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Editorial: Practices for gender equality: teachers' sense of efficacy

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Editorial on the Research Topic

Practices for gender equality: teachers' sense of efficacy

Introduction

In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations (United Nations, 1948) declared education to be a human right. Building on this foundation, in 1960, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) adopted the Convention Against Discrimination in Education, which aimed to eliminate discrimination based on race, gender, or religion [United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 1960]. Three decades later, in 1990, the Education for All (EFA) movement was launched to reduce illiteracy rates and achieve universal primary education [United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 1990]. Entering the new millennium, the UN introduced the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which reaffirmed the priority to create universal access to primary education [United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2010]. To urgently advance global priorities that promote the flourishing of global communities, in 2015, the UN created an Agenda for Sustainable Development, which established 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The development of flourishing communities necessitates that all people within a community have access to quality educational opportunities, as education has the potential to transform the attitudes in a community (Cardona-Moltó and Miralles-Cardona, 2022). The SDGs have brought attention to the need for advancing educational access for women and girls (Canton, 2021), the focus of this Research Topic. Historically, women and girls have been excluded from educational opportunities [United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2023]; this phenomenon is particularly prevalent in low- and middle-income countries (Psaki et al., 2018). Although significant progress has been made (Psaki et al., 2024), it is essential to promote approaches that address the persistent challenges related to gender equality.

Educator preparation for advancing gender equality for women and girls

Educators play a vital role in helping nations achieve gender equality through gender-responsive pedagogical practices that promote inclusive education. Therefore, it is essential

that teachers receive effective professional training to improve their understanding of their role in reaching this goal and in implementing these pedagogies, which can transform women's and girls' experiences from just having access to education to truly being included in learning opportunities.

Teacher training programs present a pivotal opportunity to increase teachers' knowledge of gender related terminology and social dynamics, gender-responsive pedagogy, and attitudes toward gender equity in education. Teachers' knowledge of gender equity concepts helps cultivate a sense of self-efficacy. Furthermore, teachers' sense of efficacy influences their use of pedagogical practices (Zee and Koomen, 2016); therefore, addressing the knowledge and skills to support females in teacher training can increase teachers' sense of efficacy as they enter the profession (Thompson et al., 2025). The purpose of this Research Topic, "*Practices for gender equality: teachers' sense of efficacy*," is to share initial findings from across the Kingdom of Morocco as professors implemented their new primary teacher preparation program. Specifically, authors employed various approaches to explore teachers' sense of efficacy in their awareness, knowledge, and use of gender-responsive pedagogies, as well as gender-equality-oriented attitudes (Miralles-Cardona et al., 2022).

Reform efforts in primary teacher preparation in the Kingdom of Morocco

The Kingdom of Morocco's 2030 National Reform Framework tasks Moroccan professors with leading reform efforts to prepare primary teachers through collaborative research and design groups in partnership with the Ministries of Education and the United States Agency for International Development (Conseil Supérieur de l'Éducation de la Formation et de la Recherche Scientifique, 2015). The national framework aims to promote high-quality inclusive education for all (SDG 4; United Nations, 2015) and gender equality (SDG 5). As they launch reform initiatives, they need a clear understanding of the current level of preservice teachers' confidence in implementing gender-responsive pedagogy to develop a comprehensive plan that ensures future teachers build on and expand effective practices for gender equity, helping to realize these goals.

We are pleased to feature nine articles in this Research Topic, authored by 42 Moroccan professors. Additionally, Miralles-Cardona et al. (2022), the developer of Teacher Self-Efficacy for Gender Equality Practice (TEGEP), contributed an article emphasizing the need for more gender-equitable approaches in schools to address the overrepresentation of women in lower-paid fields and their underrepresentation in leadership positions, with the aim of creating a more gender-balanced workforce.

Inquiry on gender equality in education: a series of investigations

The Research Topic includes a collection of articles from authors working in various contexts in Morocco, including public

universities and Regional Centers for the Professions of Education and Teaching (CRMEF). Each research team employed a unique approach and methodology to gain a deeper understanding of the Research Topic, and all utilized the TEGEP (Miralles-Cardona et al., 2022).

Droussi et al. surveyed 80 primary school teachers in urban and rural areas of the Béni Mellal-Khenifra region of Morocco. Authors found differences in responses between male and female respondents, noting that female respondents rated their confidence and familiarity with concepts related to gender equity higher. Similarly, Abid et al. discovered that female respondents had a slightly higher level of knowledge and confidence in gender equity concepts compared to their male peers from their survey of 196 teacher trainees in Rabat and Khenifra. Additionally, authors observed that Moroccan teacher trainees generally have a superficial understanding of key concepts related to gender equity. Like the previous two studies, Delbouch et al. found that, from a sample of 592 preservice teachers from five regions, female respondents reported higher levels of awareness of concepts related to gender than males. Authors speculate this may be due to the influence of gender roles on female respondents, such as carrying a greater burden of household responsibilities. Next, El Ouahabi et al. surveyed 392 preservice teachers across six regions and found that females rated their self-efficacy and gender-responsive pedagogy higher than males. Furthermore, Ouabou et al. conducted a mixed-methods study of 188 teacher trainees in the Sous-Massa region, finding a disconnect between awareness of newly enacted national policies and subsequent classroom practices. Kmiti and Azeroual also identified a gap between policies and classroom practices; despite positive attitudes toward implementing gender-equitable practices, respondents reported lacking the knowledge and skills to take action. Despite these discrepancies between policy and practice, Rguibi et al. noted a link between practices aimed at supporting gender equity and positive outcomes based on 242 teacher responses. Accordingly, Aafaf et al. emphasized the importance of integrating professional training for preservice teachers to improve their understanding of gender-related concepts, including gender-responsive pedagogy. Their findings—gathered from 135 preservice teachers in the Casablanca-Settat region—indicate that increased competence could boost implementation. Similarly, Chaouqui et al. found that respondents ($N = 112$) from Marrakesh-Safi and Eastern Region Centers had insufficient awareness of gender-related concepts. Overall, the evidence underscores the need to expand gender-equity training to ensure compliance with the laws and regulations established by the Moroccan government.

Summary and consideration for the future

We appreciate the efforts of these author groups to understand better the current state of teachers' progress toward achieving gender equity goals in Morocco. The focus of this research by professors across the Kingdom is an encouraging sign, as are the findings that teachers generally have positive attitudes toward gender equity. The research highlights

opportunities to bridge the gap between current national policies and the goals outlined in the SDGs. Teacher preparation programs provide an ideal opportunity to develop teachers' knowledge, skills, and attitudes that could advance gender equity outcomes through the implementation of gender-inclusive classroom practices. We encourage further research on this Research Topic.

Author contributions

TP: Writing – original draft. WO: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft. AK: Writing – review & editing. AF: Writing – review & editing. Y-CC: Writing – review & editing. NT: Writing – review & editing. SH: Writing – review & editing.

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