

Askland, Leif (2014).

Male Early Childhood Teachers' stories about their challenges their first year in the profession

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Abstract

The paper presents stories of four male Early Childhood teachers during supervision sessions over their first year as teachers. I am occupied to make men's kindergarten practices in kindergarten transparent to respond to the stereotyping that dichotomised research practises tend to enhance. The work also aims to describe tools for supporting newly qualified teachers in their first year. The research builds upon projects and research on gender equity and men in Norway, including Askland, L. (2012): Male Kindergarten Teacher Assistants Perspectives of Caring.

The work is based on gender and systemic theory and in an autoethnographic approach to research. The content has been produced in a mentoring context, not primarily for research. The work is partly descriptive and partly interpretations by using frames and concepts from theory on empowerment and self management. It was clarified with the participants in beforehand that my notes might be used in my own research.

The men's stories cover a big canvas of kindergarten teacher responsibilities. They are challenged and supported by experience teacher assistants, they also get locked in rules and regulations that contradict their own approach to children and they tell about support and frustrations in the culture of the institutions. How can concepts of self management and empowerment support the mentoring of newly qualified teachers for handling challenges and enhance professional qualities in their relations to children and colleagues? Findings highlight gender aspects of professional development and can be used to develop mentoring practises.

Keywords

male early childhood teachers, mentoring newly qualified teachers, early childhood education, autoethnography, gender

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Can humility and ability to act walk hand in hand?

Newly graduated male Early Childhood Teachers' stories of their own practises the first year in kindergarten

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My intentions

- To describe male Early Childhood Teachers practises as neutral as possible
- Trying to avoid gendering the descriptions
- Gendering very rapidly leads to dichotomies and stereotyping
- This work is connected to other descriptive approaches, published

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A core question

- *What is the strongest parameter in the professional life of a male EC-teacher: His gender or the professional demands and its workday occupational obligations)?*
- The challenges described in my paper seem to be rooted in other processes than gender, and might be just as well recognised by female teachers as by male.

Bacground/data used

- This work is a processing of the experiences I had as a mentor for a group of newly qualified Early Childhood Teachers
- 4 men and 3 women
- followed through six sessions over their first year as EC teachers.
- Here I just look at the participating men's stories.
- My role in this was the mentor's role.

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The main content in the men's stories

- 1) "On the edge of"-experiences
- 2) Workday challenges, noise, intervention, staff cooperation/bad atmosphere
- 3) Security, mastery, - and the lack of such
- 4) Leadership and cooperation
- 5) The children – individuals and the group

Giving the stories meaning

- Empowerment and self management
 - Planning skills
 - Organising functions
 - Initiation
 - Flexibility
 - Selfregulation/selfconstraint
 - Selfmonitoring/selfinsight
- These are dimensions that are touched in various degrees in the ECTE, but seem not to be activated once at work

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Humility – a double-edged sword

- The participants express a strong degree of humility and respect for others experiences and practises
- The assistants experiences weigh more than their professionalism acquired through education, they lack confidence in their own knowledge
- The professional eye and language is suppressed by workday "common sence"
 - (as also detected by Eik (2014), in her Ph.D)

An ethical dilemma

- Confronted with the assistants practises and reasoning the EC-teacher respect, but disagree
- When there is no atmosphere for professional discussions, bad practises survive
- In one situation the practise was so severe that it had to be reported

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The leaders' role

- The leaders' compliance to support the newly educated teachers' challenges might be the main reason for two of the men changing institution after the first year
- Is this compliance a consequence of the teachers' sex? An attitude very unreflected and maybe very deeply rooted?
- This might be the right gender perspective to examine in this case...