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**Assessing the Impact of Marriage Bars and the
Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act (1919) on
South Wales's Married Women Teachers 1900 - 1944**

Louise Day

7610 words

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Abbreviations

LEA – Local Education Authority

NUWT – National Union of Women Teachers

SD(R)A – Sex disqualification Removal Act

Introduction

‘A person shall not be disqualified by sex or by marriage from the exercise of any public function, or from being appointed to or holding any civil or judicial office or post, or from entering or assuming or carrying on any civil profession or vocation, or for admission to any incorporated society.’¹

The quotation above is taken directly from Section 1 of the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act passed in 1919 by the British Government. The female suffrage campaign had waned during the war years so that women could help as much as possible with the war effort, but once the conflict had ended, campaigning resumed.² The resulting SD(R)A, a compromise made on behalf of the Government following the rejection of the more ‘radical’ Women’s Emancipation Bill earlier that year, gave hope to married women teachers that no longer would they be forced to resign once married and their positions would be secured within their professions.³ The Act however was not watertight, and education boards and LEAs continued to dismiss married women teachers.⁴ It was not until the 1944 Education Act was passed that the marriage bar within the teaching profession was permanently quashed.⁵

Teaching was a respectable profession for women as it was considered an extension of their natural caring and nurturing roles as mothers.⁶ During the late Victorian era through to the early twentieth century, teachers formed the largest group of professional women.⁷ In south Wales, reforms such as the 1842 Mines Act had meant that, aside from domestic service, there were few other options for paid employment for unmarried women in this heavily industrialised region.⁸ This naturally meant that there was strong competition for teaching posts in south Wales, and so marriage bars were used as way of creating vacancies for newly qualified teachers. The gender ideals and social ideologies that were prevalent at this time,

¹ ‘Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act (1919)’, Chapter 71, 23rd December 1919, UK Parliament Parliamentary Archives [Online]. Available at [GB61 - GB61 HL PO PU 1 1919 9and10G5c71 \(collectionsbase.org.uk\)](https://collectionsbase.org.uk/GB61-GB61_HL_PO_PU_1_1919_9and10G5c71) Accessed 1 March 2024

² Ryland Wallace, *The Women’s Suffrage Movement in Wales 1866-1928*, Cardiff (2009) pp.219-286

³ Dierdre Beddoe, *Out of the Shadows: A History of Women in Twentieth Century Wales*, Cardiff (2000), p. 101

⁴ Beddoe, *Out of the Shadows*, pp. 82-84

⁵ Beddoe, *Out of the Shadows*, p. 119, p.143

⁶ Morris and Loftus, ‘Unit 12 The Making of the British Middle Class’, p.257

⁷ Joelle Gorno, *Welsh Women Teachers and the Women’s Movement in South Wales (1870-1928)*, [Online] (2023), pp.1-2

⁸ UK Parliament, ‘Coal mines’, (2024) [Online]. Available at: <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/livinglearning/19thcentury/overview/coalmines/> Accessed 25 May 2024

⁹ Beddoe, *Out of the Shadows*, pp. 31-32

such as the 'Welsh Mam', were also used to force married women teachers back into the domestic sphere.¹⁰

The implementation of marriage bars by Local Education Authorities meant that many women were forced to choose between their profession and the opportunity to have a family.¹¹ Women yearned to escape this outdated and oppressive domestic ideology.¹² In 1914 at the outbreak of the First World War, their opportunity came. Married women were called to the classrooms to fill the vacant teaching positions created by men sent to fight on the Western Front. When the conflict ended in 1918, women were praised for their efforts but were expected to retreat once again to their contained domestic worlds.¹³

In terms of efforts to research the impact of the marriage bar on the lives of south Wales's married women teachers, Lisa Jane Snook has explored the 'neglected' lives of those who lived in the Rhondda from 1870 up until the eve of the Second World War.¹⁴ Her work, although incredibly useful at providing an insight into the experiences that some of these women had, does not extend beyond 1939 and therefore does not capture the significance of the 1944 Education Act. Similarly, Beth Jenkins's thesis investigates south Wales's married women teachers' experiences for the same period and provides useful information on the powerful ideologies that were prevalent at the time as well as the NUWT's efforts to abolish the marriage bar. W. Gareth Evans's work mainly focuses on the experiences of Welsh girls and women as pupils and students in the Victorian era and the education provisions available to them, although his mention of the unsuccessful implementation of a marriage bar in 1913 in Caernarfonshire suggests inconsistencies existed and is therefore worthy of further investigation.¹⁵ His writing also features the issue of unequal pay, which is perhaps in need of further research, but it will not be explored within this dissertation.¹⁶

Dr. Sian Rhiannon Williams has also made notable contributions to this field of study. One such testimonial captured in the collection from women who lived in South Wales during the interwar period describes how female teachers had to leave their posts once they were married.¹⁷ Given that this happened in the interwar years after the SD(R)A was passed, it suggests that the Act was indeed undermined by the continued use of marriage bars. Williams's more recent article examines the decisions made by the Aberdare LEA to dismiss

¹⁰ Beth Jenkins, *Women's Professional Employment in Wales 1880-1939*, (Cardiff University, 2016), p.187

¹¹ Dierdre Beddoe, *Discovering Women's History: A Practical Manual*, London (1983) p. 31

¹² Beddoe, *Out of the Shadows*, p.24

¹³ Beddoe, *Out of the Shadows*, p.74

¹⁴ Lisa Jane Snook, *Women in Rhondda society.1870-1939*, (Swansea University E-Thesis, 2002) p.71

¹⁵ Evans, *Education and Female Emancipation*, pp. 168-9

¹⁶ Evans, *Education and Female Emancipation*, p.168

¹⁷ *Struggle or Starve: Stories of everyday heroism between the wars*, ed. By Carol White and Sian Rhiannon Williams (Wales, 1998), p. 242

female teachers solely on the grounds that they were married.¹⁸ Her work features heavily in Chapter One to assess the impact that marriage bars had on the lives of south Wales's married women teachers.

More recently, Ryland Wallace's book concentrates on the various female suffrage organisations and activities for women in Wales.¹⁹ His work in turn helped me to locate publications belonging to the National Union of Women Teachers (NUWT). This organisation actively opposed the marriage bars imposed on Wales's married women teachers and believed that securing the vote for women would in turn secure equality with their male colleagues in the education sector.²⁰ Wallace's work therefore provides a foundation to help explore the activities of female teachers involved in the campaign to remove the marriage bar for the first three decades of the twentieth century. In chapters two and three, this dissertation will assess the ways in which south Wales's married women teachers reacted to the continued use of the marriage bars and how they remained resilient in striving for change.

Lastly, Dierdre Beddoe deserves to be heartily applauded for her extensive research on the lives of Welsh women throughout this period. Her work has been most useful, containing a wealth of information relating to Wales's women teachers.²¹ Beddoe explains how Victorian ideals of 'The Perfect Lady' and attitudes surrounding women and domestic ideology persisted into the twentieth century, setting the context of the contemporary social climate²²²³. It also explains how at the end of the First World War, society's expectations and the economic depression further affected married women teachers.²⁴ Beddoe describes how the initial hope that the SD(R)A offered was short-lived and the suggestion that the Act was successfully and repeatedly undermined will be explored in greater depth in chapter two. Her research also provides an insight into why 1944 became the watershed year, and this will be explored further in chapter three.²⁵

¹⁸ Dr Sian Rhiannon Williams, *The 'troubled question of the married women teachers': The Aberdare dismissals of 1908*, (Cardiff Metropolitan University, 2019) [Online]

¹⁹ Wallace, *The Women's Suffrage Movement in Wales 1866-1928*

²⁰ Wallace, *The Women's Suffrage Movement in Wales 1866-1928*, p. 120

²¹ Beddoe, *Out of the Shadows*

²² Dierdre Beddoe, *Discovering Women's History*

²³ Beddoe, *Out of the Shadows* p.12, p.24

²⁴ Beddoe, *Out of the Shadows* p.74

²⁵ Beddoe, *Out of the Shadows* p.119, p.143

This dissertation is ultimately underpinned by the following question: how, and to what extent, did marriage bars affect south Wales's married women teachers between 1900 and 1944? It is broken down into three chronological and thematic chapters to provide a focused and organised study.

Chapter one, *Restriction*, focuses on the years 1900 through to 1919, the year the SD(R)A was passed. It will analyse why restrictive marriage bars were imposed, the effect they had on women's lives, and the extent to which they were relaxed and then re-introduced during and after the First World War. By concentrating on these initial years, it will provide scope for comparison in the subsequent chapters on the impact that the SD(R)A had, if any. The experiences south Wales's married women teachers endured will be explored using the secondary works above and contemporary newspaper articles. It is important to remember however that many of these contemporary primary sources are penned from the perspective of men and therefore are not necessarily able to provide a balanced viewpoint on behalf of women.

Chapter two, *Response*, is dedicated to the years immediately after the SD(R)A was passed in 1919. It examines how and why the SD(R)A came into existence and the reasons why it failed to protect married women teachers. The case of *Price v. Rhondda Urban District Council* will be analysed to explain how LEAs responded to the legislation and why they continued to implement marriage bars. Drawing on secondary works, this chapter will explore parliamentary records and contemporary newspaper articles, although significantly it is here that we are able to read individual women's responses, perhaps reflecting the political advances women were making. It will also identify how and why Price and her colleagues responded by making legal proceedings against the Rhondda authorities, thus introducing a significant increase in confidence and the political agency women were willing to employ in the fight for equality. Additionally, it will also demonstrate the other covert ways women responded to the continued use of marriage bars, highlighting the impact of the marriage bar on their lives.

Chapter three, *Resilience*, will analyse the actions of the NUWT and the role these women played in shaping the 1944 Education Act which eventually enforced a total ban on marriage bars. It will examine the legacy of the SD(R)A and explores how *The Woman Teacher*, a comprehensive contemporary journal detailing the arguments for equality for married women teachers, was utilised by members of the NUWT. It will assess the effect that their propaganda campaign and political agency had on the 1938 Spens Report and subsequently the legislation of 1944. It will also explore contemporary parliamentary records to explain how and why society's attitude changed towards this group of women. The final chapter will be the conclusion, drawing together the threads from each chapter to ultimately explain how, and to what extent, marriage bars affected south Wales's married women teachers.

This dissertation will hopefully shed new light on this relatively under-researched aspect of women's history. By focusing exclusively on Wales's married women teachers during 1900 and 1944 which was a time of immense social, political and economic change, I hope to create a comprehensive and enlightening study into the lives of these women and the challenges and triumphs they faced.

Chapter One: Restriction

This chapter will focus on the restrictions that south Wales's married women teachers experienced from 1900 through to the eve of the passing of the SD(R)A in 1919. It will first explore the reasons why marriage bars were imposed on this group of women by education authorities before analysing the extent to which marriage bars were implemented across south Wales and how they affected women's lives. The effect of the First World War on the use of marriage bars will then be examined before considering post-war attitudes and the extent to which marriage bars continued to feature in the lives of these women.

The dismissal of married women teachers in south Wales was common practice in the early twentieth century, although at this point it was more to do with adhering to traditional gender norms than legislation.²⁶²⁷ Newspaper articles from the early twentieth century show that marriage bars were imposed by education authorities as a way of enforcing 'the doctrine of separate spheres.'²⁸ One article from June 1900 warned that women who wished to pursue careers posed a threat to domestic tranquillity and 'had lost something of the naturalness of their truer life' and that a woman's 'finest nobleness [was] to be homeful for others.'^{29 30} These contemporary sources highlight the patriarchal attitudes that existed during this time and reinforce Beddoe's claim that society was threatened by those who behaved outside the boundaries of entrenched gender norms.³¹ Enforcing marriage bars also ensured that women performed their duties as wives and mothers.³² In 1908, as part of an 'effort to professionalise the teaching workforce', the Aberdare LEA resolved to not only dismiss all of the married teachers within its employ but also forced uncertificated teachers to attend additional classes to satisfy qualification requirements. These uncertificated married female teachers experienced a further difficulty therefore committing to evening and weekend classes because of the domestic and childcare responsibilities they shouldered.³³ In October 1908, the Mountain Ash Education Committee announced that 'it

²⁶ Evans, *Education and Female Emancipation*, p.261

²⁷ Snook, *Women in Rhondda society.1870-1939*, p.25, p.76

²⁸ Beddoe, *Out of the Shadows*, p.12

²⁹ *Western Mail (Cardiff, Wales)*, 'Women and the Higher Education', Saturday, June 30, 1900, Gale Primary Sources [Online]. Available at

https://go.gale.com/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=Newspapers&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&searchResultsType=SingleTab&retrieveId=edb6c123-ffff-4580-b4cb-3f1628b22b70&hitCount=237&searchType=AdvancedSearchForm¤tPosition=135&docId=GALE%7CBA3205287553&docType=Article&sort=Pub+Date+Forward+Chron&contentSegment=ZBLC-MOD1&prodId=BNCN&pageNum=7&contentSet=GALE%7CBA3205287553&searchId=R3&userGroupName=tou&inPS=true Accessed 31 March 2024

³⁰ *Western Mail*, 'Women and the Higher Education', Saturday, June 30, 1900

³¹ Beddoe, *Discovering Women's History*, p.18

³² Beddoe, *Out of the Shadows*, p.12

³³ Williams, *The 'troubulous question of the married women teachers'* p.7

was not desirable to retain the services of married women teachers.³⁴ After dismissing seventeen married women teachers, the Committee defended their decision stating that ‘no woman could serve two masters – her husband and the education authority. She must neglect either the school or the household... Woman’s sphere was her home, and they would respectfully ask these married ladies to devote their energies to their home.’³⁵ The implementation of marriage bars therefore ensured that women were confined to the domestic sphere, reflecting the patriarchal ideals of the time.

Research undertaken by Sian Rhiannon Williams indicates that education authorities claimed that marriage bars also served an economic purpose. In the case of the Aberdare dismissals of 1908, the LEA decided to dismiss all married women teachers within their employ as a viable method of creating vacancies for newly qualified, unmarried ones.³⁶ Due to the dependency of south Wales on the coal fields, and the former legislation prohibiting women from working underground, employment opportunities were limited.³⁷³⁸ Snook states that LEAs claimed that marriage bars were of financial benefit but subsequently discredits this argument because long serving male and unmarried female teachers were not forced to resign.³⁹ The claim that married women teachers were creating such problems is further challenged by the comments of Mr. B.R. Evans of Amman Valley School Board. In February 1914, he argued that contrary to earlier claims there was a shortage of teachers, and it would be irresponsible to dismiss all married female teachers.⁴⁰ Additionally, married women were expected to sacrifice their positions for unmarried women, with the latter declaring that ‘[you] have beaten us in matrimony, you give us a chance in the educational struggle.’⁴¹ Once again however this can be challenged by the response of unmarried female teachers involved in the 1908 Aberdare case. Williams explains that, although there was not complete unity, the percentage of unmarried women opposed to the dismissals formed the majority.⁴² Williams’s and Snook’s research together with these contemporary newspaper articles therefore challenge the credence surrounding the legitimacy of dismissing married women teachers as a way of creating economic gains. Instead, they suggest that the claims surrounding married women teachers preventing others from finding employment were exaggerated and used as an excuse to force women back into their homes and adhere to society’s domestic ideals.

³⁴ *Evening Express*, ‘The Bar Of Marriage’, p.2

³⁵ *The Aberdare Leader*, ‘Labour and Married Teachers’, p.8

³⁶ Williams, *The ‘troublesome question of the married women teachers’* p.6

³⁷ The Mines and Collieries Act was introduced in 1842 and prevented all females (and boys aged less than ten years old) to work underground. UK Parliament, *Coal mines*, (2024) [Online]

³⁸ Snook, *Women in Rhondda society.1870-1939*, p. 76

³⁹ Snook, *Women in Rhondda society.1870-1939*, p.331

⁴⁰ *The Amman Valley Chronicle and East Carmarthen News*, ‘Married Women Teachers – Amman Valley Managers’ Recommendation.’ 5 February 1914, p.2, Welsh Newspapers [Online]. Available at <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/4012604/4012606/4/Married%20teacher> Accessed 1 April 2024

⁴¹ *The Aberdare Leader*, ‘Labour and Married Teachers’, p.8

⁴² Williams, *The ‘troublesome question of the married women teachers’* p.14

Despite the assertion made by Councillor W. Thomas that the decision to dismiss female married teachers was 'upheld by all the authorities in the country', further sources denounce this claim and suggest instead that individual LEAs in south Wales varied in terms of the action they took.⁴³ Evans's work briefly mentions the unsuccessful attempt at implementing the marriage bar in 1913 in Caernarfonshire.⁴⁴ Williams too details how the decision taken by Aberdare LEA to dismiss all its married women teachers is a stark contrast to others who chose to reduce their married women workforce through natural wastage.⁴⁵ Contemporary sources also support this latter argument. An inquiry led by the Aberdare Education Committee in 1904 following the resignation of Jane Jones revealed that two married female teachers employed in the same schools were still in post, a result of headteachers not consistently reporting back to the authority when their staff were getting married.⁴⁶ This therefore suggests that some education authorities were reluctant to lose experienced teachers and also weakens the claim that married women teachers were less efficient, which will be discussed shortly. The decision made by Tredegar Valley Committee to dismiss a married female teacher in 1906 also sparked surprise and protest from several of its members. The teacher in question had been in post for the last twenty-eight years who, according to Rev. J.B. Llewellyn, 'had been a faithful servant, and had earned good reports, and he considered the action of the county committee a most cruel one.'⁴⁷ Mr. T.J. Pryce further warned that the affected teacher 'would have good grounds for an action for wrongful dismissal.'⁴⁸ In the case of the Amman Valley dismissal in 1914, Mr. Evans stated that he was reluctant to 'penalise the married women teachers in this part and leave the others alone.'⁴⁹ This therefore suggests that although there was not a reluctance at imposing a nationwide marriage bar, there does appear to be some hesitation against enforcing it against women in individual localities, resulting in women experiencing varying degrees of employment restriction.

What is perhaps most apparent during this period is the lack of agency that married female teachers had. Decisions that ultimately affected women were for the most part vocalised by men. For example, in response to the Aberdare dismissals, very few women attended the public meetings and so it is difficult to ascertain their individual responses.⁵⁰ From analysing primary records however, Williams has identified that several of the women affected experienced financial difficulties, such as being forced to accept a lower paid job or forfeiting their pension.⁵¹ Williams's work is supported by the concerns of Mr. T.G. Jenkins, a teacher who spoke in opposition of the Aberdare Education Committee's decision, and argued that

⁴³ *Evening Express*, 'Married Teacher Problem', p.3

⁴⁴ Evans, *Education and Female Emancipation*, pp. 168-9

⁴⁵ Williams, *The 'troublesome question of the married women teachers'* p.6

⁴⁶ *The Cardiff Times*, 'Married School Mistress', p.8

⁴⁷ *Evening Express*, 'Married Teacher Problem', 13 November 1906, p.3, Welsh Newspapers [Online]. Available at <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/4169653/4169656/51/Married%20teacher> Accessed 31 March 2024

⁴⁸ *Evening Express*, 'The Bar Of Marriage', p.2

⁴⁹ *The Amman Valley Chronicle and East Carmarthen News*, 'Married Women Teachers', p.2

⁵⁰ Williams, *The 'troublesome question of the married women teachers'* p.15

⁵¹ Williams, *The 'troublesome question of the married women teachers'* pp.16-17

these women would be placed in an 'unfair position... by reason of the loss they will suffer in connection with the Government superannuation scheme to which they have been contributing.'⁵² Mr. D P. Davies also objected to the dismissals because of financial implications.⁵³ This demonstrates how men's attitudes towards long-established gender ideals were evolving in favour of equality. Women who chose not to marry and continue with their teaching career would be dependent entirely on themselves on retirement; they would have no husbands or children to support them. The Aberdare LEA however defended the dismissals by maintaining that 'these female teachers were not the breadwinners of the family' and devalued the women's suffering as 'a little pecuniary sacrifice.'⁵⁴ The notion of the male breadwinner therefore played a fundamental role in the dismissals, and the possibility that some women were essential contributors to the family economy were not considered.⁵⁵ Injury, sickness and even death were an eventuality for the men who worked in the coal fields of south Wales, and some women were undoubtedly forced to work so they could provide for their families financially.⁵⁶ Furthermore, many women had to choose between dedicating their lives to that of career and celibacy, or sacrificing their posts in exchange for a husband and children.⁵⁷ Marriage bars therefore not only affected women financially, putting them at risk of both short-term and long-term poverty, but also affected women's personal life choices, once again placing them at a disadvantage to that of their male counterparts.

Although the outbreak of the First World War created more opportunities for married women teachers, the relaxation of marriage bars did not become noticeable until the latter half of 1915 when there was increased pressure on able men to join the army.⁵⁸⁵⁹ At the same time however, contemporary sources show that gender ideals persisted even when there was a genuine need for teachers, reinforcing Beddoe's claim that the First World War did not necessarily serve as a catalyst for change for all women.⁶⁰ An inclusive approach was taken in October 1915 by Pembroke Education Committee, conceding that 'they would be better served if they opened the door to married women for the duration of the war.'⁶¹ In

⁵² *The Cardiff Times*, 'Married Teachers', p.4

⁵³ Williams, *The 'troublesome question of the married women teachers'* p.8

⁵⁴ *The Cardiff Times*, 'Married Teachers. The Aberdare Difficulty. Protest Meeting', 11th July 1908, p.4, Welsh Newspapers [Online]. Available at:

<https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3434206/3434210/93/Married%20teacher> Accessed 1 April 2024

⁵⁵ Jenkins, *Women's Professional Employment in Wales 1880-1939*, p.187

⁵⁶ Philip Jenkins, *A History of Modern Wales 1536-1990*, New York (1992), pp.351-352

⁵⁷ Beddoe, *Discovering Women's History*, p.31

⁵⁸ Beddoe, *Out of the Shadows*, pp.57-58

⁵⁹ The Military Service Act in January 1916 introduced conscription and further depleting the numbers of male teachers. UK Parliament, 'Conscription: The First World War' [Online]. Available at

<https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/private-lives/yourcountry/overview/conscription/#:~:text=In%20January%201916%20the%20Military,certain%20classes%20of%20industrial%20worker> Accessed 30 April 2024

⁶⁰ Beddoe, *Out of the Shadows*, pp.47

⁶¹ *The Cambria Daily Leader*, 'Married Women Teachers – Pembroke Authority Removes Its Ban', 29th October 1915, p.8, Welsh Newspapers [Online]. Available at

<https://newspapers.library.wales/view/4100295/4100303/147/Married%20teacher> Accessed 1 April 2024

November 1915, Swansea Council also welcomed married women teachers into the classrooms.⁶² Similarly, Carmarthenshire Education Committee's declared in February 1916 that 'the services of women should be made use of most liberally in the present crisis', including that of married women.⁶³ Caveats existed however. Alderman Robinson of the Pembroke Education Committee stated that there was 'no use engaging teachers who had just married... They don't know their heads from their heels for twelve months', exemplifying the negative, patriarchal attitudes that existed towards married women teachers.⁶⁴ Aberdare Education Committee also stated that it was only 'prepared to employ as a teacher during the period of the war the wife of any person who enlists in His Majesty's forces.'⁶⁵ Similarly, Merthyr Tydfil Borough Council made it clear that despite relying upon married female teachers to fulfil the needs of both girls' and boys' schools during the war, newly qualified unmarried teachers were preferred. Forty-four married women were subsequently forced to resign in Glamorgan in July 1916 following the decision made to replace them with students who had recently completed their apprenticeship.⁶⁷ Depending on the stance taken by individual LEAs therefore, some women were able to benefit from employment, whereas others were excluded because of prejudiced attitudes and long-established social ideals.

As the First World War neared its final months, pre-war discriminatory attitudes resurfaced and marriage bars were once again imposed with renewed vigour, exacerbated by the Restoration of Pre-war Practices Act 1919.⁶⁸ The contributions that married female teachers had made during the war were swept aside.⁶⁹ For example, in August 1918, the Mountain Ash Committee declared that 'they should dispense with the services of some of the temporarily appointed married women teachers', and by June 1919 almost all the married

⁶² *South Wales Weekly Post*, 'Swansea Teacher – Eligibles. Will Be Invited To Join Army. Married Women to Take Places', 6th November 1915, p.2, Welsh Newspapers [Online]. Available at:

<https://newspapers.library.wales/view/4092629/4092631/40/Married%20teacher> Accessed 31 March 2024

⁶³ *Llanelly Star*, 'Married Women Teachers – Carmarthenshire School Vacancies', 12th February 1916, p.4, Welsh Newspapers [Online]. Available at:

<https://newspapers.library.wales/view/4123071/4123075/60/Married%20teacher> Accessed 31 March 2024

⁶⁴ *The Cambria Daily Leader*, 'Married Women Teachers', p.8

⁶⁵ Williams, *The 'troubled question of the married women teachers'* p.18

⁶⁶ *The Aberdare Leader*, 'Aberdare Education Committee – Married Female Teachers', 6th November 1915, p.5, Welsh Newspapers [Online]. Available at:

<https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3579869/3579874/55/Married%20teacher> Accessed 31 March 2024

⁶⁷ Tony Peters, 'Women Teachers during the First World War', Glamorgan Archives [Online]. Available at:

<https://glamarchives.wordpress.com/2015/03/27/women-teachers-during-the-first-world-war/> Accessed 30 April 2024

⁶⁸ Beddoe, *Discovering Women's History*, p.116

⁶⁹ Beddoe, *Out of the Shadows*, p.74

women teachers within the region had been dismissed.⁷⁰⁷¹ An anonymous letter addressed to the Carmarthenshire Education Committee in July 1919 suggested that they should 'commence combing out married teachers' on the basis that they were preventing demobilised men from securing jobs.⁷² In November 1919, Neath education authority made the decision to dismiss its married women teachers on the basis that 'the proper place for married women was at home.'⁷³ Similarly, Glamorgan Education Committee's decision to dismiss sixteen married teachers because it was deemed unfair that married couples could both claim a pension, a married woman's duty was to look after the home, and that married women became headmistresses and prevented others from having the opportunity of promotion.⁷⁴ These sources therefore reinforce Beddoe's claim that married women were expected to return to their domestic spheres. Nevertheless, there is evidence to suggest that there was an evolving post-war shift in attitudes to women's role in society.⁷⁵ Dr. W.E. Thomas disagreed with the notion that a married woman was 'not a capable teacher' and stated that 'I would prefer that my children should be taught by respectable married women rather than by chits of girls or cantankerous old maids'.⁷⁶

In summary, this chapter has shown that marriage bars were imposed by education authorities as a way of forcing women to conform to contemporary social ideals. South Wales's female married teachers suffered personally, professionally and financially as a result. Nevertheless, it is apparent that not all of these women were impacted to the same extent and despite a vehement attempt to force women back into their domestic realms following the end of the First World War, there was a growing awareness by some that these ideals were outdated. In the subsequent chapter, the intentions of the SD(R)A will be examined, and how and why education authorities resisted the proposed changes.

⁷⁰ *The Aberdare Leader*, 'Mountain Ash Education Committee – Married Teachers' Services', 24th August 1918, p.8, Welsh Newspapers [Online]. Available at:

<https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3581192/3581200/82/Married%20teacher> Accessed 31 March 2024

⁷¹ *The Aberdare Leader*, 'Mountain Ash Education Committee: R.C. School Teacher', 21st June 1919, p.4, Welsh Newspapers [Online]. Available at:

<https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3581570/3581574/44/Married%20teacher> Accessed 1 April 2024

⁷² *The Amman Valley Chronicle and East Carmarthen News*, 'Married Teachers in Schools', 31st July 1919, p.6, Welsh Newspapers [Online]. Available at:

<https://newspapers.library.wales/view/4014345/4014351/48/Married%20teacher> Accessed 31 March 2024

⁷³ *The Cambria Daily Leader*, 'Married Women Teachers: A Neath Discussion', 26th November 1919, p.7, Welsh Newspapers [Online]. Available at

<https://newspapers.library.wales/view/4436998/4437005/87/Married%20teacher> Accessed 1 April 2024

⁷⁴ *South Wales Weekly Post*, 'Married Teachers: Sixteen to be Dismissed in County', 6th December 1919, p.1, Welsh Newspapers [Online]. Available at

<https://newspapers.library.wales/view/4111079/4111080/26/Married%20teacher> Accessed 31 March 2024

⁷⁵ Evans, *Education and Female Emancipation*, p.9

⁷⁶ ⁷⁶ *South Wales Weekly Post*, 'Married Teachers: Sixteen to be Dismissed in County', p.1

Chapter Two: Response

This chapter will focus on the years immediately after the passing of the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act (1919) and explore the reasons why the Act failed to protect south Wales's married women teachers. It will also explore the response of Rhondda Urban District Council to the Act to exemplify why discrimination persisted against this group of women. Contemporary newspaper articles, parliamentary records and secondary works will be examined to help understand the SD(R)A's intentions and shortfalls, how marriage bars continued to be implemented and undermine its effectiveness, and to demonstrate how women responded to the continued implementation of marriage bars.

The SD(R)A was a compromise made by the British Government in response to the collapse of the Women's Emancipation Bill earlier the same year.⁷⁷ Beth Jenkin's research has shown that in the years leading up to the SD(R)A, there was an increasing awareness of the social inequalities and impracticalities that marriage bars placed on married women teachers. Her work has revealed that there was increasing pressure to grant women equal employment opportunities, as well as the observation that married women teachers who were also mothers were more receptive to the care needs of children.⁷⁸ This is supported by parliamentary records; in October 1919, Major Hills emphasised that the Act intended to address any 'legal disqualification imposed on women by marriage [and] to make quite sure that such disqualifications do not exist.'⁷⁹ He elaborated further on this point stating that a woman 'ought to be entitled to carry on her work after being married as well as before being married'. Major Hills also acknowledged the personal sacrifices women are forced to make, declaring that such restriction 'is not in keeping with the feeling of the age, and that the time has come to remove it'. Sir E. Pollock supported this notion, albeit for different reasons. Following the detrimental impact that the First World War had had on the country's population, he warned that it would be unwise 'to place any temptation before women at the present time to remain childless.'⁸⁰ Concerns that preventing educated married women from having children was 'racially dangerous' had been previously voiced by Edith Morley in 1914.⁸¹ These sources therefore support Jenkins's argument that social and political attitudes were gradually changing towards professional married women and also show that the government was concerned that marriage bars risked the recovery of the population.

⁷⁷ Sarah Tudor, *House of Lords Library Briefing - Lifting the Barrier: Gender Equality Legislation 1919*, (2019), p.2 [Online]. Available at: <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/LLN-2019-0154/LLN-2019-0154.pdf> Accessed 30 April 2024

⁷⁸ Jenkins, *Women's Professional Employment in Wales 1880-1939*, p.106

⁷⁹ House Of Commons, *Clause 1 – (Removal of Disqualification on Grounds of Sex)*, *HC Deb 27 October 1919 vol 120 cc343-93* [Online]. Available at: https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1919/oct/27/clause-1-removal-of-disqualification-on#S5CV0120P0_19191027_HOC_319 Accessed 30 April 2024

⁸⁰ House Of Commons, *Clause 1*

⁸¹ Murphy, *A marriage bar of convenience?* pp. 3-4

The SD(R)A did indeed create new opportunities for women in previously male-dominated employment sectors, but its success was limited because it failed to prevent the continued implementation of marriage bars.⁸² In 1922 *Time and Tide* magazine declared that 'the Act means nothing, we have been hoaxed.'⁸³ To explore the validity of this statement, the answers lie in the minutiae of the Act itself. Put simply, a woman's negative right under the SD(R)A to be exempt from disqualification did not mean that she was positively entitled to stay in post.⁸⁴ In June 1921, Viscountess Astor declared in the House of Commons that she was concerned about the financial disadvantages married women teachers suffered because marriage bars prevented them from completing the minimum number of years service to make them eligible for a pension.⁸⁵ She criticised that 'the dismissal of married women teachers and the refusal to reappoint them makes of no effect Section 1 (3) of the Act' and challenged the President of the Board of Education regarding his intentions in protecting them from being dismissed. Mr. H Lewis conceded that he had 'no power to compel local education authorities to employ married women' and that they must 'serve in the area of some other authority which is willing to employ married women', implicitly referring to the Education Act of 1870 and the autonomy it gave to education authorities with regards to hiring and dismissing staff.⁸⁶ These sources therefore demonstrate the flaws of the SD(R)A and show that married women could still be dismissed because education authorities were able to act autonomously and circumvent the Act. Despite the new legislation, south Wales's married women teachers continued to suffer financially and, in some cases, were forced to relocate to find employment.

The arguments opposing marriage bars were still embryonic during this time and struggled against post-war attitudes that preached married women belonged back in the home.⁸⁷ According to Kate Murphy, after the end of the First World War, marriage bars were reintroduced on a more widespread basis, reflecting the 'long-held and deeply entrenched prejudice towards women.'⁸⁸ Murphy's claim that marriage bars were a result of 'contemporary ideology' is supported by the events that unfolded in 1922 when Rhondda Urban District Council announced the dismissal of sixty-six married women within its employ.⁸⁹ One of the affected teachers, Mrs. Elizabeth Price responded by making a legal

⁸² Jenkins, *Women's Professional Employment in Wales 1880-1939*, p.16

⁸³ Beddoe, *Out of the Shadows*, p.83

⁸⁴ Tudor, *House of Lords Library Briefing*, p.3

⁸⁵ 'Married Women Teachers', HC Deb 22 June 1921 vol 143 cc1395-6w [Online]. Available at: https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/written-answers/1921/jun/22/married-women-teachers#column_1396w Accessed 2 May 2024

⁸⁶ *Elementary Education Act 1870*, Chapter 75, p.481 [Online]. Available at: <https://education-uk.org/documents/acts/1870-elementary-education-act.html> Accessed 9 May 2024

⁸⁷ Beddoe, *Out of the Shadows*, p.74

⁸⁸ Kate Murphy, *A marriage bar of convenience? The BBC and married women's work 1923-39*, (2014), p.3, p. 17, Bournemouth University [Online], Available at: <https://eprints.bournemouth.ac.uk/33051/3/BBC%20Marriage%20Bar%20-%20second%20revision%20-%20final.pdf>

Accessed 5 May 2024

⁸⁹ Murphy, *A marriage bar of convenience?* p.1

case against the Council, arguing 'that a notice to her to terminate her engagement was invalid' because it breached the terms of the SD(R)A.⁹⁰ The case brought against Mrs. Price and her colleagues was that married women were creating a shortage of jobs as over one thousand newly qualified teachers were struggling to find work. Mrs. Price counter-argued that some of these prospective, unemployed, unmarried teachers were related to members of the Rhondda education authority. The authorities had apparently expressed concern at the amount of money that had been invested in the training of these prospective teachers.⁹² When this is considered in conjunction with the mocking remark of Mr. Justice Eve 'that perhaps [Mrs. Price] objected to the policy of the older ones being shoved off to make room for the younger', it highlights the negative attitude that some men had towards married women wage-earners. It simultaneously suggests that men in powerful positions were able to manipulate situations to bend in their favour, hence reflecting the attitudes of a patriarchal society.⁹³ Mr. Justice Eve continued that it would 'be better to make cooks of these women', and the former chairman of the council, Mr. Abel Jacob, argued that employing married women teachers did little to benefit children's education. Despite the SD(R)A being a legitimate piece of legislation, the notion that married women belonged within the domestic sphere was too entrenched within society. Marriage bars therefore continued to be implemented by LEAs and were reinforced by authoritative figures within the legal system, resulting in married women teachers in south Wales to be further marginalised within the education sector.

The decision to dismiss all married women teachers within the employ of the Rhondda Urban District Council was held by the majority, but it was not unanimous. Three of the council members rejected the proposal and challenges had been made against how the dismissals infringed the authority's statutory powers.⁹⁴ The decision had been made to retain the services of married women who satisfied the criteria for compassionate grounds. However, these sources are unable to provide a figure of how many women, if any, were retained and fails to explicitly explain the eligibility criteria. It is also significant to highlight that there seems to be ambivalence towards the sincerity of the actions of the Rhondda Urban District Council. The question was raised whether the Council was 'acting in a fiduciary capacity, or whether... they were a board of management whose actions could not be questioned'. Interestingly, the article states that 'the defendants had proved to the court, however inadequately expressed were the motives and intentions and the grounds on which

⁹⁰ *The Times*, 'Chancery Division. Married School Teacher. Price v. Rhondda Urban District Council', Saturday, Apr. 28, 1923, Issue 43327, Gale Primary Sources [Online]. Available at <https://link-gale-com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/apps/doc/CS67572892/TTDA?u=tou&sid=bookmark-TTDA&xid=7cd67a7d> Accessed 25 March 2024

⁹¹ Jenkins, *Women's Professional Employment in Wales 1880-1939*, pp.183-4

⁹² *The Times*, 'High Court of Justice. Chancery Division. The Dismissal of Married School Teachers. Price v. Rhondda Urban District Council', Friday, May 4, 1923, Issue 43332, Gale Primary Sources [Online]. Available at: <https://link-gale-com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/apps/doc/CS84612260/TTDA?u=tou&sid=bookmark-TTDA&xid=49abee31> Accessed 25 March 2024

⁹³ Jenkins, *Women's Professional Employment in Wales 1880-1939*, pp.142-3

⁹⁴ *The Times*, 'High Court of Justice. Chancery Division'

they were founded, the real reason was the desire to promote efficiency in the education district over which they had jurisdiction.⁹⁵ Similar to the Aberdare case almost twenty years earlier, the Rhondda authorities therefore believed that dismissing married women teachers would improve education provisions because it enabled “new blood” to enter schools.⁹⁶ This reveals the longevity of the belief that married women teachers were less efficient than those who were younger and without domestic responsibilities.

Although Price and her colleagues were unsuccessful in their appeal, the Rhondda case is significant. Aside from exemplifying typical patriarchal responses to women’s attempts to overturn customary gender ideals, it highlights how women were capable and determined to employ their own agency with the view to improving their own lives.⁹⁷ This is in stark contrast to the contemporary sources encountered in chapter one that were dominated by men acting on behalf of women. Jenkins explains that women’s newfound confidence in asserting their agency was the result of previous legislative victories and war time work that proved their capabilities.⁹⁸ Not all women however were comfortable in making a stand against the marriage bars and some responded more covertly. Sue Bruley’s research, alongside that of Beddoe and Jenkins, reveals that secret marriages, long engagements and separate living arrangements meant that women could avoid immediate dismissal from their teaching posts.⁹⁹ Collectively, these responses show that some married women teachers in south Wales were actively and publicly resisting marriage bars, while others were exploring ways of preserving their careers after marriage. However, the unfairness surrounding forced secret marriages was challenged by some contemporaries who stated that LEAs did not reserve the right to interfere with their teachers’ personal affairs.¹⁰⁰

In summary, this chapter has explained how and why the SD(R)A was unsuccessful in prohibiting the use of marriage bars against the women teachers of south Wales, largely due to the long-established gender ideals held by society. However, it has also demonstrated how women were growing into their own assertiveness. The following chapter will explore how women teachers continued their fight for equality and help secure further legislative victory.

⁹⁵ *The Times*, ‘High Court of Justice. Chancery Division’

⁹⁶ Snook, *Women in Rhondda society.1870-1939*, p.331

⁹⁷ Jenkins, *Women’s Professional Employment in Wales 1880-1939*, p.188

⁹⁸ Jenkins, *Women’s Professional Employment in Wales 1880-1939*, p.141

⁹⁹ Sue Bruley, *the women and men of 1926: the general strike and miners’ lockout in south wales*, (Cardiff, 2010), p.29

¹⁰⁰ Jenkins, *Women’s Professional Employment in Wales 1880-1939*, p.143

Chapter Three: Resilience

This chapter will explore the arguments put forward by women teachers belonging to the National Union of Women Teachers in opposition to the marriage bar. Although it was not exclusively a Welsh movement, the NUWT was prominent in south Wales (namely Cardiff and Swansea) and undoubtedly its members were involved in the struggle to remove the marriage bar.¹⁰¹ Articles belonging to *The Woman Teacher*, the publication proclaimed as 'The Organ of the National Union of Women Teachers' will be consulted to help answer this question.¹⁰² In conjunction with parliamentary records, this chapter will then consider to what degree the actions of the NUWT influenced the Government's decision to officially remove the marriage bars imposed against married female teachers as part of the 1944 Education Act.

The NUWT was formed in 1920 shortly after the SD(R)A was passed. According to Jenkins, the organisation was able to create a successful propaganda campaign and unite women teachers at a national level in a common cause by communicating their concerns through the journal, at meetings and lectures, and through interactions with Members of Parliament.¹⁰³ Through these efforts, this collective community of women teachers were able to utilise their political agency, a continuation of the newfound post-war confidence encountered in the previous chapter.¹⁰⁴ The NUWT advocated equality, and one of the arguments they put forward was that married women teachers deserved to have the same financial freedom as men. It challenged the customary belief that marriage could be regarded as a career for women and directly admonished that forcing women to be financially dependent on their husbands was a 'bad old tradition' at risk of 'degrading the institution of marriage'.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, the NUWT argued that married women were being used as 'the scapegoat in unemployment difficulties'.¹⁰⁶ Dismissing married teachers 'merely [shifted] the incidence of unemployment', reinforcing the idea that women's work was 'only too readily looked upon by the majority of men as of secondary importance'.¹⁰⁷ As Beddoe explains, dismissing married women was believed to remedy male unemployment, especially during the 1920s and 1930s when economic depression was at its peak in south

¹⁰¹ Jenkins, *Women's Professional Employment in Wales 1880-1939*, pp.99-100

¹⁰² *The Woman Teacher*, Vol. 16, No. 5 (1934), p.65 [Online]. Available at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.2899142> Accessed 14 May 2024

¹⁰³ Jenkins, *Women's Professional Employment in Wales 1880-1939*, p.99

¹⁰⁴ Jenkins, *Women's Professional Employment in Wales 1880-1939*, p.136

¹⁰⁵ *The Woman Teacher*, Vol. 16, No. 20 (1935), p.343 [Online]. Available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/community.28299157> Accessed 14 May 2024

¹⁰⁶ *The Woman Teacher*, Vol. 16, No. 7 (1935), p.121 [Online]. Available at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.282991144> Accessed 14 May 2024

¹⁰⁷ *The Woman Teacher*, Vol. 18, No. 7 (1937), p.107 [Online]. Available at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.28299192> Accessed 14 May 2024

Wales.¹⁰⁸ However, the NUWT argued that dismissing married women teachers actually exacerbated economic problems because of the amount of money and resources that was invested into training.¹⁰⁹

In response to the social inequalities married women teachers faced, the NUWT argued that marriage bars forced women 'to make a choice between profession and marriage', creating a further disadvantage because 'in addition to her other qualifications, a woman teacher must also be celibate.'¹¹⁰ Bolstered by earlier concerns raised by individuals such as Morley, the NUWT warned of the dangers of preventing educated, intelligent women from having children, emphasising that celibacy was 'a menace to the best interests of society.'¹¹¹ The NUWT also attacked the interference that marriage bars had on women's private lives and discredited the restrictive social barriers as an 'artificial' way of a patriarchal society forcing women to remain within the domestic sphere.¹¹² 'So long as women were confined within artificial barriers' one article stated in July 1936, 'there would not be a harmony between women and the social order'.¹¹³ Powerful statements such as that of historian Eileen Power stating that 'she didn't mind having a sphere so long as she was allowed to decide upon its radius' enabled *The Woman Teacher* to build on the foundations of women's agency for the 'whole emancipation of womankind'.¹¹⁴ The NUWT used women's recent political gains as a springboard for continuing the fight for the equality of married women teachers and full abolition of the marriage bar, declaring that 'no true democracy will ever be established unless full opportunity of expression is given to the natural genius of women.'¹¹⁵ This supports Jenkins's analysis that women's legal and political victories helped progress the NUWT's battle against unfair treatment within the teaching profession.¹¹⁶

The NUWT remained steadfast in its campaign to remove the marriage bar from the teaching profession and declared that 'only by co-operation, organisation and education will women... play their full part in the shaping of the world of tomorrow.'¹¹⁷ *The Woman Teacher* announced that a 'great revolution in our social ideas must take place before it has ceased to be a handicap to be a woman'.¹¹⁸ Welcoming married women teachers into the

¹⁰⁸ Beddoe, *Out of the Shadows*, pp.84-85

¹⁰⁹ Snook, *Women in Rhondda society.1870-1939*, p.330

¹¹⁰ *The Woman Teacher*, Vol. 16, No. 7 (1935), p.102

¹¹¹ *The Woman Teacher*, Vol. 18, No. 7 (1937), p.107

¹¹² *The Woman Teacher*, Vol. 18, No. 11 (1937), p.203 [Online]. Available at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.28299196> Accessed 14 May 2024

¹¹³ *The Woman Teacher*, Vol. 17, No. 21 (1936), p.350 [Online]. Available at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.28299182> Accessed 14 May 2024

¹¹⁴ *The Woman Teacher*, Vol. 18, No. 7 (1937), p.107

¹¹⁵ *The Woman Teacher*, Vol. 22, No. 15 (1941), p.174

¹¹⁶ Jenkins, *Women's Professional Employment in Wales 1880-1939*, p.140

¹¹⁷ *The Woman Teacher*, Vol. 16, No. 7 (1935), p.121

¹¹⁸ *The Woman Teacher*, Vol. 16, No. 10 (1935), p.172 [Online]. Available at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.28299147> Accessed 14 May 2024

schools of south Wales would '[help] to mould the future through the education of the children in schools'.¹¹⁹ This would subsequently demonstrate to the next generation that it was acceptable for married women to work and encourage society to embrace a new way of thinking. *The Woman Teacher* argued that 'school should not be divorced from life', and dismissing married women including those with children potentially had a negative impact on education provisions by removing the opportunity of sharing valuable life experiences.¹²⁰ At this time, boys and girls were taught different subjects at school, with the latter group receiving an education based heavily on the domestic subjects, deemed appropriate for their gender, to prepare them for future homelife and motherhood.¹²¹ These sources therefore add weight to Jenkins's claim that the NUWT's concern to improve children's education became inextricably linked with the campaign for women's equality and the abolition of the marriage bar.¹²²

In terms of the legacy of the SD(R)A, its 'disappointments' were explicitly acknowledged in *The Woman Teacher* in February 1935. It was perhaps the benefit of hindsight and an acute awareness of the shortcomings of the Act that encouraged the NUWT to continue its work towards a total dissolution of the marriage bar. According to Beddoe, at the outbreak of the Second World War, women in Wales had learnt from experience and 'had no such high hopes' that this crisis would present them new opportunities.¹²³ While Beddoe's argument certainly is supported by aspects of gender discrimination, such as unequal pay, it is to a degree challenged by the motivations of the NUWT. The Second World War was considered the opportune moment to reassert 'the principle that women, married or single, have the same rights as men in the economic field.'¹²⁴ Times of crisis proved that it was possible, and beneficial, for married women to be employed, as once again they were relied upon to fix the labour shortage. The NUWT used this to demonstrate the capability of the government 'to make arrangements for the care of children while their mothers are employed' and therefore campaigned to prevent the re-emergence of 'the old attitude towards the employment of married women'. *The Woman Teacher* pushed back once again at the persistent gender ideals and the idea that women should be confined within their domestic sphere and announced that 'to build a true democracy in the post-war world, the foundations must be laid now, so let us start to build on the firm basis of equality for men and women.'¹²⁵ The propaganda campaign that *The Woman Teacher* waged against the marriage bar therefore demonstrates the increasing amount of confidence and agency that women were acquiring. Its effectiveness can therefore be evaluated by considering both its

¹¹⁹ *The Woman Teacher*, Vol. 22, No. 15 (1941), p.174 [Online]. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.28299287> Accessed 15 May 2024

¹²⁰ *The Woman Teacher*, Vol. 16, No. 7 (1935), p.102

¹²¹ Beddoe, *Out of the Shadows*, p.108

¹²² Jenkins, *Women's Professional Employment in Wales 1880-1939*, p.149

¹²³ Beddoe, *Out of the Shadows*, p.108

¹²⁴ *The Woman Teacher*, Vol. 22, No. 15 (1941), p.175

¹²⁵ *The Woman Teacher*, Vol. 22, No. 15 (1941), p.175

ability to unite women teachers in a common cause at a national level and influencing the legislation introduced in 1944.

The abolition of the marriage bar as part of the Education Act of 1944, according to Beddoe, was a result of both the fight for equality by women's groups such as the NUWT and because of the government's concern that there would be a shortage of teachers after the war.¹²⁶ Research undertaken for the purpose of this dissertation has shown that the NUWT criticised the government of not taking sufficient action to improve employment opportunities for married women teachers a full nine years before the 1944 Education Act.¹²⁷ Again in January 1937, the NUWT made multiple suggestions as to how the Board of Education could create vacancies and incorporate married women teachers in schools to improve education provisions.¹²⁸ The NUWT's recommendations, such as increasing the school-leaving age, were acknowledged in The Spens Report of 1938. Members of the NUWT were consulted alongside other women's groups, and the committee simultaneously recognised 'the great movement for the emancipation of women.'¹²⁹ This report played a pivotal role in addressing the need for improving education provisions and shaping the 1944 Education Act. In one debate in the House of Commons, the efforts that married women teachers had maintained during the war was recognised, and it was hoped that 'many of them will go on helping us in the peace.'¹³⁰ It would seem, therefore, that the concerns around equality in education and the need for teachers who were highly qualified took precedence over the prejudices against married women. Importantly, this move suggests that the earlier belief surrounding the inefficiency of married women teachers had dissolved. Proposals to remove the ban on married women teachers finally materialised in August 1944.¹³¹ The NUWT tentatively accepted that they finally had 'something solid' and conceded that even if the government had presented removing the marriage bar as part of improving education provisions, 'a wrong is righted as a result [and] we can but rejoice at the result.'¹³²

¹²⁶ Beddoe, *Out of the Shadows*, p.119

¹²⁷ *The Woman Teacher*, Vol. 16, No. 7 (1935), p.111

¹²⁸ The Board of Education could solve the problem of un-employment among teachers to-morrow by (a) smaller classes; (b) raising of the school-leaving age; (c) not appointing any more untrained teachers; (d) not asking head teachers to take charge of a class. *The Woman Teacher*, Vol. 18, No. 7 (1937), p.107

¹²⁹ *The Spens Report (1938)*, Chapter I, p.44 [Online]. Available at <https://www.education-uk.org/documents/spens/spens1938.html#02> Accessed 27 May 2024

¹³⁰ House of Commons, *Education Bill*, Vol. 396, Wednesday 19 January 1944, UK Parliament, Hansard [Online]. Available at <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1944-01-19/debates/dfc6c423-19e9-4a94-a058-cb2be429b3e7/EducationBill> Accessed 15 May 2024

¹³¹ 'No woman shall be disqualified for employment as a teacher in any county school or voluntary school, or be dismissed from such employment, by reason only of marriage', *Education Act 1944*, 'Chapter II Statutory system of education', p.20 [Online]. Available at <https://www.education-uk.org/documents/acts/1944-education-act.html#03> Accessed 1 April 2024

¹³² *The Woman Teacher*, Vol. 26, No. 5 (1945), p.33 [Online]. Available at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.28299352> Accessed 15 May 2024

In summary, this chapter has demonstrated how women teachers were capable of exercising their political agency and how the NUWT's opposition to the marriage bar were articulated and disseminated at a national level using their own publication and propaganda campaign. Research undertaken here suggests that the NUWT made influential contributions towards shaping the Education Act of 1944. This was, perhaps, the legacy of the SD(R)A whereby women remained resilient and determined to exert a greater degree of influence over the legislation of 1944 in comparison to that of 1919.

Conclusion

Chapter One demonstrated the reasons why restrictive marriage bars were imposed, primarily because they were seen as an effective way of creating vacancies for newly qualified teachers while simultaneously forcing married women to adhere to the deeply entrenched domestic ideology. This chapter also explored the extent to which marriage bars restricted women teachers from securing employment in south Wales during the initial decades of the twentieth century, ultimately exposing disparities that existed across the region and not all LEAs rigorously enforced marriage bars. Nevertheless, any uncomfortableness surrounding dismissing married women appears to have been due to the absence of a blanket policy. Women's individual circumstances were often disregarded, and they often experienced both immediate and long-term poverty. Some married women had to forfeit their pensions, whereas others chose not to marry, forcing them to adopt a life of spinsterhood and self-sufficiency, denying them the benefit of family inter-dependency. The opportunities granted to women at the outbreak of the First World War again varied based on the approaches of individual LEAs. The hope that the services women teachers had provided during the war would place them in a more advantageous position were dashed when the old patriarchal ideals emerged with renewed vigour post-war, forcing married women teachers back into their homes.

Nevertheless, the close of this chapter hinted at the evolving attitudes towards married women roles within society. Chapter Two explained the formation of the SD(R)A in response to a growing awareness of women's political rights and explored the reasons why it failed to prevent the use of marriage bars against south Wales's married female teachers, despite its intentions to remove any legal qualifications. It demonstrated how this group of women continued to face discrimination through the LEAs acting independently thus circumventing the Act. This subsequently highlighted how south Wales's married women teachers were prevented from making the necessary contributions to the superannuation scheme or in some cases forced to relocate to find work. The decision made by the Rhondda Urban District Council to dismiss the married women teachers within its employ exemplifies a typical patriarchal response to legislation intended to enhance women's position in society. However, this chapter also demonstrated the different ways women responded to the continued use of marriage bars. Consideration of Mrs. Price's and her colleagues' decision to initiate legal proceedings against the Rhondda authorities demonstrates how some women were prepared to push back against marginalisation and gaining confidence in exercising their individual agency. Conversely, it also showed how others chose to behave in a more covert manner, responding to the continued use of marriage bars by having long engagements, marrying in secret, or living and working in separate places to avoid detection.

Chapter Three subsequently explored the campaign led by the NUWT, prevalent in south Wales during this time, for the total abolition of the marriage bar in the teaching profession.

It explained how *The Woman Teacher* was able to articulate concerns and unite women together in a common cause. The NUWT repeatedly challenged the long-standing patriarchal beliefs surrounding married women teachers' employment and strived for their social and financial equality. The failings of the SD(R)A helped to emphasise the work that needed to be done to secure that equality for married women teachers. The NUWT employed women's growing political agency to bolster the efficacy of the campaign, and publicly announced how education provisions could be improved by including married women teachers. These public recommendations, along with the NUWT's involvement in the Spens Report of 1938, arguably shaped the eventual legislation passed as part of the Education Act of 1944. The acceptance of married women teachers therefore suggests that the belief that they were less efficient had dissipated. Although the legislation was presented by the government to reflect that it was passed to improve education provisions for the children of post-war Britain, the NUWT accepted that it was nevertheless a significant victory for south Wales's married women teachers.

Ultimately, this dissertation has demonstrated that many of the married women teachers of south Wales suffered financially, personally and professionally throughout the first part of the twentieth century, although the extent to which their lives were affected depended on the individual approach of LEAs. The early political gains that women achieved gave courage to married women teachers, and through fervent campaigning and exercising agency, these women were able to influence the Education Act of 1944, putting right what the SD(R)A had got wrong, and abolishing the marriage bar from the teaching profession for good.

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