

Ljunggren, Birgitte & Eidevald, Christian (2021). **Men`s understanding of professionalism and career choices in Nordic Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC). Resistance or surrender?** Paper presented on the 30th EECERA Annual Conference, Online, 9.9.2021.

Abstract

Although the Nordic countries reach top scores in gender equality measures, the labor markets are gender segregated. This presentation explores the construction of gendered professionalism and career choices among Nordic men in ECEC, by analyzing qualitative data from Sweden, Norway and Iceland. There is a lack of research on career trajectories and career choices of men in ECEC, specifically in a Nordic context (Eidevald, Ljunggren, & Thordardottir, forthcoming). The analysis is inspired by Warin (2014, 2019), where different discourses open up for different gender identities. We compare the subject positions available for men in gender discourses and their relation to professionalism and careers. From Oberhuemer`s (2005) notion of democratic professionalization, we depart from an open process which includes the participants. Professionalism then becomes a product of co-construction, created by researchers and the ECEC workers together. The study builds on a social constructionist paradigm inspired by phenomenology and hermeneutics. We used theme-based analysis of nine interviews. Each interview is tripartite: narrative, semi-structured and drawing a graphic storyline. The study follows universal ethical standards (EECEA, 2015). Participation is based on informed consent and data is anonymized. We find traces of discourses that challenge and reinforce gender patterns. By negotiating “professionalism”, in gendered power mechanism, resistance strategies enable new positions for men in a female dominated field. A professionalism, blind to the power games played at the micro level, is deemed to become non-democratic. Without a sensitivity to gender in policy and practice, the efforts to recruit more men to ECEC will fail.

Keywords

Men in ECEC, Professionalism, gender, power, career decisions

Authors

Birgitte Ljunggren, Queen Maud`s University College of Early Childhood Education (QMUC),
Trondheim, Norway
Christian Eidevald, University of Gothenburg, Sweden