

## Conference Paper

# Gender Diversity and Inclusive Education among Women School Stakeholders in Selected Schools of Cavite: A Grounded Theory Study

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## Abstract

The study delved into the lived experiences of women in selected schools of the province of Cavite. The paper utilized grounded theory to propose an explanation on how gender diversity and inclusive education are being understood and appreciated by women in education. The study looked into the manner by which women engaged gender issues that continue to modify and shape the system of education and its environment and eventually craft a way of understanding and implementing education that is inclusive, respectful, soberly value-driven and person-centered. The participants of the research are ten (10) women coming from the education sector. Two (2) of them are professional parents who are also officers of the parents and teachers association. Two (2) of them are graduating students in college who are also leaders in their respective departments. Two (2) are administrators who are also engaged in research and extension. And four (4) are teachers and lecturers coming from the secondary and tertiary level. Six (6) of these women are also members of the focus group for gender awareness and promotion of women's rights in schools. Results show that women in education claimed that the process of gender diversity and inclusive education is all about a dynamic, person-centered and context-sensitive consideration of gender issues and challenges within the system of education. Women believe that education informs the understanding of gender and vice-versa. Women defined, interpreted and communicated the dynamic meaning of diversity and inclusion within their experience of womanhood, the human person, family-based values, the school and its community.

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## OPEN ACCESS

## 1. Introduction

*“There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”*

Education is personal and lifelong pursuit of learning. This is the reason why schools are considered as places where initiation to life is being honed and cultivated. Going beyond what is often described as objectivist and evidence-based view of learning, contemporary progressive schools often espoused a person-driven and grassroots-based approach to doing and appreciating education (Kelly, 2010; Bilbao et al., 2008). In line with sound metaphysical basis for learning, progressive view of education sees persons as inalienable subjects of dynamic formation. Person-based education, while being open for dialogue, promotes human dignity and does not compromise with any sort of conformism and relativistic tendency. In promoting learning by living, today's progressive schools adhere to a personalist and constructivist training of students to life and lifelong learning. Hence, having persons as permanent subjects of education, learning for life is never a generic or abstract experience.

For this, education gives due attention to specific and concrete instances of learners' experiences. As education happens within a school structure, it safeguards the dynamics and sanctity of an individual's formation. Before a school is a community of learners, it is a group of individuals with specific identity, culture, symbols, situation, and particular context (Hoy and Miskel, 2013; Deal and Peterson, 2009). Schools interpret and lead the delicate process of balancing community and individual identity. In upholding and promoting unity, progressive schools appreciate diversity based on the dignity of the human person (Kelly, 2010; Wojtyla, 2001).

In the last decades, trends in education have strongly emphasized the importance of education's inclusive character. Themes espoused and communicated by national and international agencies promoting excellence in social service include the slogan *education for all*. These themes depart from a subject-centered and context-sensitive reading and application of education as a universal right. Within this perspective, education is interpreted and realized as the emancipation and empowerment of all persons regardless of race, gender, sexuality, creed and culture. Education for all movement essentially upholds and promotes inclusive learning. It specially prioritizes and gives due preference to the disenfranchised and weaker sector of the human society (United Nations Educational Scientific Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2015). It brings the process of learning to what is fair and just while addressing the needs of what society considers marginalized or alienated individuals.

Sustaining the ideals of inclusive education necessarily requires concrete ways of appreciating diversity within the context of the schools. Inclusive education begins with the affirmation and respect of individual persons and therefore of diversity. Appreciation of diversity in education is all about recognition and acceptance of individual differences. The individuality of the human person is where inclusive education gets its impetus to espouse multi-ethnic, pluralistic and even secular orientation. It is the place for recognizing dignity and the seat to promote the inviolability of rights associated to the person (Wojtyla, 2001).

Individuality and difference in education, while connoting separation, are understood as openness and communication. Individuality is essentially engagement and connection. It must therefore transcend all forms of solipsism and discrimination. A realistic view of inclusive education engages man's context through his being simultaneously **separated** and **connected**. Diversity in education enriches the learners' environment and vice versa. What is saliently being highlighted here is the **identity**, or better, the **dignity** that underlies an individual person. A diversified identity is a **unique** and **embodied** rendition of what human dignity is (Montalbo, 1995). It accommodates and embraces all without condition and, as much as possible, it overcomes biases by way of dynamic integration.

Promotion of inclusive education then happens in the open understanding and experiencing of the value and dignity of the person. It is necessarily founded on the recognition of man's dignified identity that should be recognized, affirmed and respected (UNESCO, 2015).

During the past years, gender equality became one of the central issues in inclusive education. A careful reading of documents related to it discloses themes that include the recognition and affirmation of the human person, rights and contribution of women in the society, specifically, women's equal opportunity and place in their community. Gender equality became the **slogan** for the proper and just way of understanding, appreciating and promoting the roles and rights of women before the so-called male dominated society that has **tendency** to discriminate and isolate women as weaker sex (Stotsky, 2016; United Nations (UN), 2014; Branisa et al., 2013).

From being a social movement that promotes equality and equity between men and women, gender philosophy though became a system that espouses diversity in support of freedom to align sexuality to the culture and tradition of gender. Diversity here emphasizes choice as a means to liberate persons from so-called gender stereotyping. Some schools of thought related to the gender movement claim that sexuality must be something that is **biological** while gender is understood and appreciated as set of

**beliefs** and **behavior** learned or even, imposed upon individual persons in the family or by their community (Reeves and Baden, 2000). Recently, there are exponents of gender philosophy who even challenged the so-called *hetero-normative* way of looking and considering life in the society. Some sectors of the same movement claim that hetero-normativity discriminates, if not, violates the freedom of individual persons to be who they are according to their gender preferences. Among them, there are even movements lobbying for the re-writing and deconstructing of human history. They believe that human growth and development must be described not just in terms of heterosexual but also homosexual relations (Singh, 2007).

Recent developments in the field of gender movement speak of the necessity of gender re-assignment to rectify what is said to be *anomalous* in a person's life. The group advocates the need to accept other expressions of being a man and a woman today. It therefore raises the issue of respecting diversity by giving paramount importance to gender than to that of sexuality (Reeves and Baden, 2000). This means revolutionarily changing the environment where persons and families, under the present circumstances, are being understood and appreciated. Above all, the movement strongly advocates change in values and systems of the being and managing of life. This creates deep impact among members of the society in general and the community, in particular. Concomitant to the gender movement, there are now strong moves to universally accept same sex marriage, by modifying laws and even introducing new ways of understanding human family as the basic unit of the society.

For the sake of justice and fairness, education management and leadership cannot ignore this phenomenon. Recent turn of events related to certain gender movements necessitate the consideration of issues concerning the meaning of gender diversity in promoting inclusive education. The aim of this paper is to generate an explanation of how these gender issues are being understood and appreciated by women in the education sector. It wanted to understand the same issues from the vantage point of women considering the change of connotation, plurality of perspectives and development of frameworks in understanding gender diversity and inclusive education.

## 2. Statement of the Problem

The paper wanted to propose a theory of how gender diversity and inclusive education are being understood by women in education. It intended to explain how they experience and engage gender issues that continue to modify and shape the system of education and its environment and eventually present women's perspectives

and suggested practices of implementing education that is gender sensitive, inclusive, respectful of difference and soberly person-centered in values.

### 3. Purpose of the Study

Context-sensitive education process entails the interpretation and delivery of a curriculum based on ontological values that found and guide human judgment and decisions. This humanizing and person-centered process entails the critical accompaniment of students to lifelong learning. In this, man is both subject and cause to choices and decisions being made in the same field (Wojtyla, 2001; Montalbo, 1995). Education management and leadership are essentially rooted on these choices and decisions. These actions cannot be dissociated from a student-centered and context-driven learning. Present issues connected with the meaning of gender have crucial and long-term effects to the decisions directing the present education system. Before these issues, leaders and managers of schools are expected to have the means for critical appreciation and creative integration because they are expected to be gender sensitive and gender correct when it comes to their work of realizing visions and giving life to education. The paper was intended to enrich the art and science of education management by proposing an explanation of gender difference and inclusive learning from the experiences of women stakeholders in school. The resulting framework can be used as factual basis in making decisions to better sustain development directions and innovative tendencies in education.

### 4. Methodology

The research relied on the principles of basic qualitative research to provide an in-depth understanding and explanation of women's experience of diversified and inclusive education. When it speaks of experience, we are referring to the phenomena or the *lived experiences* of women in a specific context (Lichtman, 2013). Qualitative research analyses and interprets persons in their daily activities and natural environments. It subscribes to the idea that persons tend to act and influence others based on what they observe, hear and read. The employment then, of the process of qualitative research in this paper introduces to the personal and existential meanings, and even complexities, of women's experience of gender diversity in education. It leads through and beyond description to concept development and theory building (Bazeley, 2013).

## 5. Use of Grounded Theory

This work employed grounded theory from a personalist and constructivist perspective. It is personalist because it explains and interprets women's experience of gender diversity from the vantage point of the person. It begins with a metaphysical and axiological conviction that any meaningful experience takes place within its natural environment and inalienable subject – the human person (Wojtyla, 2001; Montalbo, 1995). It is constructivist (Charmaz, 2014; Crotty, 1998) because it understands and appreciates the existential dynamics of gender diversity within the meaning-making activity of women in education.

The research intended to know and understand how women in education experience gender diversity and inclusive education. By engaging in grounded theory methodology, the participants of the research adopt the role of co-learners and suspend preconceptions in order to be open to discovery and the emergence of theory (Charmaz, 2014; Barry and Hartman, 2014).

While there is a significant amount of data and information being used to present gender diversity among women in education, little is certain about the proper framework that must be adopted to give justice to the subject matter of the study. Thus grounded theory was used to *generate* theory relating to the phenomenon of gender diversity and inclusive education. Grounded theory is commonly used to generate theory where *little* is known about the phenomenon (Goulding, 2002). This process enables categories to emerge as the main issues of the participants are discovered (Buchanan, 2006).

The research design followed the principles of data collection and analysis promoted by Corbin and Strauss's (2015) where the emphasis is on the gender categories and theory emerging from the data. The data were treated on their own basis, without making presuppositions about where they should or could lead (Charmaz, 2014). The study did not allow preconceived concepts and hypotheses to dictate the units of analysis of the study. Gender concepts derived from data analysis and questions about the same concepts have driven the dynamics of data collection (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Units of analysis were allowed to emerge directly and solely from the data. They are considered the most basic and key variables emerging from the study; they were products of the participants' words.

## 6. Data Generation and Selection of Co-Participants

The participants of the research are ten (10) women coming from the education sector. Two (2) of them are professional parents who are also officers of the parents and teachers association. Two (2) of them are graduating students in college who are also leaders in their respective departments. Two (2) are administrators who are also engaged in research and extension. And four (4) are teachers and lecturers coming from the secondary and tertiary level. The last six (6) women are member of the focus group for gender awareness and promotion of women's rights in schools (Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Memorandum number 1, series of 2015). The selection of participants considers above all the depth, intensity and extensiveness of the experiences they have of gender diversity and inclusive education in their respective sectors and interest.

## 7. Data Analysis

According to the same principles of grounded theory, the study employed coding and memoing to compare and contrast emerging gender concepts and their properties and dimensions, with an eye toward the final narrative (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). They helped reflect upon the process, and provide points of reference and clarity for the later stages of the writing process. Textual analysis and comparison were done through the use of *MAXQDA* version 11.

## 8. Open Coding

The initial coding reads through the women's words for indicators or sensitizing codes connected with diversity and inclusive education. An indicator or code may be a segment of text or as short as a word and as long as a few sentences. Generated gender codes are results of analysis indicating the *property, dimension and context* of the data. As gender indicators or codes emerging from the data accumulated, those that were found to be strongly *related to one another* were grouped together into a concept. Similarly, as concepts accumulated, they were grouped together into a category (Corbin and Strauss, 2015; Charmaz, 2014).

The process of open coding followed the principles of data collection and analysis promoted by Corbin and Strauss (2015) and Charmaz (2014) where the emphasis is on codes emerging from the data. *Scientific rigor or credibility* of this process depends on

the intrinsic connection and embedding of codes to the data. Continuous comparison of gender codes, concepts, categories and data has been constant in all the phases of the study.

## 9. Axial Coding

Axial coding is employed by taking each gender category or variable in the light of Glaser's six C's: *causes, contexts, contingencies, consequences, co-variances, and conditions* (Glaser, 1998). This is one of the distinctive features of the axial coding phase. *Hypotheses* were developed by *testing* each of the different categories as a potential *focal category*, incorporating questions that naturally arise from the six C's, and considering which category appears to offer the *best fit*. In short, categories on gender difference and inclusion, in axial coding, are *compared* and *analysed* for connection, similarity and association to individuate the *focal category*. It must be noted that comparison and analysis of this coding follow the principles and processes present in the initial or open coding. Axial coding may also be referred to as *focused coding* (Charmaz, 2014).

## 10. Selective Coding

Selective coding was used in the study to establish the *main plot* and storyline of gender diversity and inclusive education (Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2015). It excavated through the *properties, dimensions and relations* of women's experience of gender categories and processes that tie the whole of the data together into a coherent, tangible, explainable whole. Considering the subtleties of axial or focused coding, it was in this phase that the study intended to develop the entirety of women's understanding and appreciation of gender difference and inclusion, weaving together the focal categories and processes identified in the previous coding phases into a coherent composition, and plotting out additional intricacies and ways of positing the necessary paradigm to understand gender diversity and inclusion among women in education.

## 11. Theoretical Sampling and Saturation

Seen as continuation of axial or focused coding and associated with the making of the plot or storyline, theoretical sampling is viewed as the process of collecting data based



on the categories that appear to be relevant to the evolving story line of women's understanding of gender difference and inclusive education (Corbin and Strauss, 2015, p. 195).

Theoretical sampling is concept driven. Gender concepts themselves are sampled in the data. Co-researchers or participants, coming from different places and situations, provided the data that disclose the meaning of these concepts. We reiterate though that theoretical sampling did not sample persons but experiences (Barry and Hartman, 2014).

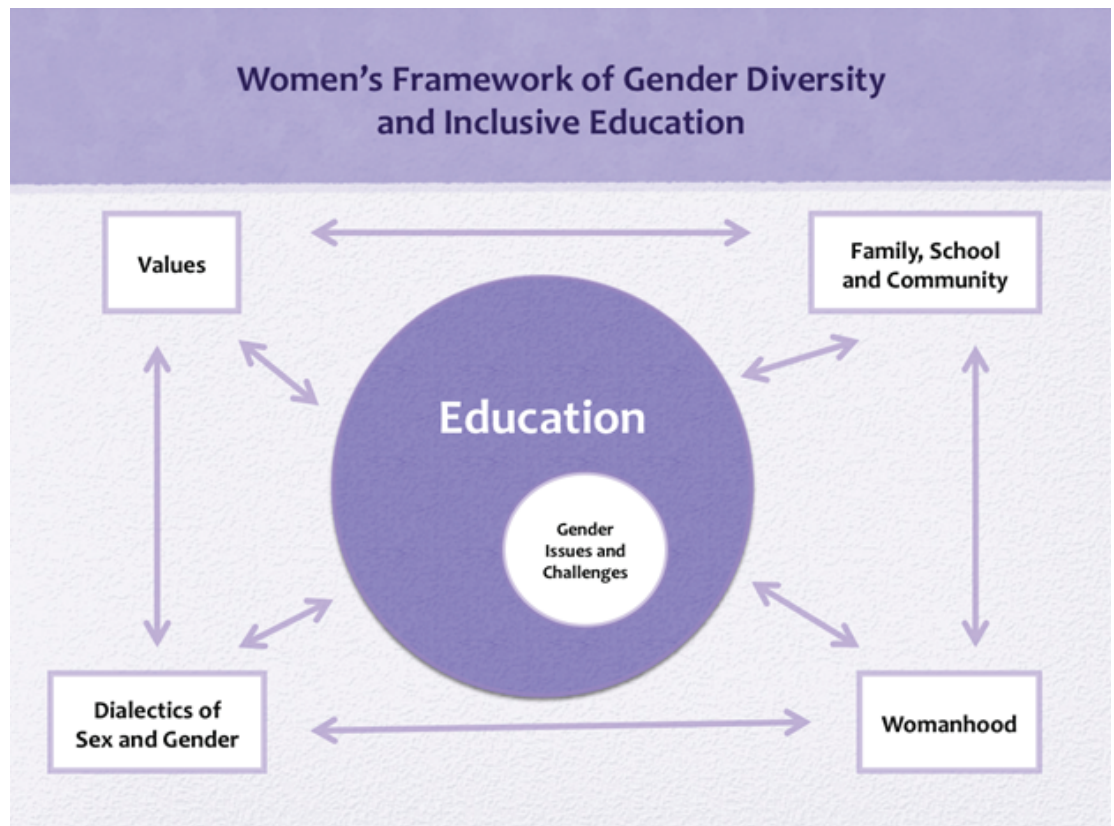
Unlike conventional methods, we did not begin the analysis of gender issues only after all the data were gathered. Data analysis went simultaneously with data generation. "Data collection led to analysis. Analysis led to concepts. Concepts generated questions. Questions led to more data collection so that the researcher might learn more about the emerging concepts" (Corbin and Strauss, 2015, pp. 144-145; Charmaz, 2014).

Theoretical sampling tested the links of concepts and core categories in view of the theory to be developed. As the research followed the leads of gender concepts and categories, it always opens itself to what might be uncovered, it stayed in the analytical process until the categories were *saturated* and this occurred when no new data emerged. This is the point when all categories are *well developed* in terms of properties, dimensions and variations (Corbin and Strauss, 2015). This method facilitated the discovery of significant and possible concepts and categories related to understanding gender diversity and inclusive education according to their properties and dimensions.

## 12. Results and Analysis

The results showed that the phenomenon of gender diversity and inclusive education in the Philippine system has really been informing and modifying the education environment at all levels (Philippine Commission on Women (PCW), 2016; Gavino-Gumba, 2013). Women see education, as a fundamental right, and gender diversity is essential to the understanding of this right. For example, understanding women's gender equality means having the same rights and opportunities in life as men. They believe that integration is the process of leveling barriers by ending segregation and creating equal and equitable opportunities for everyone. For them, inclusive education is a radical democratic approach to creating, developing, and sustaining inquiry-based, bias-free learning communities.

Figure 1 portrays the process map of how women stakeholders in selected schools of Cavite understand and appreciate gender diversity and inclusivity in the field of education.



**Figure 1:** Women's framework of gender diversity and inclusive education.

Women in education claimed that gender diversity and inclusiveness occupy the core of dynamic, person-centered and context sensitive consideration of a meaningful system of education. Women believe that education informs the understanding of gender diversity and vice-versa. Women defined, interpreted and communicated the dynamic meaning of diversity and inclusion within their experience of womanhood, the dialects of sex and gender, family-based values, the school and its community.

### 13. Gender diversity

Women believe that the understanding gender diversity is a transversal process. It intersects diverse controversial issues and challenging life realities. Women admit that issues on gender diversity shape and define the complex system of education. Gender diversity is a crucial factor in interpreting and delivering learning. It thus requires attention and serious reflection.

Women believe that gender diversity is situated right at the heart of the present system of education. It provides new socially accepted ways of interpreting differences in the education community. It is by way of it that members composing the same school community define the meaning of sense of belonging. Within the present educational state of affairs, women believe that present place of gender diversity in education is *part* of the phenomenon of globalization. They say,

*For me po, as a female... ang education is a big role in determining kung ano yung magiging future mo. Kumbaga yun yung magiging susi mo para buksan yung mga opportunities kung san ka mapupunta in the years ahead.*

*Edukasyon po para sa lahat. Ah, walang mahirap, walang mayaman, walang babae, walang lalake. So dapat (lahat) may karapatang matuto.*

*Off hand, when you talk about inclusive education, parang, it's education for everyone. Na sama-sama. Ke mahirap, mayaman, matalino, hindi matalino, abled, disabled. Sama-sama.*

Gender diversity then, is one of the present signs of time. It is a dimension of the progressive education system that caters to everyone without exemption. Most important of all, women claim that gender diversity has strengthened school communities' attention, consideration and recognition of the different marginalized sectors present in the society. In some instances, it has become almost synonymous with the call to fight and overcome poverty and to promote the right to education for everyone.

Women affirm that gender diversity also enriches the meaning of *difference*. It has become an opportunity that opens avenues for women development. Gender diversity made women realized that education is the best way of finding their places in the society and of defining their future. It becomes new basis to promote equality in the society. It cuts through and modified alienating stereotypes and biases. It has given new meaning to the dynamics of choice, freedom, women, recognition and respect. Gender diversity highlights what education is – human promotion. In line with this, gender equality becomes equal identity and recognition of roles. Women claim that being different does not lessen nor diminish the possibility to contribute to the community and realize one's self in the process. On the contrary, it supplies values that sustain the existing differences and identity of being a man and a woman in the society. Gender diversity cannot be dissociated from a person's identity, education and upbringing. Gender diversity touches the essence of being a human person. It identifies who persons are and opens them up to the proper appreciation and respect of other perspectives.

## 14. Education

Women believe that education is a great equalizer. It brings out the best of them and of their roles in the society. They affirm that it is a natural right and a value that cannot be dissociated from their dignity as persons. Gender in education opens up new horizons. It opens up new possibilities. It introduces a new interpretation of time, place and manner of being women and deconstructs the stereotypical consideration of women as persons destined to stay in and keep the house. Women see gender issues opening their horizon and projecting them to the world of work as professionals and persons with specific expertise. They say,

*Ayun parang nagiging through education po... Kapag may education yung babae parang nagiging empowered woman ka na... dahil 'di ba compared before na laging nasa bahay lang po yung mga babae po. Kung may education yung babae, mas malaki po yung possibility na pwede silang magtrabaho ng mga professional work po... maging professional po.*

*Ayun bilang isang babae na teacher... Kasi po... before kasi 'di ba lagi na lang parang may discrimination ang babae at saka lalake. Na noon ang nabibigyan lang ng chance to study and to be educated yung mga males lang. So ngayon nung nabigyan ng chance yung mga babae, as bilang babae, proud po ako. Proud po ako na meron kaming karapatan na makapag-aral, maging edukada. Medyo makapantay kahit papaano sa kakayahan ng mga lalake, at saka po makatulong sa pamilya, at sa mga bata lalong-lalo na bilang guro.*

Women claim that the introduction of gender mentality in education liberates. It spells out the difference between exercising freedom and its privation. Gender mentality gives women the wisdom and drive to change perspectives and ways of being creative. It instills hope while re-inventing women's identity so they fit in to present trends of living in their specific environment. Gender, in education, innovates and changes personal outlook. It supplies the new quality and dimension to values, standards and women's formation in general.

Gender sensitive education also defines and shapes women's ways of looking at themselves and their places in the family. Through it, women learn to re-read and understand what dignity is. It teaches them to blend firmness with tenderness so they face tough decisions with grace and serenity. In their moments of learning, women see gender related issues as catalysts for the intensification of value associated with their identity and commitment.

## 15. Values

Women's understanding and appreciation of the concept of value are inseparable with their identity, experience of honor, and self-worth. This is most important for women when they speak of gender diversity and inclusive education. They claim that womanhood must be understood and appreciated integrally. Always upholding their dignity, women see themselves as acting and working in a certain way because they are women. Womanhood then, can never be properly defined and lived without values sustaining it. They say,

*Ano po... feeling ko po kasi... kasama po sa timpla ng pag-aaral nung mga babae. Kasi po pag babae po kasi, sila po yung...binibigay... yung buong puso nila to the extent na kahit maging selfless na po... Kasi po parang as a female, as a girl when we have this goal, kaya po naming kumbaga kahit ano pong mangyari makukuha po namin siya sa abot po ng aming makakaya. Tsaka po nandun po yung emotional attachment dun sa isang bagay. So the more na nagugustuhan namin yung ginagawa namin, for example, studying. The more that yung effort exerted mas malaki po siya.*

Values, for women, represent a definite and identifying direction that they need to pursue in life. Values serve as basis of their choice and therefore the foundation of their freedom. They say,

*Nirerespeto ko po pero mas naniniwala po ko sa female at male. Wala kong problema po sa kung gay ka man or lesbian. Pero mas naniniwala po ako na female at male lang po talaga. Pero wala akong problema sa kanila kung ganon man po yung nararamdaman nila. Pero may choice naman po kasi yung tao at the first place... Siguro po dahil nag-start na rin sa bahay. Kasi sobrang strikto po talaga ng tatay ko. Dapat ganito, dapat ganyan. Dapat mag-aral, dapat may honor.*

Principles and even rules learned from the family underlie women's value system. Difficult choices not compromises make up a woman's value. They are taught and learned the hard way by persons (parents) who considered authorities in the family.

Women also affirm that values can never be understood unless they are associated to their experience of religion. Women values are faith-based. Virtues, as morally good operative habit, have their meaning because women based them on solid values. Respect for one's self, love of the family, the importance of time, the goodness of

relationship – all gravitate and have their efficacy because of values associated with women's faith. Speaking of their gender and their religious orientation, they say,

*Uhm meron po akong mga gay friends. Meron po akong mga yung mga bi, mga lesbian. Ok naman po sakin basta po masaya po sila sa ginagawa nila... Nirerespeto ko po sila as kung dun po sila magiging masaya, kung dun sila magiging productive. Pero when it comes po dun sa yun nga po, sa tinatawag po nating same sex marriage para pong I still believe that a man is for woman... (pero) para sa akin po ang iba bukod sa kultura papasok din po kasi diyan yung ano yung pananampalataya ko. Kasi po... Catholic na education... mas iba po yung level...*

For women, religious and family culture stand and coincide with their recognition and appreciation of gender difference. Religious and family values are essential initiating factors in knowing and accepting gender diversity. They define what is right and to be upheld when it comes to gender issues. They are irreplaceable foundations of the manner by which personal and family values are lived. Values are essentially expression and mentality that define, govern and direct the family. Values are existentially tied up with religion and the family because self-definition and development are continuation of what is way of acting and relation to faith and in the same family.

## 16. Womanhood

Women's understanding of womanhood goes beyond physical differences. Values that direct women in education are expressions or better emanations of their womanhood. Womanhood is determination, resilience, perspective, principle and strength. It spells out the difference between sheer estimation of life and giving meaning to it. Values are existential and personal interpretations of womanhood. Correct and conscientious way of living, knowledge and readiness of what they ought to do, all gravitate in their own unique way of valuing and respecting themselves. They say,

*Para po sakin kasi po yung pagiging babae, kumbaga naniniwala po kasi ako na lahat ng bagay kumbaga yung nangyayari po kasi po may dahilan. Kaya yung halimbawa po yung kapag... ang kahalagahan na alam mo yung kung bakit ka narito, alam mo yung dapat mong gawin. Kapag alam mo yung nangyayari sa paligid yung kumbaga halimbawa po role. Kung alam mo kung ano yung dapat mong gawin mas uhm kumbaga... kung alam mo kung ano yung dapat mong gawin magagawa mo po siya... Alam mo yung role mo lalo na kami. Diba po*

*parang innate na nagnunurture yung mga kababaihan. Yung kumbaga yung parang alam po dapat namin sa sarili namin*

The dynamic understanding of womanhood serves as the environment for the cultivation and shaping of women's values. It is both identity and discipline. Womanhood, as foundation of dignity, is the existential foundation of women's choices and personal conviction. Principles to fight and stand for are person-based but are also characteristically woman-driven and woman-centered. They say,

*Uhm meron po akong mga gay friends. Meron po akong mga yung mga bi, mga lesbian. Ok naman po sakin basta po masaya po sila sa ginagawa nila. Hindi sila nakakasakit pero to the point po na kapag pinasok po natin yung usapan ng same sex marriage... ganon. Hindi na po ako parang sang-ayon dun. Nirerespeto ko po sila as kung dun po sila magiging masaya, kung dun sila magiging productive. Pero when it comes po dun sa yun nga po, sa tinatawag po nating same sex marriage para pong I still believe that a man is for woman.*

Decisions women do on the basis of their principles are not simple products of compromises but of clear and responsible choices. They are therefore life-defining decisions enabling women to face and engage difficulties with resilience and tenacity. Womanhood-based principles are women's interpretive key to look and scrutinize the world. They are women's foundation and measure to comprehend and appreciate their potentialities and worth as an individual and as woman. Womanhood, though, is not experienced a close way of being. In fact womanhood is *being-with* by nature. It is profoundly accommodation and recognition of the other.

## 17. Family, School and Community

Women consider school and community, particularly the family, as important social systems that shape and define their understanding of gender diversity and inclusive education. They are places where they interpret, express and share their identity and roles in life. The family, the school and the community are important contexts where they experience the meaning of their difference as women and the existential significance of their roles as teachers, parents, sisters, aunts, administrators and researchers. Learning in family, schools and in communities defines the meaning and exercise of freedom and sense of independence among women. They say,

*Siguro po dahil nag-start na rin sa bahay. Kasi sobrang strikto po talaga ng tatay ko. Dapat ganito, dapat ganyan. Dapat mag-aral, dapat may honor.*

*Kasi po ngayon kung titingnan ko, kung i-cocompare ko yung sarili ko sa mga kapatid ko, mas ano po, mas nakakatulong ako sa pamilya kesa sa kanila. So dun po sa pagsunod sa tatay ko, hindi ako nagkamali. Ayun din po kasi ang ginusto ng tatay ko sa kanila.*

*Edukasyon po? Lagi po kasing sinasabi saakin ni mama dati na yung edukasyon daw po yun lang yung tanging mapapamana niya saakin. Yung parang meaning po nun saakin na dapat parang napakahalaga niya po para saakin simula pagkabata pa lang na yung... simula pagkabata na sa bahay pa lang tinuturuan ka na kung pano. Sa bahay po ang unang ituturo sayo... pano ka gumalang, gumawang trabahong gawaing bahay... Attitude nga po kumbaga.*

Learning given in the family becomes not simply wanting what others want but expressing one's self, based on what one decides with responsibility and concern for those who are part of the same decision process. Women claim that often, these decisions are *value-changing if not determining*.

Departing though from their own experience, as woman and as person, women also translate their understanding of gender difference within the terms of non-discriminating and sober consideration of themselves and of others. While women integrate their personal values to the prevailing values of their families, they verbalize gender difference considering the existential meaning of the person and its environment. While values are formed by the critical relationships they have with the members of their family, they can be lenient and, at times, liberal in their expressions. More than often though, they interpret, elaborate and therefore, assess life considering what their parents impart. They say,

*Disiplina ng nanay ko po sa akin? Mag-cite po ako ng mga instances. So, siguro po yung, like, simple cases when I would ask permission if I would go out for a party. Then she will allow me but she will tell me the bounds: like you have to be home at this time, you can go out but I have to know your friends. Yun po, as long as nasusunod ko po yun, at hindi ko nabre-break, I earn her trust. And so the next time she can always allow me because may trust na po.*

*Very thankful po ako. Kasi, dahil po sa decision ng tatay ko nandito na ako. Hindi naman po ako katulad ng dalawang ate ko na wala pong trabaho. Although sila ay tapos rin po. (laughs)... pagka sinabi nating pag-aaral, pagka sinabi nating edukasyon ng isang tao... nandun yung pamimili, karapatan mo, kalayaan mo, pero, bukas ka doon sa pagsunod sa magulang mo... sabihin nating isa sa mahalagang values sa pag-aaral mo ay yun pamilya mo, particular magulang.*



Women's analysis of important issues and choices for solutions are still very much associated with *authorities* directing and accompanying the family. They direct and accompany women in sharing life-defining values. Firmness and resilience are taught by *walking the talk*. Parents, as authoritative references, spontaneously interpret and deliver values within the dynamics of personal and raw family relations. Family-learned values form behaviors that women demonstrate in schools and in their communities.

*Kasi po lumaki po ako na nakakulong lang. Kumbaga yung pakikipag-interact ko po sa ibang tao nag-start lang po talaga yun nung nasa college ako. Medyo lang po yun. Medyo maliit na group pa lang yun. Kasi po nung nag-aaral po ako talagang bahay-eskwela lang.*

*Siguro po dahil nag-start na rin sa bahay. Kasi sobrang strikto po talaga ng tatay ko. Dapat ganito, dapat ganyan. Dapat mag-aral, dapat may honor. Balik ka parin sa kultura talaga... (sa) kulturang (ng) Pilipinas, kulturang bahay... ugaling bahay.*

They also call this *ugaling bahay*. It can be interpreted and described as principles that shape women's character and even set of rules that are directive and constitutive of their person. *Kulturang bahay* makes a women's character sober and coherent. It helps women hold their ground and not fall into absurd compromises and interpretations especially when life-defining values are being tested by gender related issues.

## 18. Dialectics of Sex and Gender

Women in education openly declare that they are gender sensitive. Most of them admit that this attitude springs from the formation they have undergone within their environment. Women's experiences of environment are those associated with human relations and practical decisions. It is the place where women interpret and express their personal identity and independence and is therefore connected to the dynamic meaning of diversity and difference. Gender diversity is a choice that women make to become part of the existing system they find in the group. As they wanted to be respected when it comes to the choices they make, so they accept what others follow according to their responsibilities. Women believe that manhood and womanhood are identities, and sexuality is expression of one or the other. This is where gender, as choice and culture, becomes an existentially hazy concept because it is identified

with sexuality. Women accept a culture where gender (notwithstanding its theoretical basis) is identified with sexuality and sexual orientation. They say,

*I have friends who are lesbians and who are gays, but it doesn't mean na, uhm...two sides of the coin yan eh... (it) doesn't mean that I accept them totally and it doesn't mean that I discriminate them. So as long as they will behave as a human being, according to our...how I define it, then it's ok by me. Because I'm...tao rin po sila, and, mabait rin po sila sa akin, and we share the same ideals, as long as hindi ganun na loud, hindi beyond sa pagiging normal na tao - tao na 'to... ha hindi na gender, tao - then...I mean...*

*Well, I think it's only in the expression. Because I think identity is just...you're either a man or a woman. But when you say sexuality it's how you express yourself.*

Women claim that there are standing problems associated to the understanding and appreciation of gender diversity and inclusive education. These issues are traceable to the meaning of gender and sex. While women confirm that gender sensitivity is a necessary prerequisite to mainstream gender related issues and orientations, they believe that gender mainstreaming begins with respect of one's self. They claim that proper consideration for others facilitates the appreciation and promotion of gender sensitivity. Women are convinced that gender diversity is good because it does not cause harm. Although they also admit that there are instances of easy comparison where gender difference is superiority and, identity as manhood and womanhood is of lesser value. They say,

*Hindi naman po in the sense na harmful. May ilan po, not all, pero may ilan pong mga gay na friends, acquaintances...ano po, yung feeling po kasi nila girl na talaga sila. Parang they would diminish yung girls po talaga na parang "I'm prettier than you" ganyan, "I'm sexier than you" parang to the point na parang iba na po yung nagiging dating na just because you're gay you could actually be ahead or be a step higher than girls.*

The word gender and sex, notwithstanding their distinct theoretical bases, are easily being identified with and used to mean the same thing – sex. Taking for granted, if not totally setting aside their existential and semantic distinction, gender and sex may be acritically used to connote the same thing. Women in education accept this practice because of gender correctness. They say,

*Because (...) tao rin po sila, and, mabait rin po sila sa akin, and we share the same ideals, as long as hindi ganun na loud, hindi beyond sa pagiging normal*

*na tao - tao na 'to... ha hindi na gender, tao – then...I mean... Nirerespeto ko po pero mas naniniwala po ko sa female at male. Wala kong problema po sa kung gay ka man or lesbian. So as long as they will behave as a human being, according to our...how I define it, then it's ok by me.*

Gender correctness, for women in education, cannot therefore be dissociated from proper social behavior. When someone comes out to the open and declares his or her real sex orientation, women in education are always ready to accept and respect gender differences. Without compromising their values, especially those associated with their families, they are open to gender differences and are honest advocates of inclusive education.

## 19. Conclusions

Considering the questions in the statement of the problems, the paper has the following conclusions:

1. Women in education believe that understanding gender diversity is a transversal process. Women in education admit that issues on gender diversity shape and define the complex system of education. Gender diversity is a crucial factor in interpreting and delivering formation. Women claim that gender diversity is a socially accepted new way of interpreting differences in the education community. Women in education believe that gender difference characterizes what is known today as open system of learning.
2. Women believe that gender issues belong to the present signs of time, that is, to the progressive education system that caters to everyone without exemption. Women emphasized that gender issues strengthened school communities' attention, consideration and recognition of the different marginalized sectors present in the society. Gender issues have become almost synonymous with the call to fight and overcome poverty and to promote the right to education for everyone.
3. Women affirmed that the concept of gender diversity enriches the meaning of *difference*. It has become an opportunity that opens avenues for women development. It has highlighted what equality is among sexes. Women claimed that gender awareness made them realized that education is the best way of finding their places in the society and of defining their future.
4. Women believe that gender diversity highlights what education is – human promotion. Gender equality becomes equal identity and recognition of roles and

being different does not lessen nor diminish the possibility to contribute to the community. Gender equality realizes persons in the process.

5. Women are convinced that gender diversity in education liberates. It spells out the difference between exercising freedom and its privation. It gives the wisdom and drive to change perspectives and ways of being creative. It instills hope while re-inventing women's identity so they fit in to present trends of living in their specific environment. It defines and shapes women's ways of looking at themselves and their places in the family. Gender in education teaches them to blend firmness with tenderness so they face tough decisions with grace and serenity.
6. Women in education present the concept of gender diversity departing from their identity and experience of honor and self-worth. They claim that womanhood must be understood and appreciated integrally. Women see themselves as acting and working in a certain way because they are women. Women promote communion while advocating diversity.
7. Women in education affirm that value can never be understood unless it is associated to women's understanding of religion. Religion still determines and shapes gender axioms of women in education. Women's values are faith-based. They determine and guide their choices and appreciation of gender identities and roles. While remaining open to the different interpretations of life in the society, women in education still subscribe to what is sacrosanct in the family.
8. Women's understanding of womanhood goes beyond physical differences. Values that direct women in education are expressions or better emanations of their womanhood. Womanhood is determination, resilience, perspective, principle and strength. It spells out the difference between sheer estimation of life and giving meaning to it. Values are existential and personal interpretations of womanhood. Womanhood serves as basis for understanding diversity and inclusiveness is teaching and learning process. It becomes the foundation and measure to comprehend and appreciate their potentialities and worth as an individual and as a woman. Womanhood is *being-with* by nature. It is profound accommodation and recognition of the *other*.
9. Women in education openly declare that they are gender sensitive. They spontaneously and sometimes acritically embrace present issues and values associated with gender diversity and inclusive education. Most of them admit that this attitude springs from the formation they have undergone within their environment.

Women's experiences of environment are those associated with human relations and practical decisions. Gender diversity is a choice that women make to become part of the existing system they find in the group.

10. Women confirm that gender sensitivity is a necessary prerequisite to mainstream gender related issues and orientations. Women believe that gender mainstreaming begins with respect of one's self and that consideration for others. It facilitates the appreciation and promotion of gender sensitivity. Gender correctness, for women in education, cannot be dissociated from proper social behavior. When someone comes out to the open and declares his or her real sex orientation, women in education are always ready to accept and respect gender differences.

## 20. Recommendations

Women's lived experience and interpretation of gender diversity and inclusive education offer context-sensitive points and perspectives that could be considered crucial in leading and managing 21<sup>st</sup> century school environments. Gender frameworks and movements are dynamically defining and shaping not just the contents but also the values and the environment of where education happens.

After presenting its conclusions, the study wants to give the following recommendations to be considered in the leading and management of schools:

1. Gender diversity and inclusive education should introduce school leaders to a more intense, existential, pluralistic and multi-cultural dialogue and appreciation of stakeholders, the school context and environment;
2. Leaders must promote constant discussion and consideration of school core values and culture vis-à-vis the changing needs, context and situations of the school stakeholders;
3. There should be healthy, open-minded, critical and multicultural consideration of gender issues among the members of schools' education community;
4. The role of women in education cannot be underestimated. They play important roles in the interpretation and delivery of school curriculum both as women and as persons. Conversations and dialogues in schools therefore must not just highlight the functions that women have and do in education but also and above all, their identity that define and shape the same functions.

## Appendix A

### Sample questions for the unstructured interview (Gender Diversity and Inclusive Education)

#### Initial Questions

Where are you coming from?

How many years have you been teacher/ stakeholder?

Can you describe your years of stay/ association in school as a woman?

#### Intermediate Questions

Can you describe your understanding of the word *gender*?

What is the importance of the phrase *gender diversity and inclusive education*?

Explain.

How do you appreciate other sexual orientations in school?

What is the importance of the gender movement for you? Explain

How do you relate yourself to the gender movement?

How do you integrate gender culture to the teaching and learning process taking place in school?

What is the effect of the LGBT movement to your life/ value system as a stakeholder?

#### Closing Questions

How would you promote inclusive education based on your appreciation of gender diversity?

Do you agree in changing values based on sexual orientation? Why?

Any final word or suggestions?

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