

Nordli, Arnt; Lysklett, Olav B. & Emilsen, Kari (2019). **To drop out, or not to drop out? How do male students in ECEC teacher training answer this question?** Paper presented on the 29th EECERA Annual Conference, 22.8.2019, Thessaloniki, Greece.

Abstract

Investigate male dropout among first-year students at QMUCs ECEC teachers training in Norway. Few men work in ECECs (Peeters, Rohrmann, & Emilsen, 2015). The percentage of men in Norwegian ECECs is 8.6 %, (SSB 2018). Norwegian authorities aim to increase the share of men in ECECs (Emilsen 2015). Sargent (2004) holds that the role of the early childhood educator is perceived as a female occupation, making men's choice to enter the profession difficult. Nedregård & Abrahamsen (2018) show that one third of the students, in a programme of professional study, drop out or postpone their study. This corresponds with our findings. Nationally more male students drop out from ECEC studies. Results will be analysed through the lens of Connell (2005), and Messerschmidt and Messner's (2018), discourses of masculinities. We investigate how male student constructs their identities as male ECEC students as described by Warin (2018). To answer our question we: 1. analyse the SPSS results, from a questionnaire, among three cohorts of first-year students. 2. analyse interviews with selected students who drop out. 3. triangulate our datasets. Informants secured anonymity in interviews, survey data, and transcription, voluntary participation. Informants have a right to withdraw during, and after, data collection. We find a high dropout rate, but no gender difference among students at QMUC. Different measures to avoid dropout and how QMUC might facilitate for male students are discussed. The research is important to understand men's motivations for ECECs studies and to reduce student dropout.

Keywords

gender balance ECEC, reduce male dropout, students wellbeing, males in a feminine work place, how to facilitate for male students

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TO DROP OUT, OR NOT TO DROP OUT.

How do male students in ECEC teacher training answer this question?



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«BOYS WHO LEAVE - A STUDY OF DROPOUT AMONG MALE STUDENTS AT QMUC».

- A local research project that began in 2016 and will conclude in 2019.

Presumptions

Male bachelor ECEC students:

- *dropout more often than female students.*
- *have different reasons for dropping out than female students.*
- *have different motivation for choosing their education than female students*
- *report other factors of well-being than female students.*



«BOYS WHO LEAVE - A STUDY OF DROPOUT AMONG MALE STUDENTS AT QMUC».

The study has two sides:

1. Boys who leave, and what we could have done to keep them
2. Boys who don't leave, and what has kept them at university.

This presentation deals with the persisting students, from which we have tried to learn:

What are factors that motivates male students to persist in their studies to become ECEC teachers.



WHAT MOTIVATES MALE STUDENTS TO PERSIST IN THEIR STUDIES TO BECOME ECEC TEACHERS.

This presentations explores this through a lense of Giddens (1990,1991, 1992) and Warins (2018 ideas about how male students are constructing their identities, in order to try learn more about:

- What has facilitated towards or hindered successful persistence in their study?
- What has been important for them as students in a female dominated profession?
- Is, and if it is, how is, gender an issue in their life as students as QMUC?



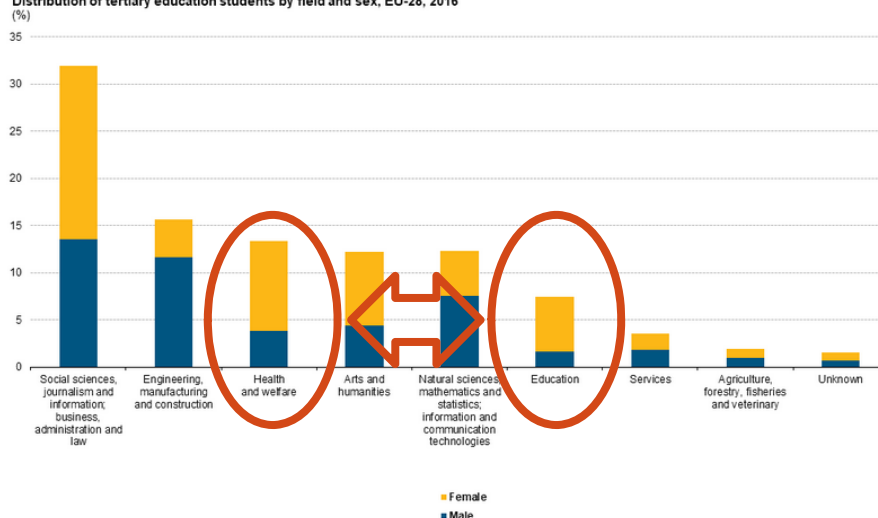
BACKDROP

- Internationally there is an increased attention towards men as an underutilized resource in work with society's youngest children (Thorpe et al., 2018:Warin, 2018)
- From a Norwegian point of view, the picture is complicated
 - Gulbrandsen et. al., 2018, finds that the rate of ECEC teachers leaving the profession has decreased to such an extent that the education system is producing a surplus of ECEC teachers.
 - The state has ratified a new law that mandate that ECEC centres must increase their percentage of qualified teachers in Norwegian ECECS (50% minimum)
 - A research committee led by Camilla Stoltenberg (2019) created a policy document that explore the fact that: on average men are academically outperformed by women and that the difference can be observed as early as in ECECs, and that the gap increase for every year of further schooling.
 - As a part of their exploration the did a knowledge review of the question: Does the teachers gender matter in children and young adults learning? They were unable to conclude strongly, but they are recommending increasing the ratio of men at all levels of education in Norway



DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION BY FIELD AND SEX

Distribution of tertiary education students by field and sex, EU-28, 2016



BACKDROP: STUDENT DROP OUT FROM STUDIES THAT LEADS TO «GENDERED» PROFESSIONS.

Mastekaasa & Smeby (2008) finds women tend to drop out less from female dominated studies than what they do from male dominated professional studies. However, they find no such tendency for men.

Nedregård & Abrahamsen (2018) finds that men, enrolled in female dominated studies, tend to drop out at twice the rate of female students.

Internationally and nationally there is no standardized method to calculate dropout.



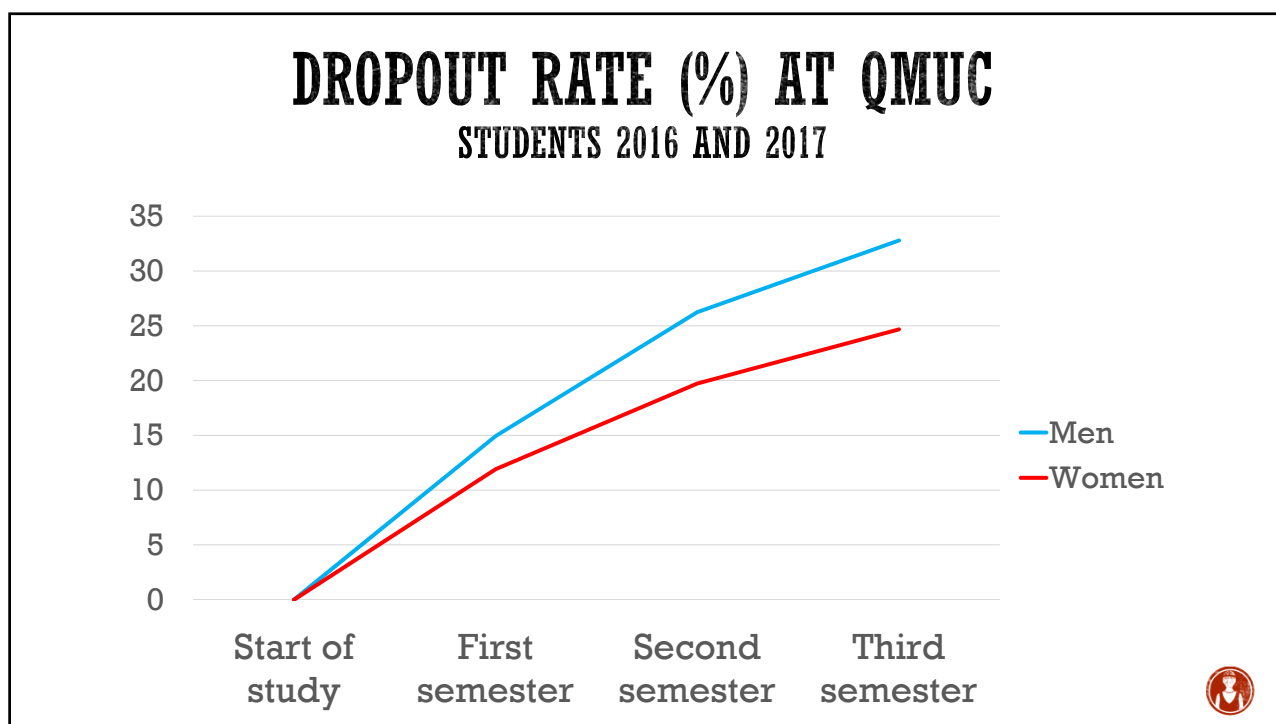
BRIEF THEORETICAL PICTURE

Anthony Giddens (1990, 1991, 1992) presents a theoretical perspective about how we as individuals must create our own identity. This context dependent identity (Narrative of self) is in constant flux, through acts of reflection by the individual. The individual can no longer point at traditions, but must reflect on their own actions and form their own gender identity (Giddens & Schultz Jørgensen, 1996). AN1

Jo Warin present findings where men have constructed hybrid identities in order to manage the integration of acceptable and publically recognisable ways of performing masculinities together with ECEC identities. (Warin 2018.p. 55)

- This implies that, in order to reduce dropout and to ensure that our students persist in their studies, it is important to know about how:
 - students construct their identity as students in training to become ECEC teachers
 - Students envision themselves as professionals working in ECECs





DESIGN AND METHODS

Mixed methods

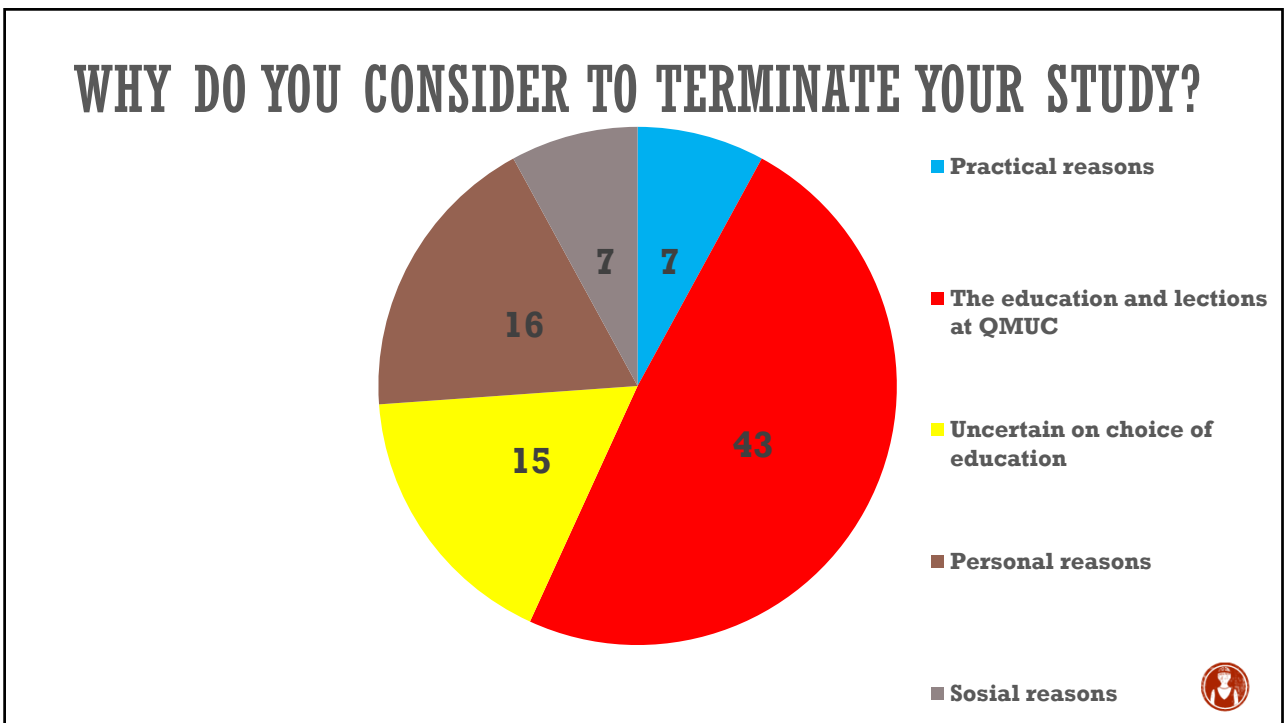
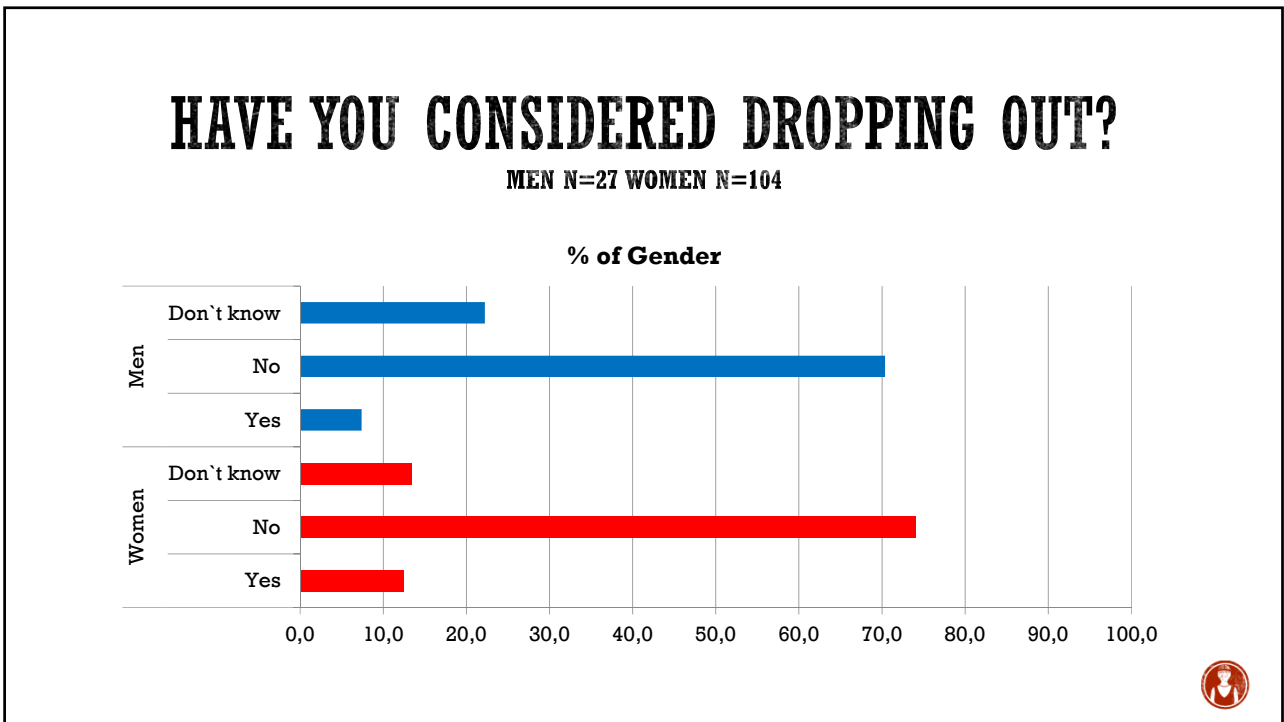
Quantitative analysis of:

1. Student self reporting at time of dropout
2. Aggregated statistics from our administrative staff
3. Survey to all first year students in first semester (Questback)

Qualitative analysis of:

1. Interviews of some of the students that dropped out
2. Group interview of 4 students that persisted in their study





SHORT PRESENTATION OF OUR INTERVIEW DATA AND HOW WE HAVE INTERPRETED THEM

At the start of 2019 we looked at our data from the students that had dropped out, in order to try and figure out what we still needed to learn more about. The discussion after that review produced the framework of the interview guide that we used when we conducted a group interview with four of male students that had persisted in their studies..

Our interview questions were formulated to explore if, or how, gender is related to:

- what motivated them to apply to QMUC
- how they see themselves as students at QMUC
- what their thoughts are about the study at QMUC
- what their thoughts are about the ECEC teacher profession

What we are showing today is a small sample of what the interviews have revealed about our male students.



FINDINGS: A DISCOURSE OF EQUALITY

I1: Why should we try to attract more men to apply for work in ECECs? Or, should we really?

G1: It is a necessary resource. It really is, since we are **pro gender equality**. We really are. I think that removing the stereotype that men can't provide the **same care** and that ECECs are a place **only for women**, would automatically attract more male applicants.

G2: I think it is because of prejudice about it being a female profession. And I think it comes down to an idea that you are **just an**, ECEC uncle or auntie, not a pedagogue.



FINDINGS: A DISCOURSE OF EQUALITY

Does it matter whether it is women or men that works in the kindergarten?

- **G1:** Personally I think that it does, obviously it would have been nice to increase the number of men. Indeed it would, but I can't claim to have a solution on how to achieve it. Having said that I think that what really matters is the individuals that are around you and their **personality**.
- **G2:** Agreed
- **G4:** Agreed. Personality and how you **are as a person** is more important than gender

G2: I was given the opportunity to not have to change diapers in my ECEC

I 1: yes..

G2: Yes, but I refused to accept. Because I want to **contribute in the same way** as the others.



THE IMPORTANCE OF GENDER AS A STUDENT

G4: Yes. It is like, what was said earlier. Us boys **found each other** rather quickly on our first day at QMUC and we are a **close knit** group still.

What we are hearing you all say is that your class-environment is good, and that it is important to have other boys in your class?

G3: Yes

G3: At least for me it is.

G4: It is not something I have seen as important, but it has **helped a lot**. It really has. Becoming such a tight knit group was not expected.

G2: I found it very helpful in the beginning to have **other boys to lean on**.



FINDINGS: HOW TO IMPROVE THE CHANCES OF THAT OUR MALE STUDENTS PERSIST

G2: I remember that I was shaking when I entered the glass hall on the first day. I looked around and saw only girls and thought “oh no!”



FINDINGS: HOW TO IMPROVE THE CHANCES OF THAT OUR MALE STUDENTS PERSIST

Isolation

G3: Yeah, but its like, you know, security and, that you always can, always have each other.

G3: Yeah, det is the truth. It really is

Security and male companionship

G4: (...) so we can form a small clique at the start of the semester, and then expand it gradually, like we did.

Male role modells

G2: The first practice periode is only two weeks into the semester. Having a male practice teacher or at least another man in the ECEC, who you can talk to and work with, I think that is quite important to keep the boys.

IMPLICATIONS AND FURTHER QUESTIONS

- We find in our study that for our male students it is important that
 - Construct social structures that make them feel safe
 - Help the men discover their own place in the kindergarten
 - Facilitate “meetings” with male role models
- Is gender and gender role models really that important?
 - Anders Bakken (2008, 2009), Jon Ivar Elstad and Anders Bakken (2013, 2015), to name a few, is sceptical of such an approach, focusing more on socioeconomic explanations for the underperformance of boys.
- When is a person dropped out?
 - There is a need for a standardized method to calculate drop out.



QUESTIONS?



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