

FEMALE TEACHERS' POOR DISTRIBUTION AND CAUSES OF THIS IN THE TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE INDUSTRY: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract: English as a Foreign Language Teaching has been the field of interest of Beninese females for a career choice. However, their involvement in the teaching career varies from one level of education to another. This study examined the distribution rates of male and female teachers in secondary and tertiary institutions over five years, reviews current research, and critically analyses patterns of gender variations in the teaching of English as a Foreign Language in Benin Republic. Descriptive statistics of percentage and group bar charts were used and interview was conducted with 10 women to identify the factors responsible for female EFL teachers' small number in the TEFL industry. The results indicated that the gap between male and female EFL teachers was widely pronounced at each level of education. English learning demand in a French speaking country, female teachers' attitudes toward studying English, female teachers' personality, societal perspective, religious factors, lack of ambition, marital factors, sexual harassment among others were identified as the reasons accountable for this gap. Efforts need to be made to increase the percentage of qualified female academics in selection processes in order to bridge the gender gap identified at secondary and tertiary levels.

Keywords: TEFL, Distribution, Female Teacher, Secondary School, Universities

Résumé : Au Bénin, l'enseignement de l'Anglais Langue Etrangère constitue un centre d'intérêt chez les femmes dans le choix de leur carrière. Cependant, leur implication dans la fonction enseignante varie d'un ordre d'enseignement à un autre. Cette étude a évalué les variations des taux de distribution des enseignants hommes et femmes sur une période de cinq ans dans les établissements d'enseignement secondaire et supérieur à travers des analyses critiques des modèles de variations entre ces deux catégories d'enseignants. Des analyses statistiques descriptives ont été utilisées et des interviews ont été réalisées sur 10 femmes afin de découvrir les facteurs qui justifient le faible taux de femmes enseignantes d'anglais. Il ressort un grand écart entre les deux catégories d'enseignants à chaque niveau d'enseignement. Des contraintes liées à l'apprentissage de l'Anglais dans un pays francophone, aux attitudes des enseignantes à l'égard de l'apprentissage de l'Anglais, la personnalité de l'enseignante, l'influence de la société et de la vie conjugale, certaines considérations religieuses, le manque d'ambition, le harcèlement sexuel ont été notées. Des efforts doivent être consentis pour réduire un tant soit peu cet écart.

Mots-clés : Anglais Langue étrangère, Distribution, enseignement secondaire, université

Introduction

English has increasingly gained importance all over the world, and particularly in Benin. It has become the most operational language in the world. It is a language that can help EFL learners to secure international positions after their studies. It helps get an easy admission into universities where English is the medium of instruction and above all to communicate with English speakers. Some of the reasons for learning English language as a foreign language in Benin Republic are the school curricula, the need for advancement in professional life, living in a target community permanently or temporarily, interest in different cultures, and some other specific purposes. English remains the language of international communication and business. The first implication is that the English Language is often seen as the key to gaining access to global markets by non- English speaking countries like Benin. The main actors in the field of education are teachers who are engaged in the transmission of knowledge to students. Teachers are regarded as national or world builders. The teaching profession has been as fraught with difficulties as other professions in terms of making inroads towards more equality in attainment and responsibilities. It has been an occupation in which females have been able to establish professional experience (Amanda 2016). School is a domain of women in professional work, and teaching can be described as a feminized profession (Basten 1997). The feminization of the teaching profession is not absolute in some African countries. The higher the position of responsibility, the fewer women are employed. Literature and statistics revealed that in many African countries, like Benin, there are few female teachers in the teaching profession. The dual phenomena of globalization and online communication technologies have brought about dramatic and ongoing changes in many fields of human endeavours in this twenty-first century. Factors associated with globalization, understood as the combination of economic integration, technological diffusion, and greater access to information have operated through markets, formal institutions (schools), and informal institutions to lift some of the constraints to greater gender equality (Amanda 2016). Apart from this introduction, the study is structured around five points: the literature review; the research questions; the methodology; the results/discussion; and the conclusion.

1. Past studies on Gender Balance in the Teaching Profession

Feminism is, nowadays, a concept that is in vogue and seems even more crucial in an environment based on gender segregation. It is seen in almost all fields and particularly in teaching. Much of the more recent literature highlights the forms of inequality that diverse groups of women still face in a largely male-dominated labour structure even as their post-war representation in universities is expanding and has increased substantially over the last four decades (Benin Parliament. 2006). In the past, women made up the majority of the teaching force, and were numerically dominant, especially evident at the

elementary/primary level in the world. The circumstances under which this feminization occurred have been noted by Owen (1988) as “subject to much regional variation and ideological complexity,” and comprise regional, class, religious, ethnic, and linguistic differences. Some introductory generalizations made are that women are likely to have played a teaching role well before the advent of compulsory schooling and various forms of organized but informal schooling have been documented. Despite the argument that the teaching profession has become a female affair, literature and statistics revealed that in many African countries, like Benin and Nigeria, there are few female teachers, especially at universities (Reay 2000). A number of factors have been identified as reasons for this gender gap in the African educational system. The most striking among them is the non-existence of female teachers at tertiary institutions. Gender disparities globally are manifested in many aspects of education, including access, retention, success, career choices and opportunities (UNESCO, 2019). This study examined the distribution rates of males and females in secondary and tertiary institutions in English as a Foreign Language teaching in Benin Republic. The study identifies the factors responsible for female EFL teachers’ distribution rate at each level of education in the TEFL industry. The investigation is to add to the scant body of knowledge about gender in English learning by following in the footsteps of previous studies while taking account of more recent developments in the research literature.

2. Research Questions

The following questions guided the conduct of the study:

- What is the distribution rate of male and female teachers in the TEFL profession in secondary and tertiary institutions in Benin?
- What are the factors responsible for EFL female teachers’ poor representation in secondary schools and tertiary institutions in Benin?

3. Methods

The population involved in the study comprises all secondary school EFL teachers and university EFL instructors teaching in the public schools. A proforma was used to collect the total number of English instructors from the 12 Direction des Enseignements Secondaires, Techniques et de la Formation Professionnelle (DESTFP) and the three English Departments over five years started from 2014 to 2019. The data collected were collated and analysed using descriptive statistics of percentage and group bar charts for comparison. Moreover, an interview was conducted with 10 female teachers randomly selected to identify the factors responsible for the small number of female EFL teachers in the TEFL industry.

4. Findings

Having outlined the purposes of the study, the study will now examine the findings that relate directly to the distribution rate of male and female teachers in the TEFL profession in secondary and tertiary institutions and

analyse the factors responsible for female EFL teachers' poor representation in secondary schools compared with tertiary institutions in Benin Republic.

4.1 The distribution rate of male and female teachers in the TEFL profession in secondary and tertiary institutions in Benin Republic

This section provides an overview of the numbers and the gap between male and female teachers in secondary and universities institutions using descriptive statistics of percentage and group bar charts for comparison.

Table 1: Gender Distribution of Secondary School EFL Teachers in Atlantic/Littoral from 2014/15 to 2018/2019 Academic year

Academic year	male (M)	%	Female (F)	%	Total	M-F	%
2014/15	632	86.46	99	13.54	731	533	72.91
2015 /16	621	86.49	97	13.51	718	524	72.98
2016/17	619	86.57	96	13.43	715	523	73.15
2017/18	615	86.99	92	13.01	707	523	73.97
2018/19	601	86.85	91	13.15	692	510	73.70

Source: Statistics DDESTFP Atlantic/Littoral 2019

Table 2: Gender distribution of secondary school EFL teachers in Zou/Colline from 2014/15 to 2018/2019 academic session

Academic year	male (M)	%	Female (F)	%	Total	M-F	%
2014/15	402	84.45	74	15.55	476	328	68.91
2015 /16	387	84.50	71	15.50	458	316	69.00
2016/17	381	84.48	70	15.52	451	311	68.96
2017/18	374	84.81	67	15.19	441	307	69.61
2018/19	361	84.54	66	15.46	427	295	69.09

Source: Statistics DDESTFP Zou/Colline 2019

Table 3: Gender distribution of secondary school EFL teachers in Oueme /Plateau from 2014/15 to 2018/2019 academic session

Academic year	male (M)	%	Female (F)	%	Total	M-F	%
2014/15	381	79.71	97	20.29	478	284	59.41
2015 /16	377	80.04	94	19.96	471	283	60.08
2016/17	372	80.35	91	19.65	463	281	60.69
2017/18	309	77.83	88	22.17	397	221	55.67
2018/19	301	77.78	86	22.22	387	215	55.56

Source: Statistics DDESTFP Oueme/Plateau 2019

Table 4: Gender distribution of secondary school EFL teachers in Borgou/Alibori from 2014/15 to 2018/2019 academic session

Academic year	male (M)	%	Female (F)	%	Total	M-F
2014/15	278	77	83	22.99	361	195
2015 /16	273	76.90	82	23.19	355	191
2016/17	269	77.08	80	22.92	349	189
2017/18	264	77.19	78	22.81	342	186
2018/19	260	77.38	76	22.62	336	184

Source: Statistics DDESTFP Borgou/Alibori 2019

Table 5: Gender distribution of secondary school EFL teachers in Atacora/Donga from 2015/16 to 2018/2019 academic session

Academic year	male (M)	%	Female (F)	%	Total	M-F	%
2014/15	271	79.71	69	20.29	340	202	59.41
2015 /16	265	79.82	67	20.18	332	198	59.64
2016/17	264	79.76	67	20.24	331	197	59.52
2017/18	262	80.62	63	19.38	325	199	61.23
2018/19	261	81.31	60	18.69	321	201	62.62

Source: Statistics DDESTFP Atacora/Donga 2019

Table 6: Gender distribution of secondary school EFL teachers in Mono/Couffo from 2014/15 to 2018/2019 academic session

Academic year	male (M)	%	Female (F)	%	Total	M-F	%
2014/15	180	87.37	26	12.62	206	154	64.71
2015 /16	267	89.89	30	10.10	297	237	79.79
2016/17	343	90.50	36	9.50	379	307	81.00
2017/18	355	90.33	38	9.66	393	317	81.33
2018/19	366	90.14	40	9.85	406	326	81.29

Source: Statistics DDESTFP Mono/Couffo 2019

Tables 1, 2,3,4,5 and 6 reveal that the male teachers outweigh their female counterparts over the five- year period. The disparity of the distribution is pronounced and is about 72.91%.

Table 7: Gender distribution of tertiary institution EFL instructors in Adjarra English department from 2014/15 to 2018/2019 academic session

Academic year	male (M)	%	Female (F)	%	Total	M-F	%
2014/15	00	00	01	100	01	01	100
2015 /16	02	66.67	01	33.33	03	01	33.33
2016/17	03	60	02	40.00	05	01	20
2017/18	04	66.67	02	33.33	06	02	33.33
2018/19	04	66.67	02	33.33	06	02	33,33

Source: Statistics English Department Adjarra 2019

Table 8: Gender distribution of tertiary institution EFL instructors in Parakou English department from 2014/15 to 2018/2019 academic session

Academic year	male (M)	%	Female (F)	%	Total	M-F	%
2014/15	03	100	0000		03	03	100
2015 /16	03	100	0000		03	03	100
2016/17	04	100	0000		04	04	100
2017/18	06	100	0000		06	06	100
2018/19	07	100	0000		07	07	100

Source: Statistics English Department Parakou 2019

Table 9: Gender distribution of tertiary institution EFL instructors in Abomey Calavi English department from 2014/15 to 2018/2019 academic session

Academic year	male (M)	%	Female (F)	%	Total	M-F	%
2014/15	16	88.89	02	11.11	18	14	77.78
2015 /16	15	88.24	02	11.76	17	13	76.47
2016/17	14	87.50	02	12.5	16	12	75
2017/18	13	86.67	02	13.33	15	11	73.33
2018/19	12	80	03	20.15	15	09	60

Source: Statistics English Department UAC 2019

Tables 7,8 and 9 show **that** the percentage of female instructors in tertiary institutions is much lower than that of male instructors in all the five years considered. The disparity of the gender distribution was very pronounced and this was about 64%.

4.5 Factors responsible for EFL female teachers' poor representation in secondary schools compared with tertiary institutions in Benin?

There are various inter locked factors which work together to cause female teachers' poor representation in the English teaching profession. The following constraints most of which emerged from the narratives of respondents' past learning experiences as university students at the departments of English are divided into two factors: dependent factors and independent factors -

Dependent factors

- **The Control and Restriction of Girls by their Boyfriends**

Benin is a French speaking country and learning English in such a context demands some language immersion, and more engagement from the students. At the secondary level of education, the minimum qualification is Licence and Maîtrise in Education; but at the University level, the minimum requirement for a lecturer is a Doctoral Degree. A bachelor's degree is the minimum educational requirement for a professional EFL teacher in secondary schools. This factor prevents females from aspiring to pursue a career at the tertiary institution. Most of female students once at University are engaged to be married with a man. Several boyfriends tend to be quite possessive and not allow their fiancé to do much alone. This restricts the girls' studying. This impacts the training and consequently the girl does not go far in her study. Females are usually regarded as home-makers in the context under investigation. Benin tends to be more traditional and more sexist about women's roles. This belief constitutes a hindrance to the pursuit of their degree at a tertiary level due to the academic rigor involved (Patrick, 2010).

- **Female Attitudes toward studying English and the Lack of Ambition:**

Beninese students are required to study English in a social environment where there is little immediate need or opportunity to use the language for communicative purposes. Further, as the bulk of secondary and tertiary school English study is oriented toward preparing students for examinations, the English learning environment is not set up to foster communicative ability. Considering these circumstances, it is easy to speculate that motivation to study English among these students is low, or that attitude toward learning English tends to become negative as students progress through their studies. The most important conclusion that can be drawn from the above results is that, in a foreign language (FL) learning environment which does not foster communicative ability in the foreign language, does not imply any need or even opportunity to use it for communicative purposes, and requires its study, attitudes toward that language and the people it represents. It does not seem unreasonable to speculate that many students would be averse to having to study a language they will likely never use, and in a way that doesn't train them to use it for much more than taking tests. Responses from respondent female teachers were slightly negative. In other words, girls showed slightly more negative attitudes than boys toward learning English. Female students lack ambition to aspire higher and to acquire the prerequisite higher qualifications that would make females employable at higher institutions. Some of the females lack motivation and interest in English learning and teaching and others find difficult to adapt themselves to the learning setting. They are most of the time shy and introverted.

▪ Classroom Teachers' Behaviour and Leadership

One of the most important resources in an enterprise is the persons that work within the organization. Their training, their education, their philosophy and professional development will have a tremendous impact on the achievement of instructional and behavioral objectives. A teacher's behavior has immeasurable effects on all aspects of the classroom environment. Teacher-student relationship directly affects students' attitudes towards the quality of academic achievement. Some of the female informants alluded to bad teacher-student relationship, power and sexual harassment, more specifically to some male lecturers' attitudes. They pointed to the fact that some of the lecturers were more interested in other things than the actual academic activities. Some of them were more interested in the candidate as a woman than as a student. In that connection, an informant said this: *I went to the office of my teacher one day and all that I could notice is that he closed the office door and started engaging me into romance ...* (Paula)

As teachers, the growth of students in both the affective and cognitive domains should always be the central concern. "Putting time into building a culture that motivates and inspires people is the venture capital of school" (Sandra & Dillabough, 2007). Shaping a positive school culture is important due to the focus on high curriculums standards, assessments, and accountability.

▪ Classroom Climate and Females' poor participation in English Class

The classroom has been regarded as male public space in the context under investigation. This has affected the participation and the academic achievement of female students, which in turn is likely to influence negatively the choice of their future profession. The majority of female students are reported to be less active than their male counterparts. The current study reveals a number of factors that significantly either enhance or demotivate female students from participation. One of the personal traits, namely, perception of classroom participation, was thought of as a strong influence on the female students' classroom engagement. Personal traits Inhibition and perception of classroom participation are the main factors highlighted by the participants. Three out of the four female students made self-reflection describing themselves as shy (inhibited or lacking in confidence) or withdrawn (uncommunicative or daydreaming). For example, one of the students, Adama said:

I am reluctant to open up and get involved in discussions with professors. In fact, I am shy by character and habit. I do not like speaking too much.... I feel nervous when people stare at me.

"It is fear of saying wrong answers which prevented me from participation," said Judith another participant. Clearly, the participants did not leave space for speculation about their shyness. It was also discovered that fear of peers' negative attitudes and social constraints were sufficient to decrease the level of participation of the female students. The findings suggested, however, that

moderate views of the world, high knowledge about the topic, professor traits and the type of the subject being studied play pivotal roles in creating a classroom climate for female students to participate. Professor traits include approachability and pedagogy. Having a pleasant character and adopting a learner-centered approach stimulate the female students to actively engage in the classroom discussion. In the light of the findings, it surfaces that the nexus between gender and higher education classroom participation does not reflect just a pedagogically based problematic but also culturally based one. Several researchers proposed different factors which influence female student participation in the classroom. For instance, while some studies divided these factors into two main categories: class-related variables such as class-size, and gender distribution and student traits such as social, and religious background, others stated that beside personal and class traits, professor traits such as gender and course policies influence female student's participation in the classroom.

-Independent factors

- **Domestic responsibilities and teen- mothers**

In Benin, most of the house chores are done by females. Laundry must be washed and food must be cooked from scratch, often for a family of seven or eight children. The overwhelming burden of domesticity often plays a major role in the decision to prevent females from pursuing their degree at school. The individual is shaped by his or her environment, family, community and culture all these factors contribute to the way the child perceives mainstream society and the child's perception of his or her role within the mainstream society (Amanda, 2016. Females are usually regarded as home-makers. This belief prevents them from pursuing professional careers at the tertiary level due to the academic rigor involved (Amanda, 2016; Patrick, 2010). The Beninese society doesn't want its girls to go higher because they feel that such females would have less time to take care of their families. Many educated and township businessmen prefer their wives going into the teaching profession at lower levels of educational system because teaching at this level allows women ample time to attend to their household chores.

- **Societal, religious and Parental Influence**

The study revealed that females pursuing their studies at University level involve some reactions from the individual family and the society in which she lives. Most of the time, it is difficult for the female to get a husband at that level because men often feel threatened by a woman who is intelligent and prefer to feel superior. The female's friends start gossiping and do not trust the intellectual effort made by her. Some parents see teaching at lower level of education as a suitable profession for their female children in the sense that, it is a career where their children would feel secure and have time for themselves and their families. This explains why the percentage of female teachers at secondary level is little higher than the percentage of women at University

level. Young children are products of their environment. By the age of six or seven years-old, they are already been socialized in patterns of behavior supported by adults in the community. In essence, children have been provided with their own curriculum content, ideology, methodology, and language transaction (Owoaje & Omolara, 2010). Moreover, in most religious circles, the female is considered to be a supportive figure, a person who is seen as an advisor, a helper and a teacher. With this mindset, people see the teaching profession at lower levels as a career where females can exhibit such roles (Owoaje & Omolara, 2010).

Discussion

A number of factors have been identified as reasons for the gender gap in the TEFL industry in Benin Republic. The most striking is the absence of EFL female teachers at University. Males prevail among tertiary institutions teachers. Many factors are responsible for these disparities in gender distribution: Lack of ambition to aspire higher that is to acquire the prerequisite higher qualifications that would make EFL females employable at higher institutions. Females are regarded as home-makers (Adichie 2013). This belief delimits females pursuing professional careers at secondary and tertiary level due to the degree recommendation. Moreover, the fact that females do not have the ambition to achieve academic excellence, and seemed preoccupied with getting only a certificate reflected a traditional role that has been given to Beninese women. The traditional role was that the future job for women was to a great extent limited to that of motherhood. The husband is the only breadwinner. Even if the woman works, she should not spend her money on the basic needs of the house. Otherwise, the community believes the husband is unable to meet the family's needs, an act which is culturally scorned. Instead, the female spends her money on her clothes and/or gives it to her family and/or relatives. Classroom traits as the name suggests, classroom traits refer to factors that are related to the environment where the learning process takes place. Fearing students' judgments and character were mentioned as the main environmental factors which induced reticence among the female students to aspire to higher education. One student said that when she gives her opinion she looked at her peers' reactions. This is because "male students always laugh at us when our responses are not correct." She went on explaining, "they [male students] consider our mistakes as an indication of stupidity". Elaborating on this point, another student interrupted saying that they should not put all the blame on male students though they are to be blamed because female students pass negative comments about each other. They perceive a woman who usually interacts and gets engaged in the classroom activities as man-like. She lacks factors of femininity. They scorned her and always play jokes on her. She becomes under their daily scrutiny, her movements, her walk, her clothes...etc. Even when you raise your hand, they say so and so is developing, or they might think you are interested in getting the attention of the professor if he is male. In public spaces, women are prevented from behaving the way men do. It seems

that the Beninese society sets private space for women and public one for men. Additionally, active participation is a man's behavior, and answers are man's logic. Attempts to transgress such rules might lead to social misfortune such as accusation of being westernized. Women should prove their existence... they should challenge culture and dismantle the idea that man is the intellectual.

Conclusion

This paper has shown the distribution rate of male and female teachers of English in secondary and tertiary institutions and has identified the factors responsible for female EFL teachers' concentration in secondary schools compared with tertiary institutions in Benin Republic. Based on the findings, the study concluded that there are far fewer females than males in every year of the study at secondary level and tertiary level. Factors like societal perspective, religious factors, lack of ambition, marital factors, and sexual harassment among others were identified as reasons for this gap. Gender balance in teaching remains an important equality issue. Gender needs to be embedded in policy thinking on teaching and teacher education and men need to take responsibility for this and do something to change it.

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