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Integration of gender in complex projects: high expectations, harsh reality

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Abstract

Research projects, particularly in higher education (HE), have become increasingly complex with request to fulfill several, seemingly contradicting strategic goals set by funding institutions. The manifestation of such projects reveals several systemic and structural challenges related to Gender Equality (GE) and Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI). This critique focuses on the paradoxical tensions within the HE environment, such as meritocracy and its ties with neoliberal academia, the problematic representation of excellence emphasising productivity over authentic scholarship, and the potential oversights of EDI related competences amidst the standardised success measures for international collaboration.

The paper aims to delve deep into the interconnected challenges of neoliberal academia and the difficulties of implementing EDI and GE. Using complexity theory as a lens, the paper identifies three main paradoxical tensions and suggests potential strategies for addressing them effectively.

- Providing a framework based on complexity research for international collaborations within HE.
- Unpacking the paradoxes associated with meritocracy in neoliberal academia.
- Critical examination of gendered structures in the neoliberal academic landscape.
- Problematizing the notions of excellence and productivity in light of feminist critiques.

Keywords: Gender Equality, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Neoliberal Academia, Complexity Theory