

Let's learn
together



**GENDER-SENSITIVE EDUCATION:
A SELF-STUDY COURSE
FOR PRE-SCHOOL
TEACHERS**



Fair play at schools

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This publication has been developed as part of the Erasmus + project **“Fair Play at Schools”** (2019-1-CZ01-KA201-061190) which is a strategic partnership project supporting innovation in the field of gender-sensitive education among Estonian, Czech and Norwegian gender equality experts from the following three organisations:

- Eesti Naisteühenduste Ümarlaua Sihtasutus (Estonia)
- Gender Information Centre NORA (Czech Republic)
- KUN Centre for Equality and Diversity (Norway)

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Introduction

The project Fair Play at Schools focuses on gender-sensitive education at schools in Norway, Estonia and the Czech Republic. All the same, gender segregation in education and gendered labour market choices are present in all European countries, to different degrees and in somewhat different constellations.

The project aims at enhancing teachers' sensitivity to gender issues. In this way, it will contribute to more inclusive classroom environments where girls and boys can develop their competencies in a safe and welcoming atmosphere without the pressure of restrictive gender stereotypes.

01 | Gender

Gender differences are often taken for granted in a school environment, but gender stereotypes have a strong influence on the achievement of children, and if teachers are not sensitive to issues related to gender, the school environment can reinforce sexist patterns in children's everyday lives.

02 | Teachers

The goal of the Fair Play at Schools project is to help teachers be reflective on the existing gender order and gender stereotypes in society and their own biases, and act against this order. It is a very important component of the teachers' competencies.

03 | Materials

The materials provided within the project can help the teacher make an effort to provide equal opportunities for girls and boys and broaden their potential to make choices in less gender-stereotypical ways in everyday educational settings.

04 | Webinars

There will also be an online course for primary school teachers and webinars in the topic of gender-sensitive education with a focus on teachers working with pupils at the second level of primary schools developed by the Estonian and the Czech partner, respectively.

Course materials can be used flexibly according to the particular needs and educational contexts of a particular country and preschool/kindergarten. Using the course material is free and available to all who have an interest in the topics of gender-sensitive education.

Course

01 | Intended audience

The online course is aimed at kindergarten teachers and workers, typically caring for children between the ages of 0 and 6.

02 | How to use the course

The course is designed to fill two days of self-study, with each day consisting of 8 1-hour modules. The self-study can be carried out individually or in groups, in the former case we suggest using co-workers, friends or others with an interest in the topics to do the discussion assignments. Some of the reflection tasks that end modules are designed to be used separately from the course itself as a reminder or checklist, if desired.

03 | Course content

The course starts with a theory part and continues on to more practically oriented modules, and we recommend doing the modules in the suggested order. However, we will put links back to earlier parts (such as the glossary) or pointing to future parts (observation methodology) where appropriate.

The course will cover practical and everyday gender-related questions from kindergarten daily life. However, kindergartens vary among themselves and among countries, so not everything will be relevant to you or your working life.

AS THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE STATES

“Today there are still differences and inequalities between girls and boys with respect to school organisation and curricula, teaching methods and materials, career guidance, teacher training and most aspects of education.

In particular, the social roles associated with stereotypical representations of femininity and masculinity are often replicated in the education system. These inequalities impact on women and men’s economic and social situation. Notably, girls’ academic success has not led to the elimination of employment inequalities, the gender pay gap, or inequalities in relation to care work. The educational sector plays a crucial role in shaping gender representations, attitudes and behaviours. Therefore, eradicating formal discrimination in the education system is a first step, as well as the integration of a gender equality perspective into all aspects of education to ensure that the education sector actively promotes gender equality.”

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/education1>

For those interested, there is also a recommendation of the Council of Europe: Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)13 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on gender mainstreaming in education.

https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805d5287

Kindergarten systems in Norway, the Czech Republic and Estonia

For background, we have included some information about the kindergarten/preschool systems which define the contexts where our kindergarten teachers operate in the three project partner countries:

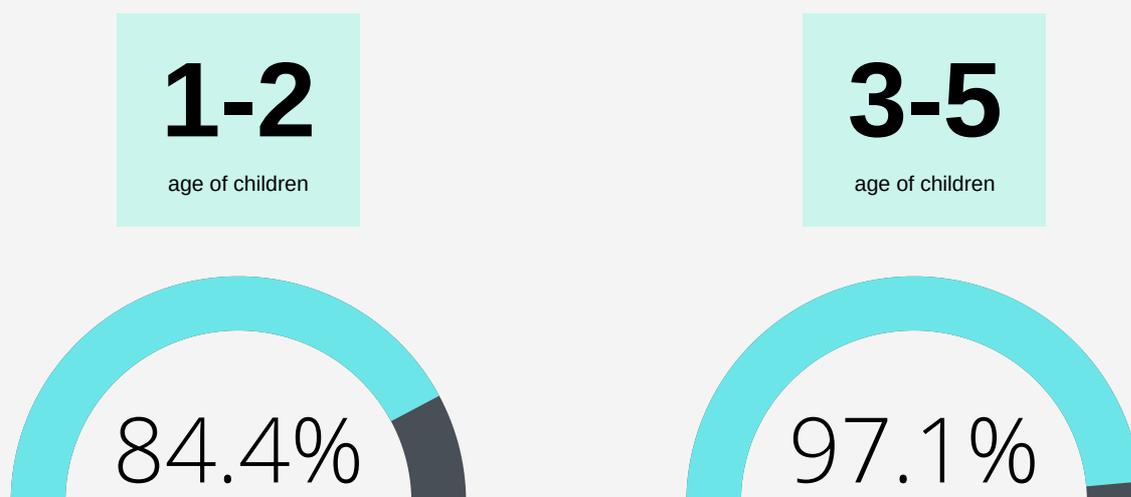
Norway

The Czech Republic

Estonia

NORWAY

Most children in Norway go to kindergarten. From the age of 12 months, Norwegian children are guaranteed a place in kindergarten as stated in § 12 of the kindergarten law. According to Statistics Norway (SSB¹), 84.4 % of children ages 1-2 attend kindergarten, and 97.1 % of children ages 3-5. Kindergarten is part of preparation to start school, the age 5 group will often be referred to as “the school starters” and have some time apart from the rest of the kindergarten where they learn preparatory skills for school and often visit the local school to become familiar with how school is.



Some kindergartens are owned by the municipal authorities and some by private corporations or individuals. The financing comes in part from public funding according to number of children, partly from parental co-pay, and is the same for both municipal and private kindergartens. There is a “cap” limiting how much parents must pay, adjusted every year in the national budget, and low-income families can get the fee reduced. There are also usually reduced prices for families who have more than one child using kindergartens.

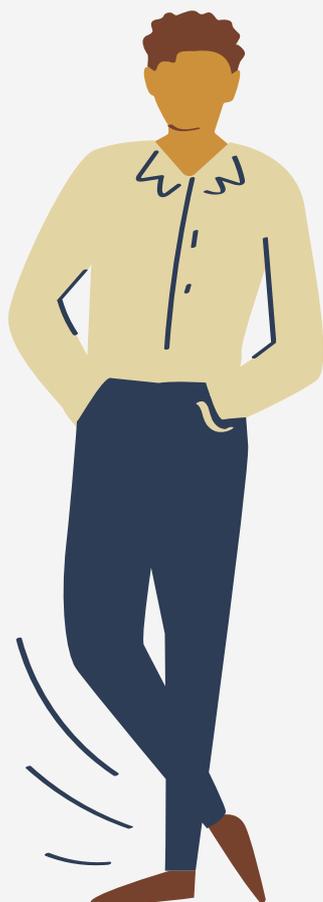
Kindergarten teacher is a bachelor's degree education in Norway, this qualifies you for teaching in school as well. In addition, kindergartens have a head with administrative responsibilities, and assistants who may or may not have vocational (high-school level) training or similar. As the demographics of Norway have changed with immigration, more bi- and multilingual staff are encouraged so that children can meet educators who know their home languages, too. There are different pedagogics in use in different kindergartens (such as Steiner and Montessori), but municipal ones follow mainstream pedagogics and are obliged to have pedagogues on staff.

¹ <https://www.ssb.no/en/barnehager>

7%

In Norway, about 7 % of kindergarten staff are male.

In Norway, about 7 % of kindergarten staff are male. This number rises so that schools have about 30 % male teachers, and higher schools more, but typically younger children will meet more female than male adults in their care and school situations.



Kindergartens are obliged to use the Framework Plan for Kindergartens²(last updated 2017). Among the core values are “equity and equality”, covering gender equality and social inclusion. While gender equality, as mentioned, is one of the core values of the framework plan for the kindergartens, it is not focused on in kindergarten teacher training at all.

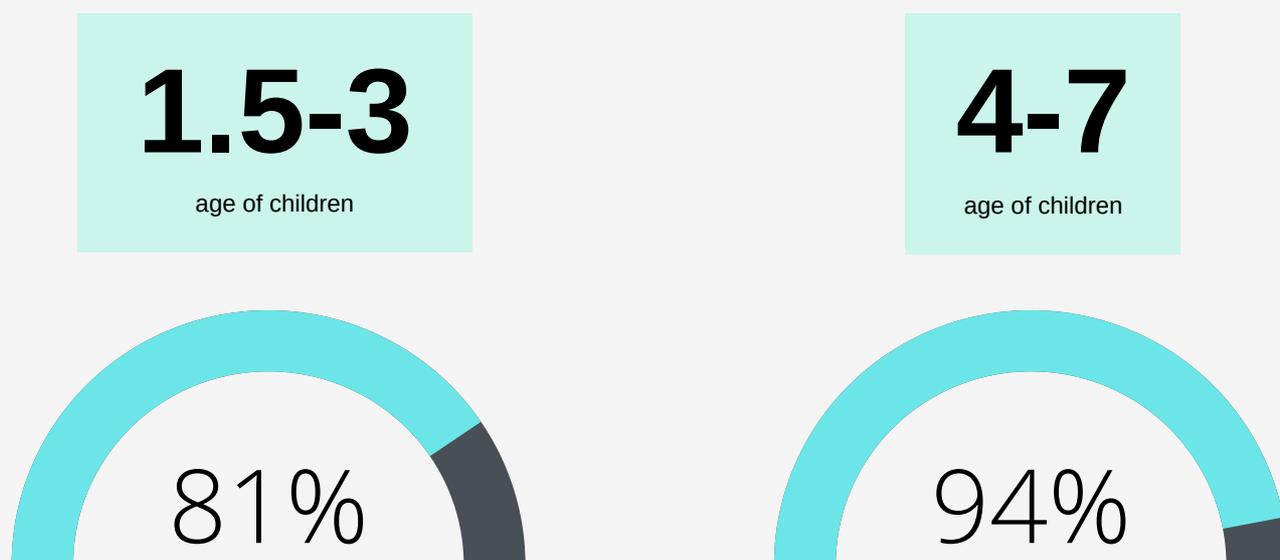
However, staff typically have capacity building and planning days (5 days a year) and may use these to run courses for the staff, or they can participate in courses, conferences or online classes such as these.

² Statistics Norway (SSB) – www.ssb.no/en/barnehager. <https://www.udir.no/in-english/Quality-in-ECEC-Schools-and-Vocational-Education-and-training/quality-assurance-school/>

ESTONIA

In Estonia, children usually stay at home until they are 1.5 years old. This is thanks to the generous parental leave at full pay which lasts for 18 months after the child's birth. All children aged between 1.5-7 years are guaranteed a place in a pre-school childcare institution by municipal authorities. Up to the age of 3, children can attend daycare (sõim), children between 3-7 years can attend kindergarten (lasteaed). A child can also stay at home until compulsory education begins at the age of 7 if the parents wish so.

Preschool attendance among children aged 1.5 to 3 years is pretty high standing currently at 81 %; for children aged 4 to 7 years it is equal to 94 %. Parents can freely choose the type of pre-school childcare institution whether a municipal or private one. In municipal kindergartens (93 % of all kindergartens) parents pay a small attendance fee and the cost of meals. The exact amounts of attendance fees are established by municipal authorities based on the child's age, the costs of management and other factors and they may vary across municipalities. The fees may not amount to more than 20 % of the minimum wage established by the Government of the Republic. (The minimum monthly wage in 2020 is 584 euros).



Preschool day care institutions typically stay open between 7.00 and 19.00 to allow parents to flexibly combine work and family life. Children get three meals a day, i.e. breakfast, lunch, and afternoon snack. They also have a 1.5-2 hour naptime.

In Estonia, preschool education is based on the national curriculum which is focused on teaching values, supporting individuality and creativity of children and learning through play. It follows the Scandinavian approach of combining different child-centred active learning methods such as “Step by Step”, the Montessori method, the Waldorf method of teaching, Reggio Emilia, language immersion as well as research, entrepreneurship and outdoor learning. The national curriculum is taken as basis when developing the curriculum by each individual preschool. Children who have completed the curriculum are issued a school readiness card which documents the child’s individual development. Parents submit the card to the school where children begin their formal education.

1:7

For children up to 3 years of age, the respective ratio is 1:7.



The number of teachers and assistant teachers in a kindergarten group is based on the ratios established by law. For children up to 3 years of age, the respective ratio is 1:7 and for children aged 3 or over, 1:10. To qualify for a preschool teacher one must have higher education and pedagogical competence.

Estonian national curriculum for preschool childcare institutions makes no references to equality, gender equality or equal treatment. Furthermore, we can say that among Estonian kindergarten teachers there is a widespread lack of knowledge of gender issues and gender sensitive teaching. These topics are not included in teacher training programmes at universities. So far, in-service teacher training on gender issues has taken place on a limited scale and largely thanks to foreign funding.

CZECH REPUBLIC

Pre-school education is organized for children predominantly from the age category of 3 to 6. With effect from September 1 2016 the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports allows kindergarten attendance also with a child who will have reached the age of at least two years by the beginning of the school year. All the same, a child under the age of 3 has no legal right to be admitted to a Czech kindergarten (section 34 of paragraph 1 of the Education Act).

Pre-school education is compulsory for a child who will have reached the age of five by the beginning of the school year. This obligation was introduced in the 2017/2018 school year.



By law, it is necessary to pay the fee for pre-school education and also for meals provided in kindergartens. The amount of the fee for pre-school education is very low and is paid on a monthly basis. Education in a kindergarten established by the state, region, municipality or association of municipalities is provided to the child free of charge from the beginning of the school year following the day when the child will have reached the age of five.

In state kindergartens, there are relatively high numbers of children in a class. A kindergarten class is filled with up to 24 children.

The Act on Teachers currently allows more ways to achieve a qualification for kindergarten teachers through education. This is possible by completing secondary pedagogical school, a specialized higher vocational school and by studying a bachelor's degree program at university.

Preschool care in the Czech Republic is provided mainly by kindergartens and children's groups. A total of 364 thousand children were enrolled in kindergartens for the 2018/2019 school year. The number of children attending children's groups was estimated at about 16,000.

The children's group is an alternative regular childcare facility for children between the ages of one and the start of compulsory schooling. The functioning of a children's group is defined by Act No. 247/2014 Coll. according to which the children's group focuses on ensuring needs of the child, on their upbringing, development of skills and cultural and hygienic habits. Unlike kindergartens, the children's groups do not guarantee education of children.

The Framework Educational Program for Preschool Education defines main requirements, conditions and rules for institutional education of preschool children. It does not make any reference to gender or gender equality.

GO AND FIND OUT

Are there national guidelines for gender-sensitive education your country?

How is gender and gender equality addressed in guidelines for pre-school education?

Day 1 // Module 1

WHY DO WE TALK ABOUT GENDER-SENSITIVE EDUCATION IN KINDERGARTENS?

In this module you will learn about:

- social identity
- prejudice and gender
- how early education can be a part of shaping children's understanding of their own gender and of how gender roles in society operate.

EXERCISE

STARTING POINT

Write a short text on your motivation for taking this course. As a starting point, consider: Are boys and girls treated differently in your kindergarten?

Next, we would like you to make two short lists:

- What are the first 5 words that come to your mind when you hear the word "girl"?
- What are the first 5 words that come to your mind when you hear the word "boy"?

SOCIAL IDENTITY - HOW SOCIAL GROUPS AFFECT HOW WE SEE OURSELVES

Who are you? If you ask somebody this question, you are likely to get answers like, 'I am a mother', 'I am Finnish', 'I am a foodie' or 'I am a drummer'. All these answers represent an identity we share with several others. These group identities are important for how we see ourselves. The social groups we identify with or feel that we belong to are called social identity.

We all have several different groups we identify with. Some social identities are more important to us than others. We may for instance feel that our identities are more defined by being a woman or a man than by which school we went to. But social identity is also fluid and flexible. The situation may influence which social identity you feel is most relevant. If for instance you are the only person in the classroom who is from Finland, you may feel that your nationality is a very defining characteristic of you, while being from Finland may not feel as relevant when you are at home with your family, peeling potatoes. Then maybe a foodie feels like a more relevant identity, indicating that you are in the same group as others who are passionate about food. Or maybe preparing dinner for your family is something you relate to being a mother or father?

Talking about gender and gender roles can provoke reactions. This is in part because gender is such a central concept to our understanding of ourselves. Everybody relates to gender categories in one way or the other, and everybody has their own personal experience connected to gender. Exploring our own vantage point is a useful exercise to get familiar with the concept of social identities.



EXERCISE

WHICH ARE YOUR SOCIAL IDENTITIES?

We all have many different social identities. Social identities can be your nationality, your religion, your hobbies, your vocation, or your relationships. Which social identities do you have?

- Name at least six social groups you identify with.
- Looking at this list of social identities, which do you consider most important to who you are, and which are not so important? Circle the identities that you feel are most important to you.
- Looking at your list; are many of your social identities related to gender? How about the identities you circled?

SOCIAL IDENTITY AND COGNITIVE MIND-MAPS

Social identity is important for how we understand ourselves, but also for how we understand our society. In order to sort all the information around us, we use cognitive shortcuts. We make assumptions about people we meet based on which groups they belong to. This happens even when we are not aware of it. Researchers have found that when we meet new people for the first time, we register gender, skin colour and age. This happens automatically and subconsciously. This gives you social clues, for example how to address someone when you meet them for the first time. You may for instance assume that the small girl you meet outside your house likes to play with dolls or that the old man on the bus may want to sit down, so maybe you should offer him your seat. We depend on these cognitive maps. Imagine meeting someone and not being able to tell their gender or their age from their looks. How would you relate to this person?

In fact, in an experiment,³ test subjects were asked to look after a baby while the mother went out of the room for a while. The test subjects were not told anything about the child, who was dressed in white. Can you guess what the test subjects did?

After a while, all the test subjects did the same thing; they took a sneak peek inside the diaper to see if it was a girl or a boy. Did you guess it? These were small babies who did not yet have language or, as far as we know, consciousness about their own gender. Yet, it seems that knowing the gender of the child was important for the test subjects to relate to the baby in their role as a babysitter. The experiment is a good illustration of one of the basic principles in this course; gender is a central sorting mechanism that provides us with a script for how we relate to other persons.

Another experiment⁴ illustrates how we use our knowledge about the child's gender to relate to them; a group of students was shown a video of a crying baby. Half of the students were told they were watching a boy, the other half that they were watching a girl. When they were asked about their opinion about why the baby was crying, the students who thought they saw a boy said that he cried because he was angry, while the other half of the students, who thought they were watching a girl said that the baby was afraid. From an early age, we treat boys and girls differently, based on our gender-specific expectations.

WATCH THE VIDEO

Another illustration of how important gender is to how we interact with children is this video, produced by the BBC.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nWu44AqF0il>

- Watch the video. What are your reactions to this experiment? If possible, discuss with your colleagues: What do you think can be learned from this experiment?
- Initially, we asked you to write down the first five words you thought of, hearing the words 'girl' and 'boy'. These short lists probably represent some of the associations that make up your cognitive mind maps for gender. Group discussion: compare your lists. Are they similar or do they differ? Reflect on similarities and differences in your lists?



³ In Ann-Elisabeth Knudsen (2005): Snille jenter og dumme gutter. Hvorfor oppfører ingen seg som de har hjerne til? Oslo: Pedagogisk forum

⁴ Bjerrum Nielsen, Harriet & Rudberg, Monica (1998). Historien om jenter og gutter. Universitetsforlaget

SOCIAL IDENTITY AND PREJUDICE

The cognitive mind maps allow us to process large amounts of information. They also enable us to act and react to the world, without having to spend valuable time considering all options all the time. We all depend on them, and we use social categories as guidelines when we interact with other people. At the same time, they can mislead us. Sometimes they are stereotypical and wrong. The little girl you met may not like to play with dolls. She might like dinosaurs better. And the old man on the bus might be an athlete who likes uphill running and frankly would be offended by you offering him your seat, thank you very much. These examples are small and innocent. But we also know that social categorization can have serious consequences.

Prejudice, an affective feeling towards a person based on their perceived group membership, is one of the side effects of our mind maps. While most of us wish to see ourselves as unprejudiced, it is important to stress that we all have prejudices. Our prejudices are based on our previous experience, norms in our society, as well as the reference base we have from media, literature and popular culture. While prejudice may be positive or negative, negative prejudice has been given much attention, as the root cause of racism, sexism, discrimination and hate crimes. The concept of prejudice is useful to explain how social categories are connected to different evaluations. Sexism, for instance, is defined by Cambridge Dictionary as “the belief that the members of one sex are less intelligent, able, skilful, etc. than the members of the other sex, especially that women are less able than men”. In many areas we see that men are considered more valuable and better than women. This also applies to children. Gender prejudice is harmful and hinders a pedagogy that values girls and boys alike and offers them equal opportunities.

The good news is that prejudice can be unlearned. In fact, becoming aware of our own prejudice is a necessary first step in the work on preventing prejudice from shaping our actions and from getting in the way of good practice. Still, one should be prepared for that it requires some work. It is energy saving to rely on our usual cognitive tools. Being forced to reconsider requires energy and effort, and it can be mentally taxing.

WHY DO WE TALK ABOUT GENDER-SENSITIVE EDUCATION IN KINDERGARTENS?

So far, we have seen that social groups are important for how we understand ourselves and each other, and that to some extent, we all have prejudice towards different social groups. We have seen that along with skin colour and age, gender is one of the central sorting mechanisms which helps us navigate in the world and relate to each other.

So why is gender so important? Statistics show us that gender influences and is intertwined with most areas of our lives. It affects what toys we play with, what friends we have, what education we choose, what jobs we get, the size of our wages and our life expectancy. There are many reasons for focusing on gender in kindergarten education, and one might argue on different levels.

The way that we base our expectations on gender places us in risk of limiting children's possibilities for development and of limiting their options for expressing themselves. These expectations are expressed through how we meet the children, what words we choose and what options we give them. When we talk about gender norms and children, we often think about the children who do not conform to the gender norms in society. The truth is that gender norms are confining to most children. The dichotomised world we offer the children when it comes to colours, toys, role models and accepted emotions limits the child's room for action. We offer the children half the world instead of the whole world.



Learning points

| The social groups

The social groups we identify with are an integral part of our identity.

| The social categorization

We also use social categorization as a way of understanding the people and the world around us. Gender is one of the central categories we use, both automatically and consciously.

| Prejudice

Prejudice is one of the results of social categorization. We are all prejudiced to a certain degree, but it is possible to decrease our own prejudice by becoming aware of it and by learning more about the topic.

| Gender-sensitive education

The goal of gender-sensitive education is to avoid prejudice and discrimination based on gender, and to prevent that children's understanding of themselves and their own possibilities is limited by gender.

Day 1 // Module 2

A PINK AND BLUE WORLD

In this module you will learn about:

- commercial branding of products for boys and girls
- what mechanisms lie behind this branding
- the possible consequences it has for the society and the individual child.

Imagine walking into a toy store to buy a gift for a child. A member of staff approaches you. What do you think is the first question they will ask you?

You are probably thinking that you will be asked if the gift is for a boy or a girl, is that not so? Your answer will decide the colours of the toys, what kind of toys are suggested, and even the colour of the gift wrapping. Is this a child who is interested in Spiderman or in Hello Kitty?

Often the whole store will be coded in pink and in blue, separating boys' and girls' toys in different sections. Not only toys are branded this way, clothing as well as equipment like strollers, sunscreens, eating utensils, furniture, and even bibles are colour coded and branded for girls and boys.

In the market, the kindergarten itself is also a commercial actor, both as a customer, buying toys and playing materials, and as a professional influence on parents, with its expertise on what toys and equipment are practical and useful for the children.

WHY BRANDING?

There are many different reasons for branding products for girls or for boys. Historically, children have been protected against direct commercial marketing, but they are increasingly a coveted commercial target group, even when they are babies⁵. Targeting children is typically done in a way that separates the market into disparate products for girls and boys. One reason for this might be that it pays off economically. Gender branding makes it less likely that a little sister inherits her older brother's clothes and toys, and that a little brother inherits clothes and toys his big sister has used before him. Having two separate markets is commercially rewarding, encouraging increased consumption.

The branding also reflects the gendered expectations in society for what is appropriate for little girls and for little boys. We as consumers contribute to maintaining the pink and blue world. Many manufacturers argue that they simply cannot sell gender neutral products, and that clearly gendered colour branding is what the consumers want. This applies to us as adults, but also to what the children themselves want (or indeed, what we assume that they want!). Indeed, a meta-analysis⁶ of research on toy preference shows that there are gender related preferences when it comes to toys. Children are also active in the development of products, and signal their preferences both through their parents and in different interactive arenas.



⁵Buckingham & Thingstad, 2007, in Emilsen (2015) (red): Likestilling og Likeverd i barnehagen. Fagbokforlaget

⁶Davis, Jac & Hines, Melissa (2020): How Large are Gender Differences in Toy Preference? A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Toy Preference Research. Archives of Sexual Behaviour (2020) 49:373-394

GENDERED COLOUR CODING IS CULTURAL



Like other young boys of his era, Franklin Roosevelt wears a dress. This studio portrait was likely taken in New York in 1884. Bettmann / Corbis

The biological difference between girls and boys is often used to explain gender differences. Some argue that boys are genetically programmed to prefer the blue side of the store, and girls to prefer the pink side. However, we know that there are gendered codes in the society surrounding us that are purely cultural. Did you for instance know that in the 1920s, pink was considered a masculine colour, a lighter version of the aggressive red, while blue was associated with girls? It was not until the 1950s that this was reversed, and that pink was branded as a feminine colour and blue as masculine. You might also have seen old black and white photographs of Franklin D. Roosevelt as a little boy, wearing a dress and sporting long hair? This was the norm at the end of the nineteenth century.

At the time, dresses and long hair were considered gender neutral for children up to the age of 6 or 7, and boys and girls alike were often dressed in white. Fashion is always changing, including what is considered feminine and masculine. A more recent example is the so-called man bun, a hairstyle previously worn mostly by women, which started to come into fashion also for men around 2008.

EXERCISE

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT

How gender is connected to cultural codes like colours and types of objects, is a research topic in academia. In the following exercise, we ask you to try yourself as a gender researcher and to do a small research assignment on the gendered branding of children's toys, books and clothes.

If you are in the vicinity of a toy store, a clothes store for children or a children's bookstore, go there, and take pictures with your cell phone of different products branded for boys or girls. Print out the pictures. Alternatively, search online for images of boys' toys and girl's toys and print out a selection. Separate the printed pictures in two piles, one for boys and one for girls.

Look at the pictures of objects branded for boys. Write down keywords:

- What characterizes the products? How do they look? What kinds of activities do the toys encourage?

Now look at the pictures of objects branded for girls. Write down keywords:

- What characterizes the products? How do they look? What kinds of activities do the toys encourage?

Compare the two lists of keywords. In what ways do they differ from each other?

BATMAN AND BARBIE - WHAT EFFECTS DOES THE GENDERED BRANDING HAVE ON US?

As they grow, children observe the world around them. From an early age they realize that they have a gender, and they develop their gender identity and understanding of gender as a reaction to the expectations and norms they meet.

The way toys are branded goes beyond colour coding and separate looks. Take Barbie and Batman as examples. The Barbie doll has big eyes that invite to communication. Batman – which is in contrast not called a doll but an action figure – has small, barely vi-

sible eyes that signalize fight and anger, and stands broad-legged and ready for action. Both in the ways that the toys are intended to be played with and in the way they portray gendered role models, these toys contribute to gender norms where boys are action oriented and physically active, while girls are oriented towards relations, verbal communication and looks rather than physical activity. Take a look at your list of keywords from the research assignment. Do you find the same tendency in your selection?

It is not only the children who are affected by this gendered coding. The codes are also relevant to how we as adults see the children. A Swedish study found that kindergarten teachers see the girls and boys as separate and homogenous groups, even though the children themselves show great variation in preferences and behaviour also within the groups.⁷ In other words, we tend to exaggerate the differences between boys and girls as groups, and to underplay the differences between different girls and different boys. In fact, we even sanction behaviour that does not comply with the cultural gender norms. A recent Norwegian kindergarten study found that even though the teachers reported that they give boys and girls equal treatment, the opposite is in fact the case, as when a girl is told to stop playing Batman, and to go to do something else, while the boys she is playing with are allowed to continue.⁸

There will always be gendered codes in society, and there is nothing wrong with girls wearing pink or boys preferring to wear blue. What the kindergarten however needs to be aware of, is the limitations that follow with separating both objects and activities as either appropriate only for girls or only for boys. In a commercially branded pink and blue world, the kindergarten has an important role to show the children that they have many possibilities and options, not just two.

THE LEGO BOX

In a kindergarten working with gender sensitivity, the staff were talking about how the children's playing materials were organized according to gender. It turned out that they had two cases of Lego, one for girls' Lego and one for boys' Lego. As they reflected upon it, one of the employees suggested that they combine all the Lego in the same case instead.

⁷ Meland, Aud Torild & Kaltvedt, Elsa Helen (2019): Tracking gender in kindergarten. *Early Child Development and Care* 2019, 189:94-103

⁸ Eidevald, C., 2009: Det finns ingen tjejbestämmare: Att förstå kön som position i förskolans vardagsrutiner och lek. Doctoral thesis Högskolan för lärande och kommunikation, Jönköping

EXERCISE

REFLECT AND DISCUSS:

1. Why do you think the Lego was separated to begin with?
2. What impact do you think having two separate Lego cases has on the children? What conclusions do you think children draw from this way of organizing the toys?
3. What do you think the result was of combining the two cases into one?

Learning points

| The children as consumers

Children as consumers are an attractive commercial group, and toys, clothes and equipment are branded for them from an early age. There is a trend where objects branded for children are typically branded exclusively for girls or exclusively for boys.

| The gendered branding

The gendered branding includes how products look and which colours they have, but also which activities and values are connected to being a girl or being a boy.

| The affirmation and sanctions

Children develop their gender identity as a reaction to the expectations and norms they meet. Kindergarten teachers' affirmation and sanctions are an important part of this process.

| The toys

To counteract limiting the children's options for action, kindergartens may need to actively work on making all toys available for the children, regardless of their gender.

Day 1 // Module 3

GENDER ROLES AND SOCIALIZATION

In this module you will learn about:

- gender roles
- factors that influence gender roles
- gender and social interaction.

First, let us take a short detour into sex and biology. Our sex is biologically determined, and connected to our bodily characteristics, our chromosomes and hormones. Our biology provides a predisposition to our development, and statistically there are some differences between the brains of boys and girls. For instance, the cerebral cortex is found to be bigger in the brains of girls than in the brains of boys from as early as week 26.⁹ Our physiques are also different, on average, muscles amount to about 40 % of the body weight of men, and 35 % of the body weight of women.

When discussing gender and gender roles, biology and genetics are often used as explanation or defence of gender discrimination.

The debate about nurture or nature has existed since the dawn of science. Biological theories are often critiqued for being deterministic, and social theories for being too relativist. For our part, we note that both our brains and bodies are in constant development, and that there are many factors that influence this development. We choose to focus on gender, i.e., the nurture side of the debate. One of the goals of this course is to provide insight, and to reflect upon how kindergarten teachers contribute to the children's socialization process into gender roles.

Gender is about identity and social aspects, including social interactions, culture and norms. As we have seen in the previous modules, gender is central to our understanding of ourselves and the world, and it is connected to a set of norms and gendered expectations for how we should act. Cultural gender norms are not fixed but develop through the times and through different contexts. Fashion is one example. As we have

⁹Emilsen, Kari (red) 2015: Likestilling og likeverd i barnehagen. Bergen: Fagbokforlaget

seen in the previous module, pink has not always been considered a girly colour, and dresses have historically been considered equally appropriate for both girls and boys. Norms and values are changing, and it is often easier to spot the changes in retrospect than when you are standing in the middle of them. But in fact, many of the rights we take for granted today, like the women's right to vote, are relatively new. In 2013, Norway celebrated 100 years of women's right to vote. Do you know which year women were granted the right to vote in your country?

We all relate to our context and to the gender roles in the society around us. The process through which we learn what is acceptable and expected from us is called socialization.

Children's socialization into gender roles is summed up like this in Emilsen (2015):

"The foundation for gender identity is laid early in childhood. The children's gender identity is shaped by the society that surrounds them, through interaction with others, parents, peers, media, kindergarten, school etc. Through socialization children learn what is allowed and accepted for them as a boy or a girl in different arenas, and expectations connected to gender are an important part of this. Girls become caring, empathic and good girls, because society around them consciously and subconsciously expect it from them. Boys become active, physical and outgoing. The children regulate their behaviour after the expectations, norms and rules they meet."

Stordal, G, in Emilsen, K. (red): Likestilling og likeverd i barnehagen. Page 77. Our translation.

As you can see, the socialization process entails many different arenas and actors. We have already addressed the commercial market and its influence on gender roles. Later on in this course, we will talk about several other aspects of this socialization process that are also relevant to the kindergarten and your work; parents and their role, how the physical surroundings are organized, and how gender roles are reflected in children's books, stories and songs.

For now, let us concentrate on you as a kindergarten teacher and your role in the gender role socialization of the children you work with.

Reinforcement

As a kindergarten teacher, you contribute to the children's gender socialization through positive and negative feedback and reactions. This includes actions that are made consciously and with intent, like praising the children or telling them off for how they act, but the feedback can also be more subtle and between the lines.

Positive feedback can be giving praise and acknowledgement, but also to distribute other

resources like advantages, power positions or attention. The positive reinforcement we give children is our most valuable pedagogical tool, as it gives the children concrete and constructive feedback on what we want the children to do.

EXERCISE

REFLECT AND DISCUSS:

Children meet many gendered expectations from adults, like expecting girls to keep clean during play or expecting boys to be boisterous and physically active. At work, take note of it when you or other members of the staff give positive affirmation to the children, and write down what is said, and whether it was said to a girl or a boy. When you do this exercise, tell your colleagues what you are up to, so they know what you are writing down and why. It can also be a good idea to collaborate on this, taking turns in observing and writing down comments.

Looking at the list of comments, reflect on the following questions:

- What positive comments have you made or heard other staff make to the children? What behaviour or quality is reinforced?
- Do boys and girls receive the same kinds of comments? If not, what are the differences?
- In a Swedish research project, Månsson¹⁰ finds that boys and girls are given different kinds of feedback, girls are getting positive reinforcement for acting as collectivists, valuing community and caring for others, while boys are praised as individualists, for putting their own needs first. Does this also apply to your kindergarten? Discuss with your colleagues.

¹⁰Månsson, A (2000): Möten som formar: interaktionsmönster på förskola mellan pedagoger och de yngsta barnen i ett genusperspektiv. Malmö: Institutionen för pedagogik, Lärarhögskolan

As adults, it is our responsibility to set clear boundaries for the children. When they cross these boundaries, negative sanctions might be necessary. Negative sanctions can be to be told off, to have privileges taken away or to experience resistance. But negative attention might also work as a reward, especially when we consider attention from adults as a resource in kindergarten.

Lack of response can also have the effect of a negative sanction. To avoid or omit, not put words to, not acknowledge or reward, is an indirect way of signalling that a behaviour is undesirable. In that way, negative sanctions can also be unintentional or subconscious.

EXERCISE

THINK ABOUT A TYPICAL DAY IN YOUR KINDERGARTEN.

- What kind of behaviour from the kids leads to sanctions?
- What sanctions do you typically use?
- Can you think of any behaviour that you find undesirable, but that you would typically try to overlook?

Being aware of all the ways we contribute to the gender socialization of children is a daunting and comprehensive task. In part because it involves becoming aware of things we do automatically without thinking about it, and also because becoming aware of gender norms involves questioning things we take for granted. No matter what we do, we send out signals, consciously or not, that the children pick up from us. It can be exhausting to constantly observe and question your own practice. Nevertheless, it is an important task. It can be reassuring to remember that it is not a goal to remove gender roles or take gender away from our identity. However, there are some negative and restricting gender roles we should try to combat. The norm that boys and men should not be caring and show emotions is one example, or that girls and women should not speak up for themselves. In the following modules we will present some tools we hope will help you in the process of developing a gender sensitive pedagogy.

Learning points

| Sex / Gender

While sex is about the bodily and biological aspects, gender is about social interaction and cultural norms.

| Historical and social surroundings

Our identities are continually shaping and developing, in our historical and social surroundings.

| Gender roles

Gender roles are norms and expectations connected to being a woman or a man. They are learnt through socialization.

| Interactions

Children's gender identity is shaped through interactions with other children, parents, media, and the kindergarten.

| Reward and punishment

Gender roles are reinforced through reward and punishment.

| Development

Gender roles have existed at all times, but what they entail and how they are enacted has varied and will continue to develop.

Day 1 // Module 4

THE PHYSICAL SPACE IN THE KINDERGARTEN, ANALYSING TOYS AND GAMES

In this module you will learn about:

- the physical space and how it influences children's actions and interactions and possibility for development
- how we refer to the different play spaces in the kindergarten
- how we introduce different toys and activities
- how what colours we use will influence how children play and see their role in the kindergarten.

NAMING DIFFERENT SPACES IN THE KINDERGARTEN

A room is more than just a room. Different spaces invite different forms of play. A room with tables and chairs encourages sit-down play. A gym will invite movement and activity. Rooms can encourage children to creative and expressive play but may also limit the children's perceived options and contribute to more one-dimensional girl and boy gender roles. In a kindergarten, play is shaped both by how the adult staff refer to spaces, how rooms are furnished and designed, and what toys are present.

Close your eyes and picture a play space in kindergarten where there are dolls. What would you call this space? In Norway, it is typically referred to as "the doll corner". Then, it was pointed out that not so many boys wanted to play in the "doll corner", because dolls are framed as toys boys aren't supposed to play with. In some kindergartens, they now

refer to this space with a more gender-neutral name in order to make the kindergarten more inclusive for all children, such as “family corner”. This makes it easier for the boys to join the play there, since playing “families” is a play familiar to most children. The same thinking may be used in re-thinking the names of play spaces with construction toys or toy cars, for instance.

TOY CATEGORIES

It is common to sort toys based on how they look or how they are perceived. For instance, dolls are often stored close to the doll carriage, close to the toy kitchen. Construction toys, tools etc. are often stored in another spot. This categorisation makes sense to us adults. For children, who may have more elastic imaginations, sorting toys in new ways may encourage completely new play patterns. Try putting the dolls with the lego, toy cars in the doll house and the toolbox next to the toy kitchen. Perhaps they will play at making food for the baby doll and fixing the doll carriage at the same time?

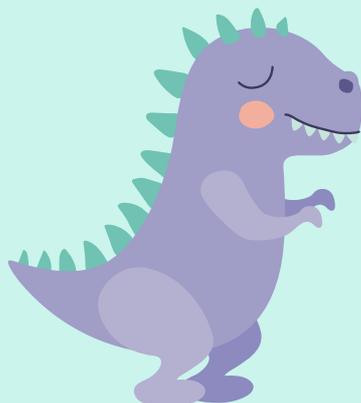
Sometimes, removing traditionally gendered toys can encourage new play. Try introducing crafting materials so they can make their own imaginary worlds – blankets, cardboard boxes – what else?

ACTIVITY

ANALYSE HOW TOYS ARE STORED

- What toys are easily accessible, and what toys are stored out of children's reach?

Re-shuffle occasionally, so accessibility changes. Make sure toys get new placement and see what happens.



ACTIVITY

How do girls and boys use the toys and the play spaces?

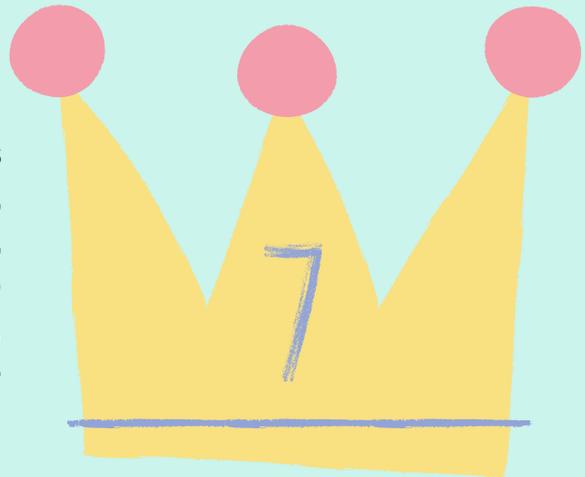
Talk to your co-workers and try to observe the children's play patterns. Mix toys and spaces that are traditionally seen as boys' or girls' toys. The family corner can include old telephones, tools and other untraditional items, perhaps the children can make porridge and fix the cooker at the same time?

Try out whether you can divide spaces by other criteria than toys included. By building little «worlds» such as «aquariums», «outer space», «the garden» etc. you can make new toy combinations and inspire new play. Another way is to divide spaces by colour.

Think about: What artwork/pictures are on the walls? How do they inspire play and imagination?

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

In Norwegian kindergartens, children's birthdays are observed in different ways. Quite often, children get a "crown" made from coloured, decorated cardboard, that they sometimes get to make with one of the members of staff. Typically, there are gendered choices to make along the way to the finished product.



- What colour should the cardboard be?
- Does the adult make sure to display all the possible colours, or do they make assumptions based on gender and provide pink or blue?

The crown is then decorated with a name and age, and they get to make drawings or put stickers and glitter on the crown. Make sure to see the whole range available, and don't automatically assume the boy wants cars or insects and the girl wants unicorns or kittens. Some kindergartens have a "treasure chest" where the birthday boy or girl can pick a little gift – if this is the case where you work, make sure you have a look and see whether there are any neutral selections available.

REFLECTION TASK

What about dress-up clothes? The boxes often contain dresses and skirts. How are these used? Do all children use them, or just the girls? Some parents do not want their sons to wear dresses or skirts or to play with dolls. How do we react? Discuss with a coworker.

TIP

CARING ROLES AND DRESS

Explain that in this kindergarten, the focus is on all children being allowed to develop and practice different qualities and roles. Talk about the positive skills playing with dolls fosters. Children are encouraged to partake in relational play and can experience caring roles that demand empathy and closeness. The dress is a piece of clothing among others available in the kindergarten. Perhaps the child sees the dress as less gendered than adults do? Perhaps it is just a garment that is fun to spin around in, or useful in play? Try to encourage seeing this as expressions of fun and play in kindergarten, and signs that the child is happy there.

INTERESTING

DANCE SKIRTS

The Swedish Egalia kindergarten in Stockholm is renowned for their work with norm-critical and gender sensitive education and tries to make sure the children have the same opportunity to express themselves and experience joy in movement. In their dance classes, tulle skirts in happy colours are termed “dance clothes”, and the movement of twirling in skirts is seen as integral to the experience of dance. They prefer to emphasize the strength and balance demanded of professional dancers and tell the children how important their bodies are to living strong, happy lives.

METHODOLOGY FOR MAPPING HOW AREAS IN THE KINDERGARTEN ARE USED BY THE CHILDREN

A kindergarten wanted to map the spaces, toys and other materials to see how they facilitated children's play and testing of gender roles. They looked into whether boys and girls play more together when toys or other materials are available than when they do not have access to toys. The kindergarten had two outdoor spaces, one with toys and play structures and one without. A map was drawn of both spaces. Twice a day, at set times, they noted on the map how many children were playing, in what groupings, and what the gender distribution was. They also made a note of what sort of games were played. Through the registrations, they saw that boys and girls played together more when there were no toys available, in the area with toys and play structures, boys and girls hardly played together at all.

Make your own observations to see the children's play patterns in your kindergarten. In free play, take a couple of days and observe the children and how they use the space. Are there areas that seem to have more children of one gender? After the first round of observations, move toys and furniture around, mix the toys up and see what happens in a further round of observations. What changed?

OUTDOOR SPACE

Does your kindergarten have access to outdoor space? The outdoors, too, can be a gendered arena. Do we allow the same acts from boys and girls in outdoor play? Will we let Maria climb as high in the tree as Omar? Do we act on the assumption that boys are more physically inclined, and seek risk to a higher degree than girls? Research shows that in adult life, men tend to prefer risk-taking activities more than women do (Sandseter 2007), but often the variation is as great within each gender category as between women and men. It is much the same for children, there may be the same difference of risk-taking behaviour between two girls as between a girl and a boy. And we have to remember that all children are entitled to the same treatment.

Our stereotypical assumptions also come up when we observe children at play. If boys and girls are playing in a sandpit, we may assume the girls are "baking cakes" while the boys use the diggers and make roads for their toy cars. Our assumptions influence how we suggest activities and what toys we offer – perhaps we offer spades and sand moulds to the girls while the boys get diggers and cars.

REFLECTION TASK

Equality in the woods? In terms of the research of space use above, Swedish research has also shown that there is more gendered play in the outdoor space in kindergarten than when the children are out in the woods or other places outside the kindergarten area. Why do you think this is?

Sample checklist

| Games

Go through one area, in this instance, **games**.

How many boardgames/card games/puzzles are available?

Look at the games available, what are your first impressions of how they are typically used.

In your experience, which of these are used by: Boys/Girls/Both

Why do you think they are/are not used by one group more than the other?

Are there ways of changing how games are chosen, what groups play together etc.?

Do you think the physical location of games in the space impacts how they are used?

Do adults/teachers play games with the children? If possible, observe how they interact with girls v. boys while playing. Are there differences?

Who buys games, if there are resources for new purchases?

According to what criteria are they chosen?

NB: What are the consequences of encouraging different activities for girls and boys?

REFLECTION TASK

What about dress-up clothes? The boxes often contain dresses and skirts. How are these used? Do all children use them, or just the girls? Some parents do not want their sons to wear dresses or skirts or to play with dolls. How do we react? Discuss with a coworker.

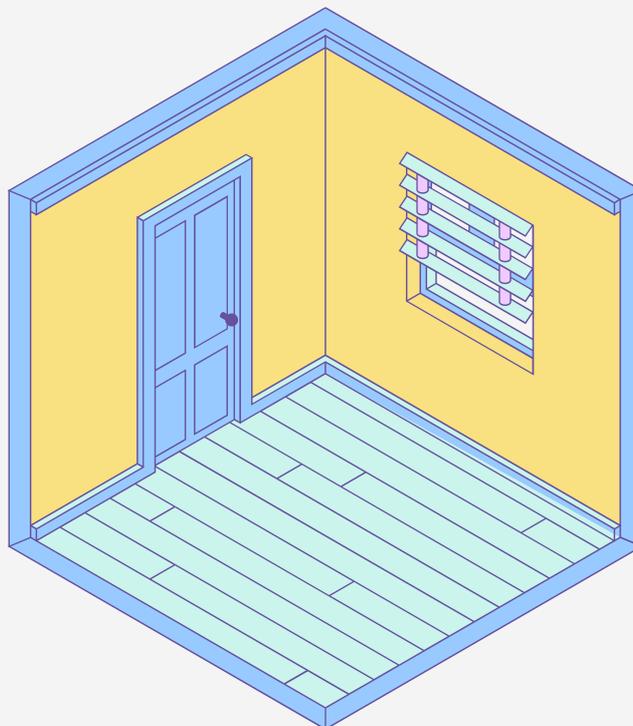
Learning points

| Spaces

Physical and social spaces structure interaction.

| Categories

Categories structure thinking and how we see possibilities.



Day 1 // Module 5

OBSERVATION METHODOLOGY – WHAT TO LOOK FOR AND HOW TO SEE

In this module you will learn about:

- how gender is expressed in kindergarten, how girls and boys are treated differently and how staff conform to gender stereotypes
- ideas on how to make a kindergarten environment a place of gender equality
- observation methods that can unveil and document inequality and help track developments/improvements.

We seek to open your eyes to all the ways gender can be observed in everyday life in kindergartens. The goal is to offer the tools to go beyond the clearly visible gendered world and be able to assess the underlying and often more important layers in our behaviour. Do we see each individual in the kindergarten for who they are? Do we give them equal amounts of our time, compassion, interest, tenderness and knowledge, or do we differentiate on the basis of gender? What do we praise them for, what do we encourage them to explore, who do we team them up with? These are among the questions that need to be raised in order to access the “invisible” gendered world in kindergartens.

CATCHING INEQUALITY ON TAPE

Gender can be very visible and tangible, like an absolute barrier between pink and blue dress codes, but more often it is not. It is perhaps also in this less visible gendered world that the deeper inequalities and most damaging stereotypes can be found. In a research project KUN conducted in more than 20 kindergartens in Norway, the employees initially reported offering equal opportunities and distributing their resources evenly among the children. However, after videotaping select situations in their daily life, such as having lunch and playing outside, the “invisible” gendered life in the kindergarten could be seen and measured, and it was in many respects far from equal or fair to neither boys nor girls.

During an ordinary meal at lunchtime, a video camera caught the interaction at the table*. Equally many boys and girls ate and talked together with employees, and the mood was light and amicable. The employees reported nothing out of the ordinary, they enjoyed the meal and the conversation. So far, so good. But when analysing the video, being able to look several times, counting and measuring, the employees were surprised by what they found. During a meal of 20 minutes, the boys talked for a total of 12 minutes and the girls - 2 minutes! This is a very strong example of the “invisibility” of gender inequality – we can be completely unaware of it, and both boys, girls and employees can think that the conversation was good, fair and balanced. In kindergartens where this is a pattern of everyday life, there will however be a basic imbalance in who is seen and heard, which accumulates over the weeks, months and years. That is serious, knowing how being listened to and validated goes to the core of self-worth and self-image. Am I interesting? Worth listening to? Does my opinion count? Is it rewarding for me to take part in conversation?

Put bluntly, is this inequality part of the reason people claim that men are more natural leaders, at ease when taking centre stage and speaking to a crowd?¹¹



¹¹ Kendall, S., & Tannen, D. (1997). Gender and language in the workplace. In R. Wodak (Ed.), Sage studies in discourse. Gender and discourse (p. 81–105). Sage Publications, Inc.
<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446250204.n5>

EXERCISE

DO YOU THINK THIS CAN BE THE REALITY IN YOUR KINDERGARTEN?

Here are some questions for you:

- Can you remember a topic or two that were popular to talk about in the last week? Would you say the topics were typically gendered in any way? Did they in other ways give certain children an advantage?
- How are the children and employees seated during playtime, mealtime etc.? Who can easily obtain eye-contact with the employees and with each other? Are there certain strategies in place for the seating arrangement, such as keeping the smaller children or more unfocused children closer to the employees? Do you seat a “helper” in between two children that manage less well?
- During lunch or a table activity tomorrow, try to notice what questions are asked, and who gets follow-up questions.

Analysing videotapes filmed in Estonian kindergartens showed that boys often use a lot more space while playing with toys. The boys, when playing with toy racing cars, were using not only the whole floor space of the playroom, but also the walls and windowsills, doors, every imaginable place. The girls, however, putting together puzzles were just sitting on a quite small carpet on the floor, not moving away even though it was quite obvious they badly needed more space. The girls were not challenging the restrictive environment, they seemed to put up with the self-imposed rule of staying on the carpet. The same pattern got repeated when girls and boys were playing with Lego building blocks. The teacher could have easily interfered, encouraging girls to use more space to empower them for the future.

Several research projects conducted in Sweden find that boys are more boisterous and physically active than girls and they take up more space than girls. Boys also engage in offensive behaviour, such as disturbing or teasing girls. Boys dominate pre-school

settings and play the leading parts, while girls play minor roles. Girls often stay close to pre-school staff, acting as little assistants and helping staff with various chores such as tidying up etc. Boys initiate and elicit more attention from pre-school staff, and pre-school staff demands more of girls than of boys and are stricter and more controlling with girls than with boys. Behaviour that is consistent with one's gender role is regarded more positively than behaviour that deviates from the gender norm.

This is of course not the whole picture. Research also suggests that girls partake in a lot more activities that demand conversation, cooperation and¹² reflection in kindergartens than boys do, and that girls strengthen their vocabulary and social skills compared to boys. But this is when the children can choose activities. At mealtimes and in other common, mandatory activities, we think there should be an awareness among the employees to divide the floor more equally between the children. Some employees suggest that it is a way of handling the potential chaos around boys, to let them speak and be at the centre of attention in order to stay calm long enough to eat and not disturb the others too much. Is there anything problematic about that solution, do you think?

RESEARCH

VIDEO FILMING

Findings from the many small research projects KUN has conducted in more than 50 kindergartens from 2007 using video filming, suggest the following:

- Boys' names are used up to 50 % more than girls' names.
- Boys are praised more for their individual accomplishments; girls are praised more for being helpful and kind towards others.
- Girls are guided towards independence, while boys are getting more help with dressing, meals etc. at every age.
- Girls get fewer follow up-questions in conversation, and employees maintain eye-contact for shorter periods with girls than with boys.

MAGINE BEING A FLY ON THE WALL DURING THIS SCENE

Three children of the same age, Nico, Elsa and Charlotte, enter the changing room in their kindergarten after having played outside in the snow. Nico lets himself fall flat onto his back on the floor with a sigh, while the two girls start undressing. "Help me!", Nico exclaims. Elsa immediately goes to help pull off his shoes. It is hard work, and she has to

¹²Bayne, Emma, 2009: Gender Pedagogy in Swedish PreSchools: An Overview. Gender Issues 26, page 130-140. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12147-009-9076-x>

try many times, changing her position and grip to manage. Nico remains still while she's working. "Elsa, could you help me, too?", asks Charlotte. "Sure, I just have to finish up here first", Elsa replies. She tugs off both of Nico's shoes and unzips his overall. Then she helps Charlotte off with her shoes and puts them on their shelf. Finally, she undresses herself and hangs everything up where it belongs. An employee in the kindergarten pops her head in and exclaims "You all are so good!"

This is a re-telling of an actual scene taking place in a Norwegian kindergarten a few years ago, caught on video during a project mapping gender equality in kindergartens, conducted by KUN.

- How do you respond to reading it? What questions arise for you, and what kind of emotional response do you register?
- Who could have acted differently in this scene, and what could they have done or said to give a different outcome?
- Do you recognise any "little helpers" or "dependants" in your kindergarten? How do you work with that – do you confirm their established roles, or do you push them to step out of their comfort zone? Do you sometimes rely on the little helpers in order to get everything done in the kindergarten?

This particular scene was caught on camera, but it might as well have been a re-telling of an observation session performed by an employee. Getting settled in a corner of the room with a pen and paper for ten minutes is an effective and low-effort way of getting some data on your surroundings. Count boys' names and girls' names that you hear, look for who plays with whom, listen to who gets asked questions and follow-up questions. Write down who gets help before asking, after asking, and who gets told to try themselves after asking for help – are there any gendered patterns? If you anonymize a scene like the one above, it can be used as a case that the staff can discuss – as a way of becoming more accustomed to looking for inequality and correcting inequality.



Learning points

| Gender stereotypes

Gender can be a very subtle, yet strong factor in how children are being treated. Staff very often conform to gender stereotypes and treat girls and boys differently. Boys take up more physical and conversational space during common activities and are encouraged to do so.

| Video filming

Learning about observation methods that can unveil and document inequalities and help track developments/improvements. Video filming is a good means to observe the subtle and "invisible" parts of interaction.



EXAMPLE OF AN OBSERVATION FORM

Situation	Help from adult when asking for it	Encouragement to do it them self	Help from adult without asking for it	12 Boy	Girl

Day 1 // Module 6

CASES – A WAY TO REFLECT UPON OUR OWN PRACTICE

In this module you will learn about:

- the case methodology for kindergartens
- how to make your own cases for discussion in your own practice.

The module works best if you can find somebody to discuss the cases with, but you can also write down your own thoughts or just reflect quietly to yourself.

In the previous module on observation methodology, there was a description of a situation in the dressing room of a kindergarten, where three children were undressing after being outside, playing.

WE RECAP

Three children of the same age, Nico, Elsa and Charlotte, enter the changing room in their kindergarten after having played outside in the snow. Nico lets himself fall flat onto his back on the floor with a sigh, while the two girls start undressing. “Help me!”, Nico exclaims. Elsa immediately goes to help pull off his shoes. It is hard work, and she has to try many times, changing her position and grip to manage. Nico remains still while she’s working. “Elsa, could you help me, too?”, asks Charlotte. “Sure, I just have to finish up here first”, Elsa replies. She tugs off both of Nico’s shoes and unzips his overall. Then she helps Charlotte off with her shoes and puts them on their shelf. Finally, she undresses herself and hangs everything up where it belongs. An employee in the kindergarten pops her head in and exclaims “You all are so good!”

Used systematically, cases like this present a valuable tool for reflecting on your kindergarten’s practice. It is very easy, has no costs, and enables the staff to go straight into discussions about essential topics – being both very practical and going to the core of gender sensitive education all at once. It discusses the very hands-on practice of a kindergarten, while linking it to the values and teachings that the kindergarten wants to convey to the children. We find cases helpful at every stage in the process, from mapping inequalities to developing new and more inclusive practices.

NOW READ THE CASE AGAIN

- How do you respond to reading the case? What questions arise for you, and what kind of emotional response do you register?
- Who could have acted differently in this scene, and what could they have done or said to give a different outcome?
- Do you recognise any “little helpers” or “dependants” in your kindergarten? How do you work with that – do you confirm their established roles, or do you push them to step out of their comfort zone? Do you sometimes rely on the little helpers in order to get everything done in the kindergarten?
- How would the story read if you changed the genders, so that the boy was the “little helper”?

You may recognise these questions from other modules, and that is right – these are variations on our standard questions.

MAKING A CASE

Using cases can sometimes feel like you are pointing out somebody’s mistakes or wrongdoings.

To make it less threatening and personal for the staff, you can specify that you are using made-up cases the first time – just to learn the method. If the staff responds well, and you can agree that the method is in your best interests and not a means to point out or mock anyone, then you can proceed to use cases from your own surroundings.

Think about a situation you feel like discussing with your colleagues – where you perhaps felt uncertain about what to do or would like to question or praise how your colleague responded. You can also choose a day or week where you take turns observing everyday life in kindergarten from a corner of the room, writing down selected situations that you observe.

Write down the situation as neutrally as you can. Anonymize the persons taking part in the situation by giving new names to children, like «Max, 7 years» and «Charlotte, 2 years», and identifying staff members using for example «Staff 1» and «Staff 2». The persons partaking in the situation may recognize the case and their role in it, but they should not feel called out in front of the entire staff.

Write down a total of at least 5 cases or have other members of staff make cases too. Add them to a bowl or hat and use it the next time the staff gathers. Draw a case out of the hat and read it out loud, and then let each person reflect a little on the case presented. You can start by just opening the floor, and then focus the scope of reflections

using for example these questions:

- What do you think is happening here?
- Is gender relevant to the situation?
- What do the children learn from this?
- Could someone act differently to give a different outcome?

Here is a selection of real cases gathered from numerous kindergartens in Norway. Perhaps you can use them the first time you try this with your staff, or they can inspire you when making your own cases? Best of luck with this exciting tool for raising awareness and improving practices!

| **Case 1**

Staff 1 asks Staff 2 if he has seen the gloves belonging to Tim (5 years). Staff 2 responds "No, perhaps it was Dad who did the drop-off today?"

| **Case 2**

Hanna (3 years) and Felix (5 years) are doing gymnastics, running and rolling onto a mat. Staff 1 compliments Felix three times on his tumbling, shouting encouragement. Hanna tries to copy Felix and falls over. "Oh, careful there!", staff 1 tells Hanna, and turns their attention back to Felix.

| **Case 3**

Dressing room: Two adults, four children. Else can't find her hat on her shelf. One of the adults looks on Else's sister's shelf and finds the hat there. The other adult asks, "Did daddy do the drop-off today, perhaps?" "It was mommy", says the adult who found the hat. The other adult answers "Oh, mummy? Perhaps it was a busy morning."

| Case 4

Dressing room, one adult, a boy and a girl. The adult is helping Lisa put her outdoor suit on. The adult says, "I think you had a haircut, Lisa?" "Yes", Lisa answers. The adult says "Your hair looks very nice, you've dressed up!"

| Case 5

Dressing room: Two adults and five children. Linus is helped by one adult to get his snowsuit velcro fastening open. Linus manages to do the zipper by himself. "Look, you managed the zipper all on your own! Shall I help you with the sleeve?" the adult asks. Linus gets help getting his arms out of the suit sleeves. The adult also takes Linus' hat off. "Walk over there and take your shoes off?" the adult says questioningly, pointing at the shoe stand.

Linus walks over and waits his turn. Many children are waiting and Linus starts walking around. The same adult who helped with his suit asks "Do you want me to pull them off? Sit down and I'll pull your shoes off". Linus shakes his head. "No, you want to wait", the adult says. Linus nods.

Linus stands in line again. A little while later, while Linus is still waiting, another adult enters the dressing room. She sits on the bench and asks Linus «Do you want me to help you with your shoes? Sit down on your bottom." "No!" Linus shouts. "You don't want to?" the adult asks. "No." Linus repeats. "Oh, you want to take them off over there? Yes, then you have to stand in line", the adult says.

Again, Linus stands in line. The third adult, who has been sitting by the shoe stand helping the children take their shoes off, says "then it's Linus' turn, he's been waiting in line". Linus manages to get his shoes off, using the shoe helper, and the adult gives him two thumbs up, saying "Super, Linus!". The adult asks whether Linus wants help getting the bottoms of his suit off. "No", Linus says. He wants to put his shoes in place and not be helped. Later, he sits down on the bench and gets his suit off. He shouts, "I made it!" The adult from the shoe stand comes over and says, "You have done really well today!"

In every case, use the standard questions as your starting point:

- What do you think is happening here?
- Is gender relevant to the situation?
- What do the children learn from this?
- Could someone act differently to give a different outcome?

Learning points

| Case methodology

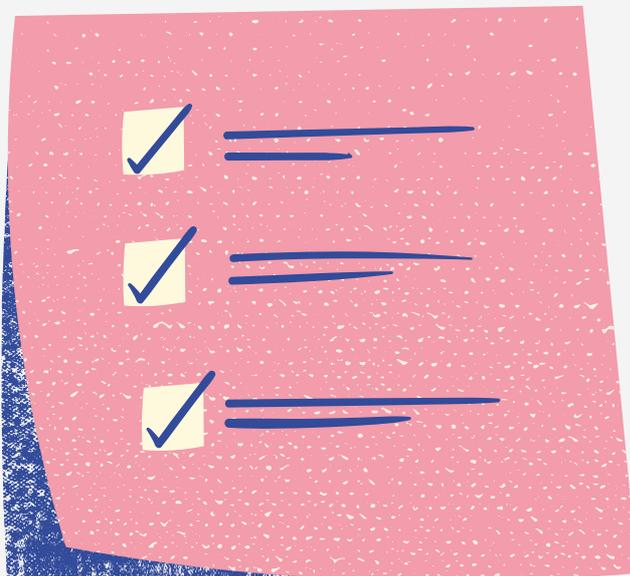
We suggest using the case methodology for kindergartens.

| Own practice

How to make your own cases for discussion in your own practice.

| Standard questions

A set of standard questions to use in your case methodology.



Day 1 // Module 7

HOW WE TALK TO GIRLS AND BOYS

In this module you will learn about:

- how our communication differs when talking to boys and girls, respectively
- what changes we can make that improve the quality of the interaction and shifts the focus away from gender stereotypes.

In Module 5 on Observation Methodology, we gave examples on very different approaches to communicating with boys and girls. This difference is seen on several levels, both with regards to the quantity and quality of interactions.

Boys are generally given more attention and more follow-up questions during conversation. However, they also receive more reproachful comments about their negative behaviour than girls do. For instance, if a group of children is making a lot of noise or doing something they should not, the employees are more likely to call out the boys in the group on their behaviour.

Girls are praised more for their looks, their clothes and accessories and for their good behaviour and care for others, while boys are praised more for their individual performances, skill sets and accomplishments.

Data material from the research project “Tracking gender in kindergarten”¹³ shows that students observing interaction in kindergartens found that staff accentuate the children’s characteristics by highlighting girls’ and boys’ appearance, size and physical skills. The analysis shows that boys receive comments on size and strength, and motoric skills are also emphasized, while girls are told that they are sweet and cute:

“You’re a big boy now; you can climb onto the chair yourself.”

“Aren’t you strong?”, says the educational supervisor to Paul (2), who is trying to lift a cushion.

“Oh, aren’t you so sweet and pretty today, Anne? You’re a little princess.”

“Marit, your hair is really lovely today.”

¹³“Tracking gender in kindergarten”, Meland & Kaltvedt 2019. To be found in Google scholar, journal Early child development and care Vol 189 Number 1, pages 94-103

Clothes are subject to similar attention. Girls in dresses, lace and bright colours receive confirmation from the staff that they are nice and sweet, while boys in trousers and jumpers are being told that they are rough and tough:

A boy arrives with his mother. The boy is wearing new socks with Lightning McQueen from the Disney film 'Cars' on them. Someone says, "Oh, you've got cool socks on. And with Lightning McQueen on them!"

If the girls were wearing dresses, they received comments from the staff throughout the day about how sweet they were. A boy with a jumper that had a lion on was told throughout the day how "tough" he was.

In the following, we present you with two select cases from "Tracking gender in kindergarten":

1. A four-year-old girl in kindergarten had short hair and wore dark colours. This girl was frequently discussed because she was dressed in boys' clothes whether she was indoors or outdoors. When there were new temporary staff in the kindergarten they were very unsure whether this child was a girl or a boy. One day, this particular girl was wearing a pink dress when she arrived at the kindergarten, and the staff praised her all the time because she was such a lovely girl and because she had such a lovely dress on.
2. A member of staff stands in the cloakroom and welcomes the children. One of the girls, Ida (2), arrives at the kindergarten with her parents. The staff say, "good morning" and then say "what lovely plaits you have in your hair and such cute ribbons". Ida smiles and says "yes, lovely!".

Questions to these cases: Do you think there are similar situations occurring regularly in your kindergarten?

In KUN's work in Norwegian kindergartens, one of the projects has been to encourage the staff to explore alternative ways of greeting and complimenting the children. The results of this have been among the more dramatic improvements of their everyday routine. When your first impulse is not to compliment a child for something exterior, like a new sweater, cool print or braids, then the focus changes to the human interaction when greeting someone, really tuning in with someone.

Like:

"How good to see you, Isabelle! You look really happy, do you feel happy too? I do, too! I so look forward to today's program, remember I said yesterday that we were going to paint? Let's go join the others."

Or:

"Hi there, Theo, good to see you! Have you slept well? I feel a little tired myself, maybe

we should start the day slowly by reading a book together?”

Often a child with new clothes or a new hairstyle will seek attention and confirmation on their looks, and this is not to say that you can never give compliments about appearance ever again. But perhaps it will be equally or more rewarding for the child if your response is:

“New dress, you say? I can tell, and it looks really comfortable and warm; is it? The colour reminds me of cherries, I think, does it remind you of something? Does it make you run even faster, perhaps, or have other magical properties? What happens to the skirt when you twirl around, let me see?!”

Exploring the qualities of a piece of clothing involves a lot of vocabulary, imagination, curiosity and excitement, as opposed to just receiving a passive “That’s a nice dress you’ve got on”, which starts and ends the conversation right there. It also shifts the focus from clothes being “pretty” or “cool” to what practical properties they have – being able to move freely, keeping warm and dry etc.

The same principle goes for a change of hairstyle. Never mind the result, but what about the exciting experience of visiting a hairdresser or having a parent be their hairdresser at home? One can spin a thousand questions around that, and involve other children in the conversation, as opposed to just stating that a hairdo turned out “lovely”.

One unforeseen and very positive side effect that staff has reported after making these changes, is that they meet each other too in this new way, and that it makes them connect and feel much better about themselves and their colleagues and workplace. Instead of mumbling a hello or routinely complimenting somebody’s new shirt, they greet each other now with a “good morning, good to see you!”, a “How are you feeling today?” or even a “I have to tell you, I have thought a lot about how you solved that situation with the meltdown yesterday, it was just so smooth and creative.” Experiencing how this changed their own motivation, wellbeing and sense of community, convinced the staff that they were really on to something important in their communication with the children.

Learning points

| Greeting

A way of greeting the children without focusing on looks eliminates a lot of gender stereotypes.

| Clothes

Shifting the focus from the aesthetical to the practical properties of clothes is an important lesson in values for the children.

| Relations

Focusing on tuning in with the other person improves relations between members of staff as well as between staff and children. It also teaches children how they can greet each other with friendliness and interest.



Day 1 // Module 8

PLAYTIME OUTSIDE

In this module you will learn about:

- the importance of outdoor play in Norwegian kindergartens
- how children play outside
- gendered experiences of outdoor play.

Norway has a strong tradition for outdoor life, and that includes kindergarten. Babies and toddlers are put down for a nap in the pram outside, and children play outside all year round. This makes the outdoor area, outdoor playtime and what happens to play once the children move outdoors, very interesting in terms of gender.

Typically, we find that outdoor play is different from indoor playtime. Outdoor play is more physical, using larger muscle groups and the children tend to use their bodies more. Play is characterised by high activity levels, and noise levels go up, too. Kindergartens will typically report more role play and improvised play outdoors than indoors.

The Framework Plan for Kindergartens (see Introduction module) stipulates that all kindergartens must have suitable outdoor space available. This usually consists of an area, often covered in gravel or asphalt, with a fence around it for safety. Play being the primary purpose of the space, there will often be a playhouse, slide, climbing frame, seesaws and a sandbox. There are often playhouses or other structures that invite roleplay, on the coast you will often find old boats etc.



When seeing these pictures, what do you think that happens there? How do the children play? Do you think there are differences in what structures boys or girls typically use? Or do you think they play less in gendered groups outside?

And what about when the group leaves the kindergarten outdoor space? On nature walks, without structured play spaces or toys? Take a moment to reflect.

These are topics that have been the subjects of much research in Norway, and we believe the findings will be of interest to those interested in kindergarten pedagogics.

OUTDOOR PLAY: OUTSIDE AREA IN KINDERGARTEN

Children's movements are taught situationally, influenced by how the children perceive their surroundings and the possibilities they offer. So structures, toys, materials, etc. available in the outdoor space will influence the range of play and movement the children see as possible.

ADULT PARTICIPATION

A 2015 research project led by Trond Hagen found that

"Overall, observation in the study found that the adults in general encouraged the children to free play and to find their own way. The role they took can be described as observational, where they supported any children who needed assistance in entering the play. They also participated directly when invited in by the children."¹⁴ [Translated by Lindis Sloan, KUN]

Hagen also found that the kindergarten staff acknowledged that free play outside was a space for the children to contribute to play content. Organised activities in outdoor time were usually reserved for walks outside the kindergarten outside area, where they went to a specific place in order to participate in predetermined activities.

In kindergarten, the adults have influence over what possibilities children see in outdoor play. They may suggest possible uses for play structures or toys; "Shall we make a cake in the sandbox?", or drive toy cars around and make roads in the sandbox. Both play suggestions involve the sandbox, but the games involved are very different.

"Our results confirm the findings of Brown et al (2009) of how children's activity levels increase to moderate or high intensity levels when adults engage with children's play in the outdoor space. A Danish study shows that how adults talk to the children, the engagement level they show and that they engage with the children to initiate play, strongly impacts children's motivation for and participation in physical play (Bugge og Froberg 2015, Koch 2013)."¹⁵ [translated by Lindis Sloan, KUN]

This focus on physical play may seem alien, and "tumultuous play" (Norwegian, "boltrelek") loud and potentially dangerous, but studies (such as Storli 2013 p 344) indicate that tumultuous play is important for psychosocial development. It allows the children to test the limitations of their bodies by engaging in physical exercise, and they learn the social codes for play-fights.

¹⁴ Statistics Norway (SSB) – www.ssb.no/en/barnehager. <https://utdanningsforskning.no/artikler/hvilken-innvirkning-har-barnehagens-fysiske-utemiljo-pa-barns-lek-og-de-ansattes-pedagogiske-praksis-i-uterommet/>

¹⁵ Statistics Norway (SSB) – www.ssb.no/en/barnehager. <https://utdanningsforskning.no/artikler/kroppslig-lek-voksenkontakt-og-sosialt-lekemonster-i-barnehagen/>

OUTDOOR PLAY IN NATURE

Nature is a challenge to everybody and offers a plethora of possibilities. Climbing a big rock can be easy to the five-year-old and impossible for the two-year-old. You can climb the rock from many directions, and as soon as you get to the top there may be a new and more challenging way up. Play structures typically offer only one standard way to climb, but nature will let you find your own. In that way, every child can be their own standard, and find new goals.

Typically, outdoor play in nature will see less conflict, as there are more materials available. Rather than a finite number of cars or balls, there will always be more sticks, pinecones, rocks to engage with. We also see – and that is perhaps the most interesting in this connection – that when play moves from the outdoor area around the kindergarten to a more unstructured space – play is less gendered. The invitation to make cakes in the sandbox will usually attract more girls and the car play more boys, but a challenge to find the biggest leaf or getting to the top of the big rock will have less obvious gendered implications.



Learning points

| Adults

Adult participation will influence play, outside as indoors.

| Outside

While play is typically gendered, playing outside is less obviously so.



Day 2 // Module 1

PARENTS: WORKING WITH THE HOME

In this module you will learn about:

- Including the parents/families of the children in the work.
 - Information to the home
 - Discussion of gender-sensitive pedagogy with the parents
- Including the diversity of children's home lives as learning tools.

In cooperation with the children's homes, kindergarten is in a unique position to work for a society with more gender equality. Working as a kindergarten teacher and working for gender-sensitive education require skills and a good deal of tenacity. Change does not happen overnight, and getting your co-workers and the children's families to work with you to make the changes may be hard. Sometimes, efforts are hindered by parents who do not want to participate, who do not see the point of working with gender equality issues in kindergarten – should you not focus on preparing for reading, mathematics, or focus on friendship?

In order to involve the home and show them why focusing on gender equality puts their child at an advantage, it may be good for you, as a pedagogue, to start by reflecting on the advantages to the children from attending a gender-sensitive educational facility:

BENEFITS

- Working actively for gender equality changes how kindergarten staff work, they are more aware of how they talk to and with the children and will meet them with more openness.
- When children and adults no longer have to use all of their energy on adapting to the norms, there is more space to be yourself, and to be creative.
- Differences and diversity become a resource in the kindergarten. All children are seen and accepted for who they are.
- In most cases, gender equality work makes both children and adults enjoy their time in kindergarten more.
- Positive focus: Your child will get more of everything! Emphasise to the parents that in a more gender-equal kindergarten the children will have more space to explore the world. With fewer gendered expectations children will not be limited, or only be offered the activities the adults expect boys or girls to like.

The above pointers are inspired by "The Swedish Way to Parent and Play: Advice for Raising Gender-Equal Kids" by Kristina Henkel and Marie Tomicic.

“Pedagogues who are meeting parents need to understand how they as professionals can contribute to the parents’ experience of meaningfulness, influence and are supported in their parenting in ways that promote gender equality both for children and adults”

– Ingerid Bø

If pedagogues lack knowledge of gender and gendered socializing processes, they may – knowingly or not – hinder positive change by confirming the stereotypical expectations we have of mothers and fathers. If we as kindergarten staff keep expecting more from mothers, and excusing fathers’ forgetfulness, mothers will keep taking the lion’s share of care responsibilities for the child. If we, on the other hand, signal the importance of fathers’ participation by expecting them to shoulder the same responsibilities as mothers, they may be inspired to take their place.

HOW TO TALK TO PARENTS ABOUT GENDER EQUALITY

Many parents are interested in learning more about children and their worlds. Themes such as gender and identity are relevant to all parents. Maybe all parents are not too concerned with the pink-and-blue dichotomy, but many may feel pressured into buying the “right” things for their child. Perhaps having gender-sensitive education as a topic in a parents group meeting is an idea? This gives kindergarten staff the opportunity to work with the topic in advance, talk through why they want to work with this and how to go about achieving their goals. It may also be easier to get the parents on board if this is raised as a topic at the start of a teaching year.

It is important to make sure the parents learn what their child may gain from making gender and gender equality a focused topic in kindergarten, and to ask the parents whether they have any ideas of how to go about improving the gender equality status in their kindergarten. Working closely with the parents makes them take ownership of the process, and they are likely to be more positive.

WHAT TO DO WHEN PARENTS DON’T AGREE WITH THE TEACHING METHODOLOGY

There may sometimes be a mismatch between the work done in kindergarten and parents’ attitudes to gender equality. We would encourage you to keep two things in

mind: On the one side, parents have the main responsibility for raising the child, and cooperation between kindergarten and the home depends on trust that the kindergarten cares for the child in the best way possible. On the other hand, the kindergarten staff have a clear responsibility for seeing that the Rights of the Child¹⁶ are met, and these include the right of expression and the right to be heard. The kindergarten staff are tasked with ensuring the children's needs and rights, and in cases where the children's needs are not met, they may need to enter into dialogue with the parents.

EXERCISE

IF THE PARENTS COME AND ASK...

A parent comes up to you and says, "My daughter needs to play more with other girls". You know that this girl loves her play group, despite being the only girl.

- **How can you meet the parent's wish?**
- **Would you try to change the girl's play group, or would you try to focus on the good friendship and joy the girl already has in the group she is in?**

A good start is to work in general to make the parents aware that play and friendship can happen across the gender lines in kindergarten.

THE CHILD IS SICK. WHO ARE YOU GOING TO CALL? MOTHER OR FATHER?

When the KUN centre for gender equality worked with Norwegian kindergartens, it was found that staff tended to call mothers more than fathers if the child became ill during their day in kindergarten. They also found that mothers were the recipients of more practical messages – the children need boots tomorrow, this bag of clothes needs to be taken home and washed – while fathers were engaged in more general small talk. Perhaps it is a good idea to start working with the parents by going through staff routines that center on the parents. Take sick children as your example. Do you have phone lists that include both parents' phone numbers? Could you try phoning the mother or the fa-

¹⁶Statistics Norway (SSB) – www.ssb.no/en/barnehager.
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

ther alternate times when the child is ill? The same goes for other information from the kindergarten – are emails sent to both parents? Are both called in to parents’ meetings? Reflect in the staff group: Are there times when we have different approaches to mothers and to fathers? Do men and women on staff have different attitudes?

“Parent 1”

“Parent 2”

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

In Norway, all kindergartens have a cooperation board (samarbeidsutvalg, SU) consisting of staff and parents from the kindergarten. They are to be the advisory and coordinating body for all parties who somehow have responsibility for kindergarten content and operations. The representatives may advise or make suggestions and also arrange parent work parties (typically a “dugnad” to help with maintenance, painting, outdoor gardening etc), theme nights and other opportunities for contact between the home and the kindergarten.

If your kindergarten does something like this, where parents meet, or there are other bodies that have a similar function, it is important to give some thought to who the parents recruited are. In one of the kindergartens in KUN’s studies, it was found that despite a 65 % minority language background among the children, the four parents on the cooperation board were all Norwegian-born women over 30, all with higher education – this was from a parent group with great diversity of gender, nationalities, social status and ages. Working with the kindergarten, KUN agreed on several criteria to ensure greater diversity among the representatives, to better reflect the diversity of the kindergarten children.

PEDAGOGUES' GENDERS AND HOW THIS AFFECTS KINDERGARTEN WORK AND TEACHER-PARENT COOPERATION

Working in kindergarten, it is important to consider what aspects of adult roles we portray for the children. In Norway, as in most countries, the vast majority of staff members in most kindergartens are women. Can women do carpentry work? Hike in the woods? Play football? Of course – and it is important that the children see this in practice, too. Men can make food, play with dolls, wear pink and change diapers – and perhaps find that they, too, enjoy doing things that are outside traditional gender roles.

EXERCISE

WATCH THE VIDEO

In this music video, a family is struggling with gendered expectations. Watch it, and consider the feelings of child, mother and father throughout. Could a trained pedagogue have been able to help them?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cf79KXBCIDg>



NO FAMILIES ARE THE SAME

In this chapter, we have used “mothers” and “fathers” throughout, however we want to make a further point about families and parents. No two families are ever the same. Many families do not consist of mother-father-child(ren), there are single parents, children living with step-parents and step- or half-siblings, children who live with their grandparents, with aunts or uncles, with older siblings. Parents may be living in same-sex relationships, so that a child has two fathers or two mothers.

Perhaps introducing more diverse roleplay, ways of performing gender, and stories or films in your kindergarten, can make more children feel that their reality is being mirrored in kindergarten, too.



Image: KUN and Fri's "Families are diverse" poster, used in kindergartens. The poster comes with talking points for adults and is meant to be displayed at children's level and to be a starting point for discussions and inspiration for diverse roleplay.

Learning points

| Including the parents/families

Including the parents/families of the children is crucial for work on gender-sensitive education in kindergartens.

| The diversity

The diversity of children's home lives can be used as learning tools.

Day 2 // Module 2

CHILDREN'S BOOKS, FILMS, SONGS AND FAIRY TALES

In this module you will learn about:

- how gender and gender roles are portrayed in children's books, songs and fairy tales
- how to develop tools to analyse and critically interact with children's literature and media
- practical training exercises and little tasks to do on your own or with the children to see how gender learning in books can be critiqued.

Make sure you have a selection of children's books available in this session.

BOOKS

Learning to love books and the worlds presented in them is a central part of childhood education. Learning to read may not start in kindergarten, but being read to (or even just spending time with picture books without printed words) is central in adult-child interaction in early education.

The books we use are more than words and pictures on paper. Books are an important medium for children in learning important skills, and they help learn about interaction, they are a socialization tool. From an early age, children see pictures in books as representations of the world, and they are very active learners. The way people, cartoon figures, animals and even cars and tractors behave in books set patterns for how to interact, telling stories that include gender roles and types of relationships. If only boys or men drive tractors in the pictures, then that's a job only men can do!

From the age of two or three, children are able to perceive and form a concept of what it entails to be a girl or a boy. They apply this skill also to characters in children's books, films and cartoons. As such, the way these characters show and describe gender relations acts as a point of reference for how the children build their expectations of gen-

der identity. What a girl character does in a story can become a child's reference for what is acceptable behaviour for a girl and so on.

By engaging with books more actively, we as adults also learn to challenge our own implicit biases and assumptions. When reading – do you even notice what gender the main characters in the books you read with children are described with? How about side characters? Are there patterns to how they are shown as behaving or how they interact? What stereotypes do you see? We will discuss this in more detail, and also suggest learning activities.

MALE PROTAGONISTS AND FEMALE SIDEKICKS

In 2018, UK newspaper The Guardian and market research company Nielsen studied the 100 most popular children's books of 2017, and found that "the majority are dominated by male characters, often in stereotypical masculine roles, while female characters are missing from a fifth of the books ranked."¹⁷ They found that all over, lead characters in books were 50 % more likely to be male than female, the same goes for characters that have speaking parts, and there were more male characters than female in almost half the books that made it into the bestseller list.

The same was true for animal figures and also other characters. Only 2/5 of the gendered characters were humans, the rest were anything from animals to birds, vegetables and crayons. Among these, when the gender was indicated, it was 73 % more likely to be male. Also, the male animal characters were typically shown as being more powerful, dangerous and wild creatures while the female beings were smaller, cuter and more vulnerable.

In an earlier module we discussed marketing and commercialization of gender stereotypes, and we see much of the same gendered stereotyping there, with typical characters being for instance princesses and spacemen, ladybirds and dinosaurs. Many of the same processes are at work in literature and other media representations marketed to and directed at children. At the same time, reading books together is an excellent opportunity for challenging these assumptions. Thus, care should be put into choosing the best books for this purpose and to analyse what underlying messages children receive from the books they are presented to.

¹⁷ Statistics Norway (SSB) – www.ssb.no/en/barnehager.
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

ACTIVITY

A PILE OF BOOKS

Grab a pile of books from the kindergarten bookshelf and sort them into piles: Male, female and non-gendered main character. Which pile is highest?

ILLUSTRATIONS

In addition to gendered pronouns and gender identity expressed in different ways, action and behaviour patterns are also part of describing to young readers how the world works. In books with parent characters, there are often marked gender differences in both dress and what they are portrayed as doing. What does mom do, and what does dad do? What about teachers or other educational characters? Are feelings discussed, and if so, what gender are the characters?

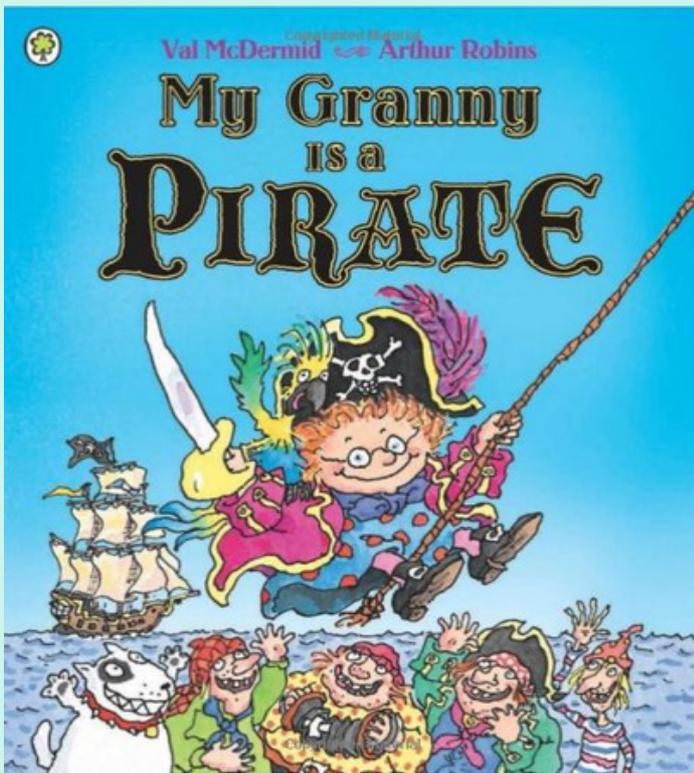
ACTIVITY

THE IMAGES IN THE BOOK

Choose a book and look at the images in the book. Are there more female or male characters in the pictures? Do you see any patterns in how they are portrayed? How can you tell what gender the characters in the pictures are – what signifiers are used to hint that a character is male/female?

IRONICAL USE OF STEREOTYPES

Many children's books play with stereotypes, often with "genderbending", so that you have "My granny is a pirate" or similar. How does a granny go about becoming a pirate?



"My Granny is a Pirate" by Val McDermid and Arthur Robbins.

Playing with expectations in this way may actually affect adult readers more than children, depending on how familiar the children are with the stereotype portrayed. If the dragon and the princess become best friends, what happens when the knight rides up to rescue her? Do the children find a dragon and a princess becoming friends as surprising as the adult does?

If you do not have books using this effect, you can try it out with playing around with the stories you read. Challenge the children to see what they think will happen and see whether their predictions are what actually happens in the story.

ACTIVITY

CHARACTERS

Pick a children's book and read it out, while changing male and female characters so that you read "she/her" for the male characters and the other way around. What happens to the story?

Start reading a story/tale to the children. The story should be new to them. Do not finish reading the story. Ask the children to invent their own ending of the story. They can draw it or take turns telling the group what they think. Reflect with your colleagues on similarities/differences in the children's endings and the official one.

HETERONORMATIVE BOOKS



Brillebjørn, by Ida Jackson and Jens A. Larsen Aas.

This is Brillebjørn, known to Norwegian children from children's TV and from books that tell short, relatable stories of travelling to visit grandparents, staying home from kindergarten because you have a cold, going to a birthday party or baking with your moms. Yes, he has two mothers, and this is not presented as an odd situation and discussed in the books. Introducing the idea that children live in single-parent households or with parents who somehow challenge the heterosexual norm was long seen as controversial in Norway but is now seen as part of presenting the actual world to children through their reading experience.

ACTIVITY

PRACTICAL TASK

Look through the children's books available to you. Do any of them show or include other family dynamics than mother, father and children? How are these books (if they exist) presented to the children, and what questions (if any) do they bring up?

SONGS, MOVIES, CARTOONS

The same concerns exist for most children's media and much the same methodology can be used when studying them. What cartoons do the children you know watch? What gender roles are portrayed, and how, and are the tendencies the same as for the books you have looked at? When you sing with the children, are there gender issues in the songs? What happens if you turn the gender roles on their heads – do the children react negatively or are they amused?

Learning points

| Gender and gender roles

How gender and gender roles are portrayed in children's books.

| Critically interact

Tools to analyse and critically interact with children's literature.



Day 2 // Module 3

DUALISTIC OR DIVERSE – HOW DO WE VIEW GENDER?

In this module you will learn about:

- A dualistic view of gender
- A diverse view of gender
- Thinking about how these influence different possible actions, based on a case.

What is socialisation? In this context, we are referring to the continual process whereby children are “shaped”, by the responses, feedback and attitudes they are met with by other children and by adults. There are multitudes of ways to be a girl or a boy, but all the ways to perform gender are not always available to all boys or all girls. By this we mean that there are norms in society that work to identify the acceptable way to be a girl or a boy. There are perceived notions of male or female properties or qualities, and this again influences what is seen as normal for men and women. However, gender and gendered qualities are not pre-defined, not set in stone. As we discussed in the “pink and blue” modules, gender is continually changing and always developing.

We call this having a dualistic view of gender: You have an idea of what constitutes male and female, and of the limitations of what is perceived as the norm. You can, however, also work to develop a more diverse view of gender identity – that there are many ways of being women or men, and we can blur the lines of what is seen as the norm, as “normal gendered behaviour” for women or men. This will extend the space for acceptable male or female behaviour, and open up for more diversity when it comes to gender.

A diverse view of gender lets the children have more flexibility to discover who they are and how they want to present themselves to and interact with the world. As an adult in a kindergarten situation, your attitudes to what is the norm for boys and girls will – consciously or unconsciously – influence how you interact with the children you work with. In the modules on observation methodology, and in the modules on filming methodology, we challenge you to discover the gendered aspects in how adults interact

with the children. Take indoor playtime, for instance. Adult perceptions of what play girls and boys enjoy may influence how adults initiate play sessions, how children are included or not, and how the adult may moderate boys' and girls' behaviour during play.

This example is from Temahefte om likestilling i det pedagogiske arbeidet i barnehagen¹⁸; a ministry for equality resource on gender equality in kindergarten in Norway and shows how a dualistic or a diverse view of gender influences adult-child interaction. What is your response, as an adult?

We are out walking in the woods. One of the girls is struggling with the terrain, she is uncomfortable and whines, stops, cries and protests. A slightly older girl takes her hand and helps her.

WITH A DUALISTIC PERSPECTIVE ON GENDER

My underlying perception is that girls are naturally more empathic and caring and see each other's discomfort. Maybe this is something they are born with...

- I show no response – the older girl is only doing as I expect, and the two girls get confirmation that this is how it should be. My lack of response serves to solidify the girls' perception of this as acceptable female behaviour.
- I praise the older girl for helping the younger girl. This is praise of a kind she often gets, she gets most attention by performing such social acts.

WITH A DIVERSE PERSPECTIVE ON GENDER

My underlying perception is that girls are socialized from an early age to show caring behaviour, to see the needs of others. I believe that this is taught behaviour, not something intrinsic to girls, and I am aware of the generalised view of girls as more caring. I want to contribute to the girls developing other understandings of themselves.

- I have noticed that the older girl often takes on a caretaker role. She seldom does anything for herself. I say, "No, you can go jump from that rock with the others, I can hold Sara's hand and help her".
- I praise the older girl, making a mental note to praise her next time I see her doing something she enjoys for her own sake.

¹⁸ Statistics Norway (SSB) – www.ssb.no/en/barnehager.
http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/kilde/kd/red/2006/0107/ddd/pdfv/290163-temahefte_om_likestilling_i_det_pedagogiske_arbeidet_i_barnehagen.pdf

This example illustrates how preconceived notions of gender and the common myths of gendered qualities influence how we (as adults) interact with the children in kindergarten. It is important to think about why we act as we do when interacting with the children. The pre-conceptions are so deeply buried inside us that most of the time we act and speak completely on impulse, not considering why we do as we do. We need to reflect on our own practices and see whether we are shaping the boys and girls to certain norms without thinking about it. Kindergarten playtime may be shaped by adult expectations of how the children's playtime should be – what we offer them in terms of space, time and toys, and how we interact and moderate play behaviour. We suggest this as a rich source for working with cases (see day 1, module 6) and for using film methodology. What patterns can you discern, and in what way would a diverse perspective offer different potential for action than a dualistic perspective would?



Learning points

| Perspectives

Dualistic and diverse perspectives on gender influence what we see as normal gendered behaviour.

| A more diverse view

Analysing our own actions in terms of a more diverse view can make you more open to gender-sensitive pedagogy.



Day 2 // Module 4

FILM ACTIVITY. INTRODUCTION TO VIDEO FILMING AS METHODOLOGY

In this module you will learn about:

- KUN's experience with video filming
- why we recommend video filming as a method for becoming a gender-sensitive educator.

Video filming yourself and your colleagues as you interact with the children in your care may seem odd. What will you learn that you cannot learn from watching each other go about your day? KUN has worked with Norwegian kindergartens since the early 2000s and used video filming, analysis and feedback as a methodology for becoming better at meeting the children and supporting their development.

If you have the chance to do your own filming, that is very good experience and learning both for you as individuals and for the teacher/staff group as a whole. Even if you just read the modules there are tips on improving your practice and becoming aware of gendered structures.

This final part of the course starts with a presentation of KUN's work, then we go on to describe the methodology for filming, for analysis and for how to continue working in the staff group after you have done the exercises.

THE START IN KVINESDAL

In the early 2000s, Kvinesdal, a small municipality in the south of Norway, scored poorly on the Statistics Norway's municipal gender equality index¹⁹. This was discussed in political and administrative forums, and the administration decided to take a broad approach, working with local industry, with school counsellors, with the municipality in their role as employer, and with the five municipal kindergartens.

KUN was hired as advisers in an initial project with focus on kindergartens and how they worked with regards to gender equality. This was in part because in working with the kindergartens, they could reach their municipal employees, the children and their parents through one project.

Initially, the project had a focus on fathers and their role in their children's lives, by measuring their participation in kindergarten parent group meetings and in the individual meetings kindergarten staff have with parents to follow up on their children's development and well-being in the kindergarten. The findings were that parents conformed to very traditional gender roles, with mothers taking more responsibility for the kindergarten interaction. As a result, the kindergartens started working to engage fathers more.

The kindergartens became more interested in and wanted to work more with gender roles and gender equality. KUN were again brought in to work with the municipal kindergartens, and together we developed the initial video filming project, called "Equality in Pedagogic Work in Kindergartens".

The kindergartens decided to focus their efforts on:

- How staff interacted with girls and boys.
- Increasing their consciousness of how individuals "do" gender and reinforce gender roles.

The overall project aim, as stated in the cooperation agreement, was to: contribute to all children being allowed to discover, try out and develop their potential regardless of gender. Boys and girls shall have equal opportunities to be seen and heard and encouraged to participate in all activities in the kindergarten. Girls and boys are not to be made to be "the same" but shall be treated equally.

¹⁹ Statistics Norway (SSB) – www.ssb.no/en/barnehager.
<https://www.ssb.no/en/befolkning/statistikker/likekom>

METHODOLOGY

Because of the geographical distances in Norway, rather than for KUN travel to the kindergartens every week, it was suggested that the kindergarten staff could film interaction and send to KUN for analysis. The methodology is used in pedagogics training and education, as having physical observation present may affect interactions more than a camera, which is soon “part of the woodwork”, as one participant said in the evaluation. Also, filming allows for more detailed analysis in a way that immediate interaction does not, you can re-watch and do repeat analysis of different levels of interaction.

STAFF INVOLVEMENT

There were preparatory meetings in both the project group and with the individual kindergartens, all the 5 municipal kindergartens sat down to discuss a range of issues in preparation and were asked to identify their main focus for the project period (2007-2009).

THE OVERALL ISSUES WERE

- How important is this project to the kindergarten in order to reach a goal of gender equality?
- How do we understand “doing gender”?
- Is it so that there are a lot of ways to act and perform for boys and girls, but that not all acts or performances are available to boys and girls?
- What should be our kindergarten’s main focus for the film project?
- What are the situations we think are most interesting to film?

The five kindergartens then returned their plan for additional topics they wanted to focus on, which ranged from how the parents (mothers v. fathers) and children (boys v. girls) were met by staff in the dressing room, to how staff interaction differed between the boys and girls, to communication during play.

HOW DID IT GO?

Each kindergarten then informed parents and got their consent to filming, and each sent over 3 hours of film material to KUN. KUN staff members then watched all film material repeatedly and analysed the material according to the desired themes, but also for an overall presentation of findings. The material was then deleted as previously agreed. No film material was presented to the staff, children or parents, any feedback they got was anonymized and on a meta level.

ANALYSIS

The video material KUN received showed children and adults in different situations, outdoors and inside, at the lunch table or in the dressing room, in gatherings or playing. Initially, the project group had been worried that non-professional filming with a stationary camera would make it difficult to tell girls and boys apart, but this turned out to be an unfounded worry – “dress codes” of what is suitable to wear for boys and girls, indoors or outside, made it very clear who was who.

In analysis, the films were first watched for overall impressions, and then KUN started using analysis forms similar to those described in the module on observation methodology.

We found that the videos showed interaction between children and adults characterized by openness and a feeling of safety and involvement, a good sense of humour and involvement, adults who engage with the children and take their time, show care and friendliness. The children appeared happy and friendly, both with adults and with each other, and over all there was a common focus on learning and mastering tasks.

HOWEVER, KUN ALSO IDENTIFIED THROUGHOUT THE MATERIAL THAT

- **Boys, more often than, girls were spoken to by name**
- **Staff talked more with the boys than with the girls, both in terms of duration and more direct communication, and they also got more follow-up questions**
- **There was more eye contact between staff and boys than staff and girls**
- **Boys got more attention in mixed groups**
- **Girls got more compliments than boys**
- **Staff had a more joking tone with fathers than with mothers**
- **Staff talked more about the children with the mothers than with the fathers**

When findings were presented to the staff, we included other, earlier research, documenting that they were part of a larger pattern, and that this was not so much something they did “wrong” as opportunities to improve their practice.

The filming and analysis were repeated two years later, and we saw that the kindergartens who had continued working with their chosen topic performed “better” in the second round.

CASES FROM THE FILM MATERIAL

In addition to the analysis, KUN staff also wrote down some short, anonymized descriptions of interaction scenes from the video material. These were then presented to the staff in project feedback meetings, and some are still used in KUN's kindergarten training material more than a decade later – some are even found in the chapter on case methodology in this course.

In each story, KUN challenged staff to ask themselves the same questions we asked you in earlier modules:

- **What do you think is happening here?**
- **Is gender relevant to the situation?**
- **What do the children learn from this?**
- **Could someone act differently to give a different outcome?**

When they were presented with the cases, it was interesting to see that the initial reaction was disbelief. Did this really happen? Here? Typically, they would discuss the (anonymized) cases and give suggestions as to how this was “probably because...” and then individualize the interaction, theorising about possible underlying factors that had legitimized the differential treatment. They sometimes suggested that there was probably something that had happened before the situation described that had caused this to happen. Only after this initial deflection were they willing to discuss the gendered aspects of the situation. We still see this when discussing cases.

After the 2007 filming and again after the 2009 filming, we used reflection tasks with the staff. You may recognize these from the different reflection tasks in this course, and we suggest that you can use them in the future as a basis for reflecting on your own practice:

- **What are my thoughts on gender equality in my work?**
- **What is gender equality, when working with children?**
- **To what degree is my kindergarten gender equal?**
- **What challenges are there in my kindergarten, if I put on my “gender glasses” and take a closer look?**

Day 2 // Module 5

FILMING YOUR OWN WORKDAY

In this module you will learn about:

- Filming as a method for gender-sensitive education
- Reflecting on your own teaching practice

Why use filming as a method for gender-sensitive education? As you saw in the previous module, film and images are good for thinking about how we interact with others. Filming your workday provides unique documentation and an excellent starting point for reflecting on your own teaching practice.

As we saw in KUN's experience from Kvinesdal, filming gives so much more information about a situation than a still picture can. Filming offers the opportunity to hear nuances in the voices, see how the adults communicate with their body language and everything that is said becomes clearer. A bonus to using film as a method is that you have lively material that can be used to inform and engage parents in these topics. This module will give you the basics of a methodology for using filming in your own learning and how you can use recordings to see new sides of how you and your colleagues and the children interact.



As we have described, Norwegian partner KUN has worked with kindergartens for more than a decade on improving their practices through filming interactions in the kindergarten daily life. Typically, staff in participating kindergartens were filmed in two sessions in each kindergarten, and KUN personnel analysed the recordings, providing feedback and practical tips on how to improve their day-to-day interaction with the children. Several of the participating kindergartens have since told KUN that they have adapted the methodology to their own use and film interactions regularly, using analytical tools and discussing the findings in staff meetings to make sure they keep gender-sensitive practices alive in their work.

ETHICS

If filming is used as a tool in your workplace, it is important to take into consideration the relevant guidelines for privacy and data protection. In the EU this is generally regulated by the GDPR (since 2018)²⁰ but other, national guidelines may apply. Please make sure your work is in compliance with these standards.

AS A MINIMUM RULE, WE RECOMMEND

- **Filming only staff who are interested in participating (and ideally have taken this two-day course)**
- **Filming only children whose parents have been given information and have consented on behalf of their children**
- **Informing the children in advance of starting filming**
- **That participants take turns doing the analysis and presentation to the group, this is not meant as a management-led activity**
- **All material is deleted after analysis**
- **That focus for the analysis is on reflection, learning and development, this is not about blame or being “right”**

PREPARATIONS

As mentioned above, filming as a methodology for improving gender-sensitive education is easier when all or a majority of staff have some training in gender-sensitive pedagogy. We recommend that staff sit down and brainstorm about what situations will make for interesting analysis, as our recommendations may not be practical or fruitful in your facility. However, in the examples below we will refer to the situations that have shown themselves to be typically good for analysis in Norwegian kindergartens. These include the dressing room, the lunch table, outdoor play and reading a book.

WHAT IS YOUR FIRST THOUGHT ON SITUATIONS THAT WOULD BE INTERESTING TO ANALYSE?

²⁰ Statistics Norway (SSB) – www.ssb.no/en/barnehager. https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/law-topic/data-protection/data-protection-eu_en

Methodology

HOW TO SET UP

| How to do the filming

When filming we make a lot of choices. We choose what situation to film, who are in the frame, when to turn on and off the camera, what angle we film from. It is important to have in mind that these decisions will have impact on what material for analysis you are left with.

| Practise before filming

Try out different angles.

Make the staff used to being in front of the camera.

Laugh a lot!

| Choosing what and where to film

In the kindergarten there is so much happening during a day, a lot of interactions between adults and children, children to children and adults to parents. Where do you start filming? You can have different approaches when filming. One approach is to have a very open mind when filming and start off randomly and see what you find, and after that choose to film more systematically in the situations/rooms where there were the most interesting situations in the first round of filming. Another approach is to discuss with your colleagues where you believe you will find most situations where girls and boys are treated differently.

You can also choose to make some observations first using the observations scheme from Day 1 Module 5 on observation methodology.

Examples of situations you can decide to focus on when filming are eating situations, getting dressed, inside free play or organized playtime.

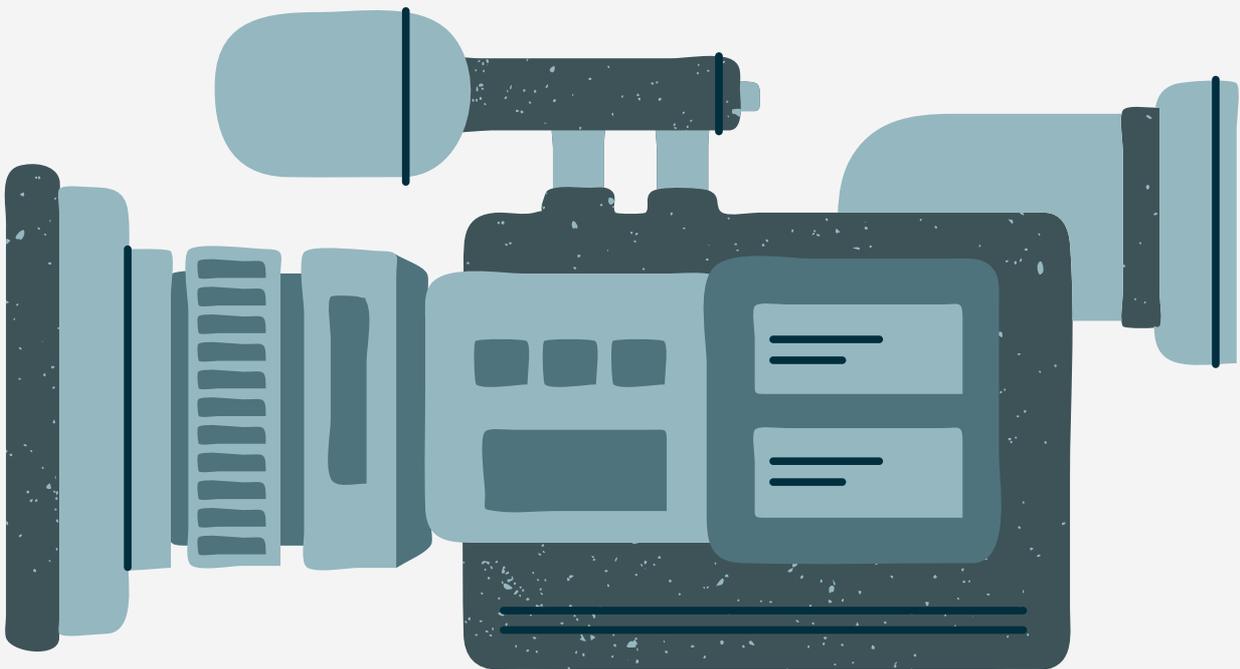
One tip is to film short sequences rather than long ones. Film short sequences of the same situation over time. This will give you more opportunities for analysis. New reflections will appear when watching the same sequence several times.

| Further development

Once staff are comfortable with the methodology of group filming, you may consider whether to film interactions between one adult and one or more children, then watch the video right after and reflect with the adult on their practice, using the following analytical questions:



- Does gender have any importance in this situation?
- Does gender limit the child(ren)'s room for action in this situation?
- What will the child(ren) learn in this situation?
- Could any other action options have been chosen?



Day 2 // Module 6

ANALYSIS OF FILM MATERIAL

In this module you will learn about:

- how to analyse films of kindergarten practice and interactions between adults and children in your facility.

ADVICE

If you have not been able to try filming, you can use the examples from this section, and see whether you agree with our analysis. What differs between the practices in Norway and in your country? You can also use the suggested forms and just observe interactions over a five-minute period or two in your facility if your co-workers agree with it. Make sure you repeat the observation periods a few times so that everybody is used to you being there, and see whether there are changes over time.

Okay, so now you have done the filming, you have the material on tape, what's next? We will now talk about what to look for in the films and how to analyse them.

WHAT NOW? HOW TO ANALYSE!

There are many ways to approach film material. It is important to keep in mind that since we are doing this analysis in a gender-sensitive perspective, we are at risk of ignoring other aspects, or over-emphasizing gender issues. You will tend to find what you look for. This is another reason that being more than one involved person may be an advantage, and you need to be critical of your own analysis.

WHERE TO START?

The first thing to do is systematise your film clips. If there are several of you on the team, a small group can go through the material first and decide what is useful and works (audio is good, you can see well etc), and sort the material so that clips with the same sort of situation are together. Such introductory work makes it easier to compare similar scenes, KUN's projects have typically had dressing room scenes, eating, and indoor/outdoor play.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR?

There are many ways of analysing the tapes. Our main suggestion is that you discuss with your partners in advance what you want to look for, but you may also find that you are becoming aware of patterns or surprising situations when you get used to watching.

Some suggestions:

- **Encouragement, confirmation statements, «Well done!»**
- **What children are given more adult attention?**
- **What behaviour is commented upon, positively or negatively?**
- **What behaviour is ignored/gets no response?**
- **Use of adults' time – what children or groups do they focus on?**
- **Eye contact between staff and children**

START BY COUNTING

Counting can be a good start in analysing such material. Use paper and a pen. Look through the film, and make a tick in separate boxes every time you hear a girls' name or a boys' name. Are there differences in how often girls' and boys' names are used? You may also make a note of how many times boys/girls ask an adult for help, for every time they get help unasked, and how many times they get help after having asked for it.

USE A STOPWATCH

At first glance, a situation may seem more gender equal than it actually is. Many of the kindergartens KUN worked with, when they first started analysing their own films, struggled to see differences. It was only when they started using a set of stopwatches to see how much adult attention time girls versus boys received, that they started seeing patterns. In most cases, certain children received much more attention and time than others, and typically these were the boys.

So, try timing your film clips, and make a note of the timespan every time an adult gives a child attention, listens to a child, or has a dialogue situation with one child. Then sum up the time given to boys and the time given to girls. Is it even? It is important to use scenes with approximately the same number of girls and boys. This may sound odd, but KUN's examples have found that in interaction scenes with adults and children, when our first impression is that the time is divided evenly between boys and girls, the boys typically dominated at least twice as much of the adult's time.

WHAT WORDS WE USE

When names have been counted and interactions timed, it is time to start looking for what is less easy to put into numbers and forms.

What is said in the situation you are analysing? How do the adults talk to the children? We often refer to “talking to or talking with”, and we have typically seen that adults use different language in communicating with boys and girls. There is a “chicken and egg” situation often commented on when it comes to gendered language skills, girls may have better language skills than boys the same age, but they are also expected to have so, and adults talk to them in a way that demands but also develops language skills. The same is true, but the other way, for boys – adults more often speak for them, demanding less of their verbal skills, meaning the boys have less incentive to develop their language skills.

TONE

Our tone may depend on whether we are talking to girls or boys. Without looking, see whether you can guess who a co-worker is talking to? Often, an adult will use a higher pitch when speaking to a girl, and a deeper one to a boy. This is also age-dependent, we tend to use a higher pitch with babies than with older children. Is this present in your material?

HOW WE RESPOND TO BOYS AND GIRLS

As you look through your material, see whether you can find boys and girls doing the same things, and see how adults respond. In dressing room situations, we have found that boys acting helpless or passive will be helped (by adults or other children) while girls doing the same will be encouraged to do things on their own.

PHYSICAL CLOSENESS

Body language is an important part of communication. When analysing how adults act in meeting boys and girls in kindergarten, body language is an important part of the analysis. You may take different approaches to this, start by seeing how adults meet children using their bodies. Is the adult person’s body language open and warm, or are arms planted in the side, signalling impatience? Closeness, too, can be visible – how are children comforted? Are they embraced, hugged, allowed to rest in an adult lap for a while? Analysing body language may be more demanding, as it is more subtle and open

to interpretation, but there are interesting gendered differences here, too – look at this example:

LAP TIME

Sjøparken kindergarten specifically looked at their own practice related to physical closeness, and chose adult lap time as their focus.

They found that:

- **Girls sit in adults' laps more often and for longer times.**
- **Boys are sent back to activity/play sooner after lap time.**
- **Boys wanted to get down earlier than girls.**
- **Girls became more passive when sitting in an adult's lap, and the adult, too, was more passive.**

FINDINGS FROM FILMING IN NORWEGIAN KINDERGARTENS

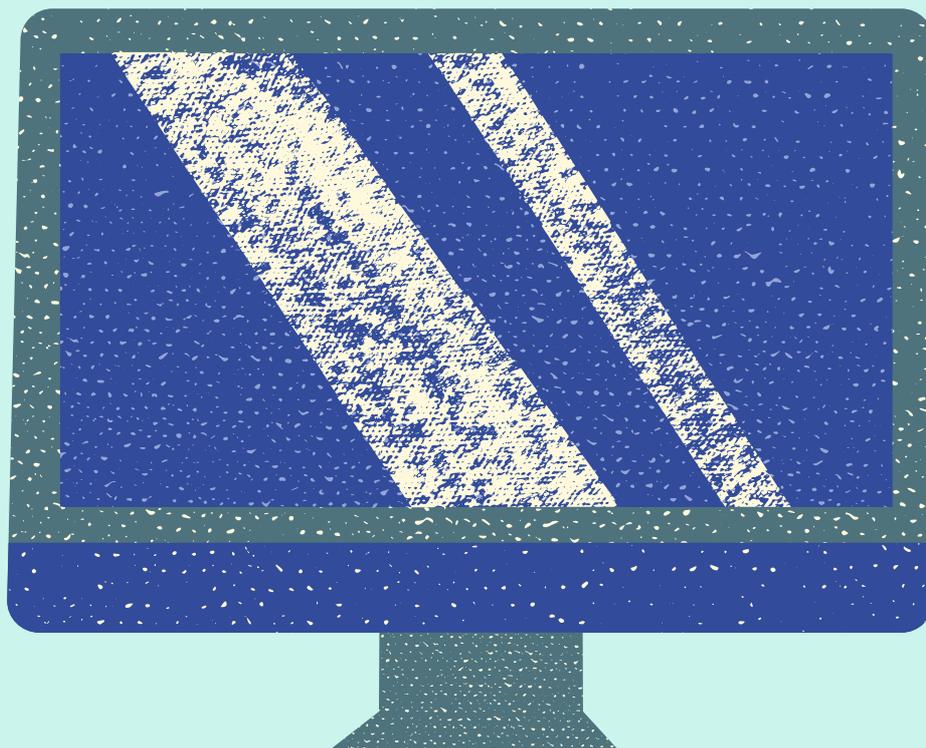
In every kindergarten we have filmed in, the majority if not all of the adults started the project with a conviction that they treated the children the same, regardless of gender. However, our analysis showed – in every single case – that taken together, there were systematic differences, and they were always similar:

- Adults met and held boys' gazes more than girls'.
- Adults used the boys' names more often than the girls'.
- Staff spoke more with boys than with girls, and asked more follow-up questions.
- The boys got more attention than the girls. Boys got a lot of verbal credit for managing tasks and also got more help such as with dressing or eating.
- Staff would typically compliment girls on looks ("you look very pretty today") and boys on accomplishments.
- Girls are complimented on accomplishments when they involve helping others, children or adults.
- The adults had a joking tone with fathers, not with mothers.
- With the mothers, staff talked about the children, more than they did with fathers.

WHAT WERE THE TEACHERS' FIRST REACTIONS WHEN SEEING THEIR BEHAVIOUR ON THE VIDEOTAPE?

Throughout our projects in about 30 Norwegian kindergartens, plus courses where the material has been used, the response from staff has always been the same. Without exception, they are surprised that the gendered differences in these situations actually happened! They had expected that the filming would show that very little difference was being made, since they were aware of the filming, and knew that gender was the purpose of the project. We found that they felt a strong need to explain the situations that had been filmed, explain their reasoning, and suggest that the children's different personalities had made the differential treatment necessary.

Only moving on from the situation, after the surprise and explanation, were the staff group able to have a fruitful discussion of expectations of boys and girls and how gender norms contribute to differential treatment, which is often completely unconscious and unintentional.



Day 2 // Module 7

WHAT NOW?

In this module you will learn about:

- How to use the findings from the analysis to make a change towards a more equal kindergarten.
- How to keep working with these topics in the kindergarten.

Through analysis, you are likely to have identified where to make an effort in order to become a more gender-sensitive kindergarten. Presenting the main findings to your co-workers and spending some time talking as a group about how to progress is often a good idea in order to make lasting, positive changes.

OTHER BENEFITS

In one Norwegian kindergarten, analysis of filmed material revealed that the grown-ups greeted the children at drop-off by commenting on how they looked. This feedback was often very gendered, commenting on how “cool” the boys looked and how “cute” the girls were.

They decided to try to change this. They decided to change the focus to the child rather than to clothes or looks. They also wanted to get better at meeting the children without gender stereotypical comments. Staff agreed among themselves that they had to direct their attention to the children themselves. They found that the result was more creative morning greetings. Now comments were along the lines of:

It's great to see you!

You look like you have slept well, have you?

Oh, it's a good thing you came today, we're going to have so much fun!

If a child walked through the door obviously proud and aching to show off a new haircut or their new coat, they agreed to meet this, too, in a new and less stereotypical way:

Oh, you had a haircut, did you go to the hairdresser's? Was that fun? Did they use scissors or the clippers?

A new coat would be met with questions exploring warmth, textures (Is it soft?) or areas of use (I bet you can run fast with that on!)

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

This work is not done once and for all. Working with people means a never-ending change of staff, of kindergarten children and of parents. We are affected by what goes on in our local community, region and country, by international affairs and even by what goes on in the celebrity world.

Changing your everyday work practice is not easy. The days in the kindergarten are often very busy and there are a lot of factors to take into consideration.

In some cases we have been able to go back to the same kindergartens several times, or we have met teachers or staff from kindergartens in other settings, and the feedback they have given us has always been that things take time.

- **Patterns of behaviour are deep-set and take time to change.**
- **You tend to fall back into old habits unless you repeat what you have learned.**
- **New members of staff need training, too.**
- **It is important to talk to the children and to the parents.**

If you try the practices in this course, we would be very interested in hearing about your experiences.



Day 2 // Module 8

CLOSING THOUGHTS: NINE TIPS TO COMBAT GENDER STEREOTYPES

Thank you for following this course on working to include gender-sensitive pedagogy in your workday. To close the course, we have compiled this list of nine tips on how to combat gender stereotypes. The tips can be useful starting points for discussions with your colleagues about the topic, and the list provides you with some reminders of how to be gender aware in your workday. The list is made as a poster – feel free to print it out and hang it on the wall at work!

HOW TO USE THE LIST

- **Read through the nine tips. Can you think of additional ways of combating gender stereotypes in your kindergarten that you want to try in your kindergarten?**
- **Choose one of the tips from the list and try to carry it out during your next workday. Afterwards, think about: How did it feel? What reactions did you get from the children?**

Nine tips to combat gender stereotypes²¹

1| Don't let the boys get away with noisy or troublesome behaviour!

Do you expect more from girls than you do from boys? Do you correct girls behaviour more easily? If the boys experience that their unruly behaviour is not stopped while girls are told to behave properly, both boys and girls may get the impression that it is ok to have different standards for girls and boys.

2| Ensure that not only girls become helpers.

Make sure that both boys and girls are encouraged and trained to help others.

3| Be conscious about complimenting children's appearances.

Don't just tell girls that they look nice and boys that they are tough, try doing the opposite as well! Also, try to use gender neutral comments like "those overalls look great for climbing!"

²¹Tips are based on an article from the journal 'Første steg', 2020:2

4| Share the responsibility for indoor and outdoor tasks.

If your kindergartens have both male and female employees, make sure that both take part in cooking, wiping off tables and changing nappies, as well as taking part in play and sports. It is not about employees doing the opposite of what they like best, but about making sure that they do not become stereotypical role models. If your kindergarten does not have male employees, recruiting male staff can be a good first step!

5| Treat the children both the same and differently.

Observe, and choose when to treat boys and girls the same and when not to. Maybe an anxious girl can practice being more courageous, while boys can be coached to play that encourages care and nurturing behaviour, without girls present. Let girls and boys get their first choice equally often.

6| Show the children that women can, and that men can.

You can do this through how you act as a role model, and what you say and do. For instance, you can affirm the choices of boys and girls who dare to think outside the gender box, like supporting a girl who wants to join the pillow fight.

7| Be conscious about the words you use.

Show equal interest in what the girls and the boys tell you. Talk about interests, activities and occupations in ways that help both boys and girls to think "I can do this!".

8| Be conscious about how girls and boys are portrayed in the kindergarten books.

What do the texts say about women, men and their activities? Who do you see in the illustrations? Are both boys and girls given the chance to see themselves as strong, vigorous and vulnerable?

9| Expectations may influence achievements.

Boys and girls must get used to seeing and hearing that they can achieve the same. Give the children inspiration and stimulate them to try things they have not done before. Talk with the parents about this.



Further reading

The Gender Loops checklist for picture books

<http://genustest.no/The%20Gender%20Loops%20checklist%20for%20picture%20books%20.pdf>

How traditional are children's books?

<https://partner.sciencenorway.no/books-children-forskningno/how-traditional-are-childrens-books/1426174>

The 2008 Gender Loops project, a Leonardo da Vinci pilot project, goes into more detail and has other suggested activities for working with gender-consciousness for “equitable early childhood centres”.

Resource

Gender loops project (2009), <https://genderloops.dissens.de/>

Practical application – try the analysis forms, downloadable from <https://genderloops.dissens.de/outcomes-and-results> under chapter 3.

Recommended reading

Elena Favilli and Francesca Cavallo: Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls

There is a good example of a non-stereotypical fairy tale. It is “The Paper Back Princess” written by Robert Munsch. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hIPrb-sA6Uo>