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Women's activism and education in Myanmar

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Part II: Education and Gendered Citizenship

> *"The first task of the educator is to give up convictions of triumphalist superiority"*
>
> (Spivak 2005, 173)

Introducing Part II

Education practices, as part of socially constructed institutions, are highly gendered and as such present models of expected behaviour from young men and young women (Aikman & Unterhalter 2005). However, such practice also vary significantly across and within contexts and in varied forms of educational space, both formal and non-formal. The chapters in this section aim to explore these varying sites of learning and the gender presentations that emerge from them, responding to the research question:

What role do differing education practices play in constructing citizenship ideals, and in what ways are these gendered?

The chapters further explore the research subquestions:

- *How have practices in education sustained and legitimised women's social subordination?*
- *In what ways are alternative sites of learning presenting alternative models?*

Part II begins with an exploration of the theoretical conceptualisations of education spaces that inform this research presented in Chapter 4 and then further extended in Chapter 6, where it is argued that different learning sites present divergent constructions of citizenship. These constructions are inherently gendered, and have been compounded by responses to conflict and displacement. Chapter 5 further examines practices in formal education which

have contributed to women's continuing social subordination, with a focus on the ways in which violence against women has been legitimised and sustained through practices within schools. Women's marginalisation does not remain uncontested, and consequently the chapters in this section provide the educational perspective which anticipate the counterpoint of women's activist responses provided in Part III.

Initially, the contrast is established between *striated* learning environments (typified by formal, state schooling) and *smooth* learning sites (being less formal and more holistic in their nature). However, rapidly it becomes apparent that these seemingly opposing modes of learning overlap and co-exist, mutually informing each other. A priority of this section is therefore to highlight practices which illustrate this dialogue between different pedagogical approaches and the opportunities to expand more inclusive learning practices within formal learning environments. To this end, the section concludes with a focus study which highlights the desires for different schooling experiences as expressed by one group of ethnically young women during a focus group discussion.