***Call For Papers for a special issue of Gender and Education***

**Gender in Distance Education**

*Do new forms of distance and virtual education promote or impede feminist pedagogy and gender equity across cultures?*

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The recent global shift towards distance, virtual and blended modes of learning has led to the growth of competing pedagogies worldwide. From a feminist perspective, it calls for a re-look at how 'distance' is to be defined and for an interrogation of the binary between the physical and virtual campus. Distance education challenges certain accepted feminist methodologies (such as experiential learning, individualized contact, and democratic exchange). The cooption of virtual and ODL (open and distance learning) modes of education by consumerist and capitalist market forces have added to the wariness towards virtual education, and the outright rejection of open universities as mass based, impersonal "digital diploma mills" (Noble, 1998; Mohanty, 2003). The perceived gendered exclusivity of ICT only serves to reinforce the argument that technology supported education is inherently anti-feminist and masculist.

On the contrary, we may discover productive links between feminist goals and praxes and the methods and objectives of distance learning. Of these, the democratization of education may be one of the shared, core values. Further, the flexibility, affordability, inclusiveness, outreach capability to disabled and non-traditional women learners, and knowledge dissemination among women and marginalized communities in remote areas, are evidence of the support that distance education can offer to feminist goals, especially in developing countries. Such a counter-view calls for working on strategies that make technology more accessible to women, rather than seeing technology as the privileged domain of men, encouraging women to become self-reliant learners in the present, and economically independent future empowered citizens.

Authors are encouraged to engage with ongoing debates, or initiate new debates set forth through such a confrontation. The collection will bring together varying viewpoints in order to highlight both inherent drawbacks and rewards of doing gender through virtual/ODL/blended modes in higher education across disciplines. Authors may choose to focus on the particular concerns of offering WS/WGS programs/courses at the university level through distance education, or foreground broader links between feminist perspectives and distance education. Articles which represent diverse international and cross-cultural perspectives, and/or address the intersectionality of gender with other institutionalized structures such as nationality, class, ethnicity, caste, race, religion, sexuality and disability, would be particularly encouraged.

**Possible Topics for Consideration**

Authors may consider any of the following questions or propose related issues:

* **Epistemologies**: How does feminist epistemology engage with the implicit 'distance' of ODL? Is 'distance' always inherently masculist? Does it challenge feminist ethics and subjectivities?
* **Pedagogies:** What are the dis/engagements between feminist and distance learning pedagogies? Can distance/ blended modes offer inclusive models to accommodate feminist pedagogy? How can we incorporate the virtual and the visual in the feminist classroom? Is the structure of ODL curricular development and delivery at odds with feminist pedagogy?
* **Theories:** How do e-learning/ distance learning and ‘other’ theories, such as, queer theory inform each other? What issues are foregrounded by the interface between virtual learning technology and the inherent interdisciplinarity of gender studies?
* **Learners & Teachers in International Contexts:** Who benefits from conventional/ODL modes of learner support? Who does the teaching/counseling? Is learner anonymity at cross-purposes with feminist pedagogies? Do virtual student peer groups reflect shifting power relationships in the context of newer pedagogical models?
* **Women’s & Gender Studies:** What are the benefits or drawbacks of teaching WGS curricula through virtual/ distance/ blended/ mixed or conventional modes? How can we assess these? How do institutional structures support/ impede ODL curriculum development in WGS in developed/developing countries?
* **Technology:** What impact does the inclusivity/exclusivity of technology have on knowledge access in urban/ rural/ semi-urban areas/ developing countries from a women's/gender perspective? What are the relationships between technology (MOOCs, OER etc.) and feminist ethics?
* **Outreach:** Does distance education redress the isolation faced by specific groups of marginalized women/ disabled or disempowered women/ queer groups/ women in culturally isolated areas of the world? Or does it serve to reinforce and normalize the stereotypes which restrict their physical mobility and access to education?
* **Intersectionality in International Contexts:** Do ODL programs help in leveling the playing field for non-traditional/ marginalized women across caste/ class/ race/ religion/ sexuality/ age differences in specific contexts?

**Deadlines:**

Abstracts/ article proposals (500 words) and a short (maximum one side of A4) author biography by 10 July. \*

Selected authors will hear by mid July if they are invited to submit a full-length research article for consideration.

Full-length papers (5000-9000 words) will need to be submitted by 13 August 2015

It is anticipated that final decisions will be reached on all peer-reviewed papers by August 2016

Please send initial inquiries and abstracts to:  anuaneja1@gmail.com

*\*Please note that this is an extension of the original deadline which appeared in the earlier version of this call*