most countries, no matter their level of development, have not achieved gender equality in STEM. Despite significant progress in the education of women and girls around the world, many countries still have a shortage of women in STEM fields especially in the roles higher up the ladder. This low representation of women in the Science and Technology industry is a social and economic concern globally. Closing the gender gap in STEM is a complex issue that requires a multifaceted approach. Educational institutions, public entities, professionals, and families must work together to instil confidence in girls and families and create incentives for women to join and stay in STEM. Ultimately, through a more inclusive economy, we can unlock the full potential of STEM-related industries and tackle the world's most pressing challenges. Bridging the existing STEM divide will not only result in economic growth but also social progress, promoting diversity and inclusion and improved research.



Shirisha Nagotu received her PhD from the University of Groningen, the Netherlands, under the guidance of Prof. Ida van der Klei. She received the prestigious Alexander van Humboldt fellowship to pursue post-doctoral research at Ruhr University Bochum, Germany, under the guidance of Prof. Ralf Erdmann. Further, she also worked at LIMES Institute, University of Bonn, in the group of Prof. Thorsten Lang before joining IIT Guwahati. At IIT Guwahati, her research group aims at understanding organelle biology, inter-organelle communication, and cellular aging. Dr. Nagotu has published more than 40 peer-reviewed articles in reputed international journals.

Mentoring towards excellence: the road forward?

Bidisha Som, Professor of Linguistics, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Guwahati

Abstract

Women's representation in academics, most importantly in STEM, has been an important point of discussion since some time. With changing times, we do see more and more women joining the ranks, bringing laurels, and setting a role model for younger generation. We are surely in better times than many others in the previous generation and the next generation will be better than us. National and international level stake holders are already putting in place several measures to make this happen. We are at a crucial juncture, where the ball has been set in motion and we need to contribute in terms of training more and more young women to take up the challenges. Joining and sustaining in STEM needs a certain degree of grit and dedication alongside the obvious aspect of aptitude; and in my view this is where our role comes in. Established women scientists mentoring younger generation, with training, internship etc can prepare them for what it takes and succeed through hard work.



Bidisha Som is a Professor of Linguistics in the department of HSS, IIT Guwahati and has nearly sixteen years of teaching experience. She received her Masters to PhD degrees from JNU, New Delhi. She has taught courses on bilingualism, language-cognition, and sociolinguistics among others. Bidisha's research work has focused mainly on North East Indian languages from cognitive science perspective. Her research work covers areas like language processing among bilinguals, language and culture interaction, second language acquisition and language development among atypical children, all the while trying to understand the nuances of the workings of the human mind. Her work

is primarily laboratory/experiment based and thus, data driven.

Session 7

14:45-15:45

University Spaces/University Voices

Panel Speakers:

1. Ms. Meenakshi Ravivanshi, NIEPA
2. Ms. Wajda Tabassum, NIEPA
3. Ms. Nayankhee Sarma, IIT Guwahati
4. Ms. Smita Choudhary, IIT Guwahati
5. Mr. Aijaz Ahmad Dar, IIT Guwahati

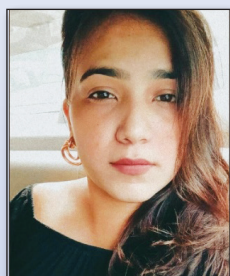
Experiences of Dalit Women Students in Higher Education Institutions

Meenakshi Ravivanshi, PhD Scholar, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA)

Abstract

The research focuses on the everyday experiences of Dalit women students in higher education institutions in Delhi, shedding light on the challenges they face while navigating their lives as students. The study delves into the discrimination, exclusion, stigmatization, and alienation that Dalit women students often encounter due to their identity. By analysing the narratives shared by these students, the research aims to understand their educational experiences and explore the mechanisms employed by educational institutions to regulate and maintain gatekeeping practices in both academic and non-academic spaces. The research employs qualitative approaches to examine the experiences of Dalit women students in higher education institutions in Delhi. Thematic analysis is utilized to thoroughly explore and explain the findings derived from the narratives shared by the participants. Through this methodology, the study provides rich insights into the lived experiences of Dalit women students, highlighting the various forms of discrimination they face within educational settings.

The research findings reveal that Dalit women students often encounter multiple layers of discrimination, both overt and subtle, which hinder their academic progress and overall well-being. These discriminatory practices are perpetuated by institutional structures, societal biases, and the prevailing caste-based hierarchies. The study uncovers the mechanisms employed by educational institutions to uphold these discriminatory practices, including biased evaluation systems, limited access to resources and opportunities, and social exclusion in various aspects of campus life.



Meenakshi Ravivanshi is an education professional with a wealth of experience in the realms of NGOs and academic institutions, dedicated to advancing education through teaching and guidance. Currently undertaking a doctoral program at the prestigious National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA) in Delhi, Meenakshi's research focus lies in exploring the multifaceted dimensions of social equity within the academic sector. Her doctoral research delves into the intricate intersectionality and pervasive caste-based discrimination among Dalit women students in higher education institutions in Delhi. This profound undertaking reflects her commitment to addressing critical issues and fostering inclusivity within the educational landscape. Meenakshi's

professional journey includes serving as a Junior Project Staff at the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and contributing as a Lecturer at the Delhi College of Vocational Studies and Research. Her engagement extends beyond traditional academia, encompassing remote work with notable organizations such as Feminism in India and The Blue Club. Meenakshi Ravivanshi's multifaceted experiences and scholarly pursuits underscore her dedication to the transformative power of education and her unwavering commitment to advancing social equity within the academic realm.

Locating Intersectionality within the space of Islamic Feminist Movements: Exploring Ethnographic Narratives of Muslim Women from Kerala

Wajda Tabassum, PhD Scholar, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration

Abstract

Contemporary feminists' movements have often articulated intersectionality within their own issues and experiences. It has emerged as a powerful tool for those marginalised women whose experiences often got neglected by mainstream feminists of the global north. The western feminism, as it has often been criticised, never acknowledged the marginalities based on social hierarchies, diversity, caste, colour and religion in their narratives. These systemic power differences based on multiple identities create a complex and intersectional web of marginalities which is very different from the experiences of women belonging from privileged societies. Thus, when black feminists devised intersectionality to articulate their own ideas about subjugation and marginalisation, Muslim feminists echoed the need for Islamic Feminism which would serve the dual purpose of resurrection of their faith in religion as well as raise their demand for an equitable space within the realms of their religious authority.

Religious-based feminist's movements paced up globally during 1980s. Claims for equality, especially in non-western and non-Christian contexts, have often been intertwined with religion (Rocheft, 2018). There has been much discussions and debates around the issues of gender equality within the space of religion. While the western feminists vehemently opposed religion and blamed it for women subjugation, feminists from the Arab world tried to locate their movement within the horizons of their religion. Islamic feminists offered an alternative model of feminism to the Muslim women where they can bring diverse perspectives and locate their own voice and agency without compromising their faith. They went back to the fundamentals of their religion, which is Quran, in order to reclaim their equal status, honour and respect which the religion ensured for them. Their arguments regarding rights and respect were within the discourse of Islam, criticising only religious conservatism and fundamentals for misogynistic interpretation of Quranic verses. Thus, all these arguments and assertions helped them in devising their own movements based on their intersectional ideas and experiences in reclaiming gender equity.

The relationship between gender and religion is very ambiguous when it comes to Muslim women in India and also it is very contentious. In the recent years, alongside with the international developments, Muslim women movements in India have gradually increased.

However, their arguments for gender equity are based on the authority from the qur'anic verses rather than Indian constitution or the universalistic principles of human rights as advocated by Indian secular feminists (Vatuk, 2008). Indian Muslim feminists asserted their right for freedom and equality through changes in Muslim Personal Laws. Their movement has always been grappled with the questions from religion and has been highly contentious as well as disorganized in its form. Historically, such movements were confined to elite sections of Muslim women only. However, it was during late 1980s and early 1990s that

such movements swept rising educated middle class Muslim women. The rising discontent among them regarding their own status and identity in a Hindu majoritarian country and failure of Muslim Personal Law Board to address the issues of extreme patriarchy within the community itself led to a mass movement which gradually unfolded itself into “Islamic Feminism’.

This paper is an attempt to explain intersectional discourses of Muslim women through the tools of Islamic Feminism. The ethnographic narratives of Muslim women from Kerala will be engaged to explain such discourses. Kerala has been a success story in India in terms of better development indicators and in terms of women empowerment. Thus, examples from Kerala to explain women’s movements seem ideal. The narratives have been collected through primary data collection and observational method of ethnography.

Keywords: Intersectionality, Islamic Feminism, Women’s Movement, Gender, Muslim Women

Theme 3: Contemporary Women’s Movements Grassroots, New Forms, Strategies, and Challenges.



Wajda Tabassum is a doctoral student at National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, under the supervision of Prof. Manisha Priyam. Her broader area of research is gender and intersectionality. Currently she is involved in doing a comparative study on power culture and education between two Indian states. She has presented her research work in various national and international conferences. Her recent published work is for Routledge titled “Creating an Equitable space for teaching and Learning” in the year 2023. In the current years, she is looking forward for writing in various academic journals and publish her research work.

Tea Plantation Workers of Assam: An Inquiry into their Education, Health and Nature of Work

Nayanakhee Sarma, Research Scholar, Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati

Abstract

Education is one of the social determinants which affect the overall well-being of the population. Access, availability, and ability to access education are some of the main criteria to be considered in terms of policy formulation. There are various intersectionality in terms of gender, place of origin (rural/urban divide or spatial marginalization), ethnicity, social caste, class, and nature of occupation which affect the overall access to education, especially in India and the Global South. Assam is one of the north-eastern states of India which has a diverse spatial and demographic diversity, with some regions and particular communities being more vulnerable. The socio-economic literature highlights tea plantation workers of Assam as one of the most vulnerable groups in terms of various human development indicators (health, education, and income). However, their contribution to the state's economic growth due to revenues earned by the tea sector is unparalleled. Based on a primary study carried out among 723 households covering 3525 household members and 1269 plantation workers in four tea garden-dominated districts of Assam (Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, Jorhat, and Sibsagar) showed that education played a crucial role in terms of overall well-being (it has direct relation with health outcomes as well as work productivity and income). The literacy level of the sample population showed a sizeable portion as illiterates (32.3%). The percentage of illiterates is higher for females (42.2%) than males (21.8%). Among the literates, the highest percentage of population is in the group of upper primary/middle school (18.5%). Overall, the percentage of literate population above the secondary level is very low (5%). Low education level affects their livelihood options and income levels as most of them are engaged in tea plantations, with only a few engaged as salaried service holders (1.3% females and 3.6% males). Among the sample population, there is a widespread prevalence of infectious diseases (such as TB and skin infection), low BMI levels of the workers and undernourished children. The nature of work in these plantations are intergenerational. The families in these plantation areas have been working for generations and the nature of work affects their health, income, and education status. They are caught in an intergenerational vicious cycle of poverty, malnutrition, low income, and low education levels. At times when the policy focus is on higher education, some distinctive vulnerable population groups in specific remote geographical pockets need specialized policy attention to reduce school dropouts and continuity of education.



Nayanakhee Sarma Research Scholar Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati My college and university training is in the discipline of Economics and Development Studies with research in the domain of Health and Nutrition. My doctoral research focuses on the Prevalence of Morbidity and Disease-specific Morbidity in India with a special focus on Assam and the Morbidity status of Tea Plantation Workers in Assam. As a research scholar, I have also worked in a few collaboratively projects with research organizations and the Government of Assam, those broadly working in the areas of Health and Nutrition. My areas of research interest are: Public Health, Nutrition, Occupational Health Hazards, Government Health Programmes, Healthcare Systems, and Health Workforce.

Daughter Deficit: Revisiting the debate on ‘missing women’

Smita Choudhary, Research Scholar, Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati

Abstract

In the aftermath of Amartya Sen’s work on ‘missing women’ women’s survival as a development problem has been studied for the total sex ratio and also for female deficit at birth manifested in skewed sex ratio at birth. However, there is paucity of literature in the context of Assam. It is often agreed upon that the northeast region of India is relatively better off in gender-based development parameters and Assam should therefore fare well as far as survival and status of females are concerned. The paper makes use of district level data from the two recent National Family Health Surveys NFHS 4 (2015-16) and NFHS 5 (2019-20) and unit level data from NFHS 5 (2019-20) to critically look into this aspect. The findings are that there are district variations in the sex ratio at birth. Logistic regression analysis used for the unit level data to quantitatively estimate the effect of several factors on odds of women not wanting any more children has found that the odds increase as number of sons increase in the pool of number of living children.

Keywords: Sex ratio at birth, Son preference, NFHS, Assam, Gender



Smita Choudhary is a PhD student in Economics at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Guwahati. Her academic training is in Economics, graduation from Cotton University and post-graduation from Gauhati University. Her research interests include development economics, gender and health. Currently she is working on Health Financing Transitions in India for her PhD. She also works as an Assistant Professor at the Department of Economics at Nalbari Commerce College, affiliated to Gauhati University.

Women in Higher Education: An Analysis Across North Eastern Region of India

Aijaz Ahmad Dar, Research Scholar, Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati

Abstract

Women's participation in higher education stands as a cornerstone for advancing women's empowerment and gender equality in economic spheres. This presentation examines women's participation in higher education across social groups in the Northeastern States of India using the data available at AISHE from 2010 to 2021. It uses two indicators, namely the Gross Enrolment Ratio and Gender Parity Index, to examine access and equity in higher education across social groups. To investigate whether the rise in pass-outs accompanies the rise in enrolments, pass-out numbers are expressed as a proportion of the total population in the age group of 18-23, similarly as GER is computed. It then examines the gross pass-out ratio across gender in the NER region.



Aijaz Ahmad Dar is a Research Scholar at the Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati. He did his bachelor's in economics from Cluster University Srinagar and master's in economics from the University of Hyderabad. Before joining IIT Guwahati, he worked as a Research Associate at the Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC) Bangalore. His research interests include the labour market and educational outcomes of marginalized sections of society.

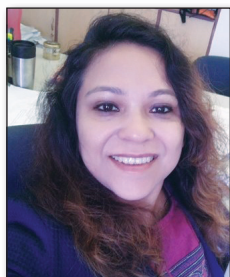
Session 8

16:00-16:45

Roundtable on Internal Committees in Higher Education Institutions

Participants:

1. Prof. Anamika Barua, IIT Guwahati
2. Prof. Shakuntala Mahanta, IIT Guwahati
3. Ms. Millie Hazarika, Advocate Guwahati High Court and IC member, IIT Guwahati



Shakuntala Mahanta, Assistant Professor, IIT Guwahati

Shakuntala Mahanta received her PhD in Linguistics from Utrecht University of Netherlands in 2007 where she continued as a postdoctoral scholar till 2008. In 2008, she joined IIT Guwahati as an Assistant Professor where she was promoted to a professorship in 2019. During her tenure at IIT Guwahati, she has involved herself with various women-related activities, especially related to female workers, students, and women in academia. She was also the Internal Committee chairperson till November 2022. Academically, she specializes in prosody, phonology, phonetics & endangered languages. She studies the unique attributes of the languages of Northeast India and she has published research articles and books on Assamese, Sylheti, Bodo, Dimasa, Deori, Mising & Mog.



Anamika Barua, Professor, IIT Guwahati

Anamika Barua is a professor at the Dept. of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati, India, and a visiting faculty member at AIT Bangkok, Thailand. Trained in Ecological Economics, her research interest lies in understanding how political, social and economic factors shape environmental decisions and change, particularly related to water. For the last twelve years, she has been involved in academic and consultancy projects related to climate change and water issues in South Asia at multiple scales.

Prof Barua serves as an expert member in several high-level committees of the Government of India. She is a member of the Technical Advisory Committee of India's climate communication to UNFCCC under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. She is also an expert member of the Department of Science and Technology's Climate Change Program. She was a member of the drafting committee of India's new water policy constituted by the Ministry of Jal Shakti in 2020.

Prof Barua has published her work in several international journals, such as the *Journal of Global Environmental Change*, *the Journal of Regional Environmental Change*, *the Journal of Cleaner Production*, *Water Resources Research*, *Journal of Hydrology*, etc. Her recently edited book 'Climate Change Governance and Adaptation: Case Studies from South Asia' published by Taylor and Francis, brings together several cases from South Asia on climate governance and adaptation with an interdisciplinary approach across different scales: local, state, and national.

List of Resource Persons

S. No	Name	University Affiliation	Email
NIEPA			
1.	Prof. Manisha Priyam	Professor, Department of Educational Policy NIEPA, New Delhi	9811283884 priyam.manisha@gmail.com
2.	Prof. Sudhanshu Bhushan	Professor & Head, Department of Higher and Professional Education NIEPA, New Delhi	9873535221 sudhanshu@niepa.ac.in
3.	Prof. Mona Khare	Professor & Head, Department of Educational Finance National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi	9811891404 monakhare@niepa.ac.in
4.	Dr. Sangeeta Angom	Associate Professor, Department of Higher and Professional Education, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi	9968261714 sangeeta@niepa.ac.in
5.	Dr. S. K. Malik	Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Policy, NIEPA, New Delhi	9968278702 skmallik@niepa.ac.in
6.	Ms. Wajda Tabassum	Ph D Scholar, NIEPA, New Delhi	8860205526 wajda@niepa.ac.in
7.	Ms. Meenakshi Ravivanshi	Ph D Scholar, NIEPA, New Delhi	7838820493 meenakshi@niepa.ac.in
Other Institutions			
8.	Dr. Priyanka Jha	Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi	9899628470 priyankajha@bhu.ac.in
9.	Dr. Priyanka Tripathi	Associate Professor, English Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology, Patna	9155147495 priyankatripathi@iitp.ac.in
10.	Prof. Krishna Menon	Professor, Gender Studies, and former Dean, School of Human Studies, Ambedkar University Delhi	9810526046 krishnamenon@aud.ac.in
11.	Prof. Nirmala Menon	Professor, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Indore	9630002229 nmenon@iiti.ac.in
12.	Ms. Mridusmita Bordoloi	Economist, IWWAGE, IFMR, Delhi	9810896465 mbordoloi@ accountabilityindia.org
13.	Dr. Prabha Ravi Shankar	Associate Professor, PG dept of JSSC, affiliated to the SNDT Women's University, Mumbai	9892902527 prabha.rs09@gmail.com
14.	Prof. Mary E. John	Professor, Centre for Women's Development Studies (former)	9818316249 maryejohn1@gmail.com
15.	Prof. Rekha Pappu	Professor, School of Educational Studies, TISS Mumbai	998488123 rekha.pappu@tiss.edu
16.	Prof. Ravinder Kaur	Professor, Sociology and Social Anthropology, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi	9899000699 ravinder.iitd@gmail.com

17.	Prof. K. Ratnaali	Dean Academic Activities and Projects, University of Delhi	9868033756 ratnakratna@gmail.com
18.	Prof. Vandana Upadhyay	Professor, Economics, Rajiv Gandhi University, Arunachal Pradesh	7005115718 vandanaupadhyay.rgu@gmail.com
19.	Prof. Rakhee Kalita Moral	Dean, Faculty of Arts, Cotton University, Guwahati	9871928887 rakhee.kalita@gmail.com
20.	Dr. V. Sawmveli	Assistant Professor, TISS Guwahati	v.sawmveli@tiss.edu
21.	Dr. Deigracia Nongkynrih	Associate Professor, NEHU, Shillong	09863117794 nongkynrihdeigracia@gmail.com
22.	Prof. Ajanta Borgohain	VC, Assam Women's University, Assam	9435033712 vc@awu.ac.in
23.	Prof. Padmini Boruah,	Professor and Head, Department of English Language Teaching (ELT), Gauhati University, Guwahati	padminiboruah@gauhati.ac.in
24.	Prof. Polly Vaqueline	Professor, Department of Women's Studies, Gauhati University, Guwahati	9435144275 pollyvauqueline@gauhati.ac.in
IIT Guwahati			
25.	Prof. Rajashree Bedamatta	Professor of Economics & Development Studies, Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati.	9678007148 rajshree@iitg.ac.in
26.	Prof. Liza Das	Professor of English, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Guwahati	9706053568 liza@iitg.ac.in
27.	Prof. Rohini M. Punekar	Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Guwahati	9954498213 rohini@iitg.ac.in
28.	Prof. Bidisha Som	Professor of Linguistics, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Guwahati	bidisha@iitg.ac.in
29.	Prof. Anamika Barua	Professor, IIT Guwahati	abarua@iitg.ac.in
30.	Dr. Shirisha Nagotu	Assistant Professor, Department of Biosciences and Bioengineering, IIT Guwahati	7086867024 snagotu@iitg.ac.in
31.	Prof. Pahi Saikia	Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Guwahati	7896000365 pahi@iitg.ac.in
32.	Prof. Sawmya Ray	Professor of Sociology, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati	9678005216 sawmyaray@iitg.ac.in
33.	Prof. Shakuntala Mahanta	Professor, IIT Guwahati	smahanta@iitg.ac.in
34.	Ms. Nayankhee Sarma	Research Scholar, IIT Guwahati	
35.	Ms. Smita Choudhary	Research Scholar, IIT Guwahati	
36.	Mr. Aijaz Ahmad Dar	Research Scholar, IIT Guwahati	
Monash University			
37.	Prof. Craig Jeffrey	Deputy Vice Chancellor (International) and Senior Vice President, Monash University Australia	craig.jeffrey@monash.edu
Online			
38.	Prof. Madhura Swaminathan	Professor, Economic Analysis Unit, Indian Statistical Institute, Bangalore	madhura@isibang.ac.in
39.	Dr. Bornali Bhattacharjee	Research Associate Scientist, Yale University	bornali.bhattacharjee@yale.edu

Organising Team

Finance Officer, Registrar(I/c)
National Institute of Educational Planning and
Administration (NIEPA)
New Delhi-110016
Email: fo@niepa.ac.in

Akshita Saxena, Project Junior Consultant,
NIEPA

Publication Unit

Mr. Amit Singhal, Deputy Publication Officer
Mr. Santosh Kumar Vaishy, Project Publication Consultant
Mr. Amit Sharma, Publication Assistant
Mr. Himanshu, Machine Operator
Mr. Ajit Kumar, Junior Project Consultant
Mr. Praveen Kumar, Trainee in Administration
Mr. Priyanshu Bhardwaj, MTS

NIEPA Faculty Members and Staff

Vice-Chancellor

Prof. Shashikala Wanjari

Department of Educational Planning

Prof. K. Biswal, *Professor and Head*

Prof. P. Geetha Rani, *Professor*

Dr. Santwana G. Mishra, *Associate Professor*

Dr. N. K. Mohanty, *Assistant Professor*

Dr. Suman Negi, *Assistant Professor*

Department of Educational Administration

Prof. Kumar Suresh, *Professor and Head*

Prof. Vineeta Sirohi, *Professor*

Dr. Anshu Srivastava, *Associate Professor*

Dr. V. Sucharita, *Assistant Professor*

Department of Educational Finance

Prof. Mona Khare, *Professor and Head*

Dr. V. P. S. Raju, *Assistant Professor (On lien)*

Department of Educational Policy

Prof. Avinash K. Singh, *Professor and Head*

Prof. Veera Gupta, *Professor (On lien)*

Prof. Manisha Priyam, *Professor*

Dr. S. K. Mallik, *Assistant Professor*

Department of School & Non-Formal Education

Prof. Pranati Panda, *Professor and Head*

Prof. Madhumita Bandyopadhyay, *Professor*

Dr. Amit Gautam, *Associate Professor*

Mr. A. N. Reddy, *Assistant Professor*

Dr. Kashyapi Awasthi, *Assistant Professor*

Department of Higher & Professional Education

Prof. Sudhanshu Bhushan, *Professor and Head*

Prof. Aarti Srivastava, *Professor*

Prof. Neeru Snehi, *Professor*

Dr. Sangeeta Angom, *Associate Professor*

Department of Training and Professional Development in Education

Prof. Vineeta Sirohi, *Professor & Head (I/c)*

Dr. Mona Sedwal, *Assistant Professor*

ICT Unit

Prof. K. Srinivas, *Professor and Head*

National Centre for School Leadership

Prof. Shashikala Wanjari, *Professor and Head*

Dr. Santwana G. Mishra, *Associate Professor, In-Charge*

Dr. Kashyapi Awasthi, *Assistant Professor*

Dr. Subitha G. V., *Assistant Professor*

Dr. Charu Smita Malik, *Assistant Professor*

Dr. Shadma Absar, *Assistant Professor*

Dr. Puja Singhal, *Assistant Professor*

Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education

Prof. P. K. Misra, *Professor and Director*

Dr. Nidhi S. Sabharwal, *Associate Professor*

Dr. Anupam Pachauri, *Assistant Professor*

Dr. Garima Malik, *Assistant Professor*

Dr. Jinusha Panigrahi, *Assistant Professor*

School Standard and Evaluation Unit

Prof. Pranati Panda, *Professor and Head*

Prof. Rasmita D. Swain, *Professor*

Mr. A. N. Reddy, *Assistant Professor*

Unit for International Cooperation

Prof. Shashikala Wanjari, *Head*

Prof. K. Ramachandran, *Senior Advisor*

Dr. Binay Prasad, *Deputy Advisor*

Project Management Unit

Prof. K. Srinivas, *Head*

NIEPA Administration

Registrar (I/c)

Mr. Nishant Sinha

Administration

Dr. D. S Thakur, *Administrative Officer (I/c)*

Mr. Satish Kumar, *Section Officer (GA)*

Mr. Bharat Bhushan Jain, *Section Officer (Estt.)*

Finance and Accounts

Mr. Nishant Sinha, *Finance Officer*

Mr. Kamal Kumar Gupta, *Section Officer*

Computer Centre

Mr. Chandra Kumar M J, *Systems Analyst*

Publication Unit

Mr. Amit Singhal, *Deputy Publication Officer*

Library/Documentation Centre

Mrs. Puja Singh, *Librarian*

Dr. D. S. Thakur, *Documentation Officer*

Hindi Cell

Dr. Ravi Prakash Singh, *Hindi Editor*

Hostel Reception

Mrs. Puja Singh, *Hostel Warden*



National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA)
(Deemed to be University)

17-B, Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi – 110016 (INDIA)

EPABX Nos. : 26565600, 26544800

Fax : 91-011-26853041, 26865180

Website: www.niepa.ac.in