

OPPORTUNITIES IN INTEGRATING GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT IN TLE CURRICULUM

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National efforts on gender and development (GAD) in all industries have resulted in significant strides in gender equality and empowerment in the country. Most government agencies and civil servants have developed gender-sensitive policies and started recognizing and integrating GAD agendas in their functions and processes. Most notably, in the educational sector, educators are required to learn about GAD agendas such as gender sensitivity and gender-fair language since they will be servicing clients of different sexual orientations, gender identities, and expressions (SOGIE).

Despite this, implementing gender-sensitive teaching strategies is still a problem for most educators in the country (Hernandez & Cudiamat, 2018). While some of the fault may be attributed to the teacher's own bias, most of the problem stems from the lack of GAD integration and consideration in the existing curricula—especially in subjects where stereotypical gender roles are still more likely to be perpetuated, such as Technology and Livelihood Education (TLE).

The integration and implementation of GAD agenda in the TLE curriculum of the Department of Education (DepEd) is an essential step toward promoting equality and inclusivity in the learning environment. Education plays a key role in shaping students' attitudes and perceptions about gender roles, careers, and opportunities. By including GAD principles in TLE subjects, students can develop a deeper understanding of gender issues and be encouraged to pursue their interests without bias or limitation. Moreover, it ensures that students of diverse SOGIE are given equal opportunities to learn skills that are traditionally seen as gender-specific, helping create a more equitable society.

Many students grow up believing that certain professions and skills are only suitable for men or women. For example, technical and mechanical skills are often associated with boys, while culinary and cosmetic skills are associated with girls. However, it has been shown in studies that gender has no bearing in student interests. A study by Curan (2023) revealed that gender has no statistically significant relationship to a student's interest in taking up a specific TLE competency. Thus, the only variable that explains that discrepancy in female and male-dominated competencies is gender roles and stereotypes.

Moreover, the skills learned in TLE subjects can lead to employment or entrepreneurship in a variety of fields. If traditional gender norms persist on the minds of the students, they may end up missing out on industries where they could've excelled, limiting the economic opportunities that they can explore.

Therefore, when students are educated without gender restrictions, not only will they be free to explore their interests, they can also realize their full potential in different industries. For example, a female student can excel as an electrician, while a male student is talented in tailoring. When traditional restrictions are lifted, all students have a better chance of finding a job or starting a business, leading to more economic growth and self-reliance.

In addition, integrating GAD into the TLE curriculum promotes respect and understanding among students. Learning gender sensitivity helps students to appreciate diversity and recognize the value of different contributions, regardless of gender. This promotes teamwork and cooperation at school and in the workplace. When students understand that everyone has the same rights and opportunities, they become more open and respectful of others, reducing discrimination and inequality in society.

It also helps prepare students for the modern job market. As society evolves, workplaces and industries are becoming more inclusive. Employers now place more emphasis on skills and competencies than gender. Students that are educated in a gender-inclusive environment are better prepared to enter the workforce with confidence and adaptability. Hence, schools must actively shape this attitude by ensuring that learning materials, teaching strategies and assessment methods are in line with the principles of gender equality. After all, along with family, it is among the two main pillars that teach the students about gender and society during their developing years (Molla, 2016).

Integrating gender and development issues into the TLE curriculum is an important approach to promoting fairness, economic opportunity, respect, and adaptability among students. It helps to break down gender stereotypes, which in turn empowers young people of diverse SOGIE to become economically and societally productive citizens. By ensuring that all learners, regardless of their gender, have equal opportunities to develop their talents and realize their career aspirations, the education system plays a crucial role in building a more inclusive and progressive society.

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