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**Primary School Teachers Perceptions of
Gender-Based Differences**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Educational Psychology
at Massey University, Albany, New Zealand

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Declaration

I certify that the thesis titled "Primary School Teachers Perceptions of Gender-Based Differences" was submitted as part of the degree of Master of Educational Psychology and is the result of my own work, except where otherwise acknowledged, and that this research paper (or part of the same) has not been submitted for any other degree to any other university or institution.

Signed:  _____

Date: 17 November 2014

Abstract

This study explores primary school teachers' perceptions of gender-based differences in primary school in New Zealand. In this mixed-method study, the research utilised an online survey to collect data in three domains: teacher as self, teacher-student dynamics, and teacher collegiality.

Quantitative analysis revealed overall no differences; however, quantitative analysis showed differences in the participants' perceptions of teachers' content knowledge, the ability to treat students fairly, and teachers' positive attitude toward the profession. Qualitative analysis also revealed differences in participants' perceptions of the jobs held by males and females in the primary sector with male teachers receiving more negative responses when compared to female primary teachers. Furthermore, all of the participants perceived a need for more male primary teachers in the primary sector. The participants were unsure if male teachers had an adequate amount of content knowledge and whether female teachers treated their students fairly. The participants perceived that male teachers' attitudes toward the profession were not as positive as female teachers' attitudes toward the profession.

Male primary teachers are always in demand in primary schools in New Zealand; but could that be for the wrong reasons? The literature has cast doubt on the common assumptions that male teachers are needed as male role models and that their presence can improve the behaviour and academic achievement of boys. The literature suggests that men in the primary teacher workforce are often viewed in terms of their inherent male qualities rather than personal attributes; their ability to be a role model rather than their caring qualities and ability to build relationships.

The research findings provide insight into primary teachers' perceptions of gender-based differences and could lead to improved teacher education and professional development programs as well as the recruitment of more effective male primary teachers.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Table of Contents	iii
List of Figures	vi
List of Tables	vii
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
1.1 Background to the Study	1
1.2 Research Objective	4
1.3 Overview	5
Chapter 2 Literature Review	7
2.1 Introduction	7
2.2 Gender Beliefs and Perceptions	7
2.3 Gender in the Learning Environment	10
2.3.1 Teacher as self	11
2.3.2 Teacher-student dynamics	16
2.3.3 Teacher collegiality	23
2.4 Teachers' Desire to Work with Children	25
2.5 Role of Males and Females in the Education Setting	26
2.6 Summary	27
Chapter 3 Method	28
3.1 Introduction	28
3.2 Justification for Methodology	28
3.3 The Researcher's Role	29
3.4 Data Collection	30
3.4.1 Survey research	30
3.4.2 Design of the questionnaire	31

3.5	The Research Study: Settings, Sample and Schedule	32
3.5.1	The setting and the sample	32
3.6	Schedule	33
3.7	Data Analysis	34
3.7.1	Quantitative data	34
3.7.2	Qualitative data	34
3.7.3	Comparative analysis	34
3.8	Validity and Reliability	35
3.8.1	Limitations	35
3.9	Ethical Considerations	36
3.10	Summary	36
Chapter 4 Results		37
4.1	Introduction	37
4.2	Participant Demographics	37
4.3	Teacher as Self	39
4.3.1	Classroom management	39
4.3.2	Content knowledge	40
4.3.3	Teaching styles	42
4.4	Teacher-student Dynamics	43
4.4.1	Role models	44
4.4.2	Nurturing, patient and fair	45
4.4.3	Motivation and engagement	47
4.4.4	Have a desire to work with children	48
4.5	Teacher Collegiality	50
4.6	Additional Questions	52
4.7	Summary	54
Chapter 5 Discussion and Conclusion		55
5.1	Introduction	55
5.2	Teachers Perceptions of Gender-based Differences	55
5.2.1	Teacher as self	56
5.2.2	Teacher-student dynamics	58

5.2.3	Teacher collegiality	60
5.2.4	Additional questions	61
5.3	Implications for Primary Teachers	63
5.4	Limitations and Further Research	64
5.5	Concluding Thoughts	65
References		66
Appendix A Survey questionnaire		73
Appendix B Letter of Request: Principals		84
Appendix C Letter of Request: Teachers		85

List of Figures

Figure 1: Ethnicity of Participants	38
Figure 2: Age of Participants	38
Figure 3: Highest Qualifications of Participants	39
Figure 4: Teacher as Self	43
Figure 5: Teacher-student Dynamics	50
Figure 6: Teacher Collegiality	52

List of Tables

Table 1: Countries with the Highest Percentage of Female Primary Teachers	1
Table 2: Classroom Management Styles	40
Table 3: Content Knowledge	41
Table 4: Teaching Styles	42
Table 5: Role Models	44
Table 6: Nurturing, Patient and Fair	46
Table 7: Motivation and Engagement	48
Table 8: Desire to Work with Children	49
Table 9: Teacher Collegiality	51