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The X-File: White Silhouettes, Pink Collars, and the Feminization Path in Morocco. Exploring Teacher Trainees' Perspectives on the Feminization of Teaching in Morocco – CRMEF Fez as a Case Study

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Abstract

Educational policies in Morocco have been the subject of numerous reform attempts and ongoing discussions. Since gaining independence in 1956, the country's educational system has faced persistent challenges. This long-streamed reform project gained scrutiny in 2016 following the partnership between the Ministry of Education and that of Finance commissioning the recruitment of teachers under interim contracts. As the waves of dissent orchestrated by "the forcibly contractual teachers" swayed the scene, attention drifted, especially at the beginning of the school year 2020-2021, to what was framed as an "orchestrated state-driven feminization of teaching" as the number of females admitted into training centers that year quadrupled that of men's. Social media users, especially amid teaching-focused Facebook and WhatsApp groups, interpreted this as a governmental plot to subdue the objecting calls of teachers regarding their work conditions. This article seeks respectively to critically explore the disproportionate increase of women in the teaching profession in Morocco. The article stands through a mixed-method approach to presents the results of a field study capturing the perceptions of 100 teacher trainees at the CRMEF Fez vis-à-vis the factors and the outcomes of the increasing waves of feminization within the teaching profession.

Keywords: conspiracy, feminization, forcibly contractual teachers, teaching

Introduction

Educational policies in Morocco have been the spotlight of succeeding discussions and are subject to many reform attempts. This long-streamed reform project can be officially traced back to the creation of the National Charter of Education and Training in 1999 which outlined fundamental changes in the Moroccan educational system, most interesting of which were linking the educational system to its outer socio-economic environment and acknowledging that without serious educational reforms, economic growth would continue to be unattainable. (Commission Spéciale Education Formation ,1999: p.7) This reform program was later followed by the National Education Emergency Support Program 2012-2015 and most recently by a third project that builds upon the best practices attained through the evaluation of 13 years of reforms from 2000 to 2013 with the optic of developing a strategic reform vision for 2015-2030. Despite these efforts, Morocco's inability to meet its desired and highly-priced objectives persists as time and time again World Bank reports (2019/2018/2016/2015) identify major shortcomings manifesting in the country's prevailing regional education-access imbalances, inadequate teacher training and poor working conditions, high levels of drop out especially among girls in rural areas and in the secondary level, inability to match education programs with 21st century's skills and market-required competencies. This, in addition to the inability to modernize the educational ecosystem and introduce new school management strategies (World Bank Group, 2018: 113/114).

One modality on which Morocco placed particular bets was the adoption of the regionalization/decentralization of institutional educational powers as one way to garner an educational landscape favoring and ensuring of quality and equality. The decentralization process in Morocco dates back to 1997 with the enactment of Act 96/47(Royaume du Maroc, 1997). Emphasis on this approach can be found in The National Charter on Education and Training and in the Strategic Vision for Educational Reform 2015-2030. Both documents restate that the objective of the educational reform in Morocco has moved from "generalization, unification, Moroccanization and Arabization" (Lahoucine Errami, 2019: 10) that were put forth at the set of independence in Morocco, to a more autonomous, decentralized and local need-valoring governance system. This decentralization of power is set up to allow state officials to target territorial/regional priorities and needs all the while guaranteeing national synergy as "bringing government closer to the people should also lead to facilitated service access for marginalized groups and regions [...] additional possibilities for participation; increased public administration accountability; a system of checks and balances; and (potential) regional veto powers (vis-à-vis the central government)."(Erik Vollmann, 2020: 13) This new approach was brought into the educational system via the initiation of the Regional Academies of Education and Training (AREFs) in 2000. While these new academies are an integral part of the ministry of education, they do enjoy autonomy in managing financial and logistic decisions at the regional level with respect to the overall goals and priorities of the central ministry (World Bank Group, 2015: 3). AREFs are representative in this sense of the decentralization of the national educational administration topped by the central administration, which is responsible for setting learning, training objectives, and monitoring their materialization throughout the different regions. AREF's regional power would also be decentered on a local basis by schools and training centers:

"As public enterprises endowed with legal personality and financial autonomy, they represent the Ministry of National Education and, as such, remain under the supervision of the State. Their mission focuses on the implementation of regulations related to educational and training institutions, the organization of schooling, and the conditions for appointment to positions in the school administration."(Co-efficience Bureau d'Etudes, 2015: 24)

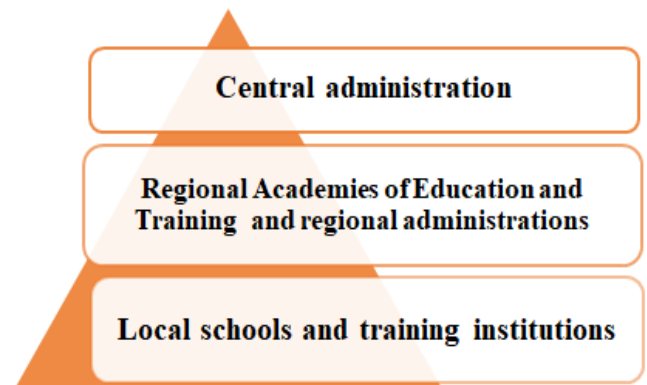


Figure 1: Moroccan Educational System triangular breakdown

The expansion and development of this organizational model brought forth continuous tensions between the government and teachers starting from the year 2016 when the professional enrollment system shifted, as an extension of the decentralization process, to a contractual one whereby new recruits are no longer directly affiliated to the ministry of education but rather became regional education academies employees.

This change fueled contestation and resistance in the rows of teachers that persist still. What is striking, however, is that not only did this change bring contestation between teachers and the government, but it has also started to put into scrutiny the nature of the profession and the increasing feminization within its rows that starkly manifested itself the past years as the number of females admitted into teaching training centers reached 14 000 (82.35%) in contrast to 3 000 males (17.64%). These numbers were seen by many social media users to be reflective of a "government conspiracy" aiming to subdue and silence the increasing calls objecting to the current professional status quo via the recruitment of "*docile entities*" that are less likely to object the government's decisions in the future.

To this, the objective of this article is to question the multidimensional nature of teaching as a form of labor that has social, political, economic, and symbolic implications reaching far well beyond the walls of the classroom and school territory. We inquire herein whether Morocco is indeed heading towards a feminization of the teaching profession, and whether this alleged process is indeed a government-induced procedure to counter the increasing waves of dissent among teachers. The answer to these questions will be provided by tracing the change in the rows of teachers quantitatively starting from the 2000s and by analyzing the perceptions of 100 teacher-trainee graduates of the school year 2020-2021 from the CRMEF of Fez. The aim here is to synthesize teachers' perceptions vis-à-vis feminization, the factors standing behind it and its consequences on school culture and learning results.

Issues surrounding the feminization of teaching: Untraceable Beginnings, Layered Understandings and Diminishing Values

Of 85 million teachers around the world (Molina), women represent more than half of the teaching force with a major concentration at the primary levels of education where their representation exceeds 66% (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2020). World Bank data show an incessant increase in the number of female teachers at this level across the past two decades where the number of female teachers augmented from 59,495% in 2000 to 67% in 2020 (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2020). The same data demonstrate major disparities linked to the distribution of these numbers across world regions as well. The highest ratios of female teachers are found in North America and in Europe & Central Asia where women represent more than 85% of the teaching force. Followed by Latin America and the Caribbean and by East Asia and the Pacific where the percentages of female teachers consecutively reach 78% and 70%. Sub-Saharan Africa comes last as the percentage of female teachers scores less than 50% (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2020). denoting that the profession in this region is still men-centric and is way far from being “Feminized”.

Whilst it may be a difficult undertaking to locate a “Golden Age” (Thornton and Bricheno, 2006) where men formed the overarching majority of the teaching workforce, it is nonetheless possible to identify historical queuing trajectories that were profusely responsible for outlining the extent to which, in what form and when women’s access to teaching was permeated, encouraged or discouraged. Reskin and Ross (1990) define queuing trajectories as gendered dual-ranking models whereby, from a demand side, the predominant patriarchal gender roles and expectations constitute the main denominators at play in defining recruitment decisions, and whereby, from a supply side, workers of both sexes rate the attractiveness of jobs based on what is deemed appropriate masculine/feminine occupations (Reskin and Ross, 1990).

Industrialization and the socio-cultural shifts that were brought in consequence permeated the mass access of women into education in the west. The natural expansion of education’s universalization allowed women to constitute an important - later on dominant - taskforce to respond to the increasing need for teachers after having been mainly concentrated at the private home-based area of the job. In Canada, the UK and the USA, the teaching profession is thought of as feminine from the onset. Statistics show that between 1840- and 1890- women’s numbers jumped significantly to form a strong majority. By the year 1875, women constituted more than half of the teaching workforce in Britain and 70% by 1901. Similarly, in the US women made up more than 63% of teachers by the late 1880s (Wong, 2019).

A great deal of the literature approaching the feminization of teaching brought forth questions related to how, on the supply side, men and women evaluated the profession of teaching and how, especially at the initial stages of feminization, women came to take over the dominant majority. To answer these questions, it is of paramount importance to stop at how the construction of gender and gender roles determine what is desirable (more so acceptable and permissible) in professions and how professionals negotiate their being and becoming into them. The process of gender socialization creates two different patterns of roles that in their turn operate to create the division of spheres of life. While women find

themselves in this system *overly-indulged-qualified* housewives, cooks, cleaners and mothers, men tend to take leadership roles in politics, jurisdiction, economy, and religion. The space occupied by men becomes that of the public remunerated life while women occupy the private sphere of home: two different spheres that construct within themselves what came to be known as “men’s Jobs” and “Women’s Jobs” which resulted as well in the creation of the dichotomy between the “man breadwinner” and the “woman housewife”. In teaching, this division played an important role in distancing men from the profession. Skelton (2012) holds that the Victorian society judged teaching as a “dishonest calling”, less serious and a less of skills-demanding job and more importantly a dead-end career that had no potential of growth or social value. Men of all social strata saw in teaching an “un-manly” occupation as it precluded them, in the case of upper-middle educated men, from investing their intellectual skills seen to better fit political and public sector work requirements. In the case of the working-class men, teaching was seen to stand in the way of showing men’s physical strength, the capital of their *manhood* and economic status (Skelton, 2012: 4). A 1925 report on the training of teachers in the UK acutely depicts the low value accorded to teaching and to men who choose this job as their main source of income. The report writes that teaching is “a field of effort for a girl of average intellectual capacity and normal maternal instincts, but for a man to spend his life teaching children of school age is waste it in doing easy and not very valuable work he would not do it if not fit to do anything else.” (Kelleher, 2011: 17)

The continuous feminization of the teaching workforce, mainly at early childhood levels and less at secondary ones, was met by a simultaneous masculinization of the school structure and its management processes. Echoing parallel patterns of gender segregation in the global job market where out of a total 39% feminine workforce, only 28%, with very scarce increase over the past 20 years, hold management positions (mainly senior and middle management jobs). The highest percentages of women in leadership positions are recorded in Latin America & the Caribbean, Australia & New Zealand and Europe & Northern America where women hold consecutively 39%, 38,06% and 37,75% of managerial jobs. Central, Southern and Western Asia in addition to Northern Africa record the lowest numbers in this area with less than 15% of women in leadership (UN DESA Statistics Division, 2020). The gender gap in education still dictates women’s underrepresentation in positions of decision-making in educational management. Women are still confined, under the prejudice of their incapacity to handle older students’ disciplinary challenges and to enforce authority over them, to lower paid and lower status jobs and missions within the profession.

The proceedings of the Second World Congress of Education held in Washington D.C in 1998 well document the multidimensional disparities that plague the teaching profession worldwide. On a first note, the report demonstrates that all the jobs that have an association with care work and that may presumably involve any sort of emotional investment are socially seen to be less valued, and hence, deserving of less compensation and social status (Education International, 1998). While the majority behind care work practice, including health care, teaching, nursing and elderly care are women, the consideration that they receive for their professions remains minimal. In her article “Is the Feminization of Teaching a Profession a Loss of Prestige” Marlaine Cacouault-Bitaud (2001) argues that the more the numbers of women tend to overtake those of men and the more women enter high-status

positions within a profession, the more its value and social worth tends to shrink and diminish. Cacouault-Bitaud argues that women taking up the majority of workers in any given occupation compares to Pandora, who by opening the forbidden jar, bore evil and ill fortune to humanity.

“In earlier times, the tribes of men lived on earth remote and free from ills and hard toil and heavy sickness which brings death upon men . . . But the woman [Pandora] took off the great lid of the jar with her hands and scattered all of these, and her action caused sorrow and mischief to men.” (Cacouault-Bitaud, 2001: IV)

For Cacouault-Bitaud, women’s access and overtaking of professions has been historically interpreted into a stigmatization that relates women to professions that are less requisite of skills, hard-work and dedication. An interesting example that the author cites is that of the reaction to women’s overtaking to postmaster positions in 1840. Respectively, male practitioners of the job feared that the users of the postal service would underestimate the level of qualification and professionalism required in the job “*as long as women are there, the public will be unwilling to believe that managing a post office involves any more knowledge than being a tobacconist*” (Cacouault-Bitaud, 2001: IV)

This devaluation of jobs of high female workforce further widens the gender gap in teaching and deepens the segregation in the profession in terms of *compartmentalizing* teaching levels and disciplines into “feminine” and “masculine”. Even though women constitute the majority of teachers at the primary and pre-primary levels as aforementioned, their numbers go down as we move up the levels ladder. This was also well documented in the Second World Congress of Education’s report which points the fact that the numbers of women are still unbalanced at higher levels of education meaning that they are stuck in lower status, less secure, less paid and less prestigious positions. This continues to tertiary education where women are mostly found in positions of part-time lecturers or assistant professors and where they remain absent from higher managerial positions at the central and regional steering institutions – ministry representatives, chief educational officials, inspectors. (Educational International, 1998: 138-139) As the chart below shows, women’s numbers go down from near 94% at the preprimary level to almost half at the tertiary level with 43%. Sorted by regions Europe & Northern America record higher numbers of women that almost reach parity at the tertiary level and a strong movement towards feminization at the secondary and high school levels. Sub Saharan Africa on the other hand scores the least in the numbers of women in teaching as it still lags at all levels except in preprimary education where women represent 80% of the teaching workforce. Women’s numbers in senior positions in educational institutions are also dismayingly unbalanced. (UNESCO, 2019: 1-4)

Besides their under-representation at higher levels of education and management positions, women also find themselves confined to what is commonly termed as “female subject areas”. While men are expected to teach scientific subjects such as math, technology, science, women, in contrast, are often more encouraged to teach areas such as history and languages. A UNESCO survey showed that in 14 countries, only a quarter of advanced mathematics teachers were women. In lower-income countries, the percentage goes even lower. In Togo for example, only 3.3 % of math teachers are women similar to 3.7 % and 5.5 % in Chad and in Ivory Coast.

(International association for the evaluation of educational achievement, 2021)

The inequalities and persisting imbalances at the levels of remuneration, status, promotion and specialization can be explained by two correlated factors: the negative attitudes towards female teachers’ and a fear-driven glass ceiling that precludes their advancement within the field. Despite women’s great and continuously growing numbers in the teaching profession, they still find it hard to climb the ladders of the job due to the fact that they are never perceived as “ideal workers”. An ideal worker here refers to a professional who enjoys the characteristics of rationality, natural leadership and natural high professionalism. While the dominant patriarchal discourse associates these traits naturally to men, presenting them hence, as naturally better managers and fitter teachers for older students, women’s inputs are always put on the defensive and perceived with great suspicion. The continues juxtaposition of female teachers and mothers as has been discussed before puts into constant questioning women’s academic achievements, pedagogical skills and teaching practices, and evaluates them always as less serious career advancers and less established “professionals”. This reasoning essentializes men as a single “homogeneous” category vis-à-vis women as a single and “homogeneous” category denying consequently any spectrum of convergence or divergence between male and female practices in teaching. To elucidate more, Morwenna Griffiths in her article “The Feminization of Teaching and the Practice of Teaching: Threat or Opportunity?” (2006) argues that we cannot speak of a unified teaching practice pertaining and constitutive only of male or female practices in education, but rather we should speak first of all of an assemble of masculine and feminine identities that are shaped far and foremost by the person’s sexual orientations, local and ethnic backgrounds, religious affiliations and on so on. (Griffiths, 2006: 387)

The fear of creating an environment that results in boy’s “sasification” (Skelton, 2011: 9) is the second factor standing behind the caution and suspicion behind distancing women from leadership positions in education. Accordingly, feminization is approached with considerable doubt and used in “an evaluative sense [that] carries the implicit message that the greater the female presence, the greater the likelihood of a “feminine” ethos and culture, and the more likely it is to discriminate against males.” (Skelton, 2011: 6) The growing entry of women into teaching is allegedly attributed to bringing an imbalance to the school environment where male students’ needs, and learning styles are ignored because of women’s innate inaptitude to detect and handle boys’ specific behavioral codes and their educational requirements. On the same level of importance, the school territory is seen as that of contention between feminine and masculine practices. The classroom is depicted to be contaminated with feminine principles that stand in favor of girls’ achievements and prioritizes care over discipline, mothering over responsibility and lenience over vigor. As a response, men are more encouraged to occupy leadership positions in order to represent a “masculine role model” for students and in order to gatekeep the balance of “proper school discipline”.

Is Morocco walking down the feminization path? and with what intentions?

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

So far, this article has attempted to explore the question of feminization being a critical shift that marked the teaching profession starting from the mid-19th century. Feminization as we presented does not only refer to the rapid increase in the number of female teachers in classrooms but rather extends to include debates on gender politics and power within society at large. One objective of our study is to question whether Morocco is walking (deliberately or otherwise) the path of the feminization of teaching and with what intentions. Our analysis in this second part moves hence to statistically trace the curve of women's entry to the teaching profession and the perceptions of 100 teacher-trainees graduates of the school year 2021-2022 vis-à-vis the feminization of teaching, the factors standing behind it and its consequences at the levels of school culture and learning outcomes.

By combining these two elements we aim at drawing the bigger image of the situation of teaching in Morocco and trace whether there are any timely-significant trends that allowed more women into the profession (with a particular focus on the transition period pre/post 2016). Moreover, we aspire to capture teachers' perceptions in order to understand why accusations are directed at the Moroccan government and also to dive deeper into the dynamics of teaching and gender manifestations and analyze if women's existence (in large and/or increasing) numbers has any influence on the power relations at play in the school landscape.

Our study attempts in this part to answer the following questions:

1. What can national statistics about teachers' recruitment tell us with regards to the allegations of a government-induced feminization of the profession?
2. What elements construct the general profile of teachers and how do they evaluate their profession?
3. What are the factors that stand behind the increase in the number of female teachers?
4. What are the outcomes of this shift in the sex of teachers on the managerial level of the job and on the development of students' achievements?

Participants

This study targeted over the duration of three months a hundred teacher-trainees from the CRMEF center in Fès. Gender-wise, 50% of our respondents are females while the other 50% are males. Taking that our literature review has revealed that the highest concentrations of female teachers occur within the primary level we have selected our research participants as to represent 50% from the primary level and 50% from the secondary and high school levels. To generate accurate and valuable insights on teaching practices, our study targeted participants who have a minimum of one year teaching experience. Accordingly, 62% of our respondents pointed out that they have an experience of one to five years in the field.

Instruments

In this study, both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods are employed. On the one hand, the quantitative approach assists in determining the general profiles of our respondents and their perceptions on feminization.

On the other hand, the qualitative approach will elicit in-depth explanation about the progression of women's increasing presence in the teaching profession, identify noteworthy trends, and explore the intersections of gender, politics, and the feminization of teaching.

Data Collection Procedure

Questionnaires and interviews were chosen as data collection instruments. The questionnaire aims to gather teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards the feminization of teaching while interviews provide an opportunity for in-depth discussions on the topic. One hundred participants, split evenly between genders, completed the questionnaire, and 25 semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers of diverse backgrounds and experiences and with representatives of the "national forcibly contractual teachers committee". The collected data was analyzed using the SPSS statistics software package.

Results

Exploring Teacher Profiles and Their Perceptions of the Teaching Profession: A Comprehensive Evaluation

By drawing on the variables of education, origin, social status and years of engagement, this first section attempts to give a general image of the elements constituting the profiles of the general university graduates who opt for teaching as a full-time career. In the midst of the growing debate about the social value of the teaching profession, the analysis will help us understand why graduates choose to pursue teaching and how they tend to evaluate it.

Starting off with the level of education of the respondents, our study found that the majority of teacher-trainees, that is, 70% of the participants of this survey, hold a bachelor's degree (equivalent of a 3-year diploma), 30% on the other hand hold a master's degree (equivalent of a 5-year diploma). Accounting for such difference are two major reasons. First, teachers prefer to secure a job immediately after their graduation for economic considerations. Male respondent n17 states accordingly: *"I am driven to pursue teaching instead of furthering my education because my family can no longer provide for me and support me while I continue my studies away from home. That is why I prefer to have a job and a secured salary at least for few years ahead and until I am well settled and then I can go back to finish my education"*. A second reason that was elevated by our respondents was that teachers prefer teaching because they find no better career venues that match the skills they acquired at the university. Teaching here is the only option for the majority of graduates, especially those specializing in the humanities and languages because of the absence of any alternatives. Male respondent n 13 states that *"the prospects of the faculty of humanities are limited. That's why the majority of its graduates opt for teaching as being the only and most famous venue that can provide them with financial independence."*

When it comes to their origins and social backgrounds, this study shows interesting data as 65% of our respondents come from urban areas in contrast to 35% that come from rural backgrounds. This last number is particularly important as 69% of the respondents coming from rural backgrounds are males. This can be explained by the fact that females in rural areas in Morocco don't have the same chances of finishing their education compared to their male counterparts especially in remote and most conservative zones where their educational journeys come to an early halt at the end of

the primary level, hence, limiting their chances of graduating and acquiring a career. Data concerning the social background of the participants yields important results as well. 50% and 48% of our respondents come from middle and lower social classes with only 2% of the participants hailing from the upper class. Noting here that the general earning per year for the middle class does not exceed 62,470 MAD (that is 7 000 \$), and that the general earning of contractual teachers in Morocco does not exceed 6600MAD per month, the data become very prominent in that it indicates that teaching in Morocco is not a highly waged occupation and it does not attract people of upper social classes.

When asked about the reasons that drove them to seek jobs in teaching, the respondents made it clear that besides their need for professional and social stability, their passion, love and awareness of the high potential and value of the job were also key factors behind their pursuit of this occupation. Accordingly, 30 respondents chose their passion about the job as the first motive behind their professional engagement with teaching. What follows is the need to secure a means for financial independence by gaining a stable salary. Female interviewee number 2 asserts here: *“My dream was to be a teacher of English because I had an inspiring teacher of English. Also, teaching is a safe job. In other words, you work in good conditions, and you receive a monthly salary. Plus, you benefit from health insurance.”*

Teachers point out that the teaching profession may lack in status and attraction because of the difficult conditions that teachers face in their jobs whether this concerns the low salaries accorded to this role or to the overall poor management of the occupation. Female interviewee N7 states: *“Though it is noticeably noble, there are plenty of individuals who do not deem teaching profession favorably because they cannot see the huge impact teachers may have on their students. Moreover, a teacher’s salary is low compared to an engineer or a doctor, and this can be considered as a reason why many if not all individuals still cannot perceive teaching as highly significant”*. These same conditions that the interviewee refers to explain why 45% of our sample view society’s regard of the profession as unfavorable. The general opinion that goes here, as female respondent 52 asserts, is that teaching is the resort of graduates who have narrow to no choices and chances at all in the job market. The interviewee states: *“if you do better in school, if you perform well, and if you have dreams and potential then teaching is the last option you should consider. The absence of work opportunities and alternatives. You may notice that there are no opportunities for us. The only job left for us is “Teaching.” So, that is why the majority apply for this profession.”*

Before delving deeper into the factors that stand behind the increase in the number of women entering the teaching profession in Morocco, it is very important to stand at the respondents’ definition and understanding of this phenomenon. Most responses received in this regard defined feminization in its statistical terms entailing the proliferation of the number of female teachers as respondent 20 for example states: *It refers to the numerical domination of women in the domain of teaching which has become a worldwide phenomenon*”. Other respondents point to feminization as being the introduction of feminine ethos and practices into the school environment. Accordingly, respondent 68 points that *“Feminization of teaching is the process whereby everything involved in teaching undergoes changes beginning from numbers of female teachers to the introduction of feminine*

concepts and approaches.” More than mere change of the school ethos, some respondents go to refer to feminization as the franchising of female students and the recruitment of more female teachers to account for their needs. Interviewee number 2 argues here that the *“Feminization of teaching entails giving more attention to female students and also having more female teachers appointed”*.

Uncovering the Factors Driving the Increase in Female Teachers in Education

The first reason standing behind the feminization of teaching in Morocco according to the respondents relates to women’s “natural disposition” to be teachers. According to the respondents, women tend to invest emotionally in their jobs and tend to show more emotions and care in the classroom. Male interviewee number 15 states: *“In my opinion, female teacher tends to be more caring and affectionate which most likely touches students’ hearts and motivate them to strive and be more attentive. On the other hand, male teacher is stricter and pragmatic.”*. An interesting point that was also brought here is that women can display, depending on the context, different behaviors and attitudes. Not only do women in this sense show care and personal interest in their students, but they can also control and enforce discipline in their classes. Male interviewee 15 continues: *“to my knowledge, most female teachers raise their voices, when necessary, they are serious and tough when it comes to discipline problems”*.

The second reason presented by our respondents was that the feminization of teaching is a government-driven action that aims to distance men from teaching, hence weakening teachers’ demands for better working conditions and for the annulation of the interim teaching system. Accordingly, 26% and 18% of the respondents agree and strongly agree to the statement affirming that the feminization of teaching is a governmental plan to limit the actions of the coordination of forcibly contractual teachers. Male respondent 20 confirms accordingly that in Morocco’s attempt to draw a positive image for itself when it comes to promoting gender equality, it has made it easier for women to access teaching in larger numbers than men: *“feminization is the act/agenda of having more and more females in the workforce; both as teachers and administrators in order to set an example that Morocco is a country that supports equal rights for both women and men.”*. On the other hand, some respondents go to directly link the feminization of teaching to government policies. Seeing it from this perspective, they confirm that the government aims to decrease the number of men in the profession knowing that in this way women will be easier to control: *“it is a known fact that men resist more than women do. This is why we are the target of the government that knows men are the ones who lead the coalition of forcibly contractual teachers and that they are the ones who lead demonstrations and strikes. So, if they can’t take us all to prison or expel us from our positions, they might just narrow our chances of getting the job in the first place”*.

While 26% of our respondents preferred to stay neutral regarding this statement, 16% and 14% consecutively disagreed with it. For this category of our participants, the government has nothing to do with the increasing waves of feminization in teaching. According to them, feminization is a long process that started well before the introduction of the contractual teaching system in 2016: *“I do not think that the contractual system of teaching is the main reason behind the feminization of teaching. Rather, I believe the female domination over the field has been going on for a long time.”*

Another opinion that was strongly expressed in this part was the emphasis that female teachers equally manifest their resistance to the teaching contractual system, that they participate in equal numbers in protests and that they are not the ‘docile’ entities that they are portrayed to be: *I notice that the demonstrations carried out by contractual teachers contain more female teachers than male teachers, so I did not agree with the statement. Female teachers express their resistance to the contractual system and they are always part of demonstrations and in conducting strikes in schools or in teaching centers*”. A female representative of the national committee for contractual teachers reiterates the same stance: *“we can’t be certain that females are afraid to participate in strikes, and vice versa for males, as it depends on the individual’s personality, personal circumstances and convictions. For example, I am a teacher. I participate in strikes, not in a formal way, but rather I go to the field and participate in protests, sit-ins and overnight stays in front of directorates or academies, and I am fully prepared to take all these steps until our demand file is settled, unlike some male professors who perform strikes by being absent from school rather than participating in strikes and protests.*

The Impacts of Feminization on the Teaching Profession: Outcomes and Implications

The previous sections of this analysis looked at teaching at large in Morocco starting with defining the profile of its practitioners and its social value moving to capture how feminization was defined by the respondents of this research and what reasons catalyze it. This present and last section of the analysis will focus on exploring the participants’ perspectives regarding the outcomes of the feminization of teaching in Morocco.

For our respondents, the feminization of teaching can play a great role in promoting girls’ education in Morocco as the increasing presence of women in classrooms would encourage girls to do more in schools and to perform better. 29.1% of the participants see that female teachers are positive role models for girls: respondent 26 expresses by stating that *“girls get more encouraged to become teachers themselves when they see female teachers and administrators around them especially in rural areas. I owe it myself to a teacher I had in my primary school who always encouraged us to have dreams beyond the scope of our small villages.”* On the other end, the respondents showed that the feminization of teaching can have many negative impacts on the school culture and on society. These impacts include the lack of male role models and reversal of gender roles in society that would lead to, as respondent 64, expresses: *“the decay of the traditional Moroccan society”,* the respondent continues: *“less and less people will get married. Less men will get married because they lack a job that is a basic requirement in starting a family, and women will be less likely to get married because their primary incentive to do so, having food on the table, is already taken care of. And concerning the impact on male students, males will be accustomed to acting like their female teachers, they will absorb their ways of expression and thinking, and we will eventually have a society that is entirely effeminate”.* The feminization of teaching as respondents declared can lead to boys’ underachievement in schools as *“feminization is going to perpetuate gender inequality in the classroom and focus on females’ needs and learning styles;”* Respondent 64 states.

Discussion

Based on the above analyzed data, we can draw multiple results. First of all, our quantitative analysis of the annual recruitment statistics in teaching across the past 21 years reveals that the structural changes of 2016 had little effect on the numbers of female teachers in Morocco. In effect, starting from the year 2000, the number of female teachers has slowly increased in a clear unbalanced pattern that was characterized at times by a blatant decrease in the numbers of women.

Second, administrative positions have also been resistant to feminization. While women’s access to teaching positions has been slow, yet on a positive note steady, women’s entry to administration and service positions decreased over the years. With, again the exception of the primary level, where the number of female administrators timidly raised from 7.90% to 10.82% over almost 20 years, the number of female administration officials in the secondary and high school levels remarkably diminished over the same period. Women’s representation in administration moved from 32.57% in 2001 to 23.57% in 2020 at the secondary level and from 31.29% to 23.62% at the high school level.

Third, the data retrieved from the field study conducted with 100 teachers-trainees graduates of the year 2021-2022 has yielded that the majority of graduates opting for the profession of teaching come from middle and lower social classes, that they favorably approach their jobs and that they recognize at the same time that the bad working conditions of their occupations and its low compensation marks it as a socially low-status profession.

Lastly, the study also showed that teacher-trainees relate the increasing waves of women’s entry to teaching to their outstanding performances and the skills that they show in recruitment concours. The study also shows that the participants of the study deny the contesting “government conspiracy theory”, but they, at the same time, still keep a suspicious eye on the government as they fear any new procedures that might be detrimental to male’s chances of entering the profession. Ambivalent in nature, these results however do point out that further analysis into the fabric of teachers is necessary, in effect fundamental to provide more in-depth analysis into the play of gender roles in the educational sector at large.

Conclusion

The current work was an attempt to approach the question of the feminization of teaching in the Moroccan context. Repeated suspicions were raised and expressed through different social media and digital communication outlets about a government plot to facilitate the access of women into the teaching profession in Morocco and distance men from such positions because of their “leading” roles in resisting the implementation of the new teaching contractual system that started in 2016 as a result of a partnership plan between the ministry of education and that of finance. This study is the first to academically explore this question, and while it acknowledges its limitations in reaching a wider audience of teachers and of education officials in order to provide more in-depth results with regard to the issue at hand, the study, however, has yielded important results in terms of tracing the development curve of the feminization of teaching in Morocco. Our close quantitative analysis of the annual statistical records of the Ministry of Education showed that Morocco moves at a slow, yet seemingly steady pace, towards feminization with no apparent or blazing leaps that can correspond to historical milestones. In fact,

the study shows that the numbers can regress on multiple occasions. Structurally, the study shows, men continue to over dominate leading administrative positions, leaving women to concentrate at the primary level and assistance care services as is the case with global trends of this occupational tenure. The study has also revealed that our sample population recognizes women's capacities to take charge of leading a classroom and delivering with the same qualities and professionalism as their male counterparts do.

Further research is fundamental to drawing narrower conclusions and neater patterns as to the feminization of teaching in Morocco. We suggest that future academic quests focus on involving more governmental officials, bring into discussions both clerical and educational bodies' evolutions within the sector and also opening up to a wider and larger number of practitioners across the country.

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