

Women in Higher Education in Southeast Asia: Opportunities and Challenges

Convenor:

Dorothy Ferary, UCL Institute of Education (qtnvdfp@ucl.ac.uk)

The growth of globalisation and the knowledge-based economy has changed the character of the labour market, driving the demand for higher educated and more skilled workforce increased significantly. These are followed by massification of higher education with the hope of expanding access to university for all, including women. Over the past decade, Southeast Asia has advanced both in access in higher education and in promoting gender equality. All Southeast Asian countries, except for Laos, have shown a higher number of female gross enrolment ratio in higher education as compared to their male counterpart (UNESCO, 2016). In addition, the continuing acceptance of working women further indicates promising future. However, both overt and covert structural and cultural barriers still impede women's participation in higher education and later workforce. The increase in tuition fees is particularly sensitive to families from a less affluent background who may prefer sending their sons instead of their daughters to university. In addition, being in university led by majority male managers and taught by majority male lecturers may also influence women's experience in university. Moreover, the concept of femininity and masculinity in certain fields of study may also hinder women's participation in the field. The persistence attitudes towards women's domestic responsibilities can also take priority over education and career. Furthermore, informal organizational and local cultures in favour of men ignores meritocracy and normalise salary gap between women and men. Taking into consideration that Southeast Asia is such a diverse region in terms of size and population, wealth, religion and ethnicity, this panel will draw studies from the region to explore women's opportunities and challenges in higher education and how higher education can further promote women's empowerment.

Single session of 4 Presenters (2 presenters have confirmed availability so far)