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GENDER LOOPS: GENDER MAINSTREAMING IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES
FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN THE AREA OF EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE
WORK AND FOR DAY-CARE CENTRES

REPORT ON THE QUALITATIVE SURVEY

- AND TWO QUESTIONS FROM A PANEL SURVEY

Project partners in Norway

Reform – Resource Centre for Men
Oslo University College

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1. Introduction

This is a qualitative study of the work undertaken by bachelor programs in early childhood education to promote the equal rights competence of their students. The underlying aim is to provide girls and boys with the same opportunities in early childhood education institutions. Unfortunate gender patterns tend to recur. Competence is required to break out of this circle.

This report examines the contributions by the bachelor programs in early childhood education to increase this competence. To illuminate the issue, three questions from the interviews are highlighted:

- What is done to integrate new gender and equality knowledge?
- Is gender integrated cross-sectionally in the bachelor degree program?
- How are male teachers in early childhood education promoted?

This report does not examine in detail how the work with gender and equal rights is described in the curriculum and framework regulations and plans, but refers to the Overview¹ where more details can be found. The report also includes a minor quantitative study.

About the bachelor programs and the qualitative interview design

Eleven informants are interviewed at the bachelor programs in early childhood education. Norway has 16 university colleges and two universities with bachelor programs in early childhood education. The bachelor programs are taught in all of Norway's five regions: North, South, Central, West and East. There are informants connected to bachelor programs in all of the regions.

	Professors	
1.	Social science	Woman
2.	Social science	Man
3.	Education science	Man
4.	Education science	Woman
5.	Drama	Woman
6.	Drama	Woman
7.	Information and communication technology	Man
8.	Physical education	Woman
9.	Arts and crafts	Woman
	Other informants	
10.	Head of studies	Woman
11.	Student	Man

The bachelor programs in early childhood education which the teachers are affiliated with have approximately 3000 students, which is about half of all students of early childhood

¹ "Overview of the Norwegian legal and political GM requirements in educator training and early childhood education institutions." Reform – Resource Centre for Men. Oslo University College. Oslo. 2007

education in Norway. One of the teachers interviewed is connected to one of the universities offering the bachelor degree in early childhood education. The informants are primarily professors in different fields of knowledge and of both genders – six women and three men. A head of studies and a male student in the bachelor program in early childhood education have also been interviewed.

The interviews were conducted in the spring and summer of 2007. The analysis and quotations in the report are based on written notes, not transcripts of tapes, and e-mail feedback from the informants.

A qualitative study with a clear gender policy agenda

The purpose of the qualitative interviews has been to determine the practice in the bachelor programs in early childhood education and the perceptions among teachers in the programs, and how the programs are organized. This is achieved through qualitative interviews that show the day-to-day activities behind planning documents, organization charts and quantitative survey responses.

The qualitative study features a common denominator with qualitative interviews in an open and interested attitude on the informants' perceptions and descriptions of reality. What is not common is the absolutely explicit gender policy agenda of the study, which is to be an instigator for integration of issues connected to gender and equality. The report presents gender policy assessments and recommendations that are directly based on the statements. These are the responsibility of the Norwegian project partners.

About the analysis of the interviews

The interviews are analyzed bearing in mind how the teachers see the situation within their bachelor programs in early childhood education, and I indicate the challenges that might exist on the national level. As the distribution among informants is substantial, there are grounds for making such suggestions.

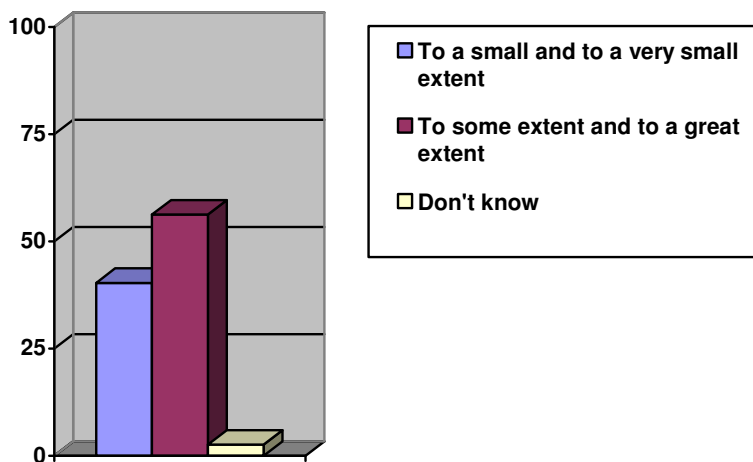
The informants are also assessed as co-researchers, as several of them have special competence in the field of social gender. Their descriptions are therefore not only analyzed but in many cases also included in the assessments made in the report.

The Gender Loops project examines a very wide issue: "the implementation of gender mainstreaming in early childhood education." This gives room for the project and the qualitative interviews to reveal a significant scope in gender and equality activities, while it also allows restricted opportunities for in-depth studies and depth of questions and analyses.

2. Teachers' gender competence, two questions from a panel survey

A study undertaken in March 2007 asked early childhood education institution teachers two questions about gender and equality in such institutions. The responses are used here to illuminate what early childhood education institution teachers in the sector bring with them of gender competence from their bachelor study in early childhood education.

a) *To what extent has the bachelor study in early childhood education enabled you to counteract unfortunate gender roles in the ECEI?*



Panel: Persons organised in Union of Education, Norway, n=155 ECE-teachers, March 2007

The responses are reasonably uplifting, in that 56 per cent of early childhood education institution teachers state that their bachelor program in early childhood education has enabled them "to some" or "to a great extent" to combat unfortunate gender patterns in the early childhood education institution. Forty per cent respond that the bachelor program to very little or little extent has enabled them in this way.

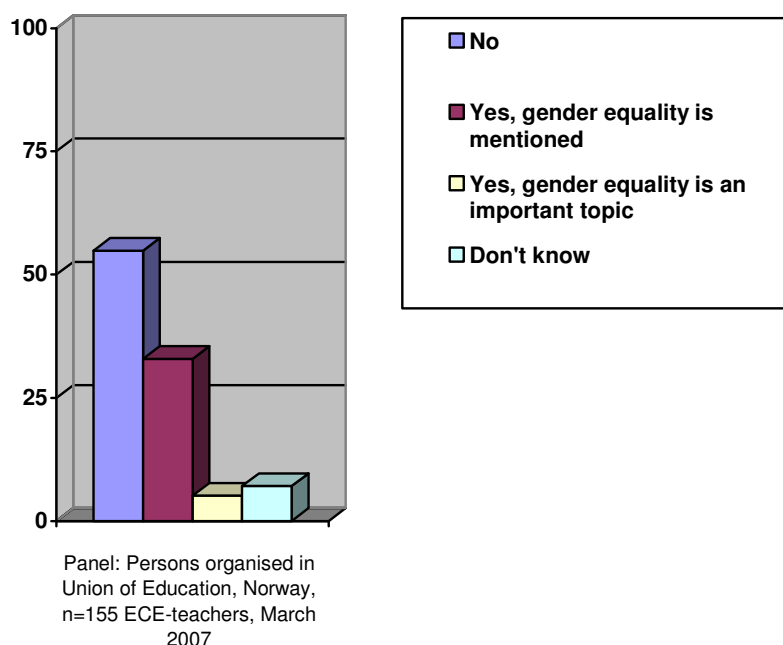
It is reasonable to interpret the results to mean that half of early childhood education institution teachers have substantial knowledge about the topic which they have brought with them from the bachelor program in early childhood education, while the other half has little knowledge from their studies.

It is assumed that the bachelor programs in early childhood education in the 1970s and 1980s had a greater focus on these issues than what has been the case in the 1990s and 2000s.

Fifty-six per cent of respondents state that they have learned to counteract unfortunate gender roles. This question is nevertheless more a question of knowing rather than doing. They have the competence, but do half of them apply their competence in their day-

to-day activities in the early childhood education institutions? This brings us to the next question.

b) Is gender equality a topic in the annual curriculum in your ECEI?



In 55 per cent of the early childhood education institutions, equality is not a topic. In 33 per cent of early childhood education institutions, equality is mentioned and in 5 per cent it is an important topic.

In the assessment of these figures it is necessary to bear in mind that having an annual plan is stipulated by law for the early childhood education institutions, and the plan is also their most important document for planning their educational activities. Early childhood education institutions are also obliged, pursuant to the Gender Equality Act, to work actively and according to plans for gender equality (the activity obligation in the Gender Equality Act). The assessment may also include the competence reported by early childhood education institution teachers themselves, cf. the previous item. The fact the gender equality is mentioned or is an important topic in 38 per cent of the early childhood education institutions is thus a low figure.

A total of 38 per cent is nevertheless surprisingly high considered in relation to how little emphasis gender and equality issues receive in the early childhood education institutions and the education sector. The percentage is so high that it almost invites one to question the credibility of the answer.

The focus of this report is the competence contributed by the bachelor program in early childhood education. A focus on gender and equality competence may contribute to promoting this in education planning. **Even if 38 per cent state that gender equality is included in the annual plan, it is not sufficient that gender equality only is mentioned.** Early childhood education institution teachers should have the competence to integrate gender equality in the educational planning and to follow up the plan in their actions.

Union of Education, Norway, regularly undertakes panel studies among its members. Representativeness can, however, not be guaranteed, this being a membership study. Bearing in mind that the percentage of trade union membership in early childhood education institution is very high, it may be surmised that the responses are reasonably accurate when it comes to early childhood education institution teachers in general.

3. How the professors, a student and the head of studies describe the bachelor programs in early childhood education

a) What is done to integrate new gender and equality knowledge?

To which extent do early childhood education institution teachers feel competent to work with gender and gender equality issues in early childhood education institutions, and what happens when they graduate and start to work?

An important source of development of early childhood education institution teachers' competence on social gender and gender equality is research and development of this as a field of knowledge, in particular with respect to social gender and small children. The bachelor programs in early childhood education and the training activities in the early childhood education institutions must be continually updated in relation to knowledge development in research and general society. The syllabuses for bachelor programs in early childhood education and for early childhood education institutions emphasize this.

The education sector has come under criticism for not renewing its understanding of gender and gender equality in accordance with social development, and that this represents an impediment to gender equality activities.²

Two requirements for such renewal are new relevant gender research and that work is undertaken to integrate this in the bachelor programs in early childhood education. This section of the report presents an overview of how the educational institutions deal with this task. Teacher descriptions of the activities with new gender knowledge will be examined and assessed.

With the exception of two of the teachers, this issue is described as being given low priority by the administration and colleagues. Several of the educational institutions report, however, not insignificant activity in this field.

Innovation activities based on the curriculum

The framework plan from the Ministry and development of local curricula and syllabuses may be the most important source of innovation activities.

There are two sources for inputting gender in education. These are the framework plan and academic updating of colleagues. The education is very focused on framework plans and less oriented towards research.

Social science teacher, male

Here the absence of integration of gender and gender equality in the framework plans create restrictions, as gender is only mentioned in social science and education science in the Framework plan for bachelor programs in early childhood education. This does not, however, preclude the possibility of working with gender perspectives in syllabuses and education plans in local bachelor programs in early childhood education and in the plans for individual

² One is Bredesen, Ole: "Nye gutter og jenter, en ny pedagogikk?" (New boys and girls, a new pedagogy?) Cappelen. Oslo. 2004.

subjects beyond social science and education science. Two of the teachers state that this is done in their subjects.

R&D activities not given the importance they might have had

Local R&D activities are uniformly pinpointed as the most important source of developing gender knowledge in bachelor programs in early childhood education and for integration of this in the teaching. Some of the bachelor programs in early childhood education where the teachers work some researchers carry out research and development activities that include gender and gender equality, while at other colleges where the teachers are employed there are nor such research and development activities. Due to the size of the sample it is impossible to state anything about the scope beyond the fact that relevant activities are carried out in bachelor programs in early childhood education nationally.

One of the teachers emphasizes that even if R&D activities on this topic are not being performed now, this is not because applications relating to the bachelor programs in early childhood education on this topic are less probable to succeed.

What we can say something about is how teachers assess the importance of the implemented R&D activities. Several of the teachers that we interviewed state that research and innovation activities have limited importance beyond the teaching provided by the teachers in question in bachelor programs in early childhood education. It appears that it is an administration and organization challenge to disseminate this competence.

Need for knowledge development in individual subjects in the bachelor programs in early childhood education

Several of the teachers interviewed point out the need for knowledge development on gender and gender equality in relation to individual subjects in the bachelor programs in early childhood education, not least in subjects other than education science and social science. Interviewees teaching physical education and drama specially mention their own subjects. It is probable that the need is just as present in the other subjects; Arts and crafts, Physical education, Mathematics, Music, Science and the Environment, Norwegian language and Moral Education (Christianity, Religion and Moral Education).

The need for textbooks in individual subjects that integrate gender perspectives

The need for knowledge development also includes the need for textbooks and compendiums that show the relevance of gender perspectives in the various subjects. One of the interviewed teachers stated that in a subject such as education science there is a lack of textbooks that raise gender and gender-equality issues. She also states there is not enough literature and research on the importance of gender in the interaction between children. She also would have liked to have had a basic textbook on the profession of teaching children in early childhood education institutions that male teachers could identify with, with a more open view on the profession than what the basic textbooks now have. She also points out that several textbooks for the bachelor program in early childhood education are linguistically weak in the sense that they recreate a clear gender division when dealing with girls and boys, men and women.

Innovation activities determined by the profession

As mentioned above, there are two major possible sources for implementation of new understandings of gender. One is the top-down work on the framework plan and curriculum. The second is the professors' own readings, research, preparations and updating in their own subjects and fields of interests. One of the professors points out that the occupational

background (sociologists, educators, the performing arts and so forth) is a determinant in both sources of implementation of new understandings. The academic background of the teachers governs their interests and viewpoints, thus also the innovation activities, to greater extent than the needs of the bachelor program in early childhood education.

When it comes to teachers' academic updating – much is read. It is not my impression that teachers read much about gender and gender equality. This is something for the few, those who deal with this explicitly in their teaching. Those of us in social science have an obligation to deal with recent gender theory. There are of course also subject traditions when it comes to what is read. Social science teachers are all sociologists where gender is an important discipline. The gender perspective is also embedded in theory directions such as post-structuralism.

Social science teacher, male

Teachers from other subjects than social science and education science are seen as having less knowledge about gender from their own bachelor program in early childhood education, and thus social gender does not have a prominent position on the agenda in their subjects.

Partner comments

The interviews with the teachers, the student and head of studies at the bachelor programs in early childhood education confirm a large need for renewal of knowledge about gender and gender equality. Knowledge about gender and gender equality is not a key area for the administration at any of the institutions where we undertook interviews.

Relevant research and development activities are undertaken at several bachelor programs in early childhood education, but these activities are not given the significance they might have had. There is a need for larger academic environments connected to gender and gender equality at several bachelor programs in early childhood education, which must not be detached from contact with early childhood education institutions and teaching at bachelor programs in early childhood education.

There appears to be a need to produce and highlight relevant research in the different subjects in the teaching. Alternatively, a detailed overview of the knowledge on gender and gender equality should be made for the various levels of bachelor programs in early childhood education in each subject. The gender and gender equality perspective must be included when new textbooks and curricula are written

b) Is gender integrated cross-sectionally in the bachelor program?

To enable students to work with gender and gender equality issues when they start working in early childhood education institutions, they should have learnt about this during the bachelor programs in early childhood education. A basic principle in Norwegian gender equality activities is "gender mainstreaming", which means that issues connected to social gender are not only a substantial element in the bachelor program in early childhood education but that this is integrated in the studies as a whole.

Gender and gender equality only an issue in education science and social science

There is a disparity between the curriculum which governs all the national bachelor programs in early childhood education³ and the national gender mainstreaming strategy. In the ten subjects covered in the curriculum, gender is mentioned in just two of them: Education science (pedagogy), the largest subject according to study credits, and social studies.

One of the most important questions in the study was whether the teachers had the impression that gender and gender equality were only addressed in social science and education science. These are the only two subjects where the Framework plan for the bachelor program in early childhood education mentions the gender perspective.

Of the total of nine teachers, six had this impression. Three of the teachers believed that another subject or two also raised this issue. Nobody believed that that the majority of the subjects explicitly raised issues associated with social gender and gender equality. The main impression is that social gender and gender equality in general are topics addressed in education science and social science.

Large need to raise social gender and gender equality in connection with the students' practical work experience

The day-to-day business in early childhood education institutions often appears to be very gendered, both in terms of interaction and expressions between the children and the day-care centre as an early childhood education institution. An important question during the interviews was therefore whether there are procedures for raising this issue in connection with the students' practical work periods. None of the nine teachers interviewed gave feedback that this is compulsory, but some report that this is a question they often discuss with students in the wake of the practice periods.

Gender issues are part of student practices in the way that male students will experience gender issues physically when they are doing their on-the-job training in day-care centres. Female students will see it when the staffing is mixed. It will also appear indirectly through observation of groups of children. For example, many students return with behaviour charts where boys are described as having problems and being unruly. Then it is important to make students ask themselves: Why are the boys unruly? Could this relate to the structure of the day-care centre? I attempt to do this when I meet students after their on-the-job training.

Education science teacher, male

³ "Framework plan for the preschool teacher education". The Ministry of Education and Research, 2003

Teachers regularly use the terms "the boys" and "the girls" in their lecturing, but in an unreflective way

The distinction between boys and girls is regularly addressed to illuminate an issue. Teachers for example ask the student: Do the boys like this? Do the girls like this? And they do this without looking into this beyond this point. It is not good that a linguistic culture is allowed to live a separate life. That it is such an understanding that shapes the role of the head educator.

Why is there such a non-committal dialogue, where boys and girls are used and not problematized?

Gender and gender equality are considered an isolated topic, in periods, and not everybody is equally interested in it. Gender and gender equality consist of so many things, for example when we speak on an everyday basis, that it is overlooked as unimportant.

Student, male

Chainsaw. The practical subjects are where the students learn about social gender

Other subjects than education science and social science are minor subjects with limited capacity to address gender and gender-equality issues. These are also subjects where gender patterns appear very clearly, and where the connection to the early childhood education institution as a gendered area is the strongest.

I think practical subjects such as arts and crafts, music and drama, are extra important for what students and the children learn about social gender. Here the practice is often very gendered. I recall that this is precisely why we taught the students, the majority of whom are women, to use a chainsaw. Not because being able to use a chainsaw in itself is important, but because we wished to give them the sense of mastering by using a new tool, and give them an experience that may result in thinking new thoughts about gender and what they bring with them. I think that much is determined in the subjects that do not address gender and gender equality, and where this is not mentioned in the framework plan for bachelor programs in early childhood education.

Arts and crafts teacher, female

Sexuality appears to have been given very low priority

How would you assess the graduating students' ability to handle issues of sexuality and sexual orientation in an open and inclusive manner?

I perceive children's sexuality as a taboo. Children's sexuality is not followed up as an issue, and therefore homosexuality and heterosexuality are no issue either. Adult sexuality is, on the other hand, discussed.

Student, male

One of the questions the informants were asked was whether heterosexuality and homosexuality and human sexuality were issues addressed by the bachelor programs in early childhood education. A majority of the teachers describe this as a topic that is not raised or has low priority.

Too many subjects, lack of knowledge: Teacher assessment of why the gender perspectives is not integrated better

How do the teachers explain why the gender perspective is not better integrated in the subjects?

- Absence of knowledge among teachers and need to raise awareness
- Too many subjects
- If social gender is to be included in the plethora of subjects already in place, teachers must have knowledge about how social gender is part of the whole. For this, more research, literature and knowledge on how gender works are needed beyond education science and social science.
- A small subject such as physical education has restricted opportunities to address the issues fully, the teacher of this subject states during the interview. Cooperation with other subjects such as education science and social science is required in interdisciplinary projects, or for example using common literature in social science and physical education. It appears to be particularly difficult to cooperate in this way with the education-science subject.

The importance of the gender of education-science teachers must be examined

Some teachers in social science and education science must address social-gender issues as an independent topic. Teachers in these subjects, not least in education science, must also assume responsibility for cooperating with other subjects where gender perspectives are included.

One of the interviewed teachers pointed out, not in direct reference to this responsibility, but in a more overarching way, the fact that almost all education-science teachers in Norwegian bachelor programs in early childhood education are women who have worked as early childhood education teachers in early childhood education institutions.⁴ This has shaped and helps shape the bachelor programs in early childhood education as a whole in particular gendered ways, the teacher claimed.

These are issues that need to be addressed more closely in connection with bachelor programs in early childhood education as a gendered activity.

Another teacher says that absent prioritising of gender may be due to the large number of female teachers within the bachelor programs in early childhood education and that this fact makes the perspective invisible to them.

⁴ The requirement that education-science teachers should also have trained as early childhood education teachers has been abandoned. This nevertheless does not change the situation, if that was the intention.

Partner comments

Teachers in other subjects than social science and education science may not have adequate room, literature or competence to give gender and gender-equality issues the theoretical depth and complexity that is required. As it is now, the theoretical knowledge appears to be more or less ignored, or even worse, directly countered if the observation made by the male student paints the true picture.

How then to proceed in practice, as the teachers describe the resource and work situation, to integrate gender and gender-equality issues? There must obviously be a higher level of interdisciplinary cooperation where education science and social science contribute to the necessary theoretical depth, the large lines, and the more practically oriented subjects contribute to visualizing this knowledge and including gender issues in their teaching. This requires greater cooperation on the curriculum, placing gender and gender equality as an interdisciplinary topic or as an explicit dimension in an interdisciplinary topic.

Moreover, as we suggested in the previous report section (2a) there appears to be a need for relevant additions to all the subject curricula in the bachelor program in early childhood education, but particularly in other subjects than education science and social science. Barriers to this appear to be the absence of recent relevant research and the fact that textbook writers fail to integrate gender perspectives in their books.

4. How the professors, a student and the head of studies understand male students in early childhood education

The relative absence of male early childhood teachers has major impact on what children in early childhood education institutions learn about gender and equality. The Norwegian partners feel that there are strong grounds for this concern because there is a lack of sufficient variation for the children when one of the genders has a relatively high degree of absence. Not least, the absence of men sends a strong signal to the children that men do other things than work in early childhood education institutions and do activities with them in their everyday.

Bearing this in mind, bachelor programs in early childhood education are expected to make significant efforts to promote men as early childhood teachers. In this section I will, however, not go into the specific work in the bachelor programs in early childhood education, I will only look at the scope revealed through the interviews. What is perhaps even more important than the fact that measures have been introduced is how the teachers think about and interact with the male students in early childhood education. Bearing this in mind, the descriptions that teachers, the head of studies and the student give in response to the following questions will be analysed:

- How is the relative absence of male students in early childhood education viewed?
- How do you explain the relative absence of male students?
- How are male students in early childhood education described?

Some figures from Norway and from bachelor programs in early childhood education in the study

First I will look at some figures on the general situation and from the study. There are around 70 000 employees in Norwegian early childhood education institutions; nine per cent men and 91 per cent women. This preponderance in favour of one gender is even greater among employed early childhood education teachers: six per cent men and 94 per cent women.⁵

This gender imbalance is somewhat less pronounced among the students starting their early childhood education programs: 14 per cent men and 86 per cent women.⁶ Much of the explanation for this difference is that there are fewer male teachers in the early childhood education institutions than there are students starting this education, and that a higher number of men drop out of the studies or the profession after completing their studies.

With respect to the bachelor programs in early childhood education that the informants in this study are taken from, all had a higher proportion of men who started the studies than the national average: varying from 16 per cent to 22 per cent.⁷ In practice, the proportion of men in the bachelor programs in early childhood education is somewhat lower.

A concerted effort to increase the proportion of male early childhood teachers is reported

The great majority of informants report significant measures to raise the number of male early childhood education teachers at their institutions. But only a small minority report that the

⁵ Statistics Norway's statistics for early childhood institutions for 2006.

⁶ Figures from *Samordna opptak* (Norwegian version of UCAS) at the start of the 2006 semester.

⁷ Figures from *Samordna opptak* (Norwegian version of UCAS) at the start of the 2006 semester.

activities are incorporated in a plan with managers who are responsible for following up the work for the institutions. Reading these reports in a greater context it is important to keep the selection of informants in mind. With a higher proportion of men than the national average, it is probable that the bachelor programs in early childhood education where the interviewed teachers work put more effort into recruiting male students than is ordinarily the case.

Partner comments

It is positive that it appears that most of the early childhood education institutions to which the informants are connected, have introduced significant measures. When only a few of “their” institutions have a plan that someone is responsible for following up, there is no guarantee that these are good and appropriate measures, or that they are measures that can be learned from.

a) How is the relative absence of male students in early childhood education viewed?

The constant low proportion of men does not give the grounds for mobilisation

One of the questions asked was: How is the absence of male students in early childhood education viewed by the teacher colleagues? That the proportion of men has been constantly low for a long time, and that the institutions must provide a good program of studies to new students, is something that the interviewed head of studies mentions when she explains her colleagues’ views.

The situation has not changed very much. The proportion of men in early childhood education has been quite constantly low for many years, even if there were more in the 70s. It’s not like this issue gets a lot of attention.

Head of studies, female

However, there are no grounds for believing that this situation is dismissed with a simple shrug of the shoulders. There is a constant expression of the desire for a more even gender balance. The interviewed teachers see the presence of men as positive for the studies and learning environment. The early childhood education institutions, education classes and departments with a more even gender balance are described as more dynamic, more playful and more varied in their perspectives and views.

The teachers’ descriptions here support the Norwegian project partners’ perception of the absence of men in early childhood education institutions and in the bachelor programs in early childhood education undermine the importance of social gender and this in turn hinders learning and development in this area.

Men are not considered to be absent

With between 16 and 22 per cent men starting in the bachelor programs in early childhood education, and in practice there is a lower proportion than this in this education, the bachelor programs in early childhood education are far from the ideal of having a gender balance. One of the interesting points to emerge is the understanding of the distance to the ideal. When asked what the view on the absence of men is, several immediately respond that this it is not looked upon as absence.

Most want to see an increase. They don’t see it as absence, but see it as fewer men than women.

Drama teacher, female

When the teachers explain their colleagues' overall perception, the low proportion of male teachers is viewed as normalised; it is as it should be. One question that was left hanging in the air was: what, roughly, can be considered enough men? How large a percentage of men does there need to be in the bachelor programs in early childhood education for there to be a sense of gender balance? I am left with the impression that this is significantly lower than fifty per cent.

Are there other bachelor programs in early childhood education that are the benchmark?

One of the teachers reports that they have had greater focus and been more interested in the issue when they had very few male students, but now that they have a larger proportion of men they no longer have the same strong focus. Another teacher mentions that the early childhood institutions in the districts give them good feedback as they have succeeded in preventing staff from leaving, and ensured that there is a steady stream of male teachers coming from their bachelor programs in early childhood education. But this stream is more of a trickle compared to the flow of female teachers from bachelor programs in early childhood education.

If male students are not seen as being relatively absent, this may be because gender balance is not the most relevant frame of reference for the colleagues in the bachelor programs in early childhood education. How bachelor programs in early childhood education compare to other bachelor programs in early childhood education appears to be a more relevant frame of reference. If this is the case, it is easy to understand that bachelor programs in early childhood education that have under 15 per cent men view this as an absence of men, while bachelor programs in early childhood education that have up towards 20 per cent men feel that they do not have an absence of men, and therefore can be satisfied.

Partner comment

Increasing the proportion of male students is seen as a slow process, the results are not coming fast enough. The best one can hope for is to be a little better than comparable bachelor programs in early childhood education. This is resignation based on facing reality. Had the problem been seen as important there would perhaps have been the grounds for a more intense effort.

There appears to be a limited amount of faith in the introduction of measure upon measure at the local bachelor programs in early childhood education.

b) How is the relative absence of male students explained?

Why are there so few male students in bachelor programs in early childhood education and why are there so few male teachers? The answers to these questions are a key part of recruitment. The teachers, the head of studies and the student in the study were also asked to explain this, or to put it more correctly, to explain what they think are the most important impediments to having a larger proportion of men in their bachelor program in early childhood education. The impediments, listed below, can both shed light on the efforts that are and are not implemented in this field and on what the early childhood teacher profession is, as one of the genders is “impeded” from actively pursuing it as a profession.

- General societal development and the relationship between men and children
- Gender division in the labour market
- Status and low societal value
- Too low pay, and too low pay for provider-oriented men
- That there are unknown job possibilities for most of the boys and men
- For some young men there is no significant impediment
- Lack of a professional practice in the early childhood education institutions
- That the occupation is looked upon by society as a female occupation
- The sector’s inability to let society know what the teacher’s job is
- Lack of choices connected to the male experiential world
- The students in the bachelor programs in early childhood education are themselves poor ambassadors

Even though all the informants were interviewed about the impediments in “their” bachelor program in early childhood education, several talk about impediments on the societal level. Several of the informants focus on nuances and divide the responsibility for the lack of men between the bachelor program in early childhood education and other societal institutions. One impediment which is especially mentioned is that the profession is not valued highly enough in society, something which is reflected in the pay level.

If not surprising in itself, it is nonetheless interesting that several of the informants point to the wrong, weak and misleading picture of the early childhood education-teacher profession that the bachelor programs and the sector both contribute to. Read the informants going into this explanation in the quotes listed below:

I also think about the lack of status the early childhood teacher profession has, that this has something to do with the lack of professionalism. Out in the early childhood education institutions I see, for example, how the parent meetings are led.

Drama teacher, female

If you are going to have a higher wage, you can’t go around dressed like you have a day off at home. You present your profession through the way you dress.

Education science teacher, female

I believe that the fact that this is seen as a traditional female profession is the most important reason why men do not choose the early childhood teacher profession. The pay also has a little something to say about that. (...) A male student in early childhood education in practice, I think, sees the female world that he expects to meet both in the bachelor program and in the early childhood education institutions.

What meaning do you give to “female world”?

There are fortunately changes in most early childhood education institutions. But by the term “female world” I mean everything from conversations, furnishing, that the day-care centre is furnished like a home with odds and ends and homely furniture and not as a workplace/a pedagogic arena.

Drama teacher, female

The day-care centre has become a female domain. The centres will have to change in the direction of being professional arenas for both genders. They will have to reflect the changes that have taken place in society. I like big day-care centres like we have a lot of in the city. I see that there are many small day-care centres out in the districts that look like small homes. Yeah, they are often residential homes that have been turned into day-care centres, with pictures on the walls and curtains, just like a private home. On campus we have a big day-care centre that I like with a wide division of gender, age and ethnicity. The employees represent society and this is seen in the activities they also have.

Education science teacher, female

For some young men there is no significant impediment

But the possible the wrong, weak and misleading picture of the early childhood education-teacher profession doesn't seem to put all men off. One informant report that for some young men there is no significant impediment to choose this profession.

For quite a number of men it does not appear to be difficult to choose this profession and this education. It would be interesting to know more about this. (...)

At first, Anders, who is the head of the Men in Day-care Group, was not especially aware of the fact that he is a man in the profession. But after sitting and discussing this for a while, he is becoming more aware of this. His impression, which he argues for well, and as I mentioned earlier, is that many young men accept and see it as a good idea to get an early childhood teacher education. They are not of the opinion that they are special as men in a bachelor program in early childhood education, so they do not have any special reason for talking about it.

Education science teacher, male

Some of the other informants give similar reports.

Partner comments

It is necessary to work on the picture society has about early childhood education teachers and the education they take.

The weak and wrong picture society has of the early childhood teaching profession is mentioned in various ways. Many of the informants state that the bachelor programs in early childhood education have much work to do within their ranks; in relation to professionalism, and in relation to the existing female culture.

This report does not examine the informants' various proposals for measures, but it can be mentioned that several of the proposals focus on working on the picture that is presented of the early childhood teacher, the education for this and the profession, and that the bachelor programs in early childhood education and greater society have a responsibility to correct this picture.

As this is such a clear signal from the interviews it is odd that such measures are not more present in the work that is being done. In other words, where is the work that focuses on giving a broader perspective on the professions as something more than a non-demanding job that all women can do?

c) How are the male students in early childhood education described?

How “the male student in early childhood education” is described and not least perceived is important for the social latitude these students have. How male teachers are socially positioned, the degree to which they are marginalised, stereotyped, ignored, if they are given special treatment, and so on, will have importance for their professional careers.

Male early childhood student teachers face others requirements/demands

Several of the interviewed teachers either report or tell about their own perceptions of the “male students” in the bachelor program in early childhood education.

I gave a lecture on awareness of the gender question in the recreational-life subject. There was a gang of six boys who sat at the back of the classroom. The closest to me were lying on chairs and did not appear to be especially interested in the topic. (...) The bachelor program in early childhood education seems to be a little too abstract for some of the boys. Nonetheless, I feel we don't need lazy boys, we need aware men. There are some lethargic boys who destroy for “men in day care”. Many teachers come to me and describe students who don't work enough.

Education science teacher, male

It is the perception of the need for “aware men” as opposed to the picture of the many “lazy boys” in the bachelor program in early childhood education that makes it more difficult for the education science teacher to be a spokesman for more men in the early childhood teaching profession. There are more such statements from the interview that refer to the male students' characteristics. “It is not enough just being a man for you to get a job in day care.” “And so we try not make things too easy for students just because they are boys, we demand just as much of both genders.”

The statements show that there are extra demands or that teachers are extra careful with the demand that one prove one's suitability when it comes to the male students as opposed to the female students. Otherwise the issue would have been gendered the other way: We don't need lazy girls, it is not enough to be female and we demand more of the girls.

You seldom hear anything negative about “female students”

It appears that male students receive more attention of both a positive and negative nature. Such as the computer teacher, who sees the other subject teachers from a little bit of a distance and has this to say:

On the one hand, I hear comments like it is sad that there are so few male students in the education. On the other hand, I hear many negative things about male students who don't do well in the education. You seldom hear anything negative about the female students. So I hear more positive and more negative things about the male students than I do about the female students.

Computer teacher, male

He feels, however, that there is no basis for such discrimination. The fact that more attention is channelled towards the female students than the male, might be because any female student is viewed as naturally suited for the study and the profession, while men have to prove their capability in each single case.

Male students' gender is over-emphasised

The interview with the male student of early childhood education highlights how this perception of gender has practical significance for those involved.

How is your presence in the bachelor program in early childhood education viewed?

I feel that I am more boy and man in the education than student in the bachelor program in early childhood education. What I do is seen as me being "a male early childhood teacher" and that just about forms the basis for what male students are and do.

Student, male

The student accounts that the space for being "not just gendered" is narrow. One could hope that a percentage of male students of 20 could reduce the basis of stereotyping the gendered minority. Judging by the student's account and the general perception left by the other interviews, we do not appear to be witnessing any large degree of transformation. It is therefore vital to direct our focus to this minority.

Partner comment

The way this is talked about and perceived creates less social latitude for potentially half of the students in the bachelor program in early childhood education. A social position or social positions are created that are not very desirable, and here it will be difficult to avoid some people being channelled into this. At the same time it is obvious that it is a challenge to live up to an ideal of equality with a little gendered minority present in the bachelor program in early childhood education.

5. Concluding remarks

What have we uncovered in the qualitative survey of the bachelor programs in early childhood education and the small scale survey among early childhood education teachers? How do the early childhood education programs promote gender competence among the students and within the profession? The concluding remarks and valuations made in this section are based around the three main questions posed in the introduction.

What efforts are made to integrate new knowledge on gender and gender equality?

The efforts within the bachelor programs in early childhood educations to integrate new knowledge on gender is generally valued by the partners as wanting, but this also relates to the knowledge situation of the field in general, including the limited scope of relevant research studies as described in the Overview.⁸

Weak framework plan. The framework plan for bachelor programs in early childhood education has not integrated a gender perspective within all disciplines, only within social science and education science. This limits both the integration of new gender knowledge and the integration of gender in the other disciplines.

The teachers at the bachelor programs in early childhood education report a lack of research and literature within disciplines other than social science and education science. Contributions to this end are viewed by several teachers as essential if gender is to be integrated successfully into the other disciplines.

The significance of R&D has major increase potential. The partners have through the survey gained knowledge of relevant research and development work being conducted at several of the bachelor programs in early childhood education, but this work does not seem to realize its potential significance. To increase the potency, larger centra for gender and gender equality issues could constitute a way forward. Such centra would necessarily have to retain intimate links to competence work in the early childhood education institutions and the teaching at the bachelor programs.

Is gender integrated cross-sectionally in the bachelor degree program?

One half of the graduated teachers report to have learnt something about gender. The panel survey shows that 56 percent early childhood education teachers claim that the study have enabled them to counteract unfortunate gender roles. This has to be viewed as a positive sign. To what extent the early childhood education bachelor programs contribute to the feeling of commitment to apply this knowledge among the students and institutions, is not a question this survey answers. However, this is a vital question for further research.

Gender is mainly an issue within education science and social science. The main impression from the qualitative interviews is that social gender and gender equality in general are topics addressed in education science and social science.

Theoretical knowledge may be countered. Teachers in other subjects than social science and education science may not have adequate room, literature or competence to give gender and gender-equality issues the theoretical depth and complexity that is required. As it is now, the

⁸ "Overview of the Norwegian legal and political GM requirements in educator training and early childhood education institutions." Reform – Resource Centre for Men. Oslo University College. Oslo. 2007

theoretical knowledge appears to be more or less ignored, or even worse, directly countered by the lacking integration in application and in disciplines other than social and education sciences.

The importance of the gender of education-science teachers is a question the survey finds wanting further study.

How are male teachers in early childhood education promoted?

The project partners argue that the education of male early childhood education teachers is beneficial to the gender and gender equality work undertaken towards children.

Significant measures are reported. The great majority of informants report significant measures to raise the number of male early childhood education teachers at their institutions. But only a small minority report that the activities are incorporated into a plan with managers who are responsible for following up the work on behalf of the institutions.

Men are not considered to be absent. Had men been considered absent, and the problem seen as important, there would perhaps have been grounds for a more intense effort. The bachelor programs in early childhood education can not be content with 15 to 20 percent male students, neither can society.

Are male teachers really promoted? However when “the male student in early childhood education” is described the measures faints. What is perhaps even more important than the fact that significant measures are reported is how the teachers think about and interact with the male students in early childhood education. The interviews give an impression of considerable stereotyping.

Massive critique that has not been taken into account. The informants make a massive critic directed towards the weak and wrong picture society has of the early childhood teacher profession. - The profession being something more than a non-demanding job that all women can do. As this is such a clear signal from the interviews, it is odd that such measures are not more present in the work that is being done.

For some young men there is no significant impediment. The situation is not without optimism. One of the informants reports of a new generation of young men for whom it does not appear to be difficult to choose this profession and this education. The informant sees this development in connection with the increased presence and awareness of fathering in the Norwegian society.