

Part 4: The feminization of schooling: Is primary education really a woman's world?

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A very simple search for the keywords "female teachers-primary education" on any of the academic/non-academic search engines used nowadays, will return an enormous number of articles, blogs, internet web sites all arguing that the workforce is skewed dramatically towards women throughout the world. Historically, the workforce in education has been feminized in many societies, regardless of the state of development. The notion that primary education is the most suitable and appropriate position for women, has a long and deep history in almost every country (Coffey & Delamont: 2000). According to Drudy (2008, cited in Sari, 2012) this global phenomenon is firmly rooted in issues relating to economic development, urbanization, the position of women in society, cultural definitions of masculinity and the value of children and childcare.

1. Why women become teachers?

Education, working hours, age, and economic and marital status all play an important role in the process of women's career development (İnandı, 2009). Most of the women working in the education field state that they choose teaching because it seems to be a career option that is compatible with their other roles and responsibilities. This however, may not be the sole reason why women prefer teaching as a career. Vijaysimha (2012) states that other reasons, such as the possibility of exploring a subject in depth, the opportunity to interact with children, and the high ideals of the teaching profession might all have an effect. Although many women mention their liking for working with children or youngsters as sources of satisfaction in their work, this may not be the main reason for choosing a teaching career. A widely held notion among teachers in all school types is that the work of teaching is especially suited for women because it allows them to perform their socially approved role as homemakers and caregivers, while also doing a "respectable job" that places relatively limited demands in terms of time spent outside the home. Snodgrass (2010) believes that while most of the factors mentioned above form, to some extent, part of the context within which women make their career decisions, those decisions will in fact be more directly based on their own perceptions, needs, and desires.

Kirk (2008) lists family pressure as another important factor for women choosing teaching as a career. He believes that teaching is clearly an acceptable profession, and one into which women are encouraged. In the case of government primary school teachers, teaching was seen as the only suitable way for young women to earn a living. Often, family circumstances made it necessary for young women to bring in an income rather than study further, but family values restricted their choice of careers.

Another reason emphasized in the teacher education literature for women to choose teaching as a profession is the "altruistic"-type motivations (Oruç, 2013; Book & Freeman, 1986). Oruç (2013) states that the goal of an altruist is to assist another person, without expecting any kind of reward. Any emotional, spiritual or physical

rewards received are secondary, and cannot be considered as the primary motivation, which can also be related with women's socially approved roles.

In addition to these issues, more recently, the impact of feminization of schooling has started to gain interest in the field of education. Researchers have begun to investigate the reasons why teaching profession has become gender imbalanced in favour of women in certain countries in the first place, and what the impacts might be on learning processes and the educational outcomes for students (Kelleher, 2011; Antecol, Eren & Ozbeklik, 2011; Skelton, 2002). Antecol et. al. (2011) states that in regard to the question "Are female students adversely affected by having a female teacher?" the evidence is mixed. Recent studies in economics find having a female teacher either has a positive effect or no effect on female student achievement outcomes in middle school/high school or college/post-college.

2. The profile of teachers in primary and secondary education in Turkey

Regardless of context, educating children is one of the biggest steps we can take toward ending extreme poverty. Education is key to building a society that can overcome poverty in a sustainable manner. Investing in human capital brings about powerful social change and creates opportunities for those in developing countries to realise their full potential and to become leaders of the generation to come. Primary education refers to the compulsory education in which students are provided with the basic knowledge about all the relevant and necessary subjects of life, which may include basic numeracy, word formation and comprehension and knowledge about general ethics, norms and standards of the surroundings.

The common goal for primary and secondary education all around the world is to ensure that all pupils are able to develop their cognitive, social, emotional, cultural and physical skills to the best of their abilities, thus preparing them for their further school career. Success in this demanding task depends on school structure, the teachers and school administration, as well as parental support.

In Turkey, the compulsory primary school age involves the age group of 6 to 13. The enrolment of this age group starts at the end of September after the child's fifth birthday, and finishes at the end of the educational year in which the child turns 14. The objectives of primary education is to ensure that all Turkish children acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, behaviour and habits to become good citizens and are raised in accordance with the concept of national morals and that they are prepared for life and for the next level of education in accordance with their interests, talents and capabilities. The 8 years of primary education consists of the four-year primary education and four year compulsory lower secondary schools. The elective courses to support students' upper secondary education are chosen according to the students' ability, improvement and preferences in lower secondary schools.

General secondary education is a four-year compulsory educational process that prepares students either higher education or for employment according to their interests, expectations and abilities in addition to equipping them with a knowledge of the world, expanding on their primary education.

In the city of İzmir, which is located in the Aegean Region of Turkey as the third biggest city in terms of population after İstanbul and Ankara, there are 3085 primary, general secondary, vocational and technical high schools. In total, of the 40493 teachers staffed in all these schools, 14227 are male and 26266 are female. Since the results from a single city may not be representative of the whole country, below the readers are given the number and percentage of male/female teacher ratio in Turkey.

As can be seen from the table, in pre-primary education, the numbers are striking. In contrast to the 694 male teachers in this sector, there were 16817 female teachers in 2003-2004 education year. Since this time, as you can see from the table the number of both male and female pre-education teachers have increased, but the relative disparity between them remained. In 2012-2013, of the total of 62 933 teachers working in 27192 schools, only 3620 were male i.e. the number of the female teachers is 16 times more than the number of males. Paton (2013) states almost a similar situation in the UK saying that "...just three per cent of teachers in state nurseries are male".

Table 1. Number of Teachers by Educational Year

Educational Year	School	Teachers Total	Teachers Male	Teachers Female
Pre-Primary Education				
2003/'04	13.285	17.511	694	16.817
2004/05	15.978	22.152	1.161	20.991
2005/06	18.539	20.910	1.167	19.743
2006/07	20.675	24.775	1.181	23.594
2007/08	22.506	25.901	1.218	24.683
2008/09	23.653	29.342	1.644	27.698
2009/10	26.681	42.716	2.069	40.647
2010/11	27.606	48.330	3.414	44.916
2011/12	28.625	55.883	2.954	52.929
2012/13	27.197	62.933	3.620	59.313
Primary Education				
1992/93	49.974	235.721	134.899	100.822
1993/94	49.599	237.943	135.552	102.391
1994/95	48.429	233.073	131.516	101.557
1995/96	49.540	231.900	130.752	101.148
1996/97	47.313	217.131	122.581	94.550
Junior High School				
1992/93	7.544	56.055	35.331	20.724
1993/94	8.318	61.968	38.244	23.724
1994/95	8.897	64.871	38.619	26.252

1995/96	9.385	70.661	41.502	29.159
1996/97	9.830	72.164	42.094	30.070
General Junior High School				
1992/93	6.680	55.457	35.059	20.398
1993/94	7.425	61.457	37.989	23.468
1994/95	7.993	64.520	38.430	26.090
1995/96	8.493	70.345	41.315	29.030
1996/97	8.844	71.808	41.893	29.915
Vocational and Technical Junior High School				
1992/93	864	598	272	326
1993/94	893	511	255	256
1994/95	904	351	189	162
1995/96	892	316	187	129
1996/97	986	356	201	155

Source: National Education Statistics, Formal Education 2012-2013

Even though less dramatic than the numbers in pre-primary education, in secondary education there are still inconsistencies between male-female teacher ratios; however this time skewed towards male teachers. Contrary to most of the European countries (Gyngell, 2012; Paton, 2013) in Turkey it seems males prefer and value teaching in primary level as much as women. The figures for 1992-1997, show that males were dominant in this field; however, more recent statistics (see Table 2) below reveal that females have regained dominance in 2013 both in private and public primary schools there are more female than male teachers.

After an analysis of the data, it is possible to say that the majority of teachers in all types of high schools are male. In Junior High, General Junior High and Vocational and Technical Junior High Schools, in all educational semesters, men are found in greater numbers. This might be because of the nature of these schools. Since these schools provide a four-year compulsory educational process that prepares students for higher education and for the future as well as for an occupation and job fields, and since the majority of the students attending these schools are males, and therefore it is not surprising that male teachers prefer these schools.

Table 2. Number of Teachers by the Type of School in 2012/13

Educational Year	School	Teachers Total	Teachers Male	Teachers Female
Primary Schools				
2012/13	29139	282043	118937	163106
Public				
2012/13	28177	261497	113776	147721

Private				
2012/13	992	20546	5161	15385
Junior High Schools				
2012/13	16987	269759	129356	140403
Public				
2012/13	16083	250833	122352	128481
Private				
2012/13	904	18926	7004	11922

Source: National Education Statistics, Formal Education 2012-2013

The above table represents the ratio of male-female teachers in 2012-2013 educational year. It can be seen that females are dramatically dominant in the first phase of education (Primary schools) whereas the situation is reversal in high schools. However, it should also be emphasized that there are greater numbers of female teachers in Junior High School public sector than males in Turkey.

3. Conclusion

Whether because their own choice or because they are socially pressured, it is an accepted fact almost everywhere in the world females have a general tendency in all cultures to become teachers. Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom are examples of countries often referred to as having 'feminised' teaching professions, denoting that women represent a significant majority of the teaching workforce (Kelleher, 2011). As the numbers show, Turkey is another country in which male-female teacher ratios do not present an equal situation in terms of gender.

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The feminisation of the teaching profession through example of Austria

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1. The current situation

More than two third of the teaching staff at Austrian schools are women¹. In elementary schools, the share of women in the teaching staff is around 91 %. In vocational schools, however, there is almost a gender balance of the teaching staff. The percentages for the different branches of vocational education are, however, quite different: the proportion of female teachers at schools preparing for economical occupations is 79 %, at technical and industrial schools, however, their proportion is 26 %.

The Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture has the following statistics in respect to the various types of schools from:

Teachers in Austria	Total	Female	Male
All schools in mainstream education	115.129	80.353	34.776
Total general compulsory schools	65.863	53.343	12.520
....Elementary schools	29.910	272.614	2.649
....Secondary schools	27.872	19.838	8.034
....Special schools	5.859	5.026	833
....Vocational schools	2.222	1.218	1.004
General upper secondary schools	20.820	12.948	7.872

¹ For comparison: In the academic year 2011/12, 34,765 people were employed as scientific and artistic staff at public universities. Of these, 2,309 were professors. 32,552 accounted for other scientific and artistic staff.

Overall, the proportion of women is 39 %. In the group of professors ,women are only 21 %

(Source:http://www.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/bildung_und_kultur/formales_bildungswesen/lehrpersonen/index.html [accessed 27 June 2013]).

....Compulsory vocational schools	4.935	1.659	3.276
...Vocational middle schools and high schools	21.908	11.119	10.789
....Higher colleges for teacher and educator training	1.603	1.284	319

(Source: Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture: accessed 27 June 2013
http://www.bmukk.gv.at/schulen/bw/ueberblick/lehrstat_oester.xml)

2. Historical background for feminisation of the teaching profession in Austria

Until the first half of the 19th Century, the teaching profession in Austria remained a distinct domain for men. Only with the Imperial Elementary Schools Act of 1869, when women were trained in separate female teacher training institutions, they received a formal equal level of education as men. - No sooner than that the first female teachers entered school service with their new education, or it was considered as an "intrusion" into the domain of men and several arguments against the use of female teachers were raised: female teachers are exposed to greater physical and emotional stress, which would make them more susceptible to illness. Marriage and pregnancy were claimed to support this assertion, as well as the assertion that married female teachers were less "joyful in their profession". In the different crown lands, this led to different rules in female teacher's celibacy. Another argument denied the female teachers the ability to impose themselves, to order and maintain discipline, whereby they were consequently made to work in the lower grades and in girls' schools. A lack of reasoning ability in conferences, a closer proximity to clergy and easier influence ability was ascribed to female teachers - especially during the liberal era. They were referred to as a threat to the school, especially as directors. Their lower pay -as much as up to 20% - was constructed around following arguments: female teachers had to only in very exceptional cases take care of family members, and their training in female handicraft was considered way less valuable than geometry and more of what in fact was the case at teacher training colleges. Although when female teachers had to teach in classes led by a male colleague, "female handicraft" - i.e. taking up more hours - they were always excluded from the efforts of male teachers to better their salaries. Female teachers remained also longer at the lowest salary level (sub teacher) and only gradually they were giving the management of a school. The remuneration of female teachers was not run by the principle of achievement, nor by qualifications nor by logic - as in relation to celibacy. Only in the First Republic of Austria an equality for female teachers with their male colleagues was established (see Seebauer, 2013, in printing).

3. Feminisation in public discourse

Print and online media show it again and again: "elementary school teachers" are a problem. One speaks of "the feminisation of schools" and "boys are being deprived by the school system". The small proportion of male teachers is i.e. cited as the reason for the problematic situation of young people. In this public discourse, arguments taken from the perspective of educational sciences are apprehended - often indiscriminately and

uncritically -; named are: the image of the profession, the low social status, the low wages compared to other so-called "man's jobs", lack of career opportunities, the relatively long duration of training in relation to opportunities for advancement and pay. However, on the other hand, the teaching profession is very compatible with the traditional image of women and the family: especially the family-friendly working hours are brought to mind; educating is much more likely to appeal to women. (see. Bühler 2004, for: Federal Ministry of Education, Sciences and Culture 2005, p. 27 ff.).

4. Feminisation in gender-theoretically based educational science studies

The lines of explanation and argumentation based on gender theory, allow a more nuanced idea about the reasons why few men choose for the training to become primary school teachers.

- It is not so much the economical restrictions that form the reason why so few men work in "women's jobs", as it is because of social and psychological conflicts;
- The "loneliness" of being a single man in an overall female teaching staff can be seen as a reason;
- The professional motivation of men working as primary school teachers, can bring them under the suspicion of being simply "temporary" workers who might change jobs when offered more attractive opportunities;
- Aggravating for men is the conflict of being socially desirable as a role-model and at the same time performing typical women's work;
- The limited career opportunities make the teacher profession very little attractive for those who are not interested in an administrative position;
- Elementary school teachers are stigmatised as no real men or homosexuals. ...

Using the example of child care in Austria, George Augusta (1996) pinpointed the "minority status" as the central conflict in a career field that is associated with "femininity". Men in this career field are faced with different demands: on the one hand as a man they have to meet a heterosexual norm, on the other hand they have to perform a job considered "feminine" (Augusta, 1996, pp. 48f.).

Consequently, Augusta lists the strategies of child-care workers used to produce hegemonic masculinity:

- Withdrawing oneself in certain parts of the profession, specializing;
- Stressing the "masculinity" of the job (Mechanics, physical strength) and distinguishing themselves with female fields of activity;
- Distancing themselves thereby that the position is seen as a transition towards jobs with higher salaries, prestige and challenge and that they are striving for management positions or administrative activities;
- Closing oneself off from work, having little or no connection to the work.

Paseka (2005) talks in her study on the vocational motivation of graduates of Austrian Pedagogical Academy (since 2007: Teacher Training College) of four types of career choice:

- the teaching profession as an alternative career or life plan, which is found only in men and which stands for a rejection of traditional male lifestyles, the interviewees had stumbled through private contacts rather coincidentally on the opportunity of becoming a teacher;
- as a new / re-orientation
- as rational solution
- as the only true career choice (see. Paseka 2005, p. 224).

5. On the problem of the small proportion of men in primary schools

5.1 In general

In consequence, some general research findings are selectively summarized (compare Horstkemper 1999; Bölsche 2002a, Larcher/Schafroth 2004; Thimm 2004):

- There is a lack of role models; an orientation on male role models is not provided for boys; male children do not find any same-sex partners and models with whom they are able to identify themselves;
- The gender imbalance is in no way desirable, an equally-justified coexistence of men and women cannot be exemplified towards children and youngsters;
- Typical girl qualities are being overrated, qualities typical for boys are undervalued;
- Feminisation draws to itself a "feminine" style and "feminine" cultures of teaching;
- Especially in a fatherless society, more boys would thus need more men in elementary school - even to counteract violence...

5.2 In particular - in classes with children having an immigrant background

As a result of immigration, the number of people with a foreign nationality has risen strongly since the early 1990s and again in recent years. At the beginning of 2012², about 970 500 foreigners lived in Austria, with a share in the total population of 11.5%.

² Comparison: In 1981, the number of foreigners stood at 288,200, or 3.8 %. During the 1980s, it increased only very slowly. In 1994, the number of foreigners stood already around 665 100, with a share of 8.4 %. From the mid-1990s, their number and proportion largely stagnated, but since 2001, a stronger growth is again recorded (Statistik Austria, 2012).

The following graph shows the percentage of foreigners on grounds of nationality (dated 1.1.2012, Statistics Austria 2012).

The proportion of male and female immigrants (students with an immigrant background) is reflected in the schools: At the elementary schools of the city of Wels (Upper Austria) every second child (49.5%) is a foreigner or respectively pupils with a non-German mother tongue, at secondary schools in Vienna-Hernals the proportion of these students is 93.2%. In Vienna Brigittenau two out of three AHS students (64.7%) have an immigrant background.



Across Austria, vocational schools with 10.8% are the type of school with the lowest, special schools with 27.2% are those with the highest proportion of immigrants. In Vienna, every tenth elementary school has about a 90 percent share of students with an immigrant background, but in some Viennese districts every fifth elementary school is exclusively attended by immigrant children (according to a parliamentary inquiry by Minister of Education Claudia Schmied, according to ORF (Austrian Broadcast) ethnic groups: <http://volksgruppen.orf.at/diversitaet/aktuell/stories/99029/>).

Back to feminisation:

- Especially boys from immigrant families have problems with the many female teachers, they especially lack male role models - As Bölsche (2002) points out "... because they have been drilled with the iron rules of machismo through their authoritarian fathers" (Bölsche 2002, and references . Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture).
- From a functional point of view nothing could argue against a female majority. Alas Steinegger (2005) "[problems] arise there where a student or the parents do not recognize the authority of a teacher." Referred to here, are children and parents from cultures such as Turkey or countries of former Yugoslavia (Steinegger 2005, cit. for the Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture).

6. Some suggestions for reviewing your own conceptions and assumptions about male teachers (see Cunningham i.e. 2002, p. 11):

- What do you think is the benefit of having male teachers?
- What are the disadvantages of the fact that there are no teachers available for young children?
- What ideas do you have about how well men can fulfil the role of primary school teachers?
- Would you like all kinds of male teachers or only certain? - Which? Why?

- What do you think would happen when men enter the professional field of early childhood education? Will they strengthen it? Will they take away women's power? What other effects would they bring with them? Why?
- What would your institution look like if half the workforce would be men?
- How do you encourage families to welcome men as teachers of their young children?

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