

9 Sri Lanka Dr Upali M. Sedere

Background: the status of women in Sri Lanka

Sri Lankan women exercised universal franchise as early as 1932, and equal access to free education and health services came into effect in the 1940s. These have had already contributed to gender equality in some spheres of life of Sri Lankan women. With the majority of the population (70 per cent) being Buddhists, there was an even a longer heritage and cultural tradition of gender equality in Sri Lanka. In the Buddhist religion the women's clergyhood was established during the time of the Lord Buddha. Though various cultural practices and the influences of other cultures suppressed the women not allowing her to enjoy the full freedom as of men, the embedded Buddhist ideology always accepted the principle of gender equity. Sri Lanka has claimed the honour of electing the first woman prime minister in the world in 1960 – Mrs Srima Bandaranayake. This landmark came in the wake of a long-established principle of equity in Buddhist culture, further backed by three decades of electing women politicians to the parliament. To date, Mrs Bandaranayake has been the longest serving Prime Minister in Sri Lanka.

It was not long after, in 1978 that constitutional provision provided equal rights without discrimination on the grounds of sex and women had equal rights under the law. However, Sri Lanka's multi-ethnic and multi-religious composition has meant that family and community laws have continued to contain discriminatory provisions in varying degrees concerning marriage, divorce, property, and financial transactions. Women have been denied equal rights to land in state-assisted settlements. Labour legislation conforms to international practice but enforcement is relatively weak, and informal sector workers, many of whom are women, do not benefit from labour laws. The amendments to the Penal Code in 1995 and 1998 and the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act 2005 have strengthened legislation, yet the problems remain to a lesser degree in certain communities.

Thus, while Sri Lankan women enjoy a relatively better status than women in many other developing countries, they have not yet achieved full gender equality or empowerment as per the provisions of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and some of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). According to the United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) Human Development Report 2006, Sri Lanka's gender development index (GDI) in 2004 was 0.749, compared with the human development index of 0.755, but the gender empowerment measure was only 0.372 (ADB 2008). This shows that gender parity is yet to be achieved in many quarters of life. By 2009 the UNDP Human Development Report gives the HPI-1 value of 16.8 per cent for Sri Lanka, ranks 67th among 135 countries for which the index has been calculated. Further, the report states that Sri Lanka's GDI value, 0.756 should be compared to its HDI value of 0.759. Its GDI value is 99.6 per cent of its HDI value. Out of the 155 countries with both HDI and GDI values, 35 countries have a better ratio than Sri Lanka's (UNDP Human Development Report 2009).

Although the subject of this study – Sri Lankan women's high representation in the teaching profession – is an indication of both their educational achievements and ability to access an established occupation, there is overall more unemployment amongst the women and gender disparity in certain jobs that favour men. This is partly due to gender stereotypes in jobs. However, today there are more females entering traditionally male fields such as commerce and accounting, banking, medicine, law etc. Entry into the

engineering field is also increasing, yet remains firmly dominated by men. The system of education provides equal opportunity to girls and boys and the coeducation system also has enabled girls and boys to compete under the same school roof.

The education system

Sri Lanka as an Island nation in South Asia has been one of the better performing education systems amongst the developing nations. Sri Lanka's has a free education system that was introduced as early as in 1944, before independence from the British. The early start on free education as well as vernacular media of instruction enabled Sri Lanka to achieve universal primary education as early as 1980. The present free education system offers free schooling, free textbooks, school uniforms, mid-day meals and free school transport from Grade 1 through Grade 11. The system of education is 13 years of general education; Grade 1 through 13 and Grade one entry age is 5 years. The medium of instruction in primary school is the mother tongue and Sri Lanka being a plural society with two major ethnic groups Sinhala and Tamil are considered the vernacular media of instruction. English is an official language and minority populations other than Sinhala and Tamil offer education in English medium. Beyond Grade six a child could follow bilingual instruction in either Sinhala and English or Tamil and English. Grades 1 – 5 is designated as Primary School, Grade 6 – 11 as Junior Secondary phase leading to General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level (GCE OL), and Grade 12 – 13 leading to General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (GCE AL). Compulsory education is declared as Grade 1 – 9 and is to be raised to Grade 11 – (GCE OL), under a new policy. At the end of Grade 13 with GCE AL qualification students seek admission to university. Students leaving at GCE OL and AL can join the vocational training and other professional/vocational schools such as colleges of education, nursing schools, and agricultural schools etc. Beside the public education system a parallel private education system exists. The school dropout rates and grade repetition rates are very low, around 1.2 per cent and < 1 per cent respectively. 98 per cent complete the primary cycle and 89 per cent enters the secondary cycle and 85 per cent goes all the way to GCE OL and 55 per cent sit for the GCE AL. Gender parity is found at every level. However from Grade one to GCE AL gradually the enrolment is higher for girls than boys. The enrolment in vocational schools is rather low as every child is aiming to enter university education. The recent educational reforms promote the vocational training stream as a parallel stream to universities. The numbers in the professional schools such as schools of nursing and colleges of education are catering more to females. Over 80 per cent of women are currently enrolled in the colleges of education and over 90 per cent are women are in the schools of nursing.

Sri Lanka is one of the higher performance nations in the field of human resource development very much focused on the EFA and Millennium Development goals. The UNDP Report between 1980 and 2010 noted that Sri Lanka's HDI rose by 0.8 per cent annually from 0.513 to 0.658 today, which gives the country a rank of 91 out of 169 countries with comparable data. The HDI of South Asia as a region increased from 0.315 in 1980 to 0.516 today, placing Sri Lanka above the regional average (UNDP 2010).

Methodology

This study is largely based on the re-analysis of primary data collected through the School Census Data of the Ministry of Education. The data reported were never analysed on these lines before and a re-analysis was carried out of the available as well as comparable data from 2001 to 2009. The School Census before that has not been collected on the same variables therefore only comparable data is analysed. The data reported for the years earlier than 2009 are secondary data taken from the published documents. The most recent available data is the School Census 2009.

The statistical analysis examined the provincial and district-wide female teacher estimates, along with analysis of qualifications and school subjects. In addition to teachers, school principal and manager gender trends were also examined.

Two focus group discussions were also held. The first involved a sample of thirty Managers and Sri Lanka Education Administrative Service personnel; the second involved a sample of 36 teachers and 10 teacher educators. Results of the focus group discussions were used for interpreting and explaining of the factors affecting the observed situation.

Feminisation of the teaching profession in Sri Lanka: analysis of trends and patterns

Sri Lanka has a long tradition of having more female teachers in the public school system (Jayaweera 2008). Table 9.1 shows that in the year 1971 the female percentage in the teaching profession was 53.4 per cent. This gradually increased and passed the 60 per cent by 1985 and passed the 70 per cent by 2005. Today there are 71 per cent female teachers in the primary and secondary sub-sectors. The percentage-wise distribution varies from an administrative district to another, yet all districts show over 55 per cent female teachers.

Table 9.1 Percentage of female teachers in public schools, 1971–2009

Year	1971	1985	1992	2000	2005	2009
% of Female Teachers	53.4%	61.20%	67.30%	69%	69.30%	71%

In the District of Colombo the percentage increased from 78 per cent in 1996 to 81 per cent in 2009. The same trend is seen in all three districts and this is further illustrated in the next section of this paper.

The historical perspective of this development is the gradual expansion of education for all started in 1939 during the rule of the British and the Ministerial Portfolio of Education was in the hand of the elected state councillors who were Sri Lankans. The debate had two important dimensions. One is to what extent free education was to be offered and the other was the place of vernacular media of instruction at a time of English rule. This debate went on until the 1947 Ordinance and compulsory education was fixed at 14 years. Free education continued all the way to University level. Vernacular media and bilingual policy had many different operational policies and practices. In October 1945 the primary school medium became Sinhala and Tamil with no option of an English medium. The post-primary medium was optional English or bi-lingual and this policy continued until January 1953. In 1953, English medium was removed from Grade VI and gradually at other grade levels in the respective years. In December 1956 the English option was removed and even the High School Certificate (HSC) was also made available in vernacular media (Jayasuriya 1969). These policy changes always brought greater equity and opened the door for rural children and girls to overcome conservative cultural practices at that time. At the time of independence from the British Sri Lanka had only 3,091 schools with 1.17 million students enrolled and 32,700 teachers; one university (University of Ceylon) with 1600 students, 200 of whom graduated annually (Central Bank 1998). In 1953, the rate of literacy was 69 per cent, and 55.5 per cent for females. The literacy level rose to over 90 per cent by 1991 (Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka 1995); Central Bank of 1998). In 1960 the government took over the management of private schools and this addressed a long established elitism in education. During the 1960–1966 period the government placed high priority

to the expansion of education to the rural areas. Of the 9,665 schools today in Sri Lanka, over 4,500 schools were built during this period and also expanded the secondary education to the rural areas by establishing and up-grading primary schools to secondary level (Maha Vidiyalayas). Further, in 1970 Sri Lanka changed its Constitution and its name from Ceylon to Sri Lanka and established a Socialist Democratic Republic. In 1972 curriculum and teacher education reforms also created a new demand for teachers. The University of Colombo and University of Vidiyalankara (now Kelaniya University) started a new Bachelor of Education degree with over 1500 undergraduates to meet the increasing demand for teachers. There were over 70 per cent females in this new batch of undergraduates entered the B.Ed. degree program to become teachers. In 1980 another round of reforms were introduced and 18 Colleges of Education were set up to provide the increasing demand for teachers. These colleges were specialised colleges and the percentage of females in these batches was above 70 per cent. This trend prevailed over time. Once the rate of female teachers exceeded 70 per cent, the percentage growth has since slowed down. This is a natural situation when the percentages reach higher levels. However, as can be seen from the number of trainees at the colleges of education, out of 3071 trainee teachers, 2578 or 83 per cent are female trainees, indicating that the trend in high female numbers continues.

Compared to its larger South Asian neighbours, Sri Lanka's high number of female teachers stands out, with India, Bangladesh and in particular Pakistan all still working towards increasing female teacher numbers. However, despite the successful expansion of Sri Lanka's education system several decades in advance of its neighbours, it must be noted that there remain voluntary teachers serving in some schools, particularly in the war-torn North and Eastern provinces, many of whom do not have the same qualifications though the Government has taken steps to regularise them if they successfully complete the three year teacher training that the government has now arranged through the National Institute of Education.

a. Feminisation across sectors of education

In 2009 Sri Lanka had 215,963 teachers employed in primary and secondary level public schools and 6,262 university academic staff serving in the 14 state universities. In 2010, this number further increased with the scheduled recruitment of another 7,000 teachers. Among the above reported number of primary and secondary school teachers 153,279 or 71 per cent are female teachers. This includes primary and secondary levels. Table 9.2 shows the actual number of female teachers at different levels primary, secondary, trainees at colleges of education, private schools, and universities – senior staff and junior staff levels.

Table 9.2 Percentage of female teachers at different levels of the education system in Sri Lanka, 2009

Level	Male Teachers	Female Teachers	% of Female Teachers
Public Schools	62,484	153,279	71%
Graduate Teachers	24,913	52,310	68%
Trained Non-Graduate Teachers	34,706	93,106	73%
Trainee Teachers	3,137	2,548	82%
Private Schools	1,211	4,490	79%
University	3550	2,712	43%
Professors	347	116	25%
Junior Staff	1889	1,870	49.7%

Sources: Ministry of Education: School Census 2009.
University Grants Commission Statistics 2009.

Geographic differences including between rural and urban areas

However, the rate of female teachers across the nine provinces of the decentralised administration varies from 80 per cent for the Western Province to 58 per cent in the Eastern Province. The distribution across the administrative districts varies from 81 per cent for Colombo district of the Western Province to 55 per cent in the Trincomalee district of the Eastern Province. Table 9.3 presents the female teacher distribution in year 2009 across the districts and the respective provinces and the source of data is the Annual Schools Census of the Ministry of Education. The information on Table 9.3 clearly shows that all 25 districts have over 55 per cent female teachers. The percentages of the distribution of female teachers may decrease if analysis could have been performed at the divisional level, the next lower level of the administrative set-up. The deployment of female teachers to remote rural schools is difficult because of lack of basic facilities such as housing, water, satisfactory level of sanitation, and transport etc.

Table 9.3 Administrative provinces and district-wise distribution of female teachers, 2009

Province	Districts	Male	Female	% Female
	Colombo Total	2922	12860	81%
	Gampaha Total	3122	11969	79%
	Kalutara Total	2091	7841	79%
Western Total		8135	32670	80%
	Kandy Total	3701	12312	77%
	Matale Total	1764	4349	71%
	Nuwara Eliya Total	3008	5991	67%
Central Total		8473	22652	73%
	Galle Total	2936	8474	74%
	Hambantota Total	2382	5610	70%
	Matara Total	2632	7580	74%
Southern Total		7950	21664	73%
	Jaffna Total	2336	5367	70%
	Mannar Total	409	782	66%
	Vavunia Total	821	1768	68%
North Total		3566	7917	69%
	Ampara Total	3802	5304	58%
	Batticaloa Total	2422	3858	61%
	Trincomalee Total	2127	2557	55%
Eastern Total		8351	11719	58%
	Kurunegala Total	6149	14237	70%
	Puttlam Total	2440	4968	67%
North Western Total		8589	19205	69%
	Anuradhapura Total	3654	6813	65%
	Polonnaruwa Total	1435	2560	64%
North Central Total		5089	9373	65%
	Badulla Total	4117	8566	68%
	Monaragala Total	2213	3979	64%
Uva Total		6330	12545	66%
	Kegalle Total	2540	7653	75%
	Ratnapura Total	3461	8081	70%
Sabaragamuwa Total		6001	15734	72%
SRI LANKA TOTAL		62484	153479	71%

Source: Annual School Census Databases 2009 of the Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka

Table 9.3 is also indicative of the urban rural distribution of female teachers because most of the urbanised districts. The urban sector in Sri Lanka is largely concentrated in several districts. The highest level of urbanisation is in the District of Colombo in the Western Province. The rural districts in each of the provinces could also be easily identified. Most of the provinces are predominantly rural areas. In the Central Province the Nuwara Eliya and Matale districts are more rural, yet the female teacher percentages are 67 per cent and 71 per cent respectively for the most rural Nuwara Eliya and Matale districts. In the Southern Province the most rural district is Hambantota and has 70 per cent of female teachers. In the Northern province Mannar and Vavuniya are not only the remote rural areas but also are the war-affected areas and 66 per cent and 68 per cent of the teachers in primary and secondary schools respectively are females.

The whole of the Eastern Province is rural and the percentages of female teachers in all three districts of the Eastern Province respectively are Amparai 59 per cent, Batticalo 61 per cent and Trincomalee 55 per cent. Though the ratio of female teachers varies from 81 per cent to 55 per cent between the urban and rural sectors, there are remote schools, a few in numbers, where female teacher ratio is much lower than the district, provincial or national averages. This happens when there is a severe shortage of suitable residential facilities for the females. Further the government also has a teacher recruitment policy that allows candidates of such remote rural areas to be given priority at recruitment if they agree to serve in those remote areas. This is as a measure of combating the limitations in the deployment of teachers to remote areas.

Table 9.4 presents the provinces and districts wise female teacher percentages from 1996 to 2009. There is a coverage of 13 years of all 09 provinces and 25 districts of all provinces. The entire table has 325 entries – (25 districts x 13 years) and there is not a single entry below 53 per cent. This indicates that for over 13 years in each and every administrative district in Sri Lanka have had over 53 per cent female teachers in public schools since 1996. Further, other than in Mannar, Amparai and Trincomalee districts the percentage of female teachers present in the year 1996 has increased in all other 22 districts. The three districts where the percentage share of female teachers has dropped by a few percentiles were the districts most affected by the 30 years of ethnic conflict.

Figures 9.1a and 9.1b further illustrates the data in Table 9.2. Figures 9.1a and 9.1b illustrate the increasing trend in the percentage of female teachers in the three districts of the Western Province. Figure 9.1a illustrates the trend in the percentage of female teachers in the Western Province from 1996 through 2009. Over the thirteen-year period in the more urbanised Colombo district shows an increase of female teachers from 79 per cent to 81 per cent, while the increase during the same period in the other two districts of the Western province was also 03 per cent – increased from 76 per cent to 79 per cent. Figure 9.1b illustrates the trend in the percentage of female teachers from 1996 to 2009 in the most rural four districts in Sri Lanka. The Nuwara Eliya district shows a 03 per cent increase from 69 per cent to 71 per cent. The Mulative district shows a 05 per cent increase from 62 per cent to 67 per cent in the same 13-year period. The Batticalo district also shows a 03 per cent (58 per cent in 1996 and 61 per cent in 2009) increase in the same period. However, the Trincomalee district shows the increase is only 01 per cent – 53 per cent in 1997 and 54 per cent in 2009. The across-district difference is more due to the war situation that prevailed over 30 years and the districts in the East, North and the North Central Provinces had a major set back during the civil conflicts. In Sri Lanka there is no policy in favour of females or any ethnic or religious groups. The selections for recruitment of teachers or trainee teachers to the National Colleges of Education are only based on qualifications, subject specialities, and media of instruction. Despite of the war situation for over 30 years, even in the war affected districts the female percentage amongst teachers stayed above 50 per cent.

Figure 9.1a Trend in the percentage of female teachers in the Western Province of Sri Lanka, 1996–2009

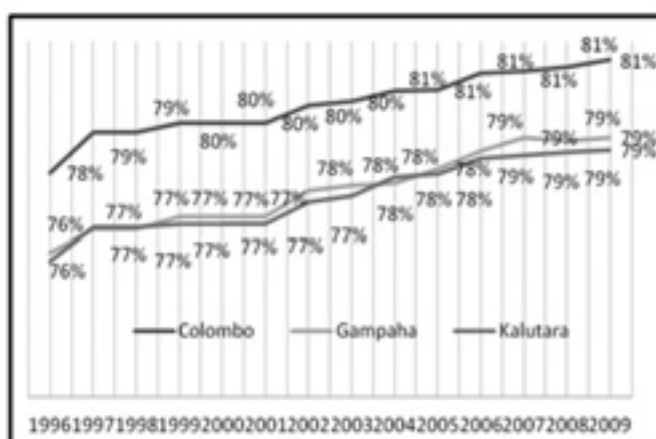


Figure 9.1b Trend in the percentage of female teachers in the most rural districts of Sri Lanka, 1996–2009

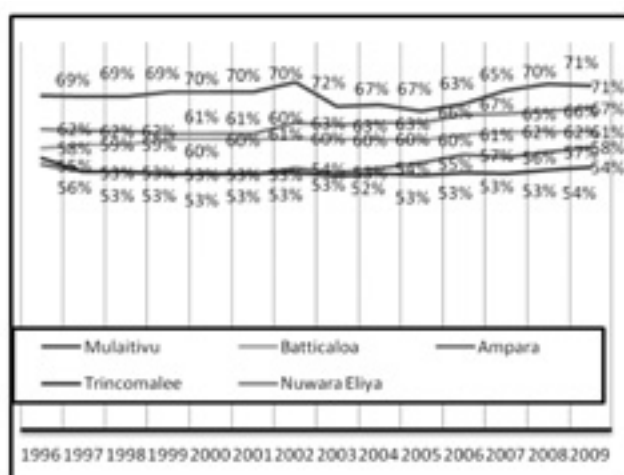


Table 9.4 Percentage of female teachers in provinces and districts, 1996–2009

Province	District	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
WEST	Colombo	78%	79%	79%	80%	80%	80%	80%	80%	81%	81%	81%	81%	81%	81%
	Gampaha	76%	77%	77%	77%	77%	77%	78%	78%	78%	79%	79%	79%	79%	79%
	Kalutara	76%	77%	77%	77%	77%	77%	78%	78%	78%	79%	79%	79%	79%	79%
CENTRAL	Kandy	72%	72%	72%	72%	73%	73%	74%	74%	75%	75%	75%	76%	76%	77%
	Matale	65%	66%	66%	66%	66%	66%	67%	66%	66%	67%	69%	70%	71%	71%
SOUTH	Nuwara Eliya	62%	62%	62%	61%	61%	61%	63%	63%	63%	63%	65%	65%	66%	67%
	Galle	73%	73%	73%	73%	73%	73%	74%	74%	73%	73%	74%	74%	74%	74%
NORTH	Matare	71%	72%	72%	72%	72%	72%	73%	73%	73%	73%	73%	74%	74%	74%
	Hambantota	68%	67%	67%	67%	67%	67%	68%	68%	68%	67%	69%	69%	70%	70%
EAST	Jaffna	65%	65%	65%	68%	68%	68%	66%	66%	67%	68%	70%	70%	71%	71%
	Kilinochchi	69%	71%	71%	73%	73%	73%	73%	71%	71%	69%	71%	74%	74%	74%
	Mannar	69%	68%	68%	70%	70%	70%	68%	66%	65%	63%	62%	63%	63%	65%
WAYAMBA	Vavuniya	69%	68%	68%	68%	68%	68%	69%	68%	68%	67%	68%	68%	68%	69%
	Mullaitivu	69%	69%	69%	70%	70%	70%	72%	67%	67%	66%	67%	70%	71%	71%
	Batticaloa	58%	59%	59%	60%	60%	60%	60%	60%	60%	60%	61%	62%	62%	61%
NORTH CENTRAL	Ampara	55%	53%	53%	53%	53%	53%	54%	53%	54%	55%	57%	56%	57%	58%
	Trincomalee	56%	53%	53%	53%	53%	53%	53%	52%	53%	53%	53%	53%	54%	54%
SABARAGAMUWA	Kurunegala	65%	67%	67%	67%	67%	67%	68%	68%	68%	68%	69%	69%	69%	70%
	Puttalam	64%	63%	63%	64%	64%	64%	66%	64%	65%	64%	64%	65%	65%	67%
UVA	Anuradhapura	61%	62%	62%	62%	62%	62%	63%	63%	63%	63%	63%	64%	64%	65%
	Polonnaruwa	60%	62%	62%	63%	63%	63%	61%	59%	58%	58%	60%	61%	63%	64%
SABARAGAMUWA	Badulla	64%	64%	64%	64%	64%	64%	64%	64%	64%	65%	66%	66%	67%	67%
	Monaragala	59%	59%	59%	59%	59%	59%	62%	61%	62%	62%	61%	62%	63%	64%
SABARAGAMUWA	Ratnapura	67%	67%	67%	68%	68%	68%	68%	68%	68%	67%	70%	70%	70%	70%
	Kegalle	70%	71%	71%	72%	72%	72%	72%	73%	73%	73%	74%	74%	74%	75%
All Island		68%	68%	68%	69%	69%	69%	69%	69%	69%	69%	70%	71%	71%	71%

Source: Annual School Census, 1996 – 2009, Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka.

The teacher deployment policy is gender fair. However, the socio-political influence on deployment is very high. This has allowed a larger number of females to remain in the more urbanised districts, while the less affluent teachers deploying to the more remote or difficult areas. This trend of increasing female percentages can be seen across subjects, across the districts and at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. This can be even better understood when one examines the number of under-graduates in the universities and the colleges of education as they are the potential teachers to join the profession in the future. This will be illustrated further in the section under future trends.

b. Differing levels of gender representation in leadership and management positions

The educational administrative cadre is selected either through direct recruitment or through promotion of the education career personnel mostly the teachers. Table 9.5 presents the percentage of female officers in the Sri Lanka Educational Administrative Service (SLEAS) from year 2001 to 2009.

Table 9.5 Percentage of female educational administrators in the districts, 2001–2009

DISTRICTS	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Colombo	52%	50%	52%	48%	49%	50%	60%	60%	62%
Gampaha	31%	34%	29%	35%	32%	33%	32%	51%	58%
Kalutara	71%	60%	50%	55%	45%	44%	42%	44%	50%
Kandy	53%	56%	62%	59%	67%	66%	67%	58%	61%
Matale	0%	100%	100%	33%	50%	50%	56%	50%	50%
Nuwara Eliya	25%	25%	40%	33%	0%	0%	14%	0%	0%
Galle	11%	8%	9%	30%	20%	55%	38%	40%	44%
Matara	22%	33.00%	20%	20%	40%	50%	50%	38%	44%
Hambantota	67%	100%	100%	75%	100%	100%	100%	0%	33%
Jaffna	18%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Kilinochchi	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Mannar	0%	0%	100%	100%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Vavuniya	0%	0%	0%	0%	33%	67%	67%	100%	0%
Mulativu	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Batticaloa	33%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	0%	0%	25%
Ampara	13%	25%	33%	0%	0%	33%	50%	25%	25%
Trincmalee	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Kurunegala	14%	11%	19%	13%	20%	33%	24%	51%	52%
Puttalam	20%	25%	33%	33%	50%	0%	20%	29%	50%
Anuradhapura	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Polonnaruwa	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	33%	33%	0%	0%
Badulla	27%	27%	36%	25%	29%	17%	20%	33%	57%
Monaragala	0%	0%	0%	0%	50%	0%	0%	67%	0%
Ratnapura	50%	64%	86%	60%	43%	43%	60%	50%	50%
Kegalle	35%	39%	45%	60%	63%	57%	50%	45%	70%
All Island	37%	41%	44%	43%	43%	45%	46%	49%	53%

Source: Annual School Census Databases of the Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka.

These officers are attached to educational administrative offices at division, zone, district, and province or at ministry of education. Table 9.6 presents the percentage of female school principals in the public schools from 2001 through 2009. School principals too are selected through competitive selection procedures as a career promotional step. This is considered an administrative position. Although at the national level there was a steady increase of the percentage, there are obvious different degrees and patterns of increases across districts.

Table 9.6 District-wise percentage of female school principals, 2001–2009

Districts	2001 %	2002 %	2003 %	2004 %	2005 %	2006 %	2007 %	2008 %	2009 %
Colombo	47%	57%	56%	59%	55%	53%	49%	51%	52%
Gampaha	39%	36%	40%	40%	40%	42%	39%	37%	37%
Kalutara	43%	36%	40%	40%	39%	40%	40%	38%	36%
Kandy	38%	38%	38%	38%	37%	37%	35%	37%	37%
Matale	32%	30%	31%	32%	32%	32%	32%	31%	32%
Nuwara Eliya	30%	29%	31%	30%	31%	31%	29%	30%	30%
Galle	37%	31%	30%	27%	26%	26%	28%	25%	26%
Matara	33%	26%	29%	26%	24%	27%	31%	27%	27%
Hambantota	25%	21%	26%	26%	23%	22%	24%	22%	25%
Jaffna	23%	19%	20%	19%	17%	18%	18%	20%	23%
Kilinochchi	27%	27%	26%	26%	28%	33%	30%	32%	NA
Mannar	29%	31%	31%	30%	31%	32%	31%	30%	29%
Vavuniya	28%	29%	31%	28%	29%	32%	33%	34%	36%
Mulativu	29%	25%	24%	24%	25%	25%	25%	31%	NA
Batticaloa	18%	16%	17%	16%	18%	17%	17%	15%	18%
Ampara	17%	18%	18%	17%	18%	17%	18%	15%	14%
Trincomalee	22%	20%	21%	20%	20%	18%	18%	24%	25%
Kurunegala	24%	19%	21%	21%	22%	19%	21%	19%	22%
Puttalam	27%	22%	20%	19%	21%	22%	21%	22%	21%
Anuradhapura	20%	22%	19%	21%	21%	20%	21%	21%	21%
Polonnaruwa	17%	16%	12%	15%	13%	13%	15%	17%	17%
Badulla	31%	29%	30%	29%	28%	28%	28%	29%	28%
Monaragala	19%	17%	19%	19%	21%	16%	18%	15%	19%
Ratnapura	29%	22%	24%	22%	20%	21%	22%	24%	19%
Kegalle	30%	31%	30%	30%	32%	31%	30%	31%	31%
All Island	31%	27%	28%	28%	28%	27%	28%	28%	28%

Source: Annual School Census Databases of the Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka.

Female Educational Managers: In 2009 there were 282 serving as SLEAS officers in management positions. Out of that 156 or 53 per cent were female managers. When compare this percentage with year 2001 this percentage was only 37 per cent. Gradually, year after year the female percentage increased from 37 per cent to current level of 53 per cent indicating in general feminisation happened in educational management services as well, yet when compared with the 74 per cent females amongst the teachers, in the managerial positions the rate has increased at a slower speed than that of the teachers. Figures 9.2a, 9.2b, 9.2c and 9.2d illustrate the rates and trends in the SLEAS Officers over the year 2001 to 2009 of the National level, the Western, the Central and the Eastern provinces. Figures 9.3a and 9.3b look proportions of female principals between 2001–2009.

Trends in female education managers

Figure 9.2a Trend in the percentage of female educational administrators (SLEAS) in Sri Lanka, 2001–2009

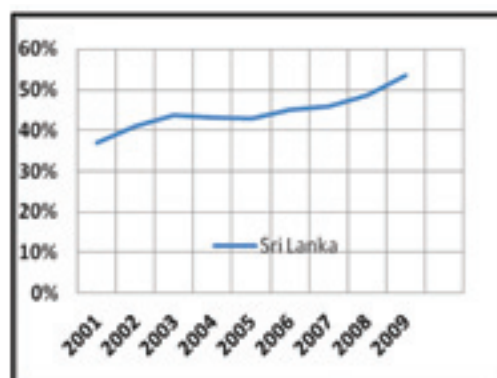


Figure 9.2b Percentage of female educational administrators in the districts of the Western Province, 2001–2009

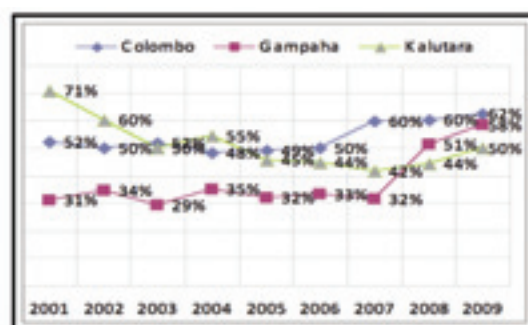


Figure 9.2c Trends in the percentage of female educational administrators in the districts of the Central Province, 2001–2009

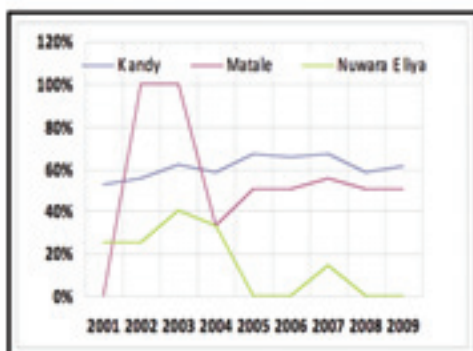
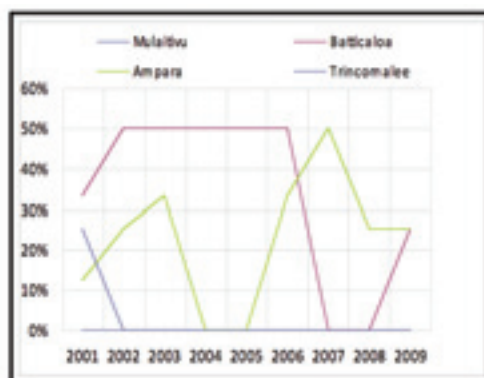


Figure 9.2d Percentage of female educational administrators in the districts of the Eastern Province, 2001–2009



Trends in female school principals

Figure 9.3a Percentage of female school principals at the national level, 2001–2009

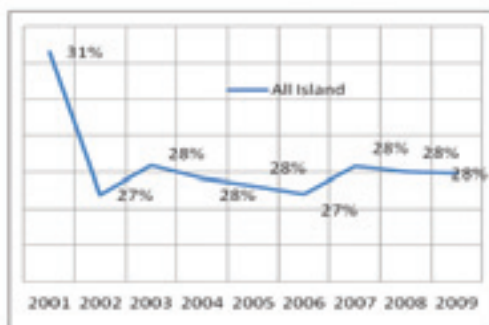


Figure 9.3b District-wise disparity in the percentage of female school principals in a few selected districts, 2001–2009

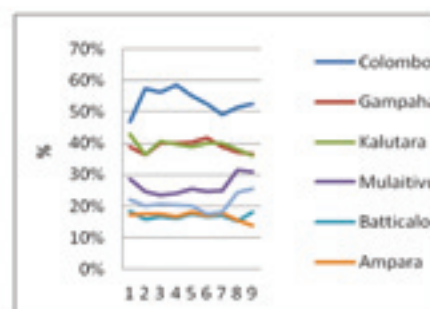


Figure 9.3c Percentage of female educational administrators in the districts of Wayamba Province, 2001–2009

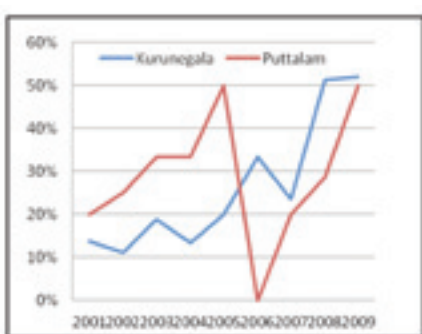


Figure 9.2a and 9.3a show two different trends. The number and percentage of female educational administrators has a steady increase in Sri Lanka at national level. However, the trend in the female school Principals shows a decrease from 31 per cent to 28 per cent over the same period. Whereas the percentage of female managers (SLEAS) from 37 per cent in 2001 to 53 per cent in 2009.

Figures 9.2b, 9.2c and 9.2d show that there is no such increasing trend in the Western, Central and the Eastern Provinces. Figure 9.3b and 9.3c illustrate the trends in

five selected districts and that too shows no one trend, rather different patterns.

This indicates that feminisation is greater in the teaching profession yet when it comes to selected administrative grades, which are mostly office jobs, there is no one pattern and districts wise the trends vary. However, in general there has been an increase, but with drastic difference in the trends across the districts and provinces. In the more remote rural Eastern Province which is also war affected, Table 9.5 shows that the SLEAS officers in Mulative district of the Eastern province has only 0 per cent of female managers. Batticallo and Amparai districts of the Eastern province fluctuated between 0 per cent to 50 per cent with no consistent pattern. A similar pattern exists in the Central Province where the Nuwara Eliya district, comparatively the most remote district reports 0 per cent female managers in the last three years, whereas the Kandy district has a steadily increasing percentage of female managers. In the year 2009, out of the 25 districts, the Anuradhapura district has 100 per cent female managers while seven other districts have 0 per cent females – Monaragala, Trincomalee, Mulative, Vavuniya, Mannar, Kilinochchi, Jaffna and Nuwara Eliya.

Female School Principals: There are over 700 school principals in the country. The principals are selected largely from amongst the Senior Teachers and also some come from the SLEAS. The study examined the representation or the share of the females at national, provincial and district levels. Table 9.6 shows that amongst school principals over 2,000 or 28 per cent are females at national level. The year 2009 data is incomplete as there are two districts with no data and the year 2008 data is very much valid in this context and out of 7,553 school principals 2,115 (28 per cent) were females. Figure 9.3a illustrates the trend over the 2001–2009 of the percentage of female school principals in the school system at national level. The percentage of 31 per cent in 2001 has dropped to 28 per cent by 2009. However, it is important to realise that there were certain new service cadres were created in year 2002 and some of the serving school principals were absorbed to the new cadre. This was the main reason for the change, and in actual numbers has not decreased, although this does indicate that male principles must constitute a significant number of the new intake. One must also realise that from year 1998 to year 2008 the Principal posts were not filled simply due to political issues and it is only in 2009 these positions were formerly filled. Many of those who were serving as acting school principals were males appointed by the political leaderships in the provinces.

The provincial and district level percentages show that the actual percentage difference is between 15 per cent and 52 per cent. The highest percentage is in the years 2008 and 2009 in the District of Colombo in the Western Province, with the lowest being in the District of Batticallo in the Eastern Province. The Monaragal, Batticalo, Amparai, Polonnaruwa, and Jaffna districts records much lower percentages of female teacher headed schools. Most of these districts were badly affected by the thirty years of ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka.

It is evident that the percentage of females in school management is significantly less than the number of female teachers in school. It also can be deducted that though the majority of the academic staff of schools is female, often over 70 per cent, yet the head of the school is a male. Figure 9.3b illustrates the district-wise disparity between the districts of the Western Province and the Eastern Province. The districts in Colombo are more urbanised whereas the Eastern Province is more rural, with more remote villages and moreover was war-affected. These are the two extreme situations have contributed very much to the disparity in the share of females in the school manager cadre. Further, there is a cultural belief that men are better managers and for co-educational schools a male is better as school principal. The leading girls' schools have only female principals similarly all boys schools have male principals only. The co-educational schools continue to prefer to have a male principal.

c. Differing levels between government, private and community/NGO schools

Sri Lanka's school system is largely a public education system. There are 9662 public schools well spread over the country. As a result of the schools takeover by the government in 1960 almost all private schools became public schools however there was room for a private school to exist as a registered private school and today there are 90 such private schools in Sri Lanka. However, there is a new development in South Asia of the rapid development of English medium schools, mostly called 'international schools', preparing students to sit for British examinations. These schools do not come under the Ministry of Education. The situation is the same in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan (Sedere, 2009). In Sri Lanka even in the registered private schools as well as the international schools the majority of the teachers are females. The Ministry of Education maintains data of the registered private schools and no data is available about the international schools.

Table 9.7 presents the province teacher numbers and percentages in the registered private schools. This does not include the newly burgeoning international schools established under the Bureau of Investment and not registered under the Ministry of Education. The reported data of the registered private/community schools come from the Ministry of Education.

Table 9.7 Number and percentage of female teachers serving in the registered private schools in 2005 through 2009

Province	2005			2006			2007			2008			2009*		
	Female	Total	% Female	Female	Total	% Female	Female	Total	% Female	Female	Total	% Female	Female	Total	% Female
Western	2885	3613	80%	3066	3845	80%	3167	3936	80%	3181	4015	79%	3272	4061	81%
Central	436	535	81%	435	529	82%	474	607	78%	482	592	81%	529	636	83%
Southern	220	265	83%	241	293	82%	211	273	77%	208	261	80%	286	355	81%
Northern	185	319	58%	187	321	58%	178	317	56%	156	287	54%	191	338	57%
Eastern	6	7	86%	6	7	86%	6	7	86%	6	7	86%	6	7	86%
North Western	60	74	81%	73	85	86%	84	97	87%	80	88	91%	87	98	89%
North Central	10	17	59%	10	17	59%	11	19	58%	12	20	60%	13	22	59%
Uva	81	149	54%	78	141	55%	75	130	58%	84	157	54%	87	157	55%
Sabaragamuwa	15	21	71%	20	28	71%	20	28	71%	19	27	70%	19	27	70%
Sri Lanka	3898	5000	78%	4116	5266	78%	4226	5414	78%	4228	5454	78%	4490	5701	79%

Source: Annual School Census Year 2005 through 2009, Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka.

Note: There are no Private schools in Kilinochchi, Mannar, Vavuniya, Mullativu, Ampara, Trincomalee and Polonnaruwa districts

The data shows that from 2005 to 2009 the approximate number serving in the registered private schools has increased from around 5,000 to 5,700 teachers and the female percentage has increased from 78 per cent in 2005 to 79 per cent by 2009 confirming the same trend as it is in the public schools of Sri Lanka. However, the largest concentration of registered private schools is in the Western Province (Colombo, Kalutara and Gampaha Districts) and the percentage of female teachers is as high as 80 per cent in the province. The lowest percentage of female teachers serving the registered private schools is in the Uva Province (54 per cent in 2005 55 per cent in 2009) and followed by the North (58 per cent in 2005 and 57 per cent in 2009) and North Central Provinces (59 per cent in year 2005 and 2009).

d. Differences between low, middle and high income regions

Sri Lanka identifies five economic zones. As per Groves' (1996) classifications the Colombo urban area was the zone that had the highest income levels, lowest unemployment and the lowest mortality rates etc., which continue to be the most

developed district amongst the 25 districts. The lowest income zone consists of Badulla, Batticalo and Nuwara Eliya Districts. If a comparison is made of these districts with the more developed Colombo districts one could see that the percentage of female teachers in the Colombo district is 81 per cent when compared with Badulla (68 per cent), Batticalo (61 per cent) and Nuwara Eliya (67 per cent), there seems a significant difference in the percentage of female teachers. However, it is important to note that the lowest rate of female teachers is in the district of Trincomalee (55 per cent). When Trincomalee district is compared with Colombo district, Trincomalee has 31 per cent less female teachers than in Colombo district. This is statistically a significant difference. Though this clearly indicates that female teacher concentration is more in the urban districts and urban centres of any given district, yet there are many other socio-economic factors affecting deployment. Politically and socially more affluent teachers manage to stay closer to home, closer to their families and avoid difficult areas. The less affluent teachers end up in more remote areas. Trincomalee is not economically much handicapped as there is a sea port, large flour mill, Airforce base, tourist beaches etc. However, during the 30-year war period it was a battlefield. Similarly almost all of the districts with a lower percentage were war-affected areas. Now after achieving peace, even in those locations, the percentage of female teachers are increasing. It is important to note that in all districts the female teacher percentage is well over 50 per cent, which when compared with many other countries clearly indicates that Sri Lanka's teacher population is dominated by females.

e. Correlation between access, retention or attainment of students and feminisation of the teaching profession

By 2010, Sri Lanka enrolled 98.5 per cent of the primary cohort and 96 per cent complete the five years of primary schooling. 89 per cent complete nine years of schooling. Sri Lanka passed the 90 per cent enrolment rate in the year 1994 (Central Bank 1998). In the year 1988/89, 51 per cent were of the total enrolment of the University of Colombo were women. The percentage of females was higher than males in the faculties of Liberal Arts & Law, and commerce (Department of Census and Statistics 1995). Although there is an initial inference from having 79 per cent female teachers in primary schools and 74 per cent in secondary schools – that large numbers of women entering the profession have possibly been instrumental in ensuring the education system is well resourced enough to provide increased access for both male and female students – it is difficult to draw any definitive gender specific impacts on either sex. However, unlike many regional neighbours who are still struggling with girls educational equality, in Sri Lanka there is a slightly higher percentage of female students progressing through Grade one to Grade 13 than the boy but only nominally so: In 2010 the School Census showed that by Grade 11, 143719 boys and 146977 girls (51 per cent females) were still in school. (Ministry of Education 2000 – 2010). It still remains difficult to account this directly to the higher percentage of female teachers because the population has a slightly higher percentage of females than males overall. However, girls are more likely to continue schooling than the boys, and the role of women in academic roles such as teaching cannot be completely discounted.

Responses from the focus groups

The author had one focus group discussion with a group of primary school parents including the fathers of the children, who indicated that they prefer to have a female teacher undoubtedly in Grades 1 and 2. In general all parents preferred to have female teachers in the primary grades due to the perception of motherly care that a female teacher extends to a primary aged child.

However, in secondary schools some parents did consider that having too many female teachers in sports activities and co-curricular activities has slowed down Sri Lankan schools over the years. The male teachers particularly indicated that when sports activities take place away from the school particularly in a different city, the female teachers tend to avoid taking students to such sports meets. However, female teachers within the groups did not agree to this comment. This needs further investigation as currently there is no conclusive evidence to support such an argument.

f. Significant correlations between gender and specialist subject areas (e.g. maths and sciences) and differing levels – where evident – between specialist/ categorised schools, e.g. ‘technical’, ‘normal’, etc.

In Sri Lanka the teacher recruitment policy as well as the teacher training policy supports specialisation. The main or the most regular recruitment of teachers happens through the pre-service teacher training colleges that are known as National Colleges of Education (NCOEs). Sri Lanka has 18 NCOEs and offers three-year residential training leading to a Diploma. The training programs are specialised as primary education, maths and science education, first language (Sinhala and Tamil), social science education, home economics, English, aesthetics, second language, other languages such as French; agriculture and technical/ vocational subjects; commerce etc. University graduates are recruited to teach in the higher classes GCE OL and AL. The recruitment targets school subjects and the medium of instruction as Sinhala, Tamil and English. There is no special policy supporting females or any other communal or ethnic considerations. By 2015, Sri Lanka intends to convert all National Colleges of Education to B.Ed Degree-granting institutions.

Re-analysing the Annual School Census data of the Ministry of Education, Tables 9.8, 9.9, 9.10 and 9.11 presents the numbers and the percentage of female teachers as per qualifications and specialisations.

Table 9.8 presents the number and percentage of graduate female teachers – teachers with university education with a Bachelors degree or above. The percentages range from 48 per cent to 95 per cent in year 2009 and 48 per cent to 100 in year 2007. The lowest percentage is for graduates with physical science and the highest is for graduates with home economics and dance graduates. There are obvious gender stereotypes in these figures. The number and percentage of females is less for physical sciences (48 per cent) and mathematics (52). However, the percentage stays below 50 per cent only for physical sciences, indicating the women have achieved gender balance in most subjects.

Table 9.9 presents the numbers and the percentages of trained female teachers and the percentages range from 08 per cent for technology to 100 per cent for home economics. The low percentage levels 08 per cent, 11 per cent and 14 per cent respectively are for the three technological subjects (mechanical, civil and electrical) and the higher percentages for home economics (95 per cent) and dance and art (92 per cent each) indicate gender stereotypes across the disciplines in the curriculum. There are certain subjects only women take and there are some subjects largely taken by male teachers. It is also obvious from the data that teaching religion is relatively less popular amongst the female teachers – only 38 per cent teach Buddhism. However, other than the technology subjects and Buddhism, in all other subjects the majority (over 50 per cent) are female teachers.

Table 9.8 Subject specialties wise female teacher percentages in public schools, 2007 and 2009

QUALIFICATION	Subject Specialty	2007			2009		
		Female	Total	%	Female	Total	Female %
GRADUATE TEACHERS	Bachelor of education	2336	3677	64%	2209	3345	66%
	Physical science	1498	3132	48%	1532	3188	48%
	Bio science g	2593	3478	75%	2608	3547	74%
	Special mathematics	333	660	50%	333	637	52%
	Arts graduates with mathematics	522	825	63%	562	904	62%
	Agriculture	557	807	69%	571	836	68%
	Home economics	67	67	100%	56	59	95%
	Commerce	4628	7535	61%	5208	8383	62%
	Social science	283	418	68%	323	461	70%
	Oriental music	1259	1491	84%	1273	1515	84%
	Art (aesthetics)	424	711	60%	424	733	58%
	Dance	1206	1327	91%	1329	1444	92%
	Art graduates	32462	47340	69%	35202	51298	69%
	English	582	828	70%	625	897	70%
	Foreign languages	62	78	79%	55	66	83%
	TOTAL GRADUATES		48812	72374	67%	52310	77223

Source: Annual School Census Databases of the Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka.

Table 9.9 Subject specialties: female teacher percentages in public schools, 2007 and 2009

Subject Specialisation	2007			2009		
	Female	Total	%	Female	Total	%
English trained	15120	20000	76%	15319	20064	76%
Mathematics	5621	10150	57%	5579	9664	58%
Science trained	7493	11386	66%	7172	10820	66%
Science / Mathematics trained	2040	2815	72%	1897	2664	71%
Social studies trained	1494	2392	62%	1445	2257	64%
Commerce trained	1114	1959	57%	996	1758	57%
Home economics trained	5543	5544	100%	5373	5378	100%
Technology (Building construction) trained	31	486	6%	56	491	11%
Technology (Mechanism) trained	27	309	9%	26	322	8%
Technology (Electrical & Electronic) trained	34	187	18%	30	184	16%
Art work trained	443	476	93%	408	438	93%
Agriculture trained	1845	3758	49%	1767	3558	50%
Oriental music trained	1831	2172	84%	1912	2250	85%
Western music trained	103	112	92%	118	131	90%
Art trained	1168	1743	67%	1187	1819	65%
Dance trained	1758	1969	89%	1824	2037	90%
Physical education trained	1867	3420	55%	2064	3748	55%
Buddhism trained	715	1801	40%	678	1767	38%
Hinduism trained	541	810	67%	499	760	66%
Islam trained	404	802	50%	420	810	52%
Roman catholic trained	649	775	84%	695	793	88%
Christianity (non Roman catholic) trained	86	97	89%	91	106	86%
Special education trained	332	626	53%	399	708	56%
Sinhala trained	1088	1800	60%	1030	1637	63%
Tamil trained	966	1390	41%	939	1335	70%
Arabic trained	43	104	79%	49	96	51%
Primary / general trained	41056	51958	79%	40303	51028	79%
Library science & information technology trained	287	421	68%	300	410	73%
Drama & theatre trained	64	78	82%	145	182	78%
Other trained	269	424	63%	365	567	64%
TOTAL TRAINED	94232	129964	73%	93106	127812	73%

Source: Annual School Census Databases of the Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka.

Table 9.10 provides the numbers and the percentages of untrained female teachers who are currently under three-year weekend in-service training schemes to become teachers. Table 9.11 presents the female teacher trainee percentage now receiving pre-service training at the 18 colleges of education.

Among trained teachers the highest number of females serve as primary teachers. Even amongst untrained teachers 78 per cent of the primary teachers are female, whereas at the secondary level the average percentage of female teachers is 68 per cent.

Table 9.10 Subject specialties wise untrained female teacher percentages in public schools, 2007 and 2009

	Subject Specialty	2007			2009		
		Female	Total	Female %	Female	Total	Female %
UNTRAINED	Science Untrained / diploma	239	398	60%	232	370	63%
	Science / mathematics Untrained / diploma	41	87	47%	44	102	43%
	English Untrained / diploma	884	1321	67%	1121	1623	69%
	Primary Untrained / diploma	1237	1777	70%	1051	1460	72%
	Religion Untrained / diploma	122	181	67%	133	194	69%
	Social studies Untrained / diploma	130	192	68%	123	168	73%
	Commerce Untrained				58	97	60%
	Technology Untrained / diploma	67	122	55%	20	45	44%
	Home economics Untrained / diploma	21	38	55%	186	187	99%
	Agriculture Untrained / diploma	267	267	100%	36	81	44%
	Sinhala Untrained / diploma	43	112	38%	54	70	77%
	Tamil Untrained / diploma	46	71	65%	119	172	69%
	Oriental music Untrained / diploma	124	177	70%	200	228	88%
	Western music Untrained / diploma	117	145	81%	7	8	88%
	Dance Untrained / diploma	6	8	75%	182	198	92%
	Art Untrained / diploma	77	88	88%	133	197	68%
	Foreign languages Untrained / diploma	125	183	68%	3	4	75%
	Moulavi Untrained / diploma	1	7	14%	4	12	33%
	Other Untrained / diploma	5	16	31%	512	753	68%
	TOTAL UNTRAINED		3552	5190	68%	4218	5967

Source: Annual School Census Databases of the Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka.

Table 9.11 Subject specialties wise trainee female teacher percentages in colleges of education, 2007 and 2009

	Subject Specialty	2007			2009		
		Female	Total	Female %	Female	Total	Female %
TRAINEES	Science / Mathematics teacher trainees	6	10	60%	61	121	50.4%
	English teacher trainees	63	98	64%	99	157	63%
	Primary teacher trainees	142	191	74%	966	1133	87%
	Religion teacher trainees	4	8	50%	47	67	70%
	Social studies teacher trainees	4	5	80%	57	96	59%
	Commerce teacher trainees	2	6	33%	4	12	33%
	Technology teacher trainees	3	5	60%	11	16	69%
	Home economics teacher trainees	8	8	100%	37	37	100%
	Agriculture teacher trainees	1	4	25%	9	20	45%
	Sinhala teacher trainees	6	8	75%	46	52	88%
	Tamil teacher trainees	8	10	80%	63	77	82%
	Oriental music teacher trainees	8	11	73%	44	59	75%
	Western music teacher trainees	7	7	100%	3	3	100%
	Dance teacher trainees	5	10	50%	89	96	93%
	Art teacher trainees	0	1	0%	33	55	60%
	Moulavi teacher trainees	26	48	54%	0	2	0%
	Other Trainees				98	1134	83%
	TOTAL TRAINEES		320	492	54%	2548	3137

Source: Annual School Census Databases of the Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka.

Table 9.12 presents the number and the percentage of female teachers at universities in Sri Lanka in 2010. On average there is 43 per cent of female academic staff in the universities. When compared with 78 per cent at primary school and 68 per cent at secondary school, the 43 per cent in the universities shows that as education advances to higher levels the percentage of females decreases. There are 54 per cent females in the lower academic grades, 47 per cent as Lecturers, 36 per cent as Senior Lecturers, 35 per cent as Associate Professors and 23 per cent as Professors.

However, currently there are more females than males occupying higher academic staff positions at university level and there is a trend showing an increase of female academics. The recruitment to university academic positions is very transparent and is based on academic merit. The relatively smaller percentage of female teachers in university faculties indicates that among females, though higher in numbers at all universities except in some faculties such as engineering, the level of academic achievement in females maybe slightly lower than the males in the long-term. However, there is a trend of a gradual increase in female staff at universities as well, and this will likely bring changes in the coming decade towards gender parity within the profession at the tertiary level.

Table 9.12 Percentage of female academic staff of the state universities, 2009

Category	Total	Female	% Female
Professors	388	90	23%
Associate Professors	75	26	35%
Senior Lecturers	2028	724	36%
Lecturer	2235	1051	47%
Other Academic	1524	819	54%
TOTAL	6262	2712	43%

Source: University Grants Commission Sri Lanka: University Statistics 2009.

Table 9.13a presents the distribution of female teachers by age and Table 9.13b presents the distribution of teachers by years of service or experience. It is evident that there were 71 per cent teachers in the over 55 year old group and the percentage has increased to 72 per cent with the younger age group between 18 – 29 years. Similarly, the percentage among those with over 30 years of teaching experience was 68 per cent and the percentage for the less than 5 years of experience has increased to 75 per cent indicating a significant increase of female teachers in recent times. Both of these tables also confirm the increasing trend of female teachers in the school system.

Table 9.13a Age-wise distribution of teachers, 2009

Age	No of teachers			% Females
	Male	Female	Total	
18 –29	4153	12235	16388	72%
30 –39	18136	45544	63680	72%
40 –49	23027	58777	81804	69%
50 –55	10680	23618	34298	67%
> 55	5959	12178	18137	71%
All Island	61955	152352	214307	71%

Table 9.13b Years of experience wise distribution of teachers, 2009

Years of Experience (Recruitment Years)	No of teachers			% Females
	Male	Female	Total	
0 – 5 (2005 – 2010)	13106	38537	51643	75%
6 – 10 (2000 – 2004)	6164	11630	17794	65%
11 –15 (1995 –1999)	7168	15203	22371	68%
16 –20 (1990 – 1994)	17286	46355	63641	73%
21– 30 (1980 – 1989)	13441	30567	44008	69%
> 30 (Prior to 1980)	4790	10060	14850	68%
All Island	61955	152352	214307	71%

Table 9.13b actually presents an interesting observation in terms of the numbers from a historical perspective. Those with 6–15 years of experience are significantly fewer in numbers than 16–20 years of experience. This could suggest that there was an influx of teacher numbers entering the profession twenty years ago, and that this has decreased since then (unless of course the difference in numbers is actually down to people exiting the profession). The 16–20 group also has a higher female percentage (73). The data shows that all recruitments in general had significantly more female teachers than males. Generally, election pledges to address unemployment amongst university graduates increased the recruitments and often exceeded the real or actual requirement in numbers. One could perhaps argue that there were more females unemployed and were waiting to enter teaching profession than males. This could be one of the reasons for the higher number of women during these periods.

Factors for the transformation of teaching into ‘women’s work’

It is apparent that in Sri Lanka the teaching profession is feminised in terms of numbers. But is it only the teaching profession that is feminised or is there a more general trend? Today in university enrolment 56 per cent are females. In the performing arts 75 per cent are females, pharmaceutical studies 74 per cent are females. In social sciences and humanities 71 per cent are females. In indigenous medicine 70 per cent and in food science 65 per cent are females. Agriculture and veterinary science over 64 per cent females and physical and bio-sciences 60 per cent are females. In medicine and dentistry 56 per cent are females, in commerce and business studies and law over 52 per cent are females. In information technology 40 per cent and in engineering studies 26 per cent are female (UGC 2009). However, in general according to Labour Market Information (2010), 7.14 million people were employed in 2009 and of this number 65 per cent or 4.61 million were men, with the balance 2.53 million being female. It should be noted that as of 2009 data, the unemployment ratio for females was 8.2 per cent as opposed to 4.3 per cent for males.

In 2009, over 234,000 of the Sri Lankans employed overseas 54 per cent were female. However, there were mostly classified as housemaids: in the skilled or professional categories a significantly larger number were males. Meanwhile, the statistics among the self-employed present another story, with the majority being female. Disaggregated statistics on size and turnover of self-employed income is still needed however to provide greater clarity on what such a female prevalence in this area means in terms of economic empowerment. Overall however, among the unemployed there are more males in categories with less than secondary school qualifications such as GCE OL, while in the higher secondary qualification of GCE A/L, the number of females remaining unemployed is much higher than the males (Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission 2010). This indicates that overall, women’s increasing academic achievements have yet to proportionally translate into the world of work, despite women’s statistical dominance.

Focus group responses

The researcher carried out several focus group discussions informally with 27 (16 females and 11 males) teacher educators of the national colleges of education; about 60 (42 females and 18 males) practising teachers who were following the two year Diploma in Education course at the National Institute of Education, about 40 trainee teachers (40 females and 10 males) at one of the national colleges of education, and a casual sample of parents to explore what factors are transforming the teaching profession to women’s work.. There was 100 per cent agreement between both men and women in the focus groups that primary teachers, particularly in the first three

grade levels have to be a female. This is an expectation of parents, mirrored by the teachers. The reasons given are because it was felt that the female teacher is a 'substitute mother' and is more likely to have a caring attitude towards children. This value opinion is reflected in the current academic year with 87 per cent females in primary teacher training programs. The trend is clear that the present 79 per cent female teachers in primary schools may further increase in the near future. This is largely a social expectation that has translated into a professional expectation.

In terms of reasons why teachers go to the profession, the trainee teachers in the groups indicated that their parents wanted them to become teachers and they consider teaching to be a family-friendly type of employment. In the teacher trainee group of 20, there were five female trainees who have had other more lucrative jobs yet resigned from those more lucrative jobs to join teaching. Two were working for commercial banks, one was employed in the State Sector Corporation, and two others were working for private commercial firms. The parents influence is mostly centred around marriage and wanting a family life for their daughter. In further discussions it was indicated that teaching allows them to get back home early, most of the times when their children returning from schools teachers who are mothers too can get back home. Also, female teachers and parents seem to believe that teaching has 'more morality' as a profession for women, and that this makes the family more stable. One female trainee said that those who work in banks and other professions often work long hours and get home late, which leads to neglect of the family. It was felt that there are more divorces in those professions while divorce is much less amongst the teachers. Parents also confirmed this view. Many parents also indicated dissatisfaction for their daughters working in banks and commercial organisations such as the garment industry. There is a strong belief that teaching is a well-respected and culturally more acceptable job for an educated girl.

The focus group discussion indicated that women were expected to align their traditional gender roles with suitable jobs and teaching happened to be the most common and widely opened field of employment for them. The 'family friendly' nature of the teaching profession encourages female candidates to join. On the other hand, most males opt to work for commercial organisations and industries as opposed to teaching, often getting into teaching as a last resort if no other more lucrative work is available. This clearly indicates that the profession has become gender stereotyped, particularly at the primary levels.

Another major factor for women choosing the profession that came out of the discussion is that, by being a teacher, they can guide their children better to be successful in their studies. When the mother is a teacher they are better aware of the school curriculum, the expectations, learning outcomes and the demands that come up at school and as such they are able for them to support their own children better. Indeed this is a fact because in general it is rare that a teacher's child fails an examination. The ability to get home after school, have the weekends free and with more school vacations female teachers are better able to lead a family and also facilitate their own children's learning.

A few of the teachers also indicated that admitting a child to a more popular school is so difficult and competitive and when you are teacher the chances of your getting a popular school for your child is much higher. This they consider is a privilege and perk of the job.

Except for several male administrators no one directly expressed views opposing the high numbers of women in the profession. The administrator who expressed otherwise indicated that most of the school principals do demand a male teacher in schools because the female teachers are not the best to carry out some of the school functions such as sports activities, after school activities and field trips etc. However,

the majority said that having more females in schools has not impeded any of those functions. The majority also indicated that there is a belief in female teachers being more committed than a male teachers and taking teaching more seriously overall than their male counterparts.

One male did make a point regarding the efficient and effective deployment of teachers, which he argued has failed due to having more female teachers in the school system. Many female teachers seek transfers as soon as they take up duties in school in the rural or remote areas. The government has now introduced a policy of selecting 50 per cent of the trainee teachers to the national colleges of education on a geographical basis and the balance of 50 per cent on a merit basis to ensure that the teachers selected on a geographical basis will go back to the same education zones that they came from. They can seek transfers only after serving the stated number of years at that school. The officer also felt that the present maternity leave provision by the government of granting 84 days of leave with full-pay and another 84 days with half-pay has made it difficult for schools to operate. However, the importance of the benefits within the profession has been a real draw, keeping it well resourced, and as an incentive cannot be underestimated. Overall however, the legislation has caused a backlash against female recruitment (ADB 2008), particularly in the lower-paid jobs. On the other hand the same legislature has attracted women to higher-level jobs, particularly teaching.

Discussion and conclusions: the feminisation of teaching and its relevance to gender dynamics in Sri Lankan society

Data that provide concrete information of the sexual and social class on feminisation of teaching is currently lacking. What can be seen however is the growing number and percentages of females across all areas of professional specialisation at the tertiary level, leading one to surmise that women are making strides in other areas within Sri Lanka. The educational performance of girls is no doubt a major contributory factor to that. Up to Grade 11 there is gender parity in school enrolment. However, Grade 12 and 13 enrolment is very much skewed in favour of girls. The enrolment in Grade one is 49.5 girls and 50.5 boys. These proportions continue on to grade nine, or the end of compulsory education phase. However, by Grade 13 GCE A/D classes the percentage becomes 57.5 per cent for girls and 44.5 per cent boys. Girl's dropout is less; absenteeism is less than the boys. Their level of academic achievement is higher than the boys. It is interesting to note that feminisation has happened regardless of social class because the trend of having a higher percentage of girls in schools is witnessed in the schools where the children of the socially affluent attend and equally in the remote rural schools where the children of the rural poor attend. The trend is rather a national trend with any immediately noticeable major social class differences. Of course female children of the more affluent undoubtedly get into better jobs because they acquire other skills such as fluency in English language and IT skills than a rural girl, but as a privilege of class this would also apply to male children. Such differences are common in any country and in all school systems, and not specific to the feminisation issue that is in discussion. Similarly, the female teachers who belong to the socially affluent classes naturally occupy the urban elite schools and the female teachers of the less affluent families end up in the rural schools. These are also common deployment issues, but further research is needed to understand the intersecting issues of class, wealth/poverty and gender that sometimes have an impact.

In Sri Lanka the salary structures do not officially discriminate between male and female, particularly in public sector roles. If discrimination exists at all it is in the private sector. At entry level a graduate teacher gets a salary comparable with the entry salaries of an engineer or a medical doctor. However, the differences do exist in the extra

allowances a doctor or a nurse earns with night time work, overtime work and attending specialised jobs etc. A teacher on the other hand gets a similar initial salary yet very few allowances, such as overtime or night duties and emergency call allowances. Many teachers offer tuition to earn extra incomes. Teaching is however a pensionable job and when compared with the private sector Sri Lankan women consider the pension as a high security incentive, offering a level of social protection for the future that is not available in all professions. Even with a little lower salary many people are likely to prefer a pensionable job. The parental generation believes this even more, and when coupled with the benefits teaching offers for women to spend time with their families, many women view teaching as an ideal role within Sri Lankan society.

An administrative assistant (Level 6, equivalent entry point of a trained teacher) in the government service earns a little less than a trained teacher at entry level to the job (UNOHRM, 2009). But whereas an administrative assistant may have many other opportunities to earn more with overtime work, weekend work etc., it is at the cost of family time. A female teacher on the other hand protects her family time and may even earn extra income by having a private tuition arrangement in her own home. These are the realistic comparable situations that encourage women into the profession. Even amongst other such gender stereotyped jobs, such as a bank teller, comparative salary advantage is assessed against family time. This is much valued in Sri Lankan culture as a mother is considered the 'Buddha at home'. Coming home early from work, being available at the weekend for their children and school vacations and holidays are valued more than a higher salary.

Educationally, Sri Lanka works well towards providing equal opportunity for girls and boys and the co-educational system has also enabled girls and boys to compete under the same school roof. Girls appear to be out-performing boys in academic as well as non-academic activities at school level. The school prize-giving ceremonies, a very popular school event in most of the upper social class schools co-educational schools, clearly demonstrate this.

Overall, Sri Lanka has had a comparatively positive history on gender parity within education and the role of women as facilitators of that education from the outset. Political actions since 1931 have paved the way for this. Sri Lanka continues to make strides towards combating some of the inequalities than other countries in the region and more broadly in the global South are dealing with: a girl child is valued and nurtured educationally and moves have been made towards combating inequality in facilities, opportunities and ownership for women. However, there are still inequalities at home and within the professions, employment and pay, presenting complexity when analysing many of the issues, indicating that educational equality for girls does not always translate comprehensively into other areas when they become women. The feminisation of the teaching profession is arguably a reflection of both the great leaps towards women's equality in Sri Lankan society, and the converse reality of gender stereotyping in employment. Teaching retains the status of a respectable and desirable job, but with a gendered caveat: one that reflects women's traditional role in particular, and provides them with a level of financial security not experienced everywhere. However, it is not necessarily the best paid job, and many men will look for other more lucrative work. Women's promotional mobility within the profession is also not reflective of their overall numbers. Overall, the samples used in this study provided initial insights into the perspectives of key groups related to the issues, including the teachers and teacher trainees themselves, as well as parents, principles and educational officers. Going forward, further research across several of the areas explored in this study is recommended in order to deepen our understanding of the issues.