

International Research Project

Career Trajectories of Men in the ECEC Workforce

Why do men leave or stay in ECEC?

Yeah. So, it was weird being a guy. It was different and you were out of place.

Andrew, dropout, Australia

Research topic

Achieving a gender mixed work force in ECEC (early childhood education and care) is of major concern to scholars and educational policy makers around the world. Although the number of men in the workforce is slowly increasing, there is a high dropout rate among men who choose the profession both from their studies as well as from the workplace. The research project faces the problem by exploring how men in the field make their career decisions to remain in or leave the profession, with a focus on reasons for dropout and job turnover.

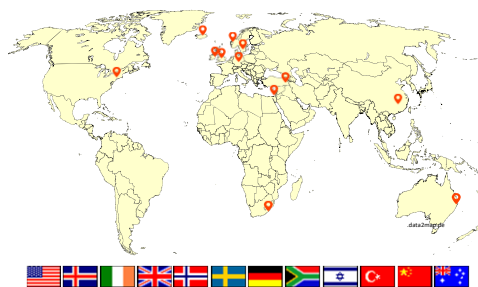


Methodology

The project used a qualitative, narrative approach to capture cultural understandings, perceptions, and constructions of men's subjective positionings in ECEC. Three case studies were conducted in every participating country, by interviewing two dropouts and one persister. Storyline methodology was applied to reveal critical moments in individual career paths. Interviews were transcribed, translated to English and then thematically categorized, creating a database from which researchers drew data to focus on particular factors related to men's career trajectories.

Subteams of researchers analysed data material on a broad range of topics:

- Professionalization
- Workplace environment
- Societal Factors
- Intrinsic motivations
- Agency
- Masculinities
- Critical moments



Cross-cultural research

The study represents a collaborative effort between 17 researchers from 12 countries on five continents, comprising diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds as well as academic disciplines. Perspectives include gender studies, early childhood education, sociology, psychology, and psycho-linguistics. This team worked collaboratively over three years to jointly formulate the research aims, methodology, and data collection and analysis. A process of co-constructed reflexivity was conducted to reveal strengths and biases.

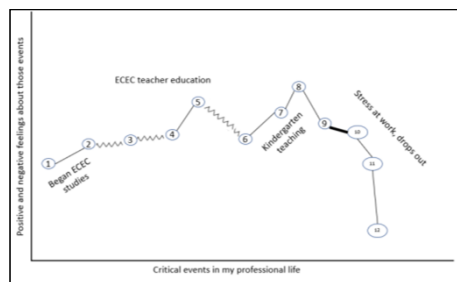
Results

Findings show how various factors at micro, meso, and macro levels affect men's career decisions, including professionalization, leadership, and everyday interactions between staff. Internal factors were found to mediate between the individual and societal and cultural forces, as well as national policies that either pull or push men towards or away from ECEC.

Gender was found to be an overriding factor, either in the foreground or background, but always present.

The study shows how international collaborative research sheds new light on a complex issue. Results reveal striking similarities worldwide, including obstacles as low status of ECEC work, gender stereotypes and paedophilia fear, but also significant differences connected to country-specific gender cultures, organisational structures, and a diversity of qualification paths in ECEC.

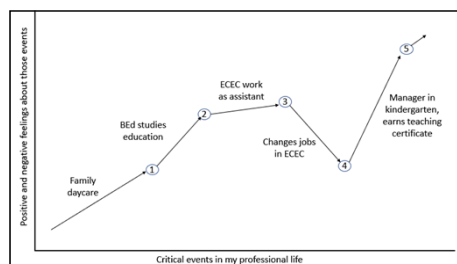
The results call for gender-sensitive policies at institutional as well as national levels, and inform policymakers about topics which have to be addressed for recruiting and retaining male workers.



Interviewees were asked to draw a storyline, highlighting positive and negative periods and critical moments of their career paths.

Above: Nils qualified for ECEC and still likes the job, but left the field due to team conflicts and a lack of support by the team leader.

Below: Amos took care for his own child and then decided to work in childcare. He studied ECEC and now works as a center manager.



It's the world's best job. It's the best. It's so rewarding and you learn a lot. I would love to work in preschools again if it is paid better and if it was different.

Sven, Dropout, Sweden

Report will be published by Routledge in the EECERA series *Towards an Ethical Practice in Early Childhood*.

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