

21st

EECERA annual conference

Education from birth : research, practices
and educational policy.

Geneva, Switzerland, 14th -17th September 2011

Tim Rohrmann (Chair)

Gender in peer- and adult-child-relations in ECEC

Self organized symposium on the 21st. EECERA annual conference, 15.9.2011,
Geneva/Switzerland

Abstract

Gender aspects are basic for an understanding of children`s development from birth on. This has become apparent in debates about boys` underachievement in schools, which have led to a shift in public interest from gender equity as a “feminist” theme towards an understanding of gender as a topic relevant for boys` development at least as much as for girls. Although these debates focus on older children and the role of primary and secondary schools, it has become clear that gender is already relevant in elementary education. It is widely acknowledged that the educational system should promote gender equity. But how can be measured if gender equity is achieved in ECE institutions? In her presentation, Frappacini presents a protocol developed to evaluate gender equity in Spanish pre-schools.

Gender is one important aspect of diversity, and gender sensitivity is a basic competence needed for a better understanding of children`s development. Research points out that gendered peer interactions play an important role for social and cognitive development of boys and girls even in early childhood (e.g. Fabes et al., 2004). But, in his meta analysis of gender in peer interactions, Rohrmann argues that gender separation is much more visible in the gender unbalance of the ECE work force than in the interactions of boys and girls. What effect does this unbalance have on the development of children?

Attachment research has shown that gender plays an important role in adult-child-relations: female ECE workers tend to develop better relationships to girls as to boys (Ahnert, Pinguat & Lamb, 2006). But, until now there is only little research about the role of adults` gender in these relationships. Several studies report differences between male and female ECE workers regarding attitudes and perceptions. As these studies were only based on questionnaires and/or interviews, it is not clear if these differences just mirror stereotypic views, or “real” behavioral differences.

Only recently empirical research projects in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Spain have begun to focus on behavioral differences in behavior of male and female ECE workers in practice. In his presentation, Andrae introduces an interesting research design and focuses on methodological questions about how the relevance of adults` gender for adult-child interactions can be measured.

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Contributions to the symposium

Tim Rohrmann

Coordination office Men in KITAS
Catholic High School of Applied Sciences
Berlin, Germany

Gender segregation in pre-school: Do boys and girls live in “separate worlds”?

Markus Andrae

University of Applied Sciences for Social Work, Education and Care (EHS)
Dresden, Germany

Gender differences in adult-child-interactions in pre-school

Paula Frapiccini Ferreira

Autonomous University of Barcelona
Bellaterra, Spain

Assessment of gender equity in educational practice in pre-school

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Fabes, Richard A. ; Martin, Carol Lynn & Hanish, Laura D. (2004). The next 50 years: Considering gender as a context for understanding young children's peers relationships. *Merill-Palmer Quarterly*, 50 (3), 260-273.

Rohrmann, Tim (2008). *Zwei Welten? Geschlechtertrennung in der Kindheit: Forschung und Praxis im Dialog*. Opladen: Budrich UniPress.

Author correspondance

Dr. Tim Rohrmann
Coordination office Men in KITAS
Catholic High School of Applied Sciences, Berlin, Germany
web: <http://www.koordination-maennerinkitas.de>
email rohrmann@koordination-maennerinkitas.de