

## 2 Reviewing the Literature

### **'Feminisation': layered understandings and focuses of research**

When looking at literature on the feminisation of a profession, it is first important to unpack perspectives as to its definition in order to understand the entry points for research that has been conducted so far. Within the plethora of literature that exists among countries that have researched the issue, entry points for analysis of 'feminisation' have been varied. Much of the research has been conducted in western and developed countries, where high female numbers in teaching – particularly at the primary/elementary level has been the case for decades. Various studies on feminisation have also focused on either one or more meanings, depending on the angle and scope of the study. For example, some studies focus only on the statistical definition. Others attempt analysis of the rates of statistical increases to understand patterns of recruitment over a historical period, and to ascertain root causes of rapid increases or indeed, stagnation, and furthermore the impacts of these trends – whether perceived or actual – on various aspects of the teaching profession and, more broadly, on education provision.

Thus the definition itself can be interpreted at several levels by different authors and actors, often depending on their concerns and reasons for approaching the issue. To more fully elucidate this, Griffiths, (2006) notes that when feminisation of the teaching profession is discussed, it can either refer to the numbers of women – absolute or proportional – within the profession, or a 'culture' associated with women. Griffiths further highlights varying understandings within this, from a focus on school ethos, teaching strategies and educational policy, to perceptions, hopes and fears about the effects of all of these. Skelton (2002), in addition to statistics and culture, adds a third definition called 'Backlash Politics and the Feminisation of Teaching', identifying a largely pejorative use of the term in the media and in policy that has become a feature of the debate in some countries.

Following through from this, it cannot be denied that this dialogue of concern at the policy level in many countries with a disproportionately high female teacher workforce has proved definitive in framing much of the research literature that exists on this topic. Responding to concerns over the presumed or actual impacts of a feminised workforce has driven much of the thought around this. For example, the ETUCE report spoke of "the subsequent loss of prestige suffered by the profession" following feminisation (Wylie, 2000, p.), while an OECD report on 'The Quality of the Teaching Workforce' flagged what it saw as the decline in the proportion of men in teaching as an issue of concern for policy-makers (OECD, 2004). These concerns have ranged from calls for more men to enter the profession as a means of raising the profession's status and desirability as a professional career choice, while much of the dialogue has also had a tendency to focus on analysing gaps in educational outcomes between the sexes, particularly regarding issues of boys' underachievement in certain subjects.

In many ways this is ironic, as much of the literature points to a very conscious historical recruitment of women into the teaching profession by those countries that are now experiencing concerns over feminisation. Underpinning many of these historical patterns, explorations of teacher feminisation have unearthed two key areas in relation to issues of gender equality: the interface between gender, labour and economics, and a dialogue between issues of masculinity and femininity within societies. In various ways, a significant portion of the literature explores the way in which the teaching profession has embodied and become a conduit for the realities of

traditional gender biases/inequalities to be played-out in decision-making and processes at the institutional and policy level. This analysis is best summarised by Drudy (2008), who writes on the feminisation of teaching as a “cumulative historical and social process” involving “subtle patterns of socialisation...” (p. 312).

Inherent within this historical and social process has been the existence of gendered perceptions of the profession. This has involved a conscious equating of traditionalist female gender roles – located within the reproductive sphere of domesticity, care-giving and nurture – with the teaching of young children in particular. In many respects this has made concerns over feminisation more complex and stratified. In primary education for example – statistically heavily feminised in many countries – the most concern regarding a lack of male teachers appears to be at the upper-primary level, where maternal qualities, considered acceptable in earlier childhood instruction, would need to be replaced with more academic vigour. This follows through more strongly at the secondary level, where although there is a lower disproportion of high female numbers, women are still in the majority of the workforce in many OECD countries. In understanding why, uncomfortable dialogue surrounding different perceptions of male and female teacher capacities are often explored. Stratifications within the profession according to gender perceptions also go deeper, and a large body of literature has also been dedicated to exploring the hierarchical imbalances that exist between male and female teachers in terms of management, leadership and career development.

In terms of the potential consequences of feminisation that have largely framed the dialogue of concern at the policy level, the literature includes in-depth analysis on the debate over the status of the profession, already mentioned. Here the gendered perceptions of teaching already mentioned are significant, as are the socio-economic determinants behind women’s recruitment and its results. Additionally, the issue of educational outcomes has dominated discourse on the issue, with the literature exploring perspectives on whether boys need male teachers in order to do well in school. This presents an interesting counter to the reverse discourse in countries where girls’ access and educational achievement is the cause for concern, leading to a call for more women teachers. Further perceptions that have been explored by the literature include the impact on school processes and the teaching workforce itself.

The literature on the feminisation of the teaching force is vast, especially when including other affiliated research avenues that are relevant to its understanding, such as gender, culture and society, gender equality and employment, men and masculinities, and girl-child education policies, among many others. Despite this breadth, in reviewing the literature within the parameters of countries/regions that have more specifically articulated their experience of the issue, there has been an inevitable focus on those countries where feminisation has been a recognisable phenomenon for some time, largely in the global North such as the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia. In order to bring in a broader knowledge base – particularly outside of the developed world – the focus has had to expand beyond the Commonwealth in order to incorporate a larger gamut of research than is currently available within the Commonwealth membership, such as Latin America. Despite evidence of higher female teacher numbers in some other global South countries, significant research that specifically analyses the issue has been difficult to come across. To further enhance the geographical sweep and probe some of the issues in detail, available literature on gender balance in the teaching profession, particularly as it refers to improved girl-child education, has also been reviewed, and this includes countries that don’t have high female teacher numbers but where targeted recruitment of women and education expansion is in progress.

### **Teaching and the employment of women: historical patterns and trends**

Within the literature the most commonly documented historical patterns of the movement of women into the teaching profession are those in western countries, which have had the longest experiences of mass education. One of the difficulties of the word 'feminisation' itself is that it connotes an assumption that at some point within the history of the teaching profession, women teacher numbers were either less than, or at least equal to male teacher numbers. What available research seems to indicate is that the increase of women teacher numbers in those countries with the longest histories of feminisation coincides with the beginnings of recorded, mass education systems (Carrington and McPhee, 2008). Following such an avowedly linear trajectory is therefore not always appropriate. However, enough research has been conducted to identify patterns and divergences among some countries and regions regarding the processes that occurred. This has been mainly in the context of elementary/primary education.

#### *Education expansion and the recruitment of women teachers*

English speaking countries such as the UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the US have a long literature on feminisation, largely due to the fact that in most cases women's preponderance (largely at the primary level) was already evident by the second half of the nineteenth century (Cortina and San Roman, 2006). Taking the UK context as an example, Miller (1992) notes that the need to recruit girls as teachers was grudgingly acknowledged as early as the mid 1840s. At this early stage of education expansion within the UK female teachers only taught young children or those girls who went on to secondary school, making their growing numbers less contentious. However, in 1875, women teachers already made up 54.3 per cent of elementary teachers (Miller, 1992) while by 1901 they were already in the seventieth percentile (Rogers, 2005), indicating that their statistical dominance of the profession at the primary level had already been established.

Canada's experiences of education expansion in the nineteenth century show similar patterns, as documented by Richards and Acker (2006). As with Britain, private schooling in homes was common in the first half of the century (where women could be found instructing young children and girls), to be gradually replaced by one-room schools that were originally populated by men in the early 1800s. Women gradually began to enter the profession, and as the system expanded between 1850 and 1890, the female teacher numbers jumped significantly, particularly in urban areas. Richards and Acker noted that various historians have made a connection between the feminisation of primary teaching and urban bureaucratic school systems, with hierarchies whereby men taught older children and occupied administrative posts and inspectors, while women taught younger children, mirroring the UK experience.

Catholic countries in Latin America and the Caribbean also saw a large entrance of women into teacher training in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. In several countries this coincided with the institutionalisation of teaching on a national scale, involved with secularisation and the centralisation of the state (Cortina and San Roman, 2006). Molina (2006) outlines the suddenness of the phenomenon in Costa Rica, where following the 1886 Education Reform Act which brought in compulsory free education for all, the participation of women teachers increased by 6 per cent between 1864 and 1883, by 5.4 per cent between 1883 and 1892, and by 11.7 per cent between 1892 and 1900. By 1904, women were already 60.54 per cent of the primary teacher workforce. Similarly, in Argentina, education expansion led to the deliberate policy requiring students who wanted to become teachers to attend 'normal school', which led to an increase in women teachers as a result of the clear gender regime

inherent within those institutions (Fischman, 2007). By 1930, 85 per cent of Argentina's education workforce comprised women (Morgade, 2006).

#### *Socio-economic and cultural dimensions of female teacher recruitment during education expansion*

Education expansion in and of itself cannot be identified as a single cause for the statistical feminisation of primary teaching, without an understanding of other cultural, social and economic denominators at play within any given context. Interacting with reforms and policies toward education universalisation were other more complex socio-economic variables that helped to create divergences in the desirability of the profession for men and women. Taking Costa Rica as an example, Molina (2006), notes that feminisation of the profession occurred as a convergence of three processes: the demand for teachers caused by the reform of 1886, which the state met by hiring cheap female labour; the growth of an urban economy, which offered young men with education options that were more attractive than working as a primary school teacher, and a growing proportion of state spending towards education that synergised with the labour insertion of women into public employment, particularly teaching. The issue of teachers' salaries and the education expansion's need for cheap labour appears to have been paramount in increased female numbers. With a male teacher's salary not much more than a manual labourer's in 1902, a female teacher's salary – while at least twenty per cent lower than that of a man's – was still far more than they could expect in any other occupation, given that other 'intellectual' fields such as law and the sciences were not open to them. At the same time, increased urbanisation saw the creation of new opportunities for men of education in the cities; positions that were often more desirable as a result of a clear career and pay progression – something that the teaching profession was already failing in. The Costa Rican example also illustrates how higher salaries in secondary teaching served to keep more men within that segment of the profession.

In Argentina's period of education expansion, a nexus of economic and cultural factors appear to have been at play. Often viewed as the father of Argentina's education system, President Sarmiento clearly outlined economics as a determinant of increased female teacher recruitment in the following passage:

*Women's education has been a topic of choice for philanthropists, however, the education of women for the noble profession of teaching is also a matter of economy and industry. Public education will be less expensive with women's help.*

*(D.F. Sarmiento, 1858, quoted in Fischman, 2007)*

Such fiscal motivation was not the only factor during this period. A series of cultural determinants saw the teaching profession as closely aligned with the female traits of maternal love, caring and dedication towards children in the name of patriotic and religious principles. The convergence of these views with the economic convenience women teachers represented leads Fischman to state that "the teaching profession in Argentina, as in Great Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the US was born feminine" (p. 354). Viewed as a calling, Fischman notes that the teaching profession during expansion saw the development of paradigmatic images of teachers as lay missionaries who must devote their life to nurturing new generations. This not only established the symbolic and cultural bases of the feminisation of teaching in Argentina, but also emphasised religious overtones that revealed the strength of Catholicism in the country. Indeed, young girls enrolled in normal schools heading towards a career in teaching were under severe scrutiny to demonstrate the right moral

standards. Morgade (2006) outlines how this 'moral burden' intensified during the conservative 1930s in Argentina, identifying control over women teachers one of the core elements of the feminisation of teaching in Argentina.

Historical trends across Europe, North America and other Latin American countries regarding cultural perceptions of gender roles, women's labour, and low salaries have been documented as an integral part of the feminisation process in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In understanding the determinants behind societal and political drivers of female teacher recruiting, the literature also looks at male trends away from teaching as a profession, and the motivations for this. The traditionalist view regarding men as the main economic provider of the family has been linked to why men don't enter teaching, because the salary is too low and unattractive. The popularity of this response among teacher respondents in a study on Montserrat was seen to suggest an association with societal constructs surrounding masculinity and maleness (Julius, 2009). In analysing patterns in the twentieth century, Miller (1992) noted that while the emergency teacher training scheme in the UK after World War II was first aimed mainly at men, eventually policy steps were taken to encourage mature married women into teaching for the first time as a means of easing the teacher shortage. This period coincides with economic growth and full employment. In their overview analysis, Cortina and San Roman note that not only are levels of feminisation highest when there is an extreme teacher shortage, but after feminisation has been established the only times when men can be seen to start to re-enter the profession is during periods of economic dislocation and unemployment, often until they find other opportunities.

In the Commonwealth Caribbean, a different pattern has been presented by Miller (1998) regarding regional specificities that are reliant on the interaction between gender, race, colour and class, rather than on urbanisation or the formalisation of education. He notes that public elementary teaching – inaugurated at the emancipation of slavery in 1834 (and therefore a system created for the education of the black majority) – began as a largely male occupation with a regional female percentage of 38.9 per cent. The study highlights different stages of numerical feminisation in each of the countries, with some becoming feminised relatively early in the late nineteenth/early twentieth century (Trinidad, Jamaica and St Lucia) and others not until the mid twentieth century (Barbados, Grenada, St Vincent, The Bahamas). In St Lucia for example, women made up 69 per cent of elementary teachers by 1921, while it took Grenada until 1971 to reach a similar percentage. Despite the chronological difference in these stages, Miller identifies the unifying denominator as an 'exclusionary process' towards black men, which leads to the eventual feminisation of the profession across the region by the late twentieth century. In the first phase of feminisation, the exclusionary process is instigated through the manipulation of a colonial state that was trying to address the social breach represented through the growth of an 'educated militant organised group of Black men who were willing to challenge the White colonial authorities' (p.36). In the second phase (post-independence) the process is based on an expansion of opportunities to lower strata females by the newly democratically empowered coalition of brown and black policy-makers, at the exclusion of lower strata black males.

The result of this historical expansion has meant that feminisation has been regarded as a concern for policy-makers in these countries for some time, even though increases in women numbers since then have slowed somewhat: In England between 1985 and 2005 women primary teacher numbers rose from 78 per cent to 84 per cent, and in the same period women secondary teacher numbers rose from 48 percent to 55 percent (Griffiths, 2006). Despite a decrease in the rate of increase, discourse has remained focused on feminisation as a perceived concern for the education system.

### **Perspectives of teaching as a gendered profession**

Sex and gender are often conflated, and much of the literature reviewed looks at how teaching is often perceived as a 'gendered' profession within countries. These are often closely associated with ideals of feminine behaviour and responsibility within gender roles at the cultural and societal level, particularly when it comes to teaching at the primary/elementary education level. Here the literature looks at various relationships between increased female teacher numbers and the influence of gender roles within society on teacher recruitment. Beyond associations with traditionalist gender roles, analyses have also looked at gender stratifications within the profession and perspectives by teachers themselves on gender roles and how they relate to teaching and managerial capacities.

#### *Perceived gender roles and assumptions about the teaching profession*

As already mentioned, much of the literature looks at perspectives of 'natural' associations between sex and gender roles that appear to have been common, from popular beliefs of men 'naturally' wanting to go into technical careers in science and technology, or carer roles being viewed as a "natural female" trait (Drudy et al, 2005). This has led to a social construction of the primary teacher being synonymous with constructs of 'female' and 'mother' (Smith, 2004). Mavrogeni (2005) indicates that in the nineteenth century, teaching was perceived as "a woman's mission, God-given nature, and her proper place in society" (p.8).

Gender roles as they pertain broadly to a woman's position within the reproductive sphere are at the core of these assumptions. Cortina and San Roman (2006) note the expectation in several of their Latin America case study countries of women teachers to display maternal qualities, and how this was underpinned by the Catholic Church which was the foundation upon which social structures and traditional gender roles rested within those countries. They document how in Costa Rica, Spain or Mexico, wives, mothers and daughters were enlisted to help male teachers, based on the belief that the presence of a woman teacher to complement a man was needed in order to contribute maternal qualities as 'social mothers'. In Argentina, Morgade (2006) outlines the terminology used as "mother teachers".

Drudy (2008) similarly references the regular use of a 'domestic ideology' which proposes that women are more naturally disposed towards nurture than men, based on the traditional gender roles found in many societies that place women within the domestic domain as care-givers. As corroboration of these assumptions, studies carried out among teachers and student teachers have shown a striking underlining of gender perceptions regarding teaching, particularly at the early childhood and primary level. In a 2001 study of teacher training institutions in the UK, Skelton (2003) found that male student teachers in particular associate primary teaching with being female. Drudy (2008) also found that male student teachers largely believed that primary teaching is better suited to a woman's 'nature', and that the perception of teaching as a 'woman's job' was one of the top reasons why there were low levels of men going into the profession.

#### *Gender stratifications within the profession: biases towards early childhood and primary education*

An analysis of feminisation within the teaching profession is incomplete without reviewing existing gendered stratifications within the profession. Already mentioned is the preponderance of women within early childcare and primary teaching, closely linked with associations of gender roles as they pertain to perceptions of femininity and a woman's 'natural' role to nurture and be a care-giver. It has been argued that in

the earliest stages of women entering the profession, these associations in fact provided employment opportunities and associated freedoms previously not experienced: nineteenth century experiences of women teachers in North America, Europe and Australia saw the teaching profession as an opportunity to either postpone or refuse marriage and the expected role of wife and mother (Mavrogeni, 2005). Indeed, for many pioneering women, teaching was a liberating personal experience (Fischman, 2007). However, the literature indicates that the continuation of carer/nurturing linkages with the profession have in time resulted in limitations within the profession for women.

In the first instance, there has been an inevitable emphasis on pre-primary and early childhood and primary education as the area where women are most effective and well-placed as teachers. This is reflected at the statistical level, with near-unanimity across countries and regions of female numbers being higher at the early stages of schooling, dropping – in some cases significantly – at the secondary level and beyond. This is regardless of whether female teachers dominate the workforce or not: 2007 UNESCO GMR statistics indicate that in Africa – where women teachers are already a significant minority overall – their numbers further decrease at the secondary level, while in North America and Western Europe where female numbers are viewed largely as a concern, they constitute 85 per cent of the teaching force in primary schools and 61 per cent in secondary schools (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2010). The extent to which this stratification occurred naturally through socialisation of teacher student and broader attitudes, or whether through deliberate government policy is not always clear. In Argentina however, the evidence does suggest a targeted legislative process: Article 10 of Educational Law No 1420 of 1884 stated that only female teachers could be assigned to the lower grades, thereby setting a precedent that would regulate the basic educational system for 110 years (Fischman, 2007).

More recently, ground-level attitudes demonstrate how this imbalance occurs in terms of gender entrance patterns into the profession. In the UK, Skelton's study (2003) demonstrated that even within primary school teacher education courses, male student teachers were to be found predominantly in the upper primary levels, teaching children aged 7 – 11 years. Despite the often egalitarian ideals expressed by student teacher respondents within the study (that primary schooling was a place for both male and female teachers), these views sat alongside perceptions of primary teaching that were reliant on gender biases: students within the study corroborated the view that secondary teaching is more 'acceptable' for males, and that male teachers were more 'adept' at teaching in secondary school. Those male students who were studying the upper primary courses were also keen to distinguish themselves from lower primary teaching, articulating that it is not 'appropriate' nor viewed as 'proper teaching' because of its associations with childcare as opposed to academic instruction. The study also demonstrated views that highlighted the discomfort of men as teachers of very young children due to societal fears of paedophilia – a fear that appears to be more readily associated with men as potential perpetrators than women.

#### *Gender stratifications within the profession: equality issues in the career hierarchy*

A broad area of research in the literature has involved investigations into hierarchical inequalities within the profession and the school structure. Beyond the gender stratifications associated with primary and secondary teaching, hierarchical imbalances appear to be an issue, with men continuing to dominate managerial positions, even in countries where female teacher numbers are extremely high. In Canada for example, 1995 statistics showed that 75 per cent of elementary school teachers were women but 75 per cent of elementary head teachers were men, while

almost half of secondary school teachers were women, 85 per cent of heads were men (Coffee and Delamont, 2000). Similar statistics are evident in Australia (Smith, 2004), while in Botswana, women teachers also find themselves with unequal access to positions of power and decision making within the education system (Mulenge, 2002), despite constituting the majority of the workforce.

The extent to which increased numbers of females in the profession has led to attempts to address this imbalance has also been explored. Some studies have found that increases in the proportion of women teachers have shown resultant increases in female headships, particularly in primary schools: New Zealand for example witnessed a rise in female primary headships from 5 per cent to 35 per cent between 1980 and 1998 (Wylie, 2000). However, with 1999 statistics for New Zealand indicating that women at that time constituted 82 per cent of the teaching staff (GMR, 2010), the issue of disproportionality requires a further look at equality within education management structures. Similarly, the OECD's Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) that looked at 23 countries within and beyond the membership, found that on average, 45 per cent of school principals were female, compared to just fewer than 70 per cent of teachers, suggesting the existence of a glass ceiling, particularly in those countries where the percentage of female school principals is over 30 percentage-points below the percentage of female teachers (OECD, 2009).

In the search to explain these imbalances, the literature has looked closely at the problems of gender associations within the profession. Arguably implicit within the previously discussed association between maternity and teaching is the potential for negative connotations towards a woman teacher's academic and instructive capacity, professionalism and potential career advancement. At a capacity level, maternal qualities are not seen as relevant to technical and pedagogical knowledge (Cortina and San Roman, 2006). Skelton (2003) identifies two factors of how male teachers come to be located in dominant managerial positions in primary schools in the UK: a) the positioning of some men as 'natural leaders' in patriarchal society and b) the endeavours of individual men to emphasise those aspects of teaching that are compatible with perceptions of 'proper masculinity', such as leadership and management. In the findings from student teacher responses to the question 'how can the government make primary teaching more attractive to men', the popular response of 'offering fast track promotions' carried within it an implicit suggestion that men are more desirous of career advancement within their professions.

The literature further indicates that this view is supported by a parallel belief that women teachers – largely due to their additional roles as wives and mothers – are less likely to want/be able to chase career advancement and entry into managerial positions. This demonstrates the paradoxical nature of teaching as one of the earliest instances in women's economic empowerment: historically, marriage bars – where women teachers were expected to leave the profession upon marriage – were common in Europe, North, and Latin America in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Acker, 1989, Richards and Acker 2006, Molina, 2006). In detailing the case of Cyprus, Mavrogeni (2005) documents the parental view that teaching is best suited for daughters because on the one hand it provides enough money to support their families, but on the other enough time to look after the needs of their husbands and children. In her historical analysis of teaching in the UK, Acker (1989) details how even after the abolition of the marriage bar for women teachers in 1944, they were often expected to take a break for child-rearing, often returning as part-time employees. The positive effects of financial liberation and entrance into the world of work that teaching therefore provided for women is ultimately negatively counteracted by these expectations. Acker further notes that the widely held view of women teachers



choosing to prioritise family over career is not only interpreted in as a lack of commitment that will hinder their personal career goals, but that these perceptions of women teachers as non-careerist has impeded teaching's overall claim to professionalisation. This will be explored further when we revisit 'loss of status' as one of the perceived consequences of teacher feminisation.

### **Perspectives on the consequences of feminisation**

Where dialogue over the feminisation of the profession exists, apart from looking at how and why, a good deal of the literature is also concerned with the simple question: 'what are the consequences and are they a problem?' This question and the dialogue of concern it has raised in the media and at the popular level in some countries has framed much of the impetus behind exploration of the issues, largely falling into the following core areas: impacts of feminisation on the status of teaching as a profession; impacts on educational outcomes; on teaching staff themselves and school processes; and finally, on broader gender equality issues within employment and society at large. In each of these, feminisation is viewed both in terms of pure weight of numbers, and in terms of a 'feminised culture' within school instruction and processes that this weight of numbers is perceived to bring.

#### *On the status of the teaching profession*

*It is honoured and disdained, praised as a dedicated service and lampooned as 'easy work'. It is permeated with the rhetoric of professionalism, yet features incomes below those earned with considerably less education (from Lartie, 1975).*

The status of the teaching profession remains one of the key issues within the debate surrounding feminisation. Some of the literature views the issue of what constitutes a 'profession' as being integral to this. Teachers, along with nurses and social workers, are sometimes viewed as semi-professionals (Etzioni, 1969). Bolton and Muzio (2005) argue that historically, this can be attributed to teaching's development as part of a state sponsored political project, traditionally enjoying less autonomy over its work, less control over its knowledge base and weaker forms of professional association and governance. Additionally, teaching is seen to suffer from an overall limitation of upward mobility within a teacher's career, upward mobility being defined as the 'essence' of a career (Lartie, 1975). Perceptions regarding the relative ease of entry to the career in some countries are also detrimental, especially when compared with other professions in law, medicine and business (Drudy et al, 2005). However, paragraph 6 of the ILO/UNESCO Recommendations concerning the Status of Teachers (1966), the following definition is clearly stated:

*Teaching should be regarded as a profession. It is a form of public service which requires of teachers expert knowledge and specialised skills, acquired and maintained through rigorous and continuing study; it calls also for a sense of corporate responsibility for the education and welfare of the pupils in their charge.*

The issues of professional status (and a possible loss/inherent lack of this status with increased female numbers) have become increasingly pertinent for countries that are suffering acute teacher shortages, where the impacts of a loss in appeal has resulted in both media and policy-makers desperately seeking causes as a means of finding solutions. Perceptions by the teacher/potential work force themselves are crucial to this (given that their entrance and exit patterns determine shortage patterns), with the

findings from the OECD suggesting that teachers themselves view the profession as having much lower status than public studies would suggest (Wylie, 2000). In some cases, a causal relationship between feminisation and low status has been explicitly made: Fu (2000) clearly asserts that the feminisation of teaching is one of the underlying causes of low teacher status in China. Fu is candid in his arguments, admitting that the patriarchal culture prevalent in Chinese society leads to an equation of high social status with male-dominated occupations. Social opinion therefore – deeply influenced by prevailing concepts of male superiority and female inferiority – leads competitive males to shun the teaching profession. However, while many countries with high female teacher numbers are caught in a negative discourse of teacher status, there are other examples such as Finland, Korea, Ireland and Cyprus, where highly feminised teacher workforces have not diminished its high social status, with strong competition for entry into teacher education (Drudy, 2008 and Mavrogeni, 2000). These divergent examples identify the question as a contested and complex one.

One of the arguable flaws underpinning arguments where a causal relationship between high female teacher percentages has resulted in a public loss of status for the profession is the integral assumption that at some historical point there were a high proportion of men in the profession and it enjoyed high status in society (Drudy, 2008). This is a highly contested assumption in many countries, where the beginnings of mass education are parallel with female teacher recruitment drives, making it impossible to identify a comparable historical point where male teachers dominated the profession.

However, reviewing some of the earliest nineteenth and twentieth century country examples can provide interesting insights to perceptions that existed at the time when targeted recruitment of women teachers was occurring. While they may not conclusively tell us the public status of the profession, they can indicate the level at which the profession was regarded as it pertains to gender associations: A 1925 report on the training of teachers in the UK is candid in its views, describing teaching as: “a field of effort for a girl of average intellectual capacity and normal maternal instincts”, but “for a man to spend his life teaching children of school age is to waste it in doing easy and not very valuable work, he would not do it if not fit to do anything else” (Report on the Training of Teachers, cited in Acker, 1989, p.22). The quote – undeniably derogatory in its assessment of teaching and of women – draws on issues already explored in this review relating to associations with maternal gender roles, and trends that have shown men to leave the profession when other, more appealing employment opportunities become available.

In attempting to understand an earlier root of this view, Miller (1992) notes that the increase of women teachers in nineteenth century Western Europe and North America saw education being split between both gender and class lines, where despite women constituting more than half the teaching workforce by the 1870s, they entered parts of the system which had the lowest status and the lowest pay. According to Miller, this left a significant legacy which went on to affect “more than women’s careers as teachers...It has produced a polarisation within education (between primary and secondary for instance, between the “academic” and the “vocational”, or between the “academic” and the “pastoral”, and between what have been thought of as male and female subjects) and within public discussion of education... [which] has been harmful” (Miller, 1996, p.57). This thought is echoed by Drudy et al (2005), who touch on the issue of this legacy by noting that unlike established professions, teaching no longer recruits from elites, resulting in an ‘anyone can teach’ mentality. This resonates with the patterns already discussed in terms of economically influenced policy decisions during education system expansions and the targeted recruitment of women teachers, who were more willing to earn a low salary. The conclusion often drawn from this has been that where volume and

feminisation have been synonymous, this has resulted in a lack of professionalisation within teaching, leading the profession to be associated with low pay, lack of authority and discipline, loss of accumulated experience as women left the profession to marry – all of which has resulted in a low status (Cortina and San Roman, 2006).

#### *On educational provision and outcomes*

Much of the strongest and perhaps most contentious dialogue and research on the feminisation of the teaching profession has revolved around the issue of its potential and perceived impacts on educational outcomes. In countries where female teacher numbers are low, the drive to recruit women into the profession is often closely associated with policy goals around girls' education and gender equality in education. However, in many countries where female teacher numbers are extremely high and where a gender gap in educational achievement in favour of girls is seen to exist, there has been a huge discourse in the media and at the policy level regarding boys' underachievement in education. This phenomenon has been of such proportions that it has often been described as a 'moral panic' (Lingard, 2003, Drudy, 2008).

The existence of this phenomenon is interesting within the broader global discourse on gender equality in education, where the primary focus is on disadvantages to girls' access, retention and completion, as well on equality of processes and outcomes. Literature in this area suggests that there is evidence to show a correlation between the number of women teachers and girls' enrolment, particularly in the rural areas where the challenges of girls' education are the strongest (UNESCO, 2000). Several reasons for this are posited. First, it has been found that in some conservative countries parents will not allow their daughters to be taught by a male teacher, especially older girls (Herz & Sperling, 2004). Secondly, the presence of women in schools and at the policy level is seen to provide girls greater encouragement towards success and achievement, can provide increased advocacy for girl-child education issues, and can provide a different type of role model from the traditional gender roles many children would have been socialised into (UNESCO, 2006). Parent and teacher interviews by Kainja and Mkandawire (1995) in Malawi indicated that it was widely believed that female teachers were needed not only as "living role models who benefitted from education" (p.21), but also were necessary to provide personal counselling and act as benchmarks for morality.

This has led to targeted female recruitment drives in several countries where girls' lack of access to education has been a major concern in the last ten to twenty years, countries such as Bangladesh, Pakistan and India, a need that has in some cases facilitated expeditious recruitment drives where young women are fast-tracked into teacher education as a temporary solution (Herz & Sperling, 2004). Studies on the increase of teachers in several states in India have demonstrated a variety of policy approaches aimed at increasing primary enrolment that have been reliant on the recruitment of women in particular (Jha and Bhardwaj, 2001). In countries where the teaching workforce is numerically feminised, these concerns shift towards a view of feminisation that has widespread impacts on the culture and pedagogy within schools, with discussion around daily routines, practices and a delivery of the curriculum that is more likely to favour female school children, and biases that disfavour male schoolchildren, both in terms of teacher expectations, and the way in which the curriculum is delivered and assessed (Skelton, 2002). This discussion surrounding teacher feminisation and educational provision and outcomes is closely linked to the issue of boys' underachievement.

Where boys' underachievement is concerned, assumptions that a gender gap in achievement (found in several countries that have a statistically feminised teaching

workforce) are widespread, as is the view that this is down to the low numbers of men in the profession. Such views in the UK have led to steps being taken to encourage more males into teacher training colleges since the late 1990s (Carrington and McPhee, 2008). The nature of these assumptions are rooted largely within sex role socialisation theories (Skelton, 2003), some of which are based on the following beliefs: that children relate better to teachers of the same sex as themselves (and vice-versa); that male teachers are therefore more likely to provide experiences that resonate directly with the concerns and interests of boys; that boys and girls have different learning styles, in particular, that male pupils are thought to derive greater benefit from experiential learning activities and kinaesthetic learning tools which are active and centred on 'male' interests (Carrington and McPhee, 2008). In underlining what he perceived as being the detrimental impact of teacher feminisation on educational outcomes in China, Fu (2000) is more explicit, arguing that teachers have become 'softer' and 'weaker' by demonstrating 'feminine' traits, resulting in a fear that students, particularly males, will have inadequate yang vigour, lacking the masculine traits of "daring to blaze new trails, strength, courage, boldness and forthrightness" (p.41). A further aspect of concern regards discipline in schools, and the gender associations related with this. Connell (cited in Mac and Ghail, 1994) writes on the tensions that exist around gender and authority, where authority is felt to be a masculine trait. Where a disciplined class is perceived as being a class that learns more, the socialisation of macho masculinity through teaching and the school system inherent within these perspectives is clear (Hayward, and Mac and Ghail, 2003).

As we have seen, perspectives on the importance of gender issues within the profession by teachers themselves are sometimes inconclusive and slightly contradictory, and in this area we have more ambiguity. In Carrington and McPhee's 2008 study in the UK, teacher interviews in response to the policy of targeted male recruitment showed that while on occasion the policy was questioned, males generally attached importance to the policy in improving motivation and academic engagement, while women teachers also felt that would widen boys' classroom experiences. The interviews also highlighted other perspectives, female teachers in particular commenting on the advantages of having male staff for improved discipline and to provide male role models for boys without fathers at home.

The issue of male role models has been a large part of the discourse at a popular level. Views are reflected (or arguably, induced) by the media, with articles that highlight the education systems need for more male teachers so that they may act as social role models' for young boys, particularly those from one-parent families or who "who have no male role model at home" (The Independent, 2007). Such views are not only found within the media: in the Netherlands, where Driessen (2007) argues that feminisation concerns are a relatively new discourse, 66 per cent of teachers interviewed answered that they believed feminisation was bad for the social-emotional development of boys as boys clearly needed – in their opinion – male role models. However, a high degree of ambiguity also exists among teachers who have been interviewed on these issues: For example, when asked specifically if they saw a correlation between role models and gender, responses in the UK showed that many teachers did not view their own gender as precluding them from being role models for one sex or another, despite having earlier spoken of a need for more male teachers overall (Carrington and McPhee, 2008). Similarly, other studies' findings showed that teachers had a propensity to argue for essential gender differences between men and women teachers even against the reality of their own experiences, indicating that the 'lack of male teachers' discourse is taken for granted as a 'truth' among the teaching workforce (Lahelma, 2000). Smith (2004) argues that the conflation of parenting and

teaching – now being applied to male primary teachers who are expected to act as masculine role models to boys – is ultimately confusing to male teachers, who are also trying to navigate their own identity formation in an occupation that is viewed as ‘feminine’. Interestingly, the research by Lahelma, conducted in Finland, was also one of the first to seek responses from schoolchildren themselves as well as from teachers regarding the general worries about a lack of male teachers. The findings indicated that while students and teachers’ views on what constituted a good teacher did not differ greatly, it was teachers, not students, who tended to relate these characteristics to the need for more male teachers.

Despite the ambiguity displayed in teacher perspectives of the issues, much of the more recent literature has been clear in casting doubt over assumptions that attempt to find a causal relationship between a feminised teaching workforce with boys’ underachievement, pointing-out that there is little concrete research to prove that boys need male teachers to achieve better or that boys need male role models to feel engaged (Griffiths, 2006, and Drudy, 2008). Studies have also shown that the issue points to more of a need to unpack societal constructions of masculinities and how this impacts on boys in certain contexts and identify the clear differences that exist within the issue of boys’ underachievement when looking at the figures according to multiple demographic and societal considerations (Jha and Kelleher, 2006). In some cases, the focus on high female teacher numbers has been viewed as a way of finding a scapegoat for far more complex issues, a one-dimensional and essentialist way of looking at gender that ignores “considerations of the multidimensionality of identity whereby masculinities and femininities are seen as being shaped by social class, sexuality, religion, age, ethnicity and so forth” (Skelton, 2003). Indeed, in-depth analysis of boys’ underachievement and the prevalence of masculine identities which view academic excellence as ‘feminine’ – leading to a disengagement with academic achievement – have shown the need for this multi-dimensional lens. In asking the question “which boys underachieve?” Jha and Kelleher (2006) found that the research heavily indicated an interaction between socio-economic class and gender: on the one hand, narrow constructions of masculine identity were widely available among working class and poorer income groups, which in turn led to anti-‘feminine’ and anti-school attitudes that found those boys representing a disproportionate number of male underachievers; on the other, the availability of a “muscular intellectualness” inherent within middle-class masculinities provided avenues for middle class boys to start achieving in mid to late secondary education.

Nonetheless, public opinion on the matter has been such that much of the literature has been concerned with attempting to answer whether policy goals need to address the lack of male role models as a means of improving boy’s educational standards. For many who have addressed the issue, the response has been a candid rebuttal. When addressing this in the UK for example, Drudy (2008) has argued that it is instead far more important for teachers – regardless of sex – to understand how boys construct their identities, and to help them to develop an understanding of the effect of certain forms of masculinities on their lives, suggesting the need for gender issues on the teacher education programme as opposed to the selective recruitment of teachers because they are male. In analysing the Australian government’s moves in this area, Smith (2004) noted that the call for more men made no attempt adequately to document whether boys and society in general would actually benefit more from the presence of more male teachers, with many other important considerations being silenced and overlooked, such as the experiences of male primary school teachers within an occupation that is regarded by society as ‘women’s work’. Lingard (2003) also looks at the Australian context and goes further, arguing that the ‘moral panics’ over

boys' underachievement appear periodically in the media and politics, and do not build upon previous stories and their insights on ways to move the debate on. Lingard further places the rise of these concerns within a movement away from gender equality in girls' education, with boys being placed firmly within a new gender equity agenda that operates on a presumptive equality between the sexes, spawning masculinity politics which construes men as the 'victims of feminism'.

#### *On managerial processes and teaching staff*

Relational to the literature on educational outcomes is that of the impact of feminisation on school processes, including instruction and school culture. Already discussed within the arguments and moral panics surrounding boys' underachievement is the suggestion that high numbers of female teachers will result in a workforce that teaches in a 'gendered way', resulting in 'feminised' practices, whether these are a lack of kinaesthetic methods, poor discipline or a reliance upon maternal behaviour. Apart from the perception that these will disadvantage boys in some way, this also ties in with other areas already discussed on the impact this has on the status of the profession, where the gendered association with primary teaching in particular as a 'woman's job' has not only made it less desirable to men, but casts doubts over its professional credibility. This concern has deepened – or arguably, only become viewed as urgent – as more women have entered secondary level teaching disproportionately, an area that is viewed as being more critical in terms of academic instruction.

Despite this, one thread to emerge out of the literature has been the view that despite high levels of women within the profession, the teaching profession is increasingly becoming subject to masculine processes (Griffiths, 2006; Skelton, 2002), the cause of which can be attributed to the unequal gender stratifications within the management hierarchy that sees a disproportionate number of men in management positions within schools, and to a 're-masculinisation of schooling' that has come about through a re-structuring of state schooling in some countries (Hayward & Mac and Ghail, in Skelton, 2002). This has led to a contradictory tension, where on the one hand there is a concern that the high proportion of women teachers leads to an inappropriate femininity of culture within schools, but on the other a concern that managerial policies lead to an inappropriate masculinity of culture within schools. In response to this, Griffiths (2006) outlines arguments by feminist educators that see the teaching profession as becoming masculinised with the imposition of a culture of managerialism that is based on an ethos associated with stereotypical, dominant male roles, and a masculinity that is hegemonic, individualistic, competitive, performative, calculative and hierarchical. This is seen as in contrast to what the literature on management styles has depicted as 'feminine', including: a non-hierarchical management structure where decision making happens on a democratic basis, less emphasis on individualism, prioritisation of emotional labour, such as the sponsoring of younger [female] staff by older [female] staff, and school agendas that are informal and flexible (Skelton, 2002). In this regard, the global rise of managerialism is seen as having the effect of intensifying gender issues and re-enforcing a rigid male/female binary, while those women who do rise within managerial culture are presented with a dilemma of whether to embrace, resist or subvert the forms of masculinity implicit in their jobs. With this in mind, Griffiths argues that the feminisation of the profession should be viewed as an opportunity for improved processes, as feminised environments are likely to give more room to manoeuvre for both students and teachers. Additionally, she argues that if hegemonic masculinity is less prevalent, this also gives other masculinities the opportunity to show themselves in safety.

In addressing the consequences of feminisation on staff, Cortina and San Roman (2006) outline impacts that are based more on the individual experience that has resulted from the complex realities of gender imbalances that have characterised the feminisation process. This includes the increasing isolation of female teachers from the spaces of power that have come about with the hierarchical stratifications prevalent within schools. Gender re-enforcements – already illustrated earlier – also have negative impacts that affect both women and men: while women teachers may struggle to convince that their teaching responsibilities are separate from any innate ‘mothering’ instinct, men must also suffer the consequences of limitations that view them as neither socially nor emotionally suitable to work with young children.

In analysis of the advantages and disadvantages experienced by male primary school teachers, Smith (2004) outlines findings that show although they are more likely to benefit from positive discrimination in seeking employment and gaining promotion, male primary teachers also suffer from their own form of isolation that comes from being a minority within the working environment. This is found through a desire for increased male comradeship and a resultant exclusion from their female colleagues, spending time instead with male principals, janitors, and in the playgrounds. Another negative impact noted by Smith was that male teachers reported an increased workload as the numbers of male teachers declined. Examples of extra duties included being expected to attend most of the school excursions and camps to meet the requested ratio by parents of accompanying male teachers.

### **Feminisation of teaching through a broader gender equality lens**

In exploring the relationships between gender roles and gender bias that have characterised the debate around the feminisation of the teaching profession, some attention has already been paid to understanding the broader gender equality discourses inherent within the issues. These have been found particularly in analysis of teaching as ‘women’s work’ and how this has impacted gender equality in terms of access to decent wages, stable work and other career opportunities within the profession. Arguably, the position of men and women in the teaching profession as a whole mirrors their position within international labour markets in general (Coffey and Delamont, 2000).

Within teaching itself, Rosemberg (in Cortina and San Roman) highlights the gender disparity that automatically exists in pay within the profession in Brazil, with women being most heavily concentrated in the lower-paid pre-school and elementary sectors, while male educators are disproportionately represented in better paid upper secondary and higher education. This persisting of such low salaries she identifies as a pattern of gender discrimination rooted within the education labour market, despite the significant increase in the education levels of women.

This ties in with core concerns in gender equality. The first of these is the suggestion that teaching being viewed as feminised has caused it to lose status within society, making it largely undesirable as it also involves lower earnings and a loss of professional credibility. The suggestion that more men entering teaching will enhance its professional standing raises a further question on the power and status of women in society in general. With this in mind, it is indeed illuminating that much of the discourse and concern over what feminisation of the teaching profession means for both its status and the quality of education delivery has happened in western and OECD countries. This in turn suggests that despite major movements towards women’s equality in many of those countries, women still have significantly lower status levels in those countries (Drudy, 2008).

In those countries where the teaching profession has been feminised yet still enjoys a high status with associated high and competitive entry levels, a different type of duality can be observed in terms of gender equality. Mavrogeni’s 2005 study on

teacher feminisation in Cyprus presents a clear example of this, where she argues that despite the high status of teaching, a woman's position in the Cypriot economy is placed in a narrow spectrum of occupations, and as a result, the perception of women's occupations – including teaching – are not seen as important as those of men who are the official breadwinners. Mavrogeni theorises that while the domination of women in this occupation was an achievement and a form of liberation for Cypriot women at the beginning of their emancipation, it now acts as a propagator of traditional ideas about women and their role in society as wives and mothers, which are transferred from one generation to another and in turn shape women's occupational tastes and career aspirations, stagnating the prospects for women's work to evolve into other sectors. Echoing this from the Argentinean experience and resonating with other author's comments on the paradoxical nature of what teaching has come to represent for many women globally, Morgade articulates that "a job in a school has signified both a space of autonomy and subjugation for women teachers" (2006, p.99).

Following through from this, a further contextualisation of teacher feminisation and the concern of broader gender inequality can be explored more generally in terms of women's position in the wider workforce. While concerns over teacher feminisation spawned a panic over biases that would disadvantage boys both in school and in later life, research continues to show that this has not been the case. Whatever advantages girls may arguably have gained over boys from higher numbers of female teachers in schools, this has not correlated in workforce participation (Global Gender Gap Report, 2007). This pattern is prevalent across countries experiencing high female teacher numbers and concerns over gender imbalance in educational achievement that favours girls. In Canada for example, the gender pay gap between university educated men and women is considerable, with women still only earning 72.5 cents to every dollar earned by a man, despite there being more women with post-secondary qualifications than men (Canadian Labour Congress, in Chubb et al, 2008). In Jamaica, despite more girls entering post-secondary institutions and being twice as likely to successfully enter tertiary education, women are still almost twice as likely to be unemployed than men (Jha and Kelleher, 2008).

It is possible that this equality issue results from the significant difference within male/female teacher numbers at secondary school. The sudden presence of more male teachers post-primary education (even in countries with high female numbers overall) also brings attitudinal shifts that re-introduce male acceptability within the profession – namely, that more academic teaching skills are a natural male preserve. It is arguable that these attitudes could impact on children in terms of opportunities and aspirations through an adverse socialisation, particularly as once having transitioned to secondary school, children see fewer women in what are perceived to be masculine subjects such as the natural sciences and maths, and in managerial positions (Cortina and San Roman, 2006). The prevalence of a male dominated managerial structure would only compound the view that men are better suited to upper levels within employment and authority (Page and Jha, 2009). Such patterns of socialisation place the school under review as part of the wider quest to understand persisting gender inequalities that disfavour women in employment and later life. Even in countries where girls are fully enrolled in schools and female teachers are abundant, there evidently exists the persistent need for considerations towards a 'gender responsive school' (Atthill and Jha, 2009). As a result, the issue of teacher feminisation – in all its gendered definitions, historical legacies, hierarchical fallacies, perceptions and backlashes mentioned in this review – are important not just for understanding what impact if any is to be had on the pursuance of EFA, but more broadly on the quest to eradicate gender inequalities within society.