

**GEA Virtual Research Seminar Series
2021-2022**

**Exploring career trajectories of
men in the early childhood
education and care workforce:
Why they leave and why they stay**

18th March 2021, 4-5.30 pm GMT



**Gender & Education
Association**



Taylor & Francis
Taylor & Francis Group



About GEA

The Gender and Education Association (GEA) is an international intersectional feminist organisation. Our inclusive community of educators, researchers, activists, leaders, artists, and more have been working together since 1997 to challenge and eradicate gender stereotyping, sexism, and gender inequality within and through education. UK charity number: 1159145



Join GEA

GEA's greatest strength is our members, so join us to help us grow and thrive to achieve our vision of gender equality and transformative education.

Annual membership is £30
or £15 for
students/concession



genderandeducation.com/join

Connect

GEA Twitter

twitter.com/genderanded

GEA Facebook

facebook.com/Genderanded

GEA Website

genderandeducation.com





Gender & Education
Association

Exploring career trajectories of men in the early childhood education and care workforce: Why they leave and why they stay

Speakers:

- **Dr David Brody**, Efrata College of Education, Israel
- **Professor Tim Rohrmann**, University of Applied Sciences and Arts, Hildesheim, Germany
- **Professor Jo Warin**, Lancaster University, UK
- **Professor Kari Emilsen**, Queen Maud University College of Early Childhood Education, Norway

Exploring Career Trajectories of Men in the Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce

Why They Leave and Why They Stay

Edited by
David L. Brody,
Kari Emilsen,
Tim Rohrmann
and Jo Warin



Towards an
Ethical Praxis in
Early Childhood

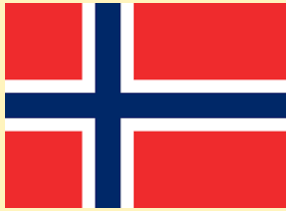
EECERA
European Early Childhood
Education Research Association





Gender & Education
Association

A 12-country project on gender in ECEC





Our study addresses three questions

- Why do some men drop out from working in ECEC in the 12 researched countries?
- Why do other men in the countries persist in their ECEC careers?
- How does gender inform and shape men's career decisions in ECEC?

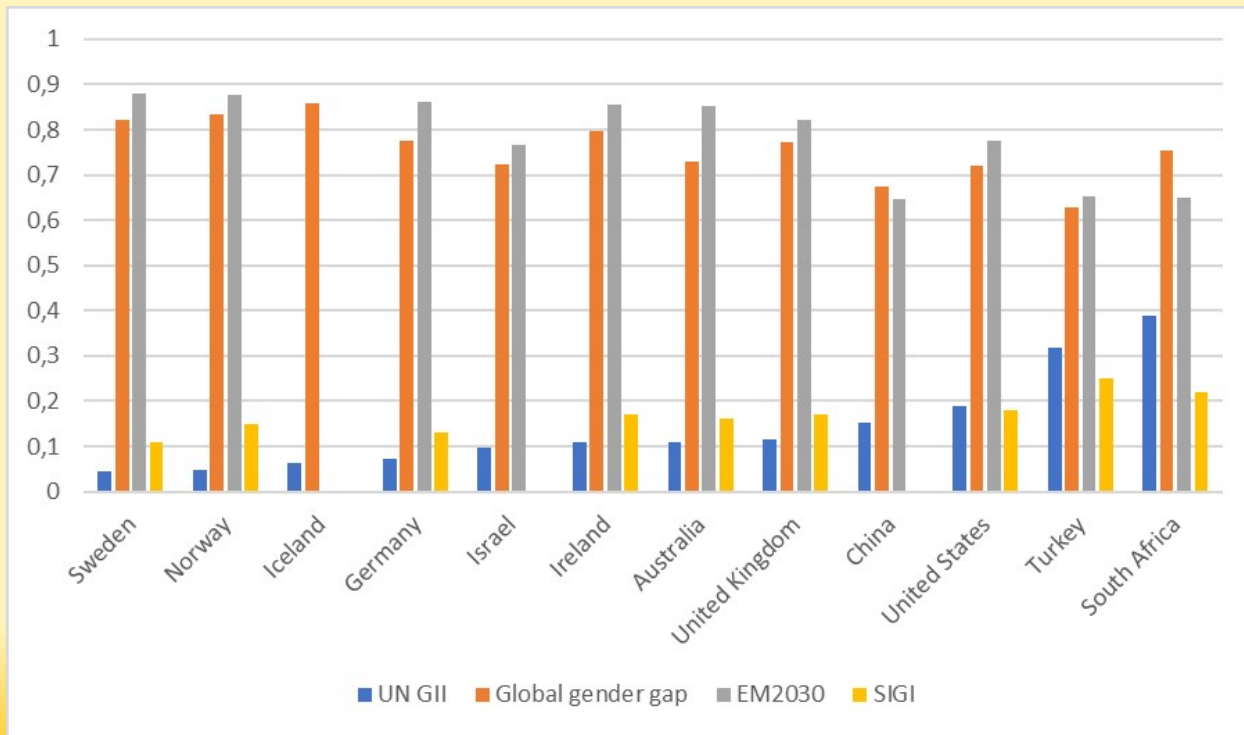


Gender: understandings

- Varying subject disciplines of authors
- ‘Regendering’/‘degendering’ (Martino and Rezai-Rashti, 2012)
 - Gender essentialism: regendering
 - Deconstructing the gender binary: degendering
- Gender balance or gender diversification?
- Intersecting micro, meso and macro factors in men’s career trajectories in ECEC, coloured by gender



Gender equality status in international comparison





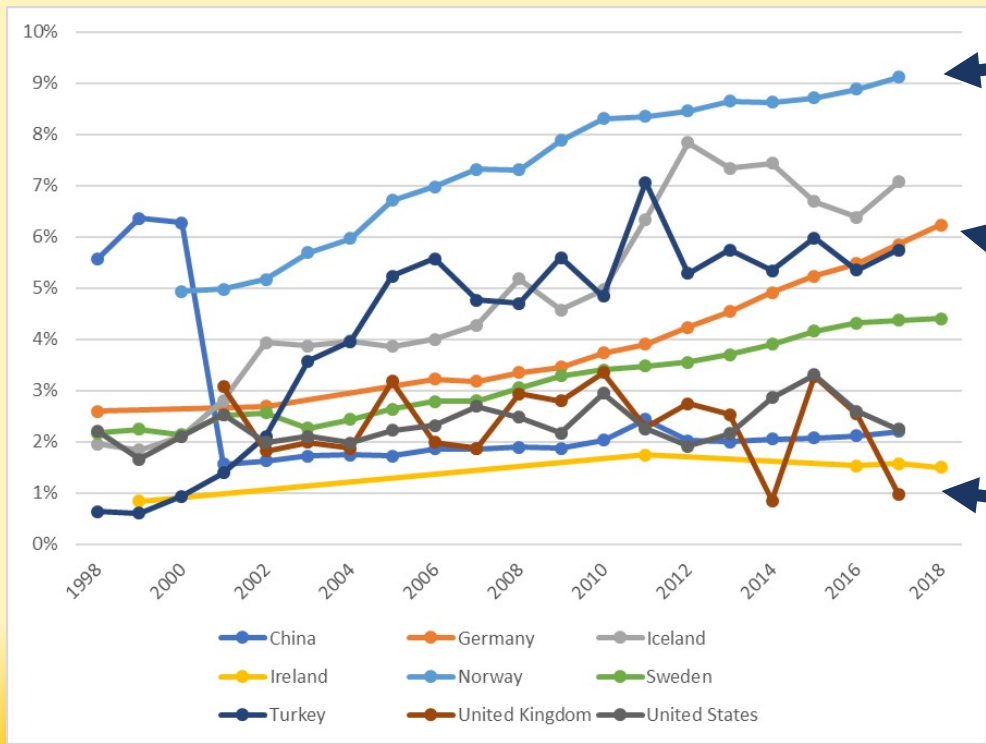
Gender balance*: an international policy goal

‘To promote process quality and improve the supply of potential workers, countries should engage in stronger efforts to bring men into ECEC’ (OECD, 2019, p. 12).

* Regarding controversies around the term ‚gender balance‘ in the academic field, we point out that for us, involving men in ECEC is connected to gender diversity and sensitivity, whereas it is not always clear what kind of understanding is behind governments‘ engagement for more men.



International statistics on men in ECEC



Norway

9 %

Germany

7 %

UK

1 %



Institutional contexts are relevant

What are we talking about – what is “ECEC”?

- care settings for children from 0-3?
- kindergarten 3-6 ? or 1-6?
- pre-school 4-6 ?
- settings for children from 0-10, including after school care?





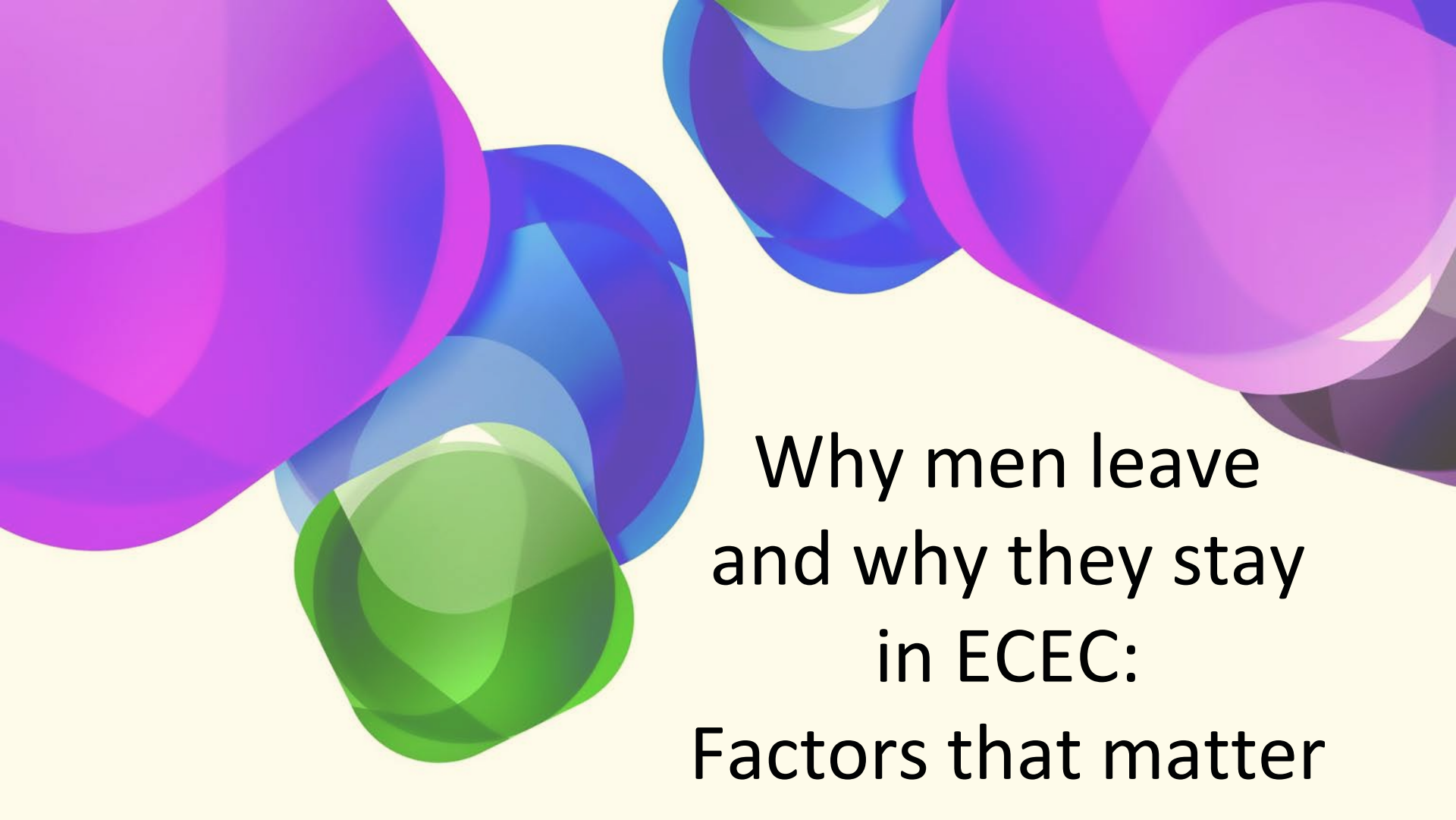
National, regional and cultural factors

- Attitudes towards gender equality...
- Differences between countries regarding qualification paths and requirements...
- Regional differences within countries...
- Cultural definitions of masculinities, femininities and tasks of men and women...

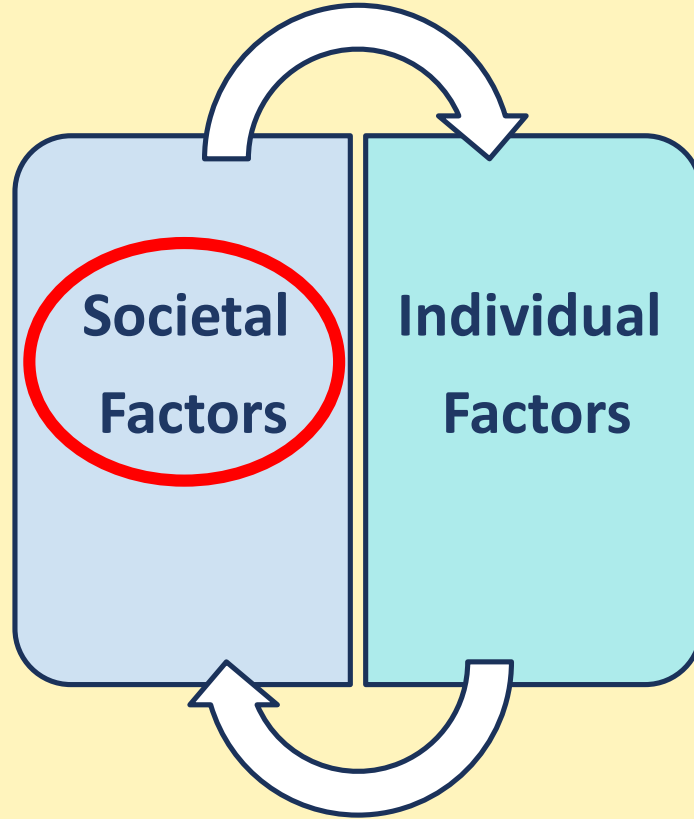


Breakout rooms

Please share your experiences regarding participation of men in the ECEC work force, with a focus on national, regional and cultural factors.

The background features several overlapping, semi-transparent, rounded shapes in shades of purple, blue, and green, creating a dynamic and colorful abstract design. The shapes are layered, with some appearing in front of others, and they are set against a plain white background.

Why men leave
and why they stay
in ECEC:
Factors that matter



Professionalization

Staff support

“Let’s say, you [are] teaching something, and you make a mistake. . . , no one will call you to crucify you, it’s all about learning.”

(Riaan, persistor, S. Africa)

Disconnect between theory and practice

“Teacher training misses its target and it is general. It doesn’t touch practical issues we encounter in our daily teaching.”

(Jun, dropout, China)

Leadership and governance

Push

“Actually, my major concern was principals. We could not get on with them. I still think that they thought of ECEC classrooms as financial sources, and they were not aware of the pedagogical importance of this period.”

(Orhan, dropout, Turkey)

Pull

“I’m closely followed up by my leader, at the same time, my leader gives me a lot of freedom to do whatever I want, really.”

(Norbert, persister, Norway)



Workplace relationships

Distrust

“I was standing at the side and then some kids climbed up [the fence], and I stood by and made sure that it went well, and then she came... and was kind of saying: ‘Yes, it’s dangerous, can’t climb there’ “.

(Nicola, dropout, Norway)

Inclusion

“I guess, for me, in a female dominated workforce, the connection that men have between each other is just important in life, really. But when you haven’t got that in a workforce, it’s actually kind of hard in many ways.”

Herbert (persister, Australia)



Societal factors

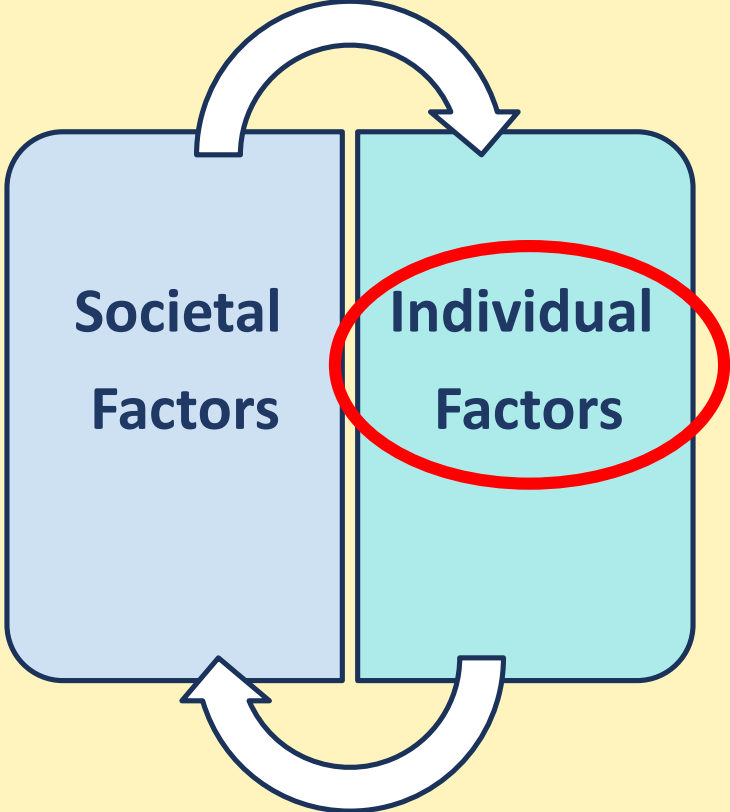


Femininization of ECEC

“I already felt a bit inferior by being in a women-driven field in which I know that some parents will be a little extra vigilant over me just because I am a man.”
(Sven, dropout, Sweden)

Reactions of family and friends

“When she [a girlfriend] learned that I was working at a preschool she looked me in the eye and just asked me straight out, “Are you gay”? There is nothing wrong with being gay in general. But the comment was different . . . you know, “what’s wrong with you”?”
(Kevin, dropout, Iceland)



Intrinsic motivations



Self-fulfillment and relatedness

“When kids are around me it’s where I belong. It’s my place to relax . . . I don’t feel [as if] I’m working for one second.”

(Amos, persister, Israel)

Competence and effectiveness

“I find it very gratifying to mould a child.... You know, that you are shaping them towards their future.”

(Riaan, persister, S. Africa)

Agency



Self reflection

“When I bent down, my students were hugging and kissing me, and we were chatting about everything. Therefore, I knew I was on the right path.”

(Mehmet, persister, Turkey)

Resistance

“I was one of the most defiant sons of bitches around. They brought in workbooks, and I said: ‘You are not putting a workbook in my kindergarten’”.

(Tzvika, dropout, Israel)

Masculinity, sexuality, and resistance

Why are you here?

“Yeah, so it was weird being a guy. It was different, and you were out of place. I didn’t let it really bother me.... I was different and maybe I needed to take some extra steps just in case parents thought it was weird.”

(Andrew, dropout, Australia)

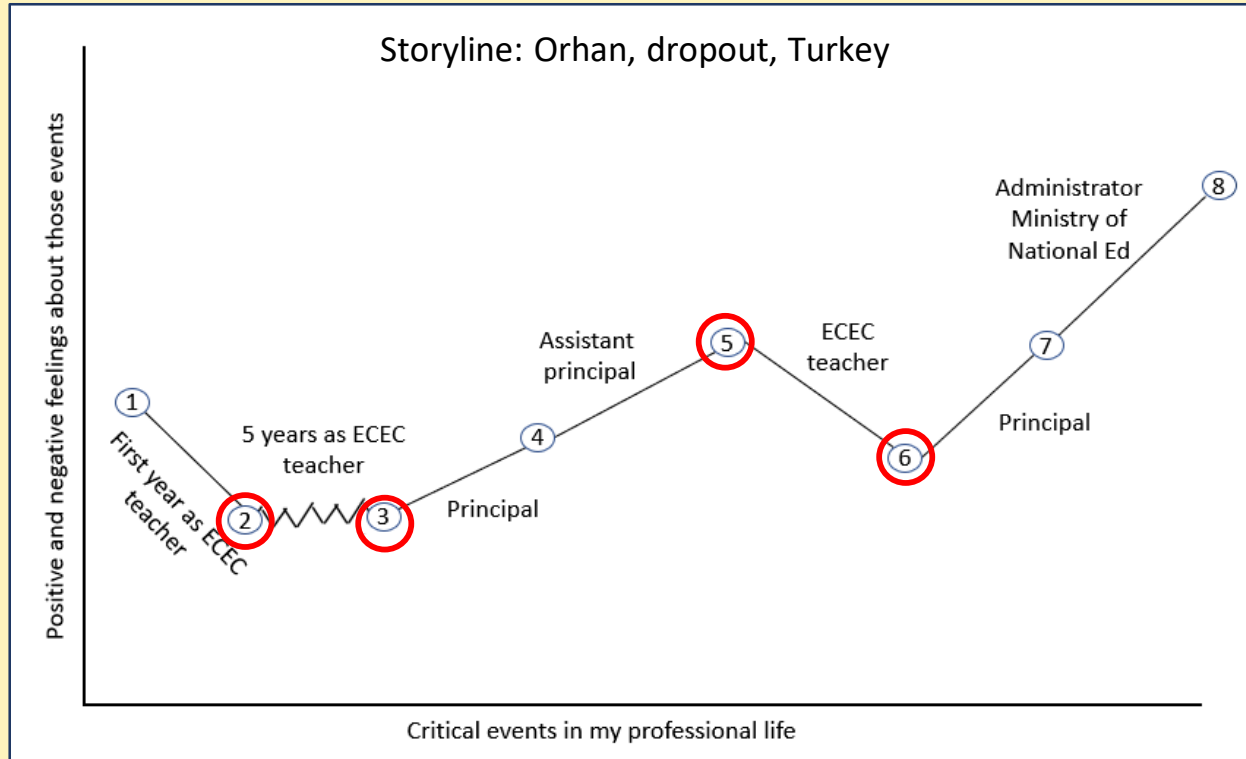
Negotiating masculinity

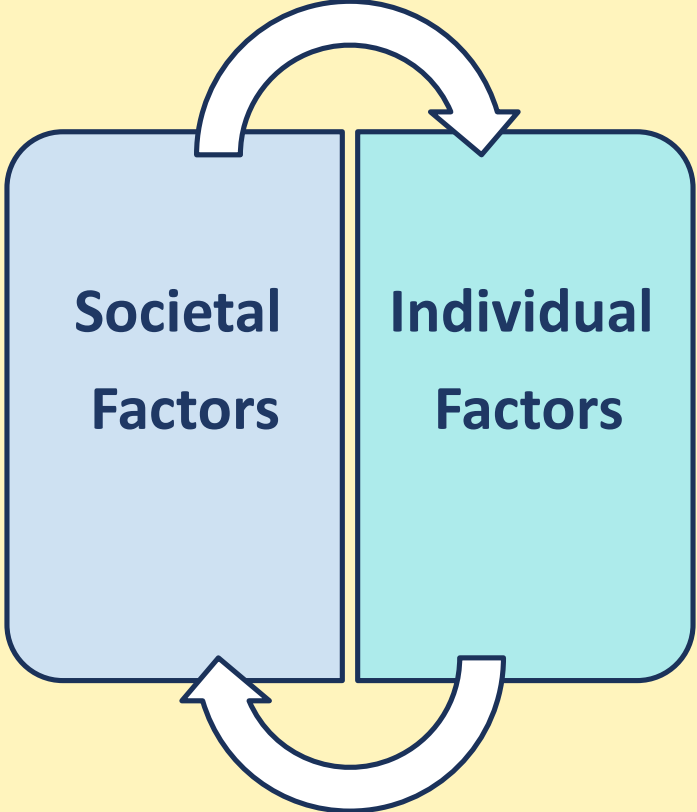
“It would be important for men to understand how they can be perceived, but yet still do these things that children need”.

(Marcos, persister, USA)



Critical moments





The diagram features two rounded rectangular boxes side-by-side. The left box is light blue and contains the text 'Societal Factors'. The right box is light teal and contains the text 'Individual Factors'. Two white curved arrows connect the boxes: one at the top pointing from left to right, and one at the bottom pointing from right to left, indicating a reciprocal relationship. The background is a dark teal color with a spiderweb covered in dew drops.

**Societal
Factors**

**Individual
Factors**



MORE MEN IN ECEC

Recommendations

Towards a gender-sensitive
workforce



Taking gender into account

- **Men's personal agency** affects their career decisions once they enter the profession.
- **The role of the leader** is of importance.
- **Peer support** is needed.
- **Everyday action:** *“One aspect of this innovation would be training for both leaders and staff to understand the importance of everyday actions on the well-being of men (and women) in the workplace”* p. 191.
- **Breaking down gender barriers:** *“Problematizing gender norms involves challenging the power of hegemonic masculinity at the macro, meso, and micro levels”*.



Developing research on gender and men in ECEC

Future research could focus on particular segments of the ECEC workforce such as:

- Men in qualification studies
- Untrained workers
- Men who move out of the classroom into ECEC administration, guidance, and supervision



Developing research on gender and men in ECEC

- Case studies in leadership in ECEC centres
- The role of team dynamics and peer support
- Approaches to gender reflexivity need to be evaluated



Towards a gender-reflective, gender-mixed ECEC workforce

- **Recognize the importance of cultural differences** regarding gender and gender equality, as well as different institutional contexts and structures in educational systems.
- Keep in mind that **translating research into policy entails a practical awareness** of how policy decisions are made and implemented at the meso and macro levels of governance.



Towards a gender-reflective, gender-mixed ECEC workforce

Macro level:

Joined-up gender policies can bring about gender change over time.

Make an effort to work across different government departments and administrations and bring together various stakeholders.

Meso level:

Transformative leadership, support structures for gender-mixed teams and for male workers, and gender-sensitive approaches to practice have to be **enshrined in ECEC policies, frameworks, and curricula.**



Towards a gender-reflective, gender-mixed ECEC workforce

Address fear of paedophilia:

Teach children about their own body and support their developing integrity and resilience against abuse.

Develop clear child-safeguarding policies in ECEC, while at the same time broach the issue of a problematic general distrust against men

Develop a professional approach to close body contact.

Overcome the idea that physical closeness is 'natural' between women and children, whereas it is potentially 'dangerous' when a man is involved.



What to bring home?

“It is the joy of working and being with children that makes men stay, and they deserve qualification paths and working conditions that keep this spirit alive”.

“It is our task to create open spaces where ECEC workers can position themselves as men and women and can develop a gender-conscious understanding of professionalism that goes beyond traditional notions of gender” (Brody et al. 2021, p.194)



Breakout rooms

- How do you find these recommendations translated to your context?
- Share strategies and measures for your country, region, provider etc. with the others.
- From your point of view, which topics need further research on national and/or international level?



Sources

Brody, David, Emilsen, Kari, Rohrman, Tim & Warin, Jo (Hrsg.) (2021). *Exploring Career Trajectories of Men in the ECEC Workforce. Why they leave and why they stay*. London: Routledge.

Brody, David (2014). *Men Who Teach Young Children. An International Perspective*. London: Institute of Education Press.

Martino, W. and Rezai Rashti , G. (2012) *Gender, Race and the Politics of Role Modeling. The Influence of Male Teachers*, New York: Routledge.

OECD publishing (2019). *Good Practice for Good Jobs in Early Childhood Education and Care*. Paris. <https://doi.org/10.1787/64562be6-en>

Rohrman, Tim & Emilsen, Kari (eds.)(2015). Special Issue: Gender Balance in the ECEC work force. *European Early Childhood Research Journal*, 23 (3). DOI:10.1080/1350293X.2015.1043804

Warin, Jo (2018). *Men in Early Childhood Education and Care: Gender balance and flexibility*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.



EECERA Gender Balance Special Interest Group

- <https://www.eecera.org/sigs/gender-balance/>



Join GEA



GEA's greatest strength is our members, so join us to help us grow and thrive to achieve our vision of gender equality and transformative education.

Annual membership is £30
or £15 for
students/concession



genderandeducation.com/join



Connect



GEA Twitter

twitter.com/genderanded

GEA Facebook

facebook.com/Genderanded

GEA Website

genderandeducation.com

