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Education from birth : research, practices
and educational policy.

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Why do men choose to educate within childcare/care?

Presentation on the 21st EECERA annual conference, 16.9.2011, Geneva/Switzerland

Abstract

The research presented deals with men's choice of training and education within care work in Denmark, specifically, the choice of an education leading to employment within e.g. kindergartens and an education as social and healthcare assistant (psychically, mentally handicapped and elderly people). While aiming at attracting men to care, at the same time the overall social policy level often identifies this choice as an "unusual choice" for men.

Previously men's choice of care for their professional life has given rise to assumptions under which circumstances the choice was made, often concluding the choice to be based upon necessity linked to former illness, opting out from other educations or unemployment.

The research is conceptualized by the European and thus a national policy objective of breaking down a gender-segregated labour market - which, in essence, has the purpose of levelling out differences in the two genders' education and career choices. The work has been conducted by analyses of Danish and foreign studies and reviews of choice education. The theoretical understandings tied to the perspective of choice and the nature of the significant factors in respect of actions is found in a rational understanding of actions and is compiled with theoretical aspects of perspectives of care and gender and work.

A thematic analysis of the policy objective of breaking down a gender-segregated labour market is followed by an analysis of initiatives and projects initiated in Denmark on the basis of the policy objective. The analysis also includes studies and analyses in relation to the set of discourses accompanying initiatives and projects. An internet-based questionnaire survey has been carried out at a large number of Danish educational institutions and is compared with a number of interviews conducted with men who have completed the education, want to enrol for such education or are currently studying to become a care worker.

The men covered by the study are highly different with much differentiated backgrounds for choosing care as their profession. They have many reasons for their choices and these choices may be compiled within three perspectives: Career, job guarantee and care in itself.

The decision for an education in care work may function as stepping stones to further education, it nearly provides a job guarantee, it offers a new and better beginning, and it may be a "calling". The perspectives emphasize that men may choose care precisely on the same grounds as all other more ordinary "masculine" training or educations.

The research unfolds the reactions from the surroundings and experiences during training periods and presents a 'wishing list' from men educating as care workers or working within the field.

Ulla Gerner Wohlgemuth

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The Danish welfare sector is facing challenges: A steep rise in retiring employees is accompanied by an aging population who again is expected to need more care. An education within the welfare sector seemingly has prosperous perspectives for both genders. Recruitment planning and strategies have to deal with the knowledge of motivation when men's choice of education and work is care and thus characterized as 'unusual'. Stereotypic and limited expectations categorizing men may cloud the vision, and a male care-worker may tend to be regarded as an addition to a female workforce, and not a qualified worker having made a personal career choice.

If men's reasons for choosing care are based mainly on suppositions that they chose care because they had no better choice, it is clearly not in accordance with European educational, employment related and equality objectives such as these are designated in the main objective of combating a gender segregated educational choice and workforce.

Finally a future rise in the male workforce educated within childcare and care will bring the sector to the test of being willing to discuss the right of defining care-work.

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WHY DO MEN CHOOSE TO EDUCATE WITHIN CHILDCARE/CARE?



Presentation

Men and Childcare

- Context (Macro level – Meso level)

Reasons and Experiences

- The choice of Bachelor in Social Education

Challenges and Outlooks

- Men as addition; or??

Reappearing Questions & Considerations

- Male staff; a benefit – a gender balance factor - or?



Ulla Gerner Wohlgemuth, University College South Denmark, EECERA 2011



REASONS & EXPERIENCES AN IMMEDIATE PREVIEW...



Reasons for choosing care/childcare are numerous ...e.g.

A wish to be engaged into something carrying greater weight

It can be observed...



Several male students find it pertinent to question care as 'women's privilege'!

Personal experiences connected to the choice are truly colourful!

A (small) rise in the amount of *young* men.



Ulla Gerner Wohlgemuth, University College South Denmark, EECERA 2011

INITIAL FACTS – EDUCATION WITHIN CHILDCARE

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
SYDDANMARK
UCSYD.DK



Bachelor in Social Education - 3½ years

Average age 26 (2009 figures)

2011: App. 4.600 new students
- **28 % are male**

More than 50 % of male students have
other entry qualifications than high
school

Ulla Gerner Wohlgemuth, University College South Denmark, EECERA 2011

MY RESEARCH

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
SYDDANMARK
UCSYD.DK

MACRO

Textual analysis of EU/national political
objectives – care as a gendered field

MESO

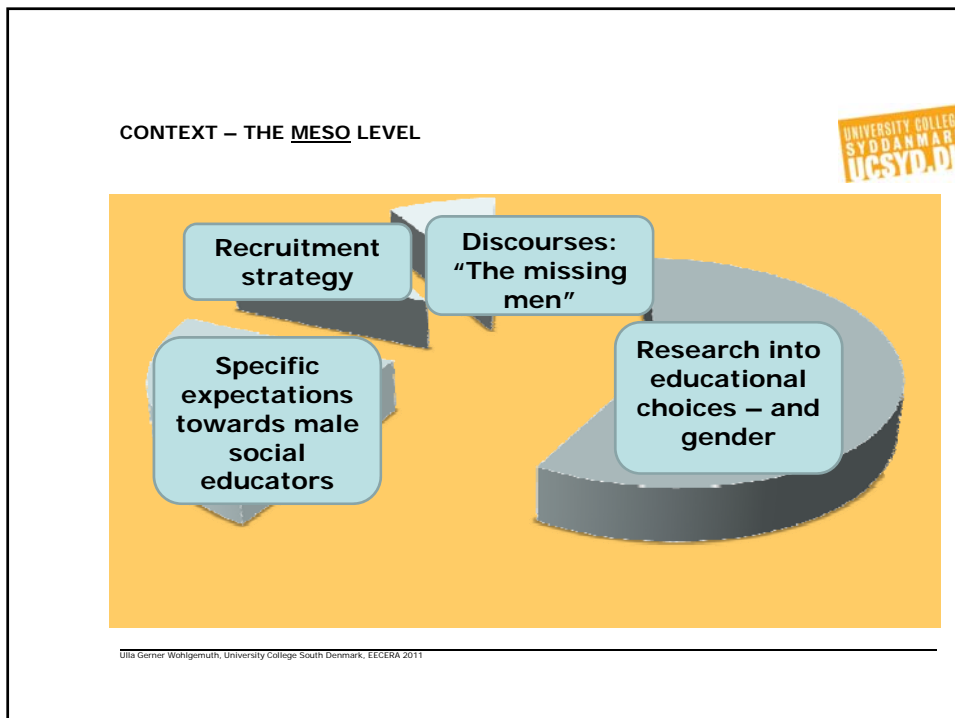
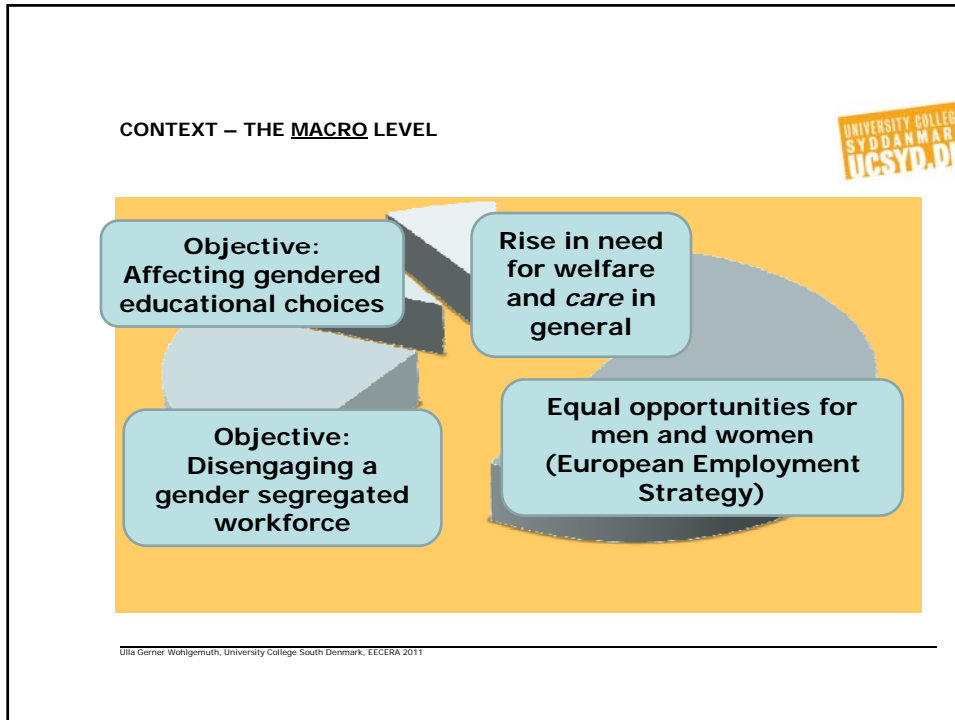
Analysis of interventions towards the 'missing
men in childcare'

MICRO


Survey: 14 University Colleges
Survey: 420 informants
Interviews




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THE MICRO LEVEL





What do the male students in the BA program answer and what do the already educated say when asked?



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Perspectives	Reasons
The career perspective	→ Further education Management
The insurance perspective	→ The good job
The care perspective	→ The unskilled care work A care event A new beginning



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Reasons and perspectives ... unfolded



Further education:

Wishes for further education is *always* within the field of care

The good job:

Also relates to freedom of choice (social educators have many possibilities)

A very small group of men have a *work-life balance* perspective (qualitative remarks)

The care perspective:

The unskilled care work is definitely the/an inspiration for men with no prior knowledge of this work field (app. 45 %)

App. 5 % have stumbled on 'care' and are taken in by what they describe as '*the enrichment of the work*' (the care event as 'happenstance')

App. 10 – 12 % of the students have performed a life turn towards a more '*meaningful and significant*' work - (the new beginning)

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MORE HIGHLIGHTS




UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
SYDDANMARK
UCSYD.DK

- Young men now choose 'care' following high-school or similar (*no detours*)
- The in service training: The students experience that children and their parents are very pleased with male staff
- Men need (and recommend) talking with other male staff
- A prejudiced field of work ("no future, body-work, no status")
- 3/4 of the students recommend care/childcare as an educational choice – for men.
- Earnings as a barrier – partly a myth
- The **air of care** is hard to come by!



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Men and childcare

- Context - a brief overview


Reasons and Experiences

- the male choice of Bachelor in Social Education (pedagogue)


Challenges and Outlook

Reappearing Questions & Considerations

- kindergartens - boys – male teachers and grades



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CHALLENGES AND OUTLOOKS – SUMMED UP

The recognition of the male educational choice of care - as a level-headed, sensible and rational choice!

Men as equally skilled colleague – not an additional workforce!

Sports, IT, wildlife and carpentry as male preferences may be true!
Even so – or not - men may be brilliant social educators wanting to work with childcare!

The request for men; does it include readiness for a male colleague who challenges, questions, and discusses the daily care work?

The current of female students into colleges; a challenge to political objectives when it comes to gender segregation/equality!

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REAPPEARING QUESTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS



Would more male pedagogues 'do the trick' in kindergartens, after school clubs, pre-school....

What are their influence when it comes to the girls?

Will a gender balance – balance the upbringing, gendered choices and the workforce?



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NEW DANISH RESEARCH



"...a higher share of male staff, a higher share of staff with a pedagogic education ...

lead to significant improvements in children's test results in Danish at the end of the 9th grade.

Boys benefit more from pre-school quality than girls".

(Long-Run Benefits from Universal High-Quality Pre-Schooling 2011)

Thank you for your attention



Ulla Gerner Wohlgemuth, University College South Denmark, EECERA 2011