



Gender Responsive Basic Education Policy: Status of Implementation and Influence on Learners' Social Skills

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Abstract

This study examined the implementation of the Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy under DepEd Order No. 32, s. 2017 and its influence on learners' social skills in nine elementary schools in Curuan District. Using a quantitative descriptive design, data were collected from 120 teachers through a survey questionnaire. Findings revealed that the policy was highly implemented, reflecting strong adherence to gender-responsive principles in school programs, classroom practices, and workplace policies. Teachers observed that the policy positively influenced learners' social skills by promoting respect, inclusivity, cooperation, empathy, and acceptance of diversity. Improved interpersonal relationships and greater participation in school activities, regardless of gender, were also noted. The results suggest that effective implementation of gender-responsive education policies contributes to the development of socially responsible and inclusive learners. Sustained gender-responsive programs and strengthened capacity-building initiatives are recommended to further enhance policy implementation and learner development.

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Introduction

Education is a powerful driver of social mobility, offering opportunities for individuals to break the cycle of poverty and inequality, leading to learners' cognitive, personal, and social development. According to Patel (2019), it is acknowledged that education is the greatest equalizer but can also impede gender equality due to gender biases and discrimination arising from cultural practices, institutional policies, and economic background. In recent years, there have been studies describing cases of inequalities that are still evident in institutions and sometimes marginalize the rights of learners and stakeholders to express themselves due to the fear of bullying, discrimination, and violence. Miske (2013) proved that gender bias is still apparent in school curricula, instruction, and assessment. Hence, the study of inequality has become an important aspect of enhancing the quality of education in terms of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and inclusiveness in teaching-learning processes.

The general features of Gender and Development (GAD) are well-known to empower all institutions in the eradication of inequality, discrimination, and violence. It has been brought into the limelight to provide equal access and benefits to men and women despite their social status, interests, concerns, and history. Hence, in Rule II, Section 10. 2 under RA No. 10533, DepEd is mandated to ensure that the basic education curriculum is gender- and culture-sensitive. It is commonly acknowledged that learners are not just expected to acquire basic literacy but to develop patriotism, respect for



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human rights, and be equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to face various social realities and challenges.

In 2005, Sax explained that with gender-based instruction, it has been important for educators and parents to understand the needs of both genders and to create a safe and gender-friendly environment to develop learners' full potential to lead in nation-building. Data have been presented in the literature, which suggested that bridging the gender gaps through strengthening practices should not be the focus but setting criteria to devise permanent ways to address these anomalies to take part in decision-making, improving curriculum integration, equal involvement of both genders in school's competition, equal access in school health programs, participation of both genders in school sports, establishing facilities addressing the needs of both genders, etc. For that reason, the Education 2030 Framework for Action acknowledged the need for universal access, inclusion, and quality.

Despite the importance of fostering gender equality in the school climate and culture, gender inequalities, bullying, discrimination, sexual harassment, and violence have been occurring and carried into the school environment. One main reason is the norms and standards created by society regarding the expected roles of men and women that often result in gender stereotypes. For that reason, the Department of Education (DepEd) mandates all basic schools to ensure gender-sensitive teaching and learning through DepEd Order 32, s. 2017, titled "Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy. This order mandates all institutions to be committed to integrating the principles of gender equality, gender equity, gender sensitivity, non-discrimination, and human rights in the provision and governance of basic education. Additionally, this policy fosters inclusive education and equal access for men and women in learning, and addresses gender barriers in the educational system. With the rampant use of social media, some children are now vulnerable to psychological bullying, especially children who belong to the LGBT community. Hence, this policy aims to protect the rights of the child against gender-based violence, discrimination, bullying, and sexual harassment. However, UNESCO highlighted the low adoption of this policy in schools due to a lack of communication and a weak monitoring framework (UNESCO, 2018).



Existing Philippine studies on gender mainstreaming in education have primarily focused on the integration of Gender and Development (GAD) principles in instructional materials, teachers' experiences in implementing gender-responsive initiatives, and challenges encountered in gender mainstreaming programs. For instance, Domogen et al. (2022) examined the integration of GAD perspectives in modular instruction, while Sepillo and Orge (2021) investigated challenges in gender mainstreaming among secondary school teachers. Although these studies provide valuable insights into policy implementation, they largely focus on teachers' practices, institutional challenges, and program compliance. Limited empirical evidence exists regarding how the implementation of the Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy influences learner outcomes, particularly social skills development, in elementary school settings. Furthermore, few studies have examined the policy's implementation across different school types and geographical locations within a single district context. Thus, this study extends the existing literature by assessing both the implementation status of the Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy and its influence on learners' social skills among public elementary schools in Curuan District. By linking policy implementation with learner development outcomes, the study offers a localized and outcome-oriented perspective that remains underexplored in Philippine educational research.

Nevertheless, the bigger picture regarding gender-responsive education policy is still incomplete. Most research often generalizes and needs more context-specific studies that will take into account the needs of both genders by eliminating gender inequalities. There is a lack of comprehensive studies on the implementation of the policy and its actual impact on learners' social skills. Hence, the purpose of this research is to present how schools executed the implementation of the policy and its effectiveness in achieving gender parity in education. Through this study, all stakeholders gained awareness and deepened their understanding of the unique challenges during the implementation of the policy by teachers from different types of schools with different geographical locations. This study is different from other research as it focused on determining the status of the implementation of the Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy in some selected public elementary schools of Curuan District and the challenges encountered by the teachers during the seven (7) years of implementation. In this paper, addressing the gaps in gender-responsive basic education policy will provide an



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opportunity for all stakeholders to design, plan, and implement effective activities and innovative interventions for the betterment of the institutions.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to determine the implementation of the Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy in some selected elementary schools in the Division of Zamboanga. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions.

1. What is the status of the implementation of the Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy in terms of:
 - a. Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment
 - b. Planning and Field Operations
 - c. Public Affairs and Work Environment
 - d. Gender Parity and Work Environment
2. To what extent does the Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy influence learners' social skills?
3. Is there a significant difference in the implementation of the Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy when the variables are categorized according to:
 - a. type of school
 - b. geographical location of the school

Methods

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design to determine the status of implementation and the extent of influence of the policy on the learners' social skills. This research utilized a survey questionnaire to gather the responses of the respondents. Hence, descriptive quantitative research is appropriate for collecting numerical data that describe the characteristics, conditions, or perceptions of a population through structured instruments (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).



Research Locale

This study was conducted in the nine (9) elementary schools of Curuan District under the Division of Zamboanga City. Curuan is located on the east coast of Zamboanga City at a distance of 50 kilometers away from the city proper. Curuan is the largest barangay in Zamboanga City; it covers 7, 216 hectares. The researcher chose two (2) big schools, three (3) medium schools, and four (4) small schools to be the respondents of the study through lottery sampling.

Respondents of the Study

The researcher used a total enumeration sampling due to the small sample size from the nine (9) selected schools with a total of 120 elementary teachers. According to Sugiyono (2014:68), total population sampling is a sampling technique where all members of the population are treated as a sample.

Instrument

The instrument was patterned on the DepEd's Basic Education Strategic Framework and key principles of gender equality programming in education from Gender Equality in and Through Education (INEE, 2010). The researcher utilized a Likert-type survey to determine the status of the implementation of Gender-Responsive Basic Education. The instrument of item number 1 was adopted from DepEd Order 32 s, 2017. Each question was divided into Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, Planning and Field Operations, Public Affairs, Finance, and Administration, and Gender Parity and Work Environment. The researcher used a modified Likert-type survey based on DepEd Order 32 s. 2017 to know the extent of gender-responsive basic education on learners' social skills for item number 2. This research instrument was the most appropriate tool to assess the status of the implementation of the Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy.

Instrument Validation and Reliability

The survey questionnaire underwent content validation by three experts specializing in educational administration, gender and development, and



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educational research. Their comments and recommendations were incorporated to improve the clarity, relevance, and alignment of the items with the objectives of the study and the provisions of DepEd Order No. 32, s. 2017. Prior to the actual data collection, the instrument was pilot-tested among 30 elementary teachers from schools outside the study area who possessed similar characteristics to the target respondents. The reliability analysis yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.92 for the implementation scale and 0.89 for the learners' social skills scale, indicating excellent internal consistency. These results confirmed that the instrument was valid and reliable for gathering data on the implementation of the Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy and its influence on learners' social skills.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher personally submitted a letter addressed to the authorities before the conduct of the study. Upon submitting a letter to gather data to the school heads, the researcher provided a consent form to the respondents to inform them of their voluntary participation and their right to withdraw from this study. To avoid the interruption of classes, some schools answered the survey questionnaire through an online modality. The survey questionnaire was encoded using the Google Form software. However, some schools answered the survey questionnaire through printed handouts due to the unavailability of internet and weak signals in their area. The survey questionnaire handouts were distributed to the respondents who gave their voluntary participation at their most convenient time.

Ethical Consideration

This study highlighted the importance of ethics in conducting the research about the status of implementation of DepEd Order 32 s. 2017 and the influence of the policy on learners' social skills. According to Orb et al. (2000), ethical considerations are fundamental in research; this provides the opportunity for the researcher to gather the most important information without causing any harm to the participants in the research. The researcher sought permission from the participants through a consent form, and participants were informed of their rights to withdraw from the study if they were not confident in disclosing any information on the status of the



implementation of the policy. Also, to protect the anonymity of respondents and the institutions, some specific information about the respondents has been omitted throughout the report.

Statistical Analysis

This study used descriptive statistics to interpret the respondents' responses. The weighted mean was used to find out the status of implementation of DepEd Order 32 s. 2017; analysis of variance to determine differences in policy implementation by type of institution; and an independent t-test to determine differences in policy implementation by school geographical location.

Results and Discussion

The Status of the Implementation of Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

The findings revealed that the implementation of the Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy in terms of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment is highly implemented, with an average weighted mean of "3.66". The most dominant Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy in terms of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment is Learners' Development with a weighted mean of "3.79", followed by Curriculum Standard with a weighted mean of "3.74", Learning Delivery with a weighted mean of "3.67", Learning Environment with a weighted mean of "3.66", Learning Resources with a weighted mean of "3.55" and Assessment with a weighted mean of "3.54" respectively. Research indicates that gender-responsive practices contribute to the enhancement and improvement of the academic outcomes for all learners in terms of fostering inclusive school culture and the development of critical life skills. Research findings underscore the essential crafting of frameworks that are sensitive to gender dynamics, strategies to combat gender-based violence, and to promote equity within educational settings. The present finding aligns with the study of Hailu et al. (2022), which reported that gender-responsive initiatives contribute to



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inclusive learning environments and equitable participation among learners. Similarly, UNICEF (2017) emphasized that integrating gender-responsive principles into curriculum and classroom practices improves educational access and promotes positive learner engagement. In the Philippine context, Domogen et al. (2022) likewise observed that gender-sensitive instructional practices enhance awareness and inclusivity among learners and teachers.

Planning and Field Operations

This finding reveals the Status of the Implementation of the Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy in terms of Planning and Field Operations, with an overall mean of "3.62" described as highly implemented. The most dominant Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy in terms of Planning and Field Operations is School Sports with a weighted mean of "3.79", then followed by Youth Formation with a weighted mean of "3.65", School Health and Planning, and Learners Support with a weighted mean of "3.60". This finding suggests that through the inclusion of genders in sports development, leadership, and providing opportunities for all learners to acquire a life-changing educational experience that empowers learners will lead to the triumph of gender equality in all aspects of learners' development (Silor et al, 2024).

Public Affairs and Finance Administration

The finding shows that the status of the implementation of the Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy in terms of Public Affairs and Finance Administration, with an overall mean of "3.43", is highly implemented. The most dominant Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy in terms of Public Affairs and Finance Administration is Public Affairs, with a weighted mean of "3.49", followed by Educational Facilities with a weighted mean of "3.45" and Information and Communication Technology with a weighted mean of "3.35," respectively.

Gender Parity and Work Environment

The findings reveal that the implementation of the Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy in terms of Gender Parity and Work Environment, with an



overall weighted mean of “3.59”, is highly implemented. The most dominant Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy in terms of Gender Parity and Work Environment was Learning and Development and Employee Welfare, with a weighted mean of “3.64”, followed by Human Resource Development and Employee Welfare with a weighted mean of “3.48”.

Table 1

Summary of the Status of Implementation of the Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy

Dimension	Mean	Description
Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	3.66	Highly Implemented
Planning and Field Operations	3.62	Highly Implemented
Public Affairs and Finance Administration	3.43	Highly Implemented
Gender Parity and Work Environment	3.59	Highly Implemented
Overall Mean	3.58	Highly Implemented

The Influence of Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy on Learners' Social Skills

The results of the Extent of Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy which Influences the Social Skills of the Learners. The respondents generated an average weighted mean of “3.50,” described as “Great Extent”. The findings are consistent with Chen et al. (2020), who found that supportive and inclusive classroom environments contribute significantly to learners' social interactions, peer relationships, and interpersonal development. Likewise, Akhigbe and Adeyemi (2020) reported that gender-responsive collaborative learning strategies foster cooperation, mutual respect, and positive attitudes among learners. These findings suggest that gender-responsive educational practices extend beyond policy compliance and contribute meaningfully to learners' social and emotional development.

Another manifestation that supports the Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy that influences the Social Skills of the Learners is exhibited in the statement “Learners of both genders are teaming up to do classroom



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chores such as sweeping the floor, flowering the plants, washing the curtains, etc." which obtained a weighted mean of "3.78" described as "Great Extent". In viewing in this sense, it can be stated that teachers are eliminating gender roles when it comes to classroom chores through the inclusion of both genders in accomplishing a simple task. Indeed, gender roles can be nurtured through the assistance of teachers and parents. In addition, the statement of "Girls include themselves in applying for school organization positions such as in the Supreme Elementary Learner Government, Barkada Kontra Droga Officers, etc." with a weighted mean of "3.74" described as "Great Extent". In a rational sense, the involvement of both genders in the school organization has been apparent in all institutions. Hence, the leadership of female learners has been accepted. Moreover, continuous advocacy will make a positive outcome, giving all learners an equal opportunity to be involved in the school organizations and to showcase their leadership skills despite their cultural beliefs, traditions, and the culture of the community.

Meanwhile, the statement "Boys learners are advocating Menstrual Health Hygiene in school." with a weighted mean of "2.93" described as "Moderate Extent" manifested less influence on learners' social skills. This only means that boys' learners are advocating Menstrual Health Hygiene, but it has not fully influenced as Social Skills of Learners as an internal pattern of communication. This is apparently shown in its weighted mean of "2.93," which is lower than the average weighted mean of "3.50". The findings are evident in the Curuan districts since some of the institutions are part of the Muslim community. As Thakur et al. (2014) pointed out, in some cultures and religious proscriptions, girls and boys face difficulties during puberty due to inaccurate and incomplete knowledge about personal hygiene management. The lack of knowledge regarding menstrual hygiene is the outcome of the teachers' lack of potential and confidence to engage all learners in a puberty-related topics inside the classrooms (Mahfuz et al., 2021). Hence, some learners are immersed in their traditional norms, and sometimes they are not open to the elimination of male dominance and advocating for gender equality. In conclusion, the attitudes and teasing by the male learners about monthly periods may contribute to mental health problems and may hinder their active participation in school activities (Hennegan et al., 2019).



Implementation of the Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy when the variables are categorized according to Type of School

The result of the ANOVA on the implementation of the Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy according to the type of school in Policy in terms of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, with the p – Value with the F–Obs was greater than the alpha level of significance (p–value = .546 and F–Obs = .608 > .05), df = 2 and 117, indicated no significance. It also reveals that, in terms of planning and field operations, the p – Value with the F – Obs was greater than the alpha level of significance (p – Value = .392 and F – Obs = .944 > .05), df = 2 and 117, indicating no significance. In terms of Gender Parity and Work Environment, the p – Value with the F–obs was greater than the alpha level of significance (p – Value = .134 and F – Obs = 2.043 > .05), df = 2 and 117, indicated no significance. On the other hand, in terms of Public Affairs and Finance Administration, the p – Value with the F – Obs was less than the alpha level of significance (p – Value = .043 and F – Obs = 3.241 < .05), df = 2 and 117, indicates significance. Post hoc analysis revealed that Medium Schools have better practiced on Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy in terms of Public Affairs and Finance Administration than the Small Schools. This finding is similar to Baker's (2018) study on the larger allocation of school funds in big schools to accomplish greater things compared with small schools.

Table 2

Summary of Inferential Analysis by Type of School

Dimension	p-value	Decision
Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	.546	Not-Significant
Planning and Field Operations	.392	Not-Significant
Public Affairs and Finance Administration	.043	Significant
Gender Parity and Work Environment	.134	Not-Significant



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Implementation of the Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy when the variables are categorized according to Geographical Location

The results on the implementation of the Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy in terms of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment according to the geographical location reveals the p – Value associated with the t – Obs was greater than the level of significance (p – Value = .523 and t - Obs = -.640 and $-.703 > .05$) df = 118 indicated not significant. Next, the findings reveal that the p – Value associated with the t – Obs was greater than the level of significance (p – Value = .343 and t - Obs = -.953 and $-1.018 > .05$) df = 118 indicated not significant in terms of planning and field operations. The hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference on the implementation of the Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy in terms of Public Affairs and Finance Administration when the variables are categorized according to Geographical Location was accepted with that the p – Value associated with the t – Obs was greater than the level of significance (p – Value = .242 and t - Obs = 1.175 and $1.099 > .05$) df = 118 indicated not significant. The hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference on the implementation of the Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy in terms of Gender Parity and Work Environment when the variables are categorized according to Geographical Location was accepted with p – Value associated with the t – Obs was greater than the level of significance (p – Value = .477 and t - Obs = -.713 and $-.811 > .05$) df = 118. This implies that the implementation of the Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy located in the Highway and Hinterland was highly practiced.

Table 3

Summary of Inferential Analysis by Geographical Location

Dimension	p-value	Decision
Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	.523	Not-Significant
Planning and Field Operations	.343	Not-Significant
Public Affairs and Finance Administration	.242	Not-Significant
Gender Parity and Work Environment	.477	Not-Significant



Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the study was confined to nine public elementary schools within Curuan District; therefore, the results may not be generalized to all schools in Zamboanga City or other regions of the Philippines. Second, the study relied on teachers' perceptions of policy implementation and learners' social skills, which may be influenced by personal biases and subjective judgments. Third, the use of a descriptive research design limits the ability to establish causal relationships between policy implementation and learners' social skills. Future studies may employ mixed-methods or longitudinal approaches and include direct assessments of learners, parents, and school administrators to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the long-term effects of gender-responsive education policies

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it reveals that the implementation of the Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy (DepEd Order No. 32, s. 2017) in the nine (9) elementary schools of Curuan District has been highly implemented during its seven (7) years of implementation. The internal stakeholders have consistently integrated the principles of gender equality, gender equity, gender sensitivity, and human rights into curriculum delivery, planning processes, school programs, and workplace practices. Gender mainstreaming has been embedded in the schools' Plans, Projects, and Activities (PPAs), School Improvement Plans (SIPs), and Annual Implementation Plans (AIPs), demonstrating institutional commitment to promoting inclusive and equitable educational environments. The policy was found to be highly implemented in the areas of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, Planning and Field Operations, Public Affairs and Finance Administration, and Gender Parity and Work Environment. Despite this positive implementation, challenges remain in the availability of gender-responsive learning materials, capacity-building opportunities, and gender-sensitive facilities. Nevertheless, schools continue to sustain efforts to strengthen gender-responsive practices through advocacy, capacity development, and inclusive participation of learners and personnel.



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The study further concludes that the Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy influences learners' social skills to a great extent. The integration of gender-responsive principles has contributed to the development of learners' cooperation, respect, participation, and appreciation of equality. However, some learners continue to exhibit resistance to changing traditional gender-related beliefs and practices influenced by cultural and community norms.

Moreover, no significant differences were found in the implementation of the Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy when categorized according to geographical location, indicating that schools in both highway and hinterland areas implement the policy at comparable levels. Likewise, no significant differences were observed across most dimensions when categorized according to type of school, except in Public Affairs and Finance Administration, where variations in resources and funding influenced implementation. Overall, the findings affirm that the Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy has been institutionalized across schools and serves as an effective mechanism for promoting gender equality, inclusive education, and positive learner development.

Recommendations

The School Division Office, district office, and elementary schools should strengthen capacity-building programs, gender mainstreaming initiatives, sex-disaggregated data management, monitoring and evaluation systems, benchmarking activities, and the provision of gender-responsive facilities and resources to ensure the sustained and effective implementation of the Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy (DepEd Order 32 s, 2017).

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