

Contextualized Framework in Integrating Gender and Development in Upland Public Elementary Classrooms of Ilocos Sur Division

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Abstract — This study aimed to develop a contextualized framework for integrating Gender and Development (GAD) principles in upland public elementary classrooms in the Schools Division of Ilocos Sur. GAD is a development approach that promotes equality through inclusive, gender-sensitive education. Using a descriptive-correlational design, data were gathered from teacher-respondents using a validated questionnaire. The study focused on assessing GAD policy awareness, levels of classroom implementation, challenges encountered, and coping strategies. Findings revealed that teachers possessed high awareness of GAD policies and showed strong implementation in classroom practices. However, they faced serious challenges, including insufficient resources, inadequate training, and socio-cultural resistance. Despite these, teachers employed effective coping mechanisms such as peer support and community involvement. Statistical analysis showed significant positive relationships between awareness and implementation, and between implementation and gender-responsive practices. A negative correlation existed between the challenges faced and the extent of implementation. The study addressed a critical research gap by contextualizing GAD integration in remote, upland settings. As an output, a contextualized framework guided by the Input–Process–Output (IPO) model was developed to promote inclusive, responsive, and sustainable GAD integration in basic education. The study recommends the institutionalization of the framework, enhanced training programs, stakeholder engagement, and provision of gender-sensitive materials.

Keywords — *Gender and Development (GAD), upland schools, inclusive education, gender-sensitive practices, contextualized framework, IPO model, public elementary education, Ilocos Sur.*

I. Introduction

Background of the Study

Gender and Development (GAD) is a development approach that seeks to address the unequal status of women and men in society by examining and transforming the social institutions, relationships, and power structures that perpetuate inequality. Unlike earlier models such as Women in Development (WID), which focused exclusively on women, GAD emphasizes the need

to engage both genders in achieving equitable development and social justice. GAD is grounded in the belief that true equality can only be achieved by correcting systemic imbalances and promoting inclusive participation in all aspects of life.

The emergence of GAD was largely a response to the limitations of previous development frameworks like WID, which did not address the root causes of gender inequality. Advocates of GAD recognized that existing structures, policies, and norms needed to be changed—not just supplemented—to empower women and ensure fairness. This shift was inspired by global feminist movements and the realization that development efforts were often gender-blind, reinforcing rather than challenging societal inequities.

The importance of GAD lies in its transformative potential. It emerged not just to include women in development but to question and reformulate the very structures that had excluded them. GAD encourages policies and programs that are participatory, inclusive, and transformative—ensuring that both women and men have equal opportunities to contribute to and benefit from development. Its emphasis on power relations, equity, and intersectionality allows for more responsive and inclusive programming in education.

GAD is intricately linked to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (quality education), SDG 5 (gender equality), and SDG 10 (reduced inequalities). These goals underscore the need for inclusive education and equitable participation in all facets of society. The incorporation of GAD in education helps dismantle gender-based barriers and ensures that learners—regardless of gender—are provided equal opportunities, thus contributing to inclusive, quality learning environments.

Several studies emphasize differences in GAD implementation between urban and upland schools. Alibin (2021) found that urban schools had stronger integration of gender-responsive programs due to access to training and resources. In contrast, rural and upland schools continue to face socio-cultural resistance and logistical barriers, limiting the consistency of GAD practices. These findings point to the urgent need for context-based strategies tailored to rural settings.

On the other hand, studies by Pandapatan (2022), Javillonar (2022), and Cabigao & Anasarias (2023) reveal a noticeable gap in GAD research focused on elementary education. Much of the existing literature targets secondary and higher education institutions, leaving the foundational level of schooling underexplored. These studies call for a shift in research attention toward early education where gender norms begin to take shape.

This lack of targeted research highlights a significant gap: how are GAD principles understood and implemented in elementary schools—especially in geographically isolated areas like the uplands of Ilocos Sur? The absence of a contextualized framework for integrating GAD into classroom instruction leaves teachers under-equipped, despite existing mandates and training programs.

Through my experiences as a school head and GAD coordinator in upland Ilocos Sur, I observed that while many teachers demonstrate awareness of gender policies, they struggle to apply them meaningfully in their classrooms. Teachers often lack culturally relevant materials and face persistent gender norms in their communities. These realities motivated the need for a localized framework tailored to the specific challenges of upland educational settings.

Therefore, this study was conducted to bridge the identified gap by assessing GAD awareness, implementation, and challenges in upland elementary schools. The goal is to develop a contextualized framework that reflects the socio-cultural realities of upland communities while promoting inclusive and gender-responsive classroom practices in support of national and global education goals.

Framework of the Study

This study is grounded on multiple theoretical perspectives that collectively inform the development of a contextualized framework for integrating Gender and Development (GAD) in upland public elementary classrooms. These theories serve as lenses through which the researcher analyzed how gender responsiveness can be effectively integrated into teaching practices in culturally diverse, geographically isolated areas.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy by Ladson-Billings (1994) emphasizes the importance of acknowledging students' cultural backgrounds as a foundation for learning. In upland communities of Ilocos Sur, this theory supports the localization of GAD principles so they align with cultural traditions and values. The integration of gender equity should not contradict but resonate with the community's identity. This approach ensures that instruction is both inclusive and meaningful.

Vygotsky's Social Constructivism (1978) underscores that learning is constructed through social interaction and community context. Gender roles and expectations are also socially constructed; thus, the theory reinforces the idea that both teaching and learning gender-sensitive values should involve collaboration between teachers, learners, and community stakeholders. This supports the inclusion of peer collaboration and local engagement in the GAD framework.

Banks' Multicultural Education Theory (1993) aligns with the principle that gender sensitivity is inseparable from cultural inclusivity. This theory is especially relevant to upland schools where varied indigenous and local practices shape student identity. The framework developed in this study draws on this theory to ensure that GAD implementation respects and integrates local norms while still promoting gender equity.

Feminist Pedagogy, as advanced by hooks (1994), advocates for transformative education where learners and educators co-create knowledge and challenge traditional power hierarchies. It promotes a critical analysis of societal structures and encourages classrooms that value all voices. Applying this to GAD, the study's framework promotes dialogue, critical reflection, and

empowerment—particularly important in communities where traditional gender norms are deeply embedded.

Freire's Critical Pedagogy (1970) focuses on education as a tool for social justice and transformation. This theory provides the foundation for promoting critical consciousness in learners. In this study, it supports a classroom culture where learners understand and question gender norms, develop respect for others, and practice equitable behaviors that extend beyond the classroom.

These theories collectively informed the design of the Input-Process-Output (IPO) Framework developed in the study. The framework is structured as follows:

Input includes the current levels of awareness of GAD policies among teachers, their classroom practices, and the challenges they face. This data was gathered using a validated questionnaire based on national GAD mandates and contextual factors affecting upland schools.

Process refers to the assessment and analysis of how teachers implement GAD policies in their teaching practices, the coping strategies they adopt to address gender-related challenges, and the degree of seriousness of such challenges. Quantitative tools such as means, standard deviation, and multiple regression were used to analyze the relationships between awareness, implementation, and challenges.

Output is the development of a contextualized GAD framework. The findings from the data were synthesized to produce a practical guide that can be used by teachers in upland schools. The framework is intended to be dynamic, culturally sensitive, and aligned with both national mandates and community realities.

In sum, the theories used in this study—Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, Social Constructivism, Multicultural Education, Feminist Pedagogy, and Critical Pedagogy—are interwoven in the IPO Framework. This unified model provides a holistic understanding of how GAD can be implemented effectively in upland elementary schools, ensuring that gender equity is both practiced and sustained in classroom instruction.

II. Methodology

The study utilized a **descriptive developmental survey design**, aiming to assess the level of awareness, implementation, challenges, and coping strategies related to Gender and Development (GAD) among teachers. A structured **questionnaire**, adapted from Manuel (2024), served as the main data collection tool and was validated by experts to ensure reliability.

The **respondents** were **929 teachers** from upland public elementary schools in the **Division of Ilocos Sur**, chosen to reflect the unique contexts of geographically challenged areas. The instrument measured awareness of GAD laws, instructional and research practices,

implementation strategies, encountered challenges, and the acceptability of a contextualized GAD framework.

Data gathering involved securing approvals from ethical bodies and school authorities, followed by distribution of the questionnaires either in-person or through Google Forms. Quantitative analysis was conducted using **descriptive statistics** (mean, standard deviation, frequency, percentage), **Pearson correlation**, and **multiple regression** to determine relationships among variables.

The study adopted specific **data categorization scales** to interpret levels of awareness, implementation, seriousness of challenges, coping strategies, and framework acceptability. It also used the **Input-Process-Output (IPO) model** to build a localized GAD integration framework.

Ethical considerations included strict confidentiality, informed consent, and respect for participants' rights. The study also ensured voluntary participation and aimed to contribute positively by providing GAD-responsive teaching strategies for upland schools.

III. Results and Discussion

The chapter presented quantitative findings based on teacher responses:

Demographics & GAD Training Exposure

- Majority of respondents were **female** and held the rank of **Teacher III**, indicating experienced educators.
- Most had long service records (over 20 years), though participation in **GAD training** was limited at **international (84.7% none)** and **national levels (74.8% none)**.
- **Regional and institutional GAD trainings** had better participation, though still lacking depth.

GAD Awareness

- Teachers were **aware** of GAD policies and laws (e.g., RA 8353, RA 7877).
- Lower awareness was noted for support-focused laws (e.g., RA 9262, RA 8505).
- Administrative support and GAD reflections in classroom tools were well recognized, but awareness of content in Intended Learning Outcomes and classroom integration remained moderate.

GAD Implementation

- **Highly implemented** practices were seen in curriculum development, research engagement, and project management.
- Teachers actively proposed GAD-related research and joined fora, but had less involvement in mentoring students and formal monitoring.
- Programs and policies were often documented, but integration into classroom teaching and action plans needed improvement.

Challenges Encountered

- The most serious issues were institutional: lack of incentives for GAD work and absence of sex-disaggregated data systems.
- Personal biases and lack of sensitivity training were rated lower but still relevant.

Correlation of Variables

- A **strong positive correlation** existed between **GAD awareness and implementation** ($r = 0.691$).
- A **moderate negative correlation** was found between **challenges and implementation** ($r = -0.604$), suggesting that challenges hinder effective application of GAD principles.

IV. Conclusion

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. The high level of awareness among respondents indicates a strong foundation for integrating GAD principles into education, but efforts should focus on translating this knowledge into practical, classroom-based applications.
2. The very high implementation of GAD policies in classrooms demonstrates significant progress, yet continuous evaluation and adaptation are necessary to ensure their effectiveness and sustainability in diverse educational contexts.
3. The successful implementation of GAD programs signifies a commitment to gender equality in education, but ongoing assessments are needed to ensure these programs are inclusive, effective, and responsive to emerging challenges.

4. The significant challenges in implementing GAD policies and programs highlight the need for comprehensive support, including resources, training, and institutional commitment, to overcome these barriers.
5. The findings indicate that increasing awareness of GAD policies enhances educators' ability to implement gender-responsive practices in the classroom, with a positive relationship between policy implementation and the development of gender-sensitive educational programs. However, significant challenges remain, which negatively affect the success of these gender programs, emphasizing the need to address these obstacles to ensure their effective delivery and impact.
6. The framework is implementable and provides guide in integrating GAD in classrooms.

V. Recommendations

Based on the findings the following recommendation were drawn:

1. To address the challenges posed by limited resources and inadequate infrastructure, the Schools Division of Ilocos Sur should prioritize the provision of GAD-specific teaching materials and classroom resources. Schools could collaborate with local government units, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and community stakeholders to secure additional funding or in-kind donations for gender-sensitive educational materials.
2. Enhance Professional Development Programs: The division should implement more targeted and regular professional development opportunities focused on GAD. This could include in-service training, workshops, and seminars for teachers, with a special emphasis on gender-sensitive pedagogy and overcoming contextual challenges. Collaborative training with NGOs and other gender equality advocates could also broaden teachers' perspectives and resources.
3. Strengthen Data Collection and Gender Disaggregation: To improve the accuracy of GAD implementation, it is important for the division to establish systems for collecting and disaggregating gender data. This would help identify specific needs and gaps, allowing teachers to better tailor their teaching practices and ensure that no learner, regardless of gender, is left behind.
4. Address Cultural Barriers Through Community Engagement: Given that cultural norms in some areas may limit the full integration of gender equality principles, schools should focus on community engagement and awareness-building initiatives. Programs and campaigns designed to promote gender equality and challenge traditional gender norms can be developed in partnership with local barangays, parents, and other community leaders.

5. Foster Collaborative Networks for Teachers: Encouraging peer collaboration among teachers can be a valuable coping strategy. The division should promote the establishment of networks or communities of practice where teachers can share ideas, resources, and strategies for overcoming challenges related to GAD policy implementation.
6. Monitor and Evaluate GAD Policy Implementation: The division should implement a more robust monitoring and evaluation system to track the progress of GAD policy implementation across schools. Regular assessments can identify areas of improvement and provide feedback for continuous improvement in gender-sensitive teaching practices.

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