REIMAGINING PEDAGOGY: A GENDER-RESPONSIVE APPROACH TO DIGITAL EDUCATION

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Abstract

An innovative strategy that combines the ideas of gender-responsive pedagogy with the incorporation of digital technologies in education is known as gender-responsive digital pedagogy. This strategy acknowledges the potential of digital tools and platforms to improve educational experiences, close gender disparities, and advance gender equality. Regardless of gender, educators may design inclusive and interesting learning environments that respond to the many needs and interests of students by utilizing digital resources. An overview of the main ideas, advantages, and difficulties of gender-responsive digital pedagogy are given in this abstract. It emphasizes the need of giving students the tools they need to analyze gender biases in the digital sphere critically and question them, as well as the necessity of providing teachers with the training and assistance they need to successfully incorporate technology in a gender-responsive way.

Keywords: Gender, Pedagogy, Gender responsive digital pedagogy

Introduction

When employing digital technology for remote learning, gender-responsive digital pedagogy (GRDP) refers to instructional strategies that specifically address the needs of the learners. Through teaching that takes gender-specific needs and barriers into consideration, the GRDP helps all learners. Instead of treating all learners as a homogenous group, it acknowledges that in many contexts, girls face comparably more risks and barriers to learning than their male peers, and that these disadvantages only get worse as girls enter adolescence and move into secondary education. GRDP stands for gender equity and diversity in the classroom. Girls and boys confront various problems, which is acknowledged by gender-responsive digital pedagogy. It includes measures to make sure that all girls and boys (and their parents) may interact with the digital content in a way that promotes learning.

Teachers can change their methods for teaching remotely by taking into account the gender and social identities of their students in order to give all students—especially girls and the most vulnerable youngsters—an equal chance to complete their education in a secure environment outside of the traditional classroom. Remote teaching occurs away from a classroom, school, or other learning environment. It can be self-guided, where students complete their work on their own, or teacher-guided, when instructors direct students and carers. Teachers who teach remotely do not physically interact with their students. Depending on the quantity of energy, Internet access, and digital infrastructure available, remote teaching may use a variety of high-, low-, or no-tech modalities. Teacher-guided modalities should be used in conjunction with self-guided modalities

because they are less likely to be successful in guaranteeing learning continuity on their own. Examples of these are television, radio, paper-based, mobile, and some online education platforms.

Why must education be gender responsive?

We instructors are aware that education is a strong force for change. Learners' lives are considerably improved by having access to high-quality education because it gives them the skills—knowledge, attitudes, and socio-emotional abilities—they need to succeed in a constantly shifting environment.

Even so, despite the fact that access to a quality education is a fundamental right, girls and boys do not always have the same chances. Children face obstacles to accessing and finishing their elementary and secondary school, including social standards and gender discrimination.

What is Gender-Responsive Digital Pedagogy (GRDP)?

GRDP refers to instructional strategies that specifically address students' requirements when they participate in distance learning using digital technology. It's about realizing that every student faces a unique set of obstacles and making sure that every learner—including those from all backgrounds and with various abilities—can interact with the digital content in a way that fosters learning and encourages them to discover their own unique learning styles.

A GRDP approach invites you, as a teacher, to critically evaluate your teaching methods and come up with ideas for how to change them to support an inclusive learning environment that gives all students, in all their diversity, the chance to learn and advance equally. A GRDP strategy puts an equitable emphasis on making sure that females continue to learn from early infancy through adolescence.

Using inclusive language for all learners, choosing educational material that does not reinforce gender stereotypes, and using platforms with accessibility features to help students with disabilities are a few examples of changes you can make to your remote teaching with digital technology. You can also change your strategy and rely on a mix of high- and low-tech platforms that girls (and boys) confirm they can use in their daily lives to overcome gender disparities in girls' access to digital technology. Additionally, you can ask girls, boys, and their parents for advice on different digital platforms or modalities that will help your students stay in touch with you and their peers.

What are some advantages of implementing gender-responsive digital pedagogies when conducting distance education?

• Using a gender-responsive approach helps to identify and address some of the barriers preventing girls from receiving an education, especially those at risk of being left behind: adolescent girls and other students who face discrimination due to a combination of factors including displacement, living with a disability, and/or identifying as part of an ethnic or religious minority.

• All students have an equal chance to interact and take part, ensuring that they all feel represented and appreciated.

• Teachers support students in challenging gender-biased beliefs about the roles of boys, girls, men, and women in society.

A teacher who employs a gender-responsive method for digital technology-based remote teaching:
- Knows about societal norms, long-standing customs, and cultural beliefs that can prevent students from having equitable access to online education and related digital technology (such as gender roles and stereotypes).

- Identifies impediments to student involvement, especially for the most marginalized, and resolves them by changing teaching strategies or enlisting the help of parents/caregivers, head teachers, or community specialists.
- Adopts different remote learning engagement modalities, such as low- and high-tech approaches, to reach students who have specific needs, limited access to the Internet and technology, or low digital literacy, in order to ensure that all students benefit from the lessons.
- Emphasizes the use of content that fairly and equally represents all students and avoids reinforcing negative stereotypes (such as those based on gender, race, or disability).
- Focuses on safety; is knowledgeable about regional laws and resources for reporting instances of gender-based violence; and takes action to ensure that all students, particularly girls, younger students, and other vulnerable groups, can communicate online safely.
- Celebrates diversity and equality in the classroom by taking into account each learner's particular needs and abilities, ensuring that classes have an equal opportunity to learn.
- Monitors student involvement, learning, and access to connectivity and devices at home, and modifies remote teaching as necessary.

Barriers to learning using digital technology

You as a teacher are unable to remove every obstacle that vulnerable students encounter when participating in online learning. System-level solutions are typically needed to address restrictions on technology, the Internet, education, or digital literacy.

However, by using a gender-responsive approach to lesson design, topic selection, learner and teacher interactions, and classroom safety, you can actively address gender inequities and barriers in your teaching practices.

Negative gender stereotypes, especially those pertaining to gender identities and sexual orientations, can be reinforced by pedagogies and curricula that do not take into account the experiences and needs of all students. Learning can be hampered by a lack of understanding of how to teach in a gender-responsive way for children and adolescents.

- Access to digital technology and the Internet

Compared to boys and men, women and girls are less likely to have access to technology and the Internet. The gender digital gap is more pronounced in lower-income countries where women are less likely to own a mobile phone or be online, even if gender gaps vary by location. Girls are less likely to own a mobile device themselves or to have access to one that is shared among the household (insert endnote).

Females have little opportunities to use or connect with digital technology due to the cost of accessing tech gadgets and the Internet, gender stereotypes that perpetuate the perception that technology is dangerous for females, and other factors.

- Access to education

When and if students can participate in schooling might be influenced by gender norms and expectations. While boys' time is controlled by the needs of their income-generating activities, girls' access to education (and particularly remote education) is limited by the time required for their family duties.

The combination of gender and other social identities, including poverty, geographic isolation, safety, minority status, early marriage, pregnancy, and damaging traditional gender attitudes, is one of the barriers preventing females from participating in education.

Education efforts that fail to recognise or actively work to overcome these social and physical barriers run the risk of excluding females and other disadvantaged populations from receiving an education.

- Digital literacy and skills

The ability to utilize digital technology safely and the knowledge of how to do so are both components of digital literacy.

Both men and women may find it difficult to engage with technology due to a lack of technical skills, but women are more likely than men to report this problem. Due to their lack of digital engagement, girls and women may be excluded from chances for civic, social, and economic engagement that call for digital access and proficiency.

Women and girls are less likely to be online than men and boys due to a variety of variables, including lower levels of education, less experience utilizing digital content and devices, and a dearth of products and services tailored specifically for them.

- Intersection between gender and other social identities

The vulnerability of students is increased by the confluence of gender and other social identities or contextual variables such poverty, displacement, violence, and discrimination based on disabilities, racism, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

For instance, 36% of refugee boys and 27% of refugee girls are enrolled in secondary education. Conflict, for example, exacerbates the gender-based barriers to education that girls experience.

Learners' sensitivity may also be increased by their age. During puberty, for instance, caring responsibilities, adolescent pregnancies, child marriage, sexual abuse, period stigma, and a lack of water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities are some of the reasons that can hinder females from finishing their schooling. Understanding how learners access and engage with digital education, as well as how to support their learning, requires taking into account the elements that distinguish their experiences from others - and how these aspects interact.

- Digital safety

The dangers associated with using digital technology might include exposing students to inappropriate or age-restricted information, extreme violence, hate speech, incitement to self-harm or suicide, bullying, harassment, and peer-to-peer online violence on various social media platforms, among others. Online dangers for girls and other vulnerable groups can be similar to the problems they already encounter in the real world, such as sexual harassment and assault. The Internet and other digital platforms can turn into toxic environments that encourage abuse and prejudice if used improperly or without sufficient education.

Parents, elders, or carers may limit access to and participation of students, particularly girls, online due to safety concerns that are sometimes strongly based on social norms.

While implementing safety precautions to safeguard girls and vulnerable groups is crucial to ensuring safe digital participation, restrictions based on gender norms disproportionately harm girls and exclude them from online resources and activities.

Gender-responsive digital content

Today's teachers have access to a huge and expanding library of printed and online educational resources. You can access and use a variety of resources to enhance your education and make it more accessible, including images, videos, audio files, and games. You must be aware that not all educational materials are inclusive or gender-responsive when you look through the resources accessible to use in your remote teaching. By perpetuating prejudice, preconceptions, and discriminatory gender norms, some content excludes learners.

The content is gender-responsive and inclusive if it:
• Prevents the upkeep of harmful gender stereotypes.
• Opposes gender biases as well as gender roles, conventions, and relationships.
• Presents women and girls as equals to men and boys, or in roles often played by them (and vice versa), while empowering them through characters and themes.
For instance, it depicts both boys and men in caring and domestic roles, actively participating in household duties and raising children. It also shows both boys and men and girls and women engaging in physical activity work, such as building.

• Examines how girls' and boys' access to or control over resources, as well as their capacity to exercise their rights, are impacted by gender norms, roles, and relationships.
• Encourages the use of tactics to change the way that men and women interact in terms of power. For instance, it encourages material in which women and girls have access to resources or are shown as being self-sufficient. Girls and women exercise their agency and can exercise their rights to vote, to health care, to safety, and to education. In terms of household decision-making and a variety of vocations, including science, technology, and mathematics, women are portrayed as being on an equal footing.

• Uses actual scientific and proper vocabulary rather than inflammatory language (particularly when discussing health, comprehensive sexuality education, and people with disabilities), and emphasizes equality and nonviolence.
For instance, the information doesn't offend people of other races, ethnicities, or traditions. It is considerate of students who identify with other genders, making sure that the terminology used does not categorize or stereotype them.
• Features male and female characters with a range of ages, physical abilities, and ethnic, racial, or religious backgrounds through visuals and voiceovers.
• Outlines the distinct requirements and difficulties that girls, women, boys, and men have. • Clearly explains ideas connected to gender equality.

GRDP and online child protection

Digital technologies offer fresh possibilities for interaction, recreation, and education. However, new dangers are also posed by digital platforms and technologies. As educators, you actively contribute to reducing these dangers and establishing a secure environment that promotes learning.

Understanding learners' online risks:

Increased computer usage, especially for younger children while alone, may increase the likelihood that kids and teenagers will be exposed to inappropriate content, bad behavior, and

unsafe contacts. Similar safety issues may exist for both males and girls. The susceptibilities to these dangers, however, will differ. Girls may be more vulnerable to sexual harassment and exploitation, for instance. Due to their particular identities, such as their sexual orientation, ethnicity, race, religion, gender identities, and immigration status, some children may be more prone to encounter peer-on-peer bullying, violence, or abuse.

Teacher strategies to mitigate online risks
Promote and monitor good online etiquette: Make sure all students are aware of the proper behavior expectations when using digital platforms and communicating online.
 Setting ground rules for interactions in digital worlds is crucial. Students should be aware that everyone is treated with respect and there is no violence allowed in the virtual classroom. Use existing procedures for online safety and violence prevention at your school and modify them to meet the needs of particular genders.

The following should be in a code of conduct:
 • Using excellent digital citizenship by treating people with kindness and respect online.
• Assisting peers who are suffering violence or who are being bullied.
• Having the ability to speak up when they or others are being abused.

Create supportive online learning spaces that facilitate discussion: Regular communication with your pupils might be difficult when learning remotely. A place or an opportunity must be provided for them to express their feelings. Create opportunities for pupils to express any concerns they may have. Regular check-ins, online mood boards, phone calls, and student-teacher-parent conferences are a few ways. Establish regular meetings if at all possible. With your students' cooperation, you may help them have conversations they might not otherwise have, support one another, and talk about their issues. Additionally, it may present a chance to enhance emotional intelligence and conflict resolution abilities.

Additionally, educators must create a suitable code of conduct that outlines the fundamental expectations for interactions between educators and students online and clarifies the appropriate methods of communication and address. Empowering learners' online use: It is essential to provide kids and teenagers with the knowledge and abilities to utilize and navigate online environments so that they can seek assistance when exposed to risky situations there. It is the responsibility of the instructor to enable their students to use the Internet responsibly. Talk to your students about the problems and dangers associated with using the internet. Encourage them to analyze their Internet usage, the material they obtain, their social media habits, and the potential effects these may have on their self-perception and self-esteem.

Data protection: It is essential to protect the privacy of students. Children and teenagers need to understand their right to privacy, especially as it relates to their personal information and the dangers of utilizing it online. They should be knowledgeable about what information they may and cannot disclose online. Discuss these matters with your students. When sharing instructional websites or platforms, exercise caution. Check for security and privacy concerns.

Addressing worries about awkward, offensive, or violent confrontations: A code of conduct or set minimum criteria for interactions between students and teachers should already exist at your institution, which you can adjust for your remote teaching engagements.

It's crucial for educators to monitor and control classroom discussions in online chat rooms, WhatsApp, Telegram, and Signal groups, among others. To ensure that these continue to be welcoming and secure environments where all learners can participate, maintain administrative control and make any online groups secure or password-protected. If you come across any instances of cyberbullying, take immediate action. Even if it seems like they are simply joking or having fun, teach students that this is bullying.

Always be accessible so that students can contact you if they feel uncomfortable with a particular online engagement. Give them information about additional resources they can use to get assistance, such as a private child helpline, a school counselor, or community or school social workers. It's critical that students, particularly girls, voice any worries they may have. This will make it more likely that they will continue their education and not stop.

Be there to listen to a student when they come forward to discuss abuse or other types of violence with you. Recognise that the issues are valid and important. Be patient with them, don't point the finger at them, don't doubt the details they are providing you, and don't make fun of them. Send the pupil to a qualified and trustworthy support person (a school counselor, nurse, social worker, or medical personnel).

Contact your head teacher or another school official if violence in classroom settings or other encounters needs to be reported so that the proper steps can be taken. The youngster could then, if necessary, be directed to a more specialized organization. Make sure you adhere to the correct processes when making referrals, filing reports, and following the case. It may be difficult to maintain regular contact or communication when teaching children remotely, making it more difficult to spot indications of suffering. Checking in frequently will help to assess the performance of the class. To create a sufficient process for recognising and reporting child abuse or neglect via remote or virtual communication, teachers and employees should evaluate safeguarding rules and consult child helpline information.

Conclusion

Gender-responsive digital pedagogy integrates the ideas of gender-responsive pedagogy with the use of digital technologies in education. It is a dynamic and innovative approach. It acknowledges the ability of technology to improve educational settings, close disparities, and advance gender equality. Teachers may design inclusive and interesting learning environments that meet the many needs and interests of students, regardless of gender, by incorporating digital tools and resources. Students are given the tools to take an active role in their own learning processes thanks to the options for collaborative learning, personalized instruction, and access to a variety of educational resources provided by digital platforms. Traditional gender norms and stereotypes can be explored and questioned through gender-responsive digital teaching. In order to navigate the digital world responsibly and inclusively, it offers kids a forum to critically evaluate media representations, challenge biases, and build digital literacy skills.

According to research, gender-responsive digital pedagogy can enhance learning outcomes, boost digital literacy, and foster the growth of 21st-century skills. It prepares students for their future academic and professional endeavors by giving them the tools they need to flourish in a digital age. However, sufficient training and support for educators are necessary for the effective

implementation of gender-responsive digital pedagogy. Teachers must possess the knowledge and abilities to gender-responsively incorporate technology into their teaching practices. To ensure that all students, regardless of their socioeconomic status or geographic location, can benefit from digital learning possibilities, it is also critical to address concerns of access and equity.

In conclusion, gender-responsive digital pedagogy may revolutionize education by promoting critical thinking, inclusivity, and gender equality through the use of technology. By adopting this strategy, educators may build learning environments that equip students with the skills they need to succeed in the digital era, while also questioning traditional conventions and promoting a more inclusive and fair society. To maximize the advantages of technology for all learners, educational institutions, policymakers, and stakeholders must embrace and promote the integration of gender-responsive digital pedagogy.

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