



## Two sides of the same coin feminisation of teaching or masculinisation of power?

*Stephania Ntouna*

*Postgraduate Student  
Postgraduate Student, MSc International and European Policies on Education,  
Training and Research, University of Piraeus, Greece*

### Key Points

Feminisation of teaching is a widespread phenomenon particularly in primary education. The priority of most of the EU countries is to attract male teachers in order to address the gender imbalance in the field. However, less attention is paid to the fact that generally the proportion of women in education management declines, as that of men increases. Particularly in Greece, the share of women in education management drops drastically, reflecting the general issue of gender inequality of the country.

The situation in Greece is urgent. Tackling gender imbalance in education is imperative, as it affects the different choices of men and women in study fields. This policy brief suggests:

- Greece needs to develop a national gender equality strategic framework that adopts the gender mainstreaming approach.
- Relevant research is required to better examine the underlying factors that define gender imbalance in the field.
- Further gender-differentiated statistics are needed in order to acquire a thorough perspective of the situation.
- Specific changes to the education system should ensure equal opportunities for women to professionally develop to leadership positions.
- Teacher training with regard to gender equality issues is essential.

## **Introduction**

For the European Union, gender equality is a core value and a fundamental right, however no Member State has achieved full gender equality yet (European Union, 2020). To meet the challenges, the EU has adopted the gender mainstreaming strategy that involves “the integration of a gender perspective” into all stages of policy cycle, all policies, measures and spending programmes (EIGE, 2021). Progress has been achieved in some sectors, such as the education gap, however there are still several critical issues that need to be resolved (European Union, 2020).

A significant aspect of gender inequality is gender segregation in the labor market. From an early age, girls and boys encounter stereotypes that affect later their options regarding fields of study and career paths. The differences in social norms and structures define the tendency of women and men to work in different occupations (EIGE, 2016). The most prominent example of the situation is the under-representation of women in political life and in specific fields such as STEM. However, the phenomenon has numerous and diverse aspects.

## **Feminisation of Teaching**

Differences in education and career choices between men and women is also reflected in the teaching profession. In most countries, the feminisation of teaching workforce is a well-known phenomenon, particularly in primary and lower secondary education. The term is used to describe the statistical dominance of female teachers in the occupation. (EIGE, 2016).

The over-representation of women in teaching positions is associated with the linkage of femininity with care-giving. As Moreau (2019) explains, teaching itself is constructed as feminised, in the sense of being “a good job for a woman” . This point of view is solidly grounded by the

assumption that teaching requires “soft skills” that are culturally identified in many parts of the world with femininity and are related to motherhood. Traditionally, teaching is regarded as an appropriate profession for a woman, with working hours that permit combined responsibilities in work and family contexts.

However, feminisation of teaching overshadows the persisting disparity in men’s favour in management and related decision-making positions in the education field (UNESCO, 2018). In international level, the share of male headteachers tends to be higher than that among teachers (UNESCO, 2018, OECD, 2020). Additionally, for different levels, the proportion of women in leadership positions declines in higher levels (UNESCO, 2018).

All in all, women are numerically dominant in relatively lower status positions, whereas men are concentrated in better-paid, and of higher authority positions that hold more influence in decision-making. This has severe consequences on the labour market, limiting career diversification and often placing women in occupations of lower esteem (Lynch & Feelay, 2009).

### Feminisation of Teaching in the EU

In the European Union countries, feminisation of teaching is an established reality. Eurostat is responsible for providing the relevant data. As of 2018, women in teaching positions in primary schools constitute 84,8% of the teaching staff of the 27 Member States. At the same time, female teachers in all EU countries represent more than 68% of all primary school teachers.

Female teachers - as % of all teachers in primary education  
[Source: [eurostat.europa.eu](http://eurostat.europa.eu)]

↓↑	TIME	2018 ↓
GEO	↓	
European Union - 27 countries (from 2020)		84.8 (d)
European Union - 28 countries (2013-2020)		85.0 (d)
Belgium		82.6
Bulgaria		93.3
Czechia		: (d)
Denmark		68.4 (b)
Germany (until 1990 former territory of the FRG)		87.3
Estonia		90.4
Ireland		: (d)
Greece		71.8
Spain		77.0
France		83.0 (d)
Croatia		93.4
Italy		95.5
Cyprus		84.0
Latvia		92.3
Lithuania		96.8
Luxembourg		75.9
Hungary		96.0
Malta		85.8
Netherlands		87.4
Austria		92.1
Poland		83.0 (b)
Portugal		80.8
Romania		90.2
Slovenia		88.8 (d)
Slovakia		90.3
Finland		79.8
Sweden		81.9

↑	TIME	2018 ↓
GEO	↓	
Belgium		65.3 (d)
Bulgaria		80.2
Czechia		: (d)
Denmark		74.6 (b)
Germany (until 1990 former territory of the FRG)		:
Estonia		80.0
Ireland		61.6 (d)
Greece		45.0
France		54.1
Italy		: (d)
Latvia		:
Lithuania		94.8
Luxembourg		42.3 (d)
Hungary		78.3
Malta		71.3
Netherlands		54.8
Austria		82.6
Poland		77.6 (b)
Portugal		:
Romania		78.0
Slovenia		74.1
Slovakia		87.0
Finland		52.2
Sweden		71.3

Female school-management personnel - as % of total school-management personnel, in primary education  
[Source: [eurostat.europa.eu](http://eurostat.europa.eu)]

Simultaneously, the share of women in decision-making positions seems to decline as the level of authority increases. Relevant figures about EU Member States show that except for Denmark, the share of female school leaders declines in comparison with that among teaching staff. Nonetheless, the representation of women in leadership positions is higher than in other fields and is expected to increase (UNESCO, 2018).

However, it should be noted that the indicators provided by Eurostat include only headteachers, deputy headteachers and management personnel with similar duties in the

school context. Facts concerning administrative personnel of higher authority are not included. As a result, this could create limitations for a thorough perspective of the situation.

### The European Union Strategic Framework

With the intention to address the multiple facets of gender inequality, the European Commission developed the Gender Equality Strategy for the 2020-2025 period. The Commission communicated that a precondition for funding specific initiatives will potentially be for the Member States to form a national gender equality framework. In that direction, the EU regards as crucial the adoption of the gender mainstreaming approach for the Member States (European Commission, 2020).

For the EU, overcoming the traditionally established gender roles constitutes a priority. Specifically addressing gender stereotypes in education is crucial, as feminisation of teaching both reflects and strengthens social representations of women and men (EIGE, 2016, Lynch & Feelay, 2009). In 2012 the French government adopted a policy strategy that led to the coordination of 4 ministries for the promotion of gender equality in the education system (Ministère de l'Education, 2013).

Additionally, it is important to attract more male teachers. In relation to that, Sweden provides exemplar policy practices. In 2008, the government of the country established a gender equality programme for schools. The project included training for teachers and measures to attract more male teachers (Numhauser-Henning, 2015).

Furthermore, a gender equality committee was responsible for analysing gender diversification in educational results and the National Agency for Higher Education conducted research in relation to differences between men and women in study choices in teacher training (Numhauser-Henning, 2015).

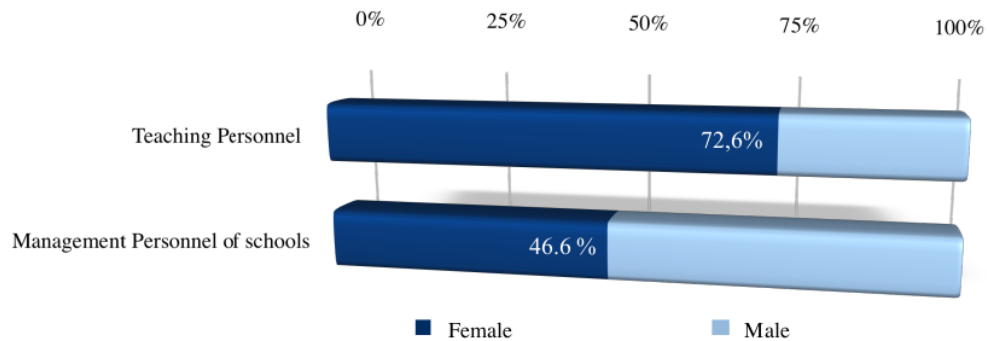
### Feminisation of Teaching in Greece

In Greece, the situation regarding gender equality is in general alarming. With 52.2 out of 100 points, Greece ranks last among EU Member States on the latest Gender Equality Index - with an extremely low indicator in the domain of power (EIGE, 2020).



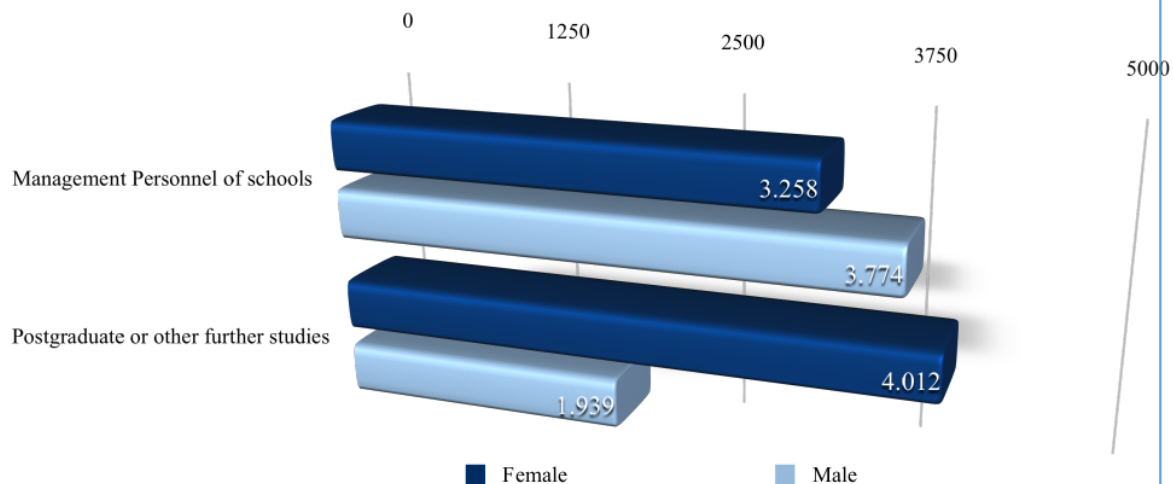
Gender Equality Index 2020  
[Source: [eige.europa.eu](http://eige.europa.eu)]

The concerning situation is also reflected in the primary education sector. As of 2019, women in teaching positions at the level of primary education constitute the 72,6% of all teaching personnel (Eurostat, 2021). Yet, the share of women drops to 46.6 % among school management personnel.



[Source: [eurostat.europa.eu](http://eurostat.europa.eu)]

Men hold the majority of leadership positions in primary education, however less of them obtain objective academic qualifications. According to the relevant indicators, out of all male teachers, 1.939 obtain postgraduate or another type of further studies. Yet, the male headteachers and deputy headteachers count to 3.774. At the same time, female teachers with postgraduate or another type of further studies outnumber those who hold leadership positions.

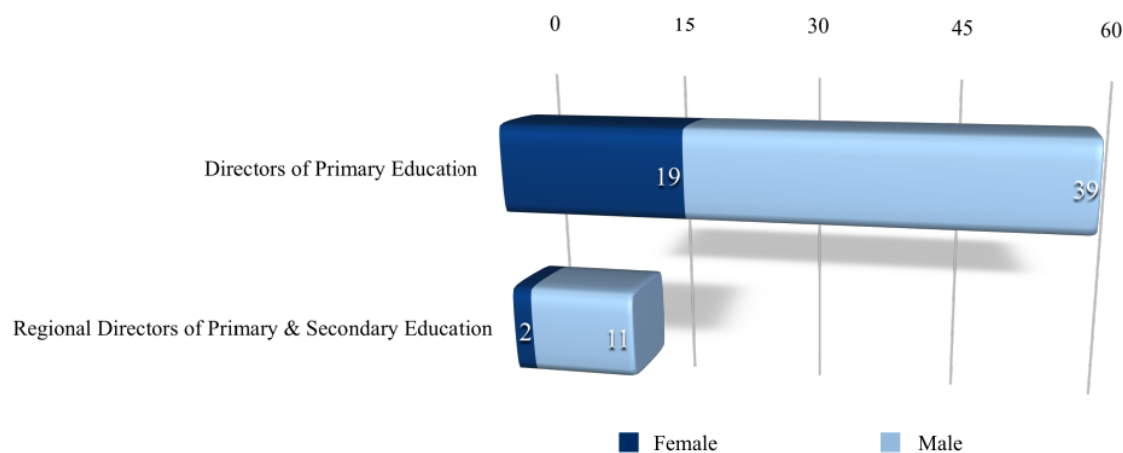


[Source: [statistics.gr](http://statistics.gr)]

The situation could be examined in the context of poor selection procedures of school leaders and a lack of opportunities for professional development. In Greece, there is no leadership training provided. Interestingly, Sweden in the past achieved in attracting more women in leadership positions in education through systematic and organised pre-service training (Norberg, 2019). In addition, the centralised educational system does not provide adequate promotion tracks ensuring opportunities for career development (OECD, 2017).

Nonetheless, statistics by Elstat focus only on the school management personnel. There are no official gender differentiated data concerning the educational authorities and other management staff. Thus, it is not possible to have a thorough perspective.

Additional data obtained by the Ministry of Education imply that as the level of authority increases, the female representation in decision-making positions seems to decline. Primary schools in Greece are under the supervision of 58 local Directorates. Recently, out of the 58 Directors of Primary Education only 19 are women (Ministry of Education, 2020). Also, there are only 2 women out of the 13 Regional Directors of Primary and Secondary Education (Ministry of Education, 2019).



[source: [diavgeia.gov.gr](http://diavgeia.gov.gr)]

[source: [pdede.sch.gr](http://pdede.sch.gr)]

The issue raises fundamental questions about the role and position of women in a western society of the 21st century. As Drudy (2008) notes, these go well beyond an analysis of an individual profession such as teaching. A correlation between masculinity and power seems indisputable in the social order of gender and in the gender structures of schools.

### **Recommendations**

Of the above, it is concluded that gender segregation in the field of primary education has to be tackled dually. For that reason, Greece has to set key priorities and take specific actions.

- Greece needs to develop a national gender equality strategic framework, adopting the gender mainstreaming approach.
- It is important to obtain further gender-differentiated statistics.
- Conducting research is significant in order to better examine the underlying factors that define gender imbalances in teaching.

Research should particularly focus on salary competitiveness with professions of similar number of years of studies that attract more men. Secondly, researching certain social norms or expectations concerning gender roles will uncover further features of the gender imbalances in the sector (OECD, 2020).

- Specific changes to the education system should ensure that opportunities for various promotion tracks within teaching careers exist for the women (OECD, 2020).
- Teacher training regarding gender inequality is essential both for supporting structural changes of the educational system and for overcoming stereotypes in the school context.



**Potential funding of the initiatives**

The Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme and the European Social Fund + could potentially support Greece in that direction. The first one accepts proposals on closing gender gaps over the life-course. One of its priorities is “to promote equality between women and men and to advance gender mainstreaming” (European Commission, 2019). The European Social Fund + funds initiatives concerning the improvement of public services and the effectiveness of public institutions. In the past, the Programme on “Awareness and Educational Intervention Programmes for the promotion of gender equality and combating gender stereotypes in Education”, in Greece was supported by ESF (Council of Europe, 2015).

**Conclusion**

Gender inequality is a global issue that places barriers to the development of our societies. In Greece, the inequalities in specific domains persist and the progress is almost nonexistent. In consequence, major changes should be promoted in all social and economic aspects of life. Education definitively needs to be in the heart of this effort.

(word count: 1.845)

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