

Beliefs and practices in the implementation of Gender and Development (GAD) programs in the Division of Roxas City

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Abstract: Gender and Development (GAD) programs in the Philippines are vital for promoting gender equality, protecting rights, and fostering inclusive, empowering environments across all sectors, including education. This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to examine the implementation of Gender and Development (GAD) programs in schools within the Division of Roxas City. It aimed to assess the level of GAD implementation, explore prevailing beliefs and practices regarding gender equality, and identify encountered challenges. Quantitative data were collected from 294 school administrators and teachers through structured surveys, while qualitative insights were gathered via 20 key informants' interviews. Proportionate stratified random sampling ensured broad representation across school types and districts. The research instrument was expert-validated and yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.984, confirming good reliability. Quantitative results, analyzed through mean and percentage, showed a "Very High" level of GAD implementation. Among the four assessed dimensions—policies, people, programs, and mechanisms—policies ranked highest, reflecting strong institutional compliance with national mandates. Programs and people also scored "Very High," while mechanisms received slightly lower ratings, indicating the need for improved sustainability and resource support. Thematic analysis of qualitative data revealed that schools integrated gender sensitivity into both curricular and co-curricular activities. However, cultural norms and gender stereotypes still influenced attitudes, and many educators reported limited training in addressing these issues. Key challenges included inadequate funding, insufficient teacher training, and community resistance, particularly in rural settings. The study concluded that while schools had institutionalized GAD practices, efforts were often compliance-driven rather than advocacy-based. It recommended policy reforms, increased funding, and targeted capacity-building to foster a genuinely inclusive and gender-responsive educational environment.

Keywords: Gender and Development (GAD), Gender Equality, Beliefs, Practices, Educational Policy Implementation

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INTRODUCTION

The implementation of Gender and Development (GAD) initiatives in educational settings has increasingly become a focal point in both international and national efforts to address gender inequality. Globally, organizations like UNESCO have emphasized the urgency of transforming education systems into inclusive spaces that uphold gender equity. In its 2024 Call for Action, Closing the Gender Gap in Science, UNESCO highlighted the need for comprehensive and sustainable strategies that address the root causes of gender-based disparities, particularly in science education. Despite these calls, the translation of gender-sensitive frameworks into effective school practices remains inconsistent, with gaps in empirical studies evaluating their real-world impact (UNESCO, 2024).

In the Philippines, the national government has institutionalized GAD policies across sectors, including education, through mandates from the Philippine Commission on Women and the Department of Education (DepEd). These mandates require the integration of gender equality into curriculum design, teacher training, and school governance. One significant legislative measure is the Anti-Discrimination Law, which protects individuals from discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression (SOGIE). This law, actively enforced in the Division of Roxas City, has created an enabling policy environment for promoting gender sensitivity in schools and advancing equity both in learning outcomes and social development.

At the local level, in the Division of Roxas City, public and private schools have responded to national directives by initiating programs that embed Gender and Development (GAD) principles in their educational systems. The DepEd has introduced various gender-sensitivity training programs, seminars, and workshops aimed at capacitating educators and administrators to implement gender-responsive practices. These professional development initiatives were designed to enhance participants' awareness of gender biases, equip them with strategies to address inequalities in the classroom, and improve institutional responsiveness to gender issues (Department of Education, 2023). However, anecdotal evidence suggests that the effectiveness of these trainings varies, depending largely on school leadership, community support, and the depth of engagement with GAD principles.

Equally important is the role of community participation in reinforcing school-based GAD initiatives. Stakeholder involvement, especially that of parents and local government units, contributes significantly to the institutionalization of gender equality practices. The establishment of bodies such as the Roxas City Gender and Development Council, which operates under the local anti-discrimination ordinance, has facilitated advocacy and awareness campaigns that extend GAD's reach beyond school walls. These efforts aim to foster an inclusive culture that challenges traditional gender roles and supports the holistic development of learners.

Despite these commendable initiatives, schools still encounter persistent challenges in mainstreaming GAD. Societal norms and deep-rooted gender stereotypes continue to shape beliefs and practices within educational institutions. Teachers and administrators often face difficulty in confronting these norms due to limited training, resource constraints, or resistance from conservative sectors within the community. Furthermore, while policies may be in place, the mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation, and continuous improvement of GAD programs often remain underdeveloped, limiting their long-term effectiveness.

This study explored the beliefs and practices surrounding the implementation of GAD in schools within the Division of Roxas City, focusing particularly on the perceptions of school principals as key implementers of GAD policies. It aimed to examine the extent to which GAD principles were integrated into school culture and to identify the factors that facilitated or hindered their implementation. By analyzing both the systemic supports and the localized challenges encountered, the study provided a nuanced understanding of how gender equality efforts are operationalized at the school level.

As an educator working in a local school setting, the researcher has personally witnessed how gender roles and stereotypes continue to influence the experiences and opportunities of learners. This close engagement with the day-to-day realities of classroom instruction and community interaction has deepened the researcher's awareness of the urgent need for gender-responsive education. The selection of this study stems from a genuine commitment to understanding how Gender and Development (GAD) initiatives are implemented in schools, particularly within contexts where traditional beliefs may still prevail. Drawing from firsthand

observations and professional experience, the researcher recognizes the importance of evaluating how national policies are translated into practical, inclusive strategies that address gender disparities. Through this study, the researcher aims to contribute to a broader effort to promote equitable, inclusive, and empowering learning environments for all students.

The justification for conducting this research stemmed from the need to bridge the gap between policy and practice in gender-responsive education. While legal mandates and institutional frameworks have laid the groundwork for GAD implementation, their effectiveness can only be realized if they are translated into concrete, context-specific practices that transform beliefs and dismantle gender bias within school communities. The findings of this study contribute to the growing body of literature on GAD in education by offering evidence-based insights that can inform future policy enhancements, resource allocation, and training programs for more equitable and inclusive learning environments in the Division of Roxas City and beyond.

Problem statement

This study aimed to investigate the beliefs, practices, and challenges in the implementation of Gender and Development (GAD) programs among schools in the Division of Roxas City. Specifically, the study sought to address the following problems:

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of the implementation of Gender and Development programs in the Division of Roxas City as a whole and in terms of policy, people, mechanism, and programs?
2. What are the prevailing beliefs of schools on the implementation of Gender and Development (GAD) programs?
3. What are the prevailing practices of schools on gender equality and the and the implementation of Gender and Development (GAD) programs?
4. What challenges do schools encounter in the implementation of Gender and Development (GAD) program?

METHODOLOGY

Research design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design. The descriptive design was utilized to systematically and accurately portray the current status of Gender and Development (GAD) program implementation in the Division of Roxas City, particularly in terms of policy, people, mechanisms, and programs. It aimed to gather detailed information about the prevailing beliefs, practices, and challenges encountered by schools in the implementation of GAD initiatives (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The qualitative component of the study focused on exploring the in-depth experiences, perceptions, and insights of school personnel through interviews and focus group discussions. This allowed for a richer understanding of the context and nuances surrounding GAD practices and challenges. Meanwhile, the quantitative component involved the use of structured survey questionnaires to gather measurable data on the level of GAD implementation across schools.

Through this design, the study not only described the current state of GAD programs but also evaluated the factors affecting their effectiveness, ultimately guiding the formulation of a relevant output to strengthen GAD implementation in the school division.

Locale of the study

This study was conducted in the Division of Roxas City, which encompasses 50 various public schools within Roxas City, Capiz, Philippines for the school year 2024-2025. The division served as the primary setting for examining the beliefs and practices related to the implementation of Gender and Development (GAD) programs in educational institutions. Schools in this division are expected to adhere to national policies on gender equality and inclusivity, making them a relevant focus for assessing GAD implementation.

The study involved schools within the division, ensuring representation from different school types, levels, and demographic backgrounds. These schools provided valuable insights into the extent of GAD program implementation, the prevailing beliefs on gender equality, and the specific practices adopted to promote gender-sensitive education. Additionally, the study explored the challenges faced by these institutions, particularly in areas such as resource availability, teacher training, and community involvement. By focusing on the Division of Roxas City, the study aims to generate localized findings that can contribute to policy improvements and strategic interventions for more effective GAD implementation in schools.

Participants of the study

There were 294 participants in the study, 10 of whom were principals and 10 teachers who participated in the interview and validation process. The purposive sampling method was used in determining the participants of the study. These participants were selected because they were considered experts with relevant knowledge and experiences that could provide valuable insights in the study. To ensure ethical conduct, informed consent was obtained from all participants before participating in the research.

Research instrument

The study employed a structured survey questionnaire as its primary research instrument to assess the beliefs and practices regarding the implementation of Gender and Development (GAD) programs among teachers and school principals in the Division of Roxas City. The instrument was divided into three parts: Parts I and II were designed for teachers, while Part III was intended for school heads to validate and triangulate the data. Part I collected demographic information such as sex, age, educational background, years of service, income, and institutional level. Part II was based on the Gender Mainstreaming Evaluation Framework (GMEF) developed by the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW), which evaluates the extent of GAD program implementation. Part III explored the prevailing beliefs, practices, and challenges related to gender equality and GAD implementation in schools, including issues such as resource constraints, teacher training, and community engagement.

To ensure validity, the questionnaire underwent expert validation by professionals specializing in gender and development, educational research, and survey design. These experts, including members of the research advisory committee, evaluated the instrument for content alignment and relevance to the study's objectives. Modifications were made based on their feedback to improve clarity and appropriateness. A pilot test involving 30 educators was also conducted to identify potential ambiguities.

Reliability testing was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha to determine internal consistency. Following the pilot test, a Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.984 was achieved, indicating excellent reliability. Items that negatively affected the instrument's consistency were revised or removed accordingly.

Data gathering procedure

Data collection was carried out when the proposal was approved, and this was accomplished by obtaining all necessary permits to carry out the study.

When the researchers have obtained all the required licenses, they inform the participants about the research study and asked for their cooperation and participation.

To guarantee a perfect recovery rate, the researchers themselves distributed and handled the study tool.

Data analysis procedure

To address the study's research questions, a mixed-method analytical approach was employed. For Problem Statement 1, which aimed to determine the level of implementation of Gender and Development (GAD) programs in schools within the Division of Roxas City, the mean was used as the primary statistical tool to quantify and interpret the data. This allowed the researcher to numerically assess how extensively GAD programs were being applied across institutions.

For Problem Statements 2, 3, and 4—which explored the prevailing beliefs and practices related to gender equality and the implementation of GAD programs, as well as the challenges encountered in terms of resource availability, teacher training, and community support—Thematic Analysis was used, following the method proposed by Clarke and Braun (2006). This qualitative approach involved six key phases: familiarization with the data through repeated reading and note-taking; generating initial codes to capture significant patterns; identifying themes by grouping related codes; reviewing and refining themes to ensure coherence and accuracy; defining and naming each theme to encapsulate their core meaning; and finally, producing a comprehensive report with narrative descriptions supported by representative data excerpts.

This combined use of quantitative and qualitative methods enabled a holistic understanding of both the measurable extent and the contextual dynamics of GAD program implementation in the schools of Roxas City Division.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Exceptionalities of learners with special educational needs

The study revealed a wide range of exceptionalities among learners with special educational needs (SEN) in the District of Sapián, based on both clinical diagnoses and teacher observations. Diagnosed conditions included learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities, visual and speech impairments, autism spectrum disorder, orthopedic or physical handicaps, emotional-behavioral disorders, and chronic health conditions. These align with established categories in special education that require individualized educational interventions (Alper & Raharinirina, 2020). Teacher observations also highlighted additional learning difficulties related to memory, attention, communication, and adaptive skills, which may not be formally diagnosed but significantly affect classroom participation. This confirms the complexity and diversity of needs present in inclusive education settings (Simonsen et al., 2017).

Strategies applied by the teachers in handling learners with special educational needs

Teachers employed multiple strategies tailored to meet the unique needs of learners with SEN. Differentiated instruction was a central method, involving the use of visual aids, simplified language, peer mentoring, and hands-on activities (Friend et al., 2017). Motivation was reinforced through praise, interest-based tasks, and small goal setting, which encouraged learners' active participation and self-confidence. Teachers also incorporated assistive technologies and collaborated with parents and specialists to provide individualized interventions (Alper & Raharinirina, 2020). These practices reflect an inclusive pedagogical framework that seeks to remove barriers to learning and promote equitable opportunities for all learners (McLeskey & Waldron, 2019).

Challenges faced by the teachers in implementing inclusive education

Several challenges emerged in the implementation of inclusive education. One major concern was classroom management, as teachers had difficulty balancing the needs of SEN learners while maintaining order and engagement across the class (Lindsay et al., 2019; Sharma et al., 2018). Insufficient parental involvement was also a concern, with many families unable to support learning at home due to limited resources or understanding of their child's needs (Brown, 2023; Garcia et al., 2023). Moreover, teachers reported emotional fatigue and stress resulting from high workloads and lack of institutional support, consistent with findings by Jones and Davies (2023). These systemic gaps limit the full realization of inclusive educational goals and highlight the need for robust teacher training and parental partnership initiatives.

Coping strategies in the implementation of inclusive education

Despite the challenges, teachers demonstrated resilience through various coping mechanisms. Stress management techniques such as organized routines, time management, and boundary-setting between work and home were commonly used (Hemmings, 2020; Johnson & Brown, 2022). Professional strategies included promoting learner independence and establishing structured classroom procedures, which have been shown to support effective inclusive practices (Evertson & Emmer, 2017; Ford, 2021). Mindfulness and creative outlets were utilized to maintain emotional balance (Briner & Dewberry, 2020; Lee & Martin, 2023), while technology was leveraged to assist with instruction and reduce workload (Patel, 2022; Adams, 2023). A strong collegial support system also emerged as a key factor in sustaining inclusive teaching practices, reinforcing the findings of Sharma and Salend (2022) on the value of collaboration in managing inclusive classrooms.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study underscore the multifaceted nature of inclusive education and the critical role teachers, school heads, and parents play in ensuring that learners with special educational needs (SEN) are supported effectively. It was found that learners exhibit a broad range of exceptionalities, both formally diagnosed and observed by teachers, which require tailored instructional strategies and a deep understanding of individual learner needs. Teachers demonstrate commendable adaptability and commitment by employing differentiated instruction, providing social-emotional support, and fostering practical life skills. However, they also face

substantial challenges, including managing classroom behavior, limited parental involvement, and emotional strain due to high workloads and insufficient resources.

Despite these barriers, educators have developed effective coping mechanisms, such as establishing structured routines, leveraging assistive technologies, and fostering peer collaboration, which enable them to maintain inclusive practices in the classroom. These findings affirm the importance of continuous professional development, institutional support, and collaborative partnerships among stakeholders in creating inclusive, equitable learning environments. Ultimately, this study advocates for systemic changes in policy and school practices to ensure that every learner, regardless of ability, is given the opportunity to thrive in a nurturing and inclusive educational setting.

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