

Article

Teaching Gender and Culture: A Historical and Pedagogical Inquiry into Gender and Development in Philippine Education

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Abstract

This study explored the perspectives and experiences of educators and students regarding the challenges and opportunities of teaching gender and culture within the framework of Philippine education. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and document analysis at the Technological University of the Philippines. The findings revealed that while gender and development (GAD) principles are recognized in educational policies, their integration into the curriculum, teaching strategies, and learning materials remains inconsistent and superficial. Educators expressed a lack of institutional support, standardized teaching resources and training opportunities, which hinder meaningful implementation of gender-responsive education. Students, on the other hand, observed that discussions on gender and culture are often presented in passing and without depth, limiting their impact on developing critical awareness. The study also uncovered cultural resistance, particularly among learners, rooted in traditional and religious beliefs that challenge more inclusive gender perspectives. Despite these barriers, both educators and students acknowledged the transformative potential of integrating gender and culture into the learning process. When approached with sensitivity and relevance, these discussions foster critical thinking, cultural pride and greater empathy among students. The results affirm that teaching gender and culture can be empowering, but it requires sustained institutional commitment, well-trained educators and culturally grounded pedagogical practices. The study concludes by emphasizing the need for a comprehensive, values-transformative approach to gender and culture education, one that moves beyond compliance with policy and instead fosters inclusivity, equity and social consciousness within Philippine classrooms.

Keywords: culture, gender, gender and development, pedagogical inquiry

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Introduction

In recent decades, the integration of gender and development (GAD) into educational frameworks has become a pressing concern for both national and international institutions. As a country committed to various global gender equality initiatives, the Philippines has made strides in promoting gender-responsive policies, including the institutionalization of GAD programs in higher education, curriculum reforms, and inclusive pedagogies (Philippine Commission on Women [PCW], 2016; Commission on Higher Education [CHED], 2020). However, despite such advancements, deeply rooted socio-cultural norms and historical narratives influence how gender and culture are taught, learned, and perceived within Philippine educational institutions.

Education is a powerful vehicle for shaping ideologies and social identities, making it a crucial site for interrogating how gender and cultural norms are constructed, reinforced, or challenged. Scholars argue that the classroom is not a neutral space but a culturally contested site where knowledge is mediated by historical memory and societal values (Apple, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1995). In the Philippine context, the legacy of colonialism, religious influence, and patriarchal traditions has significantly impacted gender representations in textbooks, teaching strategies, and curricular content (Torres, 2011; David, 2014). While gender equality is formally recognized in educational policy, the actual classroom experience often reflects a gap between policy intent and pedagogical practice.

Moreover, teaching culture and gender are deeply interconnected. Cultural education, often through literature, history, and values, carries gendered expectations and societal roles. However, when culture is taught uncritically, it risks perpetuating stereotypes and reinforcing inequalities (Reyes, 2019). On the other hand, gender-responsive pedagogy provides an opportunity to interrogate these norms and empower students to challenge discrimination and embrace diversity. Studies have shown that when educators are equipped with gender-sensitive and culturally grounded teaching strategies, they contribute to more inclusive, equitable, and critically aware learning environments (Subrahmanian, 2005; UNESCO, 2022).

Despite increasing interest in gender and cultural studies in education, there remains a gap in localized, interdisciplinary research that explores how these concepts are historically embedded and pedagogically enacted in Philippine classrooms. While existing literature has examined GAD policies, curriculum reforms, or gender in textbooks (Bautista, 2015; Alampay & Jopson, 2020), fewer studies have holistically addressed how educators and institutions teach gender and culture as interwoven domains. This study seeks to fill this gap by critically examining the historical

foundations and pedagogical practices related to gender and development within Philippine education.

By exploring how gender and culture are conceptualized, represented, and taught, this research aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on equity and inclusivity in education. It asserts the importance of reimagining pedagogies that are historically aware, culturally responsive, and committed to the transformative goals of gender and development.

Research Question

1. How have historical narratives and cultural representations in Philippine education shaped perceptions of gender roles and identities across different academic levels?
2. In what ways are gender and development concepts integrated into the curriculum, teaching strategies, and learning materials in selected Philippine educational institutions?
3. What are the perspectives and experiences of educators and students regarding the challenges and opportunities of teaching gender and culture within the framework of Philippine education?

Research Methods

This study employed a qualitative research design, specifically utilizing a phenomenological approach to explore educators' and students' experiences and perceptions regarding integrating gender and culture in Philippine education. The study venue was the Technological University of the Philippines (TUP), a state university emphasizing engineering and technology programs. TUP provided a meaningful context for the investigation, representing the challenges and possibilities of embedding gender and cultural discourses within traditionally male-dominated academic spaces.

Data was gathered through semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Participants included fifteen educators and ten senior-level students from various colleges within TUP. They were purposefully selected based on their academic engagement with gender, history, values education, and Filipino cultural instruction. Interviews focused on capturing their experiences and reflections on how gender and

culture were addressed and interpreted within the classroom and their views on institutional practices related to gender and development.

In addition to interviews, relevant institutional documents such as course syllabi, teaching modules, and instructional materials were collected and reviewed to examine how gender and cultural themes were framed within academic content. Thematic analysis was used to interpret both interview transcripts and textual data, enabling the identification of patterns and themes that illuminated the intersections of gender, culture, and pedagogy in the university setting.

Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the research process. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and gave written consent before the interviews were conducted. Confidentiality was maintained, and participants were allowed to withdraw at any time. Triangulation was employed to ensure credibility and depth by comparing interview data with findings from the document analysis. This methodology comprehensively understood how gender and culture were historically and pedagogically negotiated within a Philippine higher education institution.

Data Analysis and Findings

Historical narratives and cultural representations in Philippine education shaped perceptions of gender roles and identities across academic levels.

The findings of this study reveal that historical narratives and cultural representations embedded in Philippine education continue to shape and reinforce traditional gender roles and identities across academic levels. Despite national efforts to institutionalize gender and development (GAD) in the curriculum, many educational materials and classroom practices still reflect colonial and patriarchal values, portraying men as heroic figures and leaders. At the same time, women are often depicted in domestic or supportive roles. Participants, particularly educators, noted that textbooks and literary texts from elementary to college seldom provide balanced or empowering representations of women. On the other hand, students expressed that repeated exposure to such portrayals has influenced their understanding of what is expected of them based on gender. Furthermore, while some tertiary institutions have begun integrating gender-sensitive content, its implementation remains inconsistent, especially in basic education, where gender issues are often superficially addressed or overlooked altogether. These findings underscore the persistent gap between gender equality policies and classroom

realities, pointing to the urgent need for more inclusive, historically aware, and critically grounded pedagogical approaches in the Philippine educational system.

Colonial and Religious Legacies Reinforcing Traditional Gender Roles

Across academic levels, historical narratives in Philippine education have long been influenced by colonial and religious frameworks that portray women primarily as nurturers and men as protectors or providers. Spanish colonial education, for instance, introduced Marian models of femininity, emphasizing modesty, obedience, and motherhood, while valorizing male heroes as revolutionaries, leaders, and warriors. These portrayals have become embedded in textbooks and classroom discourse, subtly reinforcing binary gender expectations.

Participant Response 9:

“Even in tertiary textbooks, male figures like Rizal and Bonifacio dominate the historical narrative, while women like Gabriela Silang are often discussed briefly, and usually in the context of being a wife or widow.”

Participant Response 5:

“We always talk about heroes who are men, and women are usually just the ones taking care of children or helping the men. It makes you think that history belonged to men.”

These responses confirm that education continues to reflect colonial-era gender biases that shape learners’ perceptions of what men and women can or should be. This representation naturalizes unequal gender roles and limits the imagination of students, especially females, regarding their potential societal roles. As supported by Torres (2011) and David (2014), these gendered historical lenses marginalize female contributions and reinforce patriarchal norms.

Cultural Content in Curriculum Perpetuating Gender Stereotypes

Cultural representations in Filipino literature, values education, and MAPEH (Music, Arts, PE, and Health) often reproduce stereotypical roles, portraying women as submissive homemakers and men as strong, decisive leaders. These depictions

persist from elementary to college levels and affect how students internalize gender roles in everyday contexts.

Participant Response 6:

“Traditional Filipino stories still taught today portray men as wise problem-solvers and women as emotional and dependent. Students tend to absorb these values without critical thinking.”

Participant Response 5:

“I remember reading stories in elementary where girls were always sacrificing or staying home while the boys were being brave. I think it affects how we see our roles even now in college.”

These insights illustrate how cultural content, when not critically examined, contributes to the internalization of restrictive gender identities. Even as institutions claim to promote gender equality, unexamined curriculum content often contradicts these goals. This aligns with Reyes (2019), who notes that values education and literary materials in the Philippines often romanticize traditional gender norms, further influencing student beliefs from a young age.

Inconsistent Integration of Gender-Fair Education Across Levels

While gender and development (GAD) frameworks are mandated in Philippine education, their implementation remains inconsistent across academic levels. Some tertiary institutions have begun integrating gender-fair content. However, in many basic education classrooms, gender issues are either sidelined or treated superficially, leading to uneven understanding of gender equality among students.

Participant Response 2:

“We have updated our general education curriculum to be more gender-sensitive, but when I observe high school content, the same old narratives and gender binaries are still there.”

Participant Response 10:

“There is a GAD mandate, but without proper training and resources, it is hard to integrate gender concepts meaningfully in my lessons.”

These statements reveal that institutional efforts to introduce gender-responsive education are unevenly executed, often depending on the level of faculty training and institutional support. While higher education institutions may have policies, implementation gaps at the basic education level continue to hinder comprehensive gender education. As supported by Bautista (2015) and CHED (2020), gender mainstreaming in Philippine education requires more than policy; it demands

sustained curricular reform, teacher capacity-building, and inclusive instructional materials.

Historical narratives and cultural representations in Philippine education continue to shape gender role perceptions through the persistence of colonial influences, stereotypical depictions, and uneven implementation of gender-fair education. From early education to the tertiary level, these embedded narratives condition students to internalize restrictive gender identities, unless actively challenged by educators and institutional reforms. Addressing these systemic issues is essential for cultivating a genuinely inclusive and transformative educational environment.

Gender and development concepts integrated into the curriculum

The study results revealed that while gender and development (GAD) principles are formally mandated in Philippine educational institutions, their integration into the curriculum, teaching strategies, and learning materials remains inconsistent and often superficial. Although some universities and high schools have begun incorporating gender-sensitive topics, these are usually limited to general education subjects and rely heavily on the initiative of individual educators rather than a systematic institutional effort. Teaching strategies that promote gender inclusivity, such as using gender-neutral language and challenging stereotypical roles, are often observed only in humanities and social science subjects, with limited application in male-dominated fields such as engineering or technology. Furthermore, instructional materials continue to reflect gender bias, with many textbooks and learning modules portraying men as active leaders and women in passive or domestic roles. These findings highlight a persistent gap between policy intentions and classroom realities, underscoring the need for a more structured and comprehensive approach to embedding gender and development in all levels of the Philippine educational system.

Limited but Emerging Integration of Gender Concepts in the Curriculum

While gender and development (GAD) policies are present at the institutional level, integration into the formal curriculum remains uneven and often superficial. Most institutions embed GAD topics under general education subjects such as values

education, social science, or Philippine history, rather than developing dedicated courses on gender studies.

Participant Response 1 (College Instructor, Social Science):

"Gender is usually mentioned in passing, maybe one topic under a broader subject. There is no standalone course unless the program is in sociology or education."

Participant Response 2 (Senior High School Teacher):

"We are expected to include gender topics, but no clear curriculum guide exists. It is more of a teacher initiative than a systematized effort."

These responses reflect that while policy mandates exist (CHED, 2020), curriculum implementation depends on teacher discretion, subject area relevance, and institutional commitment. The absence of structured modules or subject-specific GAD integration limits consistent exposure for students. This aligns with Bautista (2015), who emphasizes that gender mainstreaming in Philippine higher education is often symbolic rather than transformative unless explicitly embedded across disciplines.

Gender Sensitivity in Teaching Strategies Relies Heavily on Teacher Initiative

Teaching strategies that promote gender equality are primarily dependent on the teacher's training, awareness, and commitment to inclusive education. Some educators incorporate gender-sensitive practices, such as using gender-neutral language, challenging stereotypes, and ensuring equitable participation, but these efforts are not uniformly applied across institutions.

Participant Response 1 (Values Education Teacher, Junior High):

"I avoid reinforcing gender roles during group work or class examples. I always remind my students that leadership, kindness, and strength are not gender specific."

Participant Response 2 (College Faculty, Engineering):

"Honestly, it is not part of our teaching strategy. We focus more on technical content, and gender issues rarely arise."

The findings show that while some educators are mindful of gender fairness in their pedagogy, many still lack the training or support to implement such strategies, especially in male-dominated programs. This creates disparities in student experiences, with gender awareness emphasized more in humanities and social sciences than in technical or STEM-related fields. As Subrahmanian (2005) points out,

sustainable gender integration in pedagogy requires institutional investment in teacher capacity-building, not just policy declarations.

Instructional Materials Remain Gender-Biased Despite Policy Mandates

Learning materials such as textbooks, modules, and assessment tools often continue to portray traditional gender roles. Although there have been efforts to revise materials, many institutions still use outdated or unexamined content that subtly reinforces stereotypes.

Participant Response 4 (Textbook Evaluator, Curriculum Office):

"We try to screen materials for gender bias, but many old textbooks are still in use, especially in public schools. Representation is often male dominated."

Participant Response 13 (Senior High Student):

"In our MAPEH book, girls are always shown dancing or doing household chores, while boys play sports or fix things. It feels unfair."

These observations highlight the gap between policy and practice. While gender sensitivity in instructional materials is mandated by the Philippine Commission on Women and the Department of Education, actual classroom resources often lag. Without regular content review and teacher feedback mechanisms, textbooks and visuals continue to convey implicit messages about gender norms. Reyes (2019) emphasizes that inclusive education must involve pedagogy and the critical examination of what is being taught and how it is visually and linguistically represented.

Gender and development concepts are present in Philippine educational institutions. However, their integration across the curriculum, teaching strategies, and learning materials remains fragmented and largely dependent on individual teacher initiative and institutional commitment. While policy frameworks exist to support gender mainstreaming, the lack of consistent implementation, teacher training, and updated learning resources limits the transformative potential of GAD in education. Strengthening institutional support, investing in teacher professional development, and revising instructional content are necessary steps toward meaningful gender inclusion in the Philippine educational system.

Perspectives and experiences of educators and students

Understanding the perspectives and experiences of educators and students is vital in assessing how gender and culture are taught within the Philippine educational system. While educational institutions have formally adopted gender and development (GAD) frameworks, their implementation remains uneven, revealing

challenges and opportunities in classroom practice. Educators often struggle with limited institutional support, a lack of gender-responsive training, and cultural resistance rooted in religious and traditional beliefs. Similarly, students may experience discomfort or confusion when confronted with topics challenging normative gender roles or cultural expectations. Despite these obstacles, both groups recognize the transformative potential of integrating gender and culture into the curriculum. Meaningful discussions on these issues have promoted critical thinking, self-awareness, and inclusivity, empowering students to reflect on social norms and advocate for equality. By exploring these lived experiences, this study sheds light on the complex realities of teaching gender and culture in Philippine education, revealing the urgent need for more comprehensive, context-sensitive, and empowering pedagogical approaches.

Limited Institutional Support and Uneven Implementation of Gender Education

Educators expressed that while gender and culture are recognized in policy documents and national mandates, the support for implementation at the school or university level remains weak. Many cited the lack of training, clear guidelines, and institutional commitment as significant barriers to effectively integrating gender and culture in their teaching practice.

Participant Response 1 (College Instructor, Social Science):

"Gender is part of our curriculum in theory, but minimal institutional push exists. We often do not have teaching materials or seminars to support this content."

Participant Response 2 (Public School Teacher, Senior High):

"Most of us want to teach gender and cultural sensitivity, but it is hard without proper modules or administrative encouragement. It feels optional rather than essential."

These responses reveal that policy alone is insufficient without actionable institutional mechanisms. The Department of Education and CHED have mandated GAD integration (CHED, 2020), but implementation varies widely, particularly in public schools with limited resources. The lack of institutional infrastructure, such as training, evaluation systems, and budget allocation, prevents consistent delivery of gender-responsive education. This mirrors findings from Bautista (2015), who emphasized that gender initiatives often remain symbolic without concrete institutional investment.

Cultural Tensions and Resistance in Classroom Settings

Both educators and students encountered cultural resistance when addressing gender-related topics, especially those that challenge traditional norms. Deep-seated

beliefs rooted in religion, patriarchy, and family values often lead to discomfort or disengagement when sensitive issues like gender identity, LGBTQ+ inclusion, or feminist perspectives are introduced.

Participant Response 1 (Student, College of Education):

"In one class, our teacher discussed gender diversity, and a few students reacted negatively. Some argued from a religious standpoint, saying it was wrong."

Participant Response 2 (High School Teacher):

"Even when I use gender-fair language or examples, some students laugh or make side comments. You can sense the resistance; sometimes it is cultural, and sometimes it is ignorance."

These perspectives underscore the cultural tensions in teaching gender and culture, where educational efforts confront long-standing societal values. The Philippine context, predominantly Catholic and traditionally patriarchal, creates friction between progressive gender education and conservative cultural norms. Smith (2012) and Reyes (2019) argue that the classroom is a contested space where pedagogy must navigate structural and cultural barriers. This resistance presents a significant challenge to achieving transformative gender education.

Opportunities for Critical Engagement and Empowerment

Despite the challenges, educators and students identified significant opportunities for fostering critical thinking, empowerment, and inclusivity through gender and cultural education. When implemented meaningfully, these topics promote student engagement, broaden perspectives, and contribute to personal and collective growth.

Participant Response 1 (Faculty, General Education Program):

"I have seen how discussions on gender roles open students' minds. They begin to reflect on their biases, and some even bring the discussion home."

Participant Response 2 (Student, Senior High School):

"When we talked about gender equality and Filipino women in history, I felt proud. It made me realize we also have a voice, that culture is not just about traditions, but also about change."

These responses reflect the transformative potential of gender and culture education when approached with sensitivity and relevance. Students become more critically aware of inequality, and educators find it fulfilling to witness intellectual and emotional growth in their learners. This supports Ladson-Billings' (1995) framework on culturally relevant pedagogy, which asserts that education must affirm students' cultural identities while equipping them to challenge social inequities. When well-

supported, gender and culture education can be a powerful platform for empowerment and inclusivity in the Philippine context.

The perspectives and experiences of educators and students reveal a complex interplay of institutional gaps, cultural resistance, and transformative potential in teaching gender and culture within Philippine education. While integration remains inconsistent and challenged by socio-cultural beliefs, meaningful opportunities exist to foster critical consciousness and inclusivity through gender-responsive and culturally grounded pedagogy. Sustained institutional support, inclusive teacher training, and culturally sensitive curriculum development are essential to overcome resistance and fully realize the potential of gender and cultural education.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study reveal a multifaceted view of how gender and culture are negotiated within the Philippine educational system. While educators and students recognize the value of teaching gender and cultural sensitivity, their experiences are shaped by institutional constraints, socio-cultural resistance, and varying levels of support. These findings reflect the broader tensions between policy intentions and actual classroom practices in implementing gender and development (GAD) education.

One of the primary challenges identified by educators was the lack of institutional support and resources, including the absence of standardized gender-responsive teaching materials and limited training opportunities. This gap often leaves teachers to rely on personal initiative to integrate GAD concepts into their teaching, resulting in inconsistent implementation. These findings echo Bautista's (2015) observation that gender mainstreaming in Philippine education remains largely symbolic unless structural and policy-level reforms support it. CHED (2020) has issued guidelines on GAD integration, but without mechanisms for training, monitoring, and curriculum revision, its impact is limited to institutions with already-progressive leadership and faculty initiative.

Another significant finding centers on cultural resistance, shaping how gender-related topics are received in classrooms. Both educators and students reported discomfort or opposition when addressing sensitive issues such as gender identity, feminism, and LGBTQ+ inclusion. This resistance is rooted in traditional Filipino values influenced by religion and patriarchy, which often frame gender roles in rigid and binary terms. Smith (2012) and Reyes (2019) argue that educational spaces are not neutral but are shaped by dominant ideologies that may resist progressive and inclusive discourses. In the Philippine context, the intersection of religion and

education poses a significant barrier to transformative gender pedagogy, particularly in more conservative communities and institutions.

Despite these challenges, the study also highlights significant opportunities for empowerment and critical engagement. Educators noted that when gender and culture are taught in meaningful and context-relevant ways, students show increased interest, participation, and personal reflection. Students, in turn, expressed that such discussions helped them become more aware of gender inequality and cultural diversity, and encouraged them to question discriminatory norms. These insights support Ladson-Billings' (1995) theory of culturally relevant pedagogy, which emphasizes the importance of affirming students' cultural identities while equipping them with the critical tools to navigate and transform social structures.

Moreover, integrating gender and culture opens interdisciplinary learning and social justice education opportunities. When teaching strategies are inclusive and reflective of real-world contexts, they can foster empathy, equity, and civic responsibility among students. As Subrahmanian (2005) notes, gender equality in education is not merely about access but about transforming educational content and pedagogies to promote more inclusive and equitable outcomes.

In conclusion, the perspectives of educators and students in this study illuminate the systemic limitations and the pedagogical possibilities of teaching gender and culture in Philippine education. While policy frameworks for GAD are in place, their practical implementation requires more than compliance; it demands institutional commitment, teacher empowerment, and culturally grounded curriculum development. The findings emphasize the need for education to serve as a transformative space that reflects and challenges existing social inequalities.

Conclusion

The findings of this study underscore the complex realities educators and students face in teaching and learning about gender and culture within the Philippine educational framework. While national policies such as the CHED GAD guidelines promote gender sensitivity in education, actual implementation remains fragmented and largely dependent on institutional initiative and individual educator commitment. The lack of standardized teaching materials, limited professional development opportunities, and insufficient administrative support hinder the systematic integration of gender and development (GAD) concepts across academic levels.

Cultural resistance further complicates the teaching of gender and culture, as many educators and students grapple with societal norms deeply rooted in religious conservatism and traditional Filipino values. These cultural tensions often manifest in

classroom discomfort or opposition when sensitive gender issues, particularly those related to feminism, gender identity, and LGBTQ+ inclusion, are introduced. Such resistance highlights the urgent need for context-sensitive, values-transformative pedagogical approaches that do not simply insert gender into the curriculum but actively interrogate existing biases and challenge entrenched stereotypes.

Despite these barriers, the study also revealed significant opportunities for empowerment and critical engagement when gender and culture are meaningfully integrated into the curriculum. Educators observed that students respond positively to inclusive, culturally relevant discussions that affirm their identities while fostering awareness of social inequalities. These moments of engagement demonstrate the transformative potential of education when it becomes a space for reflection, resistance, and the reimagining of social roles.

In conclusion, while there are clear structural and cultural challenges to teaching gender and culture in Philippine education, there is also a strong foundation for progress. Realizing this potential requires more than policy; it demands a genuine commitment to teacher training, inclusive curriculum development, and institutional support. Only then can Philippine education fulfill its role not only in promoting gender equality but in shaping a more inclusive, critically aware, and socially just society.

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