

A Conceptual Framework for Teaching an Introductory Course on Gender

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Nais ipahayag ng papel na ito ang kahalagahan ng kurso sa kasarian bilang isang interbensiyong pang-edukasyon sa pagbibigay perspektibo sa pag-unawa sa lipunan. Ang balangkas ay tumutukoy sa iba't ibang konsepto na nagbibigay daan sa mapanuring pag-aaral ng mga aspeto ng bawat kasarian at ang kaugnayan nito sa lipunan.

Ang lapit ay binuo sa pamamagitan ng pagtingin sa lipunan bilang isang pangkabuuan kung saan ang isang dimensyon nito ay ang usaping pangkasarian. Ito ay hinulma ng tradisyon ng makataong agham panlipunan na kumikilala sa potensyal ng bawat indibidwal na umunlad ayon sa kakayanan nito para sa sarili at sa kolektibong transpormasyon.

Gender is lived in the routine relations engaged in social life. This relation is traditionally based on the differences between a woman and a man. In most societies, living this distinction has brought tremendous difficulties on women, inflicted by men and even by women themselves on their own persons as part of a cultural orientation. Yet men and women related in love and marriage have often regarded that condition as normative, invariably institutionalizing a gendered environment. This kind of orientation has led to typical and not-so-typical forms of gender practices which have long threatened certain values we hold dear. Today, the currents of change dominate as society rethinks the gender issue.

This discussion reckons with the consequences of our gendered world and explores the idea of intervening through

the process of education. The objectives are: first, to think and be aware of the gender-constitution of everyday life; second, to observe how gender defines the path of routine relationships and the subsequent issues generated by such relations upon our personal and collective lives; and third, to show how education can become a relevant process in re-defining our gendered environment.

The Concept of Gender

Gender is a social construct. It refers to roles which society attributes to being male or female based on biological differences. In sociology, gender is treated as a structural feature of society in the same way as social class, social institutions and all other societal structures which are significant components in viewing society as a whole. It is also an analytic category, the basis of how individuals think about and organize their beliefs, ideas and social activities, including one's institutional involvements in the larger society (Hess, Markson & Stein, 1993).

Across different societies, such role-constitution may or may not differ between males and females depending upon how particular societies view or define the distinctions between the sexes. Cultural definitions of gender may range from sharp distinctions of differences to one where there may be none at all. The latter is exemplified by tribal societies where the young, whether male or female, are socialized to the same roles and made to undertake tasks with no particular sexual biases. Most contemporary societies, however, have been transformed by the early forces of capitalism which pioneered in establishing the sexual division of labor between men and women; the men to work outside the home in capitalist factories and the women to remain at home to attend to the children and the household chores, ultimately defining distinct sexual roles. Other kinds of socialization environments have also led to other gender orientations like homosexuality and lesbianism.

Aside from the genderization of roles in society, roles are also evaluated in terms of the supposed contribution specific roles make to society. Gender then is often a feature of the inherent structure of social inequality which may lead a society to exhibit a particular preference for a specific gender. The result is gender hierarchy or a condition of sexual inequality with unequal distributions of power, prestige and property between female and male. Sexual inequality pervades social life with more societies observing the patriarchal mode of orientation which upholds male dominance and subordinates women. This inequality is exemplified in the way women are discriminated against in all areas of societal life, including the home where their presence ideally should be most favored.

Gender Situationnaire in the Philippines

The gender situation in our society can best be observed from the micro scenes involving the casual relations of everyday life to the macro relations of the larger society. As earlier noted, these relations become issues when vested interests dominate rather than the values of equity and sharing in the relationship between man and woman. As a nation struggling to develop, the range of issues which touch and even consume our lives are numerous, varied and closely interconnected to one another. Patriarchy, the belief which asserts male superiority over women, is one such issue. Because it is so neatly woven into the logic of our everyday life, we hardly notice its persistence and the resulting aches and pains that deeply wound our persons. The effects of patriarchal practices transcend the relations of home, invariably flowing into other areas where women are involved. There is a strong and dominant cultural orientation to subordinate women, manifested in the choice of men in key positions despite equally qualified women contenders, higher pay for men who occupy the same job positions as women and other practices that tend to marginalize women. These are all conditioning factors that consolidate toward a societal view of women as

inferior to men and which impact on women in proportions beyond their personal control.

Gender and Patriarchy

Patriarchy normatively undermines the position of women in our society. While pre-Hispanic Philippines saw more equality between the sexes, colonization and capitalism increasingly legitimized and reinforced the lowering of the status of women (Rodriguez, 1990). This development emerged from the transformation of women's labor from basic participant in the area of "socially necessary labor time" during the clan era to a phase where the division of labor within the capitalist paradigm relegated women to work at home as a measure to ensure the honorific name of the male spouse. This concern is related to the concept of private property and the desire of men to have their children as sole heirs to accumulated property. Keeping women at home assured the men that those who will inherit their wealth are indeed their children (Engels, 1972).

Continuing patriarchy in our society perpetuates inequity and further accentuates the view of women as "victims" with domestic violence, sexual harassment and rape becoming more visible and common in addition to the traditional domesticity and work discrimination that consistently cage women in specific roles vis-à-vis men. The variety of media forms institutionalize this reality further as they reinforce and perpetuate a degrading perspective violative of women. Ads, sit-coms, language, comics and billboards dramatize and highlight this type of domination by presenting women as sexual objects and victims.

Today, as globalization intensifies, studies reveal that women are becoming more burdened as more of them seek entry into the formal labor force where their position and work are continuously evaluated as inferior to men. Across social classes, this condition differs in form and intensity, revealing

further that informal work among women of lower classes are increasing in number and types as structural adjustment programs of government subject households to increasing maintenance costs and marginalization. More creative mechanisms are being employed differentially by women in various households to generate alternative production and consumption patterns to ensure survival. Continuously, men provide inadequate wage money while women shoulder the traditional and now increasing "shortfalls" in household reproduction. (Beneria & Feldman, 1992; Bautista & Dungo, 1986). In other families, no longer are women staying home to take care of the young; they are actively self-employed or formally employed in varied circumstances, further increasing their vulnerability as "women" in a patriarchal society.

This reality represents a violation of the core of society's soul, our social values, which we uphold as the sacred underpinnings of the morality of our collective lives. How do we justify to future generations the heritage of egalitarian values if in our everyday life we experience the violation of these values among ourselves, when children see their fathers relate to their mothers in derogatory ways, or observe institutions that perpetuate patriarchal values? These children will see no reason why they should not do what their fathers do. Parental behaviors, values and beliefs are the main conduits for transmitting the contradictions that undermine our moral fibre. Daily, children observe what parents do to each other, or what they say during heated exchanges. These become inputs into the memories which children, in turn, transmit to their children in the next generation. The early socialization period is when these practices are effectively transmitted, when the mechanisms that further legitimize these contradictions and perpetuate their continuity are instilled. Because children during this period are keen observers of their surroundings, including their parents' relationships, they absorb everything they see without discrimination. These early observations become enduring marks that shape their impressions about life.

Gender and Development Issues

On the macro level, consider the issue of national development. To this day, "development efforts" initiated by national governance enhance only a few and distress many, women included. Crisis after crisis unceasingly test the capability of citizens to endure the effects of mismanagement by the national bureaucracy. In all these, women are the most affected since their role as housekeepers expects them to maintain the household which consumes basic services greatly affected by the continuing crisis. Yet, as various scarcities beset us, trillions of pesos are lost because of bureaucratic corruption.

Trends continue mainstreaming male dominance while leaving women marginalized despite their immersion in the reproductive and productive activities of the family. Poverty incidence is 62.17 percent of rural and urban families (Balisacan, 1993). However, NEDA claimed a growth of 5.2 percent early this year and expects 6.5 percent growth by next year. Despite such alleged gains, observations, newspaper accounts and various scientific studies on the outcomes of national projects reveal social distortions such as environmental degradation, landuse problems, health issues, migration, enduring poverty, displaced populations in favor of dams, bank robberies, and the general breakdown of values as evidenced by crimes committed even by law enforcers.

The call for transformation is imperative. Historical circumstances have failed to harness the virtue of self-reliance for the country. The major actors in the struggle for national hegemony have weakened in favor of vested interests, linking the country to the outside world on the basis of personal rather than collective interests. The prevailing literature disclose the fusion of economic and political elites in the state bureaucracy, systematically linking the economy to the outside while confining the benefits of this linkage to a few (Wurfel, 1988; Rivera, 1994). While the present indicators are showing a more

upbeat economy, the issue is now sustainability, given the enduring structural constraints of a small nation drawn into the frenzied race for profits among big nations. Current developments are drawing us deeper into the depths of global competition. How do we position ourselves in a fierce market where our exports are human labor, 60 percent of them women, electronic components, clothing accessories and garments in that order? Other issues are raised among farmers whose produce will be competing with imported agricultural products under conditions of poor technology and lack of infrastructure support. In the farms, women are mostly weeders, cleaning the fields of debris and maintaining routine cultivation once the heavier tasks assigned to men are over. Field maintenance takes longer and women patiently wait for compensation hardly comparable to the earnings of men. Over the years, difficulties of this nature have burdened the wives who shoulder the added responsibility of "making both ends meet." Are women to anticipate a heavier burden?

A view of the total society shows uneven development and discrete fractions of parts isolated from the center in pockets of poverty inserted between high-rise condominiums and prospering subdivisions. Corporate centers employ women wearing impressive uniforms as receptionists and support staff but who are not equal to men in work status. In contrast, there are women who work the sidestreets with their children tagging along, selling barbecued food, juices and sampaguita leis for economic sustenance. They live in pushcarts underneath bridges and flyovers and flee when threatened by policemen. Where are the men in their lives?

There is then cause for serious reflection about the role which the University should carve for itself in a society where serious gaps prevail in the achievement of material improvement across the different sectors. Are economic development and individual welfare at odds, that the latter needs to be postponed in favor of material infrastructure, that

people, women in particular, may be sacrificed for economic growth? This cannot be ignored by a University anchored on liberalism and egalitarian values.

The issue is whether the process of education should be coopted into the national process of development given such dehumanizing outcomes. More specifically, the University, in an objective position and fully aware of its obligation to society, should conceptualize and visualize its own relevance within the on-going processes of continuities and discontinuities in society. The connection between university education and development becomes urgent for a developing nation because education should be relevant and specifically designed to understand the present-day issues. We need to redefine our concerns, not to undermine national priorities but, rather, to help realize a candid picture of the consequences which the process of globalization might entail for all, specially women, if we fail to exercise more discrimination now.

University Education and the Gender Issue

This paper takes the posture of the University as a critic of society. In saying this, there is no intent to distance oneself from the efforts of national governance. It assumes a supportive role of initiating internal transformations towards a reflective mental orientation that consciously develops alternatives to oppressive cultural systems. Thus, the necessity for developing, among the students, the skills to reflect, to critique and to intervene when they have reached maturing, which the essence of transformative education proposes.

The gender issue must be integrated into University to hone a total cognitive orientation which is critical, creative and based on knowledge. In particular, education should focus on developing specific competencies to alter and change the pattern of gender inequality that interferes with the personal growth of individuals.

There is a sense of urgency for education to nurture capabilities which will train the young to become more discriminating and critical in assessing the past and the present as a basis for constructing the future. This is the premise of education for transformation - the capacity to undertake an enlightened intervention when conditions develop which violate deeply-held values of society. Education hones the competencies and commitment required of individuals. The process may be tedious and long. But the concerns are focused on initiating personal growth. These are envisioned to make the individual sensitive, committed and intellectually-prepared to respond for the welfare of the collective, particularly when conditions become aversive to the enhancement of equality and justice in society. This is the contribution of the university for social transformation.

Upon this basic insight rests the significance of teaching a course on gender. Societies in general carry within their core inherent cultural logics that combine both "unities" and contradictions. They in turn translate into specific cultural norms and practices of everyday life. Over repeated use, they acquire a routine and normative nature such that their effects, including the negative ones, are often taken for granted. In our own history, patriarchy has traditionally been deeply engrained within the routine of prevailing social relations despite its degrading effects in the individual actualization among women.

The perspective advanced here is one which sensitizes the individual to the awareness that individual habits, institutional routines and social change should not reinforce on-going contradictions in society. The young, enlightened by this type of educational orientation, should be enabled to criticize and to evaluate prevailing logics of cultural norms and events. An orientation of this kind holds the promise of cultivating an active search for alternative perspectives that can erode rather than perpetuate the system of patriarchy.

This is the context for defining a conceptual framework for an introductory course on gender. Anchored upon the liberal tradition of a university education, a collegiate curriculum should offer a broad perspective of life without losing the capacity to focus on themes crucial to the preservation of dignity and respect for human life.

The Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework defines the parameters in explaining the scientific nature of occurrences or events and their relationships in the natural world. It prescribes the logico-positivist approach that adheres to the empirical nature of things and their visibility to the human sensations. Major concepts and their causal relationships are defined and predicted to give direction to an analytical discussion to account for such occurrences.

While this paradigm has prevailed in the social sciences, many authors have raised the issue of going beyond this classic objectivity to include the interpretation of meanings. Popper underscores the nature of science as a constant search for knowledge and truth. The object of search is an ever-changing world out there, requiring changes in the methods of acquiring knowledge over time. Rather than focus on the observation and measurement of occurrences in the world using mainly the cause-effect relationship, the approach is to search for intentions and the hidden meanings embedded in societal symbols and structures using the interpretation of events as a key to unravel the multifold forces that account for prevailing realities. Social actions are meaningful actions which must be studied and explained in terms of their situations and their meanings to the actors themselves (Douglas, 1974). This paradigm complements the logico-positivist approach in the study of gender.

This gains significance in the study of gender relations in the Philippine society given a patriarchal culture which

normatively undermines the status of women. An interpretive approach becomes necessary when dealing with interpersonal relations where men frequently invoke their power over women through subtle ways. Studies and observations consistently reveal how entrenched this orientation has become as manifested in language, social practices and the behavior of the Filipino. All these consolidate and are represented in culture, perpetuating patriarchy within the routine of everyday life. Since women hardly subvert an ongoing reality, they often create an acceptance of this gendered state. Students of society should then be sensitized to the loud presence of the "unspoken" and the power present in "silences."

The conceptual framework offers an alternative view of the on-going relationship between the sexes and other gender orientations towards upholding a more humane and liberating environment for the personal growth of individuals in society. It implies a reflective and interpretive assessment of personal views and attitudes towards social relations in general. Directed to realize internal transformations which are ultimately expected to initiate modifications in one's personal relationships, this change is directed towards a stress on egalitarian values in an increasingly democratizing society.

The specific objectives of a gender course would be:

1. To provide an integrated framework which will sensitize students to examine the nature of gender relations in our society;
 - 1.1. to determine the inherent contradictions violative of egalitarianism in the relationship concealed in the logic of everyday life;
 - 1.2 to identify the issues arising from these contradictions;

2. To analyze these issues by drawing from the circumstances experienced by individuals as they live their lives daily;
3. To evoke alternative patterns of thought and behavior to observed and felt experiences on these issues to sustain the values of egalitarianism;
4. To integrate these learnings to enrich one's academic perspective and relations in everyday life.

Specifically, the writer advances a conceptual framework that recognizes the normative nature of patriarchy as dictated by the strength and routine of local traditions. Imbedded and diffused into the cultural logics and symbols of everyday life, patriarchal values are hardly noticed or questioned. In fact, many still believe that gender issues are non-existent and that having men rule over women is normative. Some students even think women's issues are passing fancies and constitute the nature of "a fad" rather than a salient key to unleash the contradictions of social life.

Content of the Course

A beginning course on gender should have a place in the general education (GE) curriculum where the basic skills of critical thinking coupled with a multidisciplinary perspective in viewing life's processes are inculcated. Integrating a gender perspective in the curriculum renders a more holistic view in the study of society.

Gender relation is rooted in the nature and essence of individuals free to actualize one's personal growth. Ideally, society provides equality for all in the pursuit of this concern. Social relations provide the dynamics of everyday life in a society where egalitarian values may or may not be seen in motion. Thus it is essential to begin the study on the level of

routine acts, habits and predispositions that characterize the relationship as they naturally occur. This approach captures the unique character of gender relations in our own society and negates the repeated accusations that the present concern with gender merely represents openness to Western influences. By starting from the concept of everyday life, indigenous meanings can be extracted and analyzed within their own particular settings. From here, the process can move easily to a reflection of the quality of the relationship between individuals, and in particular, between women and men. The discussion, necessarily, will lead to a greater stress on the status of women since historical circumstances have traditionally marginalized them.

In making the transition from acceptance to a critique of patriarchy as natural as possible, the major concepts guiding the analysis come from the Humanistic traditions in the social sciences: Egalitarianism, Access, Control, Autonomy and Empowerment. The interrelationship between these different concepts and values is intended to fulfill an objective inquiry into the issues of Gender relations without creating unnecessary personal dislocations.

Egalitarianism subsumes equity, justice, and equality and they comprise the moral underpinnings of societal life. They are the fibers woven into the humanistic traditions that enhance one's individual humanity to others and which strengthen the precarious stability of social life in the face of inherent contradictions and emergent contestations of norms and rules of everyday life. These values predefine how the path of social interactions will proceed. Whether this path will actualize human potentials to benefit the individual and the larger society is always problematic and hinges upon the internalization of these values and their ultimate expression in the process of everyday relations and institutional operations.

The actualization of egalitarianism is our desideratum because values are imbedded in the norms of everyday life.

They are either observed or violated in the processes of interaction between individuals; male and female and other gender orientations. At any time as individuals motivated by their own interests encounter each other, possibilities of contestations threaten on-going social interaction which in fact invoke these values. It is most appropriate to focus on gender relations to examine its quality and to track the extent human exchanges and networks of everyday behavior are governed by values, what these values are and how they are transgressed or preserved in the social dynamics of everyday life. The study of routine behavior would ultimately reveal the problematic nature of Patriarchy.

Gender issues are different across family history, class and ethnicity. Behaviors take place within a social context provided by societal history and the structures of gender itself, age, class, and ethnicity. Personalities are equally socialized in different family and community structures giving rise to a variety of gender scripts and behaviors with resulting diverse issues.

The concepts of Access, Control and Autonomy which may or may not be fulfilled in the processes of social interactions within the context of varying societal structures are the major criteria in the examination and study of the type of relationship being accounted for. They are the "absences" which issues confront. For instance, women are in-charge of household maintenance without having direct control over resources. While directly seeing to the order and maintenance of the household, the search for supplementary income to remedy "shortfalls" is a major concern and remains in the area of women's work. Men may or may not pick up the extra work to earn supplementary income. Why are men allowed more options than women? These contradictions qualify the extent to which the relationship between the sexes portray the inequality tolerated, permitted or taken for granted.

Contradictions are brought to the surface and examined to open the channels for critical reflection. It is expected that this

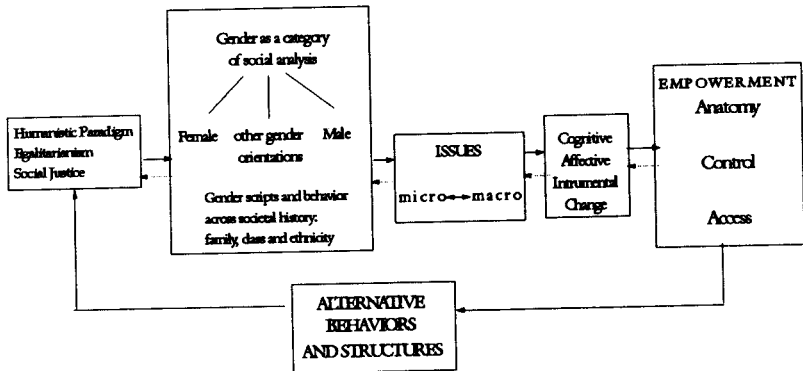
thinking process will allow students to develop a reflective and critical cognitive orientation which can evoke imageries of alternative behaviors. It is at this point that competencies for critical thinking, analysis and evaluation are evoked and formed prior to visualizing the future. The process actualizes a search for new structures of thought about gender which can then be integrated into the learning process.

Empowerment is an expected outcome from the revelations and analysis of practices too often taken for granted despite their violative nature. Empowerment has been defined on several levels. Nelly Stromquist (Anonuevo, 1995) initially defines it on the individual level "as a process to change the distribution of power both in interpersonal relations and in institutions throughout society". On the macro level, "it is a process in which women gain control over their own lives by knowing and claiming their rights at all levels of society at the international, local and household levels; it means that women gain autonomy, are able to set their own agenda and are fully involved in the economic, political and social decision-making process."

The complex nature of empowerment reveals its presence on several levels: on the micro level, cognitive, affective and behavioral; on the macro, economic and political. Empowerment "involves acquiring new knowledge to create a different understanding of gender relations as well as destroying old beliefs that structure powerful gender ideologies." Inclusive in the change is "the development of feelings that women can act upon to improve their condition," and the belief that they can succeed in their efforts in changing the existing structure.

In summary, the underlying objectives are: to acquire knowledge on gender, to critique the system of patriarchy and to initiate within oneself a process of internal transformation that can flow into the behavioral aspects, and finally, the expected impact on institutional interpretations of gender. There will be problems and resistances given an external environment that favors patriarchal values especially at home.

Below is a system representation of the interrelationship of these different concepts which can serve as a cognitive map in establishing the flow of analysis in the course.



To guarantee a smooth transition from one level to the next, the structure of learning requires specific teaching methods to challenge the reality of patriarchy in its varied dimensions and as a nodal component of Philippine social organization.

The Methodology: Insights from teaching the Course

From the actual experience of teaching the course, techniques which are projective in nature are the most natural and realistic in ensuring learning gains. Using evocative approaches are most suited in stimulating students to realize the concealed contradictions that, rule everyday life in subtle ways. As a method, it can unravel the deeper meanings of on-going acts and behavior. The objective is to make the "absent" present or to bring to the surface elements of social life that may need to be examined. The process is intended to evoke "something" from the ordinary data of routine interactions and behavioral exchanges. For instance, role playing can dramatize

the typical ways family members relate to one another in facing problems or in confronting a crisis. As roles are dramatized the way they actually happen, the contradictions or violations surface which participants perceive as routine. Such routine behaviors become objects for inquiry. The method becomes a rich source of data for class reflection and discussion.

The method has proven its effectiveness in many ways. For younger students, the effects are lighter and taken in the context of youthful encounters with parents, sisters and friends. Realizations as a group come easy as members recapture in spirited laughter the experiences which undermined their being "a girl" in the family compared with the privileges "the boys" enjoyed. Exchanges between students brought hilarious memories of threats to femaleness aborted by inexperience itself among equally young "boys." A few examples of seriously harassing experiences always drew the support of the class in a magnificent gesture of sympathy and empathy with a greater resolve to become wiser in handling the issue the next time.

Our recent teaching debut on gender last summer 1994 with a group of secondary schoolteachers revealed the greater capacity of the method to reach the inner levels of the person. The evocative approach as a teaching tool starts with the familiar and easily leads to questions of why things happen as they do. This type of inquiry nurtures the ability to criticize and sharpen one's feel of the unnatural and "anomalous." Depending upon the nature of the insight reached, an individual may just accept what is revealed in the process. When it is personal, the individual undergoes stress, shock, denial, and seeming confusion. The group becomes supportive as the individual gropes to accept reality through a show of defenses at the same time that a struggle between denial and acceptance ensues. On the level of the group, opposite camps develop as tension rises while arguments and counter arguments intensify. These normally characterize the impending change which leads to a situation open to change.

Another method which equally touches core beliefs is writing journals. Here the entries are characteristically private experiences which students are unable to share in the classrooms. Writing about degrading experiences allows the process of clarification and critique to flow as intensely as they would happen in a group. Privy to this process is the teacher who acts as the catalyst in place of a group by initiating questions to deepen the understanding and resolution of issues.

Specific modules can be designed to focus on the understanding of specific issues. Practitioners may be invited as resource speakers to help give realism and expand the cognitive understanding of issues.

Analysis of films and advertisements, sit-coms and documentaries of issues from the NGO files come under evocative approaches. Their use in classroom learning enlivens discussions while tearing apart the persisting presence of patriarchy. The role of the teacher in all these teaching strategies is to make certain that discussions are focused and students are led to think of alternatives to patriarchal beliefs and behaviors observed in the materials confronted.

Conclusion

Coming from the traditions of humanistic social science, the particular cast of this framework considers the basic need of individuals to actualize their potentials to the fullest in a society which upholds the values and attitudes of egalitarianism. Since patriarchy has been so engrained in our culture, the contradictions it creates are accepted without question. Its effects generate internal and external deprivations which prevent women from expressing themselves fully as persons. Women's oppression will prevail as long as patriarchy continues. Thus, patriarchy is a public issue requiring intervention.

The rationale for using this framework rests on the necessity of providing a wholistic perspective within the academic curriculum for viewing gender relations to allow desired structural changes to happen. Like any GE course, it assumes an interdisciplinary approach rooted in the multiple and complex needs of individuals in an equally complex society. While the view is conceptualized within a greater whole, the interrelationship between individual and society and the potential of education to refine the relationship between the two, the discussion focuses on the issues of gender roles and gender relations in order that they can be understood as they naturally occur within their own particular settings whether on the micro or the macro level. The approach takes cognizance not only of the nature of such roles and relationships but also of their interrelatedness within the cultural context from which they arise and the mechanisms within that context which tend to preserve these relationships. The discovery of these linkages within deeply-embedded structures of cultural logics and meanings open avenues for the re-interpretation of gender roles and gender relations in our society. As an educational interventior, it is wholistic and can easily be energized as a part of the critical thinking process which we are nurturing in the University.

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