



The EU Mutual Learning Programme in Gender Equality

Gender segregation in the labour market and education

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Initiatives to promote more male kindergarten pedagogues

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1. Description of the main elements of the Danish good practice

1.1. Background and general policy context of Denmark

Men's choice of education within care i.e. the BA programme Social Educator¹ gained proper momentum as an independent theme at the beginning of the 1990s when the discussion of men's rights and masculinity research were put on the agenda and when the first indications were seen that the BA programme was, as it was phrased, dominated by women. Parallel with this observation, the policy objective of breaking down the gender-segregated labour market was established in the Danish national plans of action and as a result of analysis and observations of the effect of "the shortage of men" within the field of care; the establishment of a number of discourses was started. These discourses still serve as a tool of explanation for and legitimisation of efforts, the purpose of which is to attract male pedagogues to childcare and kindergartens; for the sake of the boys and the quality of care, for the benefit of work environment and labour market structure and for the sake of gender equality.

The newest action has been a series of five projects (described in chapter 2.2.) that aim to promote more diversity and aim to attract, recruit and retain male pedagogues to childcare and kindergartens², i.e. day-care for the 0-6 year olds.

1.1.1. Gender segregation on the Danish labour market and in the Danish education system

In 2013, women's participation rate in the labour market was 72.5 % compared to 76.4 % for men. The Danish participation rate for women is one of the highest in the world. Although young women today are at least as well educated as young men, women trail men on the labour market when it comes to wages, career opportunities, and working conditions due to the gender segregation in the education system and on the labour market. Culture, norms and expectations

¹ The proper Danish noun for a 'Social Educator' is a *pedagogue*. The BA programme in Social Education is a 3½ year programme offered by eight University Colleges, qualifying for employment within all aspects of care work. Approximately 2/3 of the students are women. The BA programme was revised in 2014 offering among other things a 7 week course focusing on gender and diversity.

² Kindergartens offer care for children aged 6 months up till 6 years. The institutions are often a merge of a crèche (the youngest children) and a kindergarten (the older children). The fact, that Danish kindergartens are considered playing and learning environments as well means, that a kindergarten so to speak 'covers' early childhood education (ECE) or pre-school.

contribute to maintain gender roles on the labour market and in the family and delay equal opportunities for both sexes.

Men dominate in engineering and science, while women dominate in health and education. Many typical women's trades are still pronounced low-pay areas. The pay differential between women and men on the labour market as such is in particular correlated to the gender-segregated labour market, and therefore the Government is very interested in breaking down the gender-segregated labour market and the gender-segregated choices of education.

Different initiatives have been launched such as on-line information on the opportunities when choosing non-traditional educations, use of role-models, pilot-projects showing the available jobs within different sectors, government funding of local projects in schools and municipalities. The influence and importance of cultural values, including gender aspects, to professional career and education guidance is also part of the curriculum of the career guidance counsellor's education.

1.1.2. The Danish Day-care system in general

From 2004, day care facilities have been made available for all parents, referred to as guaranteed day-care availability. Accessibility of day-care facilities is nowadays seen as a necessary tool for parents to reconcile working life. Municipalities are obliged to assign a place in a crèche or a kindergarten for all children older than 6 months. More than 97 % of all children between the age of 3 and 5 attend kindergarten.

1.1.3. Data and statistics on male pedagogues

The share of male students in the study programme "Social Educator" has increased slightly within the last 5-6 years. Approximately 30 % of the students in the BA programme are men (2013-2014 data), but the number is expected to decline due to a recent drop in the number of applicants to the programme.

In 2003, the share of men was 17 %. In 2010, men counted 20.7 % of the students. Still only a small minority, approx. 7 %, chooses to work within day-care for smaller children (0-6 years).

In 2003, 15.8 %³ of the employees in the day-care sector were men. In 2010, this percentage had risen slightly to 16.7 %⁴. These figures cover the fact that in 2010 the share of male pedagogues in nurseries and/or crèches was 1.5 %, whereas male pedagogues formed 6.1 % of the staff in kindergartens and 46 % of the pedagogues in institutions offering after-school activities. However, April 2013 statistics showed an average of 7.1 % male pedagogues in kindergartens.

2. The goals and target groups

The funding opportunity was developed in cooperation with the Danish Union of Early Childhood and Youth Educators. It was stated that a submission for funding would be considered if a project would meet detailed requirements:

³ 6,975 men out of 43,955 employees.

⁴ 8,686 men out of 51,982 employees.

- 1) Promote a greater diversity in the day-care sector (kindergartens and crèches) by e.g. attracting and retaining more male pedagogues;
- 2) Create new knowledge in the field and
- 3) Disseminate this knowledge to relevant parties (authorities, municipalities, educational institutions and professionals in the day-care sector).

Diversity and more male pedagogues are considered important for several reasons:

- A diverse group of employees may contribute to a good work-environment, dynamics and development in general;
- Diversity and male pedagogues in the day-care institutions may offer the children a broader palette of adult identification opportunities, and a broader view of gender, development and possibilities;
- Diversity will contribute to a more varied picture of men and especially what men can do, thus it will broaden the scope on men's educational and job opportunities;
- A gender-segregated labour market is inflexible as it is retaining a gender pay gap between women and men. This may contribute to bottlenecks in the labour market which makes our society vulnerable in times of crisis and in times of growth.

The aim of this funding was to initiate a number of pilot projects that would test new methods and ways to increase the diversity among the pedagogical staff and hence attract, recruit and retain male pedagogical staff. A focus on male staff was mandatory. The ambition was to disseminate the experiences more broadly and hereby initiate more systematic efforts to increase the diversity in the day-care sector. The undertakings were directed at relevant parties, i.e. local authorities/municipalities, kindergartens, educational institutions, public administrations and job centres and local trade unions. Overall, the funding and the five projects were seen as part of a constant urge to develop the day-care sector and the pedagogical work.

2.1. The legal and financial provisions to implement the good practice

A total of 1,520,000 DKK (around 203,893 EUR) were allocated for the five projects. Another 230.000 DKK (around 30,852 EUR) are allocated to external consultants who are following the projects and collecting and conveying the good practices from the projects.

2.2. Institutional arrangements and procedures of implementation

Five practical projects in five different municipalities received funding. Each project consisted of a number of kindergartens and/or crèches/nurseries. The approaches and procedures of implementation were highly individual.

2.2.1. Hjørring Municipality – The project “Forest Man”

Hjørring Municipality focussed on nature as an essential part of kindergarten daily life. The project covered 3 institutions placed in the southern part of the main city within walking distance from each other and close to a rather large forest. For a while the forest had served as a place for occasional ‘days-out’ and a newly built wooden house fully equipped with toilet facilities served as a retreat in case of bad weather. The pedagogical staff and a public servant had discussed how to make better use of the grounds around the house and next to the forest. The idea of a forest man came to life as a result of the ministerial launch of the possible funding.

A male pedagogue was recruited and temporarily employed with the purpose of arranging outdoor activities and to attend these. The kindergartens scheduled their visits to the wood with prospects of a good result – neatly arranged outdoor activities – and informed the parents of the undertakings and the expected outcome. Knives were bought for cutting of sticks and numerous minor long-term projects within the project took place, such as knowledge of tree sorts, and varieties of snails and slugs.

The project was based mostly on the initial assumption that activities connected to outdoor life e.g. climbing trees are perceived to be masculine sets of values and the sincere belief that playing outside would appeal to men. However, in the course of the project the initial assumptions and stereotypes were challenged, resulting in the fact that now also a female pedagogue acts as forest woman.

2.2.2. Aalborg Municipality – A Man at any Prize

Local observations had assisted the originators in Aalborg Municipality in assuming high-profiled institutions to appeal to male staff. This observation leads to the supposition that male pedagogues may be recruited to kindergarten. Around 4 % of the day-care staff in Aalborg is men. A look at the actual share of male pedagogues in University Colleges made the project wonder how come kindergartens were not their first priority.

This project had a genuine belief in gendered differences in terms of pedagogical quality and sincere worries that children may spend years in kindergartens without having met a male pedagogue. Consequently, the project was designed with high hopes and particular anticipations concerning potential male colleagues. Besides an increase in male staff and a higher quality in the kindergarten, the project expected a more gender-balanced staff would improve the work environment.

Semi-structured interviews were generated in collaboration with the nearby University College. The purpose was to gain a profile of the male pedagogue and to acquire possible explanations to why most male pedagogues refrain from working in kindergartens. Almost all of the 30 male pedagogues employed in the municipality participated. Some of the findings were:

- Kindergartens need a profile and this profile should appear in the adverts;
- Male students are often unaware of the possibilities in kindergartens; University Colleges offer insufficient information;
- Directions in kindergartens restricting male pedagogues are distrustful;

- Male pedagogues attract other male pedagogues to the sector;
- Male pedagogues wish to work full-time, and many institutions offers part-time;
- The pedagogical profession in general is met with prejudice and preconception.

A rotation principle was designed – ‘a man for hire’. One male pedagogue would move between 7 kindergartens (the kindergartens volunteered). Being a man, the pedagogue supposedly would influence and change daily routines. The male pedagogue was asked to observe and make records of his experiences during his stay. The duration varied but never less than a week.

2.2.3. Skanderborg Municipality – I do the same but in a different way

Diversity became a keyword in Skanderborg Municipality. Diversity as in ‘multiple ways of being a pedagogue’ and not differentiated by gender alone, but by beliefs, interests, and concepts. The enterprises were guided by a motto: ‘I do the same in a different way’ and the intention was all along whether the children would notice and benefit from the accomplishments.

Initial attempts were made to alter the recruitment practice and the advertising for new pedagogues by questioning e.g. procedures and language usage. In their present state the adverts were found to have been either constructed by women with concordant views and/or directed to pedagogues (women) with similar interests.

Accordingly, the project questioned a few male students and asked for their opinion on ‘buzz-words’ in an advert and what would make them apply for a job in a kindergarten. The outcome was that adverts must have a built-in appeal to all kind of pedagogues (diversity) and must have a focus on pedagogical possibilities and activities, be it indoors or outdoors. Obviously, quality and the ability to form and contribute to quality are essential elements.

Apparently, a construction has developed over the years related to applications being handed in to kindergartens; an anticipated pre-visit from the applicants. Some of the applicants (women) will visit, but (most) men attach no importance to such a visit. Often the no-callers may not be invited for an interview.

The kindergartens initiated a process of changing the language connected to daily routines and the gendering of some actions or notions. Preparing lunch and laying the table is for anyone to do and has no gender. Talks about women being able to multitask and men being more impulsive and wild were questioned. In other words, it was attempted to release ‘features’, notions and abilities from gender and focus on the person and the quality of the action in question. Now and again observations were made showing reactions from the children to e.g. a man performing a specific task presumably more often performed by his female colleagues. If the children would comment on this being unusual, the pedagogues would ask them why and talk with the children about ‘what girls and boys can do’ instead of what they “typically” do and want. Outdoor arrangements, a summer party and gatherings with the parents and external consultants were other activities in order to make room for reflections.

Discussions took place among staff and with occasional external expertise from University College as to highlight consciousness of gender; of differences, strengths and possible prejudices. The project joined information eves in the regional

University College in order to draw (new) student's attention to the pedagogical profession and to chat with male students about the job-possibilities and the matters of appealing adverts.

By operating the latter, the project hoped to gain new knowledge and influence staff, politicians and parents to wish for and to think diversity as a must. Children should be content, happy and challenged by content, happy and qualified staff of both genders. The wellbeing of the children is the core of it all and the wellbeing is part of a result affiliated to a diverse staff, both genders, with different views, ideas and qualities.

2.2.4. Hørsholm Municipality – Architecture of Multiplicity

Three kindergartens were involved in Hørsholm Municipality which have very few male pedagogues employed. The municipality formed a partnership with a private consultancy firm who designed and took lead of the activities. The core concept was nudging, i.e. a gentle way of changing people's behaviour; in this context a change of the mind-set of specific target groups. The target-groups were the local politicians, the parents and the staff. They were all supposed to wonder why no male pedagogues were to be found in the kindergartens. Secondly they were to wish to attract and to recruit men.

The private consultancy firm performed a series of interviews with male students who were asked to convey their personal opinions and ambitions in terms of a possible job in a kindergarten. Among other things, the student pointed the lack of so-called 'male' attitudes. According to the consultancy firm the students described 'male attitudes as that of being relaxed and impulsive, creating fewer limits and with a more direct manner.

Through observations and videos of daily routines and activities the project ascertained that the quality of the kindergarten and the daily care may be improved and that men could play a valuable part in this. As a result of this conclusion – to gently change the mind set – a series of wall stickers, e.g. portraying children and pedagogues playing, or with an image of a pair of wellington boots was produced.

Another contribution was a catalogue displaying inspiration to children's games. The catalogue and the stickers were to nudge and remind the staff and parents of the benefits of masculine presence.

2.2.5. Fredensborg Municipality - Professionalism as a Strategy for Recruitment and Retention

Through a series of corresponding activities the originators of this initiative set out to reformulate the identity of a pedagogue and to root a new image of childcare as a scientifically and methodically based profession. Naturally, the recruitment and retention of male pedagogues - and a gender perspective – was part of the approach. Six institutions took part in the mutual efforts in Fredensborg Municipality.

The project was framed by the hypothesis that a professional identity may only be changed through investigation into the presiding understanding of core values and aims. Considerations of values and knowledge must be debated and shared with other professionals, locally as well as nationally.

The project claimed a need for kindergarten staff to be diverse, and to be as different and individual as the children. An internal course kicked off the actual reformation process of the pedagogue and the professional identity. Other structured courses followed with a focus on gender and gender perspectives, a focus on matters of language and routines and ways to organise the male staff and recruit male colleagues. Participants were leaders, pedagogues, assistants, and trainees. Staff meetings would fixate the themes mentioned previously and keep up the work via transcribed descriptions of everyday activities and observations affiliated to the central question of professional identity and a gender perspective.

Alongside the internal courses, the project initiated minor activities as part of the new agenda. A group of male pedagogues were pooled in one kindergarten in order to obtain knowledge of whether a grouping of 'equal gendered pedagogues' would make the men in question feel better.

The local advertisements and the procedures when new pedagogues are required were questioned and a modernisation became part of the reforming ideas. The project teamed up with a renowned researcher, professor Dorthe Staunæs.

3. Results of the good practice and its impact on achieving gender equality

Some of the projects have reported they are not nearly done implementing their results or intentions. *We have just begun, we are at the starting line* is the common observation. Some of the results are listed below.

The temporarily employed male pedagogue in *Hjørring Municipality* has received a permanent engagement in one of the kindergartens and the forest and the wooden house no longer have 'A Forest man' connected to it. The use of the grounds is stable though even without a leading figure.

In *Fredensborg Municipality* the originators of the project intend to mainstream their observations and records. They are steadfast when it comes to placing the profession in the centre of it all and wishes to set gender aside in terms of gender being a feature, the qualified pedagogue being the core. Leadership is an anchor to their work.

Aalborg Municipality has decided to establish a new kindergarten renowned for diversity, hence male and female pedagogues, presence and values. The municipality has set sails to form 'a light-house project'. The project has produced a guidebook to support interviews with applicants and the leader of one of the largest kindergarten departments has decided that for every set of interviews at least one man should be invited.

Skanderborg Municipality has thrived in changing advertisements and procedures affiliated to it. They have succeeded displaying that diversity in staff, and that male and female pedagogues together bring about a variety in possibilities for children. Besides being able to mirror themselves in adults of both genders the children are given the possibilities of participating in learning and playing activities offered by a diverse staff. The project has reported that some of the outdoor activities have

brought about incidents where usually shy children have behaved bravely and sceptical parents have been convinced.

Seemingly, male and female pedagogues are able to inspire each other, or even 'provoke' abilities to surface. In Hjørring Municipality a female pedagogue now claims to be the Forest Woman. *I can do almost the same as the Forest Man. They laughed a bit at me in the beginning. They do not laugh anymore. I have even laid out tiles in the back yard. I must have 'forgotten' how to do these things.*

3.1. Challenges, obstacles and constraints encountered

It is possible to map out a series of transverse themes which can be described as challenges or in some relations even obstacles.

3.1.1. Leadership and management

The venture to obtain a gender balanced staff in kindergarten is a race against odds, if the local and municipal political authorities have no intention to practise gender mainstreaming beyond the legislative standards. *It takes strong leadership* as one on the projects put it. One may succeed with a funding, but it is compulsory to have a political back-up in order to retain, preserve and develop the results achieved. This goes for the daily leadership in the kindergarten as well. A precise, detailed and well-known gender policy in the municipality will never prosper if the leaders of the kindergartens themselves refrain from taking on a management responsibility in this respect. Together with the leaders of the kindergartens the board members must be involved and take on responsibility. Furthermore, the conveyed policy and principles of the actual kindergarten needs to be taken into account.

A leader of one of the projects had made this observation: *I am amazed that none of my fellow colleagues had any questions.* She considered this lack of interest among peers an obstacle.

3.1.2. Parents

Not every parent thinks the presence of male pedagogues a blessing. He or she may find it hard to believe a male pedagogue is able to offer care and attention or may even see men as a possible risk. This observation was made by almost all of the projects. On the opposite, some parents are quite enthusiastic when they spot a man in the kindergarten. In their point of view football and fire finally may be added to the daily activities. One male pedagogue had to explain this was not necessarily the case. This man was transferred to an institution with no male pedagogues. He had to explain to the parents that he had plenty of responsibilities to perform and that building a campfire was not the epitome of his pedagogical qualities.

3.1.3. Gender, body and expectations

Every project has experienced challenges affiliated to gender, body and expectations. Participants have explained this by referring to culture, paradigms and societal patterns. Nevertheless the expectations towards male pedagogues taking upon them to work in kindergartens are easily summed up; these men are met with specific hopes – and prejudices.

Our performance and attachment to the children have changed a lot. The activities are different and so are we. (Pedagogues in Hjørring). Hjørring Municipality

described their initial position as a strong belief in the combination of men and wild-life and male sets of values. They admitted afterwards they had been certain a male pedagogue would bring about a lot of new activities (campfire, rope ways, tree-climbing). But *we know better now*, as one of the participants put it. The pedagogues have changed their opinion of men and women and their abilities and they have changed their opinion on their personal capacities.

Expectations and prejudices towards one gender nourish expectations towards another gender and restraining structural patterns are created and upheld.

Based on these records a series of brief maxims are:

- The only possible way to broaden viewpoints is by constantly challenging the images and the ideas of diversity, gender and gender roles. The pedagogical leader of the kindergarten should take charge of this.
- Prejudice and bias affiliated to gender and work is hard to come by in terms of childcare.
- Bodies create anticipations, but abilities have not gender stamped on to it. Some women are keen on outdoor life, some men are happy with storytelling.
- Do not expect everybody to think gender-mainstreaming in the kindergarten is a brilliant idea.
- Routines, patterns and unquestioned schemes may cloud the picture.

4. Assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the good practice

4.1. Introduction

The projects have worked intensely and have made essential observations although some undertakings were changed and not every part of the plans came to life. However; further research into some of the observations is necessary.

4.2. Strengths

- **For the sake of the children**

The projects have taken into consideration how the children may benefit from a more diverse and a more gender-balanced staff. Children need a multiplicity of different identification possibilities. Pedagogues naturally must represent the societal diversity and therefore be male and female. Even though the discourse 'for the sake of the boys' has a part in this argumentation, the projects have been able to set aside the 'boys-only rhetoric' and include the girls. This is an acknowledgment of changed parenthood, new father's role, new images of kindergartens, and men and women as professional child-care-givers. Many parents have stated that their children are happy with the variety in activities. This may be caused by the activities being new, different, and sometimes a bit 'wild'. Finally some fathers have expressed their satisfaction when being able to talk to a male pedagogue.

- **A wake-up call**

Although different approaches and varied outcomes none of the projects had anticipated that activities and arrangements would make them discover their own patterns and routines, prejudices and notions. Many of the participants were astonished by solid and rigid beliefs in gender, body and abilities. They were affected when they realised how this may have inflicted on their choices and decision and on how often they had just taken things for granted.

- **Adverts**

A mutual strength is the discovery of the factual systems and procedures when looking for new fellow pedagogues. Apparently, the design, the language and the procedure has developed unquestioned over time and the procedure has been framed by a certain undisputed 'air of care'. Seemingly a construction has taken place; a construction and replication of firm ideas of the colleague to be and of non-formal but solid expectations to performance when invited for an interview. Every project has recognised and worked hard to remove restraining procedures.

- **Questioning daily routine**

Routines are dreary but should be questioned as most of the projects have set out to do so. Questioning may not be sufficient and all along the road individuals tend to fall back into recognisable structures and schemes. Promoting more staff diversity and gender balance can help to challenge daily routine and to bring about new impulses and innovation.

- **Contact to students**

A prior contact to male students on information evenings and meetings with students in the BA programme was a very good approach. These students were (and are) likely to be fresh sources of knowledge. They have chosen or are about to choose this BA programme for good and solid reasons and their motives and aspirations may stimulate the actions to gender-balance kindergarten staff.

- **It is not a only question of 'more men'**

An increase in the number of male pedagogues is likely to prosper from a change of how this increase is described and is anticipated to take place. As an alternative to 'more male pedagogues', it is a matter of 'more credit to a profession'. The Danish kindergartens offer the very best of care because of highly professional pedagogues.

4.3. Weaknesses

A series of starting points have formed the basis of most of the activities. These suppositions may be described as weaknesses:

- **Men are different**

A certain expectation is apparent throughout the projects: Men are expected to contribute via 'natural' abilities, and preferably these abilities only. The present staffs – the established professional pedagogues of whom the majority is women – are the ones to define the acquired skills or type or contribution required. Individuals are put off by restrictions linked to their conduct when the restrictions are based on gendered dogmas.

- **Little use of knowledge of men's reasons to become pedagogues**

Apparently none of the projects have examined why men choose to become pedagogues. Given the fact that (some) men are employed in kindergartens and

that men are rather visible in the BA programme, valid information may have been obtained beforehand. Available information should be taken into consideration, when projects decide to attract and recruit colleagues into jobs where the acquired individuals are defined as the minority.

- **Permanent changes or just slight modifications**

It is less noticeable whether the presence of (more future) male pedagogues is expected to bring anything else but (some) anticipated changes in routines and procedures. It is also unclear whether the anticipated changes mean changes up to a certain point and then 'business as usual'.

- **Empirical approach**

There is much room for improvement when it comes to the empirical approach. How the questions were constructed, tested and validated, how the interviews were performed and how the answers were analysed and by which categorisations is imperceptible and therefore questionable. The classification of activities in the kindergarten as either male or female is problematic. The underlying reasons for making such a division are vague, so is the 'prior research' and method by which this classification has taken place. That no man is present in a kindergarten cannot lead to the deduction of abilities not being present.

- **Woman originators**

Only few men were among the originators of the projects and only one man was a front figure, the fact being that women are the majority in childcare. Knowing that the very few men in childcare may inspire other men, the projects should consider this and men should be asked to take lead of some of the initiatives and activities.