



# Re-framing Gender Disparities in Basic Education in the Philippines

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### Naomi Fontanos

Senior Research Associate, UP CIDS ERP

### Dina S. Ocampo, PhD

Convenor, UP CIDS ERP

UP College of Education, UP Diliman

UP CIDS – Education Research Program (UP CIDS ERP):  
<http://cids.up.edu.ph/>



# Objective of this Paper



Interrogates **how education data is collected, presented & interpreted** particularly on conclusions about gender disparity

Conclusions have influenced how boys & girls are regarded in the context of education,

Yet there are **no adequate explanations for disparities**

Ultimately, there **have not been corresponding interventions** to address boys' underachievement in school.

# Outline



- I. Introduction
  - A. Definition and indicators of gender disparities
  - B. Revisiting historical data on education participation and educational performance
  - C. Prevailing interpretations of the gender disparities in basic education
- II. Analytical Process
- III. Critiques, Challenges and Recommendations
- IV. Conclusion
- V. References

# Introduction



1. Gender perspective – takes into account differences based on gender; needed in looking at social phenomenon, policy, or process
2. Gender disparities in education outcome indicators – one of the most confounding issues/phenomena challenging education researchers
3. Data from Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) & Education for All (EFA) 2015 monitoring brought the disparities to light
4. Time to revisit these disparities as DepEd institutionalizes K to 12 reform mandating gender sensitivity in classrooms; push for gender equality in & through education through the 2030 Framework for Action

# Definition & Indicators of Gender Disparity



1. Boys' underachievement literature = no consensus on its definition & measurement<sup>1</sup>; no agreement if it pertains to an individual's innate ability or a person's achievement in relation to a larger group<sup>1</sup>
2. Boys' underachievement is conflated with low achievement
3. Boys' underachievement has two dimensions: under-participation and underperformance<sup>2</sup>
4. Boys' underachievement pertains to "boys' lower levels of participation and educational performance compared with girls"<sup>3</sup>

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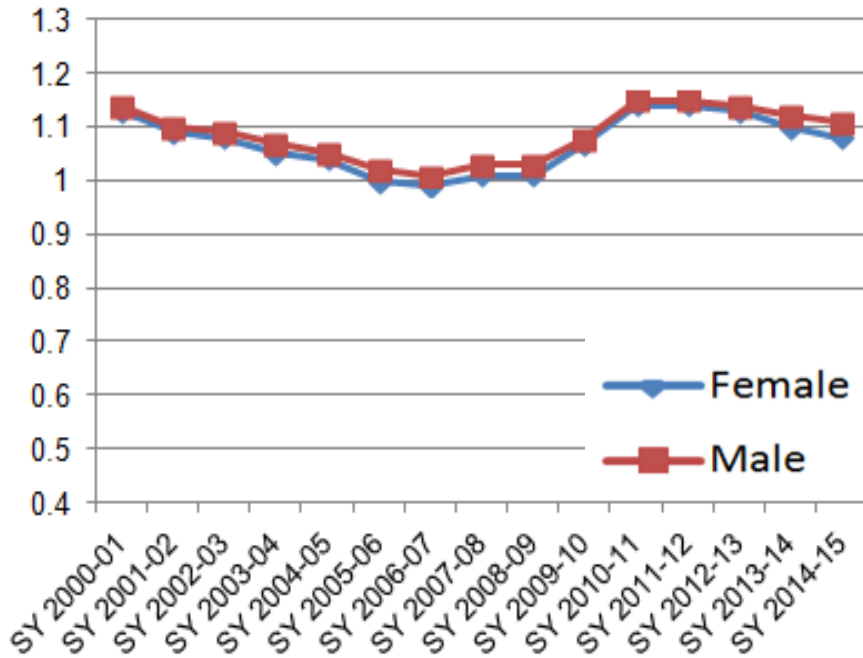
<sup>1</sup>Smith, 2003a; <sup>2</sup>Jha, 2009; <sup>3</sup>Jha & Pouezevara, 2016

# Revisiting Historical Data on Elementary Education Participation

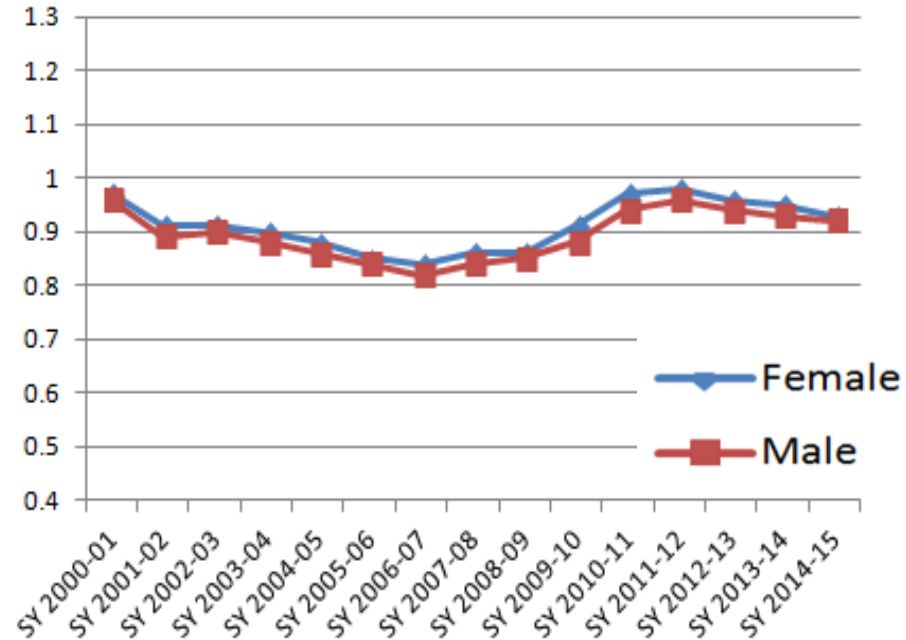


Figure 1. Participation indicators for the Elementary Grades for SY 2000-2001 to 2014-2015

## Gross Enrolment Rate (GER)



## Net Enrolment Rate (NER)

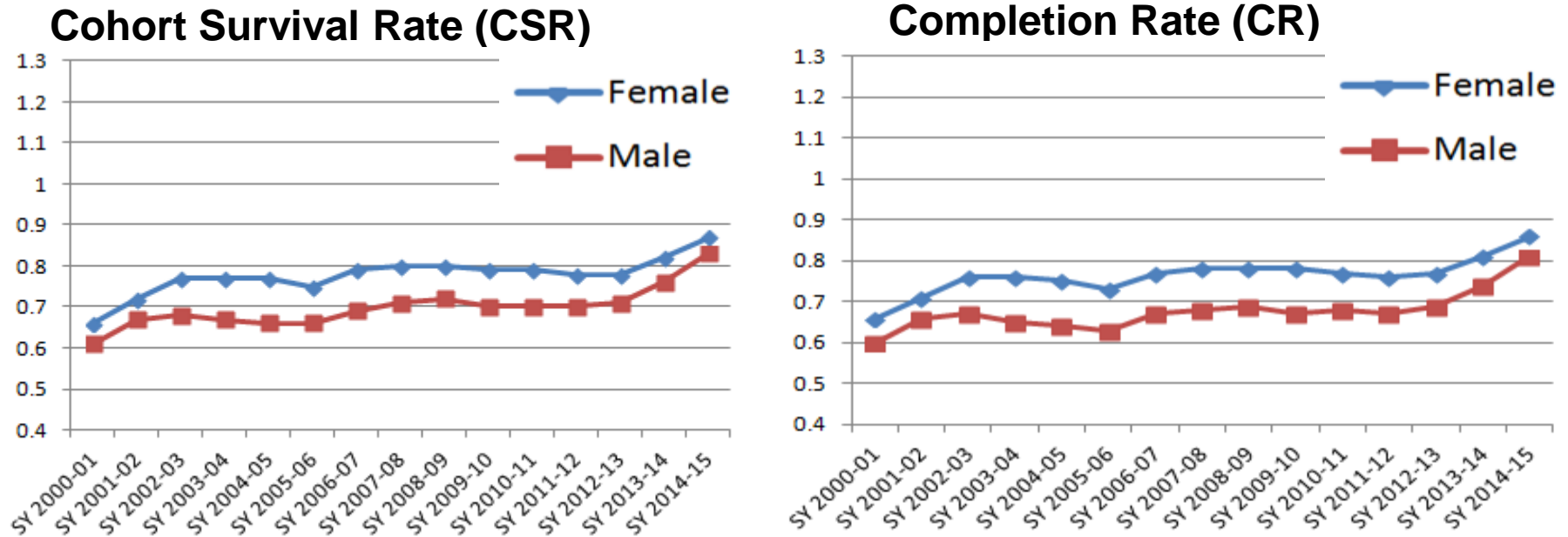


Not much difference in the participation rates of elementary boys and girls over the 15-year period

# Revisiting Historical Data on Elementary Education Participation



Figure 1. Participation indicators for the Elementary Grades for SY 2000-2001 to 2014-2015

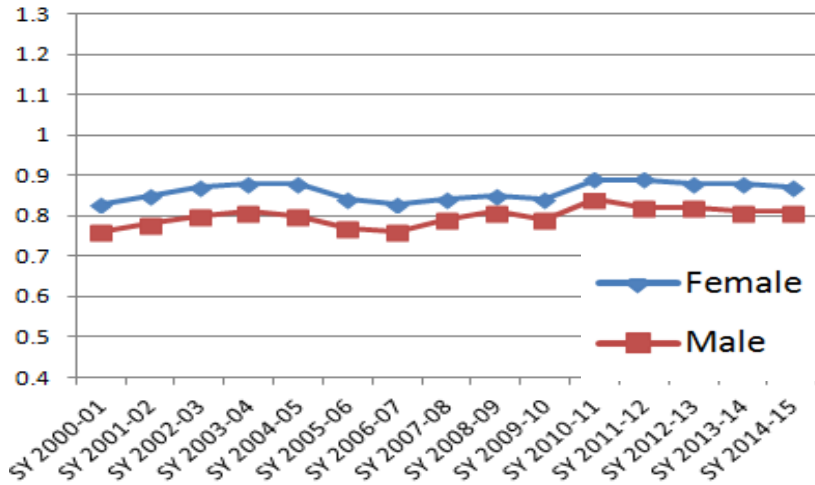


1. Upward trend in the data indicates more learners are completing elementary education
2. Gender disparity also becomes more observable in these two indicators
3. More girls than boys complete elementary & do so on time

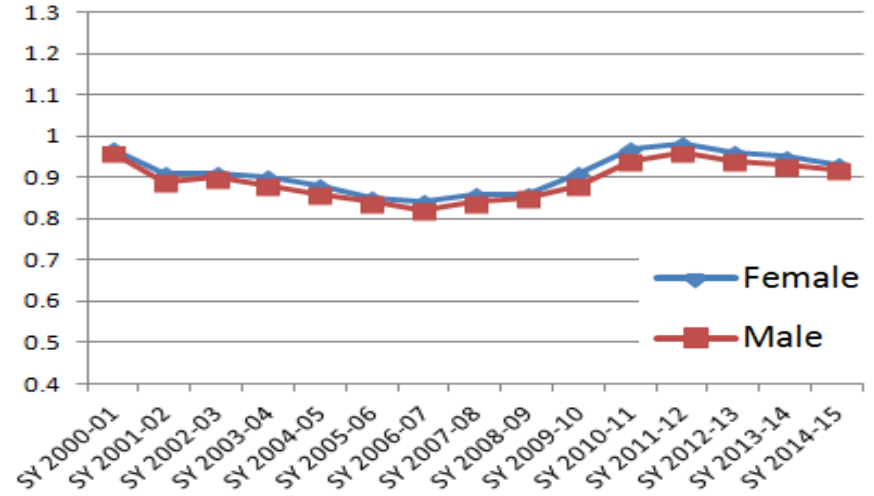
# Revisiting Historical Data on Secondary Education Participation



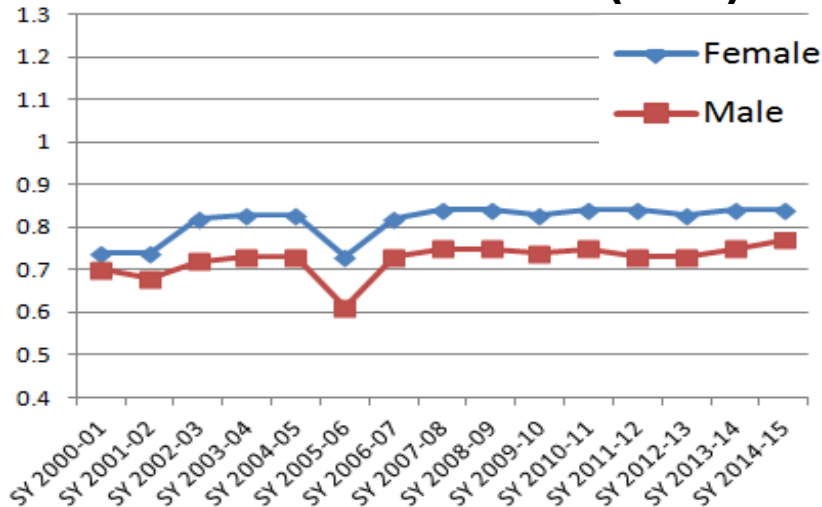
## Gross Enrolment Rate (GER)



## Net Enrolment Rate (NER)



## Cohort Survival Rate (CSR)



## Completion Rate (CR)

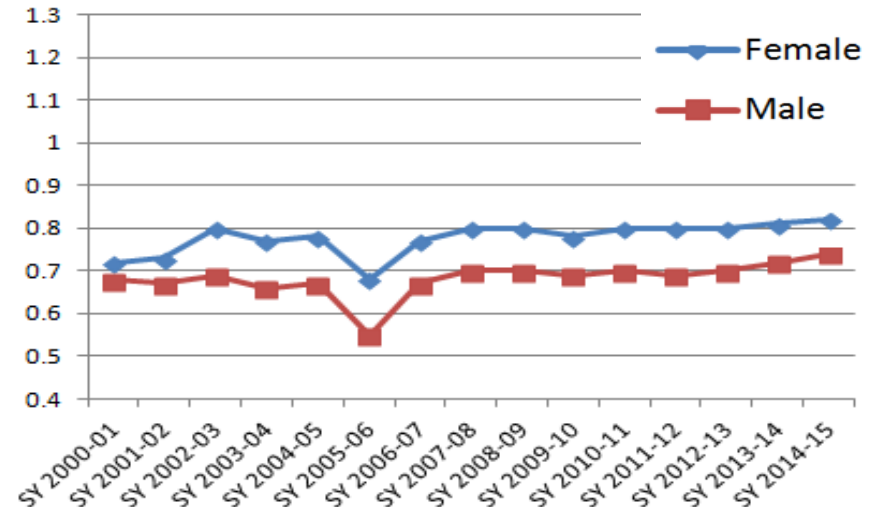


Figure 2. Participation indicators for the Secondary Grades for SY 2000-2001 to 2014-2015



# What do the data tell us about Secondary Education?

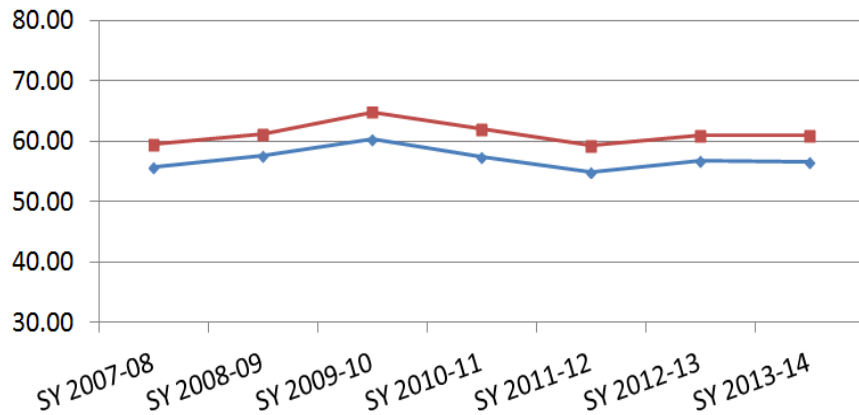


1. Variability and frequent changes over the 15-year period
2. Sustaining school participation of boys and girls in secondary education is a challenge that must be addressed with sustained efforts
3. Data for male and female students show the same trends; though the disparities in gender are more pronounced in secondary education
4. Again, girls able to complete secondary education and do so on time more frequently than boys

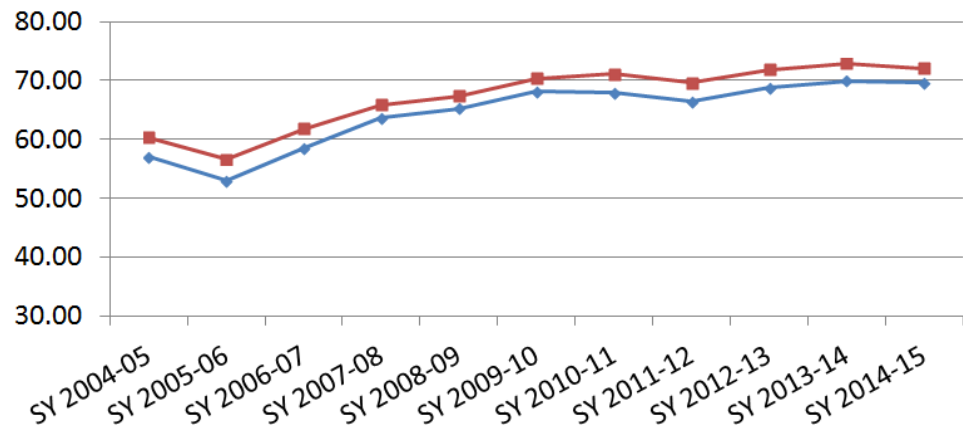
# Revisiting historical data on educational performance



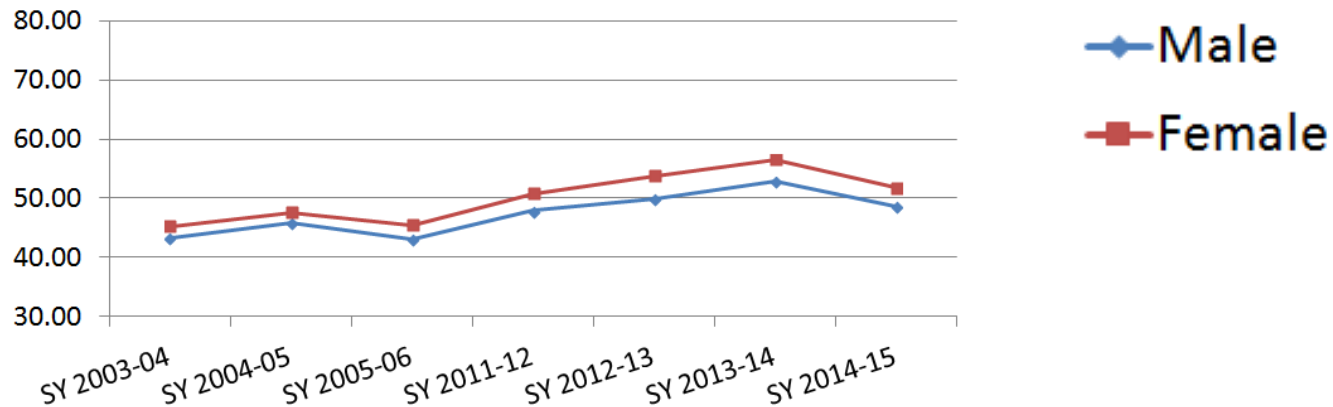
**NAT Grade 3: Overall Score**



**NAT Grade 6: Overall Score**



**NAT Grade 10: Overall Score**



Source: Department of Education (DepEd) Bureau of Education Assessment (BEA) Education Research Division (ERD)

**Figure 3. NAT Grade 3, 6, 10 Overall Scores for Males and Females from SY 2007-2008 to 2013-2014**

# What do these data mean?



1. Gender disparities observable in the educational performance data; however, score differences are small
2. Data for boys and girls need to improve and reflect better school participation and learning
3. Gender differences in scores are observable but these have not been explained or resolved over time

# Prevailing Interpretations of the Gender Disparities in Basic Education



1999-2005	“Historical gender performance in almost all key education outcome indicators... registered an advantage of females over males” (p. 57) <sup>1</sup>
2002-'05	Boys drop out more than girls, more girls graduate from high school, more girls go to college, Philippines – a nation of male underachievers <sup>2</sup>
1999-2005	Girls are becoming more educated, girls are outperforming boys in enrolment, drop-out and achievement <sup>3</sup>
1996-2012	Boys disadvantage in basic education, lagged in enrolment, cohort survival and completion rate <sup>4</sup>
2011	Filipino boys’ underachievement is driven by parents’ and teachers’ low academic expectations for boys, the economic viability of boys, passive classroom experience, gender bias, stereotyping, and a lack of learning materials <sup>5</sup>
2012-'13	“For SY 2012-2013, girls outperformed boys in all education efficiency indicators...Girls have also been outperforming boys in terms of the National Achievement Test (NAT) scores” (p. 45) <sup>6</sup>
2014	Consistent underperformance of boys in key education indicators should be addressed as a priority gender issue <sup>7</sup>

# Analytical Process Used in this Paper



1. Data sets requested at the DepEd Central Office & interpreted using current understandings about gender and achievement
2. **Refrain** from mythologizing girls' educational success or promoting moral panic over boys' disadvantage or a narrative of a “crisis of masculinity”
3. Gender still obvious variable, but **should not** be taken out of socio-cultural context or rely on abstract, dislocated idea of gender equality (Ringrose, 2007)
4. Issues of boys' & girls' equality **much wider** than gendered achievement (ibid.); definitions of achievement may be too narrow, need a wider view including “increased understanding, social competence, citizenship, extension & diversification of abilities” etc. (Francis & Skelton, 2007)

# Critique of Interpretation of Educational Participation Data



1. Treats boys and girls as homogeneous groups: “All boys are lagging behind and all girls are doing well.”
2. Pits boys and girls in opposition to one another as a group: “boys vs girls”
3. Describes “boys’ disadvantage” or “boys’ underachievement” in education in alarmist terms or as a problem that needs urgent fixing: “a nation of male underachievers”

# Critique of Interpretation of Educational Performance Data



1. Inexact/inflated assertions of girls' performance: "Girls outscore/outperform boys"
2. Portrays boys as being disadvantaged/underserved/victimized by the system: "Boys are becoming less educated."
3. Overlooks the need to improve both boys' and girls' performance

# Challenging how education indicators are reported



1. Gender-disaggregated data encouraged notions of homogeneity within gender classification; false conclusions are fostered like existence of flaws in the nature of boys or girls that curricula or learning delivery should be able to fix
2. Solutions offered veer towards re-masculinizing schooling, e.g. provision of school sports or technical-vocational education<sup>1</sup> or preferential hiring of male teachers<sup>2</sup>
3. Let go of notions of homogeneity in the interpretation of large-scale data
4. Both boys and girls experience exclusion from school and their reasons for dropping out may have a gender dimension

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<sup>1</sup>Luz, 2011

<sup>2</sup>David, Albert and Vizmanos, 2018



# Challenging how education indicators are reported



## RECOMMENDATION

Recognize that “some boys are succeeding very well, and some girls are underachieving”<sup>1</sup>

## EXAMPLE

Instead of saying “Historical gender performance in almost all key education outcome indicators... registered an advantage of females over males”<sup>2</sup>

say

“Boys performed well in some indicators as girls.”

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<sup>1</sup>Skelton, Francis, and Valkanova, 2007, p.2)

<sup>2</sup>Caoli-Rodriguez, 2007

# Challenging stereotyping in explaining gender disparities



1. Reporting data based on gender forced researchers to find gender-specific causes of the disparities observed
2. APIS 2014: reasons for not attending school are similar for both boys and girls
  - a. employment or looking for work (males: 31.0%, females: 19.3%)
  - b. high cost of education or financial concerns (males: 23.8%, females: 21.8%)
  - c. lack of personal interest (males: 20.6%, females: 6.9%)
  - d. marriage/family matters (females: 30.2%)
3. Gender = not the only determinant of problems that prevent children and youth from attending school
4. Interventions be multi-sectoral to counter threats to inclusion: (e.g. socio-economic status, race & ethnicity, age, disability, gender and sexuality) through community/school-based inclusion programs and socio-emotional learning skills development

# Challenging stereotyping in explaining gender disparities



## RECOMMENDATION

Recognize that poverty and gender norms considered as key drivers negatively affecting the schooling of boys<sup>1</sup> also continue to impact on the lives and education of girls

## EXAMPLE

Both girls and boys should be recognized as impacted by economic factors and stereotypes based on gender.

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<sup>1</sup>Jere, 2018a, 2018b

# Challenging the gender regime in schools



1. Gender regime – observable patterns of gender relations<sup>1</sup>; schools are where gendered practices are reproduced, reinforced, & maintained
2. Anxiety over schooling being feminized is evidence of a particular gender regime's notions of what it means to be feminine or masculine<sup>2</sup>
3. Understanding impact of masculinities on boys' schooling behavior & practices may be necessary in understanding underachievement<sup>3</sup>
4. Concretely, DepEd's gender policy (2017) can be contextualized in schools to enable a more gender-fair learning environment

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<sup>1</sup>Connell, 2001; <sup>2</sup>Jha and Pouzevara, 2016

<sup>3</sup>Weaver-Hightower, 2003; Skelton, Francis & Valkanova, 2007; Jha & Pouzevara, 2016

# Challenging the gender regime in schools



## RECOMMENDATION

Identify ways schools perpetuate gender inequality & stereotypical notions of what it means to be male/boy or female/girl & take steps to remedy the same

## EXAMPLE

Expectations for achievement & school success should be applied equally to boys and girls and opportunities for self-development should be accessible and open to boys and girls (e.g., sports and tech-voc should be offered to girls and not just boys)

# Challenging the need for gender comparisons



1. Boys' underachievement = conclusion made by interpreting data in different ways; turns issue into a “war of the sexes”
2. Conceptualizing a male/female binary has silenced other forms of gender & sexuality “that involves severe oppression for students & teachers”<sup>1</sup>; important to ask: which boys & which girls are at greatest risk for failure<sup>2</sup>
3. Philippine data fell short of achieving its targets; hardly any celebration of girls' achievement; gender gap is portrayed as a problem that needs urgent fixing<sup>3</sup>
4. Learner achievement is more greatly influenced by other factors beyond gender<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Weaver-Hightower, 2003; <sup>2</sup> Watson, Kehler, and Martino, 2010; <sup>3</sup> Epstein et al, 1998;

<sup>4</sup>Skelton, Francis, & Valkanova, 2007

# Challenging the need for gender comparisons



## RECOMMENDATION

If reports aggregated learners according to what they have learned & what else they need to learn, then underachievement of learners would be seen as an issue that can be addressed through education interventions & learning solutions at the level of schools and classrooms

## EXAMPLE

Make good curricula accessible to all by taking into account the voices of boys and girls through the conduct of research in schools about learner dispositions

# Conclusions



1. Gender disparity in basic education remains a legitimate and unresolved concern but cannot be viewed as a zero-sum game in which the loss of one group results in the gain for another<sup>1</sup>
2. Core objective of education = improve participation in programs which ensure student learning
3. Schools must implement inclusive interventions that enliven the centrality of gender equality in a substantive way
4. Ultimately, commitment should be to improve education outcomes for all in light of the Education 2030 Framework for Action and the K to 12 Basic Education Program to enable boys & girls to enjoy the benefits of genuine gender equality & be empowered to become agents of it in the future

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<sup>1</sup>Weaver-Hightower, 2003; Global Partnership for Education & United Nations Girls' Education Initiative, 2017



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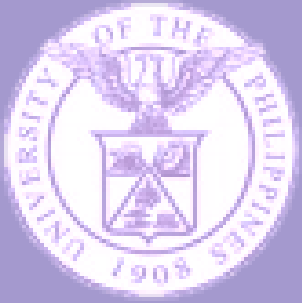


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University of the  
Philippines  
Center for Integrative and  
Development Studies  
(CIDS)

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# Thank you very much!

[erp.cids@up.edu.ph](mailto:erp.cids@up.edu.ph)