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To be a place with boys and men, a good place to work: Constructions of the gendered ECEC organization. Presentation on the 26th EECERA Annual Conference, 2.9.2016, Dublin, Ireland.

Abstract

The paper explores a new recruitment initiative for men in ECEC-organizations, "Play Resource". Here, young boys from secondary schools experience work in ECEC before their choice of career is made (Lauritzen 2015). It adresses questions of the participants problems- understanding of gender balance, recruitment of men and relates this to the further development and improvement of the initivative.

The paper relates to previous research on recruiting men to work in ECECs (C.f Opheim, Waagene, Salvanes, Gjerustad & Holen, 2014). It frames the problem of recruitment within governance discusstions on "wicked problems" which are social tasks too complex in nature for one government unit to solve alone (Busch 2013, Sørensen 2014). Innovation, particularly driven by collaboration and partnerships is regarded a means to address them (Sørensen 2014, Bjørgo, Sandvin and Hutchinson 2015).

The paper applies a bottom-up and social praxis-perspective on innovation in public sector welfare services, sensitive to conflict of (professional) values and differing understandings constructed in the social setting (Wegener 2012, 2015).

Research questions are addressed by using qualitative methodology: obervations in 4 ECECs and in –depth interviews with key informants: ECEC managers, headmasters, participating boys. The project complies with ethical norms set for research in Norway by NSD - Norwegian Centre for Research Data.

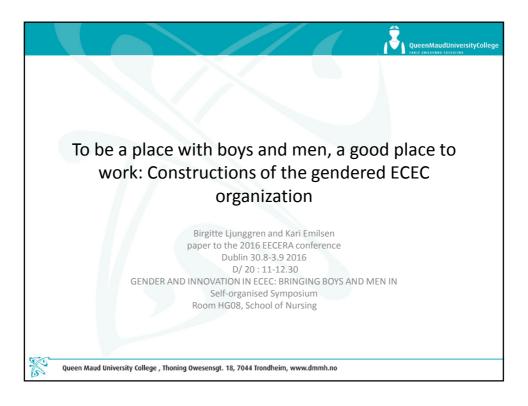
Preliminary analysis suggest that participants understands Play Resource as a tool to acchieve different means, not merely more gender balance in ECECs and this might affect the development work. Results might informe recruitment pracices and organizational innovation processes in ECECs.

Keywords

Recruitment of men, Gender balance, Innovation in ECEC, Wicked problems, Qualitative methods

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Introduction

- Initial confession
- The frame of the paper is still the same:
 - An organization perspective
 - The wondering about the ECEC as a feminized work place:
 - Well known statistics: 8,6 % men
 - ECEC-history in Norway as a home away from home
 - The Play Resource project as an innovation project
 - Exploring the interface between ECEC as an organization, innovation and gender (recruitment of men)





New research question

- Which constructions of the man/boy-friendly ECEC organization is found in the material?
 - Do we find relationships between gendered understandings of the man/boy-friendly ECEC organization and innovation?
 - Caution: very premature analysis!



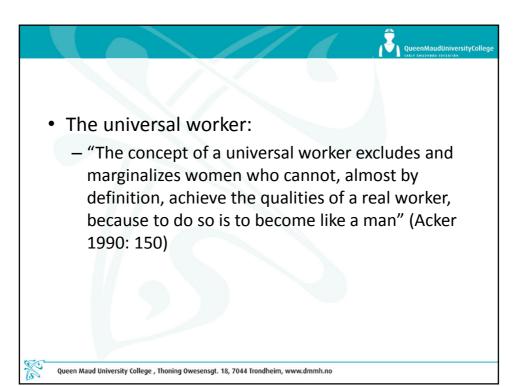
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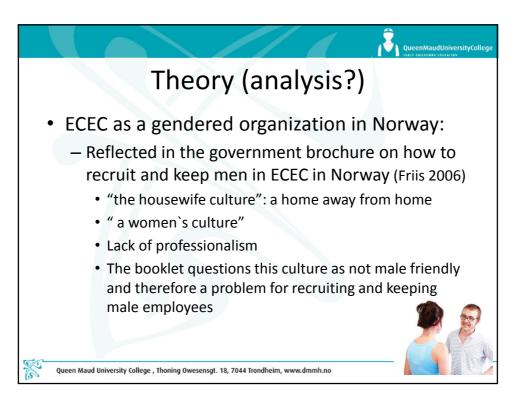


Theory

- Acker (1990, 2006): the gendered organization
 - "To say that an organization is gendered means that advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine. Gender is not an addition to ongoing processes, conceived as gender neutral. Rather it is and integral part of those processes, which cannot be properly understood without an analysis of gender" Acker 1990: 146









The booklet...

- "And how will men feel comfortable working in a work environment resembling a home? Few men like to be associated with a homely atmosphere at work and even less a house wife culture? In most homes the women still prevail and are literally deciding where the cupboard shall stand [in english: wear the pants]." (Friis 2006)
- In other words: male friendly is "publicspherish", professional and something to do with challenging feminized power structures



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Theoretically operationalized question

- What elements are described by the informants as vital to gender the ECEC organization more "masculine"?
- What elements are constructed as important problems with the ECEC organization as "male –hostile"?





Qualitative approach

- In- depth interviews with male (female)
 managers and employees and boys
 participating in in the Play Resource Project (+
 2 additional interviews)
 - The analysis is based upon preliminary analysis of in-depth interviews with 2 male managers, 1 male assistant and 2 boys (5 informants)
- Left to analyze: Interview data from 4 ECECs in the project: 4 managers, participating boys.



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Preliminary findings: the "cosy" organization

- Problematizing sector and organizational cosiness
- « I feel like using the word cosy. I felt is was a kind of cosy culture. [...] I would rather it to be a confident [trygg] atmosphere in the ECEC than a cosy one. The cosy culture I link to the home culture and the privatized way of running a ECEC.»





"Cosiness" and housewifery connects to particular pedagogical practices

- Privatized practices and non-skilled work force as the core of non-professionalism:
 - "mothering" at work: make sandwiches and clean tables
 - engaging children in calm activities: beads
 - Find itself in the material in some kind of contrast to another type of ECEC, a new one



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Old and new

[in the old culture] Then it was house wifes who
were employed. If you could wipe off the tables and
make sandwhiches that was sufficient. But now
[ECECs] are the exact very opposite of this. They are
supposed to be sterile buildings....the buildings are
built to facilitate activity and learning, to challenge
oneself, the contrast to home. At home it is often a
bit sedentary, quiet, safe. The ECEC shall be
something else. Of course it shall be safe! [manager
1]



Some tentative organizational opposites constructed from data		
Problem-solving	Static (talking)	Dynamic (doing)
Organizing units	Static (settle down,)	Flexible (unit rotation)
Organizing in general	Under-organized, small scale	Organized, larger scale
Power structure	Unformal (tacit knowledge), non- hierarchy (Decision by show of hands, friendship)	More visible hierarchy based on formal competence, decisions based on professional reflection
Management	Employee-focused, "do-gooders", habit-driven	Child-focused, flexible (expose employees to discomfort)
Technology	Technology refusal	Technology integration, efficiency
Workcontent	Sedentary, indoor (beads in particular))	Outdoor play, activity (sports)
Workforce	Female majority,narrow field of recruitment (pedagogy)	Gender balanced, broad field of recruitment (carpenters, physioterapy)
Work-family relationship	Flexible, fixed work hours (part time)	}
Organization development, business	Not relevant, focus on care and	Energetic, doing business is ok,
development and innovation	well-being	challenging old patterns, innovative strategic



The cosy organization and recruitment of men

 Having a lot of boys here at our ECEC, only a handful will actually work there. But they get insights in that this is not a housewifeoccupation where one might not thrive, but that it is a place with boys and men, a good workplace. [manager 1]





Still prevailing?

 The ECEC is in many ways based on a womenhome-care-culture, that is not something that first and foremost appeals to men. And one does not neccesary feel included in such a discourse or culture [as a man]. [manager 2]



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Discussion

- The cosy organization is strongly linked to femininity and the private and non-professional organization: it is gendered female
- In the material a new and professional organization is presented/constructed for us by the informants:
 - Defined as the contrast to the cosy organization
 - · Understood as male-friendly
 - Does it represent a new underlying logic and normal model worker?
 - Is it gendered male? Androgynous?
 - Reproduce male hegemonic norm in ECEC-organization?
 - Expresses a norm consciousness? Critique?

What effect of these constructs can be discussed in terms of gendered opportunities and gendering of the ECEC organization?

