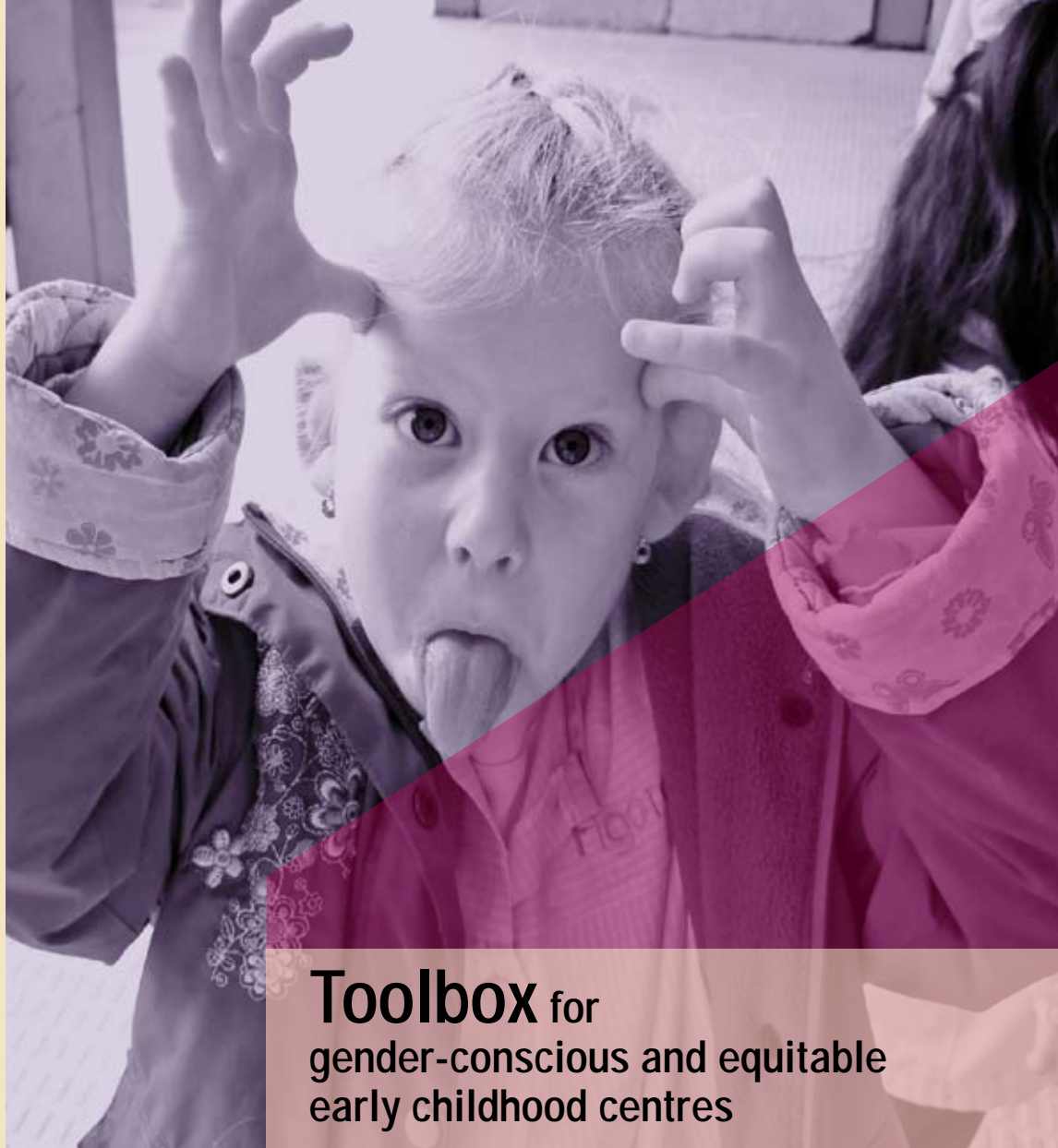


Gender Loops



Toolbox for
gender-conscious and equitable
early childhood centres



Bildung und Kultur

Leonardo da Vinci
Pilotprojekte



Impressum

Gender Loops Toolbox for gender-conscious and equitable early childhood centres

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Gender Loops

Gender Mainstreaming in vocational training for educators
and in early childhood centres

Toolbox for gender-conscious and equitable early childhood centres

English version

The Gender Loops project, financed by the EU-Leonardo Da Vinci programme,
was carried out from 1.10.2006 - 30.9.2008 by partner organisations from
Germany, Lithuania, Norway, Spain and Turkey

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Introduction

Gender Loops Toolbox

The Gender Loops Toolbox is a product of the two-year European Gender Loops project, in which the partner organisations from Germany, Lithuania, Norway, Spain and Turkey took a look at implementation strategies for gender mainstreaming in education and further training in the area of early childhood pedagogy and in early childhood educational centres.

In addition to the Toolbox, we have developed a curriculum for the integration of gender-specific lesson contents and gender equity strategies for the education and further training of teachers in early childhood and elementary education. The project results, toolbox, curriculum, research, background articles and most of the exercises and tools described can be downloaded free of charge from our website.

What is the Gender Loops Toolbox?

Here you will find tried and tested methods, projects and analytical instruments which support the realisation of gender-conscious education and ongoing gender equity strategies in early childhood education centres. With the help of the Toolbox, you can make use of clear methods and aids to improve gender awareness in practice at your place of work.

Why provide a Gender Loops Toolbox?

The results and experience gained during the two-year Gender Loops project show that, in Germany, Lithuania, Norway, Spain and Turkey gender-conscious education and ongoing gender equity strategies in the area of early childhood education have only recently been established, or are not established at all, in certain areas of practice, despite the many differences in the respective countries. Here below, we present some of the important arguments which, in our view, demonstrate the importance

of gender-conscious education and the implementation of gender equity strategies in early childhood education centres.

Encouraging character development in children

From birth onwards, children encounter the world with curiosity and a thirst for knowledge. The world is one great journey of discovery for them. Children want to move around in this world, shape it and understand it. When exploring the world, they experiment with actions, movements and languages and while doing so they develop skills, interests and their individual personalities. Grasping, walking, speaking, riding their bikes, learning to argue and many other learning steps help the children to actively adapt to the world they live in. For children, curiosity is an essential motor for daring to take a step forward into unknown areas. “What does it feel like, how do others react, for example, when I slip into the role of a pirate or prince?” What does it feel like, how do the teachers react, when I climb all on my own right up to the top of the climbing frame?

It is the job of qualified teachers to support the children's thirst for knowledge and eagerness to learn. Restrictive gender stereotypes, however, lead children to give up on certain journeys of discovery, actions and experiments at an early stage or prevent them from even trying these out at all. Gender-conscious education aims to prevent this from happening.

- Gender-conscious education supports children in their ability to push out the boundaries of stereotypical, restrictive gender images in specific situations or over longer phases, to inquisitively pursue different interests and to gain diverse skills.

- Gender-conscious education aims at helping and encouraging children to discover the unknown, to maintain their curiosity and to try out a variety of different games and activities.
- As such, gender-conscious education makes a valuable contribution towards the character development of children.

Gender-conscious education helps children to find their way about “in a culture of two sexes”

Children already learn at a very young age that adults are divided into men and women and that men and women apparently differ fundamentally from one another. At the age of 3, children begin to understand that they are divided into boys or girls and most children assume this division for themselves. In addition, from this age onwards, children notice that the sexes are assigned different attributes and modes of behaviour and that men and so called masculine activities are given a higher value. These assigned attributes and modes of behaviour are not uniform, however, and even contradict themselves a lot of the time, for example, when it is said that women are bad at parking, and yet are nevertheless supposed to be the better drivers (because they drive more safely). What is more, children often see in practice that the attributes assigned to women and men are not consistent with their everyday experiences; for example, when they are told that boys do not play with dolls, but their own brother does. For children, it is not that simple to find their way about in this “two-gender culture” and it is not easy for them to come up with an idea of appropriate gender behaviour. Gender-conscious education helps children to find their way about “in a culture of two sexes”

- Gender-conscious education takes up the questions concerning the “right” way to be a girl or a boy according to the children’s own contradictory ideas about gender and explores these together with the children.
- Gender-conscious education helps the children to integrate the many different and sometimes contradictory images into their gender-specific self image, as the simple and outdated stereotypes assigned in society coincide less and less with the complex and different lifestyles of women and men today.
- However, gender-conscious education also takes into consideration the children’s need for gender orientation. Gender-stereotypical behaviour is often the only chance children have of reassuring themselves of their own gender.

Giving consideration to the diverse living situations of the children

The children who attend early childhood education centres come from different backgrounds in life. In each of the countries which took part in the Gender Loops project, the populations are made up of people who speak different languages, who have different religious and class-based backgrounds or who live out different sexual orientations. Early childhood education centres should take this diversity into consideration and be a “home” to all of the children.

For this reason, an early childhood education centre should offer the children a trusting and familiar environment in which they see their different lifestyles represented. “The world you live in is one of many possibilities and has its legitimate place in the early childhood education centre” is the message that should be conveyed.

- Gender-conscious education is therefore based on the respective heterogeneous composition of the groups of children and gives them the opportunity of seeing themselves in the group and allows them to feel good there.
- Gender-conscious education, for example, provides for the natural integration of same-sex relationships in its educational work and conveys to the children the normality of gay fathers or lesbian mothers.

More gender equity in early childhood education centres

If you would like to establish more gender equity in your early childhood education centre as a qualified consultant, a manager or an teacher, then it makes sense to put into practice ongoing gender equity strategies (in early childhood education centres) over and above individual gender-conscious projects.

- gender equity strategies, such as the 3R methods described in chapter 5, for example, aim to carry out gender analyses in early childhood education centres, to define gender equity objectives and to then evaluate gender-conscious projects in practice. gender equity strategies thus ensure gender-conscious educational approaches in the long term.
- gender equity strategies are also always a quality development process and contribute towards making occupations in the area of early childhood development more professional and making these more respected in society.
- gender equity strategies can change the working conditions and general situation in early childhood

education centres in such a way that they contribute towards a more balanced gender situation among the pedagogical personnel.

Structure of the Gender Loops Toolbox

The Toolbox aims to be a working aid for qualified personnel in the area of early childhood education to an equal extent in Germany, Lithuania, Norway, Spain and Turkey. Because of the respectively different cultures each of the countries has with respect to the education and upbringing of children, the concept of the Toolbox is designed in such a way that, depending on what country the qualified personnel work in, what previous knowledge of gender equity in educational work already exist and what educational topics the children in each case are currently dealing with, the methods, projects and analytical instruments introduced here can be implemented in very different ways depending on the context and in line with the teachers' own assessment. One method, such as the "Gender role-change story", for example, from the fourth chapter, which was implemented successfully during the course of the project in Spain, must not necessarily work in Lithuania or Germany. Considering these different prerequisites, we see the Toolbox primarily as an initial proposal and not as a finished concept for action which must be realised step by step.

How to get started

After this introduction we now suggest some basic issues you should, from our point of view, consider when implementing gender projects

Chapter 1 Starting with one's self: raising awareness

Personal reflection about one's own gender as it is and its development is a necessary prerequisite for the successful realisation of gender-conscious education. Our personal socialization experiences as children and our own gender images influence our behaviour, perception and judgement. Reflecting about these experiences and gender images enables us to become aware of our own prejudices, stereotypical perceptions and personal hurts. This opens up new ways of looking at things and new possibilities for action in the day-to-day educational work with the children. In chapter 2, you will find methods which you can use alone, in your team or accompanied by a trainer in order to be able to take a look at your own life experiences and the effects these have had on your educational work.

Chapter 2 Taking a conscious look at things: observation and documentation

Gender-conscious education requires an ongoing analysis, observation and documentation of the individual children and groups of children. Children and every group of children are unique in some way or another. This uniqueness must be embraced and gender-conscious education adapted to it. In chapter 3, we introduce various instruments for observation which can be used to observe and then reflect upon the behaviour of the children during play and their physical behaviour as



well as the interaction between children, parents and the team with an eye to gender-consciousness.

Chapter 3 Acting pedagogically: examples, methods and projects

Gender-conscious practice not only requires self-reflection and observation, but also methodology and concrete working aids. In chapter 3, you will find a series of examples, methods, project ideas, practical aids and useful internet addresses which you can use for your gender-conscious work.

Chapter 4: gender equity as organisational development

Ongoing strategies are needed as a structural support for gender-conscious education. In chapter 4, we introduce gender equity strategies for early childhood education centres which go beyond the implementation of gender-conscious education.

We would be happy to hear about your experiences with this Toolbox. Please send your report of your experiences and your comments to: jens.krabel@dissens.de

How to get started

by Tim Rohrmann

Getting started together!

Gender equity does not begin with establishing rules and regulations, but with asking questions: “What is all this gender stuff good for?” “Are boys and girls not just naturally different to one another?” And, last but not least, “What’s in it for us? If we deal with the subject, what will that do for us in our everyday work?”

Speak first of all with colleagues or in your team about what you find interesting about the topic of Boys – Girls – Gender and why you want to deal with it. Here, the different personal attitudes of those involved as well as scepticism should be given space. Otherwise, there is a risk that resistance to change remains concealed below the surface – who would speak against gender equity?

- Agree on joint objectives, but leave enough room for differences to coexist!

Find the right approach to starting.

There are many options for how to start gender-conscious educational work:

- Further training. Take part in a further training course on the subject or invite a trainer for a day of study at your place of work.
- Observation. “Observation is important – but we unfortunately do not have enough time for it“... however, educational work without observation and reflection can easily turn into “action for the sake of action”. Begin by systematically observing a small area or individual children and document your impressions. The third chapter in the Toolbox provides you with ideas about how to proceed. Reading. Read an introductory article on the subject together or the excellent book by Melitta Walter (2005): *Jungen sind anders, Mädchen auch* (“Boys are different, girls are too“ from the Kösel publishing house). Or hand out a specialised booklet or a magazine which deals with gender topics to your team and each colleague has to give a relevant presentation. A comprehensive list of literature can be downloaded from our website.
- Experimenting. You do not have to start up a large project or carry out regular work on the subject. Start small by offering a particular activity or a play area, for example, movement room, one time for girls only, one time for boys only. Let yourself be surprised by what then happens.

Agree on individual goals here – not all colleagues have to want or to try out the same things. The main thing is to get started!

Give the subject a fixed place in your everyday work.

Working with gender is a cross-sectional task, that is, it should not be limited to individual projects, but should be a part of all educational work. This means:

- Reflecting about gender in your everyday activities: ask regularly whether and in what way a child’s behaviour is influenced by her/his gender; whether and to what extent girls and boys use what they are offered differently; what your own reactions have to do with you being a woman/being a man...
- Take gender aspects into consideration during planning work, for example, during the annual purchasing of materials or the annual project planning...
- Reflect on all areas of education in a gender-conscious way. You will find some examples and ideas for this in the fourth chapter and more on the project’s website.

Involve the boys and girls.

Concepts and activities are all too often planned for children and not with them. Instead of this, gender-conscious education should proceed from the point of view of the children. One of the best ways to approach the subject is therefore to strike up conversations with the girls and boys themselves. This is explored in depth in chapter 4

- Carry out interviews with the girls and boys.
- Develop activities together with the girls and boys.
- Become a researcher who can explore the gender world together with the girls and boys.

Involve the parents from the very beginning.

Merely announcing that you are “carrying out a gender project“ in your early childhood educational centre may confuse and unsettle parents. Involve the parents (or the parent representatives) from the very beginning, especially when you have parents with different cultural and lifestyle backgrounds. This is described further in chapter 4.

- Do not begin by giving an explanation of the definition “Gender Mainstreaming“. Instead of this, experience has shown that it is more fruitful to go over the subject of “how we can prepare the boys and girls for life in a changing world“ with the parents at a parents’ evening.

Try and involve more men in the workplace.

- Try and get more men to do internships and discuss with them their role as a man in an early childhood educational centre.
- Actively involve the fathers in the everyday work at your centre – not only when there is strenuous garden work to be done, but also to read out stories or take part in father-child play activities. Example can be found in chapter 4
- Become active in letting boys and men know about the career prospects there are in the area of early childhood education.

Your work as a manager

Putting gender-conscious education into practice mostly has nothing to do with a lack of willingness, but more about finding time and organising it.

- Support your colleagues by organising definite times for observation, documentation and exchange.
- Create the “low threshold“ opportunity for documentation, for example, by setting up a notice board on the subject for questions and observations or by creating personal research diaries.
- Provide specialised literature in reasonable amounts and make sure that they are also read.
- Organise times for exchange and reflection in the team.
- Assume responsibility for recording the results, for presenting successes to the outside world and for laying down successes firmly in your conceptual work and at a superordinate level.
- Support and improve the professional development of your colleagues by planning individual further training courses. Courses should not be selected only according to the individual interests of your colleagues, but is also a management responsibility.

Do not aim too high – but don’t give up either.

Gender-conscious upbringing and education cannot be put into practice as a fixed programme. It requires time and willingness to question one’s self and one’s own pedagogical work again and again. Changes begin in small things and are often not visible at the beginning. That is why exchange and reflection are so important for this subject.

Gender-conscious education is a journey of discovery both into one’s own life history and into the unknown territory of a new way of coexistence for the sexes. We can be like Columbus in exploring this new territory and discover something completely different to what we expected!

Get started – and let yourself be surprised!

You can download all the exercises, documentation, questionnaires, tools described or mentioned here from the project website www.genderloops.eu.

Chapter 1:

Starting with one's self: raising awareness

If you are to work on gender issues with children it is essential to explore your own gender history, images and behaviour. This will give you a different perspective and help to clarify the objectives of pedagogical practices so as to improve your professional work. Alongside individual reflections a team reflection about gender issues helps to find common gender-specific objectives and brings the teachers, who still aren't convinced about the importance of a gender-sensitive pedagogy, to reconsider their attitudes.

In the following pages we present methods and gender-questions which you can, firstly, reflect upon by yourself and then within your team. Of course you could also invite an expert who will guide you through the presented exercises. Whichever way you choose to go, we wish you new experiences, discoveries and fun carrying out the following exercises.

1.1. Biography and personal experiences

In Germany and Spain the following exercises and methods were found to be useful:

Interview between two persons: biographical questions regarding your own childhood:

Please reflect on the following questions with another person - use 20 or 30 minutes. Afterwards you can share the main topics of your discussion with your team.

Topic: comfortable memories

- Describe the situations in which you liked to be a girl or to be a boy?
- For which activities and characteristics were you complimented by others? Did you notice differences between you and your sisters/brothers?
- Did you have privileges being a girl/a boy? If so, which ones?

Topic: unpleasant memories

- Describe any situations in which other children or adults tried to ban you from doing certain things because you were a girl/a boy?
- Which tasks and duties did you have when you were young? What did people expect from you as a girl or boy when you were young?
- Did you experience insulting or hurtful comments for being or behaving as a girl or a boy?

Topic: Gender change

- Would you sometimes have liked to be the “other sex”? If so, in which situations?

Describe any other biographical gender question you would like to speak about :

Own learning experiences

This exercise gives you the opportunity to reflect on your own learning biography and to explore whether your teachers/teachers had any gender-typical learning strategies.

The exercise will use your memories of three different phases of your life

- During your childhood in an early childhood centre (age 4-6 years old)
- During your adolescence and puberty (age 14-16 years old)
- During your vocational training

This exercise needs about an hour and it is best if one trainer can slowly read the questions in each phase. Make yourself comfortable, relax on the floor (use, if you have yoga mats, cushions, blankets et al.) Gentle music is recommended during the whole exercise. Then reflect upon the following questions for each of the above mentioned phases of your education. Take your time.

- How do you remember your tutors?
- What helped you and what blocked your learning?
- Did the female or male tutors help or block your learning in different ways?
- How were your relationships at each phase with your peers of the same and the others sex?
- What support would you have needed to help you understand?

After the last phase stay in silence and with paper with pencils, colours draw and/or write a letter from you when you were a child to your teachers about what you wanted and needed. When everybody is finished, share the letters in small groups. Finally it is useful to feedback in the large group of all participants. Later you can reflect on how your early learning experiences influence your current pedagogical practice? If so, in which way?

The Gender Diary

Make a brief daily note referring to gender issues over, for example, two to three weeks. This could be:

- Something about your own personal life (how you feel in your gender relationships, power in these relationships, memories from your own life, etc.)
- Gender issues in the media you found interesting or touching
- Something related to your pedagogical/teaching activities (situations you have observed or realised in the early childhood centre, a new gender-sensitive project you would like to carry out, etc.)

You don't have to spend a lot of time writing down your daily notes. For example your daily notes could be like this: "Monday – John and Jane are playing football. Tuesday – sexist jokes in the pub after work. Wednesday – I remember my father doing the ironing and etc". Longer notes can be made where you are trying something new in your early childhood centre.

After two or three weeks you can share and comment on the gender issues you have noted in your diary. You can address doubts and questions that arise, looking for solutions where adequate. Over these weeks you can look for follow-up support when you are trying out a new idea or solution. After this period it can be useful to introduce some exercise and tools for observing gender issues and following them up.

1.2. Self and Team reflections on your teaching profession

The following materials, which give you the opportunity for self and team reflections on your profession, were tested by the Lithuanian and German partners

1.2.1 Equal possibilities for boys and girls – Booklet for self and team reflection for teachers and teachers.

The booklet “ Equal possibilities for boys and girls in school” published by the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson of Lithuania was developed for teachers in schools. Our Lithuanian partner used the booklet also within training courses with teachers in the following way: First the teachers wrote answers to the reflection questions. Then they discussed their answers within the team seeking ways to apply any changes in their daily behaviour with children. A moderator wrote down the results of the discussion.

Example questions regarding: “Boys and girls – perceptions and expectations”

- A) Boys and girls often face different expectations and often develop different character traits, interests and talents. They learn different types of knowledge and attitude.
- Think about how you look at “femininity” and “masculinity”. What are you expecting and requiring from boys and girls? What traits and characteristics do you like in boys and girls?
 - How do you react towards children and young people who are breaking gender stereotypes?
 - How do your pupils rate “femininity” and “masculinity”? What traits do they assign to each gender? How do they rate traditional feminine and masculine characteristics, interests and skills?
 - How could you as a teacher change or modify the stereotypical beliefs of your pupils, to implement and develop new attitudes towards gender equity?
- B) Boys and girls use often different ways to gain attention.
- What is your experience of this?
 - How should boys and girls behave if they want to gain attention or to get what they want? Does the same behaviour fit both girls and boys? Are they valued and punished for the same things?
- C) Positive expectations from adults improve the behaviour of children and teenagers and strengthen their self-confidence
- Think about your own and pupils opinions about the general and specific competences expected from each pupil. What do you expect from boys and what from girls? What do they expect from themselves and of each other?
 - How do pupils express their self-confidence? What impact do the self-confidence does to learning? Could you mark any differences between genders in this situation?
 - How could you help boys and girls who devalue their own possibilities?



1.2.2 Questionnaire for self and team reflection

The German partner developed a questionnaire which you can use to reflect upon your pedagogical objectives and your own gender-specific behaviour.

Example question: “Are there situations in which you behave differently towards girls and boys?”

According to my assessment:

- No
- Yes in the following situations.....
- With the exception(s) of
(Please fill in the names of the girls and boys towards you don't behave differently)
.....

My personal assumption

(Please write down the reasons you think that you don't behave differently towards girls and boys, or you don't behave differently towards girls and boys, respectively).(I don't understand the two different parts of the question here)

Further questions

- How would you define the term: “Gender-sensitive education“?
- Which different pedagogical objectives do you have towards girls and boys?
- How do you think that a gender-sensitive education might cause problems?
- Describe any situations in which your colleagues behave differently towards girls and boys?
- If one or several male teachers are working in your early childhood education centre: Are there any activities which are mainly carried out by male teachers and/or by female teachers?

Our tip: Firstly answer the questionnaire by yourself. Then discuss your answers in small groups. Afterwards present the results of your discussion towards your team.

Chapter 2

“Taking a conscious look at things: observation and documentation”

During the interviews we carried out in Germany with experts from the field of training and further training of teachers, they stress that the current observation and documentation tools should integrate some specific gender observation questions. This report can be found on the project website.

Systematic gender-sensitive observations enable teachers to perceive possible differences between the behaviour and treatment of girls and boys as well as possible atypical gender interests and competencies. Furthermore systematic gender-sensitive observations can make teachers more aware about their own gender stereotypes.

In this chapter we present a questionnaire, and observation and documentation tools that the German partner developed and tested within the Gender Loops project in several early childhood centres. In the questionnaire teachers are asked to write down their personal assumptions regarding the girls and boys of their group. The observation and documentation tools give teachers the opportunity to explore and identify their personal assumptions.

Furthermore in this chapter we present a video analysis tool the Norwegian partner used in several early childhood centres. They filmed and analysed interaction between teachers and children.

Our experience shows that teachers who used our questionnaire and the observation and documentation tools could identify their own behaviour more accurately and could raise their awareness of the behaviour of girls and boys. Some examples of the results in Berlin:

“When I filled in the questionnaire I realized that I offer more games and activities for girls”

“When I filled in the questionnaire I realized that I always ask the boys to carry the heavy things”

We think that the continual exploration of ones own attitudes and behaviour is an important precondition to implement an effective gender-sensitive pedagogy.

2.1. Questionnaire to assess gender-specific behaviour and interactions between children in early childhood centres

Below we present an example from the questionnaire to assess gender-specific behaviour and interactions between children in early childhood centres. You can download the whole questionnaire from our website.

Example question: “Do girls and boys prefer to stay in distinct areas of the group room? “

According to my assessment

- No
- Yes
- With the exception(s) of:

.....
(Please fill in the names of the girls and boys who, according to your assessment, don't prefer to stay in the distinct areas of the group room)

My personal assumption

.....
(Please write down the reasons you think that certain girls and boys differ from most children of their gender group and don't prefer to stay in the distinct areas of the group room)

Further questions:

- “Do girls and boys prefer different games and activities?“ Which? When?
- “How and when do girls and boys express certain feelings such as anger, sadness or joy in a different way?“
- Do you think that girls and boys are similarly satisfied with the activities and games you offer the children? Explain your view,
- “How and when do children ban other children from games with explicit reference to their gender?“
- How is the issue of being a girl or a boy an (educational) topic for children?“
- Describe any other personal assumptions or questions you have about girls and boys in education?

This questionnaire has the advantage of giving you the opportunity to reflect your every day work life and write down your personal assumptions regarding the girls and boys of your group.

The questionnaire may give you the opportunity to explore your own gender (typical and atypical) behaviour and to raise your awareness of gender (atypical and atypical) behaviour of the children.

Our tip: Firstly answer the questionnaire by yourself. Then discuss your answers in small groups. Afterwards think about which questions you would like to verify. We offer some tools for this in the following section.

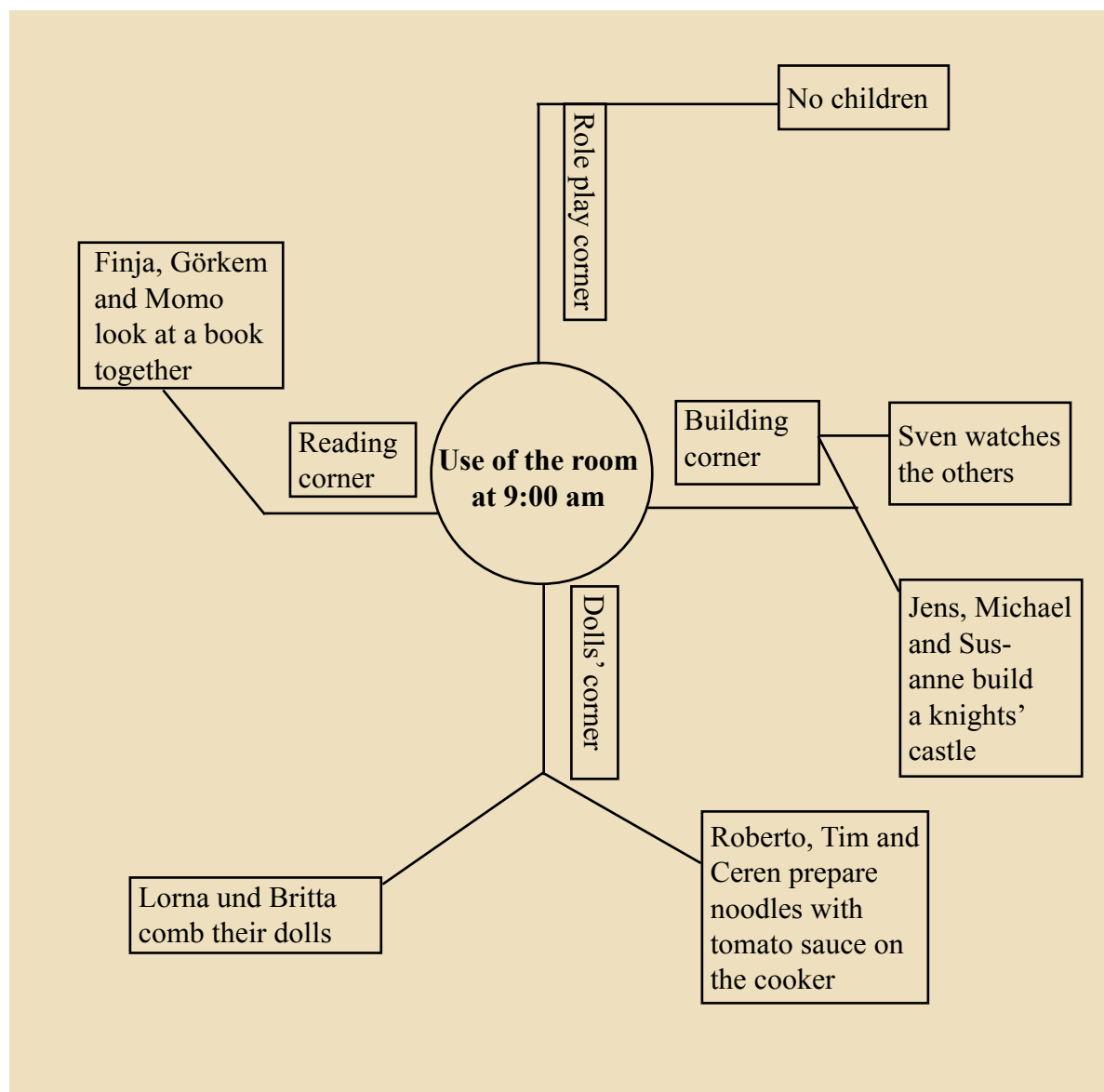
2.2. Observation and documentation tools and participative methods to verify personal assumptions regarding girls and boys in early childhood centres

Below we present an example question from our observation and documentation tools to verify personal assumptions regarding girls and boys. (Rainer Strätz/Helga Demandewitz 2005):

Example question “Do girls and boys prefer to stay in different areas of the group room?”

Observation Tool: Mind Map

You can draw into the observation diagram of a mind map which games/activities girls and boys prefer. You can enter children and their activities into the following diagram – which you may adapt to your conditions – at previously fixed points in time (for instance every hour or every two hours)



The example: Finja and her interest in the building corner

The questionnaire to assess gender-specific behaviour and interactions between children in early childhood centres had the consequence that some of the teachers participating in the project Gender Loops wanted to verify their assumptions by observing interactions between girls and boys. In one case the observation had the consequence that teachers developed a gender-sensitive project. After filling in the questionnaire to assess gender-specific behaviour and interactions the teacher Susanne came to the conclusion that only the older boys use the building corner and that the girls have no interest in building.

However, after completing the questionnaire, Susanne realised that the question whether only older boys use the building corner was still on her mind. She decided to closely observe the building corner over a period of two weeks. Two times a day she observed the building corner for 10 minutes respectively and made notes on which children use the building corner in which way. During one of these observation sequences she observed how 3-year old Finja watches several 5-year old boys go about building a Lego aeroplane. After a short while, Finja sits down beside the boys and starts to take Lego blocks from the box and put them together. When one of the older boys recognises Finja he says harshly: "Go away, girls aren't allowed to play in the building corner". As a consequence, Finja drops the Lego blocks and leaves the building corner.

The observation gave Susanne the opportunity to verify her assumption and to make herself a more exact picture of the children and their needs. The observation also led to a building project. After telling her colleagues about the observed situation in the building corner, Susanne and her team decided to plan a building activity day on which girls and boys may build "flying objects" separately from one another under the instruction of the teachers.

The example of "Finja and her interest in the building corner" shows that teachers repeatedly "miss seeing" individual children with their gender-atypical interests in stressful day-to-day life and assign them to their respective gender groups. In their perception they assign Finja to the girls, who are not interested in building. The example also shows that children develop their own ideas of girls and boys and sometimes will not accept deviating girls or boys behaviour. In this case, the older boys "ban" Finja from the building corner. teachers can often only trace the individual interests and exclusion mechanisms of children through detailed observation.



2.3. Video analysis tool to analyse personal pedagogical practice

The Norwegian partner recorded situations in which teachers interact with children. Afterwards the Norwegian partner and the teachers analysed the video sequences with a “Gender Analysis Questionnaire”. A more detailed description of the Norwegian video analysis project and the gender-analysis questionnaire you will find on our website.

Example description of a gender-specific video analysis

In this video analysis project the Norwegian partner focused on situations where teachers interact with children. In an analysis meeting the Norwegian partner and the teachers reflected upon the gender-stereotype attitudes and behaviour as well as possible alternative pedagogical practices.

The video camera was placed as a surveillance camera. The Norwegian partner used a wide angle to get the whole room and an external microphone to obtain clear sound for analysis. The camera was turned on before the situation began and turned off after the situation was over. Normally the video sequences took between 10 to 20 minutes. Afterwards the video sequences were analysed using the following five steps:

First analysis step: Pedagogical Goals and Context

In a first step the teachers describe the pedagogical goals they had when their practice was filmed and the context in which the pedagogical setting took place.

Example analysis questions:

- Which aims did you have as an teacher in this situation?
- What have you and the children been doing before the five minutes we are going to watch?

Second analysis step:

Protagonists and General Framework

In a second step the analysis group describes the behaviour of the teachers and the general framework of the respective situations to find a “common language” and to guarantee that the group is speaking about the same situation.

Example analysis questions:

- Is there a general pattern in the way the protagonists act? Which role do the protagonists play?
- How do the protagonists use body language, voice and express themselves through their clothing and appearance.

Third analysis step:

Production of Gender Related Statistics

In a third step the analysis group produce gender statistics, counting for example actions, movements and behaviour of teachers and children.

Example analysis question:

- Do girls and boys receive the same amount of compliments, attention, physical contact, or affirmative response to their questions?

In one of the analysed video sequences, in which children perform well known songs in their own way and an teacher plays the role of the TV-host, the Norwegian partner counted for example how often girls and boys were introduced by the TV-host and how often they got a positive response from the TV-host when they were done.

Fourth analysis step: Gender Patterns

In a fourth step the analysis group analyses whether the teachers and children show specific gender patterns

Example analysis question:

- Do teachers behave differently towards girls and boys in comparable situations?

In one of the video sequences, in which children eat together, the analysis group interprets that the girls are sitting closer to the adults than the boys and that they know the social codes to get the adult’s attention.

Fifth analysing step: Gender Images

In a fifth step the analysis group analyses and discusses the question “what have children learned about being a boy or being a girl?”

Example analysis questions:

- How do you think the children experience the situation?
- What could we assume that the children learned about being a boy/man or being a girl/women in this situation?

In one of the video sequences, in which girls and boys perform a short shadow play, the analysis group analyses and interprets the sequence in the following way:

The performing boys seemed to be more off-task from the story, and more insecure than the girls. It seemed also that the boys got more help from the teacher. After this interpretation the analysing group discussed the question if the boys should have had more space and therefore greater responsibility. That a greater degree of space would have given possibilities for another kind of learning for the boys?

Finally, the analysis group point out what they think the teachers did well and what the teachers should have done in another way.

Chapter 3

Acting pedagogically: examples, methods and projects



The following gender-sensitive methods, projects and examples were used in several early childhood centres in the testing phase of the Gender Loops project. We subdivided these methods, projects and examples into four different thematic blocks.

In the first thematic block “Participation of children” we describe practises and project activities which show examples of how teachers could work with girls and boys on the topic “Being a girl/being a boy”

In the second thematic block “Picture Books, Stories and Fairy Tales” we show how teachers could use picture books, stories and fairy tales in a gender-sensitive way

In the third thematic block “Games” we describe methods and project activities which could give children the opportunity to participate in gender-atypical games and activities.

In the fourth thematic block “Work with Parents” we make suggestions for a gender-sensitive practice with parents and fathers

3.1. Participation of children Gender Images of girls and boys

Squirrels eat flies

It is just before nine o'clock in the morning and Nils' father is bringing him to his pre-school group. His father takes one of the teachers aside briefly and tells her about a discussion that Nils and he had had the previous afternoon. The father tells her that Nils is convinced that squirrels eat flies. He tried to convince Nils that squirrels eat acorns and nuts, but not insects. To this, Nils replied that he didn't believe his father because Michaela, one of the girls in his group, told him that squirrels eat flies and that, as girls are cleverer than boys, it must be true.

A few hours later, in the same group, a fight breaks out between Michaela and Tom. Both of the children seem to be equally strong as neither one of them is able to gain the upper hand. Then Tom suddenly shouts that Michaela would never be able to win, because boys are stronger than girls. At this point, Michaela stops fighting.

Project: “Images of girls and images of boys” or “Are boys really stronger but more stupid?”

This example shows that children (in pre-school educational groups) already think about the subject of “being a girl or a boy”. They think about girls and boys and develop their own “gender theories”. Children talk to one another about what, in their opinion, girls and boys are good at or not good at, or about what it is better for them to do or not to do.

However, the example also shows that children influence each other in the way they act according to the images of girls and boys that are prevalent in their groups. The boy defends his opinion that squirrels eat flies by arguing that girls are cleverer. The girl stops fighting with a boy after he has told her that boys are stronger than girls.

Gender-reflective practices can take up (these) images of girls and boys and work through them with the children to resolve clichés.

Practical example 1

Taking up the images of girls and boys and putting them on the educational agenda – practical example from the early childhood centre ‘Waldspielhaus’

The idea that boys are stronger, but girls cleverer was also prevalent in a mixed-aged group in the early childhood centre ‘Waldspielhaus’. The teachers there took up this “topic about girls and boys” and started a project which lasted several weeks. Their aim was to de-construct these stereotypical gender images.

In the **Waldspielhaus** pre-school educational group, the project titled ‘Are girls really more intelligent than boys?’ started with the question “How can something like that even be measured?”

In this **first phase** of the project, the children, together with the teachers, were able to measure their own height, the length of sticks or the circumference of trees using a measuring tape. Together, the group then considered what other possibilities there are for measuring dimensions. Lots of ideas were put forward. For example, the children measured the sizes of their bodies and shoes by lying down on the ground and lining up shoes next to themselves. In this way, one child was seven shoes and another child eight and a half shoes large.

In the **second phase** of the project, the children were to find out how heavy they are. This gave rise to the idea of weighing all sorts of things. The children then brought different scales from home and weighed various objects and tried to read the weights from the scales.

In the **third phase**, strengths were measured. To do this, everybody decided on a set of rules so that a fair fight was possible. The children decided among themselves that nipping and biting was not allowed. One

of the first games to measure strength was tug-of-war. First of all, the girls competed against the boys. To the boys’ great surprise, the girls won the first time. After that, the groups were mixed and remixed several times in order to measure themselves again at tug-of-war. The children then measured themselves at throwing the sack, throwing a medicine ball and at wrestling.

When two of the children still wanted to maintain that boys were stronger and girls cleverer, the teachers acted out a small play to the children in the **fourth phase** using two rabbit puppets, Paul and Lisa, who argued with one another about who was stronger or cleverer. During the course of the play, they then thought about who was particularly good at something and ended with the sentence: “Everybody is something special; one person is good at something and the other person good at another thing, no matter whether they’re a girl or a boy”. After the play had been performed, the children talked about what they like doing and what they are particularly good at.

In the **fifth and last phase**, Lisa the hand puppet came to visit. Lisa is only four years old and she goes to her pre-school group every day. “Lisa also has strengths and weaknesses. One of her strengths is that she knows a lot about lots of different things and the children can learn a lot from her. However, Lisa still doesn’t know all the colours and sometimes she can’t pronounce certain words properly. The children help her with these things and Lisa enjoys this. Together, they learn that helping one another is more fun than laughing at one another.” (Gabi/Renate)

In the project assessment, the teachers emphasise that the conflicts between the girls and boys were defused and that the girls and boys played together more harmoniously.

Practical example 2

Surveys among girls and boys

As part of the Gender Loops project, we asked four-year-olds about their views of girls and boys.

This can also act as a chance to learn about the images the children have of girls and boys and to start up a discussion with them about this subject.

However, we also experienced that not all children are able to or want to talk about what being a girl or being a boy means to them. Children between 5 and 6 years of age are possibly more accessible and more able when it comes to talking about “gender topics”.

Over a period of several days, we questioned individual children and groups of two to three children from a group of 26. We carried out the surveys with the help of a hand puppet. The puppet’s name was Mox, it came from another planet and was on earth for the first time.

Mox was particularly interested in finding out whether it was true that there are girls and boys on earth and how you could tell them apart.

Mox asked the children the following questions:

Is it true that there are girls and boys on earth?

Can you tell whether a child is a girl or a boy?

Is there anything that girls are not allowed to do or to wear?

Is there anything that boys are not allowed to do or to wear?

Is there anything that girls don't like at all?

Is there anything that boys don't like at all?

Is there anything that girls especially like to play?

Is there anything that boys especially like to play?

Is there anything that girls and boys like to play or do?

Is there anything that girls can do better than boys?

Is there anything that boys can do better than girls?

Is there anything that girls and boys are equally good at?

During the interview, we also picked up on the “gender topics” that arose from the children’s group and asked them about these. The children in this group, for example, were predominantly of the opinion that boys do not wear hair clips and that girls do not want to play at being knights or pirates. So, we asked the children whether they believed that and whether they maybe knew some boys who wear hair clips or girls who liked to play at being knights or pirates.

The assessment of this interview project was mixed. As mentioned above, not all of the children were able to deal with the questions, it was too much for them or they were simply not interested in the questions. However, there were also children who were open to the interview situation. We found a discussion with one of the boys particularly moving: he told us that he would like to tell us a secret, but we had to promise not to tell the other children in the group about it, because he was afraid that the other children would laugh at him. The boy then went on to tell us that he liked trying on girls’ clothes at home, but that he would never dare to do this in his pre-school group.

It was also interesting to hear how different the images the children had of girls and boys were. Some of the children had very clear and fixed ideas about girls and boys, while others were far less fixed in their ideas and were much more able to make the idea of girls who play at being knights, for example, fit into their view of the world.

The teacher who took part in the interviews also reported that some of them had led him to a new awareness of the children.

Practical Example 3

Video interviews with girls and boys about their gender images

In an early childhood centre we interviewed girls and boys with a video camera in gender separated groups regarding their images they have about girls and boys. The group interviews lasted about ten to fifteen minutes.

We asked the children to sit in a circle and we placed the camera in the middle. Then we started to ask them what it means to be a boy or a girl, how it is possible to identify a girl or a boy, what boys and girls like, what they do best and some more questions (see also the questions from our practical example 2). We tried to keep turns so as to allow them all to express themselves and their opinions in front of the camera. There were some interesting comments such as the case of a girl who liked playing football with the boys when she was smaller and stopped playing now that she was older, although she still liked football. There were also boys who said they were interested in doing things that girls normally do such as dressing up as a princess.

Then we put the boys and girls together and showed them the recordings. They enjoyed this a lot. They saw themselves and laughed. The boys saw what the girls thought and the girls saw what the boys thought. This made them think about certain aspects of gender and see whether they coincided with their own comments or not. For example both the boys and the girls described and distinguished boys from girls because of their sexual organs: boys have a penis and girls have a vulva

Practical Example 4

Teachers deal with the topic “gender segregation” doing a role play

The Myrer- Kanvas Early Childhood Centre in Norway does work among several other early childhood centres with an interesting method. After lunch the children aged three to six get together for a social competence role play. The teachers, the assistants and the children have adequate time to share their experiences about being together and having a good time together. The teachers typically base their role play subjects on what they consider most relevant for the children. The role play is usually used for the dialogue and interaction with the children.

In our example the teachers performed a role play about the topic “gender separation”.

An teacher had observed that the boys and the girls where playing a lot of the time in gender separate groups. He wanted to open this up so that the children could learn and experience together across the gender specific borderlines. That was a topic he wanted to bring into the meetings. In the role play two female teachers play together, and the male teacher tries to join in, but

doesn't get allowed to do so. The teacher passes on his experience of rejection, and asks the children what he and the others should do.

The role play was used as a starting point to talk with the children about playing together, and if girls and boys can play together. They were discussing in which situations girls and boys like to play together, and in which situations they don't. And which games girls prefer to play and which games boys prefer to play.

The children were very enthusiastic and participating during the conversation. Later on it was clear that the children had gained conceptions and a reflection about playing together with girls and boys. The staff also thought that the children now included the other gender in their games to a greater extent.

- The concept is suitable for groups between five to fifteen children who are between three to six years old.
- Choose and prepare in advance a relevant (for the children) gender topic and prepare a role play.
- Make connections to the children's everyday life by comments about what you have seen observing them. For example. "Earlier today I saw Ulrik and Elias played together, and then Therese came, do you remember? It was good that you..."
- Ask the children questions about; what they would have done in this case? and what the role players should do now? Ask them to express experiences and emotions during the role play
- Use their feedback to change the role play, opening the challenge and giving the children experiences of mastering the situations.
- Encourage the children to do the same role play and mirror the same action pattern

3.2. Picture Books, Stories and Fairy Tales

3.2.1. Gender Images in Picture Books

Captain Crinklebeard and the female pirate Wild Berta

"Captain Crinklebeard was the terror of the seas. His ship, the "Bloody Herring" thrust its way through the waves faster than the wind. Whenever Crinklebeard appeared on the horizon, the honest sailors were so scared that they shivered and shook like jelly."

At this point, Finja always interrupts her father, who is reading out of the picture book "Captain Crinklebeard and his Gang" to his three-year-old daughter and interjects in a decisive tone with: "That's not true. Wild Berta is even more dangerous than Captain Crinklebeard."

"Captain Crinklebeard" has been one of Finja's favourite books for some months now. While the family were on holiday, Finja insisted that the story where Crinklebeard and his gang kidnap Molly, and force her to work on their pirate ship until her mother, Wild Berta, comes and frees her, be read at least 20 times a day. After Finja brought the book to her pre-school group and the teachers there read the story of Captain Crinklebeard and his gang several times to the other children, Wild Berta also 'joined' Finja's pre-school group and became an integral part of the imagination and fantasy of the other children.

The picture book Captain Crinklebeard challenges gender stereotyped pirate stories and offers not only boys but especially girls strong, assertive and self-confident characters they can identify with. Captain Crinklebeard, Molly and the pirate Wild Berta animate Finja and other girls to experiment with "rougher behaviour"

From the age of about 2 ½ years, children start to learn the meaning of symbols. In this process, children learn that pictures can act as symbols for other (real) objects which are able to provide them with additional information about the world. Picture books can open up the way for children to address topics and knowledge which they would not otherwise gain access. As children are mostly able to correctly assign their own gender and the gender of other children and adults from the age of three, this also means that people and animals who are shown in picture books are seen by the children as symbols for girls, boys, women and men. In this way, children understand the activities, body language, and the ways men and women move and express themselves in the picture book as symbolic descriptions of actual men and women. Together with other media, parents, teachers and peer groups, picture books therefore occupy an authoritative position in the children's



socialisation via which children gain knowledge about girls, boys, women and men.

According to different authors and media, these picture books and their content also contribute towards how children find their own identities. The stories and images in picture books act for the children as a “mine” or “construction site” in their own search for an identity and help them find their way in their everyday lives (see Bachmaier 1989; Paul-Haas 1998 after Ingrid Paus-Hasebrink).

This naturally also applies to the girls’ and boys’ search for a sexual identity. Susanne Keunert (2000, 52) writes, for example, that the way “media are dealt with (...) must be regarded as an additional stage upon which the tasks involved in (gender)-socialisation can be played out”.

You will find a check-list on our website to assess the gender images in picture books. With this check-list, we would like to give you the chance to take a critical gender-related look at the picture books you work with on a daily basis. On the other hand, we also want to recommend picture books that can support girls and boys in developing their gender identities. With this check-list, we would like to give you the chance to take a critical gender-related look at the picture books you work with on a daily basis. On the other hand, we also want to recommend picture books that can support girls and boys in developing their gender identities.

3.2.2. Gender Role change in Stories and Fairy Tales

In traditional stories and fairy tales the wolves and dragons are bad, princes are brave and princesses wait passively to be rescued.

The idea of this method is to change the roles in traditional stories or fairy tales that most children already know and then to discuss the changed story with the children.

In an early childhood centre in Barcelona the Spanish partner presented three year old children the fairy tale of Saint George with changed gender roles. Most Catalan children know this fairy tale. The fairy tale is about a village which is once a year threatened by a dragon. Every year when the dragon threatens the village, the villagers sacrifice one person so that the dragon leaves them in peace for a while. One day the princess was chosen to be sacrificed. So the village called upon Saint George who could beat the dragon and save the princess from danger. At the place where Saint George killed the dragon a rose grew. For that reason some men still present their beloved women a rose on the 23th of April.

Male dragons are much worse than female ones

Once the fairy tale of Saint George is explained, with clear characters, the Spanish partner invited the children to play the story in the new roles: a female dragon that terrorised a town, a prince which is an offering from the town to pacify the dragon and a brave Saint Georgina who rescues the poor prince from the clutches of the dragon.

After acting out the gender role-changed story several times we asked the children, “who is worst the male or female dragon?” All the children, boys & girls, answered that the male dragon was worst. Then we asked “who was bravest, St George or St Georgina?” Most of the children replied that St George was bravest. The children’s teacher was very surprised by the extent that these three year old children had already interiorised such established values related to the gender roles. Even having enjoyed playing the roles actively in the gender role-changed story, the interiorised values relating to the traditional characters were not changed or questioned.

This exercise had most impact on the teacher who became much more aware of how a series of gender roles and values are transmitted through traditional stories. Use of this method enables the exploration and discussion of values and roles in the characters of other fairy tales and stories. After using the method, the teachers facilitated discussion about how the female dragon could be as bad as the male one and how St Georgina could be just as brave as St George

The method

- Read an original traditional story or fairy tale the children know well (for example Red Riding hood) and briefly name the gendered characteristics of the roles. With older children get them to do this description of roles directly
- Together with the children explore and describe the characteristics of the main roles. Older children might write the characteristics of each role on the board
- Read the story with the gendered roles reversed. Ask the children to pay attention to any difference - but do not say anything until the story is finished. It is possible that there will be resistance to any change in a very familiar story over which the children feel ‘ownership’ and on which they already base some of their gender identity. Teachers might have to gently insist here – that it is an exploratory game
- Invite the children to play the story in the reversed gender roles. For example with ‘Red riding hood’ – girls play the wolf and boys are Red riding hood. Again a little resistance might be

found at the beginning so gentle insistence and support can be required to get them into the reversed roles. (Once into the roles children generally have fun in this game).

- Discuss what is different for the children. Did they discover anything in the different roles? With older age group we can come back to each changed role to see how everyone sees this ‘character’ – powerful active girls and passive sensitive boys. Are there some advantages in these changes?
- Invite them to do a free drawing of the story and hang the pictures in the early childhood centre. Maybe the pictures can be a starting point to talk with the parents about gender stereotypes.

3.2.3. Two princes fall in love with each other – To talk about diversity and sexual orientation with children in early childhood centres

An teacher reads to children the picture book “King and King”. In this picture book a queen wants her son to marry a princess so that she can retire. The mother organises rendezvous with princesses from far away places but the prince doesn’t like any of them. Until in the end he falls in love with the brother of a princess he has been introduced to. The two princes get married and become King and King. “It was love at first sight. What a handsome prince!”

teacher: “*Do you know what has happened?*”

Several girls and boys: “*Yes, they are in love*”

A boy: “*ey are gay!*”

teacher: “*Did you like the story?*”

A girl: “*I didn’t (...) I want him to marry the princess. She’s so pretty.*”

A boy: “*I went to a wedding where two women got married.*”

The conversation continues around the wedding where two lesbian friends of his parents got married.

This transcription of one of the sexual orientation sessions using the presentation of a story gives us an idea of the possible responses we are likely to come across: on the one hand we can see the normality with which some boys/girls live sexual orientation, and on the other hand we feel the learned homophobia and reluctance to address this (in the family, the media and inside the school) which we may come across. Precisely for this reason, in order to prevent homophobia from taking root we need to work on methodologies that normalise the sexual diversity in society and make it visible.

Early childhood learning centres are heteronormative

The early childhood centre is a predominantly heterosexual institution. Many homosexual and lesbian teachers never come out of the closet because they are afraid other people will think they are not a “good example” for the boys and girls. Furthermore, there is an almost institutionalised prejudice which regards homosexual adults that have contact with children as potential child molesters. Many parents think that a homosexual, lesbian, transsexual or bisexual teacher might publicise their “cause” and influence the boys and girls.

The introduction of sexual diversity in early childhood centres was a priori, one of the complicated issues of the Gender Loops project. On the one hand, because there are few prior experiences in this area or appropriate materials for this stage of education. And secondly, on a personal level we weren't sure about how the teachers, authorities, the children and the parents would respond.

When we presented our idea to work on sexual orientation with the picture book “King and King” in one of the early childhood centres we cooperated with the teachers reacted differently. Some of them were curious and wanted to know the picture book “King and King”. Other teachers expressed their misgivings about how the parents would react. Some arguments put forward in favour of introducing sexual orientation in all the centres were that there is an increasingly visible presence of homosexual fathers and mothers. This situation had not arisen in any of the centres involved in the project but the teachers were aware that sooner or later they would have a boy/girl with homosexual parents and that they should be prepared to deal with the issue.

The method

- Find and analyse materials to work on sexual diversity in the early childhood education phase. Although materials are being created they are not targeted at this age group. What we did find were a considerable amount of stories (on the website). The majority of these stories referred to boys/girls who have parents of the same gender. There is still little material that deals with sexual diversity for boys and girls
- Make overhead transparencies from the story “King and King” or another picture book dealing with sexual diversity. We chose “King and King” because it is a simple story that boys and girls could understand, with a classical fairy tale structure and a surprising ending.
- Present the story to the children, projecting the overhead transparencies on the wall or on a screen.
- This form of presentation helps to focus the children's attention on the story. It also facilitates debate and comments about the drawings and contents that appear on the screen. The children are allowed to make comments during the projection and are asked questions about the drawings and the story that is being presented. At this point there maybe reactions to the story that is being told and even homophobia. In the centres where we applied this method we came across some of these reactions. One boy said “how disgusting” when the two princes kissed each other in the mouth in the final scene. Another girl didn't understand why the prince didn't marry the princess because she was so beautiful.
Generally speaking, the most “homophobic” attitudes were in centres with a lower middle class profile, whereas there was more tolerance in middle class and upper middle class centres. In one of these centres one of the boys said that they were “gay” and another explained that he had been to a wedding between two women. This is not a class issue but middle class families with a high level of education are likely to have more direct contact with homosexual people. So the boys/girls of these families who grow up in this environment regard diverse sexual orientation in a more normal way:
- Once the story presentation has finished the boys and girls are asked to draw on a sheet of paper what they liked the most or found most interesting. While they are drawing the teacher can comment on and clarify some aspects of the story. When we asked the children to draw pictures we also found a certain amount of reticence. There were especially boys who didn't want to

and ask the children who drew them to explain what they have drawn. This is also a good time to clarify any queries and talk about sexual orientation.

3.3. Games

3.3.1. Gender-sensitive pedagogy in gender separated groups¹

In many early childhood centres we could observe that the boys were often more active, competitive and alert whereas the girls took often on a more submissive and passive role. We asked ourselves whether girls and boys might like to exchange behaviour.

Therefore we decided to work in one of the early childhood centres in Barcelona with two year old children in gender separated groups. In the boys group we wanted to work on topics like emotions, contact, and feelings. In the girls' group we wanted to work on aspects such as activity, risk, assertiveness and self confidence.

As we wanted to give girls and boys the opportunity to express to the other gender group what they had done in their gender separated groups we brought girls and boys together after each sessions. Usually the gender separated sessions lasted 45 minutes and the mixed sessions around 15 minutes.

The ideal thing would be to schedule one of these sessions weekly throughout the school year. The more time that is spent working on gender compensation the more it will affect the values and attitudes of the boys and girls.

Another factor that should be taken into account is the consent of parents. They must be informed about these activities and even participate, as far as possible.

At the beginning

Before we started our work in gender separated groups, we explained what we wanted to do to the children and we invited them to divide themselves up into gender groups: boys on one side and the girls on the other. It was interesting to observe that at that age practically all of them had a notion of what it was to be a boy or a girl and they divided themselves correctly into the group that corresponded to them.

The work with the boys

The work with the boys took place in a closed and quiet space. The sessions focused on exploring feelings

¹ See. Vega Navarro, A. (2005); Mette Kruse, A. (1996) ; Tim Rohrmann (2008)

through dance, music, drawings. We did work on physical contact, massage and the senses. We used stories where the male characters could be brave or afraid. We promoted activities that are normally assigned to the feminine world such as looking after babies, cooking, ironing, etc. We used costumes to give them a chance to explore with characters and identities of different genders.

The work with the girls

With the girls the work was basically done outdoors. They played with balls, football or similar sports. They were encouraged to overcome obstacles, to climb up ropes and steps. We also worked with stories where the female characters were assertive and strong.

The common work with boys and girls

After each session we worked with girls and boys together. We asked them to explain (with words or with drawings) to the other gender group what they had done and how they felt. Even with two year olds these joint sessions were very interesting and it helped them to share what they had done.

Evaluation

Our experience was too short to provide us with an assessment of the results of gender compensation. However, during the time we carried out the experience we observed significant progress in the girls. There were spectacular cases of very shy girls who at first did not want to take part in the physical activities or in the games with balls and trucks. During the sessions these girls gradually acquired self confidence and self-esteem, not only in the compensation sessions but also during normal group activities. On the other hand, with the boys we also observed that they related more naturally with traditionally feminine activities. They spontaneously played with babies or at ironing much more than they had prior to the sessions².

3.3.2. Girls don't like computers! Do girls like computers? – Stories to question gender roles

In a group of 5 year olds in one of the early childhood centres where we carried out our observations it was evident that the boys were more 'present' than the girls. The boys monopolised the space, being more vocal and active in response to questions and new activities. In this class there were more boys than girls, and initially we

questioned whether this greater presence was to their numeric majority. The girls generally made fewer and more timid interventions.

One day whilst we were observing as the children were finishing an activity, a boy went and occupied the only computer in the class. The computer has games and drawing programmes for this age group. As other children were finishing the previous activity several boys went appoint themselves on the list to play on the computer next. During this period no girls went near the computer or to put themselves on the waiting list. We asked the teacher about this and she said that the girls usually don't go near the computer and that they are not really interested in it. Our feeling was that the boys monopolised the computer without any concept that the girls might want to use it, "symbolically" excluding the girls. .

This observation, alongside others in the same centre, led us to conclude that it was necessary to realise activities which would lead the children to question gender stereotypes in their play. We invented and carried out the "Story to question gender roles" method in those centres where we saw very defined gender roles in the children's play.

Within the scope of the method we told children a story about their gendered experience, including both comfortable and uncomfortable experiences of this from the previous observations, first in a mixed and then in gender separate groups. Then, in the story, a wizard or a witch respectively came to the children and offers to magically change things for them. The children then tell the wizard/the witch three wishes what they would like to change.

The Method

Invent and tell a simple story that describes some of the existing 'gender experience and possible conflicts or stresses' of the children in the early childhood centre, with teachers and in their families. Make distance from their current lives by placing the story 'far away and long ago'. Describe boys and girls gendered lives and how they are sometimes comfortable with this and at other times uncomfortable. Part of the story could be as follows:

The boys play at running about, football, games about fighting and killing each other. Sometimes the boys wanted to stop running about and would rather play with the dolls, or with the girls. Sometimes they wanted more kisses and cuddles but were afraid to ask in case they were made fun of. And some other things that sometimes made the boys unhappy..... The fathers & male teachers would often be absent or angry children want them closer and more relaxed ...

The girls play with taking care of dolls, treating their

² A similar evaluation of gender compensation sessions with separate groups but over a span of ten years can be seen in Vega Navarro (2005). According to this and other similar experiences the girls are more receptive to the changes than boys, although changes in gender behaviour were noted in over 20% of the boys who participated in this type of experiences.

sicknesses, solving their problems talking with other girls. Sometimes the girls wanted to run about, shout more and get dirty like the boys. Sometimes they wanted to actively stop the boys fighting and shouting and get their help in The mothers & female teachers would often be too close and not let them take risks the...

One day a good witch and wizard, who could satisfy wishes, came to visit the town

Invite the children you are working with to suggest things they should change for themselves in the story to the witch and the wizard.

Then tell the children you are working with that the witch and the wizard also would like to make magic for them in gender separated groups. Then take the children into separate gender groups and let the wizard or the witch respectively appear (for example teachers could dress up as a witch/wizard or bring a hand puppet which symbolize a witch/wizard).

Then the witch/wizard asks the children what they would change within their early childhood centre. When there are a lot of different things children would like to change you can propose that they have three wishes as a group and have to agree on them. Help the children to discuss their suggestions so as to agree on just three wishes.

As soon as the children have decided upon their wishes, the witch/wizard 'magically' satisfies the wishes (as far as possible) and the children can now play or do (gender-atypical) new activities and games, role playing the changes in their separate groups.

It is useful to have support at each of the stages above: pictures in telling the story, then equipment in the spaces where the two groups work; boys might need some dolls and dressing up clothes, girls might need a space where they can run about with balls and make noise

Then the groups come together and they show the changes to the other group. Ask the children how they experienced the magic sessions.

It can be useful to go further and negotiate agreements between the groups and ask 'what magic help they need to maintain the changes', from whom?

In the following days and weeks you can refer to the story and the new magic in a range of moments:

- Paint and write aspects of the story, magic and changes to put up on the wall
- Have other periods of play where they are supported to challenge old behaviours and reinforce and practice the new magic solutions.

Experiences with the method

An important and empowering factor here is that the children take some responsibility at every stage; in defining their problems, in exploring and rehearsing

changes, and then in negotiating and implementing new agreements with each other.

We also carried out the method in the early childhood centre where only the boys used the computer. After working in gender separated groups the children meet again together to speak about their experiences. Then the girls complained that the boys dominated the computer and that they couldn't get access to play on it. The boys took this complaint seriously and agreed that, wherever possible, the computer would be occupied by a girl and boy together. We never expected this result.

We carried out this method several times, and in each of the groups where we carried out this method we found some boys who wanted to dress as a princess, play with dolls and care for babies. In one early childhood centre the girls wanted to do more active sports play with a ball. They organised a football game between themselves in the main area of the playground. Our method allowed them, as well as the others, to explore and express themselves through activities usually denied to their gender.

3.3.3. How does this feel? Costumes and Gender Role Change

My brother likes wearing skirts!

During a video interview with a five year old girl she explained to us in a low voice like when you are telling someone a secret, that her little brother who was four years old wore her dresses. She said she didn't like him wearing her dresses because he dirtied them. But the impression we got by the way she was telling us was that there was something "bad" or "abnormal" about this.

When we asked the boys/girls to explain what a boy or girl was, they always mentioned the type of clothes they use and adornments and accessories. Boys wear trousers and have short hair and girls wear skirts, dresses and have long hair. Clothes and accessories form part of identification with one gender or the other and they are generally very clearly delimited

However, in all the centres where we implemented methods we came across, in one way or another, a certain desire to transgress assigned gender by taking on symbols (clothes, accessories) of the other gender. In a costume session, many two year old boys wore a skirt and danced. This wasn't an isolated event. The teacher commented to us that some boys were "crazy about skirts". In the interviews some boys told us that they would like to dress up as a princess or have long hair. There were girls who normally wore trousers and had short hair.

So some boys and girls experimented, or wanted to do so, with gender identity whereas others, the majority, had a very clear idea about the items of clothing which defined them as a boy or girl and weren't very keen to transgress them.

In the Spanish early childhood centre CEIP Agora we developed together with the teachers a cross-dressing workshop which gives children the opportunity to cross “gender borders” without being reminded by the group that this isn’t appropriate.

The Method

In the early childhood centre CEIP Agora all boys and girls like dressing up. In all group rooms there is a dress up costumes chest which is used to interpret characters, to play and represent their fantastic and real world. Normally when the children use the costumes chest they tend to choose clothes and characters assigned to their gender. They do this either because they like to play gender stereotyped role plays or they haven’t the heart to cross gender borders in front of the other children.

The cross-dressing workshop aims to give children the opportunity to experience multifaceted gender roles.

The first step is to get together a substantial number of costumes and items of clothing. Construct characters with the available costumes that can be identified with masculine and feminine characters. Create as many characters as there are boys and girls in class. Write the name of each character you have assigned a costume to on pieces of paper (princess, witch, prince, police, etc.). Each boy and girl is then asked to choose a piece of paper at random with the name of a character. In this way their costume is determined by random choice.

The boys and girls then put on the costume that they have chosen and for a little while will live the experience of representing a character that may or may not be related to their gender. Some boys may have to dress up as a princess and some girls as a daddy.

The boys and girls are left to play freely with their assigned identities. Finally, the teacher asks them to draw the costume or character that they chose and asks them whether they liked representing it or not and why.

3.3.4. Coeducational children’s play areas

In most of the early childhood education centres there are so called childrens’ play areas (Lobato, E. - 2005), like for example the dolls’ corner or the building corner. Girls and boys tend to use these play areas gender-typically. There we often see girls playing with dolls, rehearsing and reproducing the way mothers care for their babies or cooking and cleaning the house whereas the boys build, fight and have big adventures.

These “life rehearsals” which the boys and girls act out in the play corners help them to consolidate the idea of what is masculine and what is feminine. Hence, these play areas are places where one can intervene from a coeducational perspective to try and broaden ideas and identities around masculine and feminine.

Below we describe how Spanish and Austrian early childhood centres developed strategies to use childrens’

play areas for a gender pedagogical intervention:

First strategy: Redesigning the play corners

At one of the early childhood centres that took part in the project the teachers were trying out a system for intervening in a coeducational sense in these play corners, with quite a lot of success. The teachers replaced traditional play corners like the home corner, the building corner, the hospital corner, etc, by more “modern” corners like the office corner, the restaurant corner, the animal’s corner, etc.

The teachers also changed the names of some play corners to adapt to a more egalitarian reality that could include both boys and girls. For example the doll’s corner became the baby care corner, the mechanic’s garage became the “taller de mecánicos y mecánicas” (garage for male and female mechanics) to include boys and girls. And finally, the teachers added materials to the dress up costumes chest, the stories corner and the puppet theatre, which facilitated more egalitarian participation. They bought coeducational stories, masquerade costumes and puppets which steered clear of traditional gender stereotypes and roles. The idea was to come up with varied play options which include feminine and masculine but that are mostly gender neutral areas.

Second strategy: Play corner rotation

In another early childhood centre play corner games were organised two days a week. The teachers came up with a system whereby all the boys and girls got to play once in each game corner. The system fostered mixed groups, avoiding play groups constituted along gender lines. Furthermore, the teacher must be on the alert and intervene whenever they observe differential behaviours, putting forward other options that broaden the conceptions of the boys and girls. For example in the house corner they can suggest that the father cook or take the children to school.

Third strategy: Abolition of the play corners

In Vienna the early childhood centre fun&care abolished the doll’s and the building’s corner. The teachers put the material from these two play corners in several containers with wheels. (Frauenbüro Stadt Wien/ Orner, D. et al (Hg.) - 2003)

Now the children can roll their play materials to wherever they want to play. This give several children’s groups the opportunity to play with dolls or to construct buildings at the same time in different areas of the group rooms. Girls and boys can’t be banned so easily from play areas like Finja from the building corner (see chapter 3.)

3.3.5. Gender equitable use of playgrounds

“It’s play time. The playground is divided in two, an area with dirt and swings and an area with cement

with football goal posts and basketball nets. There are benches and some tables on the side of these spaces. The two central areas are connected by a covered area, a porch that isn't very big. The first thing that draws one's attention are the boys' games. A group of them is playing with two small bicycles. Two boys are seated on each bicycle as three more boys push it along a path across the dirt playground. The bikes pick up speed and occasionally crash into a large iron gate that separates the playground from the street. Motorcycling races and accidents come to mind. The bicycles are creating a big stir because all the boys want to get on them and there is a lot of pushing and shoving. A teacher intervenes and gets them to agree to take turns on the bikes. In the cemented area the boys are playing football.

Where are the girls? They are scattered on the sides, playing in the sand, talking on the benches and they are on the swings." (English translation from the field-work logbook, CEIP Agora, 6/10/2007)

This observation of an teacher from the early childhood centre CEIP Agora is seen also in many other early childhood centres. (Subirats, M. Tomé, A. - 2007)

Various observations and research initiatives into the use of space by boys and girls have pointed to the fact that it is used unequally. In general the boys occupy the centre spaces whereas the girls play on the sides. The type of games that boys usually play, such as ball games, require a lot of space whereas girls' games do not need so much space. Space is therefore a place where boys and girls represent the unequal gender distribution of resources. This distribution which they rehearse and apply comes from the way society (family, school, communication media) instructs them. In general boys are encouraged to play football. Girls are not encouraged to take up football or most sports.

On top of this, observations have shown that boys and girls do not usually play together, among other things because this is not promoted or because they are not familiar with alternative games where they can cooperate with each other.

Practical example

The early childhood centre CEIP Agora which works with children between 3 to 12 years focused in its' gender-sensitive practice on the use of space from girls and boys. After having observed the playground of the early childhood centre over a longer period the teachers realized that the boys use most of the playground.

Thereupon the teachers planned to promote co-operation between girls and boys and the more equitable use of the playground. So the teachers decided to ban ball games two days a week. They explained to the boys and girls that on these two days without balls they would be taught other types of games that they could play. With the help of their teachers the children from

the senior class (12 year olds) made cards with the rules of a series of cooperative team games. The games were then classified according to their degree of difficulty, as suitable for the early childhood stage, first class, the middle stream and the upper stream. Once the cards were ready they introduced one of the games every week at play time. At the beginning the older children showed the younger ones how to play. They retrieved games with ropes, elastics, handkerchiefs, imitation, movement, chasing and coordination, etc.

On these days there were no balls in the playground and boys and girls shared the games and the space. They learned to cooperate and use resources in an equal fashion.

3.4. Working with parents

3.4.1 Materials for practice for the work with parents

"I wish I was called Lisa"

Tom, a four-year-old boy in a Berlin early childhood educational centres loves going to his group wearing pink dresses. Tom would also like to have long hair, wishes he was called Lisa and would like to be a girl, because "they always get to wear pink clothes and they can play at being princesses."

Tom's mother had considerable difficulties accepting Tom's desire to wear pink clothes. One of the things she worries about is other children laughing at Tom on the street with his long hair and pink attire. The mother turned to Tom's teachers with her worries and asked them how she should deal with the situation.

Gender-conscious work with parents

Gender-consciousness in practice in early childhood educational centres is confronted in several different ways with the question about how gender topics can be broached and discussed with the parents. A boy who likes to wear dresses and skirts presents a situation in which teachers often have to discuss the subject of "being a girl/being a boy" with parents. Some parents want to forbid their sons from wearing dresses, because they are afraid that this gender-atypical behaviour of the boy will cause the other children to reject and make fun of him. Other parents conform to traditional images of masculinity and femininity, want to have "proper" sons and, for this reason, have problems accepting a son who likes wearing dresses. What is more, we also know from practice that some parents feel uneasy when confronted by gender-atypical behaviour in their daughters and therefore seek to talk to teachers about it.

In situations like this, teachers need arguments and ways of reasoning which make it easier for them to persuade parents to allow their children to cross over gender boundaries. With our **materials for practice 1**



“Argumentation aids for gender-conscious education”, we would like to provide some ideas about how to deal with discussions with parents on gender consciousness.

However, gender-conscious work with parents can go beyond the discussions outlined here. Your efforts in the area of gender consciousness will be even more sustainable in the long term, the more you can win parents over in favour of gender-conscious education. In the best case scenario, the parents would then “continue” your gender-conscious work at home. A parents’ evening which explains the concept of gender-conscious education or your planned gender projects and which offers the parents the opportunity to discuss their own images of men and women as well as their fears in this respect is a good starting point. The **materials for practice 2** “Letter to the parents” provides you with a template which you can use to invite parents to an evening of this kind and then prepare it.

When you have invited the parents to such an evening you can introduce the topic “gender-sensitive education” with a gender-specific questionnaire. With our materials for practice 3 “Parent questionnaire 1” you can ask parents different gender questions and get into a dialogue with them.

Furthermore, you can involve the parents in your practical gender-conscious work by looking at the question, together with the parents, of what images of girls and boys are predominant among the children and what gender-typical and atypical games and activities they practice. The **materials for practice 4** “Parent questionnaires 2 and 3” provide you with a possibility for doing this. (On project website)

3.4.2. Working with fathers

Fathers organise an awareness group on masculinity

One does not usually come across men in early childhood education. There are hardly any male teachers and fathers are not very visible at the centres. Few fathers pick up their children from school and even fewer take part in the meetings and activities.

On the other hand the presence of men, both teachers and fathers is necessary because the masculine perspective has positive benefits for the boys and girls, promotes diversity and furthers equality of opportunities between men and women.

The experience we are going to describe in this section is a step towards achieving greater involvement of men in childhood education centres as well as towards initiating a process which can help to change certain values for example around looking after their children.

The first steps

In our case the proposal of organising a group of fathers to discuss masculinity was put forward by a teacher at

one of the centres that took part in the project. This teacher was aware that men need to change and asked the fathers of twenty two families from his centre to meet once a month and discuss issues related to masculinity and change in men. Nine fathers took up the challenge. They were informed about how these sessions are usually run and the rules in these types of groups. At the first meeting they invited a man who had been attending masculine discussion groups for a year and he gave them some basic guidelines.

The problem that may arise when it comes to introducing this type of strategy in early childhood education centres is that there aren’t any men (teachers, directors...) to get such initiatives off the ground. If this is the case, you can encourage some of the more active fathers who regularly take part in meetings and activities or are involved in caring for their children. These men can call the rest of the fathers to a meeting where they can put forward the idea of setting up an awareness group on masculinity. It might be useful at this first meeting to elicit support and counselling from a men’s association or awareness group.

Some suggestions on how to organise masculinity awareness groups

- Some groups meet once a month, others twice or three times a month. It is important to understand that the masculine cannot be “de-constructed” in two or three sessions.
- It is a good idea to speak on behalf of yourself and use the first person singular. Men tend to have difficulties when it comes to talking about themselves especially about their emotions and intimate experiences. It is worth while trying to express these and listening to other men talking about their own experiences.
- Learn to listen to others, including their silences.
- All those present must guarantee confidentiality in order to foment trust and exchange.
- Begin by asking each father to introduce himself and say what has brought him to the meeting. This is a good way of breaking the ice. You can for example begin by talking about yourself, about your life, nurturing an environment of trust and respect which will facilitate a relationship of intimacy among the men.
- These groups usually begin by looking at the personal experiences of their members and they select a topic for each session: Fatherhood, sexuality, relationships among men, relationships with women, pleasures, the army, homophobia, violence, school, friendship, intimate relationships... Some groups prefer to start off by reading a text whereas others prefer to begin by focussing on personal experiences. Each group must find the way that suits it best.

Chapter 4

Gender Equity as organisational development

In the previous chapters we have written about the reasons for doing gender-sensitive work in early childhood centres, described methods to raise gender awareness and presented methods, ideas and strategies for practical gender-sensitive work in early childhood centres.

In this chapter we want to make a step forward and present some Gender Mainstreaming strategies with which you can apply gender equity strategies to the whole institution.

Gender is a part of what is happening like the air we breathe. The gendered qualities of everyday life are so self evident to us that they are invisible. Therefore it is important to take two steps back and take a look at what is happening. Gender has consequences for children's growth, development and well-being. Because of this, managers of early childhood centres have the responsibility to make organisational plans where gender is taken into account. In this chapter we will address some key questions concerning the possibility of management to foster gender sensitivity, the importance of planning and the organisational structures in the early childhood centres. How can we work more systematically with issues like gendered language? How can we analyse and make sure distribution of resources in the centre is fair? How are the work, the tasks and staff in early childhood centres gendered? How can managers and staff scrutinize the gendered day to day life of the centre?



4.1. The Gender Mainstreaming ambition

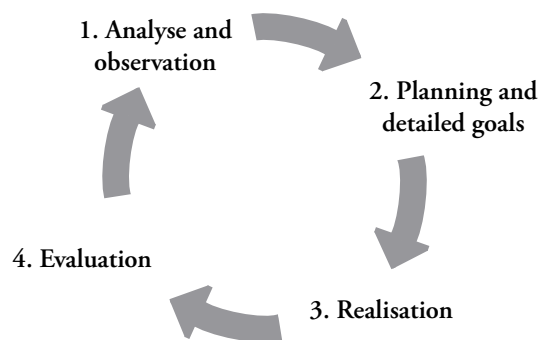
The realization of a limited gender sensitivity project may be a start to more thorough gender sensitive efforts, going from a “stunt” to a broader institutional focus. Since gender often is a key in social and psychosocial development, the ideal is that every aspect of early childhood centres reflects an egalitarian gender pattern, especially the distribution of resources. Gender equity and sensitivity should be applied to children, staff, management, interaction with parents, central administration and policy-making, architecture, play material and so forth. This means that every stone should be turned and examined and appropriate actions should be planned and executed. This ambition is what is reflected in the term gender mainstreaming. The EU and also national European governments are advocates of this ambition even if resources do not always follow the decisions. EU defines gender mainstreaming in this fashion:

The systematic integration of the respective situations, priorities and needs of women and men in all policies and with a view to promoting equality between women and men and mobilizing all general policies and measures specifically for the purpose of achieving equality by actively and openly taking into account, at the planning stage, their effects on the respective situations of women and men in implementation, monitoring and evaluation. (Commission Communication COM (96) 67 final of 21/02/96).

4.2. Gender Mainstreaming in early childhood centres - 5 steps for successful implementation

Working with a gender equity plan is useful for several reasons. Making a plan helps concretization of what you want to get out of your work, facilitating effective evaluation of your project and efforts. At the same time gender is not an issue that it is possible to isolate in a plan and then be done, for example, with: “In February we focus on gender equity and toys”.

Like development of identity and questions of class and ethnicities, managers should be willing to continually consider the implications of gender. Any situation may in some respect be good and fair today, but not necessarily in other aspects and not necessarily tomorrow.



Never the less planning the endeavour is helpful for making good process. Regardless of the size, Gender Mainstreaming developmental projects follow a certain process. (1) Setting main goals (2) Analysis and observation, (3) planning and detailed gender equity goals, (4) realisation and (5) evaluation. Concretion of these phases and bringing them to the awareness of all Centre staff, makes reflection possible and improves the quality of the project. This is an essential process to effectively plan and implement gender sensitive efforts in early childhood educational centres.

Here we describe an example of these five Gender Mainstreaming implementation steps:

Step (1) Setting main goals

The definition Gender Mainstreaming makes it clear that the aim of this process is to promote equality between women and men. This general aim must be agreed for each societal field, so a Gender Mainstreaming process should start with setting main goals.

Example:

In their first meeting, the partner organisations of the Gender Loops project agreed on the following main goals for early childhood centres:

Gender identities: to broaden the gender identities of children, teachers and parents.

Resources: to improve the equal allocation of resources (e.g. executive positions, money, time, attention) among children, teachers and parents.

Gender competence, knowledge and sensitivity: to improve gender competence, gender knowledge and gender sensitivity among children, teachers and parents.

Men and masculinities: to increase the proportion of men working in early childhood centres.

Sexual diversity: to increase awareness of the human and societal consequences of sexual diversity.

Intersectionality: to take the multiple qualities of power relationships and identity formation into consideration: gender, gender sexualities, ethnicities, class, functioning of the body and religion are addressed as a whole, and not separately.

Step (2): Analysis and observation

(This example description of step 2 to 5 is described by Elli Scambor, Men's Counselling Centre, Graz)

In a second step, the gender-relevant structure of institutional child care is analysed extensively. With the help of the here described "3R method", gender-specific disparities in different areas can be made transparent. The 3R method, developed by the Swedish scientist Gertrud Åström, is an instrument to analyse the gendered structure of administrations and organisations on three different levels. On the first level "Representation", gender statistics are produced. Some gender analysis questions are for example "How many women and men are in different decision-making positions?" or "How many women and men are responsible for the implementation of these decisions?". On the second level "Resources", the analyst works with the administration and organisation to look at resource allocation, for example: the time women/men speak at meetings and pay comparisons. The third level of "Reality" is a qualitative analysis. This stage is concerned with exposing and challenging the norms and values embedded within local authority structures and practices which underpin decision-making and which may reinforce gender inequality. (Full description of implementation of the 3R method in Lithuanian early childhood education centres on our website).

Example: Gender analysis of the way rooms are used by girls and boys

An early childhood education centre decides to analyse how girls and boys use rooms and, to do so, it uses the analytical structure of the 3R method. The teachers therefore analyse the behaviour of the children when using rooms on the levels of representation, resources and the reality.

At the representations level, for example, the teachers are interested in the concrete division of the boys and girls in the individual play areas (reading corner, doll's corner, building corner,...) and the roles the girls and boys assume in the games they play.

At the resources level, the teachers are interested in how much time the boys and girls spend in the individual play areas, in the exercise area or in the garden and how much space the boys and the girls have at their disposal to carry out their activities. For example, how large or small are the spatial resources needed for the individual games?

At the reality level, the teachers are interested in whether groups of boys and girls use rooms differently and why this is the case. The teachers take into consideration stereotypical norms and values that they encounter in their everyday work: How are the individual play areas differently designed with respect to colour? The teachers might ask themselves why the play areas are divided up in such a way that they encourage gender-stereotypical activities (doll's corner or building corner)? Who cooks and who builds? What names do the play areas have?

Other areas of analysis in early childhood education centres could be the following, for example: playing and toys, body and sexuality, movement and sport, communication and dealing with conflicts, books and language, general institutional conditions and personnel development, work with parents, and many more.

Step (3): Planning and detailed gender equity goals

In the third step, concrete, tangible gender equity goals are to be derived from the results of the gender analysis.

Example: Room use by girls and boys

Let's stay with the previously outlined example of room use. According to studies carried out up to now, girls and boys use the play areas on offer in early childhood educational centres in a limited way. Girls often like to play in small groups, are more focussed on consensus, sit at the table, paint and play in accordance with the prescribed use of the room. Boys mostly play in larger groups, are more focused on movement, take up more space and overstep the prescribed rules of use for the room more often than girls do. (See Schneider, 2005)

In the face of this, corresponding gender equity goals in the area of room use could be defined as follows: One overall goal could be to facilitate the overstepping of gender boundaries and (because of this) a widening of the opportunities girls and boys have for how they develop and how they act. Sub-goals in the area of room use could be aimed at encouraging girls to move more, or at an active involvement of the boys and girls in the tasks that arise in the early childhood education centre (clearing the table, tidying up, carrying tables and chairs, etc.). Here, boys and girls should have the chance to get to know all areas, even the atypical ones.

In order to make it possible to pursue gender equity subjects in the long term and persistently, evaluation criteria for gender equity goals must be defined, which the teachers can then use to see whether they have achieved these goals. With the example of room use, evaluation criteria in this case could be the following, for example: Boys and girls play more often in selected play areas or play more often with gender-atypical materials.

Step (4): Realisation

Once teachers have formulated certain gender equity goals, then they can develop and put into practice concrete measures in a fourth step, in order to achieve these goals.

Example: Room use by girls and boys

In trying to avoid gender-specific play areas and thus gender-typical classifications, some individual gender-aware early childhood educational centres changed over to free play areas (without defining what should happen there) or began to store toys (dolls, building blocks, etc.) flexibly, for example, in trolley containers which can be rolled around the entire area. Furthermore, early childhood education centres offer "boys' days" and "girls' days" at certain times, on which girls and boys can experiment with atypical games in "sheltered rooms" in gender-homogeneous groups. In Iceland, as part of the Hjalli pedagogy, gender-typical toys were done away with. Here, materials such as clay, sand, wood and water replaced the children's toys. The rooms are consistently kept very minimalistic (for example, empty walls).

All of these measures aim to open up to girls and boys a broad spectrum of opportunities for action and development and, in this way, to overstep the gender-typical restrictions.

(Examples and references from: Frauenbüro der Stadt Wien (2003), Ólafsdóttir (1996))



Step (5): Evaluation

The fifth step in putting gender mainstreaming into practice lies in evaluating the gender equity goals and their evaluation criteria. With the help of an evaluation, teachers can check whether goals have been reached and, at the same time, all of the evaluation results can be examined for any gender inequalities still existing. The evaluation of concrete measures can easily be put into practice alongside processes while they are happening. Different analytical methods can be used for this purpose.

Example: Room use by girls and boys

Daily observations of how boys and girls use space/rooms at predefined points in time. Structured observation of individual sequences of play, in which the use of video and/or audio recordings enables an observation of the children in action from a distance and provides opportunity for reflection by third parties. With the help of a research diary, the teacher continuously records thoughts, plans, experiences, observations and changes. Approaches from action research can be used here to help the teachers to look at their day-to-day work with the eye of a researcher and to approach their everyday working context systematically from the perspective of an observer at a distance. By linking up action and reflection, new possibilities for pedagogical activity are presented.

However, the evaluation is not the end of a gender mainstreaming process. With the evaluation results, you have the chance you advance your gender-aware educational practices to a new level under new prerequisites.

(References Altrichter/Posch (2007), Mühlegger (1999))

4.3. Challenging society's image of early childhood education

It is not just children who develop an identity, institutions and early childhood centres do as well. What's important to know is that, the image parents, staff, politicians, children, grandparents and the average Joe and Jane have of early childhood education, has real consequences for what the institution offers children. This surrounding image of the institution and the people who work there sets a frame, of the activities, the tasks, and the resources that are necessary and also what kind of motivation the workers in the sector should have. A further thing to note is that the image and identity of the early childhood education centre is not static, but in movement.

Several researchers and managers in Norway have criticised early childhood centres for drawing inspiration from family ideology and the organisation of the household. Early childhood centres seem to depend on the family ideals of the past, especially in their ideology. We see this as negative since early childhood education provides a qualitatively different form of care and education than the household. Therefore, we propose that, the inappropriate household role in the sector must be reformed along with the inappropriate current household practices in early education. Another point that we would like to highlight is the negative impact the family image may have on the recruitment of new teachers. Put bluntly why take a three-year university degree when you are still addressed as a western house-wife from the nineteen fifties? These traditional family ideals and practices in the early childhood centres are also being maintained by several factors including: many men prioritizing their own career, the evaluation of early education as

not "real work" and absence of men from the sector.

The family and household inspired identity of the Norwegian early childhood centres comes from various sources and many of them still go unchallenged. For instance a significant number of early childhood centres are in converted family villas, or are built more or less as copies of family villas. Employees of Norwegian early childhood centres were formally labelled as "aunts" and "uncles". This has been reformed, but other household labels like "living room", "kitchen", "garden", "kindergarten", "hall" are still in use.

Some early childhood centres have started a process of professionalization where these "household names" and "household remains" are being changed into labels more in correspondent to an educational institution. Among them the childhood centres managed by Pia Friis and the Kanvas early childhood centres in Norway. They work to change the interior and exterior labels of the centres to that of an educational institution and not a household. For instance no longer having flowerpots and curtains in the windows, and no longer having tablecloths. On their own these names and objects are of minor significance, but the discussions and resistance that these changes meet often reflect fears about the relationship between the teachers and children. Are traditional women's household crafts dominating activities in the centre, or not? Is the household interior a reflection of different roles for male and female workers in the early childhood centre and society?

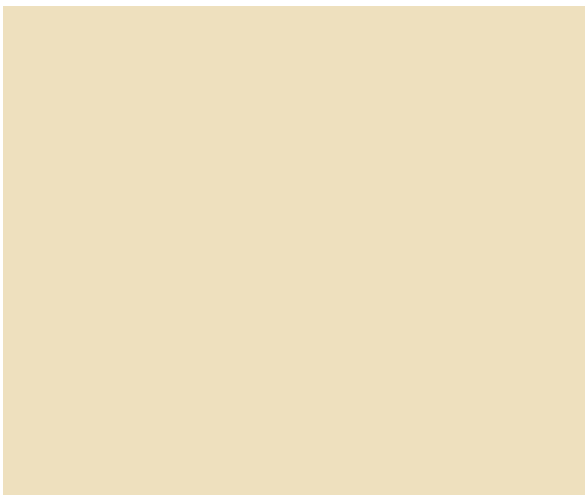
The changing of the "household names" and the "household remains" to educational names and content can be viewed as one strategy for de-gendering and de-familizing the identity of early childhood education, turning it from a "kindergarten" to an "early childhood education centre".

"Become a Minister of games and play"

Obviously not wanting to narrow down the scope of early childhood education one university college in Norway, DMMH in Trondheim, have made similar approach in its recruitment of early childhood education teachers. Potential students are invited with different proposals to become “minister of games and play”, “art lover / connoisseur” and “peace-maker”, underpinning the general human and societal content and importance of the work of early childhood education teachers.

De-familisation and professionalisation as a gender mainstreaming strategy

- * Think of how the general social surroundings perceive the early childhood centres’ tasks and content (parents, neighbours, potential workers, cooperation partners etc.)
- * Do the early childhood centres promote themselves as one of the most important institutions in society, and do they also promote exciting tasks that youth of both genders could want to work with? What does it take to convince parents of both genders that “I would have liked to work here” if history had turned out a little bit different?
- * Insist on being addressed as teacher and not “aunt” or “uncle”, and tell them why.
- * Go through information and material from the Early childhood centres, so that it underlines the professionalism of the institution.
- * Check that the clothing and appearance of staff, for example at a parent-teacher meeting, gives the profession the respect it deserves
- * Do necessary changes in the interior design so that the centre appears as a institution of education and not as a household.
- * Be aware of names and activities in the Early childhood centres - the ”inner life” and outward appearance should be linked together to transmit a coherent identity.
- * Rename centres’ names and activities. Use educational names instead of household names.



4.4. Making activities and objects available to both genders

Children's opportunities for play and games regardless of sex are one of the key questions in the scrutinizing of gender in the early childhood centre. A Norwegian researcher, Nina Rossholt, criticizes parents and teachers for narrowing down boys and girls opportunities for movement, caring and playing with certain objects. The following is a proposed approach of hers (Rossholt 2006). The focus is on the rooms of the early childhood centres in a concrete as well as a symbolic sense.

Start by asking questions and to raise your awareness. How do girls and boys use the inside and outside of the centre? Is the "rough and tumble" play of the "pillow room" predominantly a boy activity? Is the dolls corner predominantly inhabited by girls?

The physical and cultural aspects in the play areas have consequences for the language and physical challenges those children meet in their every day life activities. Of special interests are how rooms and materials are presented in regard to movement and caring. (1) Movement, climbing, running, sliding may foster development beyond traditional gender roles, for both sexes. In the facilitating of movement like dancing and other activities, friendships can be strengthened. Games associated with (2) caring, may be widened, and both sexes can learn that they can do the same things and receive the same recognition for them.

The naming of the rooms creates associations about which game to play in which location. There are no automatics in this, but wouldn't it be nice to decorate rooms which are more open in what is offered to boys and girls? The task is to rename and restructure the rooms of the centre and thereby opening up the traditional children's gender repertoire. It is of importance which and how materials are presented inside and outside. What about a room for movement? A restaurant room (instead of a kitchen corner)? A "dream oneself far away" room (with open materials that can make totally different fantasies come to life)?

A childhood centre used trips in the woods in their pedagogical work. A goal has been to give girls and boys the same opportunities and the same experiences. The children's development of movement, physical control and language has been the main focus. Instead of dividing into gendered groups the centre has divided according to level of competence. The experience so far is that the children of both genders occupy themselves with the mastering of different activities; climbing and moving in uneven terrain.

4.5. Bring in an outside view

Because gender often is invisible to our selves, an important strategy is to bring in an outside view on the practices and the early childhood centre's. Often the managers and staff find some gender related issue that they are not satisfied with, and wonder what to do. For instance it may be they find some boys noisy and troublesome, find some girls intricate and antisocial or find they constantly say no to boys.

In most cases it will be very helpful to get an outside view from someone with special competence in gender. It may be a researcher, organization consultant, teacher or adviser. Ask him or her to come and give feedback on their observations. What does she or he have to say? May be she or he finds other more pressing issues in the centre. This is an opportunity for dialogue about what is going on and how to go about it.

To bring in an outside view is not just a question of getting hold of an expert and giving them an assignment. It is about being open to different perspectives on the children, teachers, managers and centre. A lot of different people and groups who may have something to contribute in a gendered perspective come in contact with early childhood centres; students visits, parents, grandparents, teachers just starting from other early childhood centres. It can often be fruitful to be open minded and to make best use of these opportunities. (A description of the experiences of the Spanish partner can be found on our website).

4.6. Promotional strategies to increase the proportion of men

If you as an ECC (Early Childhood Centre) leader wish to recruit more men in your ECC, you have to evaluate your effort in four areas: 1. State the reasons for the need for more men, 2. Knowledge about mens' situation in the early childhood centres 3. Practical recruitment efforts and 4. Resources and infrastructure.

In Norway, which started an effort in order to recruit more men in the 1990s, the most important discovery is the significance of the efforts of each ECC leader, municipality and ECC owners. The Norwegian Ministry of children and gender equity have put forward the recruitment of men in the Early childhood centres on the agenda with an initiative in 1997. Today it is clear that certain municipalities (Asker, Fredrikstad, Bergen) and early childhood centres, among them the nature based early childhood centres and the early childhood centres which Kanvas owns and runs to a greater degree than the others, have succeeded with the recruitment of men, (Ministry of education and Research, Norway, 2008). It is above all about conscious and goal oriented work in relation to the four prioritized areas mentioned above.

1. Reasons for the need of more men

It can appear to be a meaningless question to ask an ECC leader why we need more men in the early childhood centres. It is about as meaningless as to ask questions about the need for more women, and to ask questions about the need for more staff in early childhood centres. But, since the recruitment process demands an extra effort, and parents, staff, the municipality and others will be interested and will need persuasion in order to take part in the work, it is completely necessary to address and deal with the question.

Our experience is that having men in the centre gives a good opportunity to see and to work with gender issues. But the fruits of male teachers do not come about on its own, no more than female business managers make business life more family friendly. "Just adding men" may just stratify a similar gendered division of labour that is evident in the rest of the society, men taking care of discipline, carpentry and traditional male activities, while women comfort, prepare food and are the social entrepreneurs. Having more men in early childhood education is not a quality criterion in itself. Although it is difficult to underscore that employees are gendered and that this has consequences for the or-

ganization as well as the children. The absence of men send the children a powerful message: "Men do more important stuff".

The justification for the need of more men in early childhood centres is often presented in empty phrases in the media. We propose that anyone wishing to present arguments on this issue uses solid research (like this we present above), even if it is limited.

2. Knowledge of men's situation in early childhood centres

To succeed with the recruitment of more men in early childhood centres, the centre leaders must have and use information about men's situation in the ECC sector. This is regarding reasons why the occupation can be difficult to both enter and remain within. It can be that the leader and the staff must become aware of the power and influence that women have in the workplace because of their gender. And finally it is important to get information about what it is that makes the occupation interesting to the men which work in the sector, and can make it interesting for others.

Managers can use this information to reflect on and change their recruitment strategy and their staff support strategies. For instance do many male early childhood teachers and workers meet challenges in the centre for just being male, they are the bearers of gender while the other (female) workers are seen in this context as gender-neutral. To prevent men from being alienated, and to give men an opportunity to be just human, managers should try and arrange timetables for men to work with both genders during their work hours. Many men experience a kind of social isolation in their work-environment, being a gendered minority in early childhood work. A strategy for managers and the men to meet this problem is to establish networks of men in similar situation giving each other social support for the marginal position they are in.

3. Practical recruitment efforts

To begin a teacher training (for working in the early childhood education sector) or to work in an early childhood centre is outside of the normal expectations for most boys or men. But, that does not necessarily mean that they would not be interested if the opportunity came up, or that they were not suited for the task. Therefore an early childhood centre leader who wants more men employed should not wait for the men to come to them. One has to make a specific effort to

address men and get them on the playing-field, including actively seeking and using the platforms that men already use. A wide range of different actions and objectives can be appropriate. Since men often meet some special challenges related to staying in the occupation over time, it would be appropriate to establish specific local actions to find and hold on to the men. In its action plan The Ministry of Education and Research in Norway advocate (2008) the following actions:

- to promote the ECC through active use of the media
- to focus on the comparative advantages and to direct ones efforts towards what men find attractive.
- to make work-ads for vacant posts that appeal to men.
- to use the regulations about preferential treatment in work-ads and employment.
- to ask for male students in work practice.
- to recruit boys which have to do work practice at high-school level.
- to ask for male apprentices who are going to be child and youth workers.
- to facilitate support networks for men in Early childhood centres and colleagues.
- to put the matter on the agenda in the municipality.

4. Resources and infrastructure

The work towards recruiting more men to the local Early childhood centres requires a long-range program, and the use of resources over time. Many of the issues also require that the ECC leaders and staff must re-evaluate their own views if they are to succeed. It is difficult for some of the early childhood centres to succeed in this issue in the long run all by themselves. In Norway the Ministry of Children and Equality and later the Ministry of Education and Research have provided a infrastructure and finance for the recruitment efforts, and worked to get the recruitment of men into the frameworks of the sector. The list below shows the important contributions from the ministries from the former action plan 2003-2007.

It shows an appropriate infrastructure and resources for local early childhood centres to use.

- Central agreement upon the objective of 20 percent men in the early childhood centres, and the work for municipalities and early childhood centres to take on this objective.
- Yearly national equality conferences where experiences from initiatives and local development are shared.

- Support local and regional networks for men who work in early childhood centres.
- National website for men who work in early childhood centres. www.mibnett.no
- The above mentioned booklet concerning how to recruit and keep men in the early childhood centres.
- Distribution of the Ministry of Educations yearly equality of gender prize. The prize has been awarded to different agents who have done a contribution to the recruitment of more men in the occupation.
- 4 research and development projects concerning men, who work in early childhood centres as the main objective, were completely or partially financed through the plan.
- The establishing of regional work groups. These groups are headed by a representative from one of the county governors in the region. The work-group and representative is in charge of making regional plans, distribution of earmarked funds for the recruitment of men. The work groups have also arranged activities such as study tours, conferences, social events etc.
- Activities which are connected to men in early childhood centres in twelve municipalities, early childhood centres and teacher education (nursery school) has been described in the action plan. (Ministry of Education and Research, Norway, 2008)

In 1996 when the central Norwegian effort was launched there was about 3500 men in the early childhood centres, about 7 percent of the total staff. In 2007 there were about 7000 men employed accounting for 8 percent of the current staff. (Statistics Norway). There is a 100 percent increase in numbers, but only a marginal increase in percent. There has been a large increase in the total number of staff in this sector, and proportionally approximately as many women and men have been hired. It is hard to evaluate the increase in numbers and only a marginal increase in percent in relation to the central effort. In prosperous times with low unemployment, the work in question have had little motivation due to the fact that many men have not been forced to try out new untraditional occupations. But, as mentioned above, when you take a closer look at each individual ECC, you discover great discrepancies between those who succeed with their recruitment policy and those who fail.

4.7 Some final suggestions for organisations and municipalities wishing to integrate gender into early childhood learning centres

Practical steps must be taken in order to make gender issues an integral part of everyday life in early childhood centres.

- Integrating gender issues as a central part of the Early childhood centres annual plan and regular plans.
- Make annual reports on Early Childhood Education Institutes include work on gender equity. Recently in Catalunya school councils have been required to name a person responsible for gender mainstreaming in each centre. Similarly, school annual reports have to include the activities and strategies implemented around gender issues. These reports are revised by the school council and local authorities with the objective of evaluating and promoting the development of gender mainstreaming in schools.
- Describe the Early childhood centres and the Early childhood centres department work routines, play and content for a week. Consider if routines and activities are challenging, and are diverse enough for children of both sexes.
- Approve aims of the work for equality of status between the genders in the Early childhood centres and in the municipality.
- Consolidate responsibility for the follow-up activities regarding the work for equality of status in the Early childhood centres and the municipality at a management level.
- Allocate permanent resources to planning and implementation of gender equity in the Early childhood centres and the municipality. Several Swedish municipalities have got their own gender equity advisers who assist the Early childhood centres and the schools in the area.
- Have a plan with courses and conversations in order to further develop the staffs competence in the field.



Resources and Bibliography

Chapter 2

The exercise 'Own Learning Experiences' was developed by Norman Duncan

Chapter 3

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Gender Equity starts in early childhood centres!

In the Gender Loops Toolbox you will find tried and tested methods, projects and analytical instruments which support the realisation of gender-conscious education and ongoing gender equity strategies in early childhood education centres. With the help of the Toolbox, you can make use of clear methods and aids to improve gender awareness in practice at your place of work.

The Gender Loops Toolbox is a product of the two-year European Gender Loops project, in which the partner organisations from Germany, Lithuania, Norway, Spain and Turkey took a look at implementation strategies for gender mainstreaming in education and further training in the area of early childhood pedagogy and in early childhood educational centres.

