

Pedagogies of Presence: Gender, Education, and Inclusion

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In the Philippines, the metaphor of *lukad* holds deep cultural resonance. It refers both to the process of copra-making—an intricate, patient, and layered form of livelihood—and the product of that process. The journal *Lukad*, published by the Philippine Normal University South Luzon, draws inspiration from this duality. Since its conception, it has served as a vessel for pedagogical conversations, and a site where process and outcome are rendered equipollent, or equal in value. *Lukad* champions a vision of education that is decentralized, decolonized, and democratized—situating pedagogy within indigenous knowledge, livelihoods, industries, and innovations (De Vera, 2021; Simat, 2022). Anchoring on these, the present special issue, themed Gender and Inclusive Education (or the intersections among gender, education, and inclusion), seeks to add texture to our collective understanding of pedagogical work as an unfolding process. Furthermore, in response to the pressing challenges of gender equality, diversity/disability, and social inclusion (GEDSI), this special issue invites a critical reexamination of pedagogies, a rethinking of prevailing norms and practices, and the advancing of GEDSI in education.

Gender, education, and inclusion intersect in crucial ways. While education is often seen as a pathway to equality, systemic inequities persist, many of which are grounded in gendered power relations. According to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2020), girls and LGBTQIA+ learners still face multiple barriers to educational access and success, compounded by perilous gender norms, discriminatory policies, and a lack of a genuine inclusive curricula.

The triadic theme of this special issue—gender, education, and inclusion—constitutes a critical axis upon which the philosophy and praxis of transformative education must revolve. These concepts are additive or tangential to educational discourse. These likewise pose to be foundational to constructing a pedagogy that is emancipatory, democratic, and justice-oriented. The intersection of gender, education, and inclusion necessitates a continuous interrogation of how structural inequities are reproduced in classrooms, curricula, policies, and pedagogical relations. As bell hooks (1994) emphasized, teaching is never a neutral act—it is a political and ethical commitment to equity and the dismantling of oppression. To optimize education as a site of liberation, our engagements must go beyond access and representation and delve into the very logics that produce exclusion. In the Philippine context, where cultural, economic, and institutional disparities intersect, the call to revisit educational paradigms becomes even more urgent.

A persistent dimension of gender inequality within education is the presence of misogyny—explicit or insidious—within institutional cultures, curricular content, and pedagogical practices. We still see women being underrepresented in knowledge production, often relegated to the margins of disciplines or rendered invisible altogether.

The Philippine Government’s Gender and Development (GAD) approach responds to this asymmetry in education manifested by, among others, the issuances from the Department of Education (DepEd) and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). The DepEd Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy through DepEd Order No. 32, s. 2017 provides policy frameworks to bridge the gender gaps. Through this policy, the DepEd commits to gender equality through gender-responsive basic education to holistically develop Filipinos with access to quality, culture-based basic education, in a learner-friendly, safe, and nurturing environment (DepEd, 2017).

On the other hand, the CHED Memorandum Order (CMO) No. 01, series of 2015 serves as another reference in strengthening gender mainstreaming and promoting inclusivity in higher education. This policy establishes the institutionalization of GAD programs in both CHED and higher education institutions (HEIs), emphasizing the necessity of integrating gender sensitivity across all areas of academic life. It mandates, among others, the creation of GAD Focal Point Systems and encourages the review and revision of curricula to ensure the inclusion of gender-fair content, teaching methods, and learning environments. By integrating GAD into instruction, research, extension, and institutional management, this policy aligns with broader goals of inclusive education. This CMO reiterates gender responsiveness in education and reinforces the responsibility of HEIs to challenge gender biases and ensure equitable access to learning opportunities for all, particularly those marginalized by gender identity and expression (CHED, 2015).

Education, in its idealized form, is society’s most potential tool for shaping the future. It is through education that values are instilled, identities are shaped, and collective imaginations are formed. However, when education is blind to systemic injustice or is co-opted by exclusionary practices, it risks perpetuating the very inequalities it purports to eliminate. A transformative educational paradigm must therefore transcend rote learning or the passive transmission of knowledge. It must cultivate critical consciousness (Freire, 1970), nurture ethical reasoning, and empower learners to interrogate and transform their social worlds. In doing so, it becomes a praxis—an informed, reflective, and intentional act of shaping a more just society. This issue affirms that education is both a human right and a collective moral responsibility.

Inclusion, finally, must not be misconstrued as mere integration or accommodation. True inclusion is radical—it demands the dismantling of hierarchical structures that privilege certain identities while marginalizing others. Inclusion necessitates that diversity—of gender,

sexuality, ability, age, ethnicity, and thought—is not simply tolerated, but celebrated and embedded within every facet of the educational process. As Subrahmanian (2005) cautions, tokenistic approaches that reduce gender and inclusion to symbolic gestures or compliance checklists ultimately reinforce marginalization. Tokenism devalues the complexity of social identity and masks the absence of deep structural reform. Thus, the goal is not to "add" inclusivity into pre existing paradigms, but to reimagine educational systems from the ground up—systems rooted in equity, compassion, and mutual recognition.

Be that as it may, the integration of gender perspectives and inclusivity approaches remains a challenge across curricula, courses, instructional materials, and teaching strategies. This current issue aims to contribute to the evolving discourse on gender, education, and inclusion, presenting insights on how institutions can move beyond surface-level interventions towards genuine equality and inclusivity.

The eight articles in this issue challenge readers, especially the educators to move beyond tokenistic approaches to inclusivity. Each one invites a rethinking of traditional pedagogical assumptions—whether philosophical, institutional, or methodological—to close the gender gap in education and peripheral social institutions. On deeper analysis, it can be surmised that the articles embody Lukad as a process of re-making educational discourse and practice.

In the lead article, Fleurdeliz A. Albela's "A Philosophical Sketch of Inclusivity in the Curriculum Guide of Good Manners and Right Conduct - Values Education in the K-10 Program of the New MATATAG Curriculum" dissects the philosophical underpinnings of inclusivity embedded (or absent) in the curriculum guide, drawing attention to the normative structures shaping Filipino values education. The paper echoes Noddings' (2013) ethics of care and Biesta's (2009) notion of subjectification, advocating for philosophy as both content and method to foster a more inclusive moral and civic education.

Following this is the paper titled "From Theory to Practice: Gert Biesta's Educational Telos in the Philippines' MATATAG Curriculum" by Rodrigo D. Abenes and Erlene Joy D. Esperancilla which examines the alignment between Biesta's educational telos and the MATATAG Curriculum. The paper affirms the curriculum's attention to Biesta's three functions of education—Qualification, Socialization, and Subjectification—but pushes further by emphasizing the need to deepen inclusivity. When learners are treated not merely as recipients of skills but as active participants in democratic life, education becomes genuinely transformative. This reinforces the critical point that inclusivity should not be a supplementary goal but a core pedagogical principle. This is corollary to the call for ensuring substantive equality to women per Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), i.e., women have equal access to opportunities, resources, and power, and that they can fully exercise their rights. Moreover, women in this context are active agents of decision-making.

The third article titled “Gender Education as Moral Education: A Curricular Ideal” which I co-authored with Bernardo N. Caslib Jr. foregrounds the ethical imperative of integrating gender education within moral education frameworks. Drawing on the works of Carol Gilligan (1982) and recent (GEDSI) models, we illustrate how a curriculum that promotes gender sensitivity and inclusive language helps build critical consciousness hence, develop someone to become a better human. This article is an articulation of the transformative power of curriculum in shaping moral citizens committed, among others, towards equity, diversity, and inclusivity. The feminist ethics perspective is put forward as a perceived intervention in addressing the gender gap in philosophy curriculum. A gender lens is imperative in achieving gender-responsiveness in philosophy, a discipline that has long been established to be male-dominated.

Extending this idea, “Queering the Gap: Embracing a Queer-Inclusive Learning Process in Teaching Philosophy” by Graciela L. Apolo, Samantha B. Cancino, Nikky S. Garo, Marvin Paul G. Ludovico, and Lambert Jason L. Reyna calls for the active deconstruction of heteronormativity in teaching philosophy. Using queer theory as a pedagogical lens (Jagose, 1996; Sedgwick, 1990), the authors advocate for inclusive pronouns, collective writing voice, and the inclusion of feminist and queer narratives in the curriculum. Their work challenges the patriarchal canon of philosophy and offers practical strategies for making classrooms affirming spaces for LGBTQIA+ students and educators alike. Such practices are crucial in reversing the cancellation of queer perspectives in education, as documented in local studies cited by the authors.

From philosophical discourses to professional programs, Mary Pauline V. Saquing-Sellers’ “Nursing Future Nurses: Equipping a Gender-Responsive Workforce” interrogates how gender stereotypes in nursing limit inclusivity. This perspective shows a different lens of a profession that is female-dominated. The author shows how this likewise impacts the norms and narratives in the discipline such as the stereotypes these create among males in the nursing field. By integrating gender-responsive curriculum policies and mentorship programs, nursing education can diversify its workforce and, as it were, improve patient care. Saquing-Sellers’ insights are consistent with the findings from CHED (2020) which highlight the need for inclusive training in health professions to meet the growing diversity of patient populations.

“The Objectification of Woman in the Phenomenological Study” by Beljun P. Enaya, a critique of phenomenology surfaces a key paradox in gender scholarship. While phenomenological methods offer tools for understanding the lived experience of being a woman, they risk objectifying women by reducing them to definitional categories. Enaya argues for a reconceptualization of womanhood as grounded in agency and relational freedom rather than as an “essence” to be studied. This resonates with feminist critiques of epistemology, such as those by Beauvoir (1949/2011) and Butler (1990), who challenge essentialist frameworks in gender theory. The article serves as a philosophical prelude to

rethinking how knowledge itself can be complicit in gender objectification—a foundational concern in curriculum design.

Cyren C. Oseña's "Pangangasiwa ng Pagtuturo sa Alternatibong Sistema ng Pag-Aaral" explores the Alternative Learning System (ALS) through the lens of instructional supervision and inclusivity. Using data from Quezon province, Oseña reveals gaps in perceptions and implementation between supervisors and field implementers, particularly in promoting gender-sensitive instruction. The study's emphasis on aligning policy with practice speaks to the urgent need for gender-responsive leadership in non-formal education—a finding mirrored in UNESCO's global monitoring reports (2021).

Finally, Paul Lawrence O. Viduya's "Uncovering Heteronormativity within the Philippine Marriage Model" provides a statutory analysis of the Family Code of the Philippines, perusing how legal provisions are intrinsic of heteronormative assumptions that undermine the identities of LGBTQIA+ individuals. While not traditionally considered within pedagogy, this legal critique is deeply relevant to values education and civic learning. As learners encounter laws and policies in the classroom, educators must create space for critical examination of such normative frameworks to empower all learners. Starting in the classroom, being critical to the norms, policies, and laws, and challenging current practices entail exponential benefits in properly educating the world into becoming (more) gender-responsive and truly inclusive.

These articles underscore the need to integrate gender perspectives and inclusive approaches in education. They demonstrate that equality and inclusivity are not decorative appendages to the curriculum but are its ethical center. Across the studies, there is a collective call to revisit current practices—whether in content, instruction, or supervision—and to transform education into a site of liberation rather than reproduction of inequality.

Iterations echoed in this special issue include gender-responsive and inclusive pedagogy as the solutions to the persistent gender gap in education. By deconstructing traditional epistemologies, reforming curriculum content, and embracing diverse learner identities, we take significant steps in reimagining the future of education where pedagogies really mean presence.

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