PART TWO: COUNTRY REPORTS

5 Dominica

Dr. Francis O. Severin

The Commonwealth of Dominica - background

The Commonwealth of Dominica is a small island state – 29 miles long and sixteen miles wide or 754 square kilometres (291 sq miles) – in the Caribbean Sea, which lies in-between two French islands (overseas departments): Guadeloupe to its north-west and Martinique to its south-east. According to an estimate of July 2009, the population is about 72,660. It is a green, very mountainous and rugged country. The capital is Roseau. The island is divided into 10 parishes: (1) St Andrew; (2) St David; (3) St George; (4) St John; (5) St Joseph; (6) St Luke; (7) St Mark; (8) St Patrick; (9) St Paul; and (10) St Peter (See map). In 1978, Dominica became an independent nation.

Education in Dominica

Like other former British colonies, the project of education in Dominica essentially emerged from a humanitarian motive. The humanitarian movement had contributed to the struggle for the freedom of the slaves, the latter also having precipitated their liberation through their own physical struggle – underpinned by a philosophy of personal and natural freedom.

In 1834, some Mico Charity funds were used for the education of the liberated slaves, the goal being mainly to afford them elementary education as well as training for native teachers. The Mico Charity was non-denominational in its teaching and did much work in Catholic islands like Dominica. The first allocation for education in Dominica was made in 1835 to the tune of £600 (Honychurch, 1995).

Geography and history were very much a part of the trajectory of educational development in Dominica as indeed it was a part of other developments. Education was mounted in certain areas of Dominica but impediments such as the islands rugged relief, the French patois and denominational friction between some of the main players (the Wesleyans, Catholics and Assembly) were a fundamental setback (Honychurch, 1995).

Failure followed immediately, on the heels of the passage of the Education Act in 1863 that legislated for the operation of secular schools. This was due to the following factors: (a) scattered communities; (b) relative absence of a population which earned or even used money; (c) relative absence of a population which saw the value of education and thus the wisdom of making sacrifices to secure it for their children; (d) the general thinking by parents that it was more useful and convenient to have their children perform manual labour at their sides rather than dispatch them to school; and

(e) a realisation by the government that it was not possible to exclude the priests from education in a Catholic community like Dominica (Honychurch, 1995).

The latter issue was to become a very important part of – or indeed shape – Dominica's education framework and by a new education bill, the Board of Education and the Catholic priests were mandated to co-operate in the provision of education. Hence the clergy would play a significant role in the implementation of education and specifically the teaching and learning process. Catholic elementary schools grew rapidly all over Dominica but, as Honychurch (1995) reports, both attendance and standards continued to be low, well into the twentieth century.

Education at the secondary level began much later. The following summarises the trend: (a) nuns of the Roseau Convent commenced classes for a restricted number of girls in the town during the 1850s; (b) a secular school, the Dominica Grammar School, started in 1893 with an enrolment of 25 boys; (c) the St Mary's Academy, Catholic school for boys, started operating in 1932, followed by the Wesley High School for girls. It is noteworthy that these schools remained Roseau-based, to all intents and purposes excluding children from the country districts especially in a setting where public transportation from country districts was scarce, or absent (Honychurch, 1995).

The first rural high school was launched in the 1960s in Portsmouth. As the elementary schools fed their annual output of students into the secondary schools, the population in that sector began to increase rapidly. Quite forward-looking in those days, parents collaborated in a co-operative venture to start the Community High School in 1976, deeply concerned that they were unable to find spaces for their children in the 'established' secondary schools. In 1979, a group of citizens backed up by the Methodist Church launched the St Andrew High School, thus opening up greater opportunities for children in the north east in the parish of St Andrew. At about the same time the Seventh Day Adventist Secondary School was established at Portsmouth.

In 1948, over six decades ago, The University of the West Indies (UWI) was established at Mona in Jamaica as a college of the University of London. The UWI has evolved from a fledgling college in Jamaica with 33 students to a full-fledged University with over 40,000 students, serving the entire Caribbean. Today, it is the largest and most long-standing higher education provider in the English-speaking Caribbean, with campuses in Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, and sites which are part of the Open Campus in Dominica, Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Belize, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Grenada, Montserrat, St Christopher (St Kitts) and Nevis, St Lucia, and St Vincent and the Grenadines. UWI recently launched its Open Campus, a virtual campus with over 50 physical site locations across the region, serving over 20 countries in the English-speaking Caribbean. UWI is an international university with faculty and students from over 40 countries and collaborative links with over 60 universities around the world (News Release, UWI Marketing and Communications Office, 3 December 2010).

Table 5.1 Levels, numbers of institutions, durations of student stay, age groups and ownership

Level	Number	Duration	Ages	Ownership
Pre-Schools	82	2 years	3–4 + years	Private
Primary	63	7 years	5–11 years	Private & Public
Secondary	15	5 years	12–17 years	Private & Public
Tertiary	2	2 years	17+ years	Public

Source: Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Sports and Youth Affairs, Education Planning Unit Indicators 2008.

As a point of departure, Table 5.1 provides a synopsis of the levels of education, number of institutions, the conventional duration of student stay within those institutions, age groups and ownership of the educational institutions in Dominica.

It is important to note that the Education Act makes education obligatory for students between the ages of 5–16 in Dominica. The schools in Dominica fall into three categories depending on their main source of funding and/or upkeep or otherwise their financial 'independence'. These are *public*, *assisted* and *private*: (a) public schools are fully owned and financed by the central government; (b) assisted schools are privately owned but receive financial assistance from government; and (c) the private schools are fully owned and financed by private organisations.

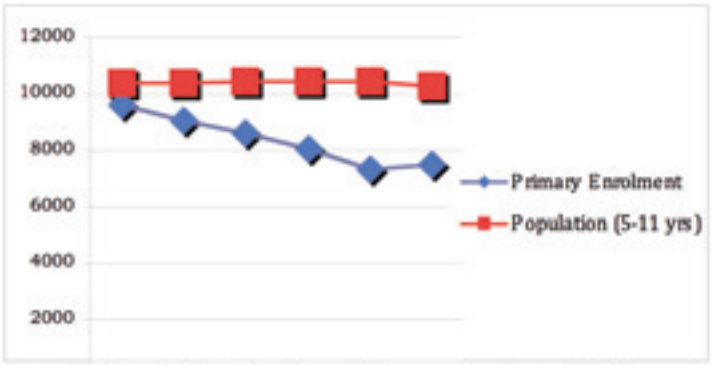
Access to education

Table 5.2 Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) at the primary level, 2002–2008

Year	Primary Enrolment (Grade K – 6)	Population (5–11 year olds)	Net Enrolment Ratio (NER)
2002/03	9,615	10,382	92.6
2002/03	9,065	10,490	87.2
2004/05	8,610	10,416	82.7
2005/06	8,029	10,431	77.0
2006/07	7,285	10,445	69.7
2007/08	7,483	10,253	73.0

Source: Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Sports and Youth Affairs, Education Planning Unit Indicators 2008.

Figure 5.1 Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) at the primary level, 2002–2008



Source: Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Sports and Youth Affairs, Education Planning Unit Indicators 2008.

It may be observed that primary enrolment in Dominica consistently fell below the official school age population. Indeed the primary enrolment continued to decline between 2002/03 – 2006/07 alongside a slight increase in the relevant population. This is further evidence of a failure to achieve universal primary education, the year 2006/07 and 2007/08 showing that 30 per cent and 25 per cent respectively of the eligible population were not at primary school.

Table 5.3 and Figure 5.2 show the Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) in the JSP and secondary levels (combined), 2002/03–2007/08.

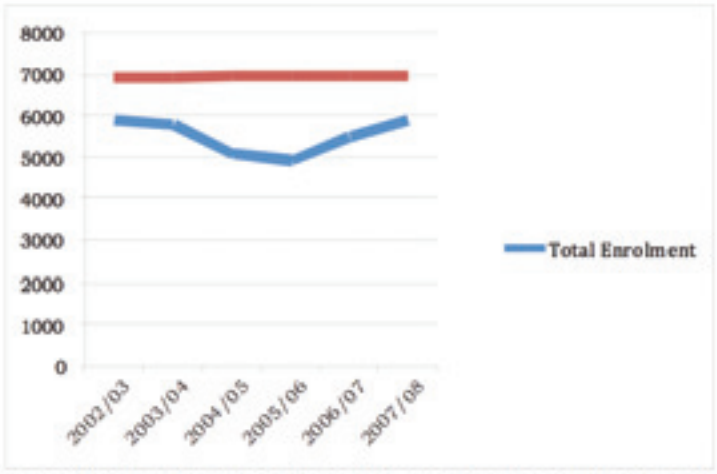
It is clear that the NER evinces a picture of incomplete or partial enrolment of the eligible population. Based on these figures, a fairly significant percentage of the population appears not to be participating in secondary school. It cannot be said therefore that Universal Secondary Education (USE) has been achieved based solely on the data cited here. Indeed what appears to be occurring is a decline in enrolment from 2003/04 until 2005/06 whence it begins to pick up again upon the 'implementation' of USE.

Table 5.3 Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) at the junior secondary programme (JSP) and secondary level, 2002/03–2007/08

Year	JSP Enrolment	Secondary Enrolment (12–16 Year Olds)	Total Enrolment	Population (12–16 Year Olds)	Net Enrolment Ratio (NER)
2002/03	606	5,328	5,934	6,934	85.6
2003/04	475	5,317	5,792	6,944	83.4
2004/05	370	4,720	5,090	6,955	73.2
2005/06	173	4,748	4,921	6,965	70.7
2006/07		5,482	5,482	6,975	78.6
2007/08		5,889	5,889	6,983	84.3

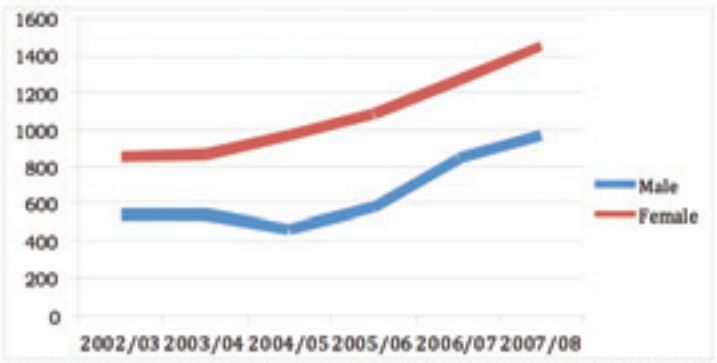
Source. Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Sports and Youth Affairs, Education Planning Unit Indicators 2008.

Figure 5.2 Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) at the junior secondary programme (JSP) and secondary level, 2002/03–2007/08



Source: Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Sports and Youth Affairs, Education Planning Unit Indicators 2008.

Figure 5.3 Male and female participation in tertiary education, 2002/03–2007/08



Source: Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Sports and Youth Affairs, Education Planning Unit Indicators 2008.

It may be noted that tertiary enrolment has increased over the years. This trend may be explained, *inter alia*, by the increased access that has emerged from the establishment of the Dominica State College (DSC).

As background to the foregoing, the DSC was established by an act of parliament as a corporate body under the control of a board of governors. This Act was passed by

Parliament on 17 April 2002. The DSC is a publicly-funded and nationally-accredited institution, established to provide tertiary education and training in agriculture, arts, science and technology, health and environmental science, teacher education, technical and vocational studies, tourism and hospitality, business, ecological and marine studies.

The DSC was established by merging the Dominica Teachers Training College, the Clifton Dupigny Community College (Academic and Technical Studies Divisions) and the Princess Margaret Hospital School of Nursing.

The DSC's programmes of study lead to Certificates and Associate degrees (2004/2005 Student Handbook). Additionally, as stated above, a group of citizens called the *GCE Advanced Level Support Group* – in collaboration with the DSC – conducts A-Level classes which lead to the sitting of Cambridge examinations.

At this level, females preponderate throughout the period 2002/03 – 2007/08, begin to ascend in 2003/04 while male numbers actually begin to decline. This is not an unprecedented trend and indeed has become the norm. At the regional University of the West Indies, for instance, in 2008/09, there is even a larger percentage of females, with 75 per cent of the 503 Dominicans registered there being female.

Male and female teachers in Dominica

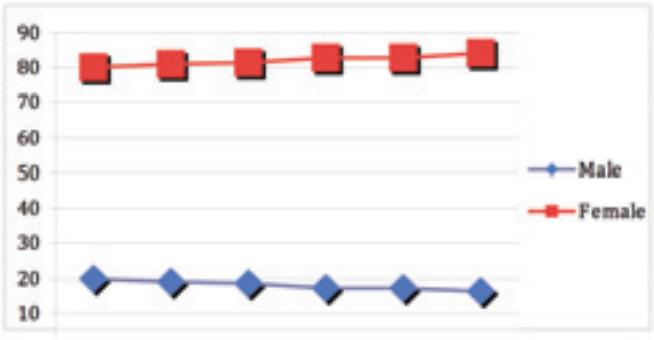
Teachers at the primary level

Table 5.4 Number and percentage of male and female staff (including principals) at the primary level, 2002/03–2007/08

Year	Total Staff	Male	Female	% Male	% Female
2002/03	658	131	527	19.9	80.1
2003/04	623	119	504	19.1	80.9
2004/05	615	114	501	18.5	81.5
2005/06	580	100	480	17.2	82.8
2006/07	565	96	469	17.0	83.0
2007/08	562	90	472	16.0	84.0

Source: Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Sports and Youth Affairs, Education Planning Unit Indicators 2008.

Figure 5.4 Percentage of male and female staff (including principals) at the primary level, 2002/03–2007/08



The data shows an unequivocal picture of female teacher preponderance at the primary school level. Not only is there a depiction of female predominance over the years, but the gap between female and male teachers appears to be increasing in favour of females.

Table 5.5 Number and percentage of trained teachers at the primary level by sex, 2002/03–2007/08

	Number Trained			Percentage Trained		
Year	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2002/03	53	304	357	46.9	63.2	60.0
2003/04	50	307	357	49.5	67.0	63.8
2004/05	45	287	332	46.3	63.0	60.1
2005/06	39	306	345	47.5	69.7	66.2
2006/07	33	273	306	42.0	65.0	61.0
2007/08	31	266	297	42.0	64.0	60.0

Source: Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Sports and Youth Affairs, Education Planning Unit Indicators 2008.

Logically, and all other things being equal, it is quite possible to argue that since there are more female teachers at the primary level, one should expect that there will also be a higher percentage of trained female teachers at that level. The data coincide with the foregoing judgment. Throughout the period the average of female trained teachers exceeds the total average and resided at 65 per cent or thereabouts (that is, almost two-thirds). Among the male teachers, the average percentage trained was about 45.7 per cent. One may also notice a sharper increase from 2004/05–2005/06 for female trained teachers compared to male trained teachers. This has been during a period where the overall number of trained teachers has decreased.

Teachers at the secondary level

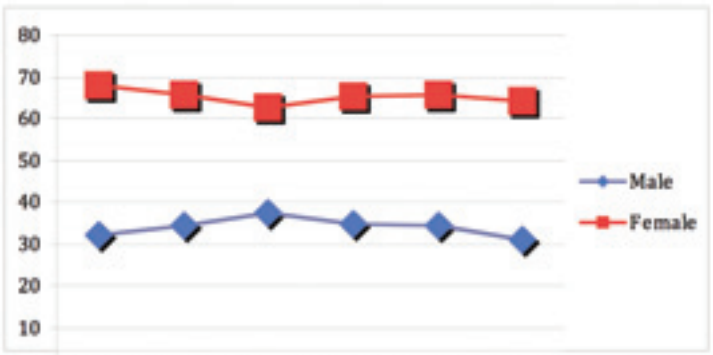
The disparity between female and male teachers at the secondary level narrows compared to the primary level; however, the trend at the secondary level shows a continuation of female predominance. On average, 66 per cent of teachers were female while about 34 per cent were male at the secondary schools. At the primary schools it is 82 per cent female compared to about 18 per cent male.

Table 5.6 Number and percentage of secondary school teachers by sex, 2002/03–2007/08

Year	Total Staff	Males	Females	% Males	% Females
2002/03	395	126	269	31.9	68.1
2003/04	385	132	253	34.3	65.7
2004/05	415	155	260	37.3	62.7
2005/06	437	152	285	34.8	65.2
2006/07	466	160	306	34.3	65.7
2007/08	491	151	340	30.8	69.2

Source: Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Sports and Youth Affairs, Education Planning Unit Indicators 2008.

Figure 5.5 Percentage of secondary school teachers by sex, 2002/03–2007/08



Source. Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Sports and Youth Affairs, Education Planning Unit Indicators 2008.

Table 5.7 Number and percentage of trained teachers at the secondary level by sex, 2002/03–2007/08

	Number Trained			Percentage Trained		
Year	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2002/03	40	97	137	31.7	36.0	34.6
2003/04	42	94	136	31.8	37.1	35.3
2004/05	45	89	134	29.0	34.2	32.2
2005/06	44	94	138	28.9	33.0	31.6
2006/07	62	126	188	39.0	41.0	40.0
2007/08	56	126	182	37.0	37.0	37.0

Source: Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Sports and Youth Affairs, Education Planning Unit Indicators 2008.

The disparity between trained females and males at the secondary level was narrower compared to the primary level. The trend in trained teachers at the secondary level shows a continuation of female predominance. On average, 36 per cent of female teachers were trained while the average for males was about 34 per cent. It is striking, from the reported percentages, that males appear to catch up very quickly by narrowing the gender disparity in terms of training. This does not negate the fact that on the whole, the figures at both the primary and secondary levels evince a somewhat longer-term commitment by females if the level of training as well as the willingness to be trained is any indication of commitment. Males however seem to show an increased long-term commitment at the secondary level. The data plainly shows the narrowing trend on the basis of sex. Indeed the both sexes are equal in 2007/08.

Geographic disaggregation

Table 5.8 shows the numbers and percentage distribution (in parentheses) of male and female teachers at primary schools in Dominica, disaggregated by districts, during the years 2003/04–2007/08.

Table 5.8 Numbers and percentage distribution of male/female teachers at the primary level by district, 2003/04–2007/08

	East			North			South			West		
Year	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2003/04	25 (27%)	68 (73%)	**93**	23 (18%)	105 (82%)	**128**	21 (21%)	81 (79%)	**102**	32 (14%)	204 (86%)	**236**
2004/05	25 (27%)	66 (73%)	**91**	19 (15%)	108 (85%)	**127**	20 (20%)	78 (80%)	**98**	33 (14%)	203 (86%)	**236**
2005/06	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
2006/07	16 (20%)	64 (80%)	**80**	19 (15%)	107 (85%)	**126**	16 (18%)	73 (82%)	**89**	28 (14%)	179 (86%)	**207**
2007/08	17 (22%)	59 (78%)	**76**	19 (15%)	105 (85%)	**124**	16 (18%)	73 (82%)	**89**	22 (10%)	189 (90%)	**211**

Source: Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Sports and Youth Affairs, Education Planning Unit Indicators 2008.

It is clear from the foregoing table that female teachers preponderated at all districts during the years under consideration. While figures are not available for 2005/06, it is quite possible to assume that the percentage distribution would have been comparable in that year. It must be noted that the female percentages were highest in the Northern and Western districts, which, remarkably, also had the largest numbers of teachers. In the Western district in 2007/08, 90 per cent of the teachers in primary schools were female.

In the Dominican context, it is not possible to place the districts neatly into the rural/urban dichotomy, especially the Western district that contains a combination of rural, sub-urban and urban areas. For example, within the Western district, the capital Roseau is located; in the Northern district, which contains a fair number of rural

hamlets (even deep rural), the second town, Portsmouth, is located. What one will have to conclude tentatively, for present purposes, is that the highest percentages of female teachers are found in the two districts where there are large towns.

What this means is difficult to say, except that there may be many more women who are on hand for professional pursuits such as teaching and who are not otherwise engaged in agriculture and full-time domestic chores. Conversely, it could also mean that in the Western and Northern districts, the locations of the major towns (Roseau and Portsmouth respectively) and where the majority of the secondary schools are concentrated, the males who are engaged in teaching were more likely to seek employment at the secondary schools. As stated elsewhere in the report, the disparity between female and male teachers at the secondary level narrowed compared to the primary level; however, the trend at the secondary level still showed a continuation of female predominance. On average, 66 per cent of teachers were female while about 34 per cent were male at the secondary schools. At the primary schools it is 82 per cent female compared to about 18 per cent male.

Variances based on school provider

Table 5.9 shows the numbers and percentage distribution (in parentheses) of male and female teachers at primary schools in Dominica, disaggregated on the basis of school type (in terms of funding source), during the years 2003/04–2007/08.

One might immediately notice that, while all school types have higher percentages of female teachers, as might be expected, the government assisted and private schools have the highest percentages of female teachers. There is no written policy with regard to employment of teachers on the basis of gender; however, in the author's empirical survey, it was possible to perceive from what the principals said, that they were generally more comfortable with employing females at that level for several reasons, including competence and social factors. At least two principals had specifically indicated that an overwhelming majority of their applicants were females.

Table 5.9 Numbers and percentage distribution of male/female teachers at the primary level by type (Government, Government – Assisted, and Private), 2003/04–2007/08

	Government			Government – Assisted			Private		
Year	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2003/04	86 (21%)	330 (79%)	**416**	10 (11%)	82 (89%)	**92**	5 (10%)	46 (90%)	**51**
2004/05	83 (20%)	332 (80%)	**415**	9 (10%)	82 (90%)	**91**	5 (11%)	41 (89%)	**46**
2005/06	67 (18%)	313 (82%)	**380**	10 (11%)	84 (89%)	**94**	4 (9%)	39 (91%)	**43**
2006/07	64 (18%)	298 (82%)	**362**	9 (10%)	84 (90%)	**93**	6 (13%)	41 (87%)	**47**
2007/08	60 (17%)	296 (83%)	**356**	10 (11%)	83 (89%)	**93**	5 (10%)	46 (90%)	**51**

Source; Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Sports and Youth Affairs, Education Planning Unit Indicators 2008.

Women teachers within the school managerial structure

Primary schools

Table 5.10 shows the numbers and percentage distribution (in parentheses) of male and female principals at the primary level, also disaggregated by district.

Table 5.10 Numbers and percentage distribution of male/female principals at the primary level by district, 2003/04–2007/08

	East			North			South			West		
Year	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2003/04	4 (29%)	10 (71%)	14	5 (28%)	13 (72%)	18	5 (31%)	11 (69%)	16	4 (25%)	12 (75%)	16
2004/05	4 (29%)	10 (71%)	14	4 (22%)	14 (78%)	18	5 (36%)	9 (64%)	14	4 (24%)	13 (76%)	17
2005/06	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
2006/07	4 (29%)	10 (71%)	14	6 (33%)	12 (67%)	18	5 (36%)	9 (64%)	14	2 (12%)	15 (88%)	17
2007/08	4 (29%)	10 (71%)	14	5 (28%)	13 (72%)	18	5 (36%)	9 (64%)	14	2 (12%)	15 (88%)	17

Source: Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Sports and Youth Affairs, Education Planning Unit Indicators 2008.

The gender profile of principals at primary schools is similar to the case for teachers generally. Indeed, the highest percentages of female principals also exist in the Northern and Western districts. In the latter district, for instance, especially in the years 2006/07 and 2007/08, the percentage of females rose to 88 per cent, which in raw figures meant that out of 17 principals in that district, as many as 15 were females with just two males in each year. Hence, the males are virtually absent as school leaders at the primary level.

Table 5.11 shows the numbers and percentage distribution (in parentheses) of male and female principals at primary schools in Dominica, disaggregated on the basis of school type (in terms of funding source), during the years 2003/04–2007/08.

Table 5.11 Number and percentage distribution of male/female principals at the primary level by type (Government, Government – Assisted, and Private), 2003/04–2007/08

	Government			Government – Assisted			Private		
Year	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2003/04	15 (28%)	38 (72%)	53	1 (20%)	4 (80%)	5	2 (33%)	4 (67%)	6
2004/05	15 (29%)	37 (71%)	52	0	5 (100%)	5	2 (33%)	4 (67%)	6
2005/06	17 (33%)	35 (67%)	52	0	5 (100%)	5	2 (33%)	4 (67%)	6
2006/07	16 (31%)	35 (69%)	51	0	5 (100%)	5	1 (14%)	6 (86%)	7
2007/08	14 (27%)	37 (73%)	51	0	5 (100%)	5	1 (14%)	6 (86%)	7

Source: Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Sports and Youth Affairs, Education Planning Unit Indicators 2008.

The highest percentages of female principals are at the government assisted schools. During the years 2004/05 to 2007/08, all the principals at the government-assisted schools were female. Government schools have retained a similar percentage over the five-year period; while private schools have shown a further increase female preponderance.

Secondary schools

Table 5.12 Female teacher numbers in secondary schools, 2011

	Government			Government – Assisted			Private		
Year	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2011	3 (43%)	4 (57%)	7	1 (24%)	6 (86%)	7	0	1 (100%)	1

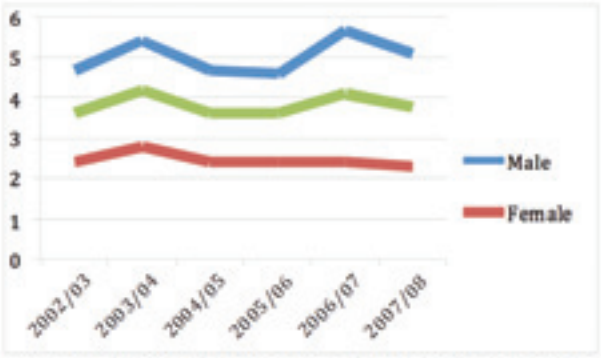
Source: Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Sports and Youth Affairs, Education Planning Unit Indicators 2008.

Data for the secondary sector was collected only for 2011. There are 15 secondary schools in Dominica. Seven of these are government owned, a further seven are government assisted and one is privately owned. As with primary schools, women principals are predominant, with 11 out of the 15 principals being female (735). However, we can also note that at the government level the proportion is comparatively only four out of the seven headships (57 per cent), a much lower proportion than the number of women teachers in secondary schools as a whole.

Educational outcomes

Over the period 2002–2008, the number of students who passed five or more subjects fell well below the numbers who were enrolled in fifth form and those who actually sat examinations. Five subjects are often used as a quality benchmark since it appears to be the minimum qualifications for gaining white-collar employment in the public and private sectors as well as the lower level requirements for accessing tertiary education. For instance, the University of the West Indies Open Campus requires a minimum of five CXC-CSEC subjects as its lower level matriculation for enrolling in various Bachelor's degrees. When students fall below this minimum, there is a sensibility that they have not achieved through the mainstream academic stream and are unable to secure certain levels of employment.

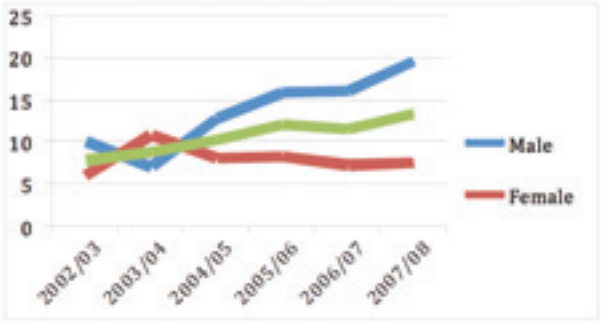
Figure 5.6 Primary school repeaters and repetition rates by gender, 2002/03–2007/08



Source: Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Sports and Youth Affairs, Educatio
Planning Unit Indicators 2008.

Collected here is a sense of the performance of boys and girls at primary school, thus allowing one to form a basis for conclusions about the learning milieu for boys as opposed to girls. The Ministry of Education defines repetition as the 'percentage of pupils enrolled in a given grade/form in a given school year who study in the same grade/form the following year' (Education Planning Unit, 2009, p. 44). Figure 5.6 is illustrative and clearly shows the disparity on the basis of sex. The females fell below the national rate while the males were above the national average, meaning that on average fewer girls repeated a class compared with boys, over the period 2002/03 and 2007/08. The inability to progress through the curriculum without repeating results in wastage of time, money and specifically physical (chalk, paper, etc.) resources, whether state or individual.

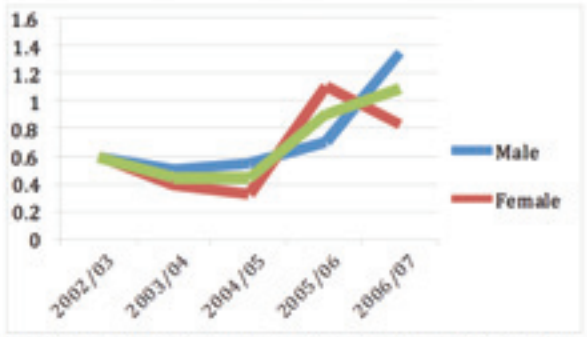
Figure 5.7 Repetition rates by gender in secondary schools, 2002/03–2007/08



Source: Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Sports and Youth Affairs, Education Planning Unit Indicators 2008.

Except for the year 2003/04, the status of boys and girls at secondary schools in terms of repetition rates shows a similar trend to what occurs at the primary schools – the girls' rate of repetition is below the average while the boys' rate is above. Figure 5.7 shows that from 2003/04 the boys' repetition rates began to rise steadily while the girls' rate declined and seemingly levelled off in between 2006/07 and 2007/08.

Figure 5.8 Primary schools drop-out rates by gender, 2002/03–2006/07

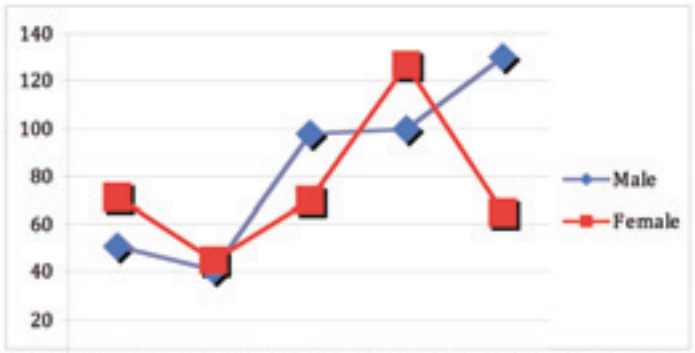


Source: Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Sports and Youth Affairs, Educatio Planning Unit Indicators 2008.

Regarding dropout rates, the trend is not as clear-cut or unambiguous as is the case with repetition rates. In 2002/03, the dropout rates were the same for boys and girls and both declined in 2003/04; the rate for the girls however declined more sharply than for the boys. The rate for the girls continued to decline in 2004/05 while that of the boys increased. Then in 2005/06 the girls' rate climbed very sharply and surpassed the boys in that year. It then declined in 2006/07 while the boys' rate increased.

Overall though, more boys dropped out of primary school over the period 2002/03–2006/07. The National Policy and Action Plan for Gender Equity and Equality (NGPP) reveals that out-migration of one or either parent and its concomitant family disruption is one of the fundamental roots of school drop-out.

Figure 5.9 Secondary schools drop-out rates by gender, 2002/03–2006/07



Source: Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Sports and Youth Affairs, Educatio
Planning Unit Indicators 2008.

The numbers for the secondary schools suggest that there is no clear-cut trend either. More females dropped out of school in 2002/03, 2003/04 and 2005/06 compared to males. In the period 2002/03 – 2006/07, 420 males and 378 females dropped out of secondary school. Like the case with the primary schools, more males than females dropped out of secondary school.

Dominica, women in teaching, and gender equality

Women in teaching – a historical perspective

It is quite possible to link the supposedly 'female' tradition in schooling with the establishment of the early dame-schools by means of which *respectable* women took the initiative to 'accommodate' groups of children at the 'primary' level in order to instruct them in the necessaries. These schools were undoubtedly patterned on the dame schools in Britain and other English-speaking countries, which offered an early form of private elementary schooling. They were usually taught by women and often located in the home of the teacher. Dame-schools were fairly varied – some functioned mainly as day care facilities, supervised by illiterate women, while others provided their students with a good foundation in the basics.

In Dominica, women tended to preponderate in teaching because the men were very much occupied with matters of the estates, agriculture, and so on. Dr Lennox Honychurch noted that in the early twentieth century, very few professions were open to women. The only profession of status for *respectable* women was teaching. Other white-collar jobs were mainly the preserve of men, including clerks, secretaries, etc. Education was thus the avenue for *respectable* women.

Logically, as time progressed and it was resolved that education ought to be more of a secular function, there grew an urgent need for trained teachers. Prominent early male educators such as S. J. Lewis, H. L. Christian, et al., went to the Mico College in Jamaica. The Mico College was founded in 1836 through the Lady Mico Charity, one of four teacher training institutions established during this period in the British colonies. Importantly, the Mico College was established as a non-denominational Christian institution that catered both for male and female students.

The Erdiston Teachers' Training College, later established in Barbados in 1948, opened up the formal avenues for Dominican women to be trained in teaching. The curriculum offerings included Education, English, Mathematics, Social studies, Religious knowledge, Health, Physical education, Music, Home economics, Woodwork, Gardening, Visual aids and Art. By 1954, Erdiston became a regional teacher training institution. Consequently, fifteen teachers from Grenada, St Lucia, St Vincent, Montserrat, Dominica and Tortola in the British Virgin Islands were admitted. Overall, in

the 1930s to 1950s, more and more women entered the teaching profession. It is quite possible to view this period, in broad terms, as a turning point in education, although, arguably, teaching always seemed to have been reserved for females.

In 1938, the West Indies Commission led by Lord Moyne visited Dominica in order to investigate and report on conditions on the island. The findings were later published as part of the Moyne Commission Report. Some of the social and economic problems in the British colonies had much to do with the decrepit education system. Hence, according to the Moyne Commission, the conditions under which people of the British Caribbean lived were horrible. It pointed to the deficiencies in the education system, and economic and social problems of unemployment and juvenile delinquency. It was also very concerned about the use of child labour and the discrimination against women at workplaces, especially since they worked long hours for less pay than men received. The foregoing pointed to the urgent need for an efficient and organised education system.

In 1940, as a result of the Moyne Commission, the Colonial Development and Welfare Office established for the British West Indies, began to provide funding for big changes to Dominica in the form of roads, jetties, air communication, health, education and other social services. Hence more money became available around that time for training of women in education.

Even in later years, such as the 1980s, 1990s and at the turn of the twentieth century, as more and more men earned university degrees, it is quite possible that the promise widened for them in fields – more attractive to males – other than education, that is, engineering, law, medicine, accounting, and so on.[18]

Women in broader Dominican society and economy

Dominica, like other Caribbean countries, has its gender stereotypes. However, the NGPP (2005) indicates that gender roles in Dominica are not as cut-and-dried in practice. Dominica is unique to some extent in that it has a powerful legacy handed down by Dame Eugenia Charles who was, up to the time of her demise in 2005, the only Caribbean woman to have been the co-founder and leader of a major political party, to be elected as head of government, and to hold for fifteen years the offices and portfolios of prime minister, minister of finance and economic affairs, and minister of foreign affairs. This significant record of female leadership is unfortunately not reflected more broadly within the country's legislature. Between the years 2000 and 2001, no more than 6 women out of thirty Members of Parliament (inclusive of opposition and Cabinet members) could be found sitting in any one year. In 2005 only 3 women held seats (House of Parliament Records, 2005).

The media is a powerful agent of socialisation and in Dominica one observes that there is generally a relative absence of women newsmakers, analysts and commentators, including talk-show hosts. Men dominate, especially the latter grouping. Additionally, since the majority of media depend upon advertising for their survival, balanced gender considerations are often treated peripherally, if unwittingly so. Advertisements tend to perpetuate gender stereotypes.

While 'over-represented' in a sexist and perhaps exploitative way in advertisements, women are under-represented in positions of power, especially economic, social, legal and political power. They earn less than their male counterparts in the labour market,

The foregoing might be seen as a tentative explanation as it must be juxtaposed against the fact that females, especially in the 2000s decade, have evidently outnumbered men at the Caribbean's regional University, the University of the West Indies, in practically every faculty (humanities and education, social sciences, natural sciences/pure & applied sciences, law, medicine, agriculture) with the exception of engineering.

in spite of their often superior educational attainments/achievements. Although, as indicated above, Dominicans elected the first female Prime Minister in the Caribbean, women in the island have not been embraced as a group into positions of power and influence. This is unfortunate since a solid and intelligent section of the population is effectively debarred from important development matters. The NGPP (2005) is perhaps correct to argue that:

> *Gender inequalities impose large costs on the health and well-being of men, women and children and affect their ability to improve their lives. In addition, gender inequalities reduce the productivity of enterprises and lower the prospects of reducing poverty and achievement of economic progress. (p. 79)*

Data indicates that despite a high proportion of women within the teaching profession, and the higher academic achievement of women and girls overall, this does not necessarily translate into a dominance of women in the overall labour force of the country. 2001 labour force participation rates show women at 45.1, compared to men at 70.2 (Labour Force Surveys and 2001 Population Census, Government of Dominica). A closer look at the employed population by type of worker shows that men outnumber women as paid employees, although there are more unpaid female workers overall. The largest disproportion however can be seen in the statistics for employers. Of the 1,235 employers registered, 919 are male. Similarly, of the 6,047 'own account workers' in the country, over two-thirds of these are also male. This data demonstrates that not only are women less likely to be employed than men, but that – overall – they are less likely to be found in more autonomous positions within the economy (2001 Population Census), such as in the role of an employer.

Having said that however, there remains a complexity to gender relations within Dominican society and economy that undermines a blanket review of the data without looking further into both industries and occupations. When the employed population is disaggregated by type of worker the data begins to demonstrate the gender nuances that have allowed for a vocation like the teaching profession to become numerically feminised on the one hand, while men continue to dominate the workforce overall. The following table with 2001 census data illustrates some of these complexities:

Table 5.13 Employed population by occupational group

Occupational Group	Sex	1991	2001	% Of Total Employed for 2001
Legislators/Senior Officials/Managers	Women	770	958	3.9
	Men	626	721	2.9
	Total	**1396**	**1679**	**6.8**
Professionals	Women	218	416	1.7
	Men	383	499	2.0
	Total	**601**	**915**	**3.7**
Technicians and Associate Professionals	Women	1263	1505	6.1
	Men	1033	1104	4.4
	Total	**2296**	**2609**	**10.5**
Clerks	Women	1506	1864	7.5
	Men	406	515	2.1
	Total	**1912**	**2379**	**9.6**
Service (incl. Armed/Defence Force), Shop and Market Sales Workers	Women	1120	1936	7.8
	Men	827	1459	5.9
	Total	**1947**	**3395**	**13.7**
Agricultural, Forestry and Fishery Workers	Women	704	658	2.7
	Men	4960	3768	15.2
	Total	**5664**	**4426**	**17.8**
Craft and Related Workers	Women	552	548	2.2
	Men	3417	3611	14.6
	Total	**3969**	**4159**	**16.8**
Plant and Machine Operators and Assemblers	Women	42	75	0.3
	Men	976	1237	5.0
	Total	**1018**	**1312**	**5.3**
Elementary Occupations	Women	1799	1845	7.4
	Men	2627	2077	8.4
	Total	**4426**	**3922**	**15.8**
Not stated	Women	267	3	0.0
	Men	319	12	0.0
	Total	**586**	**15**	**0.1**
TOTAL all Occupational Groups	**Women**	**8241**	**9808**	**39.5**
	Men	**15574**	**15003**	**60.5**
	Total	**23815**	**24811**	**100.0**

Source: 1997, 1999 Labour Force Surveys and 1991 and 2001 Population Censuses.

While women constitute less than half of those officially employed, they are heavily concentrated in the professional and semi professional sectors. Although men are also well-represented in the first two occupational groupings in Table 5.13, the preponderance of women becomes marked as one moves down the professional scale – the role of 'clerk' for example is also arguably a statistically feminised profession. Balancing out this disproportionately is a marked absence of women in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors, also within the craft sector and among the Plant and Machine Operators/Assemblers. Having said that, it is worth noting that traditionally women in the rural areas have often been found within the informal economy and are therefore not necessarily absent from sectors such as agriculture, but rather are 'unseen' due to official statistical limitations.

Interestingly, the high numbers of women within the first banding of legislators, senior officials and managers does not accurately illustrate the relative dominance of men at the highest levels of decision-making. Data of gender-disaggregated senior level positions in government between 2000 and 2004 demonstrates that men consistently make-up over two-thirds of those positions (Personal Services Department and Office of the Prime Minister). Notably, over that five-year period there was no female Head of Public/Civil Service, and no female Commissioners of Services.

Dominica's experience includes, to a large extent, female-headed households, single parent families, women who are breadwinners and protectors, men who are eking out an existence, men and women who have as a result of dire circumstances been forced to migrate leaving their families at home, and so on (NGPP, 2005).

Qualitative and quantitative research at the school level

The Dominica Growth and Social Protection Strategy (GSPS) (2008) reveals that that there is no major difference in participation rates between boys and girls at the primary level; however, speaking to quality and perhaps more relevant issues, it makes the point that females do better than boys at the primary level. Further, at the secondary level, we have seen that girls' participation rates are higher and they also surpass boys at that level as well as at the tertiary level. Herein lies the problem that underscores the difference between quantity and quality.

There is also the very important element of the education level of the household head. The 2008 GSPS reveals that their education level was very low, with over 75 per cent of household heads not having proceeded beyond primary level and 60 per cent of households having no one with secondary or tertiary education. Hence it is possible to argue that there is a 'burdensome' backlog to be educated, coupled with the fact that the learning environments in these households may not necessarily be conducive to high achievement. There were also marked differences in all age groups in the proportions between the poor and non-poor households who have no secondary education. This was particularly considerable within the 15–19 year olds. Very few adults in poor households had the benefit of tertiary education. Hence one has to interpret with much caution the conclusion by the GSPS (2008) that the outlook is positive. Added to the foregoing, the NGPP (2005) sets out the following from its own observations of the pattern of gendered educational achievement:

- Higher repetition rates among primary school boys
- Girls outperform boys in all Common Entrance Examination[19] subjects
- Lower numeric and literacy rates for boys in grade three
- Higher repetition rates for boys at secondary schools
- Higher dropout rates among boys in secondary schools
- Lower enrolment of males in tertiary education
- Violence among under-achieving males

The above paints a rather unpromising portrait of the status of boys at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education. Is the very lopsided preponderance of females as teachers at the primary level, coupled with imbalance, albeit less, at the secondary level, sending an unequivocal message that education is a feminine matter? While employment statistics indicate that more men are employed within the economy and that a core group of males still hold key decision-making roles at the high-end of Dominican society, it can be supposed that family income stratifications and class opportunities help to mitigate any negative gender perceptions of education for the kind of individuals who pursue further education and eventually claim those roles. A larger group of Dominican males are however underachieving disproportionately compared to their female counterparts. The linkage between a statistically feminised teaching cadre and male underachievement remain hard to pin-down. However, perceptions among teachers and students themselves remain an important measurement of socio-cultural expectations and behaviours that play a role in these issues.

19 Now called the Grade Six National Assessment.

As a means of ascertaining some of these perceptions, field research was carried out involving both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. For the qualitative enquiry, seventeen respondents participated in the in-depth interviews. These consisted of: 6 female teachers; 2 male teachers; 2 female deputy principles; 4 female principals; one classroom assistant; the District Education Officer, and the President of the Dominica Association of Teachers. One of the teachers interviewed was untrained, with four years experience. Participants were drawn from a mixture of co-educational and single sex schools, both government and denominational.

This section summarises the responses received under a number of headings based on the general guidelines of the interview schedule. An attempt is made to bring to the fore the narratives gleaned from the rich dialogue between researcher and interviewees.

Matching teachers and pupils by gender: importance and reasoning

There was no unequivocal *affirmative or negative* response to the question of whether matching teachers and pupils by gender was important. In some instances, respondents tended to assume a guarded posture although they leaned towards the response "no". Herein resides the boon of open-ended questions. Many respondents opined, *"I don't think so"*; *"to some extent it is important to match …"*; *"it would not make much of a difference…"*; *"there should be no gender barriers…"*; *"this has its pros and cons…"*; and *"the boys need to identify with someone…."*

An unqualified male teacher at a co-educational school who was opposed to matching teachers and pupils as a standard practice believed that there should be exceptions to the rule, as for example, in the case of sports, where there were situations, he thought, which called for a certain level of "privacy" or "discretion". Given the physical requirements of sports, and the sometimes "awkward" physical position that the girls may have to assume in exercising, both pupils and teachers may well feel more comfortable if they were matched by gender. He made the interesting observation however that sports was more associated with males, apparently suggesting that it was more common to have male sports teachers.

In other areas of the school curriculum, more so the *hidden curriculum*, he felt that females were more understanding and they had a deeper emotional side. As an example, he offered that a female was more likely to sit and listen to a child and identify with that child. The male teachers on the other hand, although they may be genuine in showing concern, may not fully understand the needs. He thought that male teachers, however, may be better able to deal with issues specific to boys.

A graduate female teacher at a co-educational school held similar views. Her overall opinion was that matching was necessary to a certain extent. At the pre-kindergarten stage teachers had to dress them. That could prove to be embarrassing or awkward for male teachers. At a certain age, when the girls experienced their menstrual cycle (period), they became more self-conscious and aware and it was her unequivocal belief that male teachers should not be the ones to deal with those matters. In suggesting balance, she contended that in certain matters concerning even the boys themselves, the female teachers may also be uncomfortable, in spite of their supposedly 'maternal' role. She thought therefore that matching should not be something continuous but necessary at such specific ages (age groups).

In this co-educational school's principal's view, it was absolutely unnecessary to match teachers and pupils by gender. For her personally, she had a better relationship with boys and suggested that all teachers had their particular preferences, which must be discounted in terms of their approach to teaching. She firmly held that female teachers had an influence on male pupils since they tended to view her as a mother figure. This, she believed, might help them to change their attitudes from machismo or male

chauvinism to gentleness. In her experience, when a female teaches boys, the latter saw another side of femininity. She conceded that she was less sure of what particular effect male teachers might have on girls. She suggested that there could be distractions.

One qualified female teacher in a co-educational school with 23 years teaching experience had no doubt concerning her belief that pupils should be exposed to both male and female teachers. To her, both allowed for balance as they had their strengths and weaknesses:

> *There are qualities to learn from both genders. The children need a fatherly figure as well as a sensitive and gentle touch so they are balanced in their upbringing.*

A qualified female teacher (with 20 years teaching experience) in a co-educational school firmly suggested that she did not believe in matching. Arguing similarly to her counterpart quoted above, she said that the children came from homes where there were both mothers and fathers so it seemed logical to her that they should have both male and female teachers. Additionally, she argued, others came from single-parent homes and therefore it was important for those without either a mother or a father to experience the presence of female or male teachers. Her line of reasoning was that it was incumbent on the school to cater for the deficiencies at home in that regard.

A qualified male teacher was of the opinion that at the primary level, matching teachers and pupils on the basis of gender did not make much of a difference. He held that matching became significant when children commenced puberty, at about 10–11 in girls and 12 in boys. At that life stage, he said, both boys and girls were searching for identity and that phenomenon became a fundamental preoccupation in their lives. At such a time, he suggested, it may be necessary to mix and match.

The principal of an all-boys school considered that matching was good to the extent that boys needed to emulate persons of their own gender. She however believed that the boys also needed that motherly care and attention that could only come from female teachers. She proceeded to share the following anecdote:

> *I recall in a previous school that I had taught there was a class which was unruly and untidy. Then a male teacher stepped onto the scene. He was neat, he wore undershirt and dressed properly and kept his haircut tidy. Within a short space of time the boys were emulating him. Hence, when a man is a good role model it has a greater impact on the boys.*

The principal of a co-educational school who has about 25 years experience as a teacher illustrated her case for good male teachers rather than male teachers for the sake of male teachers per se with a narrative of an excellent male teacher whom she said contrasted sharply with another:

> *I have seen some good male teachers who were excellent role models. Mr John Paul[20] is one such male teacher. Students listened to him. He was a positive influence on the students, both male and female. He was consistent. There was a certain justice and fairness about him. He paid attention to all students. He was not afraid to ask the girls to comb their hair. He went beyond the boundaries of school. He would go to the homes of students to meet with their parents. He was a positive influence. Contrast Mr Paul with a male teacher we have at present who is a joker. We have to tell him how to dress. He is kind of casual. If we have work around the school to do, he will take off [absent himself]…. Mr Paul took initiative. He still visits our school occasionally.*

20 Real name not used to conceal identity and uphold confidentiality and anonymity.

Emphasising the place of professionalism and seriousness of approach rather than gender, she contends:

> *I think for most children, once they have a teacher who cares about them, who uses different strategies, that's what they want. It does not matter if they are male or female. It is who you are. It is not simply about having a male teacher; it is the quality of the teacher. I am not totally for male teachers teaching male students. As long as the teachers are committed, students look beyond male or female.*

The leader of a professional teachers' union asserted that pupils tended to say that they did not care whether their teachers were male or female, once they were good and dedicated teachers. Teachers must be professional and care about their pupils. In families, men and women were the natural phenomenon. She warned against the claim that the many ills in society were caused by there being too many female teachers and too few male teachers in the education system. She avowed that she did not want males in schools simply because they were males or to make up the numbers. They must be good teachers.

Role modelling in school. How are principals and teachers role models for pupils?

In attempting to define the term 'role model', the leader of a professional teachers' union said that she equated teaching to modelling. To her, teaching really meant introducing one's pupils to a right way of doing things. Hence, teachers' whole demeanour, deportment, what they said, what they did, spoke several volumes more than merely stating that 'I am a good person'.

Another female qualified teacher who has taught for 21 years said she was distressed that in our society, the positive role models tended to be quiet. The negative role models were the ones who got all the air play (media). She said that since many of the pupils suffer deprivation, it is the money that makes them follow role models rather than character as such. She tells the parents that they must get their children to appreciate who they are and what they have.

Arguing similarly, a male qualified teacher with 37 years teaching experience he is always conscious of his role as a teacher. For instance, he smokes but careful not to do so while at school. Indeed, as a rule, he does not leave his home with cigarettes. He merely tries to do the right thing at all times (e.g., saying *good morning, good afternoon*, etc.) and tries to inculcate that in the pupils.

Varying teaching style in accordance with pupils' gender

An unqualified male teacher with four years experience says that his guide is not gender but making his teaching appealing to both boys and girls. He accomplishes this by the activities he employs in his lessons: *"I use a lot of drawings because that appeals to the students especially the boys. Boys are more visual. I do a lot of demonstration especially for the boys (bring the actual material, e.g. floating and sinking). Girls are more cognitive; they read and remember. Boys love seeing and doing."*

Generally, the majority of respondents divulged that they did not vary their teaching styles on the basis of gender. Some conceded that they did so in special cases, for example, depending on the subject being taught as well as learning ability. The principal of a single-sex boys' school however contends:

> *Teachers should do so* [i.e., vary teaching style on the basis of gender]. *Boys are more practical; they like to use their hands; they like to feel things. A simple lecture will go down well with the girls compared to the boys. The boys get fed up or frustrated quickly.*

Part of the following comment by a principal of a co-educational school suggests a general approach, eschewing gendered approaches. She says, *"No. There is no need to do so [i.e., vary teaching style on the basis of gender]. I have not really seen any method that is appropriate for girls but not for boys. Quite possibly in what I say in the classroom, one gender might relate to it more readily than another."*

A qualified teacher with 20 years teaching experience said, *"It depends on the subject being taught. Boys tend to do better at mathematics even if they do not do well at Language. I try to use examples that boys and girls can identify with or are more accustomed to."* Likewise, a qualified teacher of 14 years experience argues:

> *I don't (vary teaching style according to gender). I merely try to use the strategies that were taught to us. I do whatever will arouse their interest. I use drama. I take them into the village. I take them to the airport. I brought them at a time when the plane was taking off. I take them to the bay front. Some had never been to those places before. After the visit, they have to write about it. Both boys and girls can identify with those places and can write about what struck them most.*

The Education Officer for the Western District is of the view that one pot does not hold all and boys are still being neglected. She is unhappy with this global approach. In her view, schools are girl centred.

Relating more to one gender or the other: personal choices

Some respondents said that they attempt to reach out to both genders equally while others said they tend to be inclined to one or the other. For instance, one male unqualified teacher said, *"I relate to both equally although some boys may say I treat the girls better and vice versa. I try to be fair."* His female colleague said:

> *I try not to but I gravitate more towards the boys. I try to pay more attention to them. Maybe trying to make up for the lack of male teachers. The reason they don't do well is because they don't get much attention. From what parents say, it seems they make a greater fuss over the girls. They say "oh he is a boy" but they insist that the girls do their work and excuse the boys as 'that's what they are supposed to do'*

Respondents appeared to have specific and arguably legitimate or logical reasons for relating to one gender or the other, besides an emotional fondness or fancy. For instance, a qualified female teacher with 23 years teaching experience said that she related more to the girls and suggested that this inclination might very well be a function of the age group. She also offered the view that girls being "more settled" and taking school more seriously may play a role in her feelings.

A principal of a co-educational school with about 25 years teaching experience said that in general, she related more to boys than to girls. She grew up relating more to boys than to girls. Her best friends were boys. She admitted that she did not notice whether she actually related more to one or the other in the context of the school. The children might be better able to notice or point that out. She said she had a little more sensitivity to the boys and tried to ensure that they never felt crushed. She indicated that she tried to allow the boys to cry when they came to her about something that hurt or troubled them. She tells them that it is okay to cry.

The Education Officer for the Western District indicated that some female teachers did not want to teach boys because they thought boys were disgusting and difficult. Some of the female teachers felt intimidated by the boys. On the other hand, one did not hear of male teachers making any such complaints. She said that she was aware of

a female teacher who exchanged one boy for two girls with her colleague, that is, she gave up one male pupil in return for two female pupils.

The professional trade union leader said that there was a lot of warming up between female teachers and female pupils and sometimes between female teachers and male pupils. Male teachers, on the other hand, spoke *hard* to the boys. They might endear them with phrases such as *"You can do much better!"* She observed that on the football/cricket field or basketball court, they hugged one another, embraced one another, jumped with one another; however that ended once they were away from the playing field. To do so was taboo.

Do pupils respond differently according to the gender of the teacher? Examples

A male qualified teacher (with almost 40 years teaching experience) doubted that the gender of teachers had anything to do with how pupils responded to teachers. In his teaching experience, he had come across some female teachers who were strict to the extent that their presence would cause the pupils to get into order. On the other hand, there were some males who were laid back and the pupils would take chances with them. He concluded that it depended on the individual teacher. Some teachers may be more experienced and trained and will probably have better management skills.

The principal of the all-boys' school believes however that some pupils respond according to the gender of the teacher, as some male teachers are more assertive than female teachers. Another principal has found that the girls did not really like the male teachers although there was one they liked who was more loving (and had more fatherly qualities). No doubt suggesting the "motherly" nature of female teachers, she said that even the boys would cuddle up with them. A qualified teacher with 20 years experience said that sometimes pupils responded to teachers on the basis of their gender. There are times when one would find male teachers who were easy-going. She gave the example of a male teacher whom the pupils did not respect because he was too easy-going. She said she found that, in general, pupils had a greater fear of male teachers, especially when they were strict.

A qualified female teacher with 23 years teaching experience agreed that pupils responded to their teachers based on the latter's gender. If pupils were talking or otherwise misbehaving and a male teacher walked into the classroom they would stop talking immediately. A female teacher, she thought, may not necessarily achieve a similar reaction from the pupils. She contended that on the whole, with a serious male teacher, the children responded better in terms of discipline; however, where there was a male teacher who was not serious, chaos would be extensive. Another qualified female teacher with 21 years teaching experience held a similar view, to some extent:

> *The boys behave better for the female teachers. The girls behave better with the male teachers. The boys are looking for a mother in the female teachers while the girls are looking for a father in the male teachers. The boys might be more afraid of and respectful towards a stern male. If it is a joker male teacher, there will be chaos. If you are a male teacher and there is nothing "male" you can bring to the boys, your presence will not have an impact. Hence, it is not the presence of males per se but males who can bring maleness to the students. A soft female teacher may not be disrespected by the boys as much as a soft male teacher.*

The principal of the rural school in the sample offers the following point of view to suggest that it depends on the individual rather than the gender as such. However, there is a bit of incongruity in what she says, suggesting a sort of anomaly between the

home and the school in the sense that males are more feared at home even though they may not actually be the punishers:

> *They look at how tough you are and once they recognise that they cannot control you, they will behave and do what they are told. You can have a softie male. My female qualified teacher is given a lot of respect compared to the male teacher. They will take more advantage over a softie female though. Children, for some reason, will take advantage of mothers compared to fathers. I am the one who does all the punishment at home yet my children would not dare do to their father what they do to me. If from Biblical days men did what was expected of them, the world would be a better place.*

It appears from the following two quotations that the respondents believe that there is a greater tendency to fear males and that a weak female is more likely to be taken advantage of by the pupils than a weak male. Hence, says the Education Officer:

> *Some students do what they like with female teachers but they respect the males. This was especially so during the days of corporal punishment. You can have some really stern female teachers who both boys and girls respect.*

The professional trade union leader makes the point rather directly:

> *If a teacher is weak, particularly when female, the students take advantage. I can tell who is in the classroom given the level of noise. If the teachers are equally weak, they are more likely to take advantage of the female.*

A female teacher with 14 years teaching experience sums it up thus: "They (pupils) feel they should be quiet in the presence of the male teacher. Maybe because of the male dominance at home."

Quantitative enquiry

In addition to the qualitative interviews described above, a quantitative approach was employed by means of the survey method employing the questionnaire instrument. The questionnaire was structured and designed to elicit specific information. Two different questionnaires were designed:

(a) Questionnaire for principals, teachers, public education officials; and
(b) Questionnaire for primary school pupils.

The types of questions or stimuli included both closed-ended (pre-coded) and open-ended (free answer), and used varying levels of scales of agreement/ disagreement customised to the different capacities of the two groups of respondents.

(a) Questionnaire for principals, deputy principals, teachers and professional trade union leader.

In the case of the principals et al., the sample comprised 42 respondents, including 35 females and 7 males, from six schools and one other organisation, the Dominica Association of Teachers (DAT). It is understood that this gender disproportionality (which reflects the numbers of female and male teachers at the primary level) potentially offers biased responses when discussing questions that pertain to gender in the teaching profession. From the foregoing numbers, it is also useful to note the following attributes regarding staff categories:

1) Teachers in training/student teachers: n = 3
2) Untrained teachers: n = 4
3) Trained teachers: n = 26

4) Deputy Principals: n = 3
5) Principals: n = 6
   Teaching experience ranged from 1 year to 40 years.

Positive and balanced overall view of gender in teaching

Respondents were asked to 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'neither agree nor disagree', 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' with 20 statements indicating attitudes towards gender in teaching. There was a mix of statements representing positive and negative statements regarding male and female teachers:

Table 5.14 Responses to questions based on positive and balanced overall view of gender in teaching

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided - Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1) The gender of teachers is irrelevant at Primary School.	10 23.8%	8 19.0%	5 11.9%	11 26.2%	8 19%
2) It is vital that both male and female teachers are recruited to Primary schools.	36 85.7%	6 14.3%	–	–	–
3) Pupils identify more readily with teachers of the same gender.	2 4.8%	17 40.5%	8 19.0%	13 31.0%	2 4.8%
4) Male teachers have a crucial part to play in fostering positive attitudes to study among young boys.	24 57.1%	17 40.5%	1 2.4%	–	–
5) More male teachers are needed as "role models" in school.	28 66.7%	12 28.6%	2 4.8%	–	–
6) Female teachers often have better communication skills than male teachers.	3 7.1%	9 21.4%	12 28.6%	17 40.5%	1 2.4%
7) The gender of teachers is irrelevant at Primary School.	10 23.8%	8 19.0%	5 11.9%	11 26.2%	8 19%
8) It is vital that both male and female teachers are recruited to Primary schools.	36 85.7%	6 14.3%	–	–	–
9) Pupils identify more readily with teachers of the same gender.	2 4.8%	17 40.5%	8 19.0%	13 31.0%	2 4.8%
10) Male teachers have a crucial part to play in fostering positive attitudes to study among young boys.	24 57.1%	17 40.5%	1 2.4%	–	–
11) More male teachers are needed as "role models" in school.	28 66.7%	12 28.6%	2 4.8%	–	–
12) Female teachers often have better communication skills than male teachers.	3 7.1%	9 21.4%	12 28.6%	17 40.5%	1 2.4%
13) Male teachers are better teachers in numerical subjects (Mathematics, Physics, etc.) compared to female teachers.	1 2.4%	12 28.6%	12 28.6%	14 33.3%	3 7.1%
14) Female teachers teach subjects like English Literature and English Language better than do male teachers.	–	16 38.1%	11 26.2%	14 33.3%	1 2.4%
15) Female teachers are generally more caring than male teachers.	4 9.5%	18 42.9%	4 9.5%	15 35.7%	1 2.4%
16) Female teachers have a harder time disciplining boys than their male colleagues.	3 7.1%	16 38.1%	5 11.9%	17 40.5%	1 2.4%
17) Female teachers make just as good 'role models' for male students as do male teachers for male students.	11 26.2%	25 59.5%	1 2.4%	4 9.5%	1 2.4%
18) The public (and parents in particular) tend to have more doubts/fears concerning male teachers who work with younger children (in particular).	–	19 45.2%	9 21.4%	12 28.6%	2 4.8%
19) Female students prefer female teachers.	1 2.4%	6 14.3%	15 35.7%	18 42.9%	2 4.8%
20) Male students prefer male teachers.	–	9 21.4%	12 28.6%	17 40.5%	4 9.5%
21) Male teachers use more sarcasm and ridicule to discipline students.	–	5 11.9%	15 35.7%	20 47.6%	2 4.8%
22) Male teachers are more severe with male students and more polite towards female students.	1 2.4%	19 45.2%	10 23.8%	9 21.4%	3 7.1%
23) Schools tend to have more doubts/fears concerning male teachers who work with younger children (in particular).	2 4.8%	8 19.0%	14 33.3%	15 35.7%	3 7.1%
24) Female teachers prefer to work with the younger students as this is more in keeping with their "maternal" instincts.	10 23.8%	20 47.6%	5 11.9%	6 14.3%	1 2.4%
25) Male teachers prefer to work with older students.	11 26.2%	16 38.1%	10 23.8%	5 11.9%	–
26) Male teachers are more likely to administer corporal punishment and use insults compared to female teachers.	1 2.4%	7 16.7%	11 26.2%	20 47.6%	3 7.1%

The percentages speak for themselves, but in summary the following patterns were notable in terms of the respondents' attitudes:

- Respondents were split over whether a teacher's gender was relevant. In Primary School, however, respondents were almost unanimous on their agreement that it is vital that both male and female teachers are recruited to primary schools;
- Agreement was also strong in the view that male teachers have a crucial part to play in fostering positive attitudes to study among young boys and that more male teachers are needed as 'role models' in school;
- However, the majority of respondents were agreed that female teachers make just as good role models for male students as do male teachers;
- Where discipline is concerned, opinion was again more or less split over whether women teachers have a harder time disciplining boys than their male colleagues, and there was no overwhelming view that that women teachers were more caring than male teachers;

Primary teaching as a balanced career for men and women

Respondents were given a similar questionnaire with a sliding scale of agreement as a means of gauging the extent that primary teaching is viewed as a balanced career for both men and women.

Table 5.15 Responses to questions around the view that primary teaching is a balanced career for men and women

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided - Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1) Primary teaching is a career equally suitable for both men and women.	25 59.5%	16 38.1%	–	1 2.4%	–
2) Primary teaching is as intellectually demanding as secondary teaching.	27 64.3%	12 28.6%	1 2.4%	2 4.8%	–
3) Primary teaching is a stressful occupation.	8 19%	20 47.6%	8 19.0%	5 11.9%	1 2.4%
4) Primary teaching involves excessive paperwork.	13 31.0%	16 38.1%	2 4.8%	11 26.2%	–
5) Increasing the number of men in primary schools will enhance the status of this sector of education/of the teaching profession.	9 21.4%	20 47.6%	11 26.2%	2 4.8%	–
6) Parents are more likely to encourage their daughters to train as primary school teachers than their sons.	9 21.4%	19 45.2%	10 23.8%	4 9.5%	–
7) Primary teaching is a well-respected career.	7 16.7%	15 35.7%	10 23.8%	9 21.4%	1 2.4%
8) Secondary school teachers are regarded more highly in society than their primary school counterparts.	9 21.4%	22 52.4%	8 19.0%	2 4.8%	1 2.4%
9) Men enter primary school teaching because it provides them with a rapid means of career advancement (e.g. more likely to become the Principal than their female colleagues in primary school).	5 11.9%	9 21.4%	13 31.0%	13 31.0%	2 4.8%
10) Primary teachers are reasonably paid for the work they do.	24 57.1%	13 31.0%	–	5 11.9%	–
11) Secondary teacher training courses often attract better qualified applicants than primary teacher training courses.	2 4.8%	19 45.2%	12 28.6%	7 16.7%	2 4.8%
12) Primary teaching provides men and women with the same opportunities for promotion.	4 9.5%	23 54.8%	8 19.0%	7 16.7%	–
13) Men who teach at primary schools are somehow considered less 'masculine' than their counterparts at secondary schools.	–	8 19%	9 21.4%	18 42.9%	7 16.7%
14) Primary school teaching is viewed by the public as closer to the domestic duty of childcare and therefore it is to be done by women.	2 4.8%	19 45.2%	5 11.9%	12 28.6%	4 9.5%
15) Men are less likely to view teaching as a long-term profession for them since other careers are more attractive.	21 50%	15 35.7%	3 7.1%	3 7.1%	–
16) Men are more likely to take other jobs (e.g. teaching at secondary schools) since Primary teaching may mean that they will earn less than their wives or partners.	17 40.5%	16 38.1%	7 16.7%	2 4.8%	–

The following patterns were notable in terms of the respondents' attitudes:

- The majority of respondents agreed that primary teaching is a career equally suitable for both men and women, however, of those who responded the majority felt that men who teach at primary schools are somehow considered less 'masculine' than their counterparts at secondary schools;
- While the majority agreed that is as intellectually demanding as secondary teaching, there was no unanimity over whether secondary teaching training courses attracted better qualified applicants;
- However, while more respondents agreed than disagreed that primary teaching is a well respected career, at least 23 per cent were undecided, and when asked whether secondary school teachers were more highly regarded in society, almost three quarters were in agreement;
- The majority agreed that parents are more likely to encourage their daughters to train as primary school teachers than their sons, and about half of the respondents felt that primary teaching is viewed by the public as being closer to the domestic duty of childcare and therefore should be done by women;
- The vast majority agreed that men are both a) less likely to view teaching as a long term profession and b) are more likely to leave primary teaching for other jobs (e.g. secondary teaching) as primary teaching may mean that they earn less than their wives or partners.

(b) Questionnaire for pupils of primary schools

The sample size executed was 334 primary school pupils in grades 5 and 6 (ages 9–11) from across 6 schools. Of this number 145 of the pupils were female, constituting 43 percent of the sample. In 2008/2009 (the latest figures available from the Education Planning Unit), there were a higher percentage of boys vis-à-vis girls at primary school as well as a higher percentage of grade 6 vis-à-vis grade 5 pupils. The present sample reflects the foregoing disparity.

Total Sample (N = 334); Female (n = 145) versus Male (n = 189) Samples

The pupils were offered three options or responses for each question: Yes, No or Unsure. The researcher believed that this answer structure was simpler than the Likert scale structure, given the age of the pupils. The section presents the findings for the total sample (N = 334), as well as disaggregation on the basis of gender – female (n = 145) and male (n = 189) pupils. It is important to note that all female pupils in this study's sample belonged to co-educational schools while the male pupils belonged to both co-educational (n = 113) and single-sex (n = 76) schools.

Is the gender of teachers important at primary school?

This question sought to discover the pupils' perception of the importance to them of the element of teachers' gender at primary school. A slight majority of pupils (n = 176 or 52.7 per cent) believed that the teachers' gender was not important at primary school. Note that a larger percentage of male pupils compared to female pupils held that view.

It is important for both male and female teachers to be employed at primary schools

This statement sought to discover the pupils' view of the desirability of having teachers of both genders at the primary school level. Most pupils (n = 277 or 82.9 per cent) believed that both male and female teachers should be employed at their schools.

Pupils identify more easily with teachers of the same gender

In this case, the question elicited the pupils' view of whether or not they identified more readily with teachers of their gender, that is, did male and female pupils identify more naturally with male and female teachers respectively? The majority of pupils (n = 187 or 56 per cent) said they did not identify more naturally with teachers of their own gender; 129 (or 38.6 per cent) said they did. Eighteen (5.4 per cent) pupils were unsure.

A larger percentage of girls were therefore agreeing that pupils identify more easily with teachers of the same gender, while a larger percentage of boys rejected the notion that pupils identified more easily with teachers of the same gender.

Male teachers have an important part to play in encouraging positive attitudes to study among young boys

About two-thirds of the sample (n = 223 or 66.8 per cent) believed that male teachers had an important role to play in encouraging positive attitudes to study among young boys;

A near even percentage of female (66.2 per cent or n = 96) and male (67.2 per cent or n = 127) pupils were in agreement with the statement that male teachers had an important part to play in encouraging positive attitudes to study among young boys.

More male teachers are needed as 'role models' in primary schools

There was almost an even response to this question with those responding affirmatively (n = 154 or 46.1%) falling about 4 percentage points below the 50 per cent mark. A slender majority (n = 173 or 51.8 per cent) did not believe that more male teachers were needed as "role models" in primary schools. There were differences in opinion between boys and girls with regard to this item, while the majority of girls (n = 85 or 58.6 per cent) differ from that statement, the majority of boys (n = 97 or 51.3 per cent) concurred with the statement

Female teachers often have better communication skills than male teachers

Nearly two-thirds of the sample (n = 217 or 65 per cent) believed that female teachers often had better communication skills than male teachers. A larger percentage of girls (71.7% or n = 104) compared to boys (59.8 per cent or n = 113) agreed that female teachers often had better communication skills than male teachers.

Male teachers are better teachers in mathematics compared to female teachers

Slightly over half of the sample (n = 183 or 54.8 per cent) did not agree that males were better teachers in mathematics compared to female teachers. Just about two-thirds (66.9 per cent or n = 97) of the girls did not accept that male teachers were better teachers in mathematics compared to female teachers; on the other hand, 47.1 per cent (n = 89) of the boys agreed that male teachers were better teachers in mathematics compared to female teachers.

Female teachers teach subjects like English Language better than male teachers

The majority of pupils, nearly three-quarters of the sample (n = 234 or 70.1 per cent) believed that female teachers taught subjects like English Language better than male teachers, while 82 (or 24.6 per cent) did not believe so. Eighteen (5.4 per cent) pupils were unsure. Both girls (n = 109 or 75.2 per cent) and boys (n = 125 or 66.1 per cent) were of the opinion that female teachers taught subjects like English Language better than male teachers.

Female teachers are more caring than male teachers

Most of the sample of pupils (n = 212 or 63.5 per cent) believed that female teachers were more caring than male teachers; just under one-third (32 per cent or n = 107) did

not accept that female teachers were more caring than male teachers. A larger percentage of boys (65.1 per cent or n = 123) compared to girls (61.4 per cent or n = 89) held the view that female teachers were more caring than male teachers.

Female teachers have a harder time disciplining boys than male teachers

Over half the sample (n = 182 or 54.5 per cent) believed that female teachers had a harder time disciplining boys than male teachers. A significant 140 (41.9 per cent) however did not share the foregoing belief while 12 (3.6 per cent) were indecisive.

Male pupils were more or less equally divided on this item. Ninety-one (48.1 per cent) boys did not believe that female teachers had a harder time disciplining boys than male teachers; however, 90 (47.6 per cent) boys were in agreement with the view that female teachers had a harder time disciplining boys than male teachers. The difference in both percentage and real terms is small. Interestingly, most female pupils (n = 92 or 63.4 per cent) believed that female teachers had a harder time disciplining boys than male teachers. One-third (33.8 per cent or n = 49) did not agree.

Female teachers are good role models for boy children

A little over half of the sample (n = 173 or 51.8 per cent) accepted as true that female teachers were good role models for boy children. Both female (n = 76 or 52.4 per cent) and male (n = 97 or 51.3 per cent) pupils agree in comparable measure that female teachers were good role models for boy children.

Pupils trust male teachers as much as they trust female teachers

One hundred and eighty (or 53.9 per cent) respondents believed that pupils trusted male teachers as much as they trusted female teachers; 139 (or 41.6 per cent) did not consider this to be true. In percentage terms, both girls (n = 77 or 53.1 per cent) and boys (n = 103 or 54.5 per cent) concurred on this item.

Female pupils prefer female teachers

This was a very direct question that contained no ambiguity and did not leave much room for interpretation other than what it states prima facie. Almost three-quarters (71.6 per cent or n = 239) of the total sample felt that female pupils preferred female teachers.

Male pupils prefer male teachers

This question, the corresponding male item to the one above concerning preference by female pupils for female teachers did not yield comparable results favouring male teachers. Indeed, just about half (49.7 per cent or n = 166) of the total sample (which was made up of a majority of male pupils) believed that male pupils preferred male teachers. With this item (male pupils vis-à-vis male teachers), there was more hesitancy compared to the comparable item regarding female pupils and female teachers. Roughly half (51 per cent or n = 74) of the female pupils and 48.7 per cent (n = 92) of the male pupils felt that male pupils preferred male teachers.

Male teachers criticise pupils more than female teachers

The majority of respondents (n = 204 or 61.1 per cent) did not concur with the view that male teachers criticised pupils more than female teachers. Both female and male pupils did not concur with the view that male teachers criticised pupils more than female teachers. However, a larger percentage of male pupils believed that male teachers criticised pupils more than female teachers.

Male teachers are harsher with male pupils and more polite towards female pupils

Just about half of the respondents (50.6 per cent or n = 169) were in agreement with the view that male teachers were harsher with male pupils and more polite towards female pupils; 155 (or 46.4 per cent) disagreed while 10 (3 per cent) were undecided.

Pupils prefer female teachers to work with them as they get that motherly love from them

Most respondents, over three-quarters of the total sample (n = 256 or 76.6 per cent) agreed that pupils preferred female teachers to work with them as they received that motherly love from them.

Older pupils prefer male teachers to teach them

A little below half of the respondents (n = 161 or 48.2 per cent) did not agree that older pupils preferred male teachers to teach them while 39.5 per cent (n = 132) believed so. A relatively large number (n = 41 or 12.3 per cent) were unsure or hesitant in offering a definitive opinion.

The male and female pupils were at odds on this item. Eighty-four (or 57.9 per cent) girls did not agree that older pupils preferred male teachers to teach them while 49.2 per cent (n = 93) of boys believed that older pupils preferred male teachers to teach them. Less than half (40.7 per cent or n = 77) of the boys did not believe that older pupils preferred male teachers to teach them; 39 (26.9 per cent) girls accepted the view that older pupils preferred male teachers to teach them.

I am more afraid of male teachers than I am of female teachers

Although representing just a little over half of the total sample, the majority of respondents (n = 181 or 54.2 per cent) did not concur with the item, *"I am more afraid of male teachers than I am of female teachers."*

My school should have more male teachers

The responses to this item were more or less even in percentage terms as opposed to real numbers. Just a little more than half of the respondents (51.8 per cent or n = 173) felt that their school should have more male teachers. Boys agreed with this statement more than girls.

Discussion and implications

Through its inter-method triangulation, both qualitative and quantitative, the empirical research has yielded rich data. While quantitative data tend to be more straightforward and uncomplicated in terms of what they present to the researcher and general audience, qualitative data must be carefully pondered since what they contain is not always obvious prima facie. The preceding does not mean that it is not necessary to decode quantitative data since 'statistics do not speak for themselves'. The focus will be on seeking to isolate the main points emerging from the extensive qualitative data while trying to grasp the main trends yielded by the quantitative data.

On matching teachers and pupils by gender, generally, respondents are doubtful about the wisdom of this. There appears to be a sense that it is not possible to be too prescriptive in this matter. Parry (2000) might be interpreted as cautioning that gender differences more often than not are indicative of cultural biases and ought not to be 'embellished' to the extent that they mask what is practical. It is quite possible to argue that in the real world pupils must encounter males and females and therefore to match them creates a much rehearsed or managed scenario. Indeed, there is also a more

distinct possibility of perpetuating stereotypical notions in a male teacher-to-male pupil or female teacher-to-female pupil setting, as opposed to a mixed setting. Although specifically referring to a secondary school environment, Parry's (2000) observation that males who teach tend to be situated within 'traditional' male subjects and unwittingly assume a gender-constrained posture thus perpetuating strong stereotypes, may also be applied to the primary level, albeit tentatively.

To all intents and purposes then, the foregoing may lead male or female teachers to make gender-specific assumptions in either pure male or pure female classrooms that can undermine attempts at gender neutrality. Evans (2001) implies the foregoing when she says, "Although boys and girls follow the same formal curriculum, there may be subtle differences in the messages that they pick up from that curriculum. For example, at the primary level, they may receive biased portrayals of men and women and boys and girls" (p. 136). Morris (2004) concurs, emphasising the significant influence of the informal or hidden curriculum, "the implicit messages that students receive from their interactions with teachers…" (p. 87). It is being suggested here that in the light of what respondents have said in the present study, such is more likely to occur with exact gendered-matching. Specifically, the results from the pupil survey reveal that teacher gender is not important; that teachers of both genders must be employed at primary schools; and that pupils do not necessarily identify more naturally with teachers of their own gender. All of this is well summarised by a qualified female teacher in a co-educational primary school thus:

> *… I feel there should be no gender barriers. One has to consider parenting. There ought to be fathers and mothers. Some children have never seen a father or mother so the school should cater for that. Granted, there might be a need for gender-specific instructions, e.g., for certain skills, auto mechanics. This however is no longer so. We don't want to stereotype.*

And, says a principal:

> *I think for most children, once they have a teacher who cares about them, who uses different strategies, that's what they want. It does not matter if they are male or female. It is who you are.*

On teachers as role models, the present results agree that, "Teacher recruitment should target both male and female role models who present appropriate positive and non-sexist approaches to education" (Parry, 2000, p. 63). The pupils, whether taken as a totality or disaggregated by gender are unequivocal in their stance: that both male and female teachers need to be employed at primary schools. Hence, to do otherwise, as Parry (2000) suggests, is indeed a source of concern. Figueroa (2004) asserts:

> *The feminisation of the teaching profession has been part of a process that has seen a dramatic fall in levels of pay and, with them, in the status of the profession. As males leave the profession, education increasingly appears to boys as a "woman thing"…The absence of role models and the sit-still-and-listen methods of teaching, along with the chauvinist attitudes of the boys, put them at great disadvantage.* (p. 152)

Respondents are not consistently fixated or obsessed about having male teachers per se. The pupils, taken as a whole, are almost equally balanced in terms of their desire to have more male teachers at their schools and indeed slightly less of them believe that more male teachers are needed as "role models". Male pupils however would like to see more male teachers as role models but in percentage terms, such males do not

far outnumber their other male counterparts. Female pupils do not believe more male teachers are needed as role models.

What must be noted here however is the strength of teachers, as role models, in terms of the influence they might have on pupils' general socialisation. The role model "assignment", from respondents' point of view, is broad and encapsulates a wide gamut as indicated in Chapter 3. There is a sensibility that this can be fulfilled by both male and female teachers.

Evans (2001) sheds light on the matter of classroom management as well as teaching styles by implication. In reviewing previous studies in her book, "Inside Jamaican Schools", she said that teachers appeared to pay more attention to and interacted more with girls but tried to encourage and motivate the boys. This interaction between teachers and pupils was sufficiently glaring to be observed by the pupils who in turn admitted that teachers in fact treated boys and girls differently. The pupils seemingly took it for granted that boys received more harsh and unfair treatment compared to girls. Interestingly, the pupils differentiated between interactions in terms of instruction (teaching) and interaction in terms of behaviour (management). The pupils conceded that in both situations, boys were unjustly treated. Evans, citing Keith (1976), Evans (1988, 1991) and Parry (1995) has concluded *that, "... in Jamaican schools girls are more likely than boys to like school, to be given more positive evaluations and have positive interactions with the teacher, to be seen as more well behaved, and be given more responsibility in the classroom"* (p. 138). Parry (2000) concurs, asserting that, *"The use of educationally harmful strategies of verbal disciplining, such as sarcasm and ridicule, is justified by the belief of many (untrained inexperienced) teachers that boys are more resilient and less sensitive than females"* (p.66).

In the present study, the respondents generally said that they do not vary their teaching styles on the basis of gender; however, some disclosed that it is almost inevitable that teachers would adjust their teaching styles to suit their pupils' gender. The researcher sensed that varying teaching styles according to gender was solely to accommodate the students – boys in particular – rather than to discriminate. This is illustrated by one teacher who observed that the boys do not like to read aloud so she does not force it upon them, lest they feel uncomfortable and inadequate. Instead she gives them advanced notice so that they are not taken by surprise. She does not perceive this as being discriminatory or even unfair advantage in favour of the boys.

The Education Officer admits that principals and teachers are more likely to treat the boys harshly even as they are lenient with the girls. The quantitative results cast some doubt on this view. A larger percentage of boys compared to girls believe that female teachers are more caring than male teachers and boys are equally split on the matter of female teachers having a harder time disciplining boys compared to male teachers. The boys however feel that male teachers are harsher with male pupils and more polite towards female pupils (see following section).

The results from the survey among pupils are interesting for what they reveal regarding the question of whether pupils respond differently depending on the gender of the teacher, and vice versa. Taking both male and female pupils collectively, it is observed that they were just about equally divided on the view that male teachers were harsher with male pupils and more polite towards female pupils. What is worrying however is that a fairly large (almost half) percentage believed otherwise. When disaggregated by gender, it is clear that boys believe that there is definitely "favouritism" in that regard. Parry (2000) anticipates this:

> *Educators should be sensitive to the type of verbal disciplinary strategies that they use. At present, some (particularly untrained and inexperienced teachers) are unaware of the*

sensitivity of both male and female pupils. Insensitive strategies of verbal discipline (sarcasm and ridicule) are detrimental to the educational performances of all pupils (p. 64).

Perhaps also offering some insight into this area, the researcher learnt that both boys and girls prefer female teachers to work with them as they received that motherly love from them. But both boys and girls are saying that they are not more intimidated by male teachers vis-à-vis female teachers. That may be so but the results show that a fair number are. Pupils are also not very committed in percentage terms regarding the question of having more male teachers. Boys believe there should be but girls do not agree. Again it must not be forgotten that most pupils (n = 277 or 82.9 per cent) believe that both male and female teachers should be employed at their schools and both girls (n = 77 or 53.1 per cent) and boys (n = 103 or 54.5 per cent) agree that pupils trust male teachers as much as they trust female teachers. At best, there are some inconclusive findings, no doubt due to a bit of ambivalence on the part of the pupils. It is perhaps useful to repeat what one teacher said during the in-depth interviews in that regard, suggesting *different strokes for different folks*:

The boys behave better for the female teachers. The girls behave better with the male teachers. The boys are looking for a mother in the female teachers while the girls are looking for a father in the male teachers. The boys might be more afraid of and respectful towards a stern male. If it is a joker male teacher, there will be chaos. If you are a male teacher and there is nothing "male" you can bring to the boys, your presence will not have an impact. Hence, it is not the presence of males per se but males who can bring maleness to the students. A soft female teacher may not be disrespected by the boys as much as a soft male teacher.

The pupils themselves reveal their preferences. Almost three-quarters of the female pupils and a slightly smaller percentage of the male pupils felt that female pupils preferred female teachers. There is less certainty with regard to boys preferring male teachers. Roughly half of the female pupils and nigh on half of the male pupils feel that male pupils prefer male teachers. This suggests that there are a large number of pupils who do not believe that male pupils prefer male teachers. Figueroa's (2004) revelation is didactic:

For those teachers who seek to discipline the boys there is evidence that they adopt far more brutal methods than they would apply to girls. Such teachers are far more likely to punish boys, and in doing so are far more likely to apply the strap. Combined with this tendency is a sometimes separate and equally pernicious one: teachers, so much under pressure from large classes and lack of facilities, often do not even try to instil discipline in boys, taking it for granted that they will be bad. (p. 151)

Morris's (2004) own findings reveal a similar scenario, she suggesting that, *"Teachers seem to have internalised traditional gender stereotypes so that boys are thought to be physically stronger and more troublesome and as a result they need to be punished more severely"* (p. 88). Evans (2001) is blunt when she asserts that, based on her evidence, boys do receive *"harsher treatment than girls, and that (female) teachers show preferential treatment toward girls"* (p. 141).

On "relating more to one gender or another" through education, it appears that most respondents believe that, all other things being equal, a mixture of boys and girls in classrooms (co-education) is closer to reality and allows for more dynamism in their approach to teaching. This is not to say that teachers do not have preferences; they are

quick to point out that they deliberately try not to allow these preferences to emerge and where there are preferences, these might have originated from them having children or siblings of a particular gender. This suggests that socialisation practices at home or outside the classroom are sometimes unwittingly repeated within the classroom. What is interesting is the consistency between the findings in the present study and the literature (Evans, 2001; Figueroa, 2004; Morris, 2004; Parry, 2000). There is an expectation that girls will behave better than boys and in so doing an almost subtle and sometimes not-so-subtle self-fulfilling prophecy arises. Parry (2000) sums this up thus:

> *Male and female teachers … used adjectives like 'attentive', 'applied', 'serious' and 'encouraging' to describe female pupils' attitudes to classroom work and adjectives like 'lazy', 'disruptive' and 'noisy' to describe the male pupils' attitudes to work. (p. 26)*

In all of this, what captures one's attention is when teachers, females in particular, proceed to say that the girls hold grudges and the like for a very long time whereas the *boys get up, dust themselves off and move on*. Parry (2000) found that teachers in Jamaica, Barbados and St Vincent preferred to teach males compared to females. Indeed, a female teacher in rural Jamaica had described girls as *"masters of deception"* (p. 26).

Recall in the present study, one principal of a coeducational school admitted that she seems to have a greater liking for the boys because they are more loving; they are more likely to say hello to their old (former) teachers when they encounter them in public and more boys will return to school to look for their former teachers. Another principal agreed, saying that she was closer to the girls although when they (girls) got older, her preference changed towards the boys. The girls, she said, did not seem to be as loving afterwards. It seems teachers could not detach what occurred inside the classroom from what occurred outside.

Recommendations

A number of relevant recommendations have emerged directly from the findings of this study. There is much that has been revealed throughout the narrative from the qualitative aspects of the research and the data produced from the quantitative study. Hence, there is much information that can be gleaned by the interested reader that has not specifically been stated within the recommendations.

1) There is a role for both male and female teachers at primary schools (e.g., male teachers have a crucial part to play in fostering positive attitudes to study among young boys; as role models, etc.) and as such, recruitment processes should be directed accordingly, both at the school and ministerial (policy) levels. This includes policies and practices that attract good quality teachers, especially males who are inclined to seek employment in other more financially rewarding/lucrative sectors.
2) Male and female teachers have separate as well as interlinked roles and school leadership and management practices ought to take these on board in delegating and assigning work. This should not be prescriptive as much as creative; that is, by constant monitoring of individual talents, both formal and informal roles must be assigned, being mindful of gender stereotypes.
3) Primary teaching is a career equally suitable for females and males and to that end, there does not appear to be any strong cultural taboo that should make males feel that their masculinity is diminished if they become primary school teachers. Indeed, it is considered intellectually demanding and the perception is that it offers both males and females the opportunity for promotion or career advancement. The recommendation is that there needs to be a public campaign that popularises and

enhances the image of primary school teaching to males. The present study's results from Pearson's reveals that the more positive and balanced the overall view is of gender in teaching, the more likely will primary teaching be considered a balanced career for men and women.

4) Notwithstanding the above specific gender-sensitive recommendations, it is to be noted that respondents (teachers, principals and pupils) appeared to be suggesting that while male presence at primary schools is important, it was not that presence per se that accounted for much when all was said and done. Rather, it was having excellent, trained, conscientious and respectable teachers, whether male or female, who did not harbour gendered stereotypes and could approach their duties professionally and treat students fairly and with dignity. The foregoing is recommended as the kinds of professional ethical skills that must be emphasised in teacher training programmes as well as continuous career development programmes.
5) It must be emphasised to male teachers their fundamental role in encouraging positive attitudes towards study among male pupils. Excellent role models such as Mr John Paul must be seen to be rewarded for his level of professionalism even while it is emphasised that his example must be followed by both female and male teachers and that the bigger reward is the positive effect his teaching and pastoral care has on both male and female pupils.
6) Pupils believe that female teachers often have better communication skills than male teachers. In addition, pupils also believe that female teachers teach subjects like English Language better than male teachers. Linked to this is – notwithstanding the differences between boys and girls – the finding that generally pupils do not accept that male teachers are better at teaching mathematics compared to female teachers. It is not surprising that pupils believe that female teachers are better at communication and other verbal skills than male teachers in the light of the fact that as boys, male teachers may well have experienced the very same socialisation processes that authors such as Evans (2001), Figueroa (2004), Morris (2004), Parry (2000), et al. speak of. This socialisation does violence to their verbal facility.
7) The female pupils in particular believe that female teachers have a harder time disciplining boys than male teachers and a fair number of boys (almost 50 per cent) believe so as well. Indeed some teachers and principals in this study suggested that this was the case. It therefore means that the necessary structures must be established within primary schools to minimise whatever sensibility of intimidation and insecurity that female teachers might feel in disciplining pupils. This must be clearly defined at the micro- and macro-level.
8) There is also the important consideration of the perceived harsher treatment meted out to boys by male teachers. This has been discussed at some length above. It is simply worth recommending here that there should be measures to ensure sensitivity in that regard. Several previous studies have dwelt upon this issue.

The foregoing may well show what students value in teachers besides gender as such. It is recommended that the way boys vis-à-vis girls are trained at school must be revisited. This has implications for what boys value in education and perhaps the extent to which they value education in itself. Figueroa's (2004) discussion about *"The assertion of manliness, with its macho value of toughness,* [including] … *the rejection of English as a more refined, softer, 'feminine' form of communication"* points exactly to this unfortunate phenomenon. There are obvious implications for teacher education but also, which is a more nebulous and larger problem, for male and female socialisation at home. One is not discrete from the other.