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Primary School Teachers Careers in England and Wales: the relationship between gender, role, position and promotion aspirations.

Mary Thornton and Pat Bricheno

Abstract

This study explores gender differences in UK primary teachers' perceptions of their careers, through a national questionnaire survey and follow-up interviews. It is framed by reference to Weiner's three main components of feminism (the political, the critical and the practical) and a concern to highlight difference and complexity, as well as patterns and trends, within primary school teaching. Female and male respondents indicated different areas of concern and influence on their careers and it was found that while reported reasons for not seeking or not achieving promotion were multifaceted, the known and experienced disproportionate promotion of men, plus the frequently traditional gender differences in work - home orientation and contextual / situational expectations, contrived to limit career development for a significant number of women.

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Primary School Teachers Careers in England and Wales: the relationship between gender, role, position and promotion aspirations.

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1. Introduction

The teaching profession in the UK and elsewhere has become increasingly female (Howson, 1998). Currently UK Policy is focused on recruiting more men: however, once qualified and in-post, men tend to achieve well, acquiring a disproportionate number of high status / senior posts. This has been noted in other countries too. For example, Kauppinen-Toropainen. and Lammi's (1993) cross-cultural study of men in female-dominated professions notes similar disproportionality in Nordic countries and the USA . There are few gender-based data available concerning early years / primary teaching as a career for both men and women. This study maps and explores gendered differences in UK primary teachers' perceptions of their careers, through a national questionnaire survey and follow-up interviews.

While large scale and empirically oriented, the study is framed by reference to Weiner's three main components of feminism (the political, the critical and the practical) as the necessary starting point for any work on gender (Weiner,1994), and a concern to highlight difference and complexity, as well as patterns and trends, within the socially constructed and socially structured profession of primary school teaching.

2. Background

The status of early years / primary teaching has been linked to the status of women. As a career, it has relatively low status, especially for men (Penn & McQuail, 1997). Despite recommendations from the House of Commons Select Committee, and the Teacher Training Agency (TTA, 1996) that more men should be recruited it is becoming more, not less, a predominantly female profession. However, once qualified and in-post, men tend to achieve well, acquiring a highly disproportionate number of senior posts.

The extant literature on gender and primary teaching focuses on the nature of teachers work (Campbell & Neill, 1994; Nias, 1987, 1989), the 'Glass Ceiling' effect on women seeking promotion (Wilson, 1997; Acker, 1994; Ozga 1993), the restrictions

hegemonic masculinity imposes on educative and career options for males (Kenway & Willis, 1998; Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Connell, 1987) and the experience of men working in predominantly female occupations (Owen et al, 1998; Penn & McQuail, 1997; Ruxton, 1992). There are also some small-scale qualitative studies of primary teachers (Boulton & Coldron, 1998, Evans, 1998, Skelton, 1991; Jones, 1990). However, no UK nation-wide data on gender and primary teaching as a career exists and present British policy initiatives (Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) 'Green Paper', 1998) are based on relatively little empirical evidence.

An earlier small-scale survey of primary schools in the English county of Hertfordshire found that a large proportion of males reached Head (Principal) or Deputy Head level, that they were likely to have different subject responsibilities (mathematics, science and information technology), and that they most frequently taught the oldest children (10/11 yrs) (Thornton, 1996). The national survey, reported here, replicated these findings and thus places, in the public / political domain, accurate information about the occupational life-chances of female (and male) primary teachers. Such information can be used to critique and inform current UK policy on recruitment and careers in primary teaching. In addition to structured questions, a free-response section was included in the national questionnaire survey and, where respondents were willing, followed-up through open-ended focused interviews. The interviews aimed at facilitating teacher reflection on, and expression of, their individual and personal feelings, experiences, perceptions and life-contexts in relation to, but not confined to, their work and careers as primary school teachers. By participating in the national survey, by sharing their views, often forcefully, with teacher researchers, they contributed in a practical way to the ideas and findings presented in this paper.

3. Methodology

A random, representative sample of primary schools in England and Wales was selected, using existing Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) figures. Schools were used because a national sampling frame for primary teachers does not exist. Simple random sampling of Local Education Authorities (LEAs) was followed by stratified sampling of school types within each LEA. All selected schools were sent a letter asking them to participate. All teachers within schools agreeing to participate were sent a copy of the questionnaire to complete. Two hundred and seven teachers responded to the questionnaire and fifty-four teachers have been interviewed.

The proportion of school types in the survey was close to that required in the designed sample. There was some over-representation of first and infant schools and under-representation of junior and middle schools. This had an effect on the proportions of male and female respondents since male primary teachers are more likely to be found teaching older children. This disproportionate response from junior schools / male teachers will be addressed in future work, but it is not thought to seriously affect the validity of the sample currently available. Indeed, it may, in part at least, reflect the continuing decline in the number of male primary school teachers in England and Wales since 1994. The current gender spread of questionnaire and interview respondents is given in Table 1.

[Table 1: Respondents by gender about here]

a) The Questionnaire

The questionnaire was in two parts. Part one consisted of factual questions concerning, for example, age and qualifications of teachers. Part two offered respondents the opportunity to express an opinion. Part one was designed to answer the following questions: -

- ◀ Are promotion opportunities related to full-time and part-time patterns of work?
- ◀ Do male and female teachers differ in their level of subject qualifications?
- ◀ Are responsibilities and subject specialisms related to age and qualifications?
- ◀ Do male and female teachers differ in the amount and type of INSET they receive?
- ◀ Are male teachers more likely to seek promotion?

Text analysis of free-response data from part two explored the reasons reported by teachers for their promotion or lack of promotion, and their views about seeking promotion. The NUD.IST software, which is particularly suitable for grounded analysis (Richards & Richards, 1997; Kelle, 1995) and the linking of qualitative and quantitative data, was used to facilitate this analysis. Teachers who completed the questionnaire were asked to indicate their willingness to be interviewed later.

b) The Interviews

Open-ended focused interviews were undertaken with selected respondents who had indicated a willingness to participate further. The aim of these interviews was to feedback general face-data findings from the survey; to include participants' views in aiding understanding of survey validity and meaning; and to explore informants'

individual and personal responses to primary teaching as a career. Issues connected with teachers' career aspirations, and their perceptions of beneficial or detrimental effects on these aspirations, were also addressed in the interviews. All interviews were tape-recorded with respondents' approval.

A total of 54 teachers have been interviewed so far. The final interview target (80) will be obtained by a second random selection of additional teachers from specific school types (second-tranche questionnaires and interviews) such that the teacher respondents are clearly both randomly selected and thus viewed as representative of the teaching population of England and Wales.

4. Survey Findings

Face-data summaries and simple counts of stated views or opinions are useful in identifying the social frameworks and patterns within which individual teacher career orientations are located. It should be noted that they provide only a snapshot view, at one particular time, of teachers in one particular national education system. Survey data, as reported here, take little account of individual circumstances, constraints, experiences, or views and beliefs. These are indeed unique and can only be captured through more qualitative data collection and analysis. However, questionnaires can help provide an understanding of the socially structured frameworks and patterns within which individual teachers make, change, and live with, and through, their current career orientations.

The national survey data reported here confirm the findings from the earlier 1995 Hertfordshire study: almost half of the female teachers (47.2%) are on main professional grade (MPG), holding no additional allowances or management positions; the majority of male teachers (68.4%) are on salaries above MPG, as allowance holders or as part of the senior management team. Of the males in the sample, almost half (48.1%) have achieved headship but a far smaller proportion of the female teachers (16.1%) have done so (Table 2). Chi squared tests suggest that these gender differences are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). The structured questionnaire data suggest that while there may be relatively few male teachers in primary teaching, once qualified and in post, they have excellent career prospects.

[Table 2: Male / female teacher respondents on basic (MPG) salary scale, receiving additional salary (above MPG) or having achieved Headship. about here]

Significant differences ($p < 0.001$) were also found between male and female teachers and school type (infant, first, junior, middle and junior plus infant (JMI) schools). Men were mostly teaching in, and head teachers of, types of school that contained older children

Research by Alexander, (1991) suggests that, in England, around 80% of primary teachers are female but around 50% of head teachers are male. Our statistical data are in line with his findings. Similar patterns of disproportionality, in male control over decision making in primary schools, have been found in America (Allen, 1993; Lee, 1973, cited Acker, 1983), and the Nordic countries (Kauppinen- Toropainen and Lammi, 1993). There too, men tend to occupy more senior positions and obtain higher salaries than their female contemporaries. The socially structured and gender-patterned occupational life-chances of primary teachers are clearly unequal. This needs to be addressed in current public / political debate and policy initiatives, which focus on teacher career structures and the recruitment of more men, but which explicitly ignore gender as an issue.

When John Patten, a former British Secretary of State for Education under Margaret Thatcher, proposed, in 1993, a 'mums' army' of non-graduate and differentially trained nursery and Key Stage 1 (5 to 7 years) teachers, he made explicit and overt the usually implicit low status of primary teachers. His 'mums' army' proposal clearly illustrated, and made public, teacher stratification within the educational division of labour, although he did not invent it. This stratification of teachers has a long history covering the latter half of this century and permeating the consciousness of many parents and the general public as well as politicians (see Zufiaurre and Goni in this issue for a discussion of this in Spain). For teachers in England and Wales, as elsewhere, higher status (and subsequent authority and power) goes with the teaching of older pupils and maleness. As Skelton (1991) notes, the younger the child the lower the status of its teacher. This power / status pattern is illustrated by the gender distribution of teachers not only between schools (different age-phases) but also within primary schools. These gendered and patterned inequalities in power relations within primary teaching were recognised and addressed by many respondents in the free response section of the questionnaire and the follow-up interviews discussed below.

For women teachers in our survey, various factors, such as age, qualifications and length of teaching experience, were found to be significantly related. This was not the

case for male teachers. In terms of actual qualifications held, there was no evidence to suggest that, overall, male and female teachers are differentially qualified for the teaching positions they hold (see Table 3).

[Table 3: Management positions in relation to qualifications and gender – about here]

Male respondents, however, reported a different pattern of current career intentions from female respondents with similar qualifications. Thus, nearly 80% of female teachers with the lowest qualifications (Teaching Certificate) claimed definitely not to be seeking promotion while only 50% of men with the same low qualification ruled out promotion. There were similarly different responses from male and female teachers with the highest qualifications (Higher Degree). For men, 50% reported seeking promotion and the remaining 50% were looking for a job outside teaching. For women with a higher degree, 39% reported seeking promotion, while 15% were looking for a job outside teaching. Forty six percent said they were definitely not seeking promotion (Table 4).

[Table 4: Reported promotion seeking among male and female teachers - about here]

From this particular snapshot view of the primary teaching profession in England and Wales, taken during 1998/9, men simply appear more likely to seek and achieve promotion and higher pay with, on average, the same qualifications as their female peers (see Table 5 & Fig. 1)

[FIG 1: Achievement of promotion and gender – about here]

All the male teachers aged 21 to 30yrs were recorded as intending to seek promotion at this point in their career but only 71% of female teachers in this age group. Of the female teachers, 21% self-reported as ‘definitely not seeking promotion’ and 8% were ‘not sure’. While the percentages of both male and female teachers reporting that they were seeking promotion decreased according to their age, the *proportion* of female teachers within each age group seeking promotion was quite different from that of male teachers. This was particularly conspicuous among the youngest and oldest respondents: in the over 50yrs age group only 3% of females but 20% of males were seeking promotion (see Fig. 2 below).

For the 31-40yrs group 50% of males reported that they were not seeking promotion but there were none who were ‘not sure’. In contrast, in the female 31-40yrs group 10% were not sure. Only in the 41-50yrs group were there were some males (6%) who were ‘not sure’ about seeking promotion, but ‘not sure’ occurred in all female age groups except 50+.

[FIG. 2 Age of teacher, promotion seeking and gender – about here]

When *length* of teaching experience (rather than *age* of teachers) is considered, where some variance might be expected, regarding female respondents who may have had, or were contemplating, career breaks, gender differences are still apparent (see Fig 3). The peak period for women reporting promotion seeking is between 6 and 10 years in-service (52%) followed by a significant decline (11 to 20 years, 27%; 20 plus years, 23%). Compared to their women peers, men in the sample reported a higher rate of promotion seeking in all length of service groups except 6 to 10 years. But,

length of service as a variable did generate a ‘not sure’ group of 33% of men with less than 5 years service.

[FIG 3 Length of teaching experience, promotion seeking and gender. – about here]

The data suggest a pattern concerning firmness of decision-making for male primary teachers, in seeking or not seeking promotion that was not shared by their female peers. Some reasons for this apparent greater female ambivalence are indicated in the questionnaire free-responses and interview data.

5. Self-reported concerns and issues

Many teachers wrote extensive comments in the questionnaire’s free response section. There were clear indications here, and in the interviews, that a large number of respondents wanted their feelings and views to be heard and the issues they raised addressed publicly and politically. These more qualitative data also suggest some important gender disparities in primary teachers’ perceptions of their careers, priorities, orientation to work and the opportunities that they believe are available to them. The gender disparities identified frequently (but not always) reinforce gender stereotypes. Through the use of QSR NUD.IST (1997) for free-response questionnaire data sorting, female respondents were found to write more about family circumstances (22% vs. 7% men), stress (12% vs. 4%) and male career advantage (16% vs. 7%). Male respondents were found to write more about government initiatives and the curriculum (15% vs. 4% of women), power (15% vs. 4%) and status issues (22% vs. 14%) (Table 6). These issues and differences were also noted in the interview data.

[Table 5: Issues arising from free-response data about here]

a) Government Initiatives and the Curriculum

Male primary teachers were more likely than their female peers to write and talk about government initiatives and the curriculum (15% to 4%). Drawing on their personal and individual experiences, and orientations to their careers, men were more likely to express concern about the ways in which government initiatives had affected the status and power of primary teachers while women tended to be more concerned

about the effects government initiatives had upon their work with children. The following two quotes from male respondents usefully illustrate this point.

I know of MANY, especially male, acquaintances who have begun to train to be teachers and have left either before completing training or very soon after joining the profession. Long hours, low pay, low status and higher stress were all cited as reasons for finding alternative careers.... government initiatives and denigration of teachers have not helped. Even parents say they wouldn't do the job.! (Male, 316.1)

I do not wish to seek any further promotion from my current position as deputy head teacher. The current demands on a head teacher are unrealistic and reflect a lack of good management practice from central government etc.- too much change in a short period of time and a chronic shortage of adequate finance to implement the changes. (Male, 7.5)

There is some evidence (Bonner, 1997; Allan, 1993; Flintoff, 1993) that men, as students and workers, prefer to be seen as achieving and competent and as having high status. That is: 'they internalise the norms of hegemonic masculinity, which reward the ideals of masculinity, regardless of its correspondence with the actual traits of the majority of men' (Connell, cited Williams and Villemez, 1993:66). The perceived and real public 'denigration' of teachers in the UK over the past ten years may be effectively encouraging such men not to seek promotion, stay in, or even to join, a profession that already has relatively low status, due to its association with women's work and young children. It appeared from the study that even the potential power and position of headship could not, for many of these men working in a non-traditional occupation, counter the more general societal evaluation of primary teaching as relatively low status.

Women tended to focus more on the negative effects that government initiatives had upon their work as teachers with children.

.... despite the wish to stay with the children as a class teacher, the frustration of having heads of department, and heads who did an appalling job and had no respect for individuals be they adult or child I felt forced to seek promotion. My career in teaching has been rewarding, and enjoyable, but it has dominated my whole life because of the hours it demands... This with the low esteem given to the

profession and constant criticism by central government takes some handling at times..... We are constantly asked to add new things to the curriculum, and change our approach, to pull our socks up. When we are giving our heart and soul and a great deal of thought... this becomes a question of squeezing time yet again and not mind the throwing out of hours of work done from the previous curriculum..... (Female, 93.1)

I am perfectly content with my role as it stands. Teaching is very demanding and takes all our time and efforts. We have enough responsibility as it is. Promotion means more paper work etc. which detracts from your actual role which is to teach the children in my care. They are what is important. Their individual learning, development and happiness. As teachers we have enough to cope with from the Government's bureaucracy. Their ever-changing policies and whims..... It's the children that matter and what we do for them! (Female, 157.4)

These detailed, heart-felt comments, were frequently encountered in this study, and echo the traditional prioritisation by many women teachers of the job of classroom teacher, and of the children in their care. They appear to be in marked opposition to the implicit and explicit career orientation and status seeking of some of their traditionally oriented male counterparts.

b) Power and Status Issues

Men tended to write more about power (15% vs. 4%) and status issues (22% vs. 14%), but again their foci differed. For some men progression to headship was seen as the logical way for their careers to develop

It has been a natural progression building on experiences and expertise. (Male, 316.1)

That it was always a natural progression and what I set out to do. It seems that if you enter a profession you should seek to 'aim for the top. (Male, 269.1)

Look forward to more challenge. Able to lead/decision making. (Male, 88.2)

This was less frequently the case for female teachers.

My own aspirations as a young teacher are to specialise in one area, such as literacy, rather than a traditional linear route (to Headship). I look forward to having management responsibilities and an influence in the running of a school, but have no aspirations to the arduous responsibilities and personal sacrifices necessary to be a good head teacher. (Female, 284.6)

For other less conventional men there was a shared concern with female peers about headship taking them away from the prime purpose of the job i.e. teaching and the children.

Headship (and Deputy Headships in large schools) is more and more becoming a managerial/financial type of job, to the exclusion of contact with children. I would not seek promotion unless I could guarantee a large proportion of my time involved some input into day-to-day teaching. I also think that the position of head carries far too much power - the role of an SMT should be developed and some of the head's powers devolved to it (Male, 194.7)

Promotion is often seen as a reward for work done on cultivating contacts, doing courses (which may or may not be relevant to the real classroom needs) and other 'band-wagon' stuff. Next for me is some voluntary work: i.e. my own children are GCSE + University. Soon I'll be free to teach someone who will thank me, somewhere in the world outside UK Promotion for me is not an option. (Male, 269.3)

Morale in teaching is low. Unjustified criticism is having a serious effect on the profession. Raise morale and salaries plus introduce effective TOP management and then I would be interested in further promotion.” (Male, 47.5)

Clearly, not all men as individuals seek the power and status of headship or of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987).

However, the data do indicate that some men may be more interested in obtaining influence / power / status within their teaching careers, while, in contrast, women

appear more frequently to seek promotion in order to use it to make a 'difference', be it a better or different style of management and / or improvements at the classroom level.

c) Family Circumstances

Women wrote more about family commitments (22% vs. 7%) and how these affected their promotion opportunities and intentions.

The workload is making promotion accessible to those who do not have family commitments. This limits it to mainly men and excludes working mums for the most part. (Female, 92.2)

It is very easy to become locked into one teaching appointment particularly if you are a woman with a family. Often this leads to penalties and a terminated career structure. (Female, 65.3)

I will not be seeking promotion from class teacher – as although age and experience wise I ought to be considering promotion, I have recently had a baby. Therefore I have my hands full. (Female, 68.4)

If you want promotion you have to be prepared to put the job before the family and I have never been prepared to do this. (Female, 296.3)

The workload for a primary teacher in the UK, especially with extra responsibilities for year groups or specialist subject teaching, has become very heavy in recent years. Some female respondents noted that to take on senior roles they would have to be in a position where family responsibilities were delegated to a partner or extended family. This was viewed by many women as a stronger possibility for male teachers with female partners at home, but much less so for female teachers. The data suggest that many women teachers with families feel compelled to drop out of the promotion race, for a variety of personal reasons and circumstances, and this may explain, at least in part, why they are under-represented in the most senior positions. There is also a problem, noted by female respondents, in regaining career momentum once they have had a career-break to have and raise children.

d) Stress

Given the individual but also shared family circumstances to which many women teachers referred perhaps it was not surprising that it more female than male respondents wrote about stress (12% vs. 4%).

Owing to cultural expectations of females, women teachers are generally more obedient and wear themselves out trying to 'make things work. (Female, 40.3)

Increased stress from workload puts me off promotion! I am busy enough just on an 'A' allowance. (Female, 205.6)

Where men talked of stress, it was more likely to be in relation to leadership positions than to classroom workload and / or family commitments. "MAJOR concerns relating to increasing levels of ill health/stress related problems in the profession, particularly Heads." (Male, 88.2)

e) Career Prospects and Advantages

Women emphasised male career advantage (16% vs. 7%). In the free response section of the questionnaire and in interviews many claimed that men had an advantage over women when seeking promotion. However, male teachers did not write anything that would appear to acknowledge their male sex as an advantage.

..... women teachers rarely get promotion especially if they immerse themselves in work and leave themselves no time to 'sell themselves'. Less dedicated workers (and generally speaking men belong to this group) are more successful at self presentation..... Promotion is theirs! (Female, 40.3)

I know this is a common cry from female primary school teachers but over my 32 years I worked with many extremely able and committed male and female teachers and some less so! All the males are now heads – the majority of the women are not! (Female, 126.5)

Seeking promotion in the primary sector is difficult and is becoming more difficult nowadays – unless you are male, in which case you appear to go up the ladder more quickly. (Female, 298.6)

It is harder for a woman than a man. This view is coloured by my own experience. In my present position on a teaching team of 12.2 teachers, 3 are men. All 3 are on the Senior Management Team and until last year I was the only female on SMT (now there are 2,..... I believe promotion favours men.... The profession still has more promotion prospects for male teachers, whereas the females are generally the more conscientious! (Female, 88.3)

Such apparent and often cited individual female resentment of the gendered nature of career opportunities went largely unrecognised by most male respondents.

I always wanted to be a headmaster. I was fortunate to be appointed to the deputy headship of a 4 teacher school after just over four years teaching and then to be deputy head of a large (16 class) school four and a half years later. After almost five years I was appointed headmaster of this school where I have almost completed 25 years and never applied for another job. (Male, 47.7)

One man did however note that gender might be an issue.

I consider that gender is an issue in primary education promotion simply because of the ratio of entrants to this area of education rather than any sense of preference. (Male, 316.1)

Interview data suggest that, when engaged in open discussion, other male primary teachers recognise the possibility or perceptions of a gendered career advantage. Without that dialogue however, and despite the stated questionnaire focus on gender, male respondents did not appear to see gender as an issue in their careers. Female respondents clearly did!

Some female teachers located the problem of gendered career patterns within the appointments and promotions structures that operate in UK schools. Here school governing bodies have a great deal of power, making decisions about promotion, appointments and pay. They involve, alongside head teachers and civil service advisors, volunteer lay people from the community and local businesses. Training for school governorship is encouraged but is optional, and equality or gender issues are not high on the agenda of governor training (Bagley, 1993). Thus traditional attitudes

(men in leadership roles) may go unchallenged and the small number of available male primary teachers can lead school governors to favour men when considering appointments and promotions in their schools.

I do not favour the L. M. S. (Local Management of Schools) structure and the role of governors appointing professionals within schools. The appointment process is rather unprofessional. I feel that the teaching profession should support a more professional and assertive role in appointing teachers. (Female, 65.3)

Priorities are always given to men. They needn't work so hard. You can see a clear pattern from the beginning of their career. Most of the interviewing panel are male. (Female, 13.1)

I do feel in early years that men have an unfair advantage as I remember attending an interview for a post 'experienced infant teacher required' all candidates were female apart from the one male who was straight out of uni(versity) and needless to say he was appointed! (Female, 68.5)

To summarise the data presented in this section, it would seem that the known and experienced disproportionate promotion of men, plus the frequently traditional gender differences in work - home orientation and contextual / situational expectations, contrive to limit career development for a significant number of women. Many women (and some men) choose not to seek promotion and some successfully achieve promotion to senior levels while others do not. Overall, the data indicate that, for women primary teachers, reasons for not seeking or not achieving promotion are multifaceted; the reasons vary by individuals and their current circumstances, and in specific and different combinations. For example because,

- ◀ they feel that the competition is unfairly weighted against them, with men taking priority in promotion appointments;
- ◀ promotion procedures actually work against them (career breaks, traditional male governors);
- ◀ of limited funds within primary schools for promoted posts (few such posts available);
- ◀ of the current and increasing work load for teachers (need to prioritise);
- ◀ teachers' work as women's' work is unrecognised or devalued (public image);

- ◀ they do not wish to remove themselves from the classroom and contact with children (career orientation);
- ◀ they are lone parents (other priorities re: time);
- ◀ because of family commitments (double-bind of women's work);
- ◀ because they see their paid work as secondary to that of their partners, as the chief bread-winners (subordinate career).

6. Conclusion

Empirical data, such as the study reported here, enables us to identify patterns of gender inequality within the primary teaching profession, contributing to Weiner's public / political component of feminism. It also enables us to effectively challenge simplistic suggestions that increased recruitment of males into primary teaching and a proposed new career structure will resolve the gender imbalance in power and status, contributing to Weiner's critical component of feminism (Weiner, 1994). The complexity of the issues is noted by Skelton (1991).

.. individual and institutional patterns of masculinity and femininity are so entrenched that as more male teachers enter nursery / infant education, male power secures an even deeper hold.

We see that men in primary teaching work in an increasingly female and low status profession but, within it, they achieve disproportionate power and status. Gendered inequalities in power relations are part of this educational division of labour. Parents, pupils, other teachers, governors and head teachers greet male students and teachers with excitement, awe (or fear), precisely because they are a rare commodity. Some male teachers, when encouraged to do so in interviews, recognise the gendered nature of career inequalities and generally express regret about them. However, little has been done to address such inequalities at the national, local or individual school levels. Yet they must be addressed, both within the microcosm of the school and wider social structures if the most skilled and effective teachers, male and female, are to lead UK primary education into the twenty-first century.

Effective practical points of intervention are difficult to identify but they should initially attempt to address

- ◀ the double-bind of women's work (home + workplace), which for women appears to interact increasingly and more forcefully than for men with the stresses and strains of current teaching workloads resulting from government initiatives;
- ◀ the recognition, encouragement and confidence-building of women as educational leaders, and
- ◀ the professional location of, and responsibility for, promotions, appointments and pay.

By addressing a national cross-section of teachers, this research has mapped gender, age, qualifications, teaching experience and current role(s). It clearly demonstrates continuing gendered inequality in occupational life-chances of primary teachers. This paper has sought, through the words and views of the teachers themselves, to identify the concerns and circumstances of the teachers taking part and to make these available to a wider audience which includes policy makers, thus addressing Weiner's third component of feminism, the practical. While there are many differences between these teachers, which arise out of their uniqueness as individuals, there are also links, overlaps and some clear patterns of commonality. Our data suggest that, despite these differences, individual and institutional stereotypical patterns of masculinity and femininity remain largely intact in primary teaching in the UK today.

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Table 1: Respondents by gender

	National Total in 1994 (DFEE 1996)		UH National Survey Respondents (1998)		UH National Survey Interviews (1998)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Male	33458	18.4	27	13	9	16.7
Female	147917	81.6	180	87	45	83.3

Table 2: Male / female teacher respondents on basic (MPG) salary scale, receiving additional salary (above MPG) or having achieved Headship.

	Main Professional Grade (MPG) %	Above MPG %	Headship (Principal) %
Male	31.6	68.4	48.1
Female	47.2	52.8	16.1

Table 3: Management positions in relation to qualifications and gender

	Qualifications				
	None listed	Teacher Cert/Cert Ed	Degree	Degree + Adv. Dip	Higher Degree
Management position - male ns	%	%	%	%	%
Head		50.00	43.75	66.67	50.00
Deputy		16.67	12.50		
Smt			6.25		
Staff development				33.33	
Assessment					
Ks2					
Ks1			6.25		
Nursery					
Subject/sen coordinator		33.33	31.25		50.00
Miscellaneous - minor					
None					
Management position – female **	%	%	%	%	%
Head		14.52	5.26	50.00	68.75
Deputy		14.52	9.47		
Smt		4.84	4.21	25.00	
Staff development		1.61	4.21		
Assessment		1.61	5.26		
Ks2			1.05		
Ks1		9.68	8.42		6.25
Nursery		1.61	1.05		
Subject/sen coordinator	66.67	50.00	56.84	25.00	25.00
Miscellaneous - minor	33.33				
None		1.61	4.21		

ns = management responsibilities not significantly related to qualifications

** = management responsibilities significantly related to qualifications p<0.01 (Chi squared)

Table 4: Reported promotion seeking among male and female teachers.

	Seeking Promotion	Not Seeking Promotion	Job Outside or Retire
% males with teaching certificate	17	50	33
% females with teaching certificate	18	79	3 (includes 1.6% not sure)
% males with higher degree	50	0	50
% females with higher degree	39	46	15

Table 5: Issues arising from free-response data

	Male N=27	Female N=180
	% of all males	% of all females
Family circumstances	7	22
Male career advantage	7	16
Power	15	4
Status	22	14
Government initiatives and the curriculum	15	4
Stress	4	12

6441 words (including tables)