

Gender Inequality in Teacher Recruitment: Lack of Male Teachers

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Abstract. Due to the lack of male teachers, many primary and secondary schools provide policies in favor of men in teacher recruitment in order to balance the gender ratio of teachers in schools. However, such recruitment policies cannot change men's resistance to the education industry but cause discrimination and unfair treatment of women in recruitment. On the one hand, the gender imbalance of the teaching staff needs to be improved. On the other hand, gender discrimination in teacher recruitment should not continue. Focusing on the theme of teacher gender, this study is based on the unfair situation in teacher recruitment, analyzes its causes, and provides reasonable suggestions to solve the gender problem of teachers. The suggestions put forward in this regard are summarized as follows: (a) The government should change the stereotype of teaching profession in society through propaganda. (b) The social status of teachers should be improved. (c) Normal colleges and universities should set up gender-related courses. At the same time, primary and secondary schools should standardize and assess teachers' gender-related behaviors.

Keywords: Teacher recruitment, Gender Equality, Male teachers.

1. Introduction

In recent years, with the development of the economy and the improvement of education, the competition for jobs has become more and more fierce. Coupled with the prevalence of feminism, more and more people pay attention to and protest against gender inequality in recruitment. Among them, the recruitment policies for teachers at the basic education stage in many regions reflect gender preference. In order to balance the gender ratio of teachers and recruit more male teachers, the school lowered the threshold for male teachers, while excluding many females with stronger specialized knowledge and abilities. Debate continues about the impact of teachers' gender on students. On the one hand, many scholars questioned the traditional concept of gender and believed that the impact of teachers' gender should not be exaggerated. On the other hand, concerns about the "gender imbalance" in the teaching staff are still growing. Therefore, the value of the recruitment policy in favor of boys needs to be considered. At the same time, women's unequal treatment in teacher recruitment should also be taken seriously.

This study takes the form of a case study to analyze gender inequality in teacher recruitment. Based on previous studies, this study analyzes the reasons for the unreasonable teacher recruitment policy and puts forward reasonable suggestions. It is hoped that this study can provide a better solution to the problem of gender imbalance among teachers and provide a reference to avoid further unfair phenomena in teacher recruitment.

2. Case description

In November 2022, a list of proposed candidates for primary and secondary school teachers publicly recruited in Zhuhai caused controversy online. The contents in the list show that in this recruitment, two types of recruitment positions for primary school Chinese teachers have been set up for male and female candidates, so as to recruit enough male candidates. However, among the candidates, the educational level of males is generally lower than that of females, and there is a wide gap in "educational background". In the list, the majority of female candidates have master's degree, while those with bachelor's degrees have graduated from top universities in China. On the contrary,

most of the male candidates graduated from the lower ranked universities, and only have bachelor's degrees. This phenomenon in the recruitment process of primary and secondary school teachers is of common occurrence. In this regard, the Education Bureau explained that for the sake of equality between men and women, the enrollment ratio of half of men and women was set.

In recent years, the proportion of female full-time teachers at the stage of basic education in China has shown a continuous upward trend. In 2021, the proportion of female full-time teachers in primary school has reached 72.29%, while the proportion of female full-time teachers in kindergarten has remained between 97.00% and 98.00% from 2019 to 2021(See Table 1). It can be seen that the lack of male teachers in the basic education stage is becoming more and more serious. In the face of the imbalance in the gender ratio of teachers, many previous studies have raised concerns and advocated changing this imbalance [1-3].

Table 1. Proportion of female full-time teachers in China's basic education from 2019 to 2021 [4-6]

Academic period	2019	2020	2021
Junior high school	57.80%	58.81%	59.77%
primary school	70.02%	71.17%	72.29%
Kindergarten	97.79%	97.78%	97.80%

In fact, many local governments and schools have adjusted their policies on teacher recruitment. In order to improve the imbalance of the teachers' gender ratio, many regions have adopted preferential policies for male candidates in the recruitment of primary and secondary school teachers to encourage more men to join the teaching team. This explains the reason why the educational background of the candidates for primary school Chinese teachers in the case above is so different in gender.

In addition, as the cradle of the growth of primary and secondary school teachers, normal colleges and universities also have serious gender imbalances. Therefore, in order to solve the problem from the source, some normal colleges and universities prefer male students in enrollment policies and lower the admission score line to balance the gender ratio. For example, according to the admission policy of Shanghai Normal University in 2004, all majors are inclined to male students, who will be admitted at a reduced score on the filing line [7]. Male students will enjoy a reduced score of about 10 points at the time of admission, so as to ensure that the admission rate of male students is not less than 40% [7].

Although the formulation and implementation of policies by local education bureaus and schools are based on the consideration of balancing teachers' gender, such gender-related differential treatment obviously violates the principle of fairness and cannot fundamentally solve the problem. On the one hand, there are still few men willing to engage in the teaching profession, and prejudice against teachers' profession still exists. On the other hand, such a policy lowers the threshold for men to enter the teaching profession, so the professionalism of these teachers is questionable. The possible impact on the healthy growth of students is worth pondering.

3. Analysis

3.1. Negative effect

3.1.1 Public opinion

The gender-based discrimination in the recruitment of teachers and enrollment in normal colleges has aroused widespread public discussion. In these arguments, the most striking point of contention is the violation of women's rights by the biased policies. The profession of teachers itself does not have gender color and should not have specific gender restrictions [8]. China's labor law stipulates equal employment rights for men and women. Furthermore, *The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, signed by China, also required the state party to guarantee women's right to education and protect women from discrimination.

The law requires equality between men and women in employment, yet the recruitment policy in the case allows men and women to compete for teachers' positions separately, which actually deepens the gap between the gender in a disguised form. Under such a recruitment policy, the competition for female teachers' positions is intensified. Even if many excellent female teachers have stronger professional abilities, they also give way to male teachers because of gender so that the goal of increasing the number of male teachers can be achieved. However, such changes are superficial, and the proportion of male teachers has continued to decline in recent years. Overall, such policies have not only failed to fundamentally adjust the gender ratio of teachers, but also largely violated the legitimate rights and interests of women in employment. The impact of the policy is extensive, and the employment and enrollment policies that violate fairness may further lead to the wrong social climate, which runs counter to the ideal of gender equality [9].

3.1.2 Education

Apart from the academic background, the information disclosed in the case also includes the interview scores of the candidates. The interview results in teacher recruitment are the most direct reflection of the applicants' education and teaching ability, and can be used as a reference for their professional quality. The interview scores of the male candidates in the list are between 70-80 points, while the female candidates have the lowest interview score of 85.6 points, and the female candidates with the score of 84.8 points are marked out. It is worth thinking that this policy lowers the threshold for men to enter the education industry, thus achieving the goal of supplementing male teachers, but the concessions made to this end are in the professional ability of teachers.

The professional quality of teachers is the key factor for students to achieve academic achievements in school and ultimately gain the ability to get a foothold in society [10]. Blömeke demonstrated that a significant positive relationship between teachers' level of education and students' academic achievement was found in nine countries [11]. Even though this is not absolute data, it also suggests that people should pay more attention to the professional quality of teachers. At present, when educational administrators urgently change the imbalance of teachers' gender ratio, they often neglect the importance of considering teachers' professionalism. This policy sacrifices the possibility of absorbing more high-quality teachers. Therefore, in the absence of conclusive evidence, the advantages and disadvantages between the gender ratio and the professional competence of teachers should be measured.

3.2. Reasons

3.2.1 Reasons for the need to balance the gender ratio of teachers

Although the differential treatment of men and women in teacher recruitment should not be advocated, the imbalance of teacher gender ratio at the stage of basic education can not be ignored. Therefore, in order not only to change the current situation of women being discriminated against in the teaching profession, but also to find a more reasonable solution for the lack of male teachers, it is necessary to pay attention to the harm of gender imbalance in the teaching staff through the phenomenon, and then face up to the essence of the problem.

First of all, gender factors, as the personal characteristics of teachers, have received widespread attention in the study of education quality. A large number of studies have pointed out that the gender of teachers has an impact on students' academic achievements [12,13]. Specifically, in the face of scientific disciplines that focus on logical reasoning, male teachers tend to pay more attention to the experimental, accurate and logical nature of subject knowledge than women, so as to help students achieve better academic results, especially for boys [14]. Correspondingly, another study considered that female teachers pay more attention to the emotional characteristics of students, which helps female students obtain better test results and better social adaptability [15]. These studies show that male teachers and female teachers seem to play different roles in students' academic performance, so the absence of either side may have a negative impact on students.

Secondly, teachers of different genders have different role models in different subjects. In the past, the gender stereotype of strong males and weak females was deeply rooted, and there was also such a stereotype in academic talent. Nowadays, the majority of Chinese teachers in primary and secondary schools are women, while the majority of male teachers are math and science teachers. In this way, the imbalance of teachers' gender ratio in various subjects further deepens students' prejudice against gender. As a result, boys are more afraid of literature courses, while girls also lose confidence in learning science.

Last but not least, the teacher's role model is also reflected in the cultivation of students' character. Many voices claim that the lack of male teachers is detrimental to the growth and character formation of male students. Too many female teachers are likely to cause the feminization of male students [1,16]. In addition, the study found that female teachers tend to give students more expectations of being clever and quiet, while naughty boys are not paid attention to and affirmed by teachers under such expectations, thus damaging their personality growth [17]. Therefore, the view that the lack of male teachers is not conducive to the formation of masculinity of male students has become the main reason for people to question the gender ratio of teachers.

3.3. Misconception: The influence of teacher gender

According to the possible hazards mentioned above, the problem of gender imbalance among teachers is really urgent to be solved. However, there are still many misunderstandings about the influence of teachers' gender. These misunderstandings, to some extent, have led to unreasonable decision-making in teacher recruitment, which further magnifies the gender problem.

First of all, in many studies, the division of the areas in which male and female teachers are good at comes from the stereotype of gender. Some studies have pointed out that male teachers and female teachers often show distinct gender characteristics in the process of education and teaching. However, this difference may be due to the artificial label of gender. Masculinity should not be limited to the characteristics of men. Female teachers can also be brave and strong, and can be logical; Male teachers can also be gentle and careful, and can pay attention to students' emotions. These characteristics should be the goal of all teachers' self-improvement.

Secondly, when it comes to the "feminization" of the teaching staff, many researchers have mentioned the concern about "the lack of masculinity of boys" [1,16]. However, some studies have pointed out that "more women than men" in the teaching staff is not the main reason for affecting the gender socialization of boys, but more attention should be paid to the lack of paternity in family upbringing and the pressure of education [18,19]. Nowadays, society is becoming more and more diversified, and this process of change is the collision and blending of new and old ideas. As a result, the gender difference between men and women in the old concept has become the focus of public opinion, and the feminization of boys has become the topic. Accordingly, this anxiety has been exaggerated in school education. People should be tolerant of multiple personality characteristics, and should not conservatively classify "strong and brave" and "quiet and gentle" by gender, but give students broader psychological development space in school education.

Teacher gender may indeed have an impact on students' perception of gender role, but more targeted research shows that teacher gender has little impact on students' academic performance and academic direction choice. There are many other influencing factors in the relationship between teachers' gender and students' academic performance. Previous studies often attributed teachers' personal factors to gender, resulting in prejudice against teachers' gender. Sansone found that teachers' views on the abilities of male and female students in mathematics and science and the way they treat male and female students in the classroom have a great impact on students' academic levels. In contrast, the gender of teachers cannot be the main factor affecting students' academic performance [20]. It is noteworthy that socioeconomic status can function as a mediator that affects the relationship between teachers' gender and students' academic performance. Mulji found that in high-income areas, female teachers do not have a significant impact on students' academic performance; In low-income areas, female students obviously benefit from the teaching of female teachers [21]. This may be

because the gender stereotype prevailing in low-income areas makes most female students lose their motivation to study, and the emergence of female teachers gives them more encouragement and support, which is reflected in the improvement of their academic performance [21]. This stereotype not only comes from family and society, but also exists in schools. Therefore, it is necessary for society to turn its attention from the gender of teachers to gender discrimination in school education, especially the possible sexist beliefs of teachers. From the perspective of individual teachers, the possible gender stereotypes of teachers have a more significant impact on students' learning than the gender of teachers themselves.

4. Suggestions

The gender ratio of teachers in basic education cannot be changed overnight. While trying to improve this situation, the 'feminization' of teachers' gender should not be considered as the fundamental crux of the problem. Giving more opportunities to boys in the recruitment of teachers does not change males' exclusion towards the education industry and the prejudice of society against the teacher profession. Long-term planning needs to be implemented in order to update the social impression of the teacher profession.

In the social gender ideology, women are given the titles of "wife" and "mother", and are considered to be responsible for taking care of and cultivating children, while the teaching profession is considered as the extension of "mother" identity, and also responsible for raising children. Therefore, in the social division of labor, people naturally think that "women are more suitable to be teachers". This stereotype has led to the exclusion of male teachers from the teaching profession, and at the same time, many male teachers have been exposed to rumors from the outside world. In this case, to attract male teachers, this stereotype in the social division of labor needs to be solved first.. The government needs to publicize the image of teachers in a variety of ways to show the professional demeanor of excellent teachers, so as to show the professionalism and diversity of teachers' profession and eliminate the gender label of teachers' profession. Secondly, the social and economic status of teachers needs to be improved. In the inherent concept, teachers are considered to be stable but have no room for development, which makes many men not consider the teaching profession. At the same time, the high investment in the teaching profession has not received a corresponding high return, so it lacks competitiveness in the labor market. Improving teachers' salaries, promoting the social atmosphere of respecting teachers and improving teachers' professional happiness will inevitably attract more talents to enter the teacher industry and change the current situation of "thirst for talents" in the teaching industry.

Education is the most indispensable part of the teaching profession. The solution of many stereotypes should also start from the root of education. First, gender related education should be included in the curriculum of normal colleges and universities. The reason for many educational problems caused by gender is the lack of personal gender awareness of teachers. When gender cannot be used as a criterion to judge teachers' gender awareness, it is necessary to cultivate correct gender views through relevant courses, eliminate the gender bias that may exist in education, and cultivate teachers of the new era who keep pace with the times [22]. Secondly, in-service teachers should be trained and assessed so that teachers can consciously eliminate gender discrimination while giving education, and at the same time, the concept of gender equality should be infiltrated into the daily education of students to fill the gap in gender education in basic education.

5. Conclusion

Education and gender are topics of great concern to society. On the issue of education, schools and the government take the healthy growth of children as the starting point and expect to give children healthy and high-quality education. However, there are many difficulties and contradictions. As for the gender ratio of teachers, which is closely related to gender issues, the sacrifices women teachers

are forced to make are not what society expects, and the unfair recruitment policy should not be the only solution.

From the inequality in the recruitment of teachers, the two main problems of social concern can be seen: (a) men are unwilling to enter the education industry, and male teachers are lacking. Students lack the guidance of male image, and it is difficult to form a correct understanding of gender roles, (b) teachers' gender stereotypes are not conducive to students' academic achievements, and more male teachers are needed to encourage boys' academic achievements. In this regard, it should be realized that the phenomenon of gender imbalance cannot be solved in a short time. This problem comes from various stereotypes of gender and occupation, as well as from the stereotypes of educators themselves. On the one hand, it is a prejudice to attribute the academic differences in education to the gender of teachers. Trying to solve the problem directly by changing the gender ratio of teachers cannot really help students. On the other hand, gender stereotypes and the professional attributes of teachers hinder the possibility of men entering the education industry. Teachers are not considered to be suitable for men. Therefore, the popularization of gender education and the transformation of stereotypes are the key issues.

In short, this essay aimed to provide reference suggestions for the solution of gender problems in the teaching staff on the basis of maintaining gender equality. However, there are few studies on the impact of teacher gender on students' academic and psychological performance in China, so it is difficult to make more targeted recommendations based on the local situation in China. In addition, the relationship between teachers' gender and students' gender cognition is still worth further study.

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