

PART ONE: MULTI-COUNTRY ANALYSIS

1 Introduction and Background

Definitions and Overview

Women and the 'feminisation' of the teaching profession has been debated for decades, in some places for over a century. The term 'feminisation' has tended to apply to countries where women are a significant majority in the teaching workforce. As a result, there has been a tendency for most explorations in this subject to come from countries in the North, such as the UK, Australia and Canada, or, more recently, from South America. The debates surrounding women, the teaching profession and feminisation have been wide-ranging and, in some cases, contentious. They have included reviewing the reasons why the teaching profession became gender-imbalanced in favour of women in certain countries in the first place, and what the impacts might be on learning processes and the educational outcomes for students. Other explorations have sought to look more deeply at trends within feminisation itself, including variations between education sectors and management structures. Some discussions have attempted to address what the implications of a majority-female teaching profession has meant for gender equality and relations more broadly, including women's overall empowerment within society and the economy.

Feminisation as a statistical, sociological and educational exploration

At a purely statistical level, an occupation that is predominantly made up of women is said to be 'feminised' (Bank, 2007). However, when sociologists and educators refer to feminisation they are referring to labour market tendencies where the participation of women in various occupations is increasing (Drudy et al, 2005). Similarly, the Working Group of the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) used the term feminisation to "describe the phenomenon of large-scale entry into the teaching profession by women ..." (in Wylie, 2000 p.1). But going further, the ETUCE report indicated three distinct meanings within this: a) a statistical meaning, used in calculating percentages of men and women in a given profession; b) a meaning related to the effects of the weight of numbers; and c) the rate of access of women into a profession.

For the purpose of this exploratory study, feminisation will be investigated on two levels. First, the study will be exploring feminisation from a purely statistical standpoint, researching countries that currently have high female teacher percentages. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) use a percentage scale to bracket levels of feminisation within any teaching force, categorizing high feminisation levels as 70 per cent or more, with medium feminisation levels categorised as between 50-69 percent (Wylie, 2000). In this study, the following categorisation when will apply: low to medium feminisation: 55-69 percent; high feminisation: 70 per cent and above. Secondly, the study will also attempt to examine

feminisation from a sociological basis, exploring key issues that accompany the statistical trends, including causes, consequences and implications.

Global and Commonwealth overview

As already noted, the feminisation debate has taken place primarily in countries that have long-standing education systems and a long history of women entering the profession. As a multi-regional group of member states, the Commonwealth has a tendency sometimes to produce quite divergent results where patterns and rhythms within education are concerned. As Commonwealth countries are present in the majority of global regions, at a fundamental statistical level, regional statistics show initial indications of such divergences when perusing female percentages within the teaching force:

Table 1.1 Female teacher percentages at the regional level – 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
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	38
Sub-Saharan Africa	43	44	31	30

Source: UNESCO 2010

While the statistics include non-Commonwealth countries, we can still draw some preliminary thoughts based the regional configurations. Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia are both regions where Commonwealth countries are well-represented, and we can see from the statistical data that in both regions women teachers remain the minority¹. At a regional level therefore, neither can be categorised as feminised. However, the data does indicate that at the primary level there has been a growth in the proportion of women teachers in South and West Asia between 1999 and 2007, while sub-Saharan Africa has remained virtually static. At the secondary level, the numbers are even lower, and there has been no significant increase at all in both regions.

However, when this is juxtaposed with other regions with a significant Commonwealth presence, such as Latin America and the Caribbean, we see a sharp difference, with both those regions having female teacher percentages over the 70th percentile, indicating high levels of feminisation. This can be similarly seen in the Pacific sub-region of East Asia and the Pacific. In each of these regions, female teachers constitute a high majority at the primary level in particular, with significantly lower majorities at the secondary level. The two regions with the highest levels of statistical feminisation – Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia – do not have any Commonwealth member states within them.

¹ Commonwealth countries constitute more than half within the South and West Asia region, and 20 out of the 45 countries within sub-Saharan Africa.

A deeper analysis of selected Commonwealth country level statistics will also help to provide further understanding of the extent to which this global overview, based on regional statistics, synchronises with the Commonwealth picture. Table 1.2 below presents several points for analysis. In the first instance we see that while several Commonwealth countries in sub-Saharan Africa tally with the low levels of female teacher percentages found overall in the region, (e.g. Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, Uganda), there are others that buck this trend. Botswana, Namibia, Lesotho, South Africa and the Seychelles all show female teachers as a high majority at the primary level, all of which are countries within the Southern African sub-region on the continent. Interestingly, these high majorities were established prior to 1999, and in the intervening years to 2007 the percentages have either remained the same or decreased by one or two percentage points. At the secondary level in these countries, female teacher numbers only constitute a small majority, if at all, indicating relative gender balance or only medium levels of feminisation. This difference between primary and secondary levels is quite marked.

Table 1.2 Female teacher percentages in selected Commonwealth countries

Region and Country	Teaching Staff - % Female			
	Primary Education		Secondary Education	
	School year ending in		School year ending in	
	1999	2007	1999	2007
Africa				
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
Caribbean				
Bahamas	63	65	74	70
Belize	64	72	62	61
Dominica	75	84	68	65
Guyana	66	68	63	57
Jamaica	-	69	-	69
St Lucia	65	67	64	66
South East Asia and Pacific				
Brunei Darussalam	66	74	48	60
Kiribati	62	75	46	47
Malaysia	66	68	-	63
New Zealand	82	83	58	62
Samoa	71	78	57	-
Singapore	-	81	-	66
Tonga	67	-	48	-
Europe and N. America				
Canada	68	-	68	-
Cyprus	67	82	51	62
Malta	87	86	48	57
United Kingdom	76	81	56	61
South Asia				
Bangladesh	-	40	13	20
India	33	-	34	-
Maldives	60	71	25	-
Sri Lanka	-	64	-	-

Source: UNESCO EFA GMR 2010

The data in those sub-Saharan African countries that buck the trend appear to share more in common with countries with Commonwealth member states in the Caribbean, South East Asia and the Pacific and North America and Western Europe, where overall female teachers constitute a significant majority. Despite the overarching similarity however, we do see some differences in the trends. For example, while high female numbers were already established in most Caribbean countries by 1999, we have seen significant further growth in the female percentage at the primary level since then in some countries, such as in The Bahamas, Belize and Dominica. Further to this, female teachers also constituted a notable majority at the secondary level (all in the in the sixtieth percentile and above), although the data indicates that those percentages have stabilised since, growing very little, or with a slight decrease.

In South East Asia and the Pacific we can see some similar patterns, with female percentages that were already in the sixtieth percentile and above in primary education by the turn of the millennium. There have been varying levels of growth since: Brunei Darussalam has had comparatively significant percentage point increases at both primary and secondary level, while New Zealand has been more measured in its percentage growth, although it is worth noting that female teachers were already in the 80th percentile by 1999. A similarly high statistic can be found in the North America and Western Europe region, with the case of Malta. Primary level female teacher numbers – already in the high 80th percentile by 1999 – have grown no further since, while at the secondary level, where female teacher numbers constituted about half of the workforce a decade ago, have now grown by about ten percent. The United Kingdom has shown some growth at both levels, while Cyprus has demonstrated more notable growth at primary and secondary level (fifteen percentage points and 11 percentage points respectively).

Commonwealth South Asia, similar to sub-Saharan Africa, shows a distinct divergence in trends between some countries. While the statistics are incomplete, we can gauge that while India and Bangladesh are still working towards achieving higher female teacher numbers, Sri Lanka and Maldives already have high female teacher percentages at the primary level. Interestingly, the one statistic that we do have for secondary level teachers in Maldives indicates that in 1999 at least, female teachers were in a small minority, a stark difference from their position at the primary level in the same year.

What these national level statistics cannot show us is the extent to which female teachers are a majority or minority at the sub-national level. In large countries such as India and Nigeria this is a pertinent point, as the autonomy and unique specificities of individual states over several decades have resulted in internally divergent patterns within the evolution of their education systems. Similarly, preliminary national level statistics that give an overview of levels of feminisation are unable to unearth a variety of other trends, including further regional variations such as urban and rural differences, or institutional variations such between educational providers. Additionally, such a broad overview can cover variations within the teaching profession's management structure.

Women, teaching and the feminisation debate within the context of the education Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA)

Women and the teaching profession is an area that is particularly pertinent to the education MDGs and EFA goals. Developing countries are currently working towards overcoming the dual challenges of education expansion and universal provision while ensuring quality and equity. In the context of countries that have achieved the goals of Universal Primary Education (UPE) and gender parity in education, historical analysis indicates that an influx of women into the teaching profession has been central to these successes (Cortina and San Roman, 2006). From a purely human resourcing perspective,

female labour has been instrumental at fulfilling capacity needs, while from the perspective of educating women and girls the presence of women teachers has been a major contributory factor. Girl child education in particular lies at the heart of today's core global education mandates, providing much of the programming around achievement of the education related MDGs and EFA. In countries where girl child education remains a challenge, a dearth in female teachers within the system has been identified as one of the core barriers to gender parity and equality in education (Herz and Sperling, 2004, Kirk, 2006), most specifically where girl child retention in school is concerned. These linkages have made the recruitment of women into the profession an expected outcome within national education sector plans and donor education strategies alike.

But the strategy in itself presents cyclical challenges. Recruiting female teachers is difficult when female education and literacy rates are already exceptionally low, making gender-sensitive teacher recruitment difficult endeavours in many countries. Apart from the costs attached to overcoming those circumstances, countries are also being increasingly expected to find a balance between rapidly meeting gender quotas and ensuring quality in teaching through a) acceptable standards of teacher training and b) the provision of teachers into the education system in a manner that is both ethical and sustainable.

An area within global education mandates that has less resonance but is of consequence in some parts of the world is that of boys' underachievement and under-participation. Comparative to the issue of girl child education, it is important to put this into clear context: issues surrounding boys appear prevalent in countries that have achieved universal primary education and gender parity in education (Drudy, 2008). The difficulties are therefore less to do with a mass-marginalisation of boys that has resulted in a major lack of access and retention, and instead more specific trends that pertain to comparative underperformance in certain subject areas and higher tendency towards drop-out as they reach adolescence. In a quest to understand the causes of this, there has been a tendency among countries with majority female teaching workforces to make linkages between feminisation and the underachievement of boys. This part of the debate has had a tendency in the past to be fuelled by popular and media perceptions of simplistic gender divisions, causing contention in some cases (Jha and Kelleher, 2006).

Women, teaching and the feminisation debate within the context of broader gender equality

Just as gender equality in education and women in the teaching profession have strong linkages, so the issue of women, teaching and the feminisation debate also have a place within the broader context of gender equality in society as a whole. The gender equality MDG (MDG 3) stipulates outcomes beyond education that include women's role in waged employment and women's representation in political processes. In the first of these, women and the teaching profession clearly has a broader implication beyond education provision alone. Teaching has been instrumental in providing many women in feminised education systems with access to their first formal, waged employment opportunities, and in so doing, has been a step towards meeting the broader goals surrounding economic empowerment as mandated by the CEDAW Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 1995–2015 and the Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender Equality 2005–2015. Arguably, as education systems become increasingly feminised on a statistical level, the opportunities for women's employment in this sector have become solidified, offering guarantees of economic surety for many women in the future.

However, there are also potentially complex consequences surrounding the increasing expectation of women's employment within any given sector, especially if a

profession becomes known for being 'women's work' within societies that are still inherently tied to traditional gender roles that permit a continuation of subtle gender inequalities. The teaching profession – despite its pivotal role within societal development and dependence on educated individuals – is not necessarily exempt from such nuances. The Second World Congress of Education International in 1998 put down a resolution on the increasingly feminised nature of the teaching profession that highlighted many of these broader issues. These included several trends that indicated a discrepancy in equity within feminised teaching workforces, such as a) the wide variances in numbers within education sectors, with women found overwhelmingly in the early stages of education; b) an under-distribution of women across the teaching career hierarchy, disproportionate to their overall numbers, indicating direct or indirect discriminations against them within the profession; and c) concerns regarding an undervaluing of work that becomes traditionally associated with women. Such concerns feed into a broader discourse that looks at gender inequality from more nuanced perspectives that developed countries which have fully-educated and relatively empowered female workforces continue to grapple with today (gender pay gap, 'glass ceilings' in promotion, and women's struggle for continued economic equality when dealing with their responsibilities within the reproductive sphere), that developing countries may find will become their gender equality challenges of the future.

These dualities of impact and consequence – women in teaching as instrumental in education provision generally (and female education in particular) on the one hand, versus an entrenching of gender inequalities through the feminisation of the profession on the other – makes the topic one of multi-layered issues and applicability in the development context.

Scope, methodology and how the report is structured

As exploratory research into countries that have not had a plethora of outputs on some of these issues, the scope of this study is broad on both a geographic and analytical level. Geographically, the research covers five countries in the Commonwealth in a cross-regional manner: Dominica from the Caribbean, Lesotho from Africa, Samoa from the Pacific, and both Sri Lanka and India from South Asia. The first four countries were chosen as they presented consistent figures of statistical feminisation overall within their teaching workforces. Each country has a definitively highly-feminised teaching cadre in terms of percentages at the primary level, with varying levels of low-medium and high feminisation at the secondary level. Despite being anomalous due to its overall national percentage of women teachers being well below 50 per cent, India was also chosen for the purpose of conducting a comparative analysis between two state education systems: Kerala, which has a highly-feminised teaching workforce, and Rajasthan, where women teachers are still in a minority but where targeted teacher recruitment has seen a strong rate of increase in female teaching. The inclusion of India therefore offers the opportunity for retrospectively analysing an already feminised system while observing the trends and patterns within another that is potentially becoming feminised. For this study, countries were chosen specifically from the global South as a means of widening the geographic research base on the topic. As the following chapter of existing literature will show, the most prolific work on the subject has been done on the feminisation debate but largely within developed country nations like the UK and Canada.²

² Research is also growing in countries in South America, while investigations into female teachers have been explored systematically in India over the last ten years. The latter however has been primarily from the perspective of states within India that have been seeking to increase female numbers within systems where they are badly under-represented.

Analytically, the research will be two-pronged: i) comparative statistical analysis, and ii) qualitative analysis of the key trends and issues that present themselves. Statistically, the research will look at the following areas: national levels of feminisation within the teaching workforce and how these vary depending on primary, secondary and – where data is available – among academic staff at the tertiary level. Sub-national analysis is also included, looking specifically at regional variations of female teacher numbers within countries, particularly at any rural/urban differences that exist. The research will also seek to identify differences in feminisation levels between education providers, and analyse percentages in relation to gender and management hierarchies within the profession. Using the trends and issues identified in the statistical analysis as a starting point and bolstered by the results of qualitative investigations including desk research, questionnaires and interviews at the country level, the remaining analysis will explore and seek to identify factors that have led to the teaching profession becoming feminised in those countries and whether it is perceived as ‘women’s work’, to determine the extent to which the process of feminisation is related to class and sexual divisions within society, and to debate common arguments surrounding the impacts of feminisation on educational processes and outcomes, and on gender equity more broadly. Where data has been available within countries, the research will also address other issues emerging from the topic, including the growth of contract/para-teachers and teacher migration.

The methodology has involved both extensive desk research of the literature on feminisation, women and teaching and other related subject areas, and country-level collection of data from Ministries of Education and other relevant institutions. Qualitative research was also conducted at the country level among varied participants, including teachers, ex-teachers, trainee teachers, principals, education administrators, parents and pupils, as a means of ascertaining stakeholder perspectives on some of the core issues where previous research has not existed. Structurally, the report is divided into two parts. Part One consists of the synthesis chapters, and contains a literature review of publications that have previously explored the feminisation debate or are relevant in some manner to the issues being investigated. The following chapters in Part One present a comparative analysis of the data collected from the five countries, firstly looking at the statistical commonalities and variances, and secondly at the qualitative arguments and conclusions emanating from the trends and issues uncovered. A series of recommendations is presented, followed by suggestions for further research. Part Two of the report will include each of the country level case-studies in their own right, allowing for individual appraisal and an opportunity for deeper national-level specificities to be viewed.