

Gender issues framing the teaching force

Vimala Ramachandran
National Fellow, NUEPA, New Delhi

Why gender?

- Teachers and educators influence the gender roles of their students thus impacting their educational outcomes. When considering Education for All (EFA) goal 5, which aimed to eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and now aims to achieve gender equality by 2015, it should be realized that teachers are a critical force for meeting the goal” (Guidelines for inclusion, UNESCO, 2009)
- Teachers as agents of change, teachers as harbingers of values of equality and non-discrimination...
- Teachers, being embedded in society may themselves be subject to gender based exclusion / discrimination

Why gender?

- “The teacher, the learning environment and practices within the school coalesce to affirm roles and attitudes. A process that begins within the home gets re-established and consolidated within the school... The school teacher plays an important role in maintaining, modifying and reshaping her understanding of location, in terms of her class, caste, gender, religion, sexuality and and region” (NCF India, Gender issues in education, 2005)

How gender is positioned?

- While there is almost universal acceptance of the importance of “Gender” , the way it is positioned raises questions:
- It is mostly about tracking numbers – number of teachers, number of students, absenteeism, number of training attended....
- Programmes monitor completion of activities and utilisation of budgets, allocation of budgets for gender related areas
- Gender is equated with women / girls (example fishing community in Tsunami area of TN)
- Mechanical screening of textbooks etc...(Dipta will talk about this in her presentation)

What is missing...

- How gender issues manifest in everyday practice of teaching and learning;
- Attitudes, perceptions, prejudices that we all carry with us into our work space...
- Have we missed the substance and focusing more on the form
- When we talk about gender issues that frame the teaching force in the world, it is important to go beyond numbers and tokens...

Feminisation

- Feminisation of the teaching profession – at pre-primary, primary and up to secondary proportion of women high (regional variations exist) but at higher education levels it goes down (vertical segregation) representation in management / leadership roles also low (varies across countries)
 - Should we work towards attracting more men to the teaching force? Experience in Europe (EACEA, 2010)
 - Should we continue to push for more women in
 - Is there a hierarchy of disciplines (horizontal segregation) and levels?

Global issues

- Need to work towards more women teachers in management and leadership;
 - Glass ceiling, barriers to women reaching leadership positions?
- Weave in gender as a topic in teacher education
 - Integration versus modules or separate courses.
- Continuing professional development of women teachers
- Gender bias in teacher education texts
- Sexual harassment, safety issues...
- What can teachers / teacher educators do to foster a sense of equality between men and women, between different races, castes, communities and religion?
 - How much can they do?
 - It is about justice and equal opportunities
 - Its about men and women

The Indian Scenario

- Policies recommend more female teachers – especially in DPEP and now SSA, special programmes (NPEGEL) or schools (KGBV) for girls
 - Gender = Girls
- Proportion of female teachers (grades 1-12) around 40 percent
 - Huge urban-rural differences
 - Enormous variation across different states of India
 - Higher in private schools (53%)
- Caste and gender hierarchies in appointment of para-teachers (Probe, revisited 2011).

Huge variations across India

% of Women (Regular) Teachers	2010-11	2010-11
	Government Schools	Private schools
	Primary, Upper Primary	Primary, Upper Primary
All India	40.68	54.65
Assam	31.55	29.61
Jharkhand	25.77	44.80
Kerala	68.84	74.75
Madhya Pradesh	30.94	55.27
Maharashtra	39.07	50.75
Rajasthan	28.39	32.59
T Nadu	68.85	84.48
West Bengal	39.76	55.95

Note: Primary & Upper Primary with Secondary and Higher secondary included, but not stand alone secondary or higher secondary schools. Source DISE

SES, GOI (2007-08)	Higher secondary schools	High school (post basic)	Middle (Senior Basic Schools)	Pre-primary & Junior Basic
	% female teachers (regular) per 100 male teachers			
All India	58	61	67	80
Assam	47	35	35	54
Jharkhand	82	42	23	58
Kerala	283	258	230	299
Madhya Pradesh	62	63	28 (?)	45 (?)
Maharashtra	47	46	79	152
Rajasthan	41	33	44	44
T Nadu	97	146	151	284
West Bengal	47	39	38	40

Complex web of social norms

- Social norms instrumental in encouraging women to become teachers
 - However lack of other employment opportunities for men, pushes many into teaching;
 - Low female literacy and patriarchal values have had negative impact in some states
 - Hierarchies within:
 - Pre-school, primary, upper primary, secondary, university,
 - Government teachers, local power and influence versus private teachers
 - Few in leadership positions: headmasters, head teachers, educational administrators, BRC (Kerala and TN notable exceptions)

Becoming a teacher

- Teacher training courses popular among girls who complete secondary education
 - Access to secondary education remains a challenge
 - Fees, including capitation in private institutions
 - Ability to study math and science in higher secondary (Visaria's study, 2009)
- Patriarchal norms come in the way of participation in in-service training (especially residential)

On the brighter side

- Absenteeism lower among women teachers (Kremer et al, 2005)
- More motivated, focus on school and children; not given to participating in local politics (Jha and Bharadwaj 2001 and Ramachandran et al 2004, Rajagopal 2009)
- Female head teachers less engaged in politics and more engaged with school (De et al 2005, Samson et al 2007).

Recurring recommendations

- Do not address gender issues mechanically:
 - Equal attention to substance, attitudes, practices
 - Devise need situation specific strategies;
- Enable more girls to move to secondary education, make sure science, math is offered;
- Enhance opportunities for women in most deprived social groups / races / locations to transition from secondary to teacher training course
- Mentor and nurture women to take leadership positions

Recurring recommendations 2

- Enable women teachers to form an association / forum to address specific problems / issues and provide support:
 - Academic – teacher training, continuing education, leadership training
 - Non-academic – safety, sexual harassment, discrimination, stereotyping

Recurring recommendations 3

- Teacher training:
 - Pay attention to experiences of teachers, the problems they face on the ground
 - Factor in perspectives and priorities of different kinds of teachers and those from different social groups
- Look at manifest and hidden hierarchies – and address all of them together (do not do them in silos):
 - Caste / race / community / location
 - Gender
 - Ability / disability
 - Health (HIV positive, other ailments that lead to prejudices)

A lot to do

- Lets not become complacent...
- Numbers are just one dimension of gender.... Go beyond numbers, ratios, percentages and focus on the twists and turns of everyday practice of teachers.
- **THANK YOU!**