

20th

EECERA annual conference
Knowledge and voice in Early Childhood:
Who knows, who speaks, who listens?
Birmingham, UK 6th -8th September 2010

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Male Childcare Workers coping with their professional lives and career after graduation

Presentation on the 20th. EECERA conference, 7.9.2010, Birmingham/UK

The paper reflects upon the situation of being male in kindergartens overwhelmingly dominated by women. What happens to men entering the women's domain? What strategies are in use coping with the situation of being a minority at a workplace? The study relates to gender and masculinity research and to kindergarten studies done both in Europe and especially in the Nordic countries. Most jobs in our western society are divided into "men's work" and "women's work". Few have analyzed why men are under-represented in women's work, and what happen to those few who enter women's working area. Pre-school teaching has evolved in a female domain, based on cultural ideas about differences between the sexes. Men crossing these borders are challenging these ideas. What are their experiences in this crossing-over? Web-based survey to the 96 males graduated from my college 1977-2007. The survey aimed to give answers to questions about their professional lives and career after graduation. The survey is supplemented by interview. The methods in use have been accepted by the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD). 70 percent of the men are still working either in kindergartens or schools. They give interesting arguments for still working with children. Some have quitted work among other arguments; due to women domination. How can we cope with the challenge? The project analyzes the outcome of positive actions towards a more gender-balanced workforce. Connections between gender and professionalization are discussed.

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Male pre-school teachers coping with their professional lives and career after graduation



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*96 male students graduated as
pre-school teachers 1977-2007*

Web based survey to 96 male pre-school teachers

Find out more about what has happened to those 96 men who graduated as preschool teachers in the period of 1977-2007

Qualitative interviews of a selection of men who graduated in four decades: 1970, 1980, 1990 og 2000

What challenges have they met? Have the challenges and the situation changed throughout the decades? Do the men differ in they way they look upon their work, choice of careers, work challenges and so forth?

**Starting point
for my interest
in the topic**

- Both women and men (who are crazy....)
- Children – girls and boys - need both male and female role models in forming their identity in a positive way

"Children need adults who are crazy about them"
Urie Bronfenbrenner



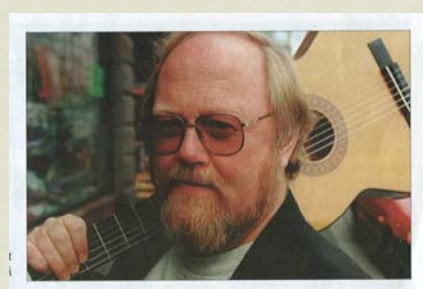
To me this is about children's rights

Children have the right to experience that both women and men can take part in caring activities and participate in all kindergarten activities

**Employees in norwegian kindergartens. By gender
1990-2008**

Year	Women Total number	Men Total number	Year	Women Total number	Men Total number
1990	34152	1739	2000	48970	3703
1991	37977	2084	2001	50043	3773
1992	40709	2362	2002	51928	3996
1993	43721	2673	2003	53816	4606
1994	46511	2883	2004	55625	4845
1995	48386	3446	2005	59013	5715
1996	48655	3429	2006	63453	6202
1997	48371	3422	2007	69076	7013
1998	49232	3411	2008	73854	7596 (9,3%)
1999	48851	3640			

The pioneers – educated from
Barnevernsskolen in Oslo i 1969



Announcement for new students: Barnevernsakademiet 1935 (the first preschool teacher training college in Norway)

A womanly/ feminine education built on domestic values

During this practical and pedagogical education built on domestic values, we will prepare you for jobs / positions in orphanages, day nurseries, kindergartens and other institutions dealing with young children. We will as well give you a fundament for women's special tasks: the home and the children. We will also open your eyes to many of the important questions raised by society.

Professional demands

Conference for experts on childcare in Paris i 1956 arranged by UNESCO and WHO worked out the following demands for the future workforce in kindergartens:

Besides being a woman, good physics, warmth and kindness, personal and social qualifications, sense of humour and physical beauty shall be decisive professional qualities in the future.

Three strategies in connection with crossovers in the working field (Williams 1993 and 1995)

- *Taking over* means that a job, which in a way suits women, is redefined into men's speciality. As a consequence women will gradually be expelled from that field of work.
- *Invasion* means that men overtake a job in vast number. The visible result of the invasion process is the exclusion of women on one side and the invasion of men into the jobs at the top of the hierarchy.
- *Infiltration* means that a few men choose for various reasons, to educate themselves in the field. The choices they make are often motivated by personal interest or as a result of lack of work.

96 male students graduated as pre-school teachers - 1977-2007

Occupation in spring 2008	Percentage
Preschool teacher	51
Public kindergarten	48
Private kindergarten	52
Teacher in school	27
Other occupation	22

In other words

78 percent of the male students, who graduated from Sogn og Fjordane college, still work with children between 1-14/16 years of age



If you should have chosen an occupation once again....

....would you then choose a kindergarten career?

56 percent said Yes

44 percent said No

What are the men's main reasons for being satisfied and still working in kindergartens?

- *The meaningful work with children*

- As a man I feel I have an important task to do being together with both boys and girls
- It gives me a lot of energy being together with small children, it is easy to please them, to make them happy, to make them laugh – their energy and motivation influences me
- They have not yet learned to be infamous, complicated and intolerant
- Kindergarten gives me possibilities to work in a positive and constructive atmosphere together with children and adults in close contact with nature

- *The freedom*

- Don't tell anyone but if I want to go fishing – the children want to go fishing as well!
- I love the freedom kindergarten work gives me

main reasons for staying.....

- *Variation and challenge in work*

- I have a job which results in sand in my ears, paint on my skirt, blood on my trousers and jam in my beard. I love it.
- I have a working day characterized by variation and challenges. To me that is the main reason for staying

- *The possibilities of personal development in work*

- I will get working experience for a further career. Now I work together with a lot of clever and professional women and I get a lot of experience about how to develop an organization.
- This is the job which I have trained for and I will work here as long as I feel that I can try out what I have learned and experienced during my three years of education.

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- BUT many of them have reflected on quitting kindergarten, due to hard work, bad salary, and few career possibilities. The same reasons as women often mention.
- But quite a few: about 70 percent say that being the only man at their workplace is also an important reason for either deciding to change work or reflecting upon quitting. The lack of male colleagues is a common topic in my interviews with the informants.

Some voices

- I really miss male colleagues, and I am often more than satisfied working together with women only.
- Sometimes my reactions are different from the “women-in-group” reactions, and I should have liked to have a man to discuss my reactions with.
- The kindergarten as a whole is too dominated by women and everyday life. The organisation is filled with incomprehensible intrigues that I as a man hardly can understand. On top of that: the topics of conversations are too often linked to their own children, illness, difficult husbands, crocheting and knitting. I very often feel on the sideline – more like a lonely bird.

This is all about....

- Being a minority in the institution
- Experience the male role as a prison
- Female model authority or power
- Cutting wings
- Lack of male caring ideals og role models

Ref. Ole Bredeesen (1997 og 2004)



What can be done in preparation?

- The colleges have a responsibility to prepare the students for the working situation. By keeping gender, sex roles and working place culture on the college agenda we can contribute to an ongoing discussion on this topic.
- It is important to produce ideas of action on how to stimulate the colleges to put emphasis on this theme.