Marie Curie: A Pioneer Woman In Academia

With a lifespan of only 66 years, Marie Curie became a pioneer woman in academia. Her research on radioactivity, which ironically caused her death, led her to become the first and only woman, not just win two Noble Prizes but in different branches of science. As a result of her commitment and determination, she changed today's world by advancing medical science.

Born in Poland in 1867, Maria Sklodowska was raised in a well-educated family. Both of her parents inspired Marie to explore the scientific world. Astoundingly, Marie excelled academically from a young as. Despite winning a gold medal and coming top of her school when finishing secondary school, Marie couldn't enroll in the University Warsaw. Therefore, she enrolled in a floating university that was held underground and in secret.

Marie's desire for further education took her to Paris in 1891 after resolving some family matters. During her time studying at Sorbonne University, she was discouraged and pushed often towards difficulties. Against the odds, she stayed and pushed through. After 2 long years, she finally received her master's degree in mathematics and physics. Later that year her professor offered her to work in a laboratory. There, she met her lab partner, Pierre Curie, soon they became life partners.

Afterward, a French physicist, Antoine Henri Becquerel, whose work on radiation grabbed Marie's attention, inspiring her to investigate further on radioactivity. At home she was raising a family of her own. One of her quotes states that "I have frequently been questioned, especially by women, of how could I reconcile family life with a scientific career. Well, it hasn't been easy."

A result, of her relentless effort, led to her discovery of two new radioactive elements and their properties. Polonium is named after her motherland, Poland and radium. They had another breakthrough in 1902, they discovered radium chloride salt. In the following year, Maire, Pierre and Henri Becquerel were invited to receive the Noble Prize in Physics. From then she was recognized as the first woman to receive a Noble Prize.

Tragedy struck Marie in 1906 when Pierre got caught in an accident in a busy intersection. Yet, she maintained progress. Meanwhile, she got promoted as Sorbonne University's first female teacher. She frequently told her students that "Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so we may be fearless."

In 1911, Marie was awarded with another Nobel Prize this time for chemistry. Unlike the first time, she was a solo recipient. This made her the first and only person to win two noble prizes. Later, she used her discoveries to establish cures for some forms of cancer and improved the design of the x-ray machines. During World War 1, she personally traveled with a portable x-ray machine to help the injured people herself. Her enormous contribution to society and personal achievements cost Marie her life. In 1934 Marie died as a consequence of aplastic anemia due to over-exposure to radiation.

However, her legacy lives on. Marie Curie is an idol, especially as a woman in science. She

showed us that women have the ability for high education and sophisticated scientific investigation. Furthermore, she brought the fantasy of the radioactive element to reality. Moreover, Marie became an inspiration for all. Today there are statues, pictures, movies and books of her spread all over the world to uphold her legacy to all. Marie Curie was a passionate and towering genius, who dedicated her life for improvement in the field of medicine, chemistry, physics and aspect of a woman’s life, positively influencing society, therefore creating a new era.