



## Critical Pedagogy in Teacher Education for Gender Equity : A Study

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### Abstract:

*The pursuit of gender equity in education requires not only policy reform but also a radical transformation in pedagogical approaches, especially within teacher education programs. This paper examines the role of critical pedagogy in advancing gender equity through teacher education. It argues that a critically reflective pedagogy, rooted in the principles of empowerment, social justice, and resistance to hegemonic norms, can serve as a transformative tool for preparing teachers to challenge gender biases both in themselves and within the educational system. Drawing upon the theoretical frameworks of Paulo Freire, bell hooks, and other scholars, the paper explores the philosophical foundations of critical pedagogy, its application in teacher education, and its potential to address gender stereotypes, curriculum bias, and the hidden curriculum. This article advocates for an inclusive, intersectional, and critical approach to teacher education as a pathway to gender-just schooling.*

**Keywords:** Pedagogy, Teacher Education, Gender Equity, Curriculum.

### Introduction:

Gender inequality in education continues to manifest in various forms—ranging from unequal access and participation to systemic discrimination, biased curriculum content, and discriminatory pedagogical practices (UNESCO, 2022). While strides have been made towards universal access to education, gender equity—a condition where individuals are treated fairly according to their respective needs—remains elusive, particularly in patriarchal societies where education reinforces existing gender hierarchies (Stromquist, 2013).

Teacher education holds the potential to disrupt these patterns by preparing educators not only to deliver content but also to foster critical thinking, challenge stereotypes, and act as agents of change (Connell, 2009). Within this context, critical pedagogy, as an emancipatory teaching philosophy, emerges as a powerful framework to deconstruct and transform gender inequities.

### Review of Literature:

A 2023 cross-cultural study by Çelik & Thomas compared teacher education practices in Turkey and the United States, revealing that while American trainees were more open to LGBTQ+ inclusion and feminist

discourse, Turkish trainees exhibited greater resistance due to cultural taboos and state-imposed restrictions on gender discourses. The authors argue for locally rooted but globally aware pedagogical strategies.

In Morocco, Khanoussi & El Amrani (2025) analyzed pre-service teachers' self-efficacy in practicing gender equity and found that although awareness had improved due to policy interventions, deep-seated gender norms and lack of institutional support impeded practical transformation. The study calls for community-based mentorship and collaborative gender forums in teacher education institutions to enhance sustainability.

Narayan et al. (2023) document a teacher training program in Kerala that used *gender labs*, theatre-based methods, and digital storytelling to help trainees identify and resist gender biases in classroom settings. The project demonstrated that embodied learning—where emotional and social experiences are central—deepens the impact of critical gender pedagogy.

Similarly, Vu & Pham (2022) investigated how English language teachers in Vietnam addressed gender bias in textbooks. The findings revealed a gap between awareness and action: while teachers recognized stereotypical content, few mediated it in class due to lack of confidence, inadequate training, or fear of backlash. The authors emphasize the need for critical media literacy and curriculum mediation training.

### **Significance of the Study:**

This study is significant for its focused exploration of critical pedagogy as a transformative tool in teacher education aimed at promoting gender equity. Amid rising awareness of gender-based injustices, the study highlights how traditional teacher education often reinforces stereotypes and fails to address gender biases. By adopting critical pedagogy, influenced by Paulo Freire, the study encourages reflective thinking, activism, and the development of inclusive practices among future educators.

It fills a critical gap by examining how gender equity and critical pedagogy can be integrated meaningfully in teacher training, an area often overlooked in existing literature. The study also aligns with global and national educational goals such as SDGs 4 and 5 and India's NEP 2020, reinforcing its policy relevance.

Importantly, it contributes to the personal and professional growth of teachers by helping them understand their roles in either challenging or perpetuating gender inequities. Lastly, it provides practical guidance for curriculum developers and policymakers, promoting a shift from superficial gender inclusion to deep, structural transformation in education—positioning teachers as agents of change toward a more just and equitable society.

### **Theoretical Framework: Critical Pedagogy and Gender Equity**

**Foundations of Critical Pedagogy:** Critical pedagogy, rooted in the work of Paulo Freire (1970), emphasizes the need for education to be a dialogical, participatory, and liberatory process. Freire's concept of "conscientização"—critical consciousness—underscores education as a political act that enables learners to perceive and challenge oppression in its varied forms.

According to Freire, the traditional "banking model" of education, where knowledge is deposited into passive learners, reproduces existing power structures. In contrast, critical pedagogy promotes praxis—reflection and action—leading to societal transformation (Freire, 1970). bell hooks (1994), extending Freire's ideas, advocated for "engaged pedagogy", a practice that acknowledges the intersectionality of race, class, gender, and identity in teaching and learning spaces.

**Gender as a Site of Oppression:** Gender is a social construct that is historically and culturally contingent, and often institutionalized through educational practices (Butler, 1990). Schools act as agents of

socialization, subtly reinforcing binary notions of masculinity and femininity through curricula, textbooks, language use, and teacher behavior (Sadker & Zittleman, 2009). Therefore, to address gender inequity, educators must be equipped to interrogate these normative structures.

Feminist pedagogies intersect with critical pedagogy in emphasizing lived experiences, voice, and consciousness-raising, thereby providing a theoretical bridge for addressing gender oppression in educational settings (Weiler, 1991).

### **Gender Biases in Teacher Education: The Need for Transformation**

**Gendered Socialization of Teachers:** Prospective teachers, like all individuals, are shaped by gendered norms and stereotypes from early childhood. These internalized attitudes often surface in classroom interactions and pedagogical practices. Studies have shown that teachers, even unconsciously, may perpetuate gender bias by assigning roles, evaluating performance, or disciplining students differently based on gender (Browne, 2004).

In India, traditional gender roles often dictate that women teachers are expected to embody nurturing and moral values, while men dominate in subjects like science or leadership roles (Kumar, 2012). Such stereotypes can only be challenged if teacher education programs include structured reflection on gender constructs.

**Curriculum and Institutional Practices:** Most teacher education curricula are still structured around technical-rational paradigms that ignore socio-political dimensions such as gender. In the Indian context, the National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE) emphasizes the need for inclusive education but often fails to embed gender justice as a critical component (NCERT, 2009).

Further, teacher training institutions may themselves reflect patriarchal values. Gender-based harassment, lack of representation of female faculty in leadership, and gender-insensitive infrastructure (e.g., lack of sanitation facilities for women) are widespread (Agrawal & Sharma, 2017).

### **Critical Pedagogy in Action: Strategies for Gender-Just Teacher Education.**

**Reconstructing the Curriculum:** A gender-sensitive teacher education curriculum must include:

- **Gender Studies Courses:** Embedding critical gender theory, feminist thought, and intersectional analysis into core curricula (Mahony, 2002).
- **Textbook Analysis:** Training teachers to analyze textbooks for gender bias, representation, and stereotyping.
- **Case Studies and Role-Plays:** Using real-life scenarios to simulate classroom challenges and encourage problem-solving from a gender-equity perspective.

For instance, the TARANG initiative by Nirantar (an Indian feminist resource group) integrates gender into literacy and education programs through context-based materials and participatory methods (Nirantar, 2011).

**Reflective and Dialogical Practices:** Critical pedagogy demands spaces for dialogue, reflection, and consciousness-raising. Teacher educators must create opportunities for pre-service teachers to:

- Reflect on personal gender biases.
- Engage in peer dialogues and storytelling.

- Participate in “gender labs”—interactive workshops focused on power, privilege, and identity (Subrahmanian, 2005).

Such approaches not only sensitize future teachers but also model pedagogies they can replicate in their classrooms.

**Practicum and Field Work:** Critical field experiences, where teacher trainees engage with diverse communities—particularly marginalized genders—can be transformative. Supervised teaching in inclusive schools, NGOs, or gender resource centers enables experiential learning and empathy-building.

For example, Gender Audit Projects, where trainees examine gendered school environments (e.g., access to toilets, gender representation in wall posters), have been successfully used in Scandinavian and African teacher training programs (Unterhalter et al., 2014).

### Challenges and Resistances

Despite its transformative promise, implementing critical pedagogy for gender equity in teacher education faces numerous obstacles:

- **Institutional Resistance:** Many teacher education institutions, particularly in rural areas, are conservative and resist curriculum changes that challenge dominant gender ideologies (Kumar & Kamat, 2013).
- **Lack of Faculty Training:** Teacher educators themselves may lack exposure to critical pedagogy or gender studies, leading to superficial implementation.
- **Policy-Practice Disconnect:** Although national frameworks mention gender equity, mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating implementation are weak (Ramachandran, 2010).
- **Cultural Barriers:** In deeply patriarchal settings, gender-equity education may be met with hostility or derision, especially if it challenges religious or traditional norms.

### Conclusion:

Gender equity in education is not just about equal numbers—it is about transforming the very structures that produce and sustain gender hierarchies. Critical pedagogy offers a dynamic, reflective, and empowering pathway to equip teachers with the tools to recognize and resist gender-based oppression. It challenges the neutrality of knowledge, demands the inclusion of marginalized voices, and encourages praxis that extends beyond the classroom.

In the context of teacher education, this means training future educators to be not just instructors but also social critics and change agents. By embedding critical pedagogy into teacher education, societies can move toward classrooms—and ultimately communities—that uphold gender justice as a foundational value.

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