

Emilsen, Kari & Ljunggren, Birgitte (2016).

Young boys as "Play Resources" in ECECs – an innovative recruitment initiative.

Presentation on the 26th EECERA Annual Conference, 2.9.2016, Dublin, Ireland.

Abstract

In this paper we present findings from an ongoing research project aiming at exploring "Play Resource" as a recruitment measure. The overriding objective for the research project is to find better ways of working for recruiting and retaining men in ECECs, to study, develop and disperse new ways of organizing recruitment and competence strategies in ECECs.

The issue of gender balance in ECEC is not new, and the attitudes towards male participation in the upbringing of children are about to change (Rohrmann and Emilsen 2015). The Norwegian authorities have worked actively in recent decades to increase the share of men in ECECs (Emilsen 2015). There is a political goal of 20% men employed in ECECs, which is rooted in legislation and action plans (BLD 2011). Yet, the percentage of men in Norwegian ECECs is 8.6 % (SSB 2015). Peeters et.al (2015) finds that in spite of many measures there has been little progress.

The purpose of "Play Resource" is to let boys experience work in ECECs institutions and thereby consider work with young children as a career option. The project's methodical design has a qualitative approach, combining case studies, interviews and observations, and literature studies. Research is done in accordance with guidelines for research ethics.

Findings show that "play resource" are considered as beneficial for the ECEC, the boys and the children. A long-term objective is to encourage recruitment of men to permanently work in ECECs and to increase the status of ECECs as workplace (Lauritzen 2015).

Keywords

Gender balance, Recruitment of men, Diversity in the ECEC workforce, Care for young children, Innovation

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Our agenda

- Presentation of the research project "Play Resources"
- Preliminary results:
 - Funders perspective (County Governors)

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Background

- In Norway it is established that ECEC are an important contributor to the goal of an egalitarian society (Askland and Rossholt 2009, Askland 2015, Emilsen 2011, 2015).



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Background

- The Norwegian authorities have worked actively in recent decades to increase the share of men in ECECs (Emilsen 2015).
- There is a political goal of 20 % men employed in ECECs, which is rooted in legislation and action plans (BLD 2011).
- The percentage of men in Norwegian ECECs is 8.6 % (SSB 2015).



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The Research Project «Play Resource»

The purpose of "Play Resource" is to let boys experience work in ECECs institutions and consider work with young children as a career option. Hospitation is an important mean for competence development, because experiences may stimulate the boys' motivation and attitudes concerning ECECs. A long-term objective is to encourage recruitment of men to permanently work in ECECs and to increase the status of ECECs as workplace (Lauritzen 2015)

The overriding goal: is to find better ways to recruit and retain men in ECECs.

Explicitly: to study, develop and spread new ways of organizing recruitment and competence strategies in ECECs.



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The importance of this innovation/measure will be studied at two levels:

- The significance for the boys and their attitude towards a future profession in ECEC
- The influence the innovation/measure has for ECEC centers as organizations and their service



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In this project we have the following research questions:

What is the significance of the innovation/measure on the boys' attitudes towards working in ECEC centers (ECECs)?

What characterizes the organization of the innovation/measure?
What are the key success criteria?

What kind of impact does the innovation/measure have on management and the employees' awareness on gender sensitivity and equality issues in ECECs?

How is this innovation/measure valued compared to other social expenditures?

What is the significance of this innovation/measure for the development of ECECs quality?



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Methodological design

Qualitative approach - combining:

- Case studies (five ECECs)
- Interviews (county governors, school leaders, leaders in ECECs, and boys)
- Observations (in the ECECs)
- Literature studies (Norwegian and English)



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Preliminary results - Interviews with counselors working at the County Governors (funders) office.

Aim: to get input to further development and spreading of the initiative from government level

- *18 counselors (17 women, 1 man) was interviewed*
- *15 of these counselors supported and funded the measures, while 3 did not*



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Preliminary results - Interviews with counselors working at the County Governors (funders) office

- All were positive to the measure – and reported that it was «well spent money»
- The organization of the measure was different in each county (But had the same intention and idea).
- The counselors justify the initiation of the measure with the governmental and national focus on more men ECECs and the national action plans we had in Norway since 2001.
- The counselors had some difficulties to report the amount of money they had used the three past years on this measure because of cuts in support!



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Preliminary results - Interviews with counselors working at the County Governors (funders) office

Reasons for choosing "Play Resource" as a measure to recruit more men to ECEC:

- There is a general need for skilled staff in all ECECs independent of gender, but men specifically.
- The measure gives the opportunity to give insight into the profession of an ECEC worker (for a relevant group) and in this way can secure higher recruitment.
- The measure can also be a good way to promote ECEC (and the profession) in a favorable way in general



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Preliminary results - Interviews with counselors working at the County Governors (funders) office

Reasons for choosing "Play Resource" as measure to recruit more men to ECEC:

- To demonstrate that men can work in ECEC
- Show children and parents that the boys are good role models
- More gender balance in ECECs is good for children's learning



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**Preliminary results –
Interviews with the County Governors representatives (funders).**

Reasons for choosing “Play Resource” as measure to recruit more men to ECEC:

- More gender balance in ECECs is good for the working environment
- The measure is both a competency strategy and a strategy for equality
- To focus on quality and competence is important in order to raise the status of the profession, and to keep the staff already recruited.

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«Hitting several birds» with one
«government-stone»

As display window of day care as good work place for boys

Rises status of profession

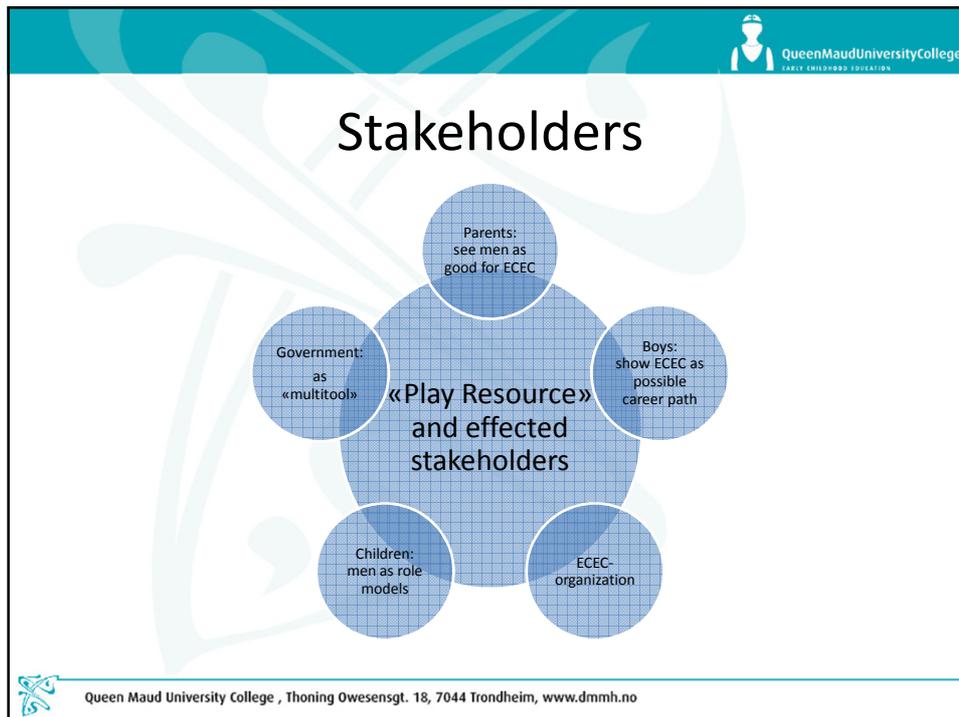
«Play Resource» as «governmental multitool»

Showing men as good role models

better learning for children

operationalizes state policies of competence and gender balance

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The slide is titled "Discussion" and contains the following text:

The analysis shows different functions of the play ressource initiative and arguments for it, still: **It is not widely discussed WHY we want more men in ECECs .**

The data suggests a complex discourse within the ECECs concerning the significance of better gender balance which includes different stakeholders. This is supported by earlier research (Østerem et al 2009, Hoel et al 2010, Opheim et al 2014)

There is a need for more research on different aspects of gender balance in ECEC.



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Further challenges

Recruitment is too slow, both in education in general and in ECEC

There is not sufficient interest for the recruitment of men neither nationally or locally.

There are too many nice words and intentions, but not enough action.

In the field of practice there are diverse attitudes towards gender balance in Norwegian ECEC when we study it more closely (Emilsen 2015)



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