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INTERSECTIONALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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*Intersectionality for Change:
Opportunities and Challenges in Higher Education
Research, Teaching and Policy*

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Anja Vevoorts & Ekaterina Masetkina

Bridging Lived Experience and Institutional Frameworks: Intersectional Approaches to Mentoring and Gender Equality in Higher Education

This contribution explores how intersectional approaches are translated into institutional frameworks and practices in higher education, combining perspectives from gender equality governance and mentoring for early-career researchers. Focusing on North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW, Germany), it examines the role of the Regional Association of Equal Opportunities Officers (LaKof NRW) in shaping a political process to establish a statewide, independent contact point for cases of abuse of power and sexualised discrimination. Through sustained engagement with key stakeholders, feminist expertise has been translated into policy initiatives aimed at strengthening protection mechanisms and addressing structural inequalities within academia.

Complementing this institutional perspective, this presentation draws on empirical insights from a structured mentoring programme for women researchers at a German university (case Dusseldorf). The programme encompasses three distinct groups: doctoral researchers — both domestic and international, postdoctoral researchers, many of whom are young mothers navigating dual careers, and women physicians working in strongly hierarchical clinical environments where leadership remains predominantly male. Across these groups, intersecting dimensions such as gender, social background, caregiving responsibilities, migration status, academic rank, and disciplinary context shape access to resources, career progression, and the navigation of power relations — as evidenced through qualitative programme data and participant reflection.

By bridging lived experiences and institutional frameworks, this contribution reflects on how intersectionality is operationalised across different levels of higher education. It argues that while policy interventions are essential for addressing systemic inequalities, mentoring programmes provide crucial spaces for support and empowerment — while also revealing the limits of formal structures in capturing diverse lived realities.

Keywords

intersectionality, academic mentoring, gender equality policy, structural inequality, women in academia, higher education governance

Gaia Ciccarelli

The Quest for Inclusion and the Pitfalls of Invisible Homophobia: A Case Study on European Higher Education Institutions

The PrEcIOUS project – Promoting pluralistic education in European universities to combat invisible discrimination related to LGBTQ+, funded under the Erasmus+ program, stems from the assumption that Higher Education (HE) can fully achieve its goals only if the academic community is diverse and plural, a place where each member feels not only safe but also seen and valued as a person. Within such a context, both respect of fundamental human rights and active participation need to be promoted, empowering students to become active citizens sharing EU fundamental values. At the same time, HE institutions must strive to create educational paths capable of supporting such competencies. This is particularly urgent considering discrimination grounds such as gender, gender identity and sexual orientation are still very much a part of everyday life for many individuals. To do so, PrEcIOUS has developed a Learning Outcomes Framework based on different levels of competencies as well as a related Training Package for the acquisition of said transversal skills. This paper will analyse the challenges faced in fostering inclusive education paths challenging invisible homophobia and gender-based discrimination within HE institutions.

Keywords

LGBTQIA+ comprehensive education, human rights, invisible homophobia, global citizenship education, SOGIESC discrimination

opportunities and challenges in higher education research, teaching and policy

Ewa Krzaklewska, Marta Warat, Karolina Sikora & Paulina Sekuła

Traces of intersectionality in Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) in Polish universities and research organisations

This presentation examines whether and how intersectionality is incorporated into Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) in universities and research organisations, and translated into institutional practices. As experiences of institutions from Central and Eastern Europe and Latin America demonstrate, intersectionality is not a fixed and universal concept and its multiple understandings are shaped by social, economic and political conditions (Warat et al 2025). Particularly in the CEE, conservative political backlash, “anti-gender discourses” and insufficient knowledge on applying this concept constrain the translation of intersectional research into policy area.

We draw on two data sources. First, we conduct a text analysis of 82 GEPs (37 Polish universities, 45 Polish research institutes), to assess how intersectionality is represented in official documents. Second, we analyse three in-depth case studies of Polish institutions combining document analysis and qualitative interviews, to explore implementation practices. The GEPs analysis reveals that intersectionality is seldom mentioned explicitly as relevant to GEP implementation. Where additional social dimensions (e.g. race, age, sexual orientation) appear, they are usually framed through legalistic language, reflecting depoliticised approach. The qualitative case studies reveals a more nuanced picture and ‘traces of intersectionality’ (Beeckmans et al 2025): even where intersectionality is absent from GEPs, the needs of the groups experiencing inequalities within the institutional community can be voiced and addressed under certain conditions. We argue that intersectional approach should be understood more broadly - as an open, empathetic and participatory institutional approach that recognizes diversity within the community, and, consequently, experiences of marginalization and emerging needs of its members. This research is undertaken within INSPIRE Horizon Europe project.

Keywords

Gender equality policy, Gender equality plans, Poland, intersectionality, traces of intersectionality

Kamila Olesińska

Public Pedagogy of Resistance: Intersectional Disability Activism on Instagram as an Alternative Educational Space

While intersectionality is increasingly institutionalized within higher education, crucial educational work and knowledge production often occur on its margins. This presentation explores Instagram as a space of "public pedagogy" where self-advocates with disabilities challenge dominant, ableist, and medicalized discourses. Based on an ongoing qualitative analysis (netnography) of profiles managed by Polish disabled creators, this study investigates how digital activism intersects with dimensions of gender, spatial exclusion (e.g., mobility vs. "bed activism"), and systemic marginalization. Operating outside formal academic structures, these creators translate their embodied, intersectional experiences into public knowledge and policy demands. By documenting everyday practices—from navigating inaccessible infrastructure to daily care routines—they engage in a "politics of visibility." This digital advocacy not only educates the broader public but also exposes the gaps in formal institutional policies and curricula that often fail to capture the complex, lived realities of disabled individuals. The presentation argues that disabled self-advocates serve as grassroots educators who deconstruct intersectional inequalities. Their digital activism provides vital insights for higher education and public policy, highlighting the need to integrate embodied, non-academic knowledge into formal pedagogical and institutional frameworks.

Keywords

Digital activism, Disability studies, Intersectionality, Politics of visibility

Tomasz Krawczyk

Navigating theory, ideals and practice: Ensuring ethical conduct of collaborative doctoral projects

Collaborative research with people with lived experience is increasingly recognised across scientific disciplines, including health sciences. It has potential to fulfil the social responsibility of science, empower people involved, and broaden the scope of shared knowledge. These features make collaborative research appealing to doctoral and early-career researchers, who often enter academia with a commitment to transformative practice. Yet, tensions arise between transformative aspirations of collaborative research and traditional, hierarchical structures of health research culture. Institutional arrangements can challenge an efficient and ethical conduct of collaborative research. Moreover, the recognition of collaborative research varies geographically. Doctoral projects face additional constraints, including strict timelines, authorship requirements, as well as formal and informal expectations. These factors create an environment that may compromise ethical conduct and the well-being of both co-researchers and doctoral students.

Within an analytic autoethnography, I discuss experiences from research collaboration with Deaf people in a doctoral project, exploring its social, psychological, and ethical aspects. The autoethnographic analysis is framed through Sarah Banks's concept of ethics work and conceptualisations of collaborative processes. Within these frames I explore the power dynamics and tensions that may emerge among co-researchers.

I argue for broadening ethical deliberation to encompass diverse activities that acquire moral relevance in collaborative processes. Consequently, there is a need for multifaceted training for early-career researchers, which should address the sociocultural context of health research, foster activity-oriented approach to research ethics, and explore underlying power dynamics that shape collaborative research processes.

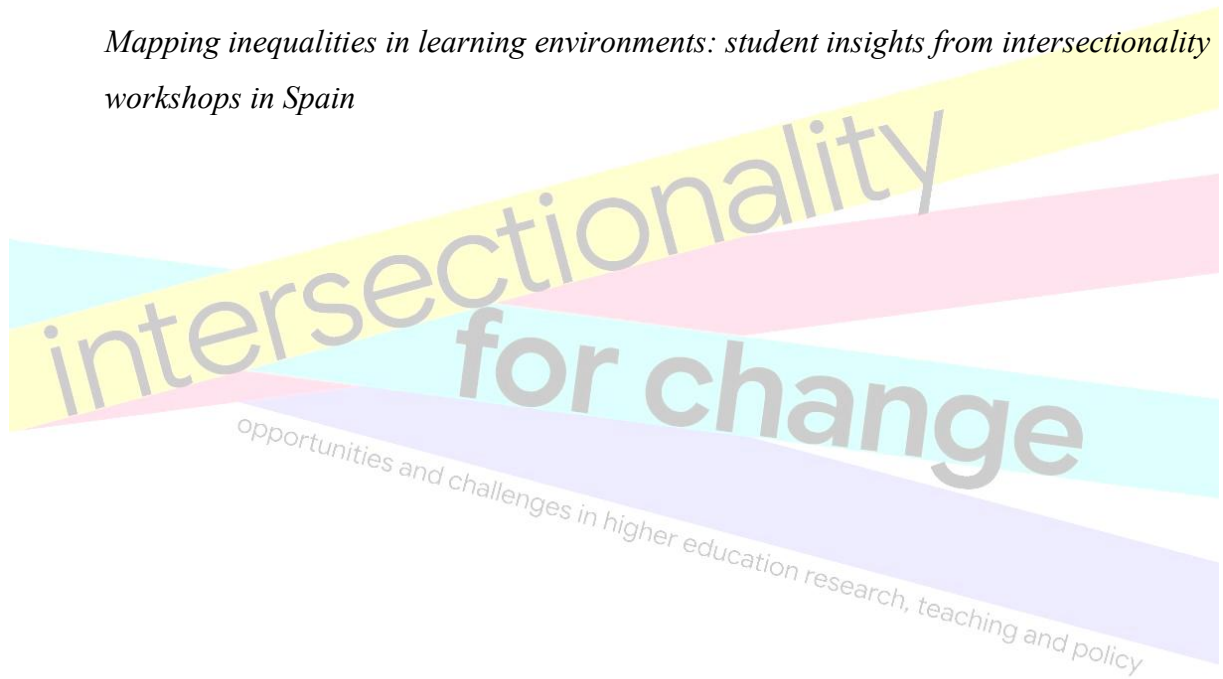
Keywords

ethics work; research collaboration; participatory research; PhD project; people with lived experience; autoethnography

SESSION 2

TEACHING, PEDAGOGY, AND WORKSHOP-BASED APPROACHES

- Sude Pekşen; Liudvika Leišytė
Examining Intersectionality Workshops in Higher Education
- Ewelina Ciaputa & Aleksandra Migalska
Between Pedagogical Intervention and Systemic Transformation: Insights from Workshops with Academic Staff
- Gloria García-Romeral & Marina Garcia-Castillo
Mapping inequalities in learning environments: student insights from intersectionality workshops in Spain



Sude Pekşen & Liudvika Leišytė

Examining Intersectionality Workshops in Higher Education

Although intersectionality has become an important framework in understanding how power relations shape teaching and learning in higher education (HE) (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Crenshaw, 1989), its implementation into actual teaching and learning remains inconsistent (Sim & Bierema, 2023). In Germany, this has been largely addressed through widening participation and diversity approaches, while more critical intersectional perspectives remain less institutionalized and are often limited to specific disciplines (Frierson, 2022). Workshops are one established format for supporting intersectionality related learning in higher education (Hoffmann et al., 2024), taking the form of professional development for university lecturers and being embedded in the study program for students. Yet, existing evidence on intersectionality workshops remains limited on academic staff (Mergner et al., 2026). Thus, we ask the following research question: How do students and academics perceive the relevance and practical value of intersectionality workshops in HE? The study is based on quantitative survey data from intersectionality workshops at a German university (2024–2025; N = 81; n = 55 pre-, n = 26 post-surveys), analyzed descriptively.

The initial findings suggest that academic staff primarily approach the workshops to strengthen their teaching, while students primarily want to learn practical skills for addressing diversity, inequality, and inclusion in HE. However, the data point to recurring tensions around the conceptual complexity of intersectionality and the need for more time and space to translate reflection into academic practice for both participants groups.

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Keywords

Intersectionality; higher education; professional development; university lecturers; student learning; teaching practice

Ewelina Ciaputa & Aleksandra Migalska

Between Pedagogical Intervention and Systemic Transformation: Insights from Workshops with Academic Staff

We explore the transformative potential of pedagogical interventions aimed at fostering inclusive teaching practices in higher education, based on a series of workshops conducted with academic staff. The workshops were delivered in two formats: a short, intensive 4-hour training and an extended version comprising three multi-hour sessions. Both formats combined theoretical reflection with practical exercises, creating a space for participants to critically engage with their own teaching practices.

Drawing on qualitative insights from these workshops, the presentation examines how academic teachers perceive their role in advancing inclusive education and identifies key barriers that hinder the implementation of inclusive pedagogies.

We argue that while workshops can serve as important sites of reflection, awareness-raising, and skill development, their impact remains partial unless embedded within broader institutional change. Inclusive education requires not only pedagogical innovation but also structural adjustments, including recognition of teaching diversity, institutional accountability, and sustained professional development opportunities.

By situating teachers' experiences at the intersection of pedagogical intervention and systemic transformation, this presentation contributes to ongoing debates about the conditions under which inclusive education can move from isolated practices to a more comprehensive institutional commitment.

Keywords

pedagogical interventions, inclusive education, workshop-based research, teaching practices

Gloria García-Romeral & Marina Garcia-Castillo

Mapping inequalities in learning environments: student insights from intersectionality workshops in Spain

This paper presents findings from student workshops and relief maps sessions conducted at the University of Vic (Catalonia, Spain) in the context of the InterHED project, focusing on how inequalities are experienced and articulated within higher education learning environments. Drawing on sessions with over 140 students, we analyse how participants identified and reflected on intersecting axes of inequality shaping their everyday academic experiences in the university environment.

Students consistently pointed to learning environments as key sites where inequalities are reproduced, negotiated, and sometimes challenged. Beyond formal curricula, pedagogy and evaluation, they highlighted classroom interactions, infrastructure, online and informal spaces as relevant to research institutional norms as central mechanisms through which inclusion and exclusion operate. Experiences of discomfort and lack of recognition were often linked to intersecting positions related to gender, class, migration background, and religion.

The findings reveal that inequalities are not only structural but also embedded in everyday pedagogical practices and spaces and implicit expectations of “normal” students. At the same time, the Spanish context illustrates tensions between progressive equality frameworks and persistent gaps in addressing inequalities from an intersectional perspective, as in the case of cultural and religious diversity.

By foregrounding students’ perspectives, this paper contributes to ongoing debates on intersectionality in higher education, emphasising the importance of understanding learning environments as lived and contested spaces to ensuring that intersectionality remains a tool for transformation rather than a purely institutional framework.

Keywords

intersectionality; higher education; learning environments; inequality; students; Spain

SESSION 3

MAKING INEQUALITY VISIBLE: INTERSECTIONALITY IN EVERYDAY TEACHING AND LEARNING PRACTICES

- Kosmo Tataruch & Natalia Lamparska
Intersectionality in Higher Education - An Analysis of Potential Studying Challenges Based on Workshops with Student
- Lorena González-Ruiz
Understanding Students' Experiences of Inequality: Towards Intersectional Teaching Practices in Spanish Higher Education
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Kosmo Tataruch & Natalia Lamparska

Intersectionality in Higher Education - An Analysis of Potential Studying Challenges Based on Workshops with Student



Lorena González-Ruiz

Understanding Students' Experiences of Inequality: Towards Intersectional Teaching Practices in Spanish Higher Education

Drawing on a series of participatory workshops conducted with over 140 students at the University of Vic (Catalonia, Spain) within the framework of the InterHEd project, this presentation explores how everyday teaching practices can both reproduce and challenge unequal conditions of learning in higher education.

The presentation is structured around three main objectives. First, we identify and conceptualize three key dimensions of teaching practices, namely teaching methodologies, participation, and assessment. These dimensions shape how knowledge is transmitted, how students interact “within” and engage “with” learning activities, and how their performance is evaluated.

Second, we examine students' experiences and needs in relation to these dimensions, showing how inequalities are often linked to rigid pedagogical formats, limited modes of participation, and standardized assessment practices that fail to account for diverse trajectories and positions.

Third, building on these insights, the paper outlines a set of practical pedagogical strategies to support teaching staff in responding to these challenges from an intersectional perspective.

These include combining individual and collaborative work, offering varied formats for demonstrating learning, co-designing evaluation criteria with students, and incorporating iterative feedback that values both learning processes and outcomes.

Overall, this contribution argues for understanding teaching practices as situated and relational, and for advancing intersectionality as a practical framework for reshaping teaching practices and improving learning processes in higher education.

Keywords

intersectionality; higher education; teaching practices; inclusion; inequality; learning

Sol Karda, Artemis Sarnek, Agata Augustyn, Jakub Łaskawiec, Krzysztof Gerc & Aleksandra Krogulska

The Impact of Camouflaging Neurodivergent Identity on Well-being in the Academic Context

While higher education institutions increasingly adapt to social diversity, neurodivergent students (e.g., autistic, dyslexic or with ADHD) still face inequalities and decide to camouflage their identities. As they perceive the world differently than the non-neurodivergent majority, navigating higher education spaces might be more challenging for them. Therefore, to avoid stigmatization, they may choose to hide their neurodivergence, which predicts anxiety and depression and is associated with burnout.

The aim of our research was to determine, using a questionnaire-based study (N = 112), how camouflaging strategies: compensation (overcoming social difficulties through learned behaviors and scripts), masking (hiding neurodivergent traits through controlling behavior), and assimilation (attempting to fit in) predict confidence, emotions and burnout in an academic context. Additionally, we examined whether grades, academic achievements and university support moderate these relations.

In the academic context, assimilation turned out the most influential strategy: it positively predicted burnout and negative emotions, and negatively predicted positive emotions and academic confidence. Compensation had a slightly positive impact on studying confidence. Additionally, although masking positively predicted negative emotions, high university support reduced negative emotions only when masking was low.

To conclude, the constant effort to hide identity traits exhausts mental resources and undermines academic students' potential. The findings suggest that institutional support alone is insufficient; universities must implement policies that reduce the need for masking and allow neurodivergent students to function more authentically to be able develop fully their academic skills.

Keywords

neurodivergence, camouflaging, higher education, university support, inclusive policies, educational equity

Joanna Kwinta-Odrzywolek, Natalia Krygowska-Nowak & Jolanta Perek-Białas

Navigating university while caring: student strategies and emerging evidence from Poland

As intersectionality becomes increasingly embedded in higher education research and policy, questions remain about its capacity to capture less visible and context-specific dimensions of inequality in students' everyday lives. One such dimension is informal caregiving among students. In the Polish context—where institutional recognition of student carers remains limited—young adults combining university study with care for older family members challenge dominant assumptions about student participation and expose gaps in existing support structures.

This presentation draws on qualitative interviews with student carers in Poland conducted within the InterCare project, complemented by preliminary findings from a quantitative survey among young people in Poland. It examines how students experience and manage the intersection of caregiving and educational responsibilities, paying particular attention to the role of institutional arrangements, cultural expectations, and access to resources.

Rather than treating intersectionality solely as an analytical framework, the study explores how inequalities are lived, negotiated, and rendered (in)visible in everyday academic practices. The findings show that students with caregiving responsibilities develop situated strategies—such as selective participation, temporal adjustments, and informal negotiations with academic staff—to remain engaged in higher education. At the same time, caregiving remains largely absent from institutional understandings of student diversity, revealing a gap between intersectional frameworks and their practical application in the Polish higher education system.

By foregrounding the Polish case, the presentation highlights the importance of recognising caregiving as a distinct and contextually embedded dimension of student inequality. It also points to the need for more inclusive institutional responses in light of ongoing demographic changes and the growing relevance of intergenerational care.

Keywords

intersectionality; higher education; student carers; student experience; informal care

SESSION 4

DECOLONIAL AND GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES: LANGUAGE, POWER, AND PLACE

- Mariam Dalakishvili

Teaching the State Language Through an Intersectional Lens: Experiences of Teachers and Ethnic Minority Learners in Georgian Higher Education Contexts – The Case of Ilia State University

- Tala Odeh, Beesan Jian, Iga Zamroczynska, Polina Pavkina & Matylda Malec

Intersectionality in Practice: Transnational Student Research on Higher Education in the West Bank

- Michelle M. Jacob

Challenging the Indigenous Elder Void in Higher Education

- Gabriela Camelia Mitu

Unequal Belonging: How Language and Mobility Shape International Students' Experiences in Higher Education

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Mariam Dalakishvili

Teaching the State Language Through an Intersectional Lens: Experiences of Teachers and Ethnic Minority Learners in Georgian Higher Education Contexts – The Case of Ilia State University

This study aims to explore the lived experiences of ethnic minorities in the university teaching of the state language from an intersectional perspective. Many groups in Georgia have limited access to high-quality education, including young people living in high-mountainous regions and ethnically diverse villages.

Georgian citizens for whom Armenian and Azerbaijani are their native languages are deprived of the opportunity to learn the Georgian language at the B2 level. Lack of knowledge of the state language and soft skills are significant obstacles for minority groups in terms of access to and integration into various spheres of public life. Early marriages and high school dropout rates are common.

To address this inequality, the state developed a temporary program in 2013. As a result of this decision, Armenian- and Azerbaijani-speaking applicants were given the opportunity to enroll in their native language and study the Georgian language intensively for one year, in order to continue their undergraduate studies in Georgian.

Ilia state university is one of the universities that provides this program. Compared to other universities, this program uses an integrated teaching strategy. This is why Iliauni's case was chosen as an interesting case study.

Research adopts a constructivist epistemological perspective and uses in-depth interviews. It aims to contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the intersectional experiences of students and lecturers by focusing on their voices and perspectives in everyday life, in the process of learning the state language.

Keywords

Intersectionality, lived experience, ethnic minority, high education, teaching

Tala Odeh, Beesan Jian, Iga Zamroczynska, Polina Pavkina & Matylda Malec

Intersectionality in Practice: Transnational Student Research on Higher Education in the West Bank

The aim of our project is to understand the role of higher education in the lives of students living under occupation in the West Bank, Palestine. In our research, we implement intersectionality (Collins et al., 2021) as a core methodological framework in peer-to-peer group interviews with Palestinian students. First, we conceptualize it as a structural principle guiding the formation of a transnational student research team composed of researchers from Palestine, Ukraine, and Poland. Second, we apply it as a critical lens in the empirical research process, enabling us to capture the complexity of role of higher education by analyzing the diversity of participants' lived experiences.

We reflect on the process of academic cooperation and discuss how it proved essential for analyzing the role of higher education in the West Bank context. We demonstrate how an intersectional approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of how factors such as gender, socioeconomic status, place of residence, and political conditions intersect to shape unequal access to education and strategies for coping with structural constraints. We map the struggles of students from different social groups, as well as their ways of using education as an instrument for gaining agency within the political climate of occupation and war.

We address the methodological challenges of implementing intersectionality in research design, data collection, and analysis. By doing so, we contribute to ongoing discussions on the possibilities and limitations of intersectionality in research (Jibrin & Salem, 2015; Shoman et al., 2025), particularly in conflicted and geopolitically complex settings.

Keywords

intersectionality, access to education, West Bank, peer-to-peer research, decolonial perspectives

Michelle M. Jacob

Challenging the Indigenous Elder Void in Higher Education

Since Time Immemorial, Indigenous Elders have served as revered teachers within Indigenous communities. Elders are important advocates and role models within Indigenous educational models that have sustained Indigenous communities, languages, and cultures in respectful relation with place for generations. However, contemporary challenges of intersecting axes of oppression marginalize, erase, and destroy Indigenous cultures and languages. For example, in the United States higher education context, Indigenous Elders are typically excluded from curricula and classrooms, creating an Elder void. In this paper, I critique the anti-Indigenous, sexist, ageist, and classist logics, policies, and practices that create and perpetuate the Elder void. I discuss institutional efforts to reclaim the important roles of Elders in higher education program design, curricula, and instruction, focusing on the Sapsik'wala Indigenous Teacher Education Program and a Decolonization in Education course. I share reflections from Elders, students, and colleagues involved in our collaborative work. I conclude with recommendations for challenging axes of oppression that exclude Indigenous knowledges and Elders from higher education.

Keywords

Indigenous education, decolonization, teacher education, Indigenous knowledges

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Gabriela Camelia Mitu

Unequal Belonging: How Language and Mobility Shape International Students' Experiences in Higher Education

In recent years, student mobility has become a central feature of higher education in Europe, often associated with opportunity, diversity, and personal development. However, the lived experiences of international students reveal that access to a sense of belonging within academic environments is not equally distributed.

This presentation explores how language barriers and mobility status intersect to shape international students' experiences in higher education. Drawing on an intersectional perspective, it argues that factors such as non-native language proficiency, cultural differences, and institutional practices contribute to uneven forms of participation and integration. While universities increasingly promote internationalisation, many academic and social spaces remain structured around implicit norms that favour local or linguistically privileged students.

Through a reflective and critical analysis grounded in the experience of Erasmus mobility, this contribution highlights how everyday academic practices — such as teaching methods, access to opportunities, and informal networks — can reproduce subtle forms of exclusion. These dynamics do not necessarily manifest as explicit discrimination, but rather as cumulative barriers that affect students' confidence, participation, and sense of belonging. The contribution ultimately calls for a more nuanced understanding of belonging in higher education, not as an individual responsibility, but as a shared institutional process. It suggests that universities should move beyond symbolic inclusion and critically reassess how language, mobility, and implicit norms shape unequal student experiences.

Keywords

intersectionality, sense of belonging, international students, language barriers, student mobility, inequality

SESSION 5

PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES AND TEACHING METHODOLOGIES

- Daniel Czyżewski
Reflection on one's own position (positionality) in power structures as a tool for the professional development of academic teachers and their impact on the teaching-learning process
- Gabriela Kozłowska
"It Doesn't Concern Me": Challenges and Strategies in Teaching Intersectional Inequalities to Privileged Student Groups
- Sven Segin, Lucy Wächter, Nina Bieling, Sude Pekşen & Liudvika Leišytė
A Problem-Based Learning & Hackathon Format for Applied Intersectional Learning in Higher Education
- Mateusz Żebracki
The Intersectional Blind Spots of Algorithmic Governance in Higher Education: A Legal and Regulatory Perspective
- Gerard Coll Planas
Applying an Intersectional Lens in Primary Teacher Education through Children's Literature: Insights from the Zoom Out Project

Daniel Czyżewski

Reflection on one's own position (positionality) in power structures as a tool for the professional development of academic teachers and their impact on the teaching-learning process

Being a teacher, tutor, or educator does not mean passively holding a position within the educational system without any changes. Fulfilling this role should involve continuous development and self-discipline regarding one's position in the teaching-learning process. Positionality represents a reflective narrative through which academic educators explicitly disclose their social, cultural, and professional identities to acknowledge that knowledge production is never entirely objective. Within the contemporary landscape of higher education, critical reflection on positionality has emerged as a pivotal tool for professional development, enabling educators to interrogate their own placement within institutional power structures and their subsequent influence on the didactic process. The presentation will focus on reflective teaching functions as a transformative praxis, bridging the dynamic interaction between theoretical knowledge and classroom action. By developing critical consciousness, as proposed in the frameworks of Brookfield (2017) and Farrell (2015), educators can mitigate the risk of unconsciously reproducing systemic biases in their teaching. This introspective approach is essential for shifting professional identities from didactic content transmitters to facilitators of student-centered pedagogy. Furthermore, recent studies by Gałęcka (2023) and Secules et al. (2021) highlight that acknowledging non-apparent identities and positional power fosters trust with marginalized groups, effectively challenging perceived institutional neutrality. Creating a self-reflective academic environment in which students and educators are aware of each other's positionality is extremely important for the development of inclusive societies.

Keywords

student-centered, teaching-learning, didactic, systemic biases, tutor, teacher

Gabriela Kozłowska

"It Doesn't Concern Me": Challenges and Strategies in Teaching Intersectional Inequalities to Privileged Student Groups

Integrating an intersectional perspective into university curricula is a crucial step toward a more equitable academia. However, pedagogical practice often encounters significant resistance in the classroom, particularly from students occupying privileged positions (e.g., in terms of social class, background, or gender and sexual normativity). This presentation analyzes the phenomenon of rejection and denial of "difficult topics" such as racism, classism, ableism, or homophobia by groups that do not directly experience these forms of oppression. In the Central European context, this resistance frequently manifests as a denial of the systemic nature of inequalities or the dismissal of such issues as an "imported" problem. The primary objective of this presentation is to map the mechanisms underlying this resistance, ranging from cognitive barriers and emotional discomfort to the phenomenon of "privileged fragility." Secondly, the presentation offers a practical application. It will discuss specific pedagogical strategies that facilitate the deconstruction of privilege in a manner that engages, rather than alienates, the student body.

Tools rooted in critical pedagogy will be proposed to help transform students' defensive attitudes into a profound reflection on their own position within the social structure. Aligning with the conference's core theme of "Intersectionality for Change," this presentation argues that effectively teaching about inequalities requires more than merely modifying syllabi; crucially, it demands the bold development of transformative methods to navigate resistance within the pedagogical relationship.

Keywords

Intersectional pedagogy, Student resistance, Invisible privilege, Academic teaching, Systemic inequalities, Critical pedagogy

Sven Segin, Lucy Wächter, Nina Bieling, Sude Pekşen & Liudvika Leišytė

A Problem-Based Learning & Hackathon Format for Applied Intersectional Learning in Higher Education

Although intersectional perspectives are increasingly present in higher education curricula, their translation into practical teaching methods is limited. Often, engagement stops at the theoretical level, leaving unanswered the question of how students can work with intersectional concepts in professional and organizational contexts. Building on Crenshaw's (1989) foundational conceptualization of intersectionality and on problem-based learning as an established pedagogical approach for connecting theory to real-life practice (Savery, 2006), this presentation, given from a student perspective, addresses this gap by introducing the "DiveHack" project. In this project, a 24-hour hackathon is held over two days, during which students develop solutions to diversity and intersectionality problems submitted by external partner organizations. Thus, we ask: What role can hackathon formats play in bridging intersectional theory and students' practical skills?

The hackathon combines several stages of problem-based learning, beginning with case presentations from partner organizations and moving through collaborative concept development to creative video outputs and a final feedback panel discussion with company representatives. From a student perspective, this presentation discusses the negotiation of intersectional concepts under time pressure and the dynamics within interdisciplinary student teams. On this basis, the contribution offers initial insights into the potential and constraints of hackathons as a format for connecting intersectional theory to practical skills in higher education.

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Keywords

hackathon, problem-based learning, intersectionality, diversity, higher education, student perspective

Mateusz Żebracki

The Intersectional Blind Spots of Algorithmic Governance in Higher Education: A Legal and Regulatory Perspective

As higher education institutions (HEIs) increasingly adopt digital technologies and automated decision-making (ADM) systems for admissions, student support, and academic assessment, the risk of "technocratic depoliticization" of inequality becomes a critical concern. This presentation explores the intersection between digital governance and intersectional justice within the framework of European higher education policy.

Drawing on research into the regulatory frameworks for AI in public governance, I argue that current algorithmic tools often fail to account for the overlapping axes of inequality—such as socio-economic status, disability, and migration background—that shape student experiences. If intersectionality is reduced to simplified administrative categories within ADM systems, it risks reinforcing existing power structures rather than challenging them.

The session will analyze the legal and ethical challenges of implementing "intersectional-by-design" algorithms in university administration. By examining the tension between administrative efficiency and the protection of individual rights, the presentation seeks to identify how academic policy can ensure that digital transformation does not become a tool for further exclusion. Ultimately, it proposes a shift from purely technical compliance to a human-centric, intersectional approach to digital governance in HEIs, ensuring that the complexity of lived experiences is not lost in the process of digitization.

Keywords

Intersectionality, Automated Decision-Making (ADM), Digital Governance, Higher Education Policy, Regulatory Frameworks, Algorithmic Bias

Gerard Coll Planas

Applying an Intersectional Lens in Primary Teacher Education through Children's Literature: Insights from the Zoom Out Project

Intersectionality has gained visibility in higher education as a framework to understand how multiple axes of inequality shape educational experiences. However, its translation into teacher education and classroom practice remains uneven and methodologically challenging. This paper presents the European project Zoom Out as a pedagogical and formative initiative aimed at fostering an intersectional perspective among pre-service primary school teachers through work with children's literature.

A part of the project focuses on students enrolled in the Bachelor's Degree in Primary Education and is based on a series of participatory workshops designed to introduce key concepts of intersectionality while explicitly connecting theory with educational practice. Through guided analysis of children's books, reflective activities, and practical resources, students are encouraged to critically examine representations related to gender, ethnicity, social class, disability, and family diversity, and to explore how these intersect within classroom contexts.

This contribution discusses the opportunities and tensions involved in integrating intersectionality into initial teacher training. Particular attention is paid to students' learning processes, their resistance or uncertainties when engaging with intersectional analysis, and the pedagogical value of children's literature as an accessible yet critical tool for addressing complex social issues.

By situating intersectionality within teacher education rather than as an abstract theoretical framework, the Zoom Out project illustrates how higher education can move beyond depoliticised or instrumental uses of the concept and support future teachers in applying an intersectional lens in everyday classroom practice.

Keywords

intersectionality, primary school, pre-service teachers, literature, Erasmus+

SESSION 6
INTERSECTIONAL INEQUALITIES

- Sucharita Halder
The Paradox of Inclusion: Intersectional Inequalities in Indian Higher Education

- Chandrabali Dutta
Reclaiming Knowledge: Intersectionality, Language Hierarchies, and the Crisis of Higher Education in India

- Juljana Laze, Enkelejda Cenaj & Rudina Duraj
Intersectionality in Higher Education: Understanding Student Inequalities and Institutional Responses in Albanian Universities

- Martha Cecilia Londoño López
Intersectionality in Practice: Revealing Embodied Inequalities on Campus through Relief Maps

- Franziska Deutschmann & Toya-Tahnee Heller
Intersecting inequalities in the transition to doctoral studies: disability, social background, and intention to pursue PhD

intersectionality
for change

inequalities and changes in higher education research, teaching and policy

Sucharita Halder

The Paradox of Inclusion: Intersectional Inequalities in Indian Higher Education

By examining how structural disparities endure in spite of official pledges to equity and access, this study investigates the paradox of inclusion in Indian higher education. Based on Kimberlé Crenshaw's conceptualisation of intersectionality, the study investigates how caste, class, gender, geography, and institutional hierarchies interact to influence PhD researchers' lived experiences. The report draws attention to structural issues such as persistent underfunding, unequal fellowship distribution, unstable academic employment, discrimination based on caste, gendered limitations, and the digital divide. It also examines institutional practices, such as the power dynamics between supervisors and scholars, admissions corruption, and the increasing impact of ideological changes in curriculum design, including discussions of saffronization and knowledge creation.

The study uses a mixed-methods approach and collects data from 100 respondents in rural and urban settings, public and private organisations, gender categories, and caste groups. Semi-structured interviews and case studies demonstrate the compounding obstacles that marginalised scholars have, such as limited access to professional networks, financial instability, and linguistic marginalisation. The results imply that rather than reducing socioeconomic inequality, higher education in India frequently perpetuates it.

In order to promote truly inclusive education, the study makes the case for a critical reevaluation of institutional accountability, pedagogy, and policy. It suggests focused efforts in anti-discrimination policies, finance, mental health support, and digital inclusion. This study adds to the current discussions on justice, equity, and access in modern India by placing higher education within larger socio-political and economic frameworks.

Keywords

Intersectionality, Higher Education, Inequality, PhD Scholars, India

Chandrabali Dutta

Reclaiming Knowledge: Intersectionality, Language Hierarchies, and the Crisis of Higher Education in India

This paper examines the continued dominance of English-centric and Eurocentric colonial education models in Indian higher education and its implications for epistemic inequality and pedagogical relevance. Despite postcolonial critiques, English remains the primary medium of instruction and academic legitimacy, reinforcing hierarchies of access and privileging Western knowledge systems over indigenous and vernacular epistemologies (Altbach, 2016). This linguistic and epistemic dominance perpetuates exclusion, particularly for students from marginalized caste, class, and regional backgrounds. Drawing on the concept of intersectionality as theorized by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), the paper argues that curriculum design in India inadequately addresses the interconnected axes of caste, gender, class, and language. The absence of an intersectional framework results in homogenized pedagogies that reproduce upper-caste, urban, and male-centric perspectives, thereby alienating diverse student populations (Rege, 2013). Methodologically, the study employs critical discourse analysis of higher education curricula alongside qualitative reflections from students and educators. It identifies key challenges including institutional inertia, linguistic elitism, and the tokenistic inclusion of diversity without structural transformation. The paper contends that the lack of intersectionality, combined with the persistence of colonial knowledge structures, is gradually diminishing the social relevance and transformative potential of higher education in India. It calls for a decolonial and intersectional reconfiguration of curricula that foregrounds plurality, inclusivity, and epistemic justice (Bhambra, 2014).

Keywords

intersectionality, linguistic hierarchy, colonial education, pedagogy, curricula, inclusivity

Juljana Laze, Enkelejda Cenaj & Rudina Duraj

Intersectionality in Higher Education: Understanding Student Inequalities and Institutional Responses in Albanian Universities

This article examines Intersectionality as an analytical lens for understanding student inequalities in higher education institutions across Albania. Although well established in global academic discourse, its application and integration into local higher education settings have been uneven and underexplored, particularly in Southeast Europe.

Framed within a sociological perspective, this study examines how overlapping dimensions of inequality (socioeconomic background, gender and geographic origin) impact students' access to higher education institutions and their academic experiences. Instead of examining these factors or situations one at a time, the paper discusses their overall, interconnected impacts on educational pathways.

The research adopts a qualitative approach, analysing institutional policies around teaching, student support and curriculum alongside interviews with academic staff and students.

Despite the widespread use of inclusive discourse and policy frameworks, the findings illustrate limited action to address intersectional inequalities. And institutional responses to disadvantage tend to be by single axes rather than recognising their interaction.

The paper then elaborates on the implications for pedagogy, stressing a call for critical reflexivity in teaching practices and more trans-inclusive teaching methods. It is also problematic that intersectionality gets depoliticised when reduced to a formal policy concept detached from its critical and transformative potential.

This study situates intersectionality within the Albanian higher education context and engages in ongoing debates on the localisation of global theoretical frameworks while providing recommendations for more effective institutional and pedagogical responses to student inequality.

Keywords

intersectionality; higher education; student inequality; pedagogy; institutional policy; local context

Martha Cecilia Londoño López

Intersectionality in Practice: Revealing Embodied Inequalities on Campus through Relief Maps

This paper examines how intersecting structures of power shape the everyday experiences of students in higher education, drawing on a doctoral study conducted at the Meléndez campus of Universidad del Valle (Colombia). The study examines how gender, sexual orientation, and racialization influence the ways students inhabit, move through, and relate to campus spaces. The central theoretical references were Lefebvre, Massey, Rodó de Zárate, feminist geographies, and intersectional geographies. The Experience Relief Maps (RM) methodology is used, integrating social, geographical, and emotional dimensions to make visible inequalities that often remain hidden.

Based on the analysis of the lived experiences of 120 students from 25 academic programs, the study identifies differentiated experiences of privilege, exclusion, and violence that particularly affect women, gender diverse students, students with diverse sexual orientations, and non mestizo racialized groups.

The findings show that the physical and symbolic design of the campus responds to an abstract model of the student, disconnected from the diversity of real embodiments and needs. The research highlights the importance of transforming institutional culture and the spatial configuration of the university, placing human diversity at the center of policies and practices in order to move toward more just, inclusive, and sensitive environments that acknowledge the integral human experience of those who inhabit them.

By centering lived experience, the study advances debates—highlighted in the InterHEd call—on how intersectionality is translated, enacted, and contested in higher education. It shows how intersectional, experience-based methods can support structural change and foster more inclusive, just, and human-centered university environments.

Keywords

Relief Maps, intersectionality, lived experience, campus geographies, feminist methodologies, higher education

Franziska Deutschmann & Toya-Tahnee Heller

Intersecting inequalities in the transition to doctoral studies: disability, social background, and intention to pursue PhD

This presentation examines how disability and parental educational background overlap in the transition to doctoral studies and how they relate to the intention to pursue a PhD. The analysis is based on data from the Graduate Study Cooperation Project (KOAB), conducted by the Institute for Applied Statistics (ISTAT), which surveyed the 2023 cohort in Germany and Austria (N = 40,893). Using a four-category grouping that combines disability status and parental higher-education background, the study investigates differences in PhD intentions. The results show that people with disabilities are more likely to report an intention to pursue a PhD, whereas those from non-academic family backgrounds are less likely to do so. At the same time, the combination of disability and non-academic parental background occurs more often than would be expected by chance, pointing to a field of tension in the transition to doctoral studies. Graduates with disabilities and an academic parental background are overrepresented among those who considered pursuing a PhD but eventually decided against it. By contrast, graduates without disabilities and without an academic parental background more often state that a PhD was never an option for them. The study shows that PhD intentions are not merely individual decisions, but are embedded in social positions. By linking disability and social origin, the analysis contributes to intersectional higher education research and illustrates how inequalities are structured in the transition into academic careers.

Keywords

disability; social origin; PhD intentions; doctoral studies; intersectionality; inequality

SESSION 7
STRUCTURAL CONDITIONS AND POLICY

- Bawalla Oluwatoyin Gbenga
Precarity and Intersectionality: Experiences of Contract and Adjunct Staff in Ogun State Private Universities Higher Education

- Enkelejda Cenaj, Rudina Duraj & Juljana Laze
Intersectionality in Transition: From State-Controlled Equality to Market-Driven Inequalities in Albanian Higher Education

- Anna Cybulko
Why is it so difficult for academic institutions to collect data on equality that takes into account its intersectional nature - and yet still worth the effort?

- Dangeni, Flora Petrik & Joanna Kwinta-Odrzywołek
Student carers: an underexplored and emerging axis of inequality in higher education

- Maya M & Suparna Majumdar Kar
Intersectionality in Practice: Inclusive Education Policies in Indian Higher Education

- Pranjali Kirloskar
Who Gets to Be International? Exploring Inclusion and Access in Erasmus+ Mobility

Bawalla Oluwatoyin Gbenga

Precarity and Intersectionality: Experiences of Contract and Adjunct Staff in Ogun State Private Universities Higher Education

This study examines the growing phenomenon of academic precarity within the global shift toward the neoliberal university, where flexible labour arrangements and the academic “gig economy” have become increasingly prominent. In Nigeria, particularly within private universities, the reliance on adjunct staff has intensified due to institutional demands and regulatory pressures, thereby normalizing non-permanent academic employment.

Despite the operational advantages of adjunct staffing, the expansion of contract-based academic labour has produced a workforce characterized by job insecurity, irregular remuneration, and limited institutional inclusion. Anchored in Standing’s Precariat Theory and Crenshaw’s Intersectionality Theory, the study conceptualizes precarity as both a structural labour condition and a differentiated experience shaped by gender, age, and socio-economic background. Existing studies in Nigeria often overlook these intersecting dimensions, treating precarity as a uniform phenomenon.

Adopting a qualitative approach, the study employs Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and draws on in-depth semi-structured interviews with adjunct academics across selected private universities in Ogun State. Data were analyzed using a hybrid thematic approach combining deductive and inductive coding techniques.

Findings reveal multidimensional precarity manifested in job insecurity, institutional marginalization, and fragmented professional identity, further intensified by intersectional factors. The study highlights significant gaps in Human Resource Management practices and recommends inclusive policies, fair compensation systems, and structured career pathways to promote equity and sustainability in academic labour.

Keywords

Academic Precarity, Adjunct Academic Labour, Intersectionality, Human Resource Management, Nigerian Private Universities

Enkelejda Cenaj, Rudina Duraj & Juljana Laze

Intersectionality in Transition: From State-Controlled Equality to Market-Driven Inequalities in Albanian Higher Education

Although intersectionality is commonly used as an analytical tool for overlapping structures of power in Western scholarly traditions, analyzing through an intersectional lens in a post-socialist context is somewhat limited. This paper examines the role an intersectional lens can play in analyzing shifting educational inequalities in higher education in Albania during the period of socialist, centrally planned education to the expansion and marketization of the higher education sector after 1990. It explores how different axes of inequality—especially social and economic status, gender, geospatial location, and social capital—interact to create diversity in youth's educational trajectories and outcomes. Under socialism, access to higher education was defined by politically defined categories of class and ideological loyalties, providing a predictable and regulated path for class-related social mobility. On the other hand, the increased enrollment in higher education after the fall of socialism, while expanding access, has resulted in many different forms of inequality.

The massification of higher education altered the parameters of how barriers are defined. Findings from 50 semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted with students from the University of Tirana and Alexander Moisiu University illustrate how unequal access to social networks, gender and ongoing regional disparities now create unequal opportunities and outcomes for Albanian youth. Many students voiced concerns that their degree will not help to overcome their socio-economic barriers and the significance of the informal networks they have established to assist them versus those who have been able to achieve through merit.

This uncertainty, distrust in institutions and desire to migrate among Albanian youth reflects broader societal dynamics. These results have implications for the ongoing discourse around intersectionality as it relates to various socio-historical contexts while providing a useful methodology for understanding how new types of inequities are created in higher education.

Keywords

intersectionality; higher education; post-socialist transformation; massification; youth trajectories; inequality; Albania

Anna Cybulko

Why is it so difficult for academic institutions to collect data on equality that takes into account its intersectional nature - and yet still worth the effort?

The aim of this presentation is to examine the practices of Polish academic institutions regarding their equality data collection taking into account their intersectional nature. In particular, the focus will be on what rules allow/prohibit the collection of data on intersectional discrimination in pay and working conditions, by whom and in what context can such data be collected. The paper will also elaborate on what data can be used (or is needed) to establish intersectional discrimination

The starting point will be to reconstruct the formal and legal context of collecting this type of data, based on current regulations and recommendations available at various levels. Against the backdrop of the formal and legal regulatory framework, the challenges associated with data collection and the resulting benefits will be presented.

The challenges will be mapped at various levels of generality: from those embedded in the broader socio-political context, through those common to all workplaces, specific to the academic context, to those relevant to specific institutions. The needs and benefits arising from the collection of intersectional data will be analyzed, taking into account short- and long-term effects as well as the perspectives of individuals and institutions.

Keywords

equality intersectional data; intersectional discrimination, pay discrimination, working conditions

Dangeni, Flora Petrik & Joanna Kwinta-Odrzywolek

Student carers: an underexplored and emerging axis of inequality in higher education

This paper examines student carers as an underexplored and emerging axis of inequality in higher education across Europe. While intersectional research has advanced understanding of inequalities related to gender, ethnicity, class, and disability, the role of unpaid care responsibilities among students remains largely neglected. Responding to calls to identify overlooked dimensions of inequality, this study positions student caregiving as a critical yet under-recognised intersectional dimension shaping educational experiences.

Drawing on early findings from the InterCare project (2024–2028), the paper focuses on students aged 18–30 providing care in Germany, Poland, and the UK. Using qualitative data from individual and dyadic interviews, as well as audio diaries, it explores the intergenerational care arrangements students navigate within differing national and institutional contexts. Particular attention is paid to how caregiving intersects with gender, class, and access to resources, and how these intersections are shaped by local welfare/care regimes, cultural expectations, and institutional practices.

Preliminary findings indicate that caregiving both intersects with and intensifies existing inequalities, often remaining un/misrecognised within higher education systems. For instance, care experiences are shaped by social position, with students from lower socio-economic and minoritised backgrounds, as well as single-parent households, describing more intensive and demanding forms of care, while gendered norms inform how care is negotiated and valued. By foregrounding student carers, this paper contributes to reconfiguring intersectionality in higher education, conceptualising care as a relational mechanism through which inequalities are enacted and reproduced across generations.

Keywords

student carers, inequality, intersectionality, visibility, higher education

Maya M & Suparna Majumdar Kar

Intersectionality in Practice: Inclusive Education Policies in Indian Higher Education

Inclusive Education has been the cornerstone of India's higher education since Independence. Affirmative policies to include historically marginalised sections like the lower castes, and tribes are a constitutional obligation. Policies to support inclusion of women in academia is also a national commitment. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2000 focuses on student centered learning where everyone has the privilege of a learning environment irrespective of the social signifiers and environmental factors that might differentiate them. This paper looks into the various Indian Higher Education policies on Inclusive education to examine how intersectionality is embedded in the policies and juxtapose it with some of the recent challenges that received national attention. The question of how intersectionality is defined in the Indian Higher Education Policies would be followed by a discussion of the APAAR (Aware, Acknowledge, Prepare, Act and Reflect) framework which would help Higher Education Institutions to practice inclusion effectively.

Keywords

inclusive education, Indian higher education. Inclusive policies, Intersectionality, APAAR framework

opportunities and challenges in higher education research, teaching and policy

Pranjali Kirloskar

Who Gets to Be International? Exploring Inclusion and Access in Erasmus+ Mobility

International student mobility is increasingly positioned within European higher education as an important component of inclusive and internationally oriented learning. At the same time, recent policy discussions have placed growing emphasis on widening participation and improving access to mobility opportunities for underrepresented groups. This paper explores how inclusion and access are framed within Erasmus+ and higher education internationalisation discourse, with particular attention to the assumptions embedded in institutional narratives surrounding student mobility.

Drawing on an intersectional perspective, the study examines how mobility participation may be shaped by multiple and overlapping factors, including socioeconomic background, nationality, language competence, and differing forms of social and cultural capital. The paper is based on a qualitative analysis of selected Erasmus+ and institutional documents, including mobility-related webpages, inclusion statements, and internationalisation strategies. Rather than focusing on participation outcomes, the study considers how mobility opportunities are represented, communicated, and made intelligible within higher education contexts.

The paper aims to contribute to ongoing discussions on intersectionality and higher education by reflecting on how inclusion is translated into internationalisation practices and discourse. In doing so, it seeks to open further discussion on the relationship between institutional narratives of accessibility and the diverse structural conditions shaping students' engagement with mobility opportunities.

Keywords

Internationalisation of Higher Education, Erasmus+ Mobility, Inclusion, Intersectionality, Student Mobility, Higher Education Policy