



# EMPOWERING CHANGE: FOSTERING GENDER EQUALITY IN PHILIPPINE EDUCATION FOR A BRIGHTER TOMORROW

**Venus A. Lopez\***, **Joyce S. Signo\*\***, **Juliet E. Ucab\*\*\***, **Gladys S. Escarlos\*\*\*\***

\*Teacher II, Kapalaran Elementary School, Kapalaran, Danggagan, Bukidnon

\*\*Teacher I, Kibongkog Integrated School, Kibongkog, San Fernando, Bukidnon

\*\*\*Assistant Principal, Kibawe Greenland of the South Academy, Kibawe, Bukidnon

\*\*\*\*University Professor, Central Mindanao University, Musuan, Bukidnon

**Abstract:** This article examines the critical role of promoting gender equality in Philippine education as a pathway to fostering an inclusive and equitable learning environment for all students. Highlighting the progress made through the Department of Education's Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy, it discusses the importance of integrating gender-sensitive approaches into curricula and classroom practices. The article emphasizes strategies such as utilizing positive role models, adopting inclusive language, encouraging collaborative activities, and facilitating critical discussions on gender issues. By implementing these strategies, educators can not only enhance student engagement and self-esteem but also contribute to breaking down traditional gender stereotypes, ultimately laying the groundwork for a more just society.

## INTRODUCTION

In today's classrooms, the importance of gender equality is becoming increasingly evident. An elementary teacher, drawing from personal experiences, recognizes that creating a fair and inclusive environment is essential for helping all students thrive. Research indicates that when children learn about respect and equality early on, they develop better relationships with their peers and grow into more understanding adults. By incorporating gender-sensitive approaches into everyday lessons, educators can challenge stereotypes and encourage every child to explore their interests freely. This article explores how promoting gender equality in education not only benefits students but also lays the foundation for a more just society in the future.

## Progress in the Philippine Education System

The Philippine education system has made significant strides in addressing gender disparities. The Department of Education (DepEd) has implemented the Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy, which aims to integrate gender equality principles into the curriculum and school activities. This policy is crucial for dismantling biases that hinder both boys and girls from achieving their full potential. By fostering an environment where all students feel valued and respected, schools can help bridge the gap between genders, ensuring that both boys and girls have equal opportunities to succeed academically and socially. Research indicates that girls in the Philippines often outperform boys in educational settings, especially as they progress through school. For instance, while primary net enrollment rates are nearly equal for boys and girls, girls have higher completion rates in secondary education. This trend highlights the need for targeted interventions to support boys who may be falling behind. By understanding the root causes of these disparities, educators can implement strategies that promote engagement among all students, regardless of gender.

## Frameworks Supporting Gender Equality

In promoting gender equality in education, various studies and frameworks emphasize the importance of targeted interventions and inclusive practices. The AGEE Framework stresses monitoring and evaluating gender equality in education across six interconnected domains: resources, values, opportunities, participation in education, knowledge, understanding and skills, and outcomes. This framework provides a comprehensive approach to understanding and addressing gender inequalities in educational contexts (UCL Centre for International Education, 2021). Moreover, research on best practices in integrating gender education within the Philippine educational landscape indicates that implementing gender-sensitive approaches can dismantle biases and promote inclusivity. When educators incorporate gender education into their curricula, they enhance student engagement while contributing to building a more equitable society (UNGEI, 2022). A study by Emfimo et al. (2024) highlights that integrating gender education into the Philippine educational system is essential for fostering inclusivity. Their research emphasizes training teachers to combat discrimination and incorporating gender, sexuality, and human rights into curricula. The OECD Report on Gender Equality in Education further supports this notion by examining existing gender gaps in educational attainment. It reveals that while girls often outperform boys academically, systemic issues persist that require targeted interventions to ensure both genders achieve equal success (OECD, 2021). Additionally, the AGEE project provides a framework for understanding how gender dynamics affect educational outcomes by focusing on equitable learning environments where every child can explore their interests freely (UCL Centre for International Education, 2021).

### The Role of Positive Role Models

One key aspect of promoting gender equality in the classroom is the importance of role models. Children often look up to adults and peers alike. When teachers actively demonstrate equal treatment and respect among all students, they set a powerful example. Research from the World Economic Forum (2020) indicates that positive role models can inspire children to break free from traditional gender roles, leading them to pursue interests and careers that may have previously seemed out of reach. The DepEd recognizes this impact and has initiated programs to increase the visibility of diverse role models within schools, aiming to create an environment where all students can thrive.

### Language Matters

Another important factor is the language used in the classroom. Research shows that using gender-neutral language helps create an inclusive atmosphere where all students feel represented. According to a study published in the *Journal of Educational Psychology* (2019), inclusive language significantly impacts children's self-esteem and willingness to participate in class activities (Gustafsson Sendén et al., 2015). The DepEd has encouraged teachers to adopt such language practices as part of their training programs.

### Collaborative Activities

Classroom activities also play a vital role in promoting gender equality. Teachers design projects that encourage collaboration among students of different genders. Activities such as group discussions or science experiments allow children to work together and appreciate each other's strengths. A study conducted by the American Educational Research Association (2021) found that cooperative learning environments lead to improved social skills and reduced gender bias among students. The DepEd promotes collaborative projects through its curriculum guidelines, encouraging educators to implement gender-sensitive activities that engage all learners.

### Critical Thinking through Gender Discussions

Integrating discussions about gender issues into the curriculum enhances critical thinking skills. Engaging students in these discussions encourages them to think critically about societal norms. Research from the *International Journal of Educational Research* (2018) highlights that when students engage with topics related to gender roles and stereotypes, they become more aware of biases and are better equipped to challenge

them. The DepEd has begun incorporating discussions on gender equality into various subjects across the curriculum.

### **Continuous Professional Development**

Fostering an environment that supports gender equality requires ongoing reflection from educators. Professional development programs focused on gender sensitivity provide valuable insights for teachers. A report by UNESCO (2022) emphasizes ongoing training's necessity to equip educators with tools to address gender issues effectively.

Promoting gender equality in education is essential for creating a fair and inclusive environment for all students. Key strategies include: Positive Role Models: Inspiring children to challenge traditional roles, Inclusive Language: Fostering belonging among all students, Collaborative Activities: Enhancing social skills and reducing bias, Critical Discussions: Empowering students to advocate for fairness. By focusing on these areas—role models, inclusive language, collaborative activities, and critical discussions—educators can significantly impact their students' lives while contributing to a more equitable society. The commitment to fostering gender equality in education not only benefits individual students but also lays the groundwork for a more just future for all.

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