

Women and Teaching: International Perspectives on the Feminisation Debate

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Overview

- **Defining “feminisation”**
- **The feminisation debate in context**
- **Early historical examples**
- **Prevalent themes**
- **Exploring feminisation outside of the global north**
- **Findings from five new case studies**
- **Recommendations**

Defining “feminisation”: Varied perspectives

- **On the surface:** an occupation that is predominantly made up of women;
- **Three layered approach:**
 - a) **Calculating percentages of women in a given profession**
 - b) **A meaning related to the effects of the weight of numbers**
 - c) **The rate of access of women into a profession**
- **Consistent aggregate perspective;**
- **No officially recognised percentage threshold for when “feminisation” begins**

Global Overview

Region	Teaching Staff – Percentage Female			
	Primary Education		Secondary Education	
	School year ending in		School year ending in	
	1999	2007	1999	2007
Arab States	52	59	49	51
Central and Eastern Europe	82	80	72	74
Central Asia	84	86	65	69
South East Asia and the Pacific	55	60	46	48
East Asia	55	59	46	47
Pacific	71	75	57	56
Latin America and the Caribbean	76	78	64	60
North America and Western Europe	81	85	56	61
South and West Asia	35	45	35	36
Sub-Saharan Africa	43	44	31	30

Source: UNESCO EFA GMR 2010

The feminisation debate in context:

- **Feminisation in the context of MDGs and EFA:**
 - Historically, an influx of women into the teaching profession has been central to successes in the delivery of UPE and gender parity in education
 - Recruiting female teachers is a cyclical challenge for countries with low female literacy – difficult to meet gender quotas. Also a cost/quality issue for teacher training
- **Feminisation in the context of broader gender equality:**
 - Teaching as economic empowerment for women
 - Societal perceptions of “women’s work”
 - Equity issues within feminised work forces

Early historical examples

- **Historical trajectories – countries in the global north and South America and the Caribbean:**

Examples:

- **United Kingdom**
- **Canada**
- **Australia**
- **Argentina**
- **New Zealand**
- **Costa Rica**
- **Trinidad**
- **Jamaica**
- **St. Lucia**

The feminisation debate: some prevalent themes

1. Education expansion and the targeted recruitment of women teachers;
2. Socio-economic and cultural dimensions of female teacher recruitment during education expansion;
3. Perceived gender roles and assumptions about the teaching profession;
4. Gender equality issues in the career hierarchy;
5. On the status of the profession;
6. On educational provision and outcomes;

Exploring feminisation outside of the global north

- Overall, developing countries with feminised teaching workforces are fewer and appear almost anomalous within their respective regions;
- For example, in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, the following countries show high female teacher percentages:
 - Sub-Saharan Africa – Namibia, South Africa, Lesotho, Botswana
 - South Asia – Sri Lanka, Maldives
- However, countries in the Caribbean and Pacific show the converse pattern, with nearly all demonstrating significant majority female workforces

Female teacher percentages in selected Sub-Saharan African countries

Region and Country	Teaching Staff - % Female			
	Primary Education		Secondary Education	
	School year ending in		School year ending in	
	1999	2007	1999	2007
Botswana	81	78	45	54
Ghana	32	33	22	22
Kenya	42	44	-	40
Lesotho	80	78	51	55
Mozambique	25	34	-	16
Namibia	67	65	46	50
Nigeria	48	50	36	38
Rwanda	55	53	-	53
Seychelles	85	85	54	55
South Africa	78	77	50	53
Uganda	33	39	-	22
Zambia	49	48	27	39

Female teacher percentages in selected Caribbean countries

Region and Country	Teaching Staff – % Female			
	Primary Education		Secondary Education	
	School year ending in		School year ending in	
	1999	2007	1999	2007
Caribbean				
Bahamas	63	85	74	70
Belize	64	72	62	61
Dominica	75	84	68	65
Guyana	86	88	63	57
Jamaica	-	89	-	69
St. Lucia	85	87	64	66

Source: UNESCO EFA GMR 2010

Country case studies

- **Five Countries:**
 - **Dominica**
 - **Lesotho**
 - **Samoa**
 - **Sri Lanka**
 - **India (focus on Kerala)**
- **Two-pronged approach:**
 - 1) **Comparative statistical analysis**
 - 2) **Qualitative analysis of key trends and issues**

Country	Teaching Staff – % Female			
	Primary Education		Secondary Education	
	School year ending in		School year ending in	
	1999	2007	1999	2007
Lesotho	80	78	51	55
Dominica	75	84	68	65
Samoa	71	78	57	-
Kerala		79*		76*
Sri Lanka	-	84	-	-

Source UNESCO EFA GMR 2010

* Selected DISE data 2008-09

Findings

Levels of statistical feminisation: Historical trends

- **Catalytic periods that led to feminised teaching workforces**
 - **Sri Lanka, Samoa and Kerala: post-independence education expansion dynamics which viewed teaching as a suitable profession for women;**
 - expansion of secondary education and increased access for girls
 - men also exiting profession in search of higher paying jobs (Dominica and Lesotho)
- **Female teacher training and teacher recruitment: organic developments, or targeted strategies?**

Access to education, outcomes, and teaching processes

- Cases studies confirmed trend from older feminised workforces – relationship between increased female teacher numbers and access to primary education, especially for girls;
- Lesotho, Dominica and Samoa all showed levels of gender disparity in *favour of girls* (in terms of access);
- Performance indicators showed divergent experiences between countries where gender was concerned, (boys' underachievement still a concern among stakeholders)

Internal variances

- Female percentages consistently highest in urban centres
- Gap was less pronounced in case studies with the highest female percentages overall (Sri Lanka and Kerala)
- Case of India: Even in states that have a dearth in female teachers overall, urban centres are fast reaching what would be considered feminised levels
- Variances in feminisation levels between school providers

Managerial disparities

- High female teacher percentages do not automatically translate into proportionate numbers of female school Heads –men still advantaged (Dominica the exception);
- This became even more pronounced at secondary level, where even in countries with high female percentages within that sector, female Heads are disproportionately represented to their numbers (e.g. Sri Lanka).

Socio-cultural associations of teaching as women's work

- **Qualitative data and empirical research among teachers showed perceptions of the profession – mainly at the primary level – as women's work:**
 - **Perspectives on a biological disposition prevalent – primary teaching as an extension of childcare;**
 - **Teaching as a conducive profession for women, as it allows them time to maintain their personal domestic sphere whilst also earning.**

Untrained and “para” teachers

- Highest numbers of female untrained teachers were found in Lesotho and Dominica – different levels of feminisation, but both struggling with teacher attrition/mobility (male teachers were still *more likely* to be untrained overall);
- India: “para” teacher nature and prevalence varies between states – Kerala and Rajasthan experiences notably different.

Teacher remuneration, career progression, and “status”

- **Low salaries a key factor in most case studies for lack of male interest in the profession – interlinked with economic and women’s gender roles in society;**
- **Similarly, lack of career progression also seen as deterrent for men to enter the profession, or as a reason to exit;**
- **Mixed responses regarding whether low remuneration has an impact on the profession’s “status”**

Summary Recommendations

- 1) **On increased female teacher recruitment among countries aiming to achieve EFA: need for a longer term perspective;**
 - Women teachers are not to be viewed as a low-wage “cure all”;
 - Counter growth in any negative societal perceptions of teaching as “women’s work”

- 2) **On addressing current equity issues within feminised work forces**
 - Tackle gender equity issues amongst teachers
 - Empower women teachers to speak and address pay and promotional issues
 - Gender sensitive teacher training

- 3) **On the recruitment of male teachers into feminised work forces**
 - Address negative perceptions of men teaching primary school;
 - Explore pathways in countries where boys/young men need further academic support to enter teacher training colleges



Thank You