

From Inclusion to Transformation: Transfeminist Perspectives on Gender-Responsive Higher Education

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Abstract

This paper develops a transfeminist critique of gender-responsive education in higher education. While gender-responsive approaches have contributed to challenging discrimination, stereotypes and unequal participation, they often remain tied to additive models of inclusion: gender is treated as a dimension to be incorporated into existing pedagogical and institutional frameworks. Drawing on transfeminist theory, queer theory and feminist pedagogy, the paper argues that a transformative approach requires a shift from inclusion as accommodation to inclusion as a critical interrogation of the norms that organise teaching, learning and academic belonging.

The paper asks what becomes visible when higher education is analysed not only as a site where gender inequalities are reproduced, but also as an institution that produces the conditions through which gendered and sexual subjects become intelligible, legitimate and governable. It examines how categories such as participation, safety, voice, care and merit are shaped by normative assumptions about embodiment, identity and authority. Particular attention is given to trans, non-binary and intersectionally marginalised subjectivities, which expose the limits of pedagogical models based on stable identities and formal equality.

Rather than rejecting gender-responsive education, the paper proposes to radicalise it through a transfeminist framework. This perspective redefines pedagogical transformation as an epistemic, relational and institutional practice. The contribution lies in reframing higher education not merely as a space that includes diverse subjects, but as a field in which the very terms of inclusion, knowledge and recognition can be contested and reconfigured.

Keywords: transfeminism; gender-responsive education; higher education; queer theory; feminist pedagogy