

## Beijing Forum 2019

### Women's Initiative and Development over the Course of Civilization (IV)

On the afternoon of November 3rd, the panel session “Women's Initiative and Development over the Course of Civilization” was inaugurated in the Moonlight Hall, Yingjie Exchange Center, Peking University. Seven speakers were invited to share their opinion on the topic of “The Construction and Development of Disciplines” considering women studies.

Peng Peiyun, previous Vice-Chairperson of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress and previous Chairwoman of the All-China Women's Federation, was first invited to express her view. Peng claims that regardless of her age (90 years old) and a decade since she has been retired from her job, women issue and women studies remain within her concern. She found the panel impressive with a wide range of topics being discussed with plenty of new insights put forward domestic as well as foreign scholars. Peng believes that women's liberation is an irreversible trend in contemporary society which plays a vital role in the emancipation of the whole humankind. She encouraged scholars in the field to feel optimistic about the future of women's studies and keep up with all the brilliant and honorable work. At the same time, we should pay special attention to all the old problems that remained and new problems that arise out of rapid social development. She looks forward to the next panel and especially placed her hope on the new generation of scholars.

Professor Cheung Fanny Muiching briefly introduced the establishment of the gender studies program from the Chinese University of Hong Kong since 1985. Women studies were initially marginalized in the academic field due to the limitation in terms of data and literature. Along with the gradual increase of interest in women's topic and administrative support from the school, women studies were available for master students and later integrated into undergraduate courses. Cheung emphasized that women studies and gender studies are a multidimensional and interdisciplinary field of studies that requires scholars from various courses to cooperate especially when it comes to the establishment of a research institution. Besides academic achievement, Cheung also thinks highly of the social and practical value of these findings.

Inspired by the panel, Cheung also underscored the idea that urban studies should be

conducted through the women's perspective as well since issues like urban security, city planning, and community development will affect the benefit of women as a whole. In response to Cheung, Professor Ye Delan from Taiwan University also mention Taipei as an example in which the women have outnumbered men in terms of population. Cases like this make women's perspective even more significant in urban studies.

Besides introducing the public-private partnership of gender studies and practice in Taiwan, Professor Ye also mentioned the adoption of scientific methods and the use of big data in demographic and gender research in Taiwan university. To Professor Li Mingshun from China Women's College, science and technology is not a method but rather a foundation in humanities and social science. He also suggested the integration of journalism and women studies since both require an interdisciplinary approach.

Associate Professor Kim Miran from Anglican University (Republic of Korea), in her fluent Chinese, shared her experience of Chinese women's liberation study after 1949. Professor Shen Jie from Japan Women's University, on her part, introduce the rapid development of women studies in Japan especially after the Fourth World Conference on Women took place in Beijing in 1995. Reflecting on her experience changing her course's title from "Women and welfare" to "Gender and welfare", she indicates the importance of conducting comprehensive studies that focus not only on women's issue but gender as a whole.

Professor Zuo Jiping from St. Cloud State University, through sharing her experience of graduate studies in the U.S. and later fieldwork in rural China, indicates the variety of women's experiences around the world as well as people's view towards gender equality. Zuo asserts that people from different cultural and social backgrounds have their ways of picturing and understanding gender equality which deserve equal respect and attention.

While researcher Wu Xiaoying from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences does not find much progress in gender studies in China, researcher Du Jie from Women's Studies Institute of China, remains optimistic about the young generation of scholars in Chinese universities regarding the quality and quantity of research produced in recent years. Professor Lu Jiehua from the department of sociology of Peking university highly advocated the opening of women's studies since the undergraduate period. From the same department with professor Lu, professor Tong Xin

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from Peking University proudly asserts that 80% of students graduate women's studies of the department have continued to work in the field. This has more or less echoed with what Peng Peiyun has entrusted to the young generation that will carry on the work of previous scholars.