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Gender Equality: Male Early Educators
Annotated Bibliography
EDUC 577, Issues and Diversity in Education
August 5, 2015
Abstract

In a country that has spent the last couple of years pushing early childhood education services, schools are not striving to meet the needs of students in every way possible. In a country full of students growing up in single parent homes, growing up without a male influence, schools are missing an opportunity to provide a male role model. There are many advantages to hiring male teachers in early childhood education. Schools and colleges should do more to recruit men to join in the field of early childhood education.
Gender Quality: Male Early Educators

When one visits the United Nations Population Fund (2015), the website focuses on gender equality for women. USAID (2015) focuses on “women’s empowerment” (website). Visit the European Commission (2015), the website states that gender equality to be between men and women. Despite acknowledging gender equality to be between men and women, the commission focuses on how to improve equality for women. Throughout history, women have struggled to be treated equally as men. And based on these organizations, the problem has not yet been absolved but progress has been made. However in the field of early childhood education, day cares and preschools are dominated by females. Men struggle to be treated equally in the field of early childhood education. Research suggests that the lack of men in early childhood education affects benefits students receive when participating in services. According to Men Teach (2013), in 2013, of all child care teachers, only 5.2% of them were men. In preschools and kindergartens, only 2.2% of teachers were men. Where are the men? Why are so few men teaching? This literature review seeks to consolidate and share current research about men in early childhood education.

Where are the men?

One reason men do not teach in early childhood education is that they are not viewed as a caregiver. In many cultures, women are viewed as nurturers, and men are viewed as the breadwinners of the family (Wardle, n.d.). In the American culture, we have made education a women’s world (Bernhagen). As a result of that viewpoint, many men do not want to teach in early childhood education. While a female teacher may provide hugs and comfort to the crying
child who just fell on the sidewalk, male teachers may not be sympathetic enough by brushing off the clothes and encouraging the child to keep going (Wardle, n.d.).

A second reason why men do not teach in early childhood education is that there are too few men teaching in the field. Men are not supported to be teachers, especially in early childhood fields (Wardle, n.d.). Men may feel intimidated being the only man on the teaching staff. Also, men and women struggle to relate to each other in some ways and naturally struggle to work together (Wardle, n.d.).

A final reason why men do not teach in early childhood education is that they do not feel supported. Their motives for teaching are questioned by others- parents, school staff, even the community. (Palenski, 2012). If teaching, male teachers are closely observed by other teaching staff. Because so much pressure is put on male teachers, they seek employment in jobs where they feel supported and feel that they can be successful (Wardle, n.d.).

**How Children Are Affected**

Gender inequality among teaching staff is affecting the gender view in early childhood education. Burns (2015) believes that “Education can, and should, play a role in shaping attitudes and transforming behaviors to improve gender equity” One major area of gender equality in early childhood education is the majority of female teachers (Burns, 2015). Educators are not setting an example for young boys to aspire to be a teacher when they grow up. Just as girls do not desire to be scientists when they grow up, boys do not want to be teachers (Burns, 2015). Lipsitz (2013) suggests that schools, “Promote gender equality at a young age, It’s good for children to see that women and men alike can go to work and read stories and prepare lunches. It’s
important that they realize as early as possible that a person’s role in life doesn’t have to be determined by his or her gender.”

**Advantages of having Male ECE Teachers**

One advantage to having male early childhood educators is that men serve as good role models. Many students are in single-parent homes without a positive male role model. Male teachers can serve as a role model when there is no male in the home (Friedman, 2010). A male teacher can serve as a good role model (Burns, 2015). Many children want to play with and be around men (Collette, 2014).

Men also provide a different approach to play in the classroom. Men are better known for getting down on the ground with the kids (Wardle, n.d.). They will play with the boys in the block areas—an area that has a history of being noisy and full of movement with children building (Wardle, n.d.). Men will jump into the excitement of the gym games or playground activities and interact with the child in different ways (Wardle, n.d.) Men and women interact with children differently throughout activities. Children need both types of interaction (Kokoros, 2012).

Men can help connect the teachers to the dad or male in the family (Wardle, n.d.). Men have concerns and questions about their children’s education but do not know how to approach their concerns to a female teacher (Wardle, n.d.). Female teachers especially do not know how to respond to or work with men in the home who are not the father of the children (Wardle, n.d.). Male teachers will be able to find ways to encourage the men in the homes to be more involved in the school (Wardle n.d.).
Recruiting men into ECE

According to Collette, his school district in New York City is doing nothing to promote male educators in early childhood education (2014). Recruiting men needs to start with schools. When they advertise openings, schools may want to consider appealing to male applicants by putting a welcoming line to men in the advertisement (Cunningham & Watson, n.d.). Schools may want to place the add in more than just the jobs section of the paper, too (Cunningham & Watson, n.d.).

Another alternative is to hire men as teacher assistants or in other roles in the school but encourage their involvement in the classroom (Cunningham & Watson, n.d.). Schools should consider asking high school or college volunteer men to come regularly volunteer in the classroom (Cunningham & Watson, n.d.).

College Teacher programs need to recruit as well. They should try to recruit several men in the program. They should reach out to early childhood teachers and ask them to come share their stories at recruitment. College should look to find teacher success stories to share with recruits for the early childhood programs. By recruiting several men in the program, the men will work together to get through the program. If there is not one in place, college education programs should start a program to recruit men (Cunningham & Watson, n.d.).

What Schools Can Do

First, schools ought to check for classroom stereotypes. Look over books, look through classroom displays. Classrooms should be promoting men and women in roles equally (Kokoros, 2012). Men should be shown in displays positively interacting with students.
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Second, schools should recruit men to teach. If finances prevent the hiring of new staff, schools should recruit regular male volunteers. Children should have an opportunity to regularly interact with men. Fathers should have an opportunity to work with other fathers (Wardle, n.d.).

Third, early childhood educators should receive a pay raise (Bittner & Cooney, 2003). If men are concerned that they cannot support themselves or their families, they will not pursue early childhood education.

Finally, if schools hire male teachers, they need to promote staff equality. The male teachers should have a voice in planning instruction or running the classroom. They should have an opportunity to meet the parents and participate in conferences. Their observations of students should be considered. Part of staff equality also includes policies for all staff. Schools should not develop extra policies and enforce the policies just on male teachers (Wardle, n.d.). Policies are for all teachers and should be enforced equally for all teachers.

Conclusion

Research overwhelmingly supports the addition of male teachers in early childhood education. Research also suggests that there are small, inexpensive steps schools can take to promote men in school. In a county that is currently pushing early childhood education programs, it is time to evaluate more than just the academic needs of the students. Children need a male role model to look up to through their education years. It is time for schools to make a change.
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