

## 4 Debating the Trends and Issues

This chapter will attempt to address some of the core trends that have been outlined by the statistical analysis in Chapter 3, looking more closely at the underlying trends and issues that characterise female teacher numbers in the selected countries. In addition to the statistical data presented, all five countries conducted qualitative investigations to varying degrees as a means of unpacking socio-economic, cultural and political perspectives. This involved empirical research in four of the case study countries – Samoa, Lesotho, Sri Lanka and Dominica – that included questionnaires and interviews with teachers, principals, administrators, parents and students. India – with its unique comparative analysis of the very different examples of Kerala and Rajasthan – offered other insights into the issues through a review of secondary research that has been conducted in both states and at the national level.

The chapter will explore evidence and the key arguments that look at: causes of high female teacher numbers – socio-cultural associations, access to teacher training and teacher recruitment policies; impacts of high female teacher numbers – performance, provision, teaching processes; and areas that appear cyclical in nature where cause and effect are concerned, such as men, teacher salary and the issue of status, and teacher feminisation and its implications for gender equality in society.

### Exploring the key issues

#### *Socio-cultural associations and gender – teaching as ‘women’s work’*

One of the core issues that has emerged from much of the abundant literature in countries such as the UK, Canada and those that have been studied in Latin America is around perceptions of the teaching profession as ‘women’s work’. Analysis of increasing female teacher numbers historically provided insights into the ways in which education policy during the expansion of education systems relied on the association between male and female gender roles as a means of targeting women in particular to enter the teaching profession (Fischman, 2007, Richards and Acker 2006, Cortina and San Roman, 2006).

Within the remit of the five case studies being analysed in this study, India presents us with the most conclusive evidence of a similar pattern occurring with the association between women and the teaching profession, an interesting situation given that India is the only country where – at the national level at least – high female teacher numbers are still not the norm<sup>11</sup>. Despite this, the variety of different experiences at the state level means that the Indian case study does offer two specific vantage points on the feminisation issue: a) a historical perspective of how regional specificities resulted in states like Kerala and Rajasthan having completely different experiences of female teacher recruitment in response to the national-level policy in post-Independence India; b) a very current perspective of targeted female recruitment specifically in Rajasthan, where we are able to see the changes occurring as a result of education expansion in response to the MDGs and EFA.

An investigation into pre-independence policy approaches to education at the national level demonstrates some of the earliest socio-cultural associations between gender and the teaching profession. A study into the teaching profession in the Madras Presidency between 1900–1930 (Swaminthan, 1999) uncovers a 1929 report on the development of women’s education that reflects the patriarchal attitudes of

<sup>11</sup> Similar evidence from the other countries may not be absent, just as yet untapped.

educational policy in Britain at the time. Most specifically, Swaminthan's study highlighted that the report looked at the 'Development of Women's Education' and that every effort should be made to encourage girls to study and to take an interest in what were considered appropriate professions for females: teaching and nursing. With only limited access to higher educational opportunities, women were excluded from other careers.

The impact of this colonial policy once India became independent and started to actively shape its education policy would vary from state to state. In Rajasthan for example, it could be argued that these associations between gender roles and the teaching profession would become a moot point, as the extreme norms of seclusion for women in the state meant that women were unable to work or seek education outside of the home, making teaching just another form of paid employment that they did not have access to until very recently. Therefore, while the colonial associations with teaching and traditional gender roles were cast in an orthodoxy that coincided with Rajasthan's own perceptions of women in the domestic sphere, this did not translate into women entering the teaching profession in that state. Conversely, in the state of Kerala – where girls were able to access education as early as the mid-nineteenth century – female education was being pushed in colonial times as a part of the vision to 'build the modern moral home, imagining the educated woman to be its fulcrum' (Devika, 2000; Devika and Mukherjee, 2007). Post-independence, this domestic vision has continued, with the onus on women as central to the educational growth of children within their family unit, a cultural reality that has in time translated into the teaching profession, where women could play both the role of loving mother in the classroom. This historical analysis resonates strongly with the evidence available from other countries, as discussed in Chapter 2.

Arguably, the nuances of gender roles for women in Kerala provides one of the clearest insights into the manner of socio-cultural associations with gender that have become embodied in the teaching profession. While individuality is encouraged for women alongside academic accomplishment, this is done so only within the bounds of traditional femininity, with the domestic ideal of the woman as homemaker still being strongly adhered to (Devika 2000). More recently, the domestic ideal is increasingly being replaced by the ideal of income-earning mother, a role that marries well with traditional perceptions of teaching – particularly primary level teaching – as a good profession for women in society. This 'gendering' of opportunities is reflected in the courses that continue to be pursued by women in higher education in the State, where there remains a broad split in male and female course preferences. It is notable therefore that a similar pattern is evidenced in Rajasthan. Although the two states are markedly different in many ways where overall access to education for females is concerned, for those women who are able to access higher education, the share of female enrolment only becomes significant in teacher training courses, with enrolment in traditionally 'male' areas of study and employment, such as engineering and architecture, remaining low. This reflects a similar gendering of opportunities, although the surrounding circumstances may be different.<sup>12</sup>

These findings are supported by several aspects of the empirical research conducted as part of this study in both Lesotho and Sri Lanka. In Lesotho, questionnaires were distributed among primary school teachers in four out of the

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<sup>12</sup> In Rajasthan, a woman's husband's family will largely determine whether the daughter-in-law will take up paid employment, and in particular what type of employment. Teaching is encouraged among those families where females are permitted to take-up employment because it can be taken up without badly affecting a woman's home-making responsibilities.

country's ten districts, covering both rural and urban locations. Sixty male and female teachers were targeted in each district. One of the key purposes of the research was to identify factors that have contributed to the disproportionately high number of women in teaching at the primary level. The responses of women teachers were illuminating. The most common response was that women had a 'natural fitness for the job'. This involved the association between a woman's role as a mother and carer of children. The varied responses within this overarching theme included the assumptions that: 'women's work is to care for children'; 'women are naturally born to care for young ones'; 'women are guardians to the young'; 'women can communicate better with children....are merciful...patient....sympathetic'. Related to those responses, women teachers also shared that teaching was a profession of choice based on the convenience it offered alongside their domestic roles as wives and mothers in the family, especially as female primary teachers are rarely transferred and stay with the families. Job security and the perception of primary teaching as a 'stress free' job were also factors. However, another core response that also surfaced was the issue of 'marginalisation' from other employment, which included secondary teaching. That will be looked at in more depth later.

In the case of Sri Lanka, findings from empirical investigations were strikingly similar. Using focus group methodology, discussions were carried-out with 27 teacher educators, 60 trained teachers, 40 trainee teachers and a casual sample of parents to explore various factors that could be argued to be transforming teaching into 'women's work'. Overall, more women were represented in each of the groups. As with Lesotho, the responses indicated a high degree of gender role-association with primary teaching in particular. In all the focus groups there was complete agreement between both male and female respondents on the need for primary teachers – particular in grades 1–3 – having to be female. It was argued that this is an expectation of parents, school principals and society in general, because the teacher is a 'substitute mother and will be more caring towards the child'. Additionally, the overwhelmingly female focus group of trainee teachers indicated that their own parents had been influential in their decision to become teachers as it was considered a family-friendly employment, allowing them the opportunity to get back home early and be there when their own children were returning from school. Further discussions highlighted concerns regarding higher instances of divorce among females who were involved in other professions such as banking etc., as this led to long hours and neglect of the family. Overall, the focus groups were of the view that teaching was a job that carried a certain 'morality' and helped to stabilise the family unit, providing a well-respected and more culturally acceptable job for a girl within society. Additionally, another factor that came through was the perceived benefits for children of having a mother as a teacher, as she will be able to support their learning outcomes effectively. This factor resonates quite clearly with the research findings from Kerala on the role of women as responsible for the educational growth of their own children.

Samoa appears to present similar findings to this, perceptions also coincide with a cultural socialisation of women to be responsible for younger children:

*The teaching force in Samoa is a female-dominated profession. Females' caring and nurturing persona seem to fit into the teaching arena...Teaching is a sharing career and women share their strengths and weaknesses on a daily basis to try and improve their teaching and assist students. Teaching also allows women to take time off with the family as there are holidays...*

*Epenesa Esera, Dean of Education, National University of Samoa, 2010*

The final remark makes reference once again to the pressures that women face regarding finding a balance between work and their responsibilities in the reproductive spheres, and this consideration can go further when trying to assess some of the reasons why women's dominance of the profession does not translate so fluidly into the managerial sectors. If teaching is considered such a suitable profession for women who are also mothers and homemakers due to its flexibility, what are the potential ramifications for those same women if they pursue management positions that demand more of their time in the workplace? Unfortunately, the issue of women's managerial roles in feminised systems is not one that was explored among the participants, so perceptions are not forthcoming. However, it can be surmised that the perpetuation of traditional gender roles that continue to emphasise women's commitments to the reproductive sphere is unlikely to have the most positive outcomes for the aspirational aspects of their working roles in the public sphere. Whether leadership positions are not being pursued by women, or whether that they are simply being denied/not offered to women remains unclear in this study. However, leadership is a much 'gendered' concept in a wide variety of cultural contexts; it continues to be identified with the male and there is a tendency to assume that 'rightful' leaders are male (Coleman, 2003).

#### *Teacher training and teacher recruitment – organic developments or targeted strategies?*

One of the key areas that came through in the literature review was the impact of access to teacher training and the role of teacher recruitment policies in the disproportionate increase of women teachers in countries that now have statistically feminised workforces. Relational to the socio-cultural associations that appear to permeate the teaching profession in such countries, it is also important to understand the extent to which the process of becoming a teacher for women is: a) an organic development as a result of those associations; b) a targeted approach at a policy level; c) a combination of the two. Additionally, what other processes play a role, if any?

Although several of the case studies have demonstrated historical trajectories of women entering teaching in large numbers in catalytic periods around post-independence expansion of the education system, only one country case study presented traceable evidence to primary data that indicated targeted policy attempts to specifically encourage women into the teaching profession: India. In an attempt to encourage women's education, early post-independence policy documents in India from 1947 onwards all stressed the need to recruit female teachers, and included recommendations to incentivise female teachers. Suggestions included giving female teachers preference when admitting recruits into teacher training institutions, giving female teachers from rural areas greater preference, and providing female teachers posted to rural areas with living quarters and a special allowance. These policy recommendations were further complemented by others that championed quotas of at least half of all teachers appointed to be female in certain situations, and the setting-up of exclusively girls' schools and colleges where most teachers would be female (Agrawal and Aggarwal, 1992).

Interestingly however, the decentralised nature of the Indian political system has meant that the extent to which those recommendations were implemented has varied greatly from state to state, with some going as far as reserving quotas for female teachers up to 50 per cent at the primary level (UNESCO 2001), while others chose to have no explicit quota for women. The latter have retained the lowest proportions of female teachers. In the case of Kerala, the existence of a long-standing policy of female education – irrespective of the gender biases inherent within that education as noted

earlier – meant that the national-level policy of targeting women to be teachers could be implemented within an already prepared environment.

This brings us to the issue of access to teacher training and the relationship this has with a well-educated female population in countries that now have statistically feminised workforces. Just as countries with low female teacher numbers are struggling with gender balance owing to the correlation with female illiteracy and overall lower participation among girls, we can see the clear correlation between an educated female population and high female teacher numbers in our case studies. The case of Samoa offered us some insights into this.

Broad historical analysis of educational expansion after Samoa's independence from New Zealand in the 1960s indicates that enrolment in teacher training colleges was very much in favour of women as a result of other available employment that drew men away from the profession. This would suggest that rather than a targeted policy at the time, the preponderance of women occurred as a result of an overall growth in the country's labour market that made teaching more available to women. It is important also to note within this historical overview that by the end of the 1970s, the numbers had become so disproportionately in favour of women, the entry criteria within the teacher training colleges were amended as a means of enhancing access for males, who usually achieved lower scores in the regional Year 13 exams. However, enrolment figures into pre-service teacher education remain hugely in favour of females as a result of the enrolment criteria. In Samoa today, female students on average outperform their male counterparts in the Pacific Senior School Certificate (PSSC), which is the qualification that entry into the Diploma of Education has depended on since 1997, following the establishment of the National University of Samoa which merged the Western Samoa Teachers' College with the University's newly-created faculty of Arts and Faculty of Sciences. With boys' performance in education in the qualifications needed for entry into the profession remaining lower than girls', the pool of potential teacher trainees is already skewed towards females.

However, where Samoa is concerned it is important not to forget that overall, the number of female teachers at the secondary school level is much less than at the primary level – particularly in the colleges which offer Year 13 studies – indicating that males do still access teacher training to the degree that the secondary teaching profession cannot be called 'feminised' (female teachers account for 52.3 per cent). Additionally, it is also important to note that boys' lower performance rates in school does not necessarily exclude them from other areas of tertiary education or entering into other professions that require the PSSC, so it is important to concede that other aspects other than performance may also be at play. Lesotho, like each of the cases within this study, also has higher performance indicators overall for girls in school. However, the data from Lesotho indicates that some female primary teacher respondents found themselves marginalised from attempting to enter into the secondary teaching sector due to their poorer qualifications, statements that are supported by the statistics: female teachers at secondary level, represent 59 per cent, compared to 75 per cent at the primary level.

In Dominica, where levels of female teachers in 2007 in secondary schools are also much lower, at 65 per cent compared to 84 per cent at primary, there is a discrepancy in the direct correlation between lower performance among males and the decision to enter teaching. Repetition and drop-out rates for boys in Dominica over the last decade has become significantly higher for boys than girls, particularly at the secondary level. While it can be argued that this may be a root cause of why access to teacher training and recruitment may be more difficult for males, it does not tally with the fact that men are still found in some numbers as teachers at the secondary level, especially as the

percentage has remained relatively stable for about a decade, even as boys' performance has not improved. The difference between primary and secondary percentages suggests that, along with the similar discrepancies from the other three countries with similar trends, that rather than a simplistic assumption of higher female performance equalling access to teacher training, there are likely to be other biases influencing male and female choices for entering the profession.

#### *Untrained and 'para' teachers – in pursuit of EFA*

The need for engaging untrained or para-teachers is often acknowledged as a necessary development – sometimes targeted policy – to either expand a system or maintain the successes of one that starts to regress for a variety of reasons, for example increases in teacher attrition. In many cases, the growth in numbers of untrained teachers is something that occurs quite organically at the most local of levels, with communities sometimes taking it upon themselves to engage (and sometimes pay) individuals in schools that have been without teachers for substantial periods of time. An absence of data regarding the presence of para/contract teachers within the teaching profession in our case study areas with high female teacher numbers means that it is difficult to surmise about the extent to which this phenomenon has contributed to the current feminised percentages in all countries. However, in the case of Lesotho, studies have indicated that increasing numbers of primary teachers overall has also led to an increase in the proportion of untrained teachers, most of whom are either volunteers or on short-term contracts (Phamotse et al, 2005). Interestingly, the data indicates that of the men who are working as teachers, the percentage that is unqualified is higher than the percentage of women teachers who are unqualified. However, in aggregate terms the sheer number of female primary teachers (constituting 80 per cent of the total workforce) means that in real numbers women are still more likely to dominate the para' teacher classification. A similar pattern was reflected in Dominica, where the numbers of untrained teachers were higher among women overall, purely as a result of the far higher numbers of women in the profession. However, when viewed from the perspective of proportionality, women teachers overall were more likely to be qualified than their male counterparts. As already noted in the previous chapter, the difference between Lesotho and Dominica is that untrained teachers have increased in Lesotho while the overall teaching force has increased in response to expansion, while in Dominica the number of untrained female teachers has increased as the overall teaching workforce has decreased.

The incidence of para-teachers in India has been documented quite broadly over the last ten years, indicating a growth in their number generally in many states seeking to meet education provision goals that lead to access, retention and completion (Govinda and Josephine, 2005). Understanding the gender characteristics of this has also been explored to an extent in research that looks at the relationship between increasing female numbers and a growth in contract teaching in Rajasthan, where female teacher numbers may still be low, but where there are overtly targeted efforts towards increasing those numbers by specifically using para-teachers. Overall, India has seen a growing trend to recruit contract teachers in a bid to increase the teacher workforce. This has contributed to the increase in the proportion of female teacher numbers overall. The relevance between this growing trend in contract teaching and teacher remuneration is the simple fact that contract teachers earn less than regular teachers and are usually hired for no longer than a year at a time, removing the value-addition of job security that we have seen cited in other country contexts. There are several benefits and advantages to the contract situation. Firstly, it is a strategy that helps to ameliorate the teacher shortage, with limited resources and timeframe, in states like Rajasthan. Additionally, the more lenient qualification requirements means

that more women are able to enter the profession, contributing to tackling one of the barriers identified in girls' education. However, the PROBE data also indicated that one of the results of the introduction of low-paid contract teacher jobs has been an outflow of men from the profession in both rural and urban areas. Interestingly, this outflow has been characterised by men from upper-castes, and this group has been replaced by an inflow of middle-caste men and upper-caste women who both appear more willing to work for the lower wages (DISE, 2008–2009). This evidence from Rajasthan presents an interesting intersection between social class and gender within the teaching profession as it moves towards increasing capacity and increased female numbers. Despite the dominance of men in the teaching profession in Rajasthan, research studies conducted there on teacher motivation indicate that teaching was by and large not a preferred option among men (Ramachandran et al, 2005). Some respondents indicated that they simultaneously pursued other work, while others saw teaching as a stopgap arrangement while preparing for a range of civil service examinations. This was particularly the case for young males from urban areas and from more privileged upper-caste groups, a situation that has increased with the change in terms of service that has resulted in lower paid contract jobs. Middle-caste men and those in rural areas – no doubt armed with fewer privileges and options for alternative employment – are now replacing those roles, as are upper-caste women, who are more likely to have the qualifications needed in a state where female education remains the preserve of those in the upper sectors of society. In this analysis we are then able to surmise that while teaching is increasingly being considered a second rate job for men from the upper-castes, for women from the same caste it is considered more acceptable. This indicates a clear gendered inequality between men and women which would lead one to question whether if men across all social classes were able to access alternative, better-paid opportunities in Rajasthan, would the numbers within the teaching workforce then start to replicate Kerala's? If so, what message is this sending, both in terms of the profession itself as one that should be desirable to future generations (both male and female), and for women in general as they seek gender equality more broadly?

#### *Teacher remuneration, career progression, and the 'status' issue*

The issue of salary, career opportunities and status is one that permeates debates within the teaching profession on a global level, irrespective of whether countries are developed or developing. The importance of highlighting concerns in this area is an ongoing and integral aspect of the teaching profession's future. The 1966 ILO/UNESCO Recommendations Concerning the Status of Teachers clearly underlines the importance of advancement and promotion (paragraphs 40–44), teacher salaries (paragraphs 114–124) and social security (paragraphs 125–140). These recommendations were drawn up to serve as guidelines for individuals, institutions and policy-makers at the national level, but the issues they seek to address continue to be a major source of concern. Within the context of the feminisation debate, the results offer mixed experiences.

Despite the ambiguous position that para-teachers inhabit in terms of security, when looking at some of the reasons why high numbers of women chose to join the profession as qualified teachers in some countries, an often-cited reason is the security that the profession is known to provide<sup>13</sup>. This came through strongly in Sri Lanka, for example. This security not only included a regular salary, but also other associated

<sup>13</sup> The key difference being that in those countries where security within the profession is now widespread, it is possible to speculate that a period of reliance on para teachers has already passed during an earlier phase of educational expansion.

benefits such as a pension. Interestingly however, teacher remuneration continues to be seen as largely inadequate in many countries, and has remained one of the core reasons why many men either chose not to enter the profession or end up leaving it in the long run. Structurally, the profession is also perceived to offer fewer opportunities for career progression, with limited management positions within institutional contexts. This presents a curious situation when applied to the teaching profession as a whole, firstly because the status of the profession is a potentially key determinant in ensuring that a country's education system continues to be sustainably resourced; and secondly because the status of the profession has consequences in the long term for women's equality, if teaching becomes embedded as 'women's work' in societal consciousness.

Research among twenty-five male teachers who had left the profession in Samoa presented some interesting responses that pertained specifically to remuneration and career progression. When asked to give their reasons for moving to other jobs, eighteen out of the twenty-five responded that they had left the teaching profession for better salaries elsewhere, making salary by far the strongest contributing factor to male exit from the profession within this sample. As a means of explaining this reasoning, one male respondent said the following:

*Males – like me – are head of the family...and my family rely on me for everything so that is the reason I wanted to look for another job with better pay and I left when I got one...*

All of the interviewees spoke of the need to provide for their families and their role within Samoan society as breadwinner. Two respondents indicated that the decision to leave coincided specifically with their decision to get married and start a family, citing that the teacher salary was no longer sufficient to provide for their needs, moving instead to other, better-paid public sector roles. A review of average public sector salaries indicates that the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture – within which teachers represent more than 60 per cent of employees – had the second lowest in Samoa in 2002–2003 (Ministry of Finance Statistical Department Annual Statistical Abstract 2005). By 2005–2006 it had risen to the fourth lowest, indicating gradual improvement within education sector pay increases. But with nineteen ministries within the public sector, it still lags behind significantly. As a result, for those contemplating a career, teaching is still expected to have one of the lowest salaries of all the professional occupations, and the importance of this rate of remuneration cannot be emphasised enough. Although there is no gender discrimination in terms of male and female salaries, males are clearly more negatively affected due to their roles within Samoan society. This presents the possibility that even in instances where men had a natural interest in the teaching profession itself, this could be outweighed in the long run by familial pressures to provide a higher income.

Other impacts also need to be considered. One male interviewee noted that if a male teacher possessed or gained a bachelors degree they were less likely to remain in the profession, as the degree was a 'passport' to a better job elsewhere. This is supported by evidence from the public primary teaching sector, where the bachelor degree holders are far more likely to be female than male. Additionally, the private sector – which pays teachers comparatively higher salaries – seems able to retain its bachelor degree holders more consistently. Of the 74 primary school teachers that held bachelor degrees in 2010, 62 are employed in private or mission schools, with only 7 in the public school system.

The second reason most mentioned by the interviewees in Samoa was the perceived lack of opportunity for promotion within the teaching profession. Currently,



the career structure at the school level in the country includes only three positions of increased responsibility and pay at both primary and secondary level, with no practice of salary increments tied to performance review.<sup>14</sup> Interestingly however, 60 per cent of the male ex-teachers interviewed indicated that they still saw teaching as a prestigious profession, especially in the rural areas. People in the rural areas understood the importance of schooling and education towards development and regarded the main agents of the schooling process – teachers, regardless of whether they were male or female – with high esteem. 25 per cent of interviewees responded that teaching was considered a low status occupation; with some citing the low salary as a reason and others indicating that this low status has not always been the case where teaching was concerned. These responses suggest that the status of the teaching profession in Samoa remains largely one of respect from the perspective of the importance of a teacher's role in society, but that there is a growing association with low remuneration that has resulted in a gradual loss as other professions become more available and are able to offer better pay. While low salary may be the root cause of this loss in status and not necessarily the high number of women within the profession itself, the potential for association between the two cannot be ignored, especially if teaching increasingly becomes perceived as 'women's work'.

Similar to Samoa, in Lesotho the issue of low teachers' salary was acknowledged as having a more detrimental effect on men than on women. It was acknowledged by male and female teacher respondents that men were more likely to seek out other professions for better pay, and an increase in salary was also cited as one of the strategies that needed to be employed if more male teachers were to be attracted to the profession. With the case of Lesotho however, both male and female teachers were asked more explicitly whether they felt that a feminised teaching workforce had resulted in lower pay. Most respondents chose not to respond to this question at all. Of those that did, the majority of both male and female teachers did not believe that this was the case, with the main argument being that teacher salaries are determined by the country's economy and not by gender. For those who did feel that there had been an adverse effect on salary as a result of more women in the profession, there was a view that female needs were 'cheaper' and therefore salaries could be kept low. A few participants also felt that women are unable to effectively influence government: "Women cannot fight for their rights...the men responsible for salary structures undermine females...females are not listened to by governments". Some respondents felt that if there were more men within the profession, they would be in a better position to fight for salary increases. Overall there was an element of contradiction within the responses. Despite the overarching view that more women did not lead to less pay, when asked what incentives should be used to attract more men to the profession, the vast majority of responses suggested pay increases.

The status of the profession presented a more divided response between male and female respondents in Lesotho. The majority of male teachers who responded to this question felt that more women in the profession had negatively impacted the status of the profession. Only a few of these linked this to their perceived inability to fight for higher salaries. Instead, respondents suggested that their perception of women teachers as bad disciplinarians was part of the reason. Two respondents also suggested that the very fact teaching now seemed to be a female career was a reason in itself for lower status, as it made teaching seem like an 'inferior' career. Of those who responded most said that they did not feel feminisation had resulted in a loss of

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<sup>14</sup> It is noted however that the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture is currently reviewing teacher salary and structure as one of the strategies to improve the teacher retention rate and overall educational outcomes.

status' The reasons presented were tied to the belief that the teaching of young children was inherently 'women's work' anyway, and therefore they were automatically best suited for the profession.

Of the female teachers who responded to the question, the answers were almost equally split between agreement and disagreement, with those who disagreed numbering just a couple more. Interestingly, those in agreement seemed to concur with the reasons offered by the male teachers, arguing that women are better suited to the job than men anyway so there could be no detrimental impact on status. Of the almost equal number of women who felt high female teacher numbers had resulted in a negative impact on the status of the profession, their reasons were more related to a perceived need for males within the profession for discipline, the development of boys' and to offer balance within the profession. Interestingly, several female teachers felt that there was need for more males within the profession in order to make children 'more confident' in their teachers – a statement that appears indicative of a negative perception by children themselves of the profession due to feminisation. Such a view would certainly need greater investigation among pupils in Lesotho.

Sri Lanka and Dominica did not present any data that specifically researched perceptions of the profession regarding teacher remuneration and status and how this impacted upon men. What was clear in both countries was that men were more likely to choose other career options. In Sri Lanka for example, the focus group discussions among teachers, administrators and parents all indicated that it was felt men preferred to work for commercial organisations and industries, and that teaching was often a last resort when no other lucrative job could be found. In Dominica, just as women dominate the teaching profession, so men can be found to dominate other professions, such as the media.

#### *Educational provision, outcomes and teaching processes*

From an impact perspective, feminisation of the teaching profession has long been a sensitive issue, as already seen in the review of literature from countries that have been exploring the arguments for several decades. Data from the countries in this study unearthed some thoughts that are relevant to high female teacher numbers and educational provision, teaching practice and pupil performance.

In countries still struggling with issues of girls' educational access, the need for more female teachers is considered an underpinning of equitable education provision and an expansion of the system. Indeed, one of the key commonalities between each of the case countries in this study is that access to education for both male and female students is quite high, as evidenced in the indicators from the previous chapter. This indicates a correlation of some sort between gender balance/ higher female teacher numbers and equitable access, something that is not evidenced as readily where male teachers are in the majority overall.

But educational access is not the only aspect of education provision that countries are concerned with. Integral both to access and quality for example, has been the need for deployment systems that also encourage adequate resourcing at various sub-national levels (Kelleher, 2008). Where educational provision is concerned, Sri Lanka offers some insights into perceptions regarding teacher deployment and gender. First, it is important to note that Sri Lanka is doing relatively well in the Education for All goals, particularly where high enrolment and participation at both primary and secondary level is concerned (UNESCO, 2008). However, issues around quality persist, particularly in terms of sub-national consistency. The National Education for All Mid-Decade Assessment Report noted that there are serious disparities in the provision of resources to schools, with a lack of strict policy or procedure to ensure that every school receives an adequate

quota of teachers. This has led to an excess of teachers in urban schools while rural and remote schools are understaffed. Research undertaken as part of this study indicated some concerns on the part of educational administrators regarding high female numbers in the teaching profession and deployment efficiency. Some argued that as women teachers are more likely to request transfers back to urban and peri-urban settings after an initial contract in the rural areas, inevitably remote rural areas are being underprovided for<sup>15</sup>. The conflict-affected areas are the most challenging of these. Additionally, urban areas are more likely to attract teachers with the highest qualification and skills, a factor that is also underpinned by affluence and social class.

In Kerala, the comparatively laudable achievements of the State's education provision and corresponding high literacy rates among both men and women is increasingly coming under a critical lens, as the quality of educational quality is seen to be stagnating and in some cases declining. For example, learning outcomes at primary level have recently been disappointing (according to the 2009 Annual Status of Education Report – Rural Survey). It is also reported that the growing size of the private unaided sector in Kerala is a result of people's unhappiness with falling quality levels in the aided and state sectors (GOK, 2006). This trend indicates that while high numbers of women teachers have managed to address the core issue of educational provision and have successfully tackled access, issues surrounding quality will sometimes remain.

However, in both the case of Sri Lanka and Kerala it is immensely difficult to evaluate such concerns as a direct impact of statistical feminisation of the workforce, and it is even more important to employ extreme caution over any tendencies towards such assumptions, ensuring that the focus is more on the policies needed to address such issues (in the case of Sri Lanka this would encompass not just teacher deployment but also rural development strategies), rather than an over-emphasis on a single, possible factor. With Kerala, the likely reasons for decline in quality have been posited as a combination of the following: a) no expansion having taken place in the government or aided primary sector since the 1980s, with budgets neglecting to include the need for infrastructural improvements or upgrades in equipment and the use of outdated curricula (Economic Survey of Kerala, 2002, cited in Gopalan, 2004; also GOK 2006); b) issues surrounding 'protected' teaching posts in certain schools with fewer numbers of pupils and a resistance to re-deploying teachers among aided schools (Gopalan, 2004 and GOK, 2006); and finally an overall increase in positions being gained through nepotism rather than competence (George and Sunaina, 2005). The overriding lesson to be learnt therefore is that teacher recruitment in great numbers (regardless whether male or female) is only one stage towards meeting the need for educational provision. Once the workforce has been filled it is just as important for policies to pay attention to quality issues within the system and to other related factors – relating to both teaching and other areas, such as physical infrastructure and curricula. A simple preponderance of female teachers is by no means a causal factor.

Where the feminisation of the profession and gendered educational outcomes are concerned, the debate becomes increasingly sensitive. As noted in the review of other countries that have observed high numbers of women in the teaching profession, there has been a tendency to resort to an impact analysis based more on simplistic rationales that automatically equate high female teacher numbers with indicators that

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*15 The government of Sri Lanka has now introduced a policy of selecting 50 per cent of trainee teachers to the National Colleges of Education on a geographical basis to ensure that there is some significant return of teachers to remote and rural areas. Additionally, teachers can only now seek transfer after serving a stated number of years in one location.*

point to underachievement in male students. This has led to the creation of what have been called 'moral panics' about boys' underachievement in certain countries such as Australia and the United Kingdom, often without any sort of conclusive evidence that proves a link and often without addressing interwoven issues, such as social class, geography, ethnicity etc., that makes boys' underachievement a nuanced issue.

In attempting to unpack this difficult issue within the context of our case studies, the research looks both at the statistical evidence of performance and outcome indicators where available, along with the results of the empirical research conducted among teachers themselves. One of the case countries – Dominica – has also been able to provide some valuable insights into the perceptions of pupils on aspects of this issue. Initially however, it is important to accept that on the surface, a direct comparative analysis between gender equality indicators in education in each of these case studies shows one common strand: The statistical evidence from chapter 3 indicates that gender disparity in favour of girls at the secondary level does exist where enrolment rates are concerned. But such surface level analysis of statistics covers other contradictory data that must be investigated, in case high female teacher percentages are to be made an unproven scapegoat for a more complex sociological issue. Within this study the statistical analysis has presented a variety of trends that certainly require further research, but for the time being it makes any correlation with a preponderance of female teachers far from conclusive. In Lesotho for example, boys' underachievement is more associated with under-participation than underperformance. Studies already conducted on this (Jha and Kelleher, 2005) suggest a variety of social, economic and occupational practices that pull boys out of the system as they leave primary education.<sup>16</sup> Examination results clearly show that within the school system itself, regardless of female teacher numbers at primary school, boys will perform as well as girls. However, in Dominica the data suggested a clearer gender bias in favour of girls' performance, with boys' repetition rates consistently higher than girls' and the national average. And yet even here the relationship remains vague, as other external issues could also play a role: Dominica's National Policy and Action Plan for Gender Equity and Equality (NGPP) revealed that out-migration of one or either parent and its concomitant family disruption is one of the fundamental roots of school drop-out.

Evidence from Samoa helps to further elucidate this point. The implication that female teachers encourage girls' participation and an absence or significantly lower proportion of male teachers discourages boys' participation is not borne out, for if this were the case with Samoa, the result of increasing numbers of women in the teaching force over the last two decades should have resulted in declining male student representation in schools in the same period. However, data on school participation of males between the ages of 5 – 14 years increased from 89 per cent in 2000 to 97 per cent in 2004, then declined, then remained steady at 94 per cent between 2007–2008 (MESC Statistical Digest 2008). When looking at participation rates between 15 –19 year olds, we see a significant drop in both male and female students – 2008 registered 57 per cent for girls and 49 per cent for boys (MESC Statistical Digest 2008). This indicates retention problems in these latter stages of secondary school for both males and females, as opposed to just an issue concerning boys. When investigating the causes surrounding drop-out rates among boys, observations at the rural village level in particular indicate that many boys opt-out of Years 12 and 13 of formal schooling in order to focus on supporting their extended families and fulfilling village obligations

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<sup>16</sup> In the Lesotho context, herding remains a traditional livelihood that boys remain engaged in, particularly in the highlands. Considered a major stage in male socialisation as well as an economic necessity, many boys will be absent or drop-out of school to fulfil this practice.

that are culturally tied to their coming of age into as young men, such as responsibility for the family's subsistence agriculture. Therefore, unless a boy is at liberty to pursue a formal sector job – probably in an urban area – completing 5 years of secondary schooling may seem to be little use to their rural lives and the expectations of their community. This insight suggests that there are likely various factors behind the lower participation of both males and females in secondary education, and it would be unlikely that the higher proportion of female teachers at the secondary level is responsible for this in either case. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that Samoa has been recognised as being at risk of not achieving gender parity in secondary education by 2015 (UNESCO 2007). Further investigations into drop-outs among all students is therefore needed, along with careful analysis and observation of whether the margin between male and female participation widens any further, and an analysis of the socio-cultural impacts of gender roles on boys, which may unearth deep-rooted issues pertaining to how these link with attitudes towards education.

One area within the Samoan context that remains troubling regarding gender differences in education is that of performance. While reasons for lack of participation can be more easily investigated, performance indicators that show boys underachieving in certain core subjects present far more complex issues that need addressing. Results from national assessments in Samoa show that there are problems regarding boys' underachievement in primary schools, particularly in the subject areas of English, Samoan and Numeracy. Gender disaggregated data of 'at risk' students within these subjects shows that boys are far more likely to fail in these subjects at Year 4. But the correlation between this trend and the increase in female teachers is still inconsistent and therefore ultimately inconclusive. For example, although the percentage of at-risk boys increased dramatically between 2001–2003, so did the percentage of at-risk girls, albeit they were fewer. Secondly, the numbers of at-risk boys has since decreased significantly from a high of 61 per cent in 2003 to 17 per cent in 2007 (MESC Statistical Digest 2008). As female teacher numbers during that period continued to increase slightly from 75 per cent to 76 per cent (MESC Research, Policy and Planning Division), there is nothing to suggest that a high proportion of female teachers are at the heart of this issue. However, the discrepancy between male and female achievement rates at this level does remain a concern for Samoan education, and further research is clearly needed.

In Sri Lanka, focus group discussions among teachers, trainee teachers, education administrators and parents showed minimal negative perceptions regarding disproportionately high female teacher numbers and educational outcomes. This is despite the fact that Sri Lanka also presents higher educational performance outcomes for girls than for boys. The only view expressed that indicated a negative association with a feminised teaching force came from a few male administrators, who indicated that school principals have been known to specifically ask for male teachers to carry out school functions that included sports, after school activities and field trips, etc. However, all other respondents claimed that they did not feel female teachers had hampered these school functions in any way, with many going on to argue that female teachers were 'more committed than male teachers, often taking teaching more seriously than their male counterparts,' a perception that possibly contains its own gender bias.

By comparison, research among teachers in Lesotho showed a definite lack of consensus on the issue of teachers' gender and educational performance, with varied responses surfacing when teachers of both sexes were asked to comment specifically on whether boys needed male teachers in order to perform better in school. Overall, the majority of teachers indicated that they felt boys did not need male teachers in order to perform educationally. Many refused to give reasons for their view on this. Of

the minority who did feel that boys need male teachers in order to perform well, various reasons were given, including: 'boys listen better if taught by males....for discipline...they need men as role models...women are gender-biased....some activities need to be done by men'. Male and female teachers appeared to split in their responses however, with a greater proportion of men interviewed feeling that boys needed male teachers in the classroom for many of the above reasons. The issue of discipline in particular was a recurring theme that also came-up in some of the responses of teachers (both male and female) when asked about the status of the profession. There seemed to be a correlation between the perception that women find it harder to discipline children, particularly boys, and that this impacts on the way the profession is viewed. Although not said explicitly by any of the respondents, possibly the association of feminisation with a lack of authority is at the root of such comments, a possibility that poses further questions regarding societal perceptions of men and women and issues surrounding gender equality. This will be further explored later.

In Dominica, the responses were also mixed. In-depth interviews conducted with principals, deputy principals, teachers, an education officer and a leaders of a teachers' trade union provided perspectives on issues including the overall importance of 'gender matching' between pupils and teachers (e.g. whether boys need male teachers and girls need female teachers), on the issue of teachers as role models, and whether pupils actually respond differently according to the gender of the teacher.

On the issue of gender matching, respondents were doubtful about this, feeling that there was a need for it not to be too prescriptive. While several saw the need for gender matching to a certain degree, these seemed to be more for reasons outside of educational performance per se, for example, when pupils need to turn to an adult in the school environment to deal with personal issues, such as the menstrual cycle for girls and other adolescent issues that may affect boys. In this respect it was felt that boys might feel they cannot approach a female teacher, making the suggestion of gender matching more important in the later years. Additionally, it was also felt by one respondent that boys did respond more readily within the sports environment if a male teacher was present. However, female principals in two co-educational schools were keen to play down the importance of gender matching. One firmly held that female teachers had an important relationship with male students that involved helping to avert them from negative masculinities of machismo and chauvinism, while the second emphasised the need for professionalism and seriousness rather than gender. This respondent felt that as long as the teachers were committed, students tended to look beyond gender.

Research among pupils themselves remains one of the more rare research samples used when exploring the teacher feminisation debate. Research conducted as part of this study in Dominica has been able to provide some strong insights into perceptions regarding responses by primary students to assumptions about the gender of their teachers. Using a significant sample, 335 Grade 5 pupils were asked to respond to a series of statements that ranged from whether they thought more male teachers were needed as 'role models' in primary schools, to whether female teachers have a harder time disciplining boys than a male teacher would. The responses showed a variety of perspectives from both male and female pupils.

For example, when asked if it was important to have both male and female teachers in primary school, the majority of pupils (83 per cent) responded positively to this, with only a 1 per cent difference between the percentages of male to female pupils. When asked whether more male teachers were needed as role models, there was a split within the overall sample, with 52 per cent not agreeing with the statement. Interestingly however, the gender-disaggregated responses indicate that while the

female sample had a higher disagreement rate, only a slight majority of boys (51 per cent) felt that more male teachers were needed as role models. Following through on the theme of gender matching between pupils and teachers, both male and female students were equally divided in the view that female teachers were good role models for boy children, while when asked whether they felt that pupils identified more easily with teachers of their own gender, more boys than girls actually disagreed. The above results indicate that where male and female representation in the teaching profession is concerned, although pupils can see the overarching benefits of having both male and female teachers, they are not associating any significance to the idea of gender matching within education, with boys themselves not demonstrating any particular need for male teachers as role models or as teachers that they more easily relate to. However, a further response within the questionnaire does suggest that this may have something more to do with their current age and where they are within the education system: When asked to respond to the statement 'older pupils prefer male teachers to teach them', male and female pupils were at odds, with significantly more boys than girls agreeing with the statement. Although overall only half of boys did agree with the statement, the greater divergence in response between boys and girls in this question suggests the beginning of a change in perception that could grow as they get older. A similar study that samples secondary school pupils – as they go through adolescence and start to assume more enhanced gender identities – would help to illuminate this, especially as the statistical data shows that male teachers are less in a minority at the secondary level within feminised systems.

Just as the concept of gender matching between pupils and teachers is one that looks at associations between boys' underachievement and high numbers of female teachers, so the issue of discipline and its association with male teachers needs to be addressed. Dominica is the only country within this study that presents us with a pupil perspective on the issue: when asked to respond to the statement 'female teachers have a harder time disciplining boys than male teachers', female students were much more likely to agree with this statement than boys (63 per cent of girls agreed, only 47 per cent of boys agreed). As a result, just over half the total sample of pupils (54 per cent) agreed with the statement. Combined with the perceptions that adults who tend to agree with the statement that women do have more difficulty in disciplining than men do, these results present an ongoing contention within the debate.

## **Conclusions, recommendations and further research**

### *Conclusions*

Women and the teaching profession is an area of research that clearly presents multi-layered considerations both in terms of education provision and gender equality. In the first instance, evidence remains strong that the introduction of women into the teaching profession in increasing numbers has been a major contribution towards greater education provision within societies. This was first evidenced in the work conducted in countries with long-standing education systems in the global north and in Latin America, and the results of this study seem to suggest a similar conclusion, with each of our case studies demonstrating that where high female teacher numbers are present, the education system is providing notable successes in terms of universal primary education and – to various degrees – secondary education also. Following through from that, the major issue of girls' access to basic education is also one that those countries appear to no longer be dealing with at the most fundamental of levels, as demonstrated by recent education indicators in Chapter 3. With the education of girls being one of the first blows a society can strike for women's equality more broadly, the importance of this link cannot be overestimated. The very growth of women's employment in the teaching

profession itself can be put forward as an example of a shift towards greater gender equality between men and women, as the presence of educated women within a professional, salaried field in the formal sector is testimony to women's move away from economic dependence and vulnerability, towards empowerment through a visible and established role in a country's economic and social landscape.

Having acknowledged that however, there remains a complex duality within the issues that surround women and the teaching profession in those countries where the workforce can be described as feminised. Evidence from research countries presented in this study suggests quite clearly that there is a strong association between teaching as a profession and traditional gender roles that align themselves with women's long-held responsibilities in the domestic sphere, suggesting that while women may no longer be confined exclusively to this sphere, their role in the public one is very much influenced by it. This is manifested at two levels: first in an assumption within societies that women have a biological predisposition towards teaching because children are involved; and secondly, through the difficulties women experience in finding a balance between work and their family obligations, and the ways which teaching can help address that balance. In the first instance we have seen that many respondents in the varied interviews, questionnaires and focus groups across each of the countries have referred to what they believe to be an inherent female ability among women to work more effectively with children. These views were explicitly present in Sri Lanka, Dominica and Lesotho. Many female respondents also made it clear that their motivations for joining the profession were rooted in desire to work with children. In the second instance, responses and evidence from several countries demonstrated the need for women to find employment that was conducive to their responsibilities as wives and mothers. This included a need for more flexible working hours in order to be available for their own children. This view was expressed quite consistently by female teachers themselves who did not wish to compromise their traditional roles as mothers and home makers, and reflected in the opinions of others within those societies such as their parents, underpinning the socio-cultural expectations that have made teaching an increasingly chosen form of employment for women. In Sri Lanka, the view was also held that women who entered into other, more time-demanding professions were less likely to have successful marriages. In some societies – such as the case of Kerala – where there has been a long record of female education, women are increasingly being expected to occupy a new symbiotic role of 'working mother' which the teaching profession appears to readily fulfil. These gender associations have been instrumental in the propagation of a view overall that teaching – and primary teaching in particular – is indeed 'women's work'.

Intersecting both the growth of women's educational achievement and the continuance of traditional gender roles is the likelihood of more women to be found accessing teacher training opportunities. A review of growth in female numbers in a couple of our case study countries suggest varied experiences that reflect on the one hand an organic movement of women into the profession in Samoa as males sought opportunities in a growing public sector post-independence, while in India we see evidence of targeted policies and recruitment strategies by certain states such as Kerala towards bringing women into the profession, including the creation of quotas, gender-sensitive deployment policies and a leniency in academic entry requirements. More currently, Samoa seems to present an argument where the fact that a greater number of girls than boys qualify with the necessary requirements for teacher training courses is one of the core reasons why more women are entering the profession overall. But we do not find consistency in other countries such as Lesotho, where many female respondents in the primary sector spoke of their decision to join the primary



sector in particular as one determined to a large extent by having only the minimal qualifications. Without further, detailed investigations of motivations among teacher trainees specifically in each country, it would be difficult to understand the real inter-linkages between gender role expectation, access to teacher training courses and the question of personal choice.

One question that would need to be asked in such a study is the extent to which personal choice influenced the trend where more women are to be found at the primary level in each of the research countries. At present, the reasons for this appear to be linked to the perpetuation of traditional gender roles. These associations with teaching tend to diminish as one moves up the educational sectors, with secondary education demonstrating feminisation to a far lesser extent. In the cases of Dominica and in particular Samoa, the percentage of women is significantly less, to the extent that it would be difficult to say that those sectors are actually feminised in those two countries. The data also demonstrates that high female numbers rarely translate into mirrored proportions within the management structure as principals or deputy principals, especially not at the secondary level. Only Dominica presented almost comparable figures, with women teachers not only in abundance at the primary level, but also in the more gender-balanced secondary sector. Aside from Dominica's scenario, the reasons for the more common trend in these countries remains an area for further research. The consistency with findings in other country studies indicates a need to ask critical questions that relate to gender equality within the profession. Does career progression within teaching remain hampered by the very reasons why women go into teaching: the opportunity to fulfil traditional maternal/wifely roles while also earning a salary? And to what extent are gender biases towards women's abilities impacting on promotion within the profession, and what are the reasons for these biases?

While the impact of female teachers on fulfilling workforce needs is considered a positive outcome for the education provision overall, and a particularly positive impact on access to education for girls, evidence from the country studies offered varying perspectives on the impact of women in the profession on educational outcomes, particularly for boys. Boys occupied the primary concern in this area as each of the countries showed higher enrolment and completion rates in general for girls, and higher academic achievement overall at the national level<sup>17</sup>. In Lesotho, both male and female teachers felt that male teachers were needed for issues of discipline and role-modelling. In Dominica the results were mixed, although many teachers and principals overall felt that greater gender balance was needed in the profession if boys were to benefit equally. Male and female primary pupils in Dominica offered a slightly different perspective. While agreeing with the overall need for both male and female teachers in school, they did not concur fully with the more widely held adult views that male teachers were better disciplinarians or better role models for boys than women teachers. It is acknowledged that these responses could change if the research was conducted among older pupils in the secondary sector. However, direct correlations between the gender of teachers and actual educational outcomes still remain inconclusive and difficult to prove. The example of Samoa demonstrated this difficulty, where although boys' under-participation in secondary schools remains a major concern for the country, female teacher numbers cannot be held accountable as male teachers are almost 50 per cent in that sector. This indicates that other reasons – such as male responsibilities to the family and other possible masculine socialisations – need as much further investigation as any concerns regarding feminisation.

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<sup>17</sup> Although this did not follow through in tertiary level achievements for all of the case studies.

The issue of teacher remuneration is one that resonated in the majority of the countries under review. Teacher salaries remain comparatively low in many countries, and the research indicates that this has been a factor in countries where men are not as attracted to the profession. The issue is interlinked with men and women's gender roles in society, and the expectation on men to be main providers within the family. The perception of teacher pay and its relationship with the teaching profession's status is mixed, with most ex-male teachers in Samoa who had left for financial reasons conveying the view that teaching still retained a well-respected status within Samoan society because of the importance of education, regardless of the female numbers and regardless of the pay. In Lesotho, we saw a clearer indication of how the status issue is nuanced, with respondents who felt that status was not compromised arguing from the perspective that teaching is a woman's job anyway. However, many in Lesotho did indicate that they felt the presence of so many women in the profession meant lobbying for pay increases would not be taken seriously by policy-makers. Additionally, when asked to offer insights into how the profession could attract more men and how the status of the profession could be raised, many respondents were keen to emphasise pay increases as a male incentive.

The above analysis surrounding pay and status in particular presents two underlying implications that are crucial to the dual issues of the MDGs and EFA: a) teacher provision and delivering and sustaining quality in education, and b) gender equality at all levels of education and broader society, especially as it seeks to go beyond gender parity.

For the first implication, the need to address the linkages between a diminishing respect or status of the profession and the association that this has with teacher remuneration is crucial, as this will in time have subsidiary impacts on quality. It is important to stress at this juncture that teaching quality is not synonymous with encouraging males specifically into the profession with higher pay, but rather that teaching quality is more likely to be assured with an increase of better qualified teachers overall, whether they be female or male. The relationship between quality education and ensuring equity considerations for women teachers was highlighted at the 55th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women by the ILO statement that *"...to achieve quality in education, the status of teachers, and particularly that of women teachers, must receive more attention"* (ILO, 2011).

More so, higher status of the profession along with better remuneration will not only generate interest in teacher training courses among graduates but is more likely to ensure a fall in attrition rates more broadly. In many respects, the success of EFA is dependent on ensuring that both the status and economic desirability of the teaching profession increases significantly.

In terms of gender equality more broadly, at the most basic level, the assumption that pay increases are needed to restore males to a profession indicates that women within society are generally expected and/or accept the fact they earn a lower wage than men. Just as countries with high female teacher numbers appear to demonstrate a greater propensity towards gender parity and – in many instances – great achievements in girls' education, it is also noticeable that this does not always translate to either workforce participation or equality in pay. These are issues not unique to the case studies in the research, but ones that continue to be struggled with in other feminised teacher' countries with as long a history in gender equality advocacy as the United Kingdom, where the gender wage gap between men and women stood at 19.8 per cent in 2009, and the percentage of women in full-time work is only two thirds of men (UK Office of National Statistics, 2010). We see commonalities in such trends with the cases within this study. In Sri Lanka for example, educational attainment among

girls and women has been such that even the tertiary sector has gender-balanced female percentages, and often within subject areas such as medicine and commerce that are often associated with men. However, it is also worth noting that the percentage for unemployed women is double that for men, with greater numbers of highly-qualified women out of work than men. Unpacking the reasons for this trend are needed to understand whether these are women actively seeking work on the same level as men (and therefore potentially being discriminated against) or whether they are women who are moving in and out of employment as a result of responsibilities within the domestic sphere. Much of the dialogue that emanated from the focus group discussions indicated that women are still more likely to enter into professions that have a gendered association, with societal expectations around the domestic sphere playing a large role in career and financial aspirations. In the case of the teaching profession, many women in Sri Lanka, it appears, are willing to make the trade-off between a lower salary as a teacher that nonetheless allows them to spend time with their children. In Dominica, women's dominance in educational achievement and in the teaching profession does not absolve the inconsistency of very few women being in prominent decision making roles at the government level, along with their much lower labour force participation overall. Similarly with the Indian state of Kerala, debates around gender equity are often polarised, with female education overall demonstrating a respect of equity on the one hand, but tight 'gendering' of academic choices and careers shows underlying limitations.

Therefore, where women in the teaching profession is concerned, the duality that exists between accepted women's roles in the home and finding a career that does not compromise that role also presents implications for broader issues of gender equality. The goal of gender balance/proportionality in society is one that is sought overall as a means of ensuring equality. And yet with teaching in these countries we see an imbalance that exists not as a result of prejudicial barriers towards men entering the profession, but more as a result of complex associations that have developed over time and which now prevent many from wanting to. Nothing within the research presented in this study indicates that women dominate the professions in those countries as a result of men encountering the kind of sexism that has barred women from accessing many male dominated professions. Indeed, the research has unearthed either a lack of concern regarding the absence of men, such as with Sri Lanka, or an active desire for more men in order to provide gender balance, such as in Dominica. Attempting to 'redress' feminisation is therefore an equality issue converse to ones that societies have become traditionally accustomed to, where more commonly the unequal group in question are actively seeking entry. The overall consistency with which the research in this study has presented men's presence in management positions– comparative to their overall numbers – is an issue that has potential ramifications for a country's commitments in the MDGs and EFA – namely gender equality in education, and gender equality more widely. Alongside family structures, school environments present children and young adults with formative introductions to societal expectations of various groups, whether these are based on gender, race, ethnicity or social class/castes. As a result, feminisation of the teaching profession through increasingly high numbers of women entering the profession is potentially being perpetuated through a cycle of expectation that girls and boys are introduced to at an early age, shaping their attitudes towards viable careers. So just as a feminised profession on the one hand can present a positive example for girls – offering a clear and often secure employment path – on the other it can also infer lack of choice in other areas. Lack of career progression for women teachers comparable to men can also translate into how both sexes perceive women in management/positions of authority. There is also an argument of lost plurality for men

due to an alienation from the teaching profession, particularly the primary sector. But this is a much more difficult argument to make – especially in primary teaching – as many societies appear to find an inherent discomfort in the idea of men working closely with young children. Whether such perceptions also have negative consequences on men's equality and well-being is a contentious yet arguably much needed area of debate and exploration for another time.

### *Recommendations*

Recommendations that flow from this report are based on an understanding and acceptance of the complexities that exist within the debates around feminisation of the teaching profession. As indicated in the introductory chapter, the purpose of the study has not been to identify feminisation of the profession – categorised as teaching workforces with disproportionately high numbers of women teachers – as a problem in and of itself. The role that women have played in fulfilling the teaching needs of expanding education systems is whole-heartedly acknowledged and upheld. Instead, the research has sought to uncover some of the trends and issues that have arisen within feminised teaching workforces, focusing on how feminisation occurred and what the implications are for a country's education and gender equality mandates. In so doing, the recommendations that follow are less policy prescriptions but intended instead to provide thoughts and guidance for countries with feminised workforces, as well as those that still have a shortage of female teachers but which are following or soon to follow a path that involves targeted female teacher recruitment as a means of achieving the MDGs and EFA. The following takes into account the many recommendations put forward by the country researchers within this study, and seeks to reflect the broadly common suggestions that came from all five. It is understood however that each country report carries within it its own unique perspective on many of the issues put forward, and for more targeted recommendations at the country level, the case studies in Part II will provide further guidance.

#### *On increased female teacher recruitment among countries aiming to achieve the education MDGs and EFA goals*

In countries or states where the number of women teachers has increased in the last few years due to special recruitment drives (but still remains low), it is important firstly to reflect at all levels the rationale behind such a recruitment drive and to be aware of the trends that are being set within this process. These include:

- 1) Understanding the relationships between a reliance on contract/para teaching and gender inequalities, and the longer-term consequences this will have on the profession in terms of value issues, such as salary and status, and on gender equity. For countries seeking to dramatically expand their workforces as a means of meeting the MDGs and EFA, they must not lose sight of future issues surrounding the difficulty in delivering and maintaining quality education and the relationship with low wages and a growing dependence on untrained teachers. This recommendation broadly correlates with the premise that addresses 'The teacher shortage' in developing countries within the already established ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers;
- 2) Following through from this, while it is understood that such countries are struggling with budgets and are looking for opportunities to make savings, it is also important that teacher remuneration and the formalisation of secure contracts and training opportunities should not take the brunt of budgetary cuts. The following quote from the Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers highlights this most eloquently:

*Authorities should recognise that improvements in the social and economic status of teachers, their living and working conditions, their terms of employment and their career prospects are the best means of overcoming any existing shortage of competent and experienced teachers, and of attracting to and retaining in the teaching profession substantial numbers of fully qualified persons.*

Countries seeking to expand their teacher population should not view the targeting of women into the profession as a low-wage 'cure all', lest education expansion becomes more about economic exploitation of a 'voiceless' and unempowered group, than it is about appreciation of women's crucial role as teachers in the pursuance of EFA and the wider benefits of female teachers in meeting education goals;

- 3) It is important to ensure that just as women are being targeted for recruitment into the profession, they are also being given the opportunities for promotion and career enhancement simultaneously, lest the management structure reflect pervasive gender inequalities, with women disproportionately in the lower echelons. While the initial goals of educational provision may not be adversely affected by this characteristic of teaching professions with high female numbers, more nuanced barriers to gender equality in education that become important later down the line (such as the removal of gendered associations with academic and career choices that school experiences are very much responsible for) could become a problem;
- 4) Finally, countries should be observant of the development of societal perceptions around teaching – particularly primary teaching – as 'women's work' during this process. Evidence from this report has shown that there has been a synchronicity between the need for more teachers and an utilisation of traditional gender roles that justify women's entrance into the profession. If such associations continue to become developed as more women enter the profession, successes such as gender parity in education in the one hand could become devalued in the long-term through the continuation of more deep-rooted gender inequalities in other sectors of society, such as employment. The need and processes involved in delivering education should not be viewed as existing in a vacuum, devoid of societal biases. Indeed, as a primary facilitator of child socialisation it has a responsibility to ensure that it does not reflect those biases if they are deemed to impact negatively on the opportunities and outcomes of individuals.

*On addressing current equity challenges for women teachers within feminised workforces:*

- 1) As a first recommendation it is important that education systems take note of the lack of women in positions of authority in the teaching profession comparative to their numbers. On a pure equity premise, such a consistent trend does not meet the expected standards of gender parity and equality that countries are trying to meet. The message that is sent at a societal level is a negative one, while the possibility that the education system is therefore contributing to the reproduction and acceptance of negative gender roles among students of both sexes cannot be ignored. It is important that assumptions are not made around women's commitment to roles that involve greater responsibility and time. Instead, reasons for a lack of female managers should be investigated more thoroughly from an equality perspective as a means of understanding what barriers exist for women's promotion within a management structure. Women teachers must also be empowered by enabling them to take leadership responsibilities.

- 2) It is important that there is more discussion on this during in-service training programmes. There is need for greater awareness of systemic constraints for women wishing to develop their career within the education sector, such as negative attitudes towards women's ability to manage and lead schools, lack of female role models, long hours, and commitments that are difficult to reconcile with family and child care responsibilities. There is also a need to spread awareness of constraints for female teachers within families and communities. Teacher training programmes should pay attention to the different experiences, perspectives, and priorities of women, rather than assume the gender-neutrality of being a teacher.
- 3) Teacher remuneration and working conditions needs to be reviewed in line with other similar professions in the public sector, mindful of the negative impacts of associations between low pay and a profession regarded as 'women's work' on gender equality in general. Incremental pay rises based on performance is one approach that could be introduced more systematically within the profession. Similarly, revision of career structures at the institutional levels could yield positive results in terms of both male and female teacher retention.
- 4) Where it is perceived that women's voices are not sufficient to ensure increased pay and status within the profession, women teachers need support from the mainstream education system itself, along with other employment bodies that can help to strengthen their position. The creation of forums for female teachers is essential so that they can collectively bargain and negotiate better pay and working conditions in schools.

*On the recruitment of male teachers into feminised workforces:*

- 1) As discussed in this report, in some circumstances male teachers are likely to exit the teaching profession because of financial responsibilities that cannot be met through the available salary packages for teachers. Societal expectations tied to male gender roles as heads of households are as much responsible for this as for the limitations met by female teachers in expanding their own careers or going into other areas. As already recommended, salary increases are necessary and will work for both men and women coming into the profession. However, such a strategy would need to be followed through with a conscientious observation to ensure that a higher pay scale does not lead to the profession no longer being viewed as a role that is still available to women, or that women find themselves further marginalised from managerial positions.
- 2) In countries where male secondary completion rates are lagging (and this has been identified as a possible reason for fewer men in the profession), it may also be prudent to consider the expansion of pathways into the teaching profession that allow for a re-entry into academia as a means of fulfilling the qualifications needed to start teacher training. As an example, possible pathways can be created through appropriately-structured teacher training programs for mature individuals who did not achieve the required scores but have since then joined the workforce and demonstrated skills and knowledge in a particular area. However, such an undertaking would only be successful through partnerships between the relevant organisations, in view of the possible barriers that might be encountered in implementation.
- 3) In several of the case studies in this report we have noted that the primary sector is where men are most under-represented. One recommendation for addressing this is the provision of pre-service and in-service training to change male teachers' attitudes towards teaching young children; training institutions may have to

develop courses that enhance positive attitudes in males so that they can work with small children. Studies in gender may also bring an understanding in men that teaching need not be gender-related.

- 4) On a broader level, there also needs to be a public campaign that popularises and enhances the image of primary school teaching to men. It is understood however, that this may not be easy in some contexts, where the perception of primary education and childcare remain intertwined, and where childcare is still considered exclusively a woman's domain. The more positive and balanced the overall view of gender is within society, the more likely primary teaching will be considered a balanced career for both men and women.

#### *Further research*

The areas covered in this study have been wide, and as an initial exploration on feminisation of the teaching profession in countries where the issue is relatively new in research terms, the opportunity for follow-through is abundant. Several gaps within this study and more generally in the overall available literature would provide the first set of suggestions for future research:

#### *Women teachers and recent drives towards EFA: relationships between gender and increases in 'para' and untrained teachers.*

More research than currently exists is needed on this area from a gender perspective. Research will need to take place in countries where the teaching forces have significantly increased their numbers in the last ten years, although may not yet be deemed 'feminised' in terms of women's proportionality, in order to keep it current. There currently remains a need for better clarity on who a para-teacher is, a need that has been hampered by insufficient data collection on the issue. Understanding where para-teachers are primarily located is also key, as although traditionally para-teachers have been known to be found in the under-resourced remote and rural areas, new strains on city schools due to the growth in urbanisation in many countries could also present more complex demographic patterns. Research around this subject can be broached from various perspectives, but more notably in the interest of following through on this research it would be beneficial to approach from a quality education provision angle in one instance, and from a gender equality in the labour force angle on another.

#### *A gender-analytical review of teacher training curricula, institutions and other processes.*

In countries that have majority-female teachers as well as those that don't but have shown significant increases, a gender analytical review of the teacher training process is important as a precursor to the earlier recommendation around incorporating a gender 'lens' into pre-service teacher training programmes.

#### *Women and leadership in the teaching profession.*

The findings of this research have demonstrated that in the majority of cases women's preponderance in the profession does not equitably translate into managerial roles in schools, indicating an issue around women and leadership within the profession. An in-depth piece of empirical research that specifically explores this issue among teachers, principals, education officers and pupils would be beneficial to unpacking some the causes and consequences of the trend. This could be juxtaposed with research in a country where women are found in high numbers as school principals, such as Dominica.

*Pupil perspectives on gender and the teaching profession, particularly at the secondary level.*

The empirical research from Dominica was successful in presenting some interesting insights among primary age children around the gender of their teachers and how they believed this related to them as students and on their educational attainment. The contentious issue of male educational underachievement (with its related sub-texts around role models, discipline and teaching styles) becomes more pertinent it seems at the secondary level when boys and girls begin to go through puberty and fulfil their gender roles more visibly. Although female teacher numbers generally decrease at the secondary level even feminised workforces, the secondary-level illicit the greatest amount of concern in this area and the voices of the pupils themselves is one that has so far been generally absent from much of the fervent discourse.

*Comparative empirical research with teacher trainees entering the teaching profession – motivations behind choice of career.*

Research in this study has looked at in-service teachers, and those who have also left, and their perceptions of the profession. An area of interest would include research among teacher trainees on the motivations behind teaching as a choice of career. Many of the responses in this study from women teachers were relatively in-sync with traditional female gender roles. An interesting insight would be whether women teachers in countries with similarly high female teacher numbers to Sri Lanka or Lesotho – the UK or Canada would be a good choice – are also entering the profession for similar reasons, despite the more radical approaches and frameworks around gender equality that exist in the global North.