



Centre for Research in Education Inclusion and Diversity



C R E I D   B R I E F I N G   2

# GENDER BALANCE OF THE TEACHING WORKFORCE IN PUBLICLY FUNDED SCHOOLS IN SCOTLAND

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The teacher census carried out in 2003 showed that there had been a fall in the percentage of teachers who were male from 30 per cent in 1998 to 26 per cent in 2003. With regard to initial teacher education (ITE), men made up only 10 per cent of entrants to primary education in 2002 - 03, and 39 per cent of entrants to secondary education. This gender imbalance is evident in many European countries and other parts of the developed world. This research set out to investigate the nature of the gender balance in Scottish publicly funded schools, the underlying reasons for the growing imbalance and possible courses of action which might be taken to ensure greater diversity amongst the teaching workforce.

## Main findings

- The proportion of men in the Scottish teaching workforce is declining. In 1994 men comprised a third of all teachers, whereas by 2003 this had fallen to a quarter.
- In the primary sector, women outnumber men by five to one. In the secondary sector, the gender gap is widening particularly rapidly, and almost two thirds of all teachers in secondary schools are now female.
- In secondary schools, traditional gender divisions are evident in terms of subject taught. However, women now make up the majority of teachers in History and Modern Studies, as well as traditionally male-dominated subjects such as Mathematics and Science.
- Traditional gender divisions persist in school hierarchies, with men five times more likely than their female counter-parts to become headteachers in both primary and secondary schools.
- Other social divisions are also apparent within the teaching workforce; there are no headteachers from black and minority ethnic groups in either the primary or the secondary school sectors.
- Undergraduates have a rather negative view of teaching, although women and people from less socially advantaged backgrounds are more likely to consider teaching as a possible career.
- University careers staff believe there is scope for more successful marketing of teaching as a career with much closer liaison between local authorities and universities.
- Practising teachers emphasised the positive aspects of their work, such as the pleasure of working with young people and having considerable autonomy in the classroom. Men were particularly likely to emphasise negative features such as relatively low pay, the growth of managerialism and relatively low pay compared with some other professions.
- Traditional views still exist with regard to the suitability of teaching as a career for women, particularly in the primary sector. On the positive side, teaching is seen as a family-friendly occupation offering reasonably equal opportunities for promotion. On the negative side, women are still regarded as 'natural' teachers of young children, and men entering primary school teaching may encounter suspicion with regard to their motives for wanting to work with young children.

## **Introduction**

Teaching is a highly gendered profession, both historically and currently. Historically, the ideology of the male breadwinner shaped not only social attitudes towards teachers, but also the pay and promotion structures that distributed unequal rewards to male and female staff. Between 1915 and 1945, local authority rules obliged women teachers to resign their posts on marriage, although married women whose husbands were unable to support them were allowed to be employed on a temporary basis. Differential pay scales for men and women in teaching were established in 1919, not to be removed until 1962. An argument used to justify these formal barriers to gender equality was the fear that women were taking over the profession and the absence of men as role models was likely to be detrimental to male pupils. Debates about positive action in favour of men in the teaching profession have recently resurfaced in the light of concerns about the underachievement of socially disadvantaged boys (Tinklin et al, 2001) and the growth of violence and indiscipline, also mainly involving disadvantaged boys (Mills, 2001).

Within much of Europe and North America, there is a desire to challenge gender stereotypes which are seen as outmoded and potentially restricting individual freedom and creativity. The division of labour observed by children and young people is particularly important, since it is at this stage that gender stereotypes may be either challenged or reinforced. In line with Scottish, UK and European policy and legislation, there is a growing commitment to equality and diversity in the workplace. In the sphere of education, however, far from melting away, gender divisions appear to becoming more heavily entrenched. The teacher census carried out by the Scottish Executive Education Department in 2003 showed that there had been a fall in the percentage of teachers who were male from 30 per cent in 1994 to 26 per cent in 2003. With regard to initial teacher education (ITE), men made up only 10 per cent of entrants to primary education in 2002 - 03, and 39 per cent of entrants to secondary education. This gender imbalance is evident in many European countries and other parts of the developed world (Sinisalco, 2002; Drudy et al, 2005).

This research set out to investigate the nature of the gender balance in Scottish publicly funded schools, the underlying reasons for the growing imbalance and possible courses of action which might be taken to ensure greater diversity amongst the teaching workforce.

## **Research aims**

The aims of the study were to:

- Identify perceived and experienced barriers experienced by men in teaching
- Explore the attitudes of male and female undergraduates to teaching as a possible career and the perceptions of university careers officers
- Explore the views and attitudes of leaders and others involved in delivering ITE on issues relating to the growing gender imbalance
- Make recommendations to the Scottish Executive and other relevant bodies on actions would be likely to encourage more men to remain within or join the teaching profession.

## **Research methods**

In order to address the above aims, the researchers undertook a literature and policy review; an analysis of Scottish statistics from a range of sources including the Scottish Executive, the General Teaching Council for Scotland and the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council; key informant

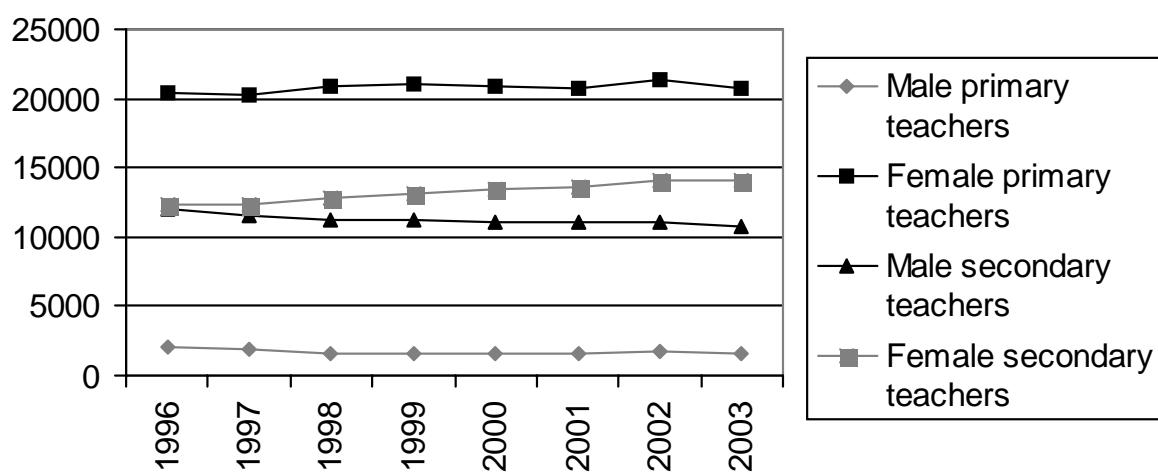
interviews; a survey of undergraduates on social and biological science programmes in three Scottish universities (two pre-92 and one post-92); interviews with university careers service staff; and focus groups with practising teachers in primary and secondary schools. Full details of research methods are given in the final report to the Scottish Executive (Riddell et al, 2005).

### The gender and age profile of Scottish teachers in publicly funded schools

In 2003 in Scottish publicly funded schools, there were 49,230 full time equivalent teachers employed to work in 2,826 publicly funded schools teaching 406,015 pupils. Of these 55% taught in primary schools, 44% in secondary schools and 1% in special schools. As noted earlier, the proportion of men in the Scottish teaching workforce is declining; in 1994, they comprised a third of all teachers, whereas by 2003 this had fallen to a quarter. The proportion of men and women in primary and secondary schools is very different. In every year from 1996-2003, there were almost five times as many female primary school teachers as male primary school teachers. There were also consistently more female secondary school teachers than male teachers, although the gap in the secondary sector was much smaller. However, Figure 1 shows that the gap in the number of male and female teachers is widening, as the absolute number of female teachers increases and the number of male teachers declines. The gap in the number of men and women in secondary school teaching is widening particularly rapidly.

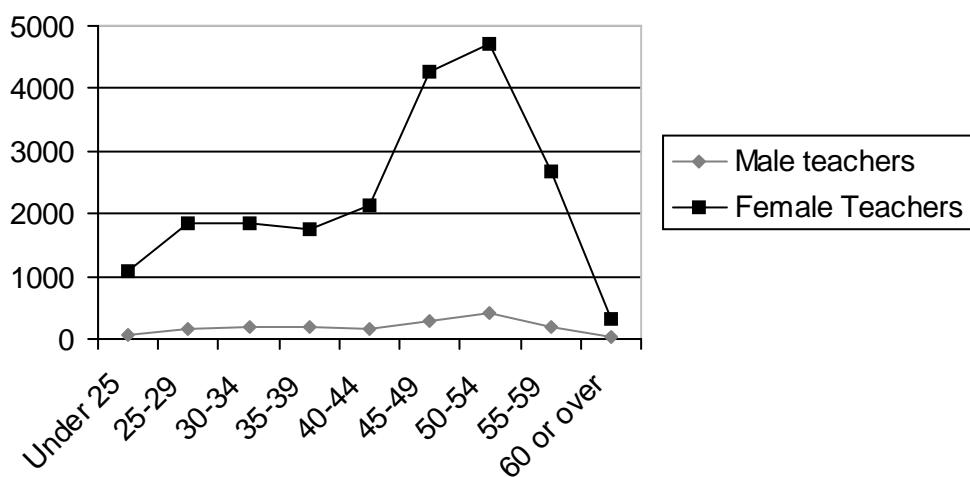
**Figure 1: Teachers by gender and type of school 1996-2003**

(Scottish Executive 2004) NB No official figures were available, by gender, before 1996.



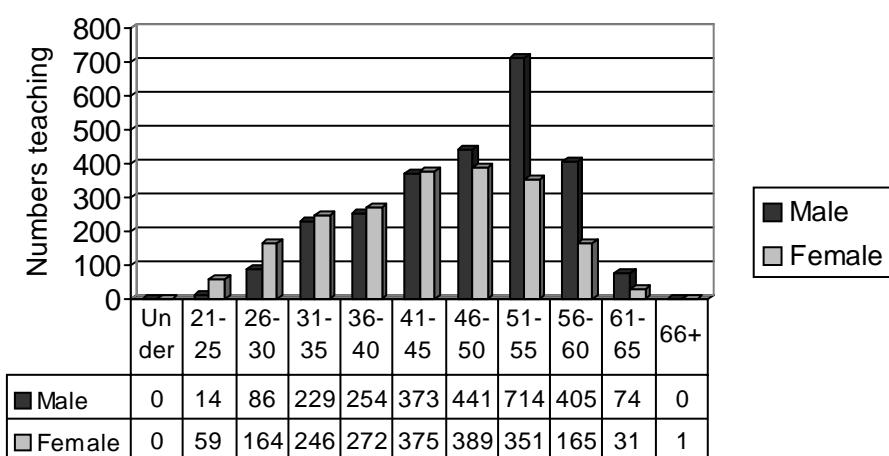
The gender profile of teachers also varies by age. Figure 2 shows that the majority of both male and female teachers are over the age of 44, and the gender gap is at its widest among the 50 - 54 year olds. This suggests that there is a need not only to attract more men into teaching, but also to sustain the number of women entering the profession.

**Figure 2: Scottish primary school teachers in 2003, by age and gender (Scottish Executive, 2004).**



In secondary schools, traditional gender divisions are very evident in terms of subject taught, with men making up the majority of teachers in Chemistry, Physics, Geography, History, Computing Studies and Technical Education. An analysis by age, gender and subject taught suggests that this picture is about to change radically, since women in the younger age groups make up the majority of teachers in Mathematics, Science, History and Modern Studies. Figures 3 illustrates the distribution of teachers by gender and age in Mathematics, a subject in which men have tended to dominate, but where women are likely to be in the majority in the future.

**Figure 3: Mathematics by age group and gender**



This may have implications for the culture of particular subject areas and their attraction to girls and boys. More female teachers in non-traditional subject areas such as Physics and Chemistry may make these subjects more attractive to girls, however, it is possible that for boys it will become even harder to find appealing role models.

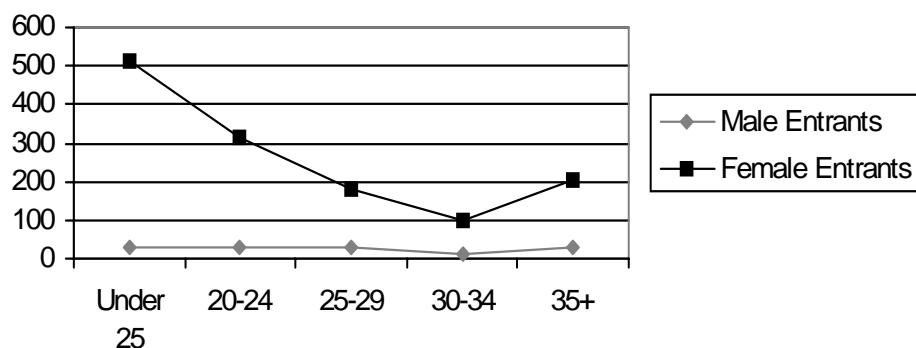
Traditional gender hierarchies persist in Scottish schools, with men five times more likely than their female counter-parts to become head teachers in primary and secondary schools. Other social divisions

are also apparent. All principals and deputies of secondary schools and head teachers of primary schools who declared their ethnicity in the 2003 Schools Census described themselves as white-UK or white-other. Given the importance of teachers as role models for pupils and the legal duty on public sector organisations to promote equality, there is clearly a need to take action to ensure that the social profile of teachers reflects more closely the characteristics of the Scottish population.

As noted above, fewer men are entering initial teacher education. On the PGCE primary programme, the majority of women are under 24 whilst men are more evenly spread across the 20 - 35 age groups (see Figure 6). This suggests that for women, primary teaching is a first career choice, whereas men are more likely to enter primary teaching having tried out other jobs.

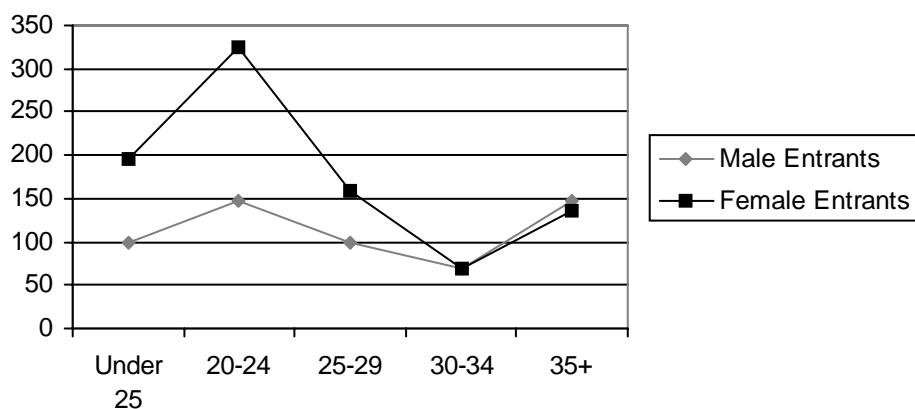
**Figure 6: Primary PGCE and BEd students by age group and gender 2002/2003**

In contrast, the majority of both male and female graduates entering the PGCE secondary education



programme are in the 20-24 age range, implying that graduates have enrolled for the course immediately after their first degree, or shortly thereafter (see Figure 7). By far the largest group of PGCE secondary students are women in the 20-24 age group.

**Figure 7: Secondary PGCE and BEd students by age group and gender 2002/2003**



The main subject of students on the BEd and PGCE programmes reflects the gender balance in the wider teaching profession. However, the proportion of male students training to teach History, Geography, Chemistry, Music and Technical Education is well below the proportion of men cur-

rently teaching these subjects in schools.

### **Undergraduates' views of teaching as a career**

The undergraduate survey provided insight into the views of potential new recruits to the profession, indicating the considerations influencing their future career choice and how teaching fared in comparison with other options. When asked to consider the importance of particular factors in relation to career choices, nearly 90% of respondents felt that job security and a steady income was important. About two thirds thought that having a well-paid job and a job that suited family life were important, and about a half thought that good holidays would influence their career choice. Less than a third felt the high social status was important. These general attitudes appear to be compatible with opting for teaching as a career (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Factors influencing career choice in order of popularity.**

For all respondents		Male respondents		Female respondents	
1. Security and income	88%	1. Security and income	86%	1. Security and income	90%
2. Socially useful	68%	2. Well-paid job	73%	2. Work with people	69%
3. Work with people	67%	3. Socially useful	69%	3. Socially useful	68%
4. Well-paid job	66%	4. Uses degree	64%	4. Uses degree	66%
5. Uses degree	65%	5. Work with people	63%	5. Suits family life	66%
6. Suits family life	62%	6. Suits family life	56%	6. Well paid job	65%
7. Will inspire others	55%	7. Has good holidays	56%	7. Will inspire others	56%
8. Has good holidays	49%	8. Will inspire others	55%	8. Has good holidays	48%
9. Social status	32%	9. Social status	41%	9. Social status*	27%

\* $p < .05$

Overall, whilst 60% of respondents had considered a job in teaching, the majority appeared to have rejected this option, since only 11% said they were very likely to become a teacher. Most respondents had a rather negative view of teaching, believing that it had relatively poor pay, low social status and that discipline problems made it an unattractive career choice. However, teachers' holidays were seen as a plus and it was viewed as a family-friendly occupation.

Despite the fact that women were significantly more likely to say they were very likely to become a teacher, their general views were similar to those of men. However, they were significantly more likely to agree with the statement that teaching offered family friendly conditions, which may provide some insight into their reasons for opting for teaching despite an awareness of some of its less attractive features.

Those considering a career in teaching placed higher values on family friendly conditions, long holidays and working with people, and less importance on having a job with high social status. Undergraduates from the post-92 university, who were more likely to come from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, were significantly more likely than those from the pre-92 universities to regard a high salary, high social status and long holidays as important. They were also more likely to think that teaching was a reasonably paid job. Overall, those from more socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds were more likely to be considering teaching as a career and regard it as a reasonably well-paid job. In response to specific questions about working in education, it emerged that undergraduates overall held a fairly negative view of teaching as a career. However, women and those from less advantaged neighbourhoods were more likely to see teaching as a possible career choice. This may not indicate great enthusiasm, but lack of more attractive alternatives. The views expressed in the survey suggest that young men may be particularly reluctant recruits.

**Table 2: Level of agreement with statements about teaching as a career**

Statement	All respondents agreeing	Male respondents agreeing	Female respondents agreeing
Holidays make teaching attractive	249 (80%)	86 (80%)	163 (79%)
Good job for people with family responsibilities	165 (52%)	47 (44%)	118 (57%) *
Reasonably well paid job	127 (40%)	41 (38%)	86 (42%)
Primary teaching more attractive	121 (39%)	34 (31%)	87 (42%)
Good career prospects	111 (35%)	38 (35%)	73 (35%)
A lot of public respect	98 (31%)	38 (36%)	60 (29%)
Have experience of teaching	87 (28%)	20 (19%)	67 (33%)
Discipline problems make teaching unattractive	209 (67%)	74 (69%)	135 (66%)
Likely to become teacher	36 (11%)	7 (6%)	29 (14%)

\* p<0.05

### Promoting teaching as a career: the views of university careers officers

Careers officers suggested that across the board graduates were interested in public service, and women favoured careers offering a positive work life balance. Graduates generally wanted to work in an area which was relevant to their discipline. Mature students were likely to look for a job which would allow them to work locally. Pay was not the major motivating factor.

Interestingly, it was felt that the pull factor of jobs in IT and the electronics industry was not the main reason for the declining number of men in teaching. Rather, male graduates were likely to be under-employed in service sector occupations. Careers officers expressed the view that the graduate labour market in Scotland was depressed rather than buoyant, but teaching had failed to fully capitalise on the relatively large number of graduates in search of employment. However, it should be noted that there have been very high intakes into PGCE programmes over the last two years. Compared with the private sector, the public sector appeared to put less energy into graduate recruitment and a more strategic approach would result in a better qualified and more enthusiastic teaching force.

Teacher education courses generally expected candidates to have prior experience of working with children and this might mitigate against men, who, compared with women, were less likely to have accumulated work experience with children over the years in both formal and informal settings. In addition, men on teacher education courses might be uncomfortable in a predominantly female environment.

Positive aspects of teaching included the terms and conditions of employment which might be appreciated rather more than women than men. In addition, the induction year was regarded as offering a more secure start to a teaching career. On the negative side, teaching was seen increasingly as a 'woman's job', demanding 'soft' qualities, and was therefore less appealing to men. The growing demands on teachers to assist with pupils' social development might also deter men.

Finally, teaching suffered from a negative image. Mass media were partly responsible for the propagation of scare stories, but teachers themselves projected an overwhelmingly negative view of their own profession which was dampening the enthusiasm of new recruits.

## **Addressing the gender imbalance in teaching: the views of practising teachers**

### **Positive and negative feature of teaching as a career**

Practising teachers in primary schools identified a number of positive features of teaching, including the opportunities provided for varied and autonomous work and contributing to the social and academic development of children and young people. A number of primary school teachers spoke of the fun which was an intrinsic part of working with children:

I think working in direct contact with the children is good fun and you are constantly learning something new everyday. (Female primary teacher).

Another positive feature was the variety of the job. One suggested:

People get stuck in a rut [in other posts] but here two days are never the same.  
(Male primary teacher).

The holidays and pension arrangements were another positive feature compared with jobs in the private sector and the working hours were very good for people with caring responsibilities. Opportunities for contact with the local community and other professionals were particularly welcomed by primary teachers.

Like their colleagues in primary schools, secondary teachers also spoke of the value they placed on their relative autonomy in the classroom and the pleasure of working with young people. Some also referred to the advantages of teaching compared with their previous occupation:

I worked in stock broking for five years before I came into teaching, so taking my experience from that into the classroom now, it's great. I see that it motivates pupils and .... I get a lot of satisfaction from that to see someone learn from my own experience.  
(Male secondary teacher)

Negative features identified by secondary school teachers included the number of pupils seen on a daily basis and the amount of paperwork associated with increased regulation and accountability. Male teachers in secondary schools emphasised the low pay and lack of promotion opportunities compared with some other professions such as law and medicine. Growing pressures arising from school inclusion policies and indiscipline were mentioned by some teachers.

There's more and more expectations on school and teachers to sort society out. We are the ones that can sort out bullying, drugs, everything. So whereas respect for us as a profession has gone down, both with children and with other adults, the responsibility that we are given has increased and that's difficult. (Female secondary teacher)

However, teachers in schools serving diverse communities were less likely to see these as problems, indicating that school culture might play a part. In relation to the public image of teaching, it was felt that a negative view of teachers' professional competence was sometimes promoted by media and

politicians. In addition, in their efforts to improve pay and working conditions, trades unions tended to play up the difficulties of teachers' work.

### Reasons for the declining proportion of men in teaching

Teachers were asked to give their views on why fewer men were going into teaching. It was noted that primary teaching had always been regarded as a job which was more suitable for women than men because of the caring and maternal qualities which women were assumed to possess. Shifting such deeply held beliefs was not an easy task:

I don't know how you would get round the barrier of men seeing it as a female dominated profession'. (Male primary school teacher)

There was a general view that teachers' pay did not compare favourably with that of some other occupations, and this was a more salient factor for men than women.

I can walk out the door and double my salary, or triple my salary... There is not a huge incentive to be here except to teach.  
(Male secondary teacher)

In connection with these views, it is worth noting that there were no significant differences between male and female undergraduates in their views of the importance of pay as a factor in career choice.

Whilst female teachers were wary about generalising, they felt that women were possibly more attuned to meeting pupils' social and emotional needs, an increasingly important part of the job:

But I would say as a rule generally it would appear that female teachers are much more likely to engage with kids and talk to them about something going on at home than male teachers who are much more likely, generally, it's a generalisation, not to do that in the same way. (Female secondary teacher)

Women might even be able to deal with discipline problems with men, because of their flexibility and ability to negotiate:

I have two boys and I have suggested teaching to them at various points over the years, but it is the hassle they would get...they couldn't put up with the cheek they would have to take...If they were teaching they wouldn't like the bad behaviour...they would find that difficult to deal with...and I think women can maybe take it more. (Female primary teacher)

Whilst there was agreement that women might be more empathic than men, there was some resistance to essentialist ideas of masculinity and femininity. One respondent said: 'it's not genetic, it's how they are raised'. Ultimately, having the right personal qualities rather than one's biological sex was regarded as the most important factor in determining who would be a good teacher.

I really don't think it's anything to do with whether you are a man or whether you are a woman, I think it's about the person and I think if you have got certain qualities for teaching then you will be a good teacher.... I think if the man has got the right attributes to be a teacher then it's totally appropriate that that's where he should be and very important for young boys that they do have role models. (Female secondary teacher)

In addition, gender stereotyping might have a negative impact on men who did choose to become a teacher. For example, concerns about discipline might pressurise men into fulfilling the role of disciplinarian against their wishes:

...men are quite often pushed towards the difficult class therefore they have to fulfil that stereotype of being able to deal with the difficult class. What quite often children need are men that are quiet, softly spoken and gentle. That is actually really important.  
(Male primary teacher)

There was general agreement that male role models were very important for both boys and girls:

In a society where so many children don't have a male role model, at home or within their immediate sphere of communication, a male teacher can actually be really important.  
(Female primary teacher)

Therefore, even though it might be difficult to attract men into teaching, attempts to do so should not be abandoned.

### **Addressing the career structure of teaching**

Key informants suggested actions to be taken to recruit more men into teaching should include changing the image of the profession for men by emphasising the pay and promotion opportunities as part of a good career structure. In addition, the option of starting mature entrants higher up the pay scale might be reinstated. Combating gendered job stereotyping in schools was also felt to be important. Overall, however, key informants considered that the main concern should be to ensure that the best-qualified and motivated people entered the profession, regardless of their gender.

Changes introduced as a result of the McCrone agreement were seen, by practising teachers, as having a mixed impact on teaching as a career in general, and specifically as a career for men. The flattening of the career structure had removed some promotion opportunities in the secondary sector and this, coupled with the new faculty structure, was seen as having a negative effect on morale. Positive aspects of the Chartered Teacher programme were recognised, but it was seen as costly, time-consuming and may not fit easily with women's career profiles. The probationary year arrangements were also viewed positively, but difficulties remained in finding a permanent job and these might be perceived particularly negatively by men.

### **Implications for policy and practice**

In the light of the declining proportion of men in teaching and the apparent reluctance of current undergraduates to pursue a career in education, it is evident that fresh thinking is needed about how to attract and retain a teaching workforce which reflects social diversity. Rather than pursuing positive action policies aimed at men, which might disadvantage women, respondents felt that the emphasis should be on getting the best recruits into teaching, and coercing reluctant men would be counter-productive. The following actions were likely to be successful in recruiting the most able individuals, regardless of gender:

- developing positive messages about teaching through focused advertising campaigns emphasising pay and promotion as well as intrinsic job satisfaction

- much closer working between local authorities and university careers staff to recruit the best graduates
- countering negative media messages about teaching
- actively engaging trades unions and teachers themselves in promoting their own profession;
- developing more imaginative ways of recruiting the best new graduates and career changers into teaching
- paying attention to all aspects of social diversity, so that the teaching workforce reflects more closely the full spectrum of modern Scottish society
- supporting male and female teachers in all aspects of their working lives, so that they feel able to meet pupils' social, emotional and academic needs
- continuing to review teachers' pay and conditions to ensure that teaching is able to compete with other professions for the best graduates.

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## Full Report

If you would like a copy of the full report it is now available on the Scottish Executive's website:  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/11/11135710/57107>

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