

# Action Plan

## An Action Plan for Gender Equality

in Kindergarten and Basic Education  
2008–2010

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## Foreword

Gender traditional educational and career choice is one of the most important factors causing systematic differences between women and men in working life and in society as a whole. From the perspective of social equalisation this is one of the biggest challenges for education policy. The Ministry of Education and Research now wishes to tackle this challenge by presenting “The Action Plan for Gender Equality in Kindergarten and Basic Education 2008–2010”.

It is not an objective as such to have equal numbers of men and women in all professions, but to break with the visible and invisible barriers that stop girls and boys from taking untraditional choices. Gender equality is as important for boys as for girls, and measures must be aimed at both groups.

Children and young people need both male and female role models. Children in kindergartens need to experience that both women and men can take part in caring activities and participate in all the kindergarten activities. But a better gender balance in kindergartens is also important for ensuring that we attract enough qualified staff and for ensuring varied qualifications. This Action Plan sets the ambitious target that 20 per cent of those employed in kindergartens are to be men.

Gender equality work requires us to act here and now but also entails systematic and long-term work on attitudes. This Action Plan deals with the most important measures the Ministry wishes to implement to promote gender equality in kindergartens and primary and secondary education and training. However, if work for equal opportunities is to succeed, a systematic approach and systematic participation are essential on the part of everyone in direct contact with children and young people in kindergartens and basic education: leaders, teachers and other pedagogical staff. This aspect has therefore been given great emphasis in the National Curriculum for Primary and Secondary Education and Training and in the Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens.

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Bård Vegar Solhjell  
Minister of Education

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# 1 ACTION PLAN FOR GENDER EQUALITY

*The Action Plan for Gender Equality in Kindergarten and Basic Education*<sup>1</sup> 2008–2010 is being implemented in kindergarten and primary and secondary education and training over a period of 3 years. The Action Plan also deals with higher education and research that has relevance for kindergarten and basic education.

The Action Plan for Gender Equality is the result of close collaboration between the Directorate for Education and Training and the Ministry of Education and Research, with the Directorate for Education and Training as the national coordinator. The Directorate has published more information about the plan and all relevant documents, articles and reports on its website.

The overall objective for the Action Plan is that kindergartens and basic education shall contribute to *an equal society where everybody has the opportunity to use their abilities and interests irrespective of gender, and that equality and equity between the sexes must form the foundation for all learning and pedagogical activities in kindergartens and basic education.* To achieve this, three main objectives have been given priority:

1. The learning environment in kindergarten and basic education shall promote equality between boys and girls.
2. A better gender balance when it comes to choice of education and career – with special focus on vocational education and training and the recruitment of girls to sciences.
3. A better gender balance among members of staff in kindergartens and basic education.

Both at the start and at the end of the Action Plan period, there will be a survey of how kindergartens and schools follow up their responsibility for equality. The survey is to be organised so that it will be possible to measure any changes that might take place from 2008 to 2010. The Plan is to be evaluated.

The main target groups for this Action Plan for Gender Equality are:

- children and young people in kindergartens and basic education
- leaders and staff in kindergartens, schools and training establishments
- school owners, kindergarten owners and municipalities in their capacity as kindergarten authorities
- the county governors
- staff and students in pre-school teacher education, general teacher education, subject teacher education and vocational teacher education and practical educational education, hereafter called teacher education
- parents/guardians

The Action Plan will be followed up by the national authorities, the county governors, kindergarten and school owners (county authorities, municipalities and private institutions), in addition to kindergartens, schools and training establishments in accordance with the existing division of responsibilities. To achieve the objectives of the Action Plan kindergartens and basic education must collaborate with parents/guardians. The teacher education institutions are also important

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<sup>1</sup> Basic education comprises compulsory education in grades 1 – 10 plus upper secondary education and training.

actors when it comes to following up the Action Plan. Other major collaboration parties are the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS), teachers' and head teachers' unions, bodies for user collaboration in school, the National Council for Professional and Vocational Training (SRY), the networks for Men In Kindergartens, the Pupils' Organisation, the National Parents' Committee for Primary and Lower Secondary Education and various other professional and industrial bodies.

## **2 MAIN OBJECTIVES AND RESULT OBJECTIVES**

*The overall objective for the Action Plan is that kindergartens and basic education are to contribute to an equal society where everybody has the opportunity to use their abilities and interests irrespective of gender, and that equality and equity between the sexes must form the foundation for all learning and pedagogical activities in kindergartens and basic education*

The Plan has three main objectives each of which is accompanied by result objectives with separate measures. All the measures are anchored in the Action Plan's result objectives. (The measures can be seen in Chapter 7.)

### ***Main objective 1***

***The learning environment in kindergartens and basic education shall promote equality between boys and girls***

- In accordance with the Framework Plan for Kindergartens, the curricula for basic education and the Education Act, kindergartens and schools must integrate gender equality in their everyday activities.
- Gender equality competence in kindergartens and basic education shall be enhanced.
- The teacher education programmes shall place greater emphasis on factors that are conducive to increased equality between the sexes.
- Competence in kindergartens basic education concerning bullying because of gender and sexual identity shall be increased.

### ***Main objective 2***

***A better gender balance when it comes to choice of education and career – with special focus on vocational education and training and the recruitment of girls to the sciences***

- Active use of gender perspective in the school educational and vocational counselling services is to be increased.

### ***Main objective 3***

***A better gender balance among members of staff in kindergartens and basic education***

- Increase the percentage of men in kindergartens to 20 per cent by 2010
- Increase the percentage of male teachers in primary and lower secondary education
- Increase the percentage of male students in teacher education

## **2.1 Choice of models and measures**

When following up the Action Plan stakeholders should strive to use knowledge about how change can be created in kindergartens, schools and training establishments. Clear implementation plans will help anchor measures in the educational work and make this work systematic and continuous for a longer period of time. Research also shows that kindergarten and school leaders are instrumental to whether the individual kindergarten or school succeeds in changing its practice or not.

“The Action Plan for Gender Equality in Kindergarten and Basic Education 2008–2010” includes measures that are based on analyses in the Action Plan and that will be evaluated throughout the period in the light of updated knowledge and evaluation.

Several of the challenges discussed in the analysis and the Action Plan’s result objectives will be solved not only by designated measures in the Plan itself but also by other measures implemented or planned implemented in kindergartens, basic education and teacher education. These measures do not necessarily have an explicit gender perspective or a gender equality perspective but help solve several of the challenges discussed in “The Action Plan for Gender Equality in Kindergarten and Basic Education”.



## **3 FRAMEWORK AND LEGISLATION**

### ***3.1 The Gender Equality Act***

Act of 9 June 1978 no. 45 relating to gender equality (the Gender Equality Act) states that Public authorities shall make active, targeted and systematic efforts to promote gender equality in all sectors of society and in their own spheres of activity (section 1a). In other words, they have a duty to be active, an obligation that was reinforced by the Proposition no. 77 to the Odelsting (2000–2001) concerning amendments to the Gender Equality Act etc. Employers are obliged to give an account of the actual state of affairs as regards gender equality in the enterprise and measures that have been implemented and/or planned to be implemented in order to promote gender equality.

This is also a major point in the Act of 25 September 1992 no. 107 relating to municipalities and county authorities (the Local Government Act). This legislation obligates the municipalities to account for the state of affairs and measures that have been implemented or planned to be implemented to promote gender equality and hinder discrimination which contravenes the Gender Equality Act (section 48).

Other important provisions in the Gender Equality Act are for instance that women and men have an equal right to education (section 6), and that teaching aids used in schools and other educational institutions must be based on gender equality (section 7). This means that the teaching aids may not impart biased presentations of men or women.

Gender-based harassment and sexual harassment are not permitted (section 8a), nor is direct or indirect differential treatment of women and men (section 3). However differential treatment that promotes gender equality in conformity with the purpose of this Act is not a contravention of this provision (section 3a).

Regulations concerning preferential treatment of men with regard to education and professions caring for children have been issued (Circular Q-07/98). Kindergartens and schools may therefore encourage men to apply for positions. According to the Regulations a man may be preferred to a woman if the male applicant's qualifications are considered as good or practically as good (section 2). The opportunity to use affirmative action in favour of men in conformity with these Regulations is limited to positions mainly concerned with the education or care of children (sections 4 and 2).

The Ministry of Education and Research may issue guidelines for affirmative preferential treatment of men or women concerning admission to certain types of education. It must be noted that the opportunity to use affirmative action in favour of men applies to admission to study courses especially concerned with the education or care of children, and when men otherwise would be in a minority on the course (section 3). According to Regulations for Admission to Universities and University Colleges the Ministry may determine bonus grades/quotas for applicants of the minority gender (Circular F-10-05, section 7-16).

### ***3.2 The Kindergarten Act and Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens***

According to Act no. 64 of 17 June 2005 concerning Kindergartens (the Kindergarten Act) kindergartens are to be educational institutions and shall help homes care and raise their children thus creating a good foundation for the children's development, lifelong learning and active

participation in a democratic society. Care, upbringing and learning are to promote human equality, gender equality, intellectual freedom, tolerance, health and an understanding of sustainable development (section 2).

Kindergartens also have a social duty concerned with early prevention of discrimination and bullying, and kindergartens are to help equalise social differences.

As early as 1996 the Framework Plan for Kindergartens determined that kindergartens must base their activities on the principle of equality between the two sexes. This is a comprehensive duty concerned with promoting attitudes which is included in all aspects of the kindergartens' activities and is not a topic that can be selected only for certain periods. The 2006 Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens details the kindergarten's responsibilities respecting gender equality in the following manner:

Gender equality is to be reflected in the kindergarten's pedagogy. The kindergarten must raise children to meet and create an equal society. The kindergarten shall base its activities on the principle of equality between the two sexes. Boys and girls must have equal opportunities for being seen and heard and be encouraged to take part together in all of the kindergarten's activities. The staff must reflect over their own attitudes towards and society's expectations for girls and boys (p.10).

All kindergartens must have a conscious awareness of gender equality in their daily care of the children and in all their planning, documentation and evaluation. It is the responsibility of kindergarten leaders, pedagogical leaders and the rest of the staff. Kindergarten owners are responsible for ensuring that the kindergarten has the framework conditions it needs for this work, while the municipal authorities must supervise all kindergartens in the municipality to make sure that they have satisfactory pedagogical activities in accordance with legislation and Framework Plan. The county governor is to advise municipalities and owners, as well as supervise the municipality in its capacity as kindergarten authority.

### ***3.3 The Education Act and the National Curriculum for Knowledge Promotion in Primary and Secondary Education and Training***

In accordance with Act no. 61 of 17 July 1998 relating to Primary and Secondary Education and Training (Education Act) the education given to girls and boys in primary and secondary education and training shall promote human equality and gender equality, intellectual freedom and tolerance and joint international responsibility (section 1-2).

There must be emphasis on creating good collaboration between teachers and pupils, between apprentices and enterprises, between schools and homes, and between schools and working life. Everyone connected with schools or training establishments must strive to avoid that pupils, apprentices or training candidates are harmed or exposed to offensive words or deeds (section 1-2). All pupils in primary and secondary schools have the right to a good physical and psycho-social environment that promotes health, well-being and learning (section 9a).

According to the Regulations to the Education Act as determined by the Ministry of Education and Research as of 23 June 2006 (re section 9-2 first paragraph of the Education Act) the individual pupil has the right to counselling about choosing education and careers, and information about education, vocations and the labour market. The information and counselling must be organised so

that the pupil can gradually develop knowledge, self-knowledge and the ability to make his/her own decisions about further education and future vocation without having to consider traditional gender roles (section 22-6). This is the responsibility of the school owner (section 22-3). New regulations for educational and vocational counselling are being prepared in 2008, planned to be in force as of 1 January 2009.

The Core Curriculum applies to primary, secondary and adult education in the Knowledge Promotion, in the same way that it applied to Reform 94 and L97. It says that “education should foster equality between the sexes and solidarity among groups and across boundaries” (p.8). It also says that teaching new technology must not uphold traditional gender stereotypes where girls are inculcated with the belief that “women do not understand” science and technology (p.26).

The Quality Framework for Knowledge Promotion points out that education must meet the pupils’ diversity of background, abilities, interests and talents with a diversity of measures. Whatever their gender or age, their social, geographical, cultural or language background, all pupils are to have equal opportunities for developing through academic work in an inclusive learning environment. According to the Regulations to the Education Act of 23 June 2006 (pertaining to section 14-1 fourth paragraph of the Education Act) schools and training establishments must regularly evaluate how far their organisation, adaptation and implementation of the education and training they provide are conducive to attaining the objectives determined in the National Curriculum for Knowledge Promotion (section 2-1). School owners are to help to establish administrative systems and to collect statistics and other information necessary for evaluating the status and development of the education provided (section 2-2).

### ***3.4 Framework Plan for Teacher Education Programmes***

Pre-school teacher, general teacher and subject teacher education programmes and the practical educational education programme all have their own framework plans, which were determined by the Ministry of Education and Research in 2003. The Framework Plan for Vocational Teacher Education was determined in 2005. All the Framework Plans emphasise that education in kindergarten and basic education assumes that the children are growing up in a far more equal society than previous generations did:

It is an educational objective that each gender has the opportunity to develop on its own premises. Knowledge about the differences between boys and girls are important in teacher education. Children and young people are under pressure from a global culture and media industry, where expression and contents are often stereotypes. Teacher education students must have insight into how this influences gender socialisation and they must be able to use their conclusions from this influence in their pedagogical planning and their methodical plans (Chapter 1).

The Framework Plans for the longer teacher education programmes make gender equality a cross-disciplinary and integrated topic. The equality and gender perspective is required in plans for the programme’s subjects and subject areas (Chapter 2.5). The topic is also concretised in the Framework Plan for Pre-school Teacher Education in the objective that the students are to have insight into theories about the differences between boys and girls and know about methods for promoting gender equality and equity.

The Framework Plan for the Practical Educational Education Programme points out that the individual institution is responsible for developing study courses in practical educational education

which conform to the objectives of the Framework Plan and the needs and interests of the students. The gender equality perspective and the gender perspective must be included in plans for pedagogy and subject/vocational didactics.

## **4 NATIONALLY INITIATED EFFORTS FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN KINDERGARTENS AND BASIC EDUCATION 1996–2007**

### ***4.1 Efforts for gender equality in kindergartens 1996–2007***

Norway paid political attention to female dominance in kindergartens at an early stage. Since 1997 the Ministry of Children and Family affairs, as it was then, has worked systematically for more male employees in Norwegian kindergartens. An Action Plan was implemented in 2001–2003 with the long-term target of achieving at least 20 per cent men in a fully developed kindergarten sector.

One of the results was the establishment of a network of Men in Kindergartens (MIB) in all the counties. The county governor's office and a male county contact were responsible for making plans and measures in each county. The MIB networks were a forum for men working in kindergartens, but were also meant to be creative and inspire kindergartens, municipalities and universities and university colleges. A website for men in kindergartens was also established (<http://mibnett.no>).

In 2003, on commission for the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs, a knowledge status about kindergartens and pre-school teacher education from a gender and gender equality perspective was drawn up.<sup>2</sup> The report indicated that gender differences and equality were not given much space in kindergartens and kindergarten research. The report proposed measures aimed at strengthening efforts in this area.

Making equality part of kindergarten practice and working to attract more male employees must be seen in conjunction. Children form their gender role patterns before they are old enough to start school. Kindergartens can prepare the children for meeting and creating a more equal society. It is therefore important that children experience that also men can work with children and care. This was the background for the decision to implement a new, expanded Action Plan: "The Good Kindergarten is a Kindergarten with Gender Equality". The Action Plan for Gender Equality in Kindergartens 2004–2007 was passed by the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs and continued by the Ministry of Education and Research from the autumn of 2005.

The Action Plan continued earlier efforts, objectives and organisation. It confirmed that gender equality is part of the kindergarten's quality development – for the benefit of the children. The Plan had two main objectives:

1. More men in kindergartens – 20 per cent men by the end of 2007.
2. Equality and equity between the sexes must form the foundation for all activities and pedagogy in the kindergartens.

The Plan's objectives were:

- to ensure that gender equality is anchored in the framework for kindergartens and pre-school teacher education
- to ensure that authorities and employees in the kindergarten sector are informed about and committed to gender equality efforts
- to re-establish the MIB networks in the counties to act as driving forces

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<sup>2</sup> Rossholt, N. (2003): Barnehagen og førskolelærerutdanningen i et kjønns-, likestillings- og diskursperspektiv, et forprosjekt: kunnskapsstatus og forslag til tiltak. Report no. 19. Oslo University College.

Gender equality is part of the objectives clause of the Kindergarten Act of 2005 and it is elaborated in more detail in the 2006 Framework Plan. In other words, promoting gender equality is a legal obligation for kindergartens. It is not a topic that kindergartens can de-select or leave to enthusiasts. A major part of the work has been to ensure that more kindergartens follow the Framework Plan so that the pedagogical contents of the kindergarten are based on gender equality.

The Plan was based on the idea that mobilisation and activities had to take place locally and regionally. The follow-up was organised in five regions with one of the county governors being responsible for coordination in each region. These county governors were from Sogn and Fjordane, Vestfold, Oslo and Akershus, North-Trøndelag and Nordland. They received funds from the Ministry and have been driving forces and organisers to ensure that the region's county governors implemented the Plan's local measures, offered information and counselling, and supported local development projects. The MIB networks in the counties were to contribute to a broader and more out-going recruitment drive, and help the county governors in their work.

Work on gender equality in kindergartens is an untested field which lacks research and methods. More practice-oriented research and development work has been given priority. The Ministry has initiated nine research and development projects that receive all or parts of their funding through the Action Plan. These projects aim to increase knowledge about how one can work with gender equality, about research and development projects about men in kindergartens and about university college activities in this field.

There have been annual national conferences with participants from kindergartens, municipalities, kindergarten owners and university colleges. These have been important meeting points and channels for sharing experiences. In connection with the conferences gender equality prizes have been awarded to a kindergarten, a municipality and a university college for good efforts for recruiting men to kindergartens.

The Ministry of Education and Research has made two booklets about gender equality in pedagogical work in kindergartens and about men in kindergartens. These booklets were distributed to all kindergartens, municipalities and university colleges in 2006.<sup>3</sup>

Several municipalities and kindergartens have implemented their own development projects related to the contents of the Action Plan, with themes that range from gender equality and equity in daily pedagogical work to how to get more men and keep them in the kindergarten. Several of these projects were organised as collaboration projects involving several kindergartens in the same municipality.

Several municipalities have anchored the Action Plan's objectives in their municipal plans such as partial plans, recruitment plans and so on. There are also instances of private kindergarten owners anchoring gender equality objectives and measures in their own plans.

The county governors have used different channels to inform and motivate municipalities, private kindergarten owners, university colleges and kindergartens. Gender equality has been a topic for discussion at a number of different meetings and conferences during the plan period, funding has

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<sup>3</sup> Friis, P. (2006): Temahefte om menn i barnehagen, om å rekruttere og beholde menn i barnehagen, and Rossholt, N. (2006): Temahefte om likestilling i det pedagogiske arbeidet i barnehagen. Both published by the Ministry of Education and Research.

been given to local measures and projects and collaboration groups have been established to draw up measures in line with the objectives of the Action Plan.

Networks for Men in Kindergartens (MIB) have been established in a number of municipalities and regions, some of which have been in existence since before the Action Plan was effectuated. Some of these networks have first and foremost been meeting places for men working in kindergartens, while others have been more out-going and have been driving forces towards municipalities, visited upper secondary schools, prepared information material etc.

The Action Plan has placed gender equality on the agenda in the kindergarten sector. There are now more kindergartens, owners and university colleges following the Action Plan objectives actively than there used to be. During the plan period the number of men in kindergartens has increased substantially, by 50 per cent from 2003 to 2007<sup>4</sup>. More than 800 kindergartens have achieved the target of 20 per cent men. However, one has not succeeded in increasing the figures for the country as a whole sufficiently. (Chapter 5.5. deals with the topic of men in kindergartens in more detail.)

The Ministry of Education and Research has commissioned John Roald Pettersen to make a final report from the Action Plan 2004–2007. The final report “Towards an Equal Kindergarten” will be finished during the spring of 2008 and will summarise the experiences and present examples of good practices for use in future work on gender equality. The new Action Plan entails a survey of the status for gender equality in kindergartens and schools.

The Ministry is of the opinion that some progress in gender equality work in kindergartens has been made. But there is still a lot to be done before the objectives are reached and the whole of the kindergarten sector is actively engaged in gender equality. For this reason the objectives of the Action Plan 2004–2007 are to be continued and strengthened in the present Plan.

## **4.2 Gender equality efforts in basic education 1996–2007**

Ever since the 1970s, gender equality has been integrated in the curricula for primary and secondary education and training. The objective has been that training and education are to practice and achieve fellowship and equality between the sexes. Efforts to ensure gender equality and a conscious gender perspective are meant to ensure that girls and boys have equal benefits from their education. The contents and organisation of the education, the use of teaching aids and working methods must serve boys’ and girls’ learning and interests equally well. They must be given the same attention, both as individuals and as groups, and be given equally demanding tasks and challenges.

During the period of 1996-2004 the Ministry of Education and Research prepared three-year policy documents for the Ministry’s gender equality efforts in this sector. The background for the first policy document was a commission in 1995 from the Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs, as it was called at the time, to the Department of Education at NTNU to carry out a quantitative survey of gender equality efforts in primary and lower secondary education.<sup>5</sup>

Imsen’s survey confirmed many gender differences known since the 1970s. It was surprising that there was the same difference after more than 20 years of gender equality responsibility and efforts

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<sup>4</sup> Preliminary figures for 2007

<sup>5</sup> Imsen, G. (1996): *Mot økt likestilling? Evaluation of gender equality work in primary and lower secondary education carried out for the Ministry of Church Affairs, Education and Research.* Department of Education, NTNU

in schools. Imsen points out that this is serious and indicates that the education sector has downgraded its responsibility. The evaluation showed that gender equality was given the lowest priority of all the priority areas. Very few schools had mentioned gender equality specifically in their annual plans. Only a small percentage of the teachers in the survey (16.2 per cent) state that there have been discussions about gender equality in connection with their school's planning activities while 39.4 per cent of the teachers do not know. This indicates that gender equality is not the topic the teachers in the survey were most committed to in a collective context. Considering the emphasis the 1987 National Curriculum for Primary and Lower Secondary Education (M87) placed on gender equality, there are grounds for claiming that the surveyed schools had not followed this aspect of the National Curriculum sufficiently.<sup>6</sup>

The pupils in the survey reported that central aspects of gender equality were dealt with only to a small degree in the teaching.<sup>7</sup> What happened usually was that teachers dealt with the topic of gender equality where they felt it was most natural in the different subjects, which meant that the teacher's knowledge, interests and attitudes in this area were of decisive significance. It seems as though a school having gender equality as a prioritised objective does not necessarily mean that there is teaching about gender equality in the classroom. The initiative for teaching about gender equality is first and foremost up to the individual teacher. The survey thus documents that work on gender equality, if it happens at all, is mainly privatised and left to the individual teacher and local "enthusiasts" and is to a small degree a concern for the whole school. It is therefore necessary to have a drive to ensure that issues relating to gender and equality become an integrated part of the school's work.

There have been several surveys into different aspects of education, gender and gender equality, but there have not been any equivalent large scale surveys into gender equality work in basic education after the NTNU survey of 1995. Nor have available research results with a gender perspective been disseminated or exploited sufficiently.

Policy documents prepared by the Ministry of Education and Research in the period of 1996-2004 included plans of measures for primary and secondary education and a focus on recruiting more men to teacher education. The measures were among other things designed as school projects with different slants on the gender equality issue.

Most of the school projects were concluded during the policy periods but some were transferred to the Directorate for Education and Training when it was established in 2004. Manuals and handbooks to help teachers in gender equality work in schools were also made.

One of these is called "Handsome and Pretty", a guide for teachers in their gender equality work in primary, secondary and adult education, issued by the Ministry of Education and Research in 2001. This guide was based on factual information, background material and questions teachers could use as a basis for teaching and practicing equality in their lessons. Another example is "Young People, Films and Gender – a Teacher's Handbook on Gender Equality" from 2004, which uses film clips and practical working methods to challenge gender roles among the young.

As of 2004 the Directorate for Education and Training has been responsible for monitoring the education sector with regard to gender equality work.

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<sup>6</sup> Imsen, G. (1996): 47

<sup>7</sup> Imsen, G. (1996): 154



“The Action Plan for Gender Equality in Kindergarten and Basic Education 2008–2010” will be coordinated by the Directorate for Education and Training.

## 5 STATUS AND CHALLENGES

Gender equality in kindergartens and basic education is a comprehensive topic. There are no surveys, routines or coordination of all the gender equality measures in the education sector, nor is there an up-dated knowledge survey for the whole field. Besides, the challenges may be completely different in kindergartens, schools, enterprises and teacher education. However, some main challenges are obvious:

1. There is little updated knowledge about the gender identity development of girls and boys in present-day kindergartens and schools.
2. Girls and boys have different learning outcomes, which often affects their completion of upper secondary education and training.
3. Girls and boys continue to have very traditional choices of education and careers.
4. Professions in kindergartens and education are dominated by women.

### 5.1 Formation of gender identity in kindergarten and basic education

#### 5.1.1 Formation of gender identity in kindergarten

A person's gender role pattern is formed at an early stage. Research indicates that gender socialisation starts already at birth, and that the new-born girl or boy is treated differently by its mother and father.<sup>8</sup> Interaction between children and adults in the kindergarten help form the children's perception of what it means to be a girl and what it means to be a boy. Children explore new roles and new behaviour all the time. Based on the reactions of adults and children around them they form concepts about what is suitable behaviour for girls and what is suitable for boys.

The Kindergarten Act makes it absolutely clear that kindergartens must take into account differences based on gender, social, ethnic and cultural background and functional level. A good kindergarten is therefore a kindergarten that helps equalise these differences. The objective is to help the children have a good childhood and school start, and to prevent later learning and behavioural problems. In recent years knowledge about the significance of early childhood for later learning and identity formation has increased.<sup>9</sup>

Yet gender differences and gender equality are not given much space in Norwegian kindergarten research. This may make it more difficult for pre-school teacher education to provide good teaching in this field. Kindergartens have a tradition for talking about children, not about girls and boys. It is necessary to research how the gender identity of boys and girls is formed and what this means for everyday kindergarten life. There is even less research-based knowledge about how kindergartens can help create an equal kindergarten. The projects that do exist are often small, and many are not

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8 e.g. Nielsen, H.B. and M. Rudberg (1989): *Historien om jenter og gutter. Kjønnssosialisering i et utviklingspsykologisk perspektiv*. Universitetsforlaget

<sup>9</sup> e.g. Shore, R. (1997): *Rethinking the Brain. New Insights into Early Development*. Family and Work Institute, New York, and Aukrust, V.G. (2006): *Tidlig språkstimulering og livslang læring – en kunnskapsoversikt*. Report made for the Ministry of Education and Research, and Frost, J. et al. (2005): "Semantic and Phonological Skills in Predicting Reading Development. From 3-16 Years of Age". In: *Dyslexia*, 11: 79–92, and Frost, J. (2006): *Tidlig intervensjon, begrepsavklaring og alternative betegnelser*. Memo to the Ministry of Education and Research, Bredtvet Competence Centre, and Løge, I.K. and A.A. Thorsen (2005): *Sammenheng mellom språk og atferd? Rapport fra et pilotprosjekt*. Centre for Behavioural Research, University of Stavanger, and Dickinson, D. and P. Tabors (eds.) (2001): *Beginning literacy with language*. Paul Brookes.

recent. This is confirmed by a new knowledge overview made by NOVA, Norwegian Social Research, on commission for the Ministry of Education and Research. The report presents the results of a number of projects concerned with gender and equality in kindergartens.<sup>10</sup>

The studies NOVA has carried out indicate that influencing the attitudes of the kindergarten staff – of both sexes – is the most important factor for achieving the objective of altering the children’s gender role pattern. To a certain degree the expectations and ideas of the staff mirror a traditional gender role pattern. This is reflected by their treating girls and boys differently. This means that the children slowly move in opposite directions with gender stereotypical behaviour patterns and ways of thinking becoming clearer as time passes. If one is to change the gender role pattern of children then adults must change their own attitudes.

There are several studies showing that the staff and structure of kindergartens support a two gender model where girls and boys are treated differently. Boys receive more attention from the staff than girls do, both in the form of verbal communication and physical contact and being met with general interest. The interaction in kindergartens strengthens the self-perception of boys, while it possibly weakens that of the girls. There is much to indicate that boys are encouraged to promote their own opinions and their own will at the expense of sensitivity for those of others, while the girls develop a self-perception that is more social and self-controlled.<sup>11</sup> One development project shows that the staff made different demands of boys and girls when it came to assertiveness and self-control, a result which came as a surprise to the staff itself.<sup>12</sup>

Members of staff often choose toys for the children according to what they themselves consider suitable for girls and boys. They are also often more present where girls play than where boys are. The boys use more space and demand action while the girls tend to be more indoors and are quieter. Several studies show how the differences between girls and boys are expressed in their games. Boys and girls in kindergartens often play apart. They play different games, and they do not have much dialogue. When boys and girls play together, they adopt male and female roles respectively. Both girls and boys are well aware of their own gender’s cultural codes even before they start school.<sup>13</sup> Boys pay a price when they “play girls’ games” because they may lose their position in the peer group. Masculinity is in other words still associated with power and position in the male hierarchy.<sup>14</sup> The boys have the power of definition in the games. They have learned and know the strategies of power. Girls do not fight but subordinate themselves to the boys and retire if there is a struggle for a position. The girls represent a caring competence during play.<sup>15</sup> Several

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<sup>10</sup> Bakken, A. et al.: Er det skolens skyld? En kunnskapsoversikt om skolens bidrag til kjønnsforskjeller i skoleprestasjoner. NOVA Report 4/2008.

<sup>11</sup> Andresen, 1986 in Rossholt (2003).

<sup>12</sup> Vintervold, A.L. (2007): Sosial kompetanse og kjønn i barnehagen. Report to the Ministry of Education and Research. Vestfold University College.

<sup>13</sup> e.g. Sara E. Hill, Ross Flom (2007): “18-and 24-month-olds’ discrimination of gender-consistent and inconsistent activities”. In: *Infant Behavior & Development* 30 (2007): 168–173.

<sup>14</sup> Nordberg, M. et al. (ed.) (2005): *Manlighet i fokus – en bok om manliga pedagoger, pojkar och maskulinitetsskapande i förskola och skola*. Liber, Stockholm, and Anne-Mette Klausen interviews Jan Kampmann: ”Trenger vi TARZAN i skolen?” In: *NIKK magasin nr. 2*. NIKK, Oslo.

<sup>15</sup> Ohnstad, 2002 in NOVA Report 4/2008

researchers ask if boys and girls really have the same opportunities when play, as a basis for learning, is so different.<sup>16</sup>

One recurring find in the studies is that the kindergarten staff members wish to treat boys and girls in the same way and believe they do so. But in practice they bear with them the role expectations existent in society. Some projects have focussed on making the staff aware of their attitudes to the gender role pattern. The few projects that have been evaluated indicate that it is possible to change the kindergartens' practice when it comes to gender equality. Kindergartens where the staff members consciously work with the gender role pattern have the smallest difference in how girls and boys are treated.<sup>17</sup>

Through the Action Plan for Gender Equality in Kindergartens many kindergartens have implemented development measures to promote equality in their everyday lives. There are also research-based methods for use by the kindergartens. Results will be summarised in the Action Plan's final report.

Kindergartens have often started by looking at the attitudes of the adults and how these influence how they relate to the children and affect the contents of the kindergarten. Which area they continue to work with varies a good deal. Some have chosen to look at how tasks are distributed between women and men or at adapting the physical conditions in the kindergarten. However, many have concentrated on relations with the children, such as changing the play culture and equality in the pedagogical contents. For instance, one method that has been tried out is dividing the children into groups of girls and boys for shorter or longer periods of time. In this manner the staff may more easily adapt the pedagogy according to the needs of girls and boys. The method was developed in the Hjalli kindergartens on Iceland and has been tried out in several Norwegian kindergartens. The method is disputed, but evaluation indicates that there have been good results.<sup>18</sup>

It is a national responsibility to ensure that the kindergartens have the necessary competence for integrating the gender and equality perspective in the kindergartens' pedagogical contents and in their caring for the children. During the Action Plan period emphasis will be placed on guidance and dissemination of knowledge to the kindergartens.

Children's gender role patterns have gradually changed and become more varied and it is therefore important to have updated research in this area. In line with developments in society as a whole it is the girls that are best at expanding their repertoire of roles and they are quicker at breaching the boundaries into the boys' play culture. Which consequences this should have for kindergarten pedagogy when it comes to development and learning for boys and girls respectively should be made the object of research.

*Does having more men in kindergartens make a difference?* A substantial argument for having more men in kindergartens is that children need male role models. The children must be able to see and experience that a man can be a carer, too, and that gender in itself is not significant for how a boy or girl can shape their role models. In the same way that fathers today take a much greater part

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<sup>16</sup> Rossholt, N. (2003).

<sup>17</sup> Andresen, 1986.

<sup>18</sup> Oma, 1995. NOVA Report 4/2008.

in caring for their children, children must also encounter men in the public kindergarten caring role. Otherwise it will be difficult in the longer run to change traditional gender role patterns. One could also make a case for arguing that men will bring a wider range of values, interests and activities to kindergartens, which would benefit both the children and the working environment.

Working in kindergartens is an untraditional choice for men and they have thereby broken with some of the expectations society has for men. But recruiting men is not in itself a solution to the gender equality challenges facing kindergartens. Men and women are different and can complement each other. This view is shared by kindergarten staff. Surveys of the expectations of kindergarten staff regarding men's professions show that both women and men believe that men have a special position in kindergartens. They can bring in other activities and manners than women do, and it is positive to have more masculine values in kindergartens. Children appreciate it and it has been pointed out that boys in particular need an adult man as a role model. At the same time, kindergarten employees believe that personality and aptness are most important, not gender.<sup>19</sup>

Kindergartens need different sorts of men, and female and male employees have a joint responsibility for facilitating equality in the kindergarten's pedagogy and practice.

A great many female employees agree that kindergartens need more men. About 9 out of 10 women believe that men are important for the children's development and for the working environment.<sup>20</sup>

There are many different reasons why kindergartens should recruit more men but there is little research to substantiate these reasons. It is therefore important to have more research into how more men make a difference in kindergartens, and which significance this has for the children's development and for the quality of the kindergarten.

### **5.1.2 Formation of gender identity in basic education**

Most Norwegian pupils are happy at school. This is shown for instance by the analysis of the Pupil Survey in 2006 and the Young in Norway Survey<sup>21</sup> However Norwegian schools still face the challenge of unrest and problematic behaviour.<sup>22</sup> 8 out of 10 of the pupils with serious behavioural problems are boys.<sup>23</sup> The disruptive, aggressive boys attract a lot of attention from teachers, politicians and media. But who is the "typical boy" nowadays? What characterises him and his gender identity formation? What does it currently take to be included in or excluded from the boy hierarchy? We have no updated research into present-day boys. It is easy to forget that there are many different types of boys, such as for example the quiet and invisible boys in the class, the ones whose names the teacher forgets.<sup>24</sup> In fact we have no updated research into what it means to grow up as a boy in today's society.

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19 Lysklett and Emilsen (2007): Final report from "Menn i natur- og friluftsbarnehager".

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

21 The Directorate for Education and Training (2007): 47, and Strandbu, Å. and T. Øia (eds.) (2007): 71.

<sup>22</sup> The Directorate for Education and Research (2007): 53.

<sup>23</sup> Nordahl, T. et al. (2005): *Atferdsproblemer blant barn og unge*. Fagbokforlaget.

<sup>24</sup> Lyng, S.T. (2004): *Være eller lære? Om elevroller, identitet og læring i ungdomsskolen*. Universitetsforlaget.

We know a little more about present-day girls than about present-day boys because gender equality work and gender research has been mostly directed towards the girls. One of the most important changes over the last 15-20 years has been that girls have created greater autonomy/independence for themselves and that their gender culture has become more visible for everyone. Several researchers refer to the emergence of independent and ambitious girls who no longer belong to the quiet host in the classroom.<sup>25</sup> However research indicates that primary school teachers may find active and individualistic girls difficult.<sup>26</sup> Some researchers also believe it may be difficult for some young girls to find their own identity in the conflicting discourses of youth culture: on the one hand discourse of strong, clever and independent girls and on the other hand the discourse of an attractive appearance and a perfect body, a new achievement field for ambitious girls.<sup>27</sup>

According to several researchers there are two major factors regarding gender and young people today. For one thing, masculine and feminine characteristics are today mixed more freely in the individual youngster than used to be the case. There are increasing differences within the girl group and the boy group. Gender is in other words no longer one complete package but something that can be assembled in different ways.<sup>28</sup> Secondly, it is important to remember that girls and boys today have a different view of themselves and what the future may bring, than young people had 15 or 20 years ago. Gender equality and rights are a matter of course for present-day Norwegian youngsters. Many of them would oppose being categorised as a “typical girl” or “typical boy”, as they first and foremost regard themselves as individuals. This may mean that traditional gender equality campaigns risk meeting opposition and/or lack of interest from young people.<sup>29</sup>

The NOVA report<sup>30</sup> shows that both in Scandinavia and in other countries there are a number of studies that through classroom observation shed light on how different forms of interaction patterns between teachers and pupils are distributed according to gender. The studies have concentrated both on measuring the amount of attention the teachers pay to boys and girls, and what kind of attention this is. Almost all of the research in this field concludes<sup>31</sup> that teachers generally pay different degrees of attention to boys and girls and that boys receive most attention from teachers in the classroom. This may be significant for how much and how girls and boys participate in lessons and their attachment to school.

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<sup>25</sup> e.g. Nielsen, H.B. (2000): ”Inn i klasserommet” In: Imsen, G. (ed.) (2000): *Kjønn og likestilling i grunnskolen*. Gyldendal Norsk Forlag: 63.

<sup>26</sup> Nielsen, H.B. (2003): ”Nye jenter og gamle kjønn”. In: NIKK magasin nr. 2. NIKK, Oslo

<sup>27</sup> Nielsen, H.B. (2003): 12

<sup>28</sup> Hegna, K. (2005): “*Likestillingsprosjektets*” barn. *Endringer i kjønnsforskjeller blant ungdom fra 1992 til 2002*.

Report 21/05, NOVA, Oslo, and Pedersen, W. (2005): *Nye seksualiteter*. Universitetsforlaget, and Nielsen, H.B. and M. Rudberg (2006): *Moderne jenter. Tre generasjoner på vei*. Universitetsforlaget.

<sup>29</sup> Nielsen, H.B. and M. Rudberg (2006).

<sup>30</sup> Bakken, A. et al. (2008): “*Er det skolens skyld?*” *En kunnskapsoversikt om skolens bidrag til kjønnsforskjeller i skoleprestasjoner*. NOVA Report 4/2008.

<sup>31</sup> Among others Wernersson, I. (1977): *Könsdifferentering i grundskolan*. Göteborg: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis (distr.) and Kelly, A. (1988): Gender Differences in Teacher Pupil Interactions – a Meta-Analytic Review, *Research in Education*: 1–23.

If education is to socialise pupils to gender equality, interaction in the classroom is probably more important than the textbooks say.<sup>32</sup> It is also possible that new working methods are significant. However these are some of the areas in classroom research where there is scarce knowledge which is not up-to-date. There is more about female and male teachers on page 38.

### 5.1.3 Bullying because of gender and sexual identity

Surveys show that boys use verbal and direct harassment, i.e. teasing, ridicule, threats and negative characteristics of their peers as a type of identity formation of a “proper masculinity”.<sup>33</sup> Boys are more often involved in bullying and harassment than girls, both as bully and victim.<sup>34</sup>

Bullying often has sex or gender as a starting point, for instance in the form of sexual harassment. A Swedish doctoral thesis shows that half of the girls and almost a third of the boys consider sexual harassment a problem at their school.<sup>35</sup> There are no equivalent Norwegian surveys but there is no reason to assume that Sweden and Norway differ a lot in relation to this problem. In Norway there is only one national survey of sex-related bullying<sup>36</sup>, which comprises a survey of sexual harassment in sports<sup>37</sup> and a survey of sexual abuse among young people in Oslo<sup>38</sup>.

What is sex-related bullying and sexual harassment precisely? “Gay” and “whore” are the most usual and most hurtful insults used.<sup>39</sup> These are important terms of abuse that show the limits for what the pupils find acceptable and unacceptable. Both Norwegian and Swedish surveys show that many young boys have very negative attitudes to homosexuals.<sup>40</sup> A smaller survey about sex education in Norwegian schools shows that teachers do not intervene when pupils utter homophobic and homo-negative expressions.<sup>41</sup> The survey indicates that this might be due to a lack of knowledge among the teachers about how they can plan their instruction in sexual topics so as to be non-excluding.

The above-mentioned Norwegian knowledge status about sex-related bullying among children and young people also draws the conclusion that schools need more knowledge about this phenomenon and that teachers should have more knowledge about how to deal with conflicts based on gender and sexuality.<sup>42</sup> Considering the negative consequences sex-related bullying can hold for the persons involved, this is a challenge schools must tackle. Sex-related bullying often creates serious

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<sup>32</sup> Ericsson, K. (2003): “Klasserommets sanne ofre – jenter eller gutter?” (In *NIKK magasin* nr. 2, NIKK, Oslo.

<sup>33</sup> Eliasson, M.A. (2007): *Verbal abuse in school: constructing gender and age in social interaction*, Karolinska Institutet, Sverige

<sup>34</sup> The Directorate for Education and Training (2007): 50

<sup>35</sup> Witkowska, E. (2005): *Sexual Harassment in Schools – Prevalence, Structure and Perceptions*. Arbete och Hälsa vetenskaplig skriftserie, Stockholm.

<sup>36</sup> Helseth, H. (2007): Kunnskapsstatus om kjønnsrelatert mobbing blant barn og unge On commission for the Directorate for Education and Research and the University College of Nesna. Published at [www.Directorate for Education and Research .no](http://www.Directorate for Education and Research .no).

<sup>37</sup> Fasting, K. et al. (2003): “Experiences of Sexual Harassment and Abuse among Norwegian Elite Female Athletes and Non-athletes”. In: *American alliance for health, physical education, recreation and dance*, vol. 74, nr. 1.

<sup>38</sup> Mossige, S. (2001): *Ungdoms holdninger til seksuelle krenkelser og overgrep; ungdommers oppfatning av barn som legitime mål for seksuelle handlinger*. Volume no. 16. NOVA.

<sup>39</sup> Sundnes, A. (2003): *Kamp om ordet: en fortolkende studie av seksuelle skjellsord blant ungdom*. The University of Oslo.

<sup>40</sup> E.g Hegna, K. (2007): *Homo? – betydningen av seksuell erfaring, tiltrekning og identitet for selvmordsforsøk og rusmiddelbruk blant ungdom* Report 1/07. NOVA.

<sup>41</sup> Røthing, Å. (2007): “Homonegativisme og homofobi i klasserommet – marginaliserte maskuliniteter, homovennlige jenter og rådvile lærere”(In: *Tidsskrift for ungdomsforskning* 1/2007, NOVA.)

<sup>42</sup> Helseth, H. (2007).

health problems, both for the victim and for those who witness the harassment.<sup>43</sup> Harassment because of sexual leanings is often mentioned as a reason for the high suicide figures among young homosexuals. Boys who are marked as “gay” also face a higher risk of being exposed to hate crimes. The survey defines this as crime based on other people’s beliefs, colour, national or ethnical origins, homosexual tendency, way of life or leanings.<sup>44</sup>

Another survey shows that being marked as “whore” increases the probability of physical or sexual abuse.<sup>45</sup> A comprehensive survey from 2007 of 18-year-olds from 5 countries in the Baltic region plus Norway<sup>46</sup> shows that 84 per cent of the Norwegian youngsters that have experienced unwanted sexual incidents, are girls. The abuser is almost without exception a boy. Just under one half of the unsolicited sexual incidents take place between a girl in her teens and a boy who is about 5 years older, but still in his teens. As many as 10 per cent of the Norwegian girls had experienced at least one incident of sexual intercourse against their own will. For the group aged 19 the figure is as high as 17.5 per cent. About 8 per cent of the boys had experienced intercourse against their own will (10 per cent of the 19-year-olds). These are frightening figures, which indicate that schools must take seriously their work with their pupils on attitudes concerning sexuality, bodies and the definition of limits.

A Finnish project draws the conclusion that as long as schools do not question sex-related bullying and do not promote many ways of being a boy or a girl, they are actually helping to legitimate the violence that is taking place.<sup>47</sup> Different ethnographic surveys show that gender and sexuality are often part of and a source of conflicts among children and young people.<sup>48</sup> The survey also shows that knowledge about sexual gender roles, expectations and how these influence conflicts between young people may make it easier for schools to solve these problems and prevent sex-related bullying. Lack of knowledge about bullying and sexual harassment among teacher education students shows that teachers of the future also have little competence in dealing with sexual harassment among the pupils.<sup>49</sup> This is a challenge that the teacher education institutions must tackle.

## **5.2 Learning outcomes in kindergarten and basic education**

Over the last few years we have increased our knowledge about the significance of early childhood for later learning.<sup>50</sup> Surveys show that early language stimulation can prevent learning difficulties in school. Kindergartens can achieve good results for children’s language development by using methods that can be combined with their traditions for learning through play, such as deliberate and active play with nursery rhymes and verse, singing and fairy tales.<sup>51</sup>

There is little systematic knowledge about the quality of Norwegian kindergartens, and we know little about how girls and boys are met in kindergarten and whether they participate equally in for example activities that stimulate language development. A survey of social competence and gender

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<sup>43</sup> Menckel, E. and E. Witkowska (2002): *Allvar eller på skämt?* The Institute of Working Life: 2, Stockholm

<sup>44</sup> Tiby, E. and Sörberg, A. (2006): *En studie av homofoba hatbrott i Sverige*. Forum for livende historie: 2, Stockholm.

<sup>45</sup> Duncan (1999): *Sexual Bullying – Gender Conflict and the Pupil Culture in Secondary Schools*. London/New York, Routledge.

<sup>46</sup> Mossige, S. et al. (eds.) (2007): *The Baltic Sea Regional Study on Adolescents’ Sexuality*. Report 18/07, NOVA, Oslo.

<sup>47</sup> Helseth H. (2007)

<sup>48</sup> Helseth H. (2007)

<sup>49</sup> Helseth H. (2007)

<sup>50</sup> e.g. Frost, J. et al. (2005) and Frost, J. (2006).

<sup>51</sup> e.g. Frost, J. et al. (2005) and Frost, J. (2006).



in kindergartens indicates that the assumption that boys are offered more action and girls more talk may prove to be correct.<sup>52</sup> In other words, there is every reason to examine whether boys get the language stimulation in pre-school age that they need. Report to the Storting (White Paper) no. 16 (2006-2007) “Early Intervention for Lifelong Learning” emphasises that even pre-school children need language development support and concrete stimulation measures if necessary.

### 5.2.1 Gender differences in grades

Nowadays girls achieve better grades than boys in all subjects in primary and lower secondary education except physical education.<sup>53</sup> Girls achieve on average 4.2 more points than the boys in lower secondary education.<sup>54</sup> However it is the boys’ total grades that have increased most during the period of 2002-2006, which means that the differences between girls and boys have become slightly smaller.<sup>55</sup> However, according to figures from the Primary and Lower Secondary Education Information System (GSI) 7 out of 10 pupils in primary and lower secondary who had individual decisions for special needs education during the school year of 2006/2007, are boys.

Even though gender differences in grades in upper secondary are smaller than in primary and lower secondary education, there are differences here, too. It is worth noticing that there is by far the strongest correlation between the parents’ level of education and the pupils’ learning outcome, not between gender and achievements. While the average difference between girls and boys is 4.2 lower secondary points, the difference in lower secondary points between pupils who have parents with higher education and those who do not, is as much as 11 points.<sup>56</sup>

Differences in the learning outcomes of girls and boys are noticeable not only in grade statistics but also when it comes to basic skills such as number understanding and reading skills. International surveys such as PIRLS 2001 and 2006 and PISA 2000, 2003 and 2006 show that girls read better than boys do and that there are too many boys among the poorest readers. In PISA 2006 Norway is one of the countries with the smallest gender differences in sciences and mathematics.

In Norway gender differences in reading increased by 6 points from 43 points in 2000 to 49 points in 2003, whereas the result is 44 points in 2006. However these changes are too small over time to be significant. But results for Norwegian pupils’ reading competence in PISA 2006 show that the reading competence of Norwegian 15-year-olds has become significantly poorer in three years. The decline in reading skills therefore applies to both girls and boys.<sup>57</sup>

Results from the international PIRLS surveys also indicate that gender differences in interest for and skills in language and reading start early. Boys have a less positive attitude to reading activities than girls, and the differences in reading skills relate to pre-school age reading activities and

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<sup>52</sup> Vintervold, A.L. (2007).

<sup>53</sup> The Directorate for Education and Research (2007): *The Education Mirror 2006*: 40.

<sup>54</sup> Lower secondary points are calculated as the pupils’ total grades in eleven subjects (*The Education Mirror 2006*: 40).

<sup>55</sup> The Directorate for Education and Research (2007): *The Education Mirror 2006*: 40.

<sup>56</sup> This is the correlation between the parents’ educational level and the pupils’ grades when other family factors such as income, immigrant background and length of residency are kept constant, so that one compares groups that have the same characteristics apart from the parents’ educational level. A more detailed explanation can be found in Hægeland, T. et al. (2005): *Familiebakgrunn, skoleressurser og avgangskarakterer i norsk grunnskole*” (In *Utdanning 2005 – deltakelse og kompetanse*. Statistical analyses 74, Statistics Norway: 40–41.

<sup>57</sup> Kjærnsli, M. et al. (2007): *Tid for tunge løft. Norske elevers kompetanse i naturfag, lesing og matematikk i PISA 2006*, Universitetsforlaget.

language development. Many children know quite a lot when they start school, but even before this many girls have better knowledge of the alphabet than the boys.<sup>58</sup>

Why are the differences between girls' and boys' reading skills so big? In connection with "Make Space for Reading! Strategy for Stimulating a Love of Reading and Reading Skills 2003-2007" half of the participating schools had separate measures for boys. Most of these measures were designed to improve the framework or motivation for reading for boys. Many schools also purchased books especially meant for boys.

The evaluation of the strategy shows that focussing on boys and reading has been successful, leading to greater awareness on the part of school leaders and teachers concerning the challenges relating to boys' reading skills.<sup>59</sup> In the evaluation the researchers point out that the "quest for good books for boys" must not lead to the belief that all boys are the same. They propose that schools must ensure a broad diversity of books without dividing them into "girls' books" and "boys' books".<sup>60</sup> A survey carried out by the Reading Centre in Stavanger also indicates that certain perceptions about boys and reading should be reconsidered.<sup>61</sup> This survey shows that boys read even though they may have a tendency not to wish to define themselves as readers. Boys relate to reading more as an activity than as identity, which may be caused by their belief that reading means fiction. In the interviews concerning reading habits the researchers registered that the boys needed to demonstrate that their choice of reading matter is individual and that all boys do not like for instance the fantasy genre.

An abundant supply of varied texts on different topics may help give boys a greater love of reading and interest for the benefits they can gain from reading. It may also be useful to consider the material and type of exercises that are used in the teaching of reading.<sup>62</sup> More boys than girls seem to be oriented towards facts and tasks when they read. They may therefore find it difficult to show their actual reading skills level in test situations when the tests have a predominance of exercise types which girls may perhaps be more familiar with. A survey of texts by 15-16-year-olds and assessments of texts by pupils<sup>63</sup> shows that imaginative writing has a strong place in primary and lower secondary education. This seems to be adapted to the girls' premises, with emphasis on narrative, imaginative texts and with less emphasis on factual writing. The researchers behind this survey recommend that the teaching of writing should continue to develop the playful and creative aspects, but that conscious efforts should be made to expand the genre register so that it interests the boys to a greater degree.

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<sup>58</sup> Solheim, R.G. and F.E. Tønnessen (2003): *Hvorfor leser klasser så forskjellig? En sammenligning av de 20 klassene med de beste og de 20 klasser med de svakeste leseresultatene i PIRLS 2001*. Centre for Reading Research, Stavanger.

<sup>59</sup> Buland, T. et al. (2006): *Leselyst, helt uten smak av tran? Evaluering av tiltaksplanen "Gi rom for lesing!"* Partial Report no. 2. SINTEF Technology and Society IFIM, Trondheim.

<sup>60</sup> Buland, T. et al. (2007): *Lokal grunnmur gir nasjonalt byggverk? Evaluering av tiltaksplanen "Gi rom for lesing!"* . Partial Report no. 3. SINTEF Technology and Society IFIM, Trondheim.

<sup>61</sup> Hoel, T. and L. Helgevold (2005): *"Jeg leser aldri – men jeg leser alltid!" Gutter som lesere og som bibliotekbrukere. En kvalitativ undersøkelse med utgangspunkt i "Fritt valg"- rapporten*. National Centre for Reading Education and Research. University of Stavanger.

<sup>62</sup> Engen, L. et al. (2006): *Leseferdighet på 2. årstrinn, våren 2005*. Partial report. National Centre for Reading Education and Research, University of Stavanger.

<sup>63</sup> Berge, K.L. et al. (red.) (2005): *Ungdommers skrivekompetanse – Bind I: Norsksensuren som kvalitetsvurdering*. Universitetsforlaget and Berge, K.L. et al. (eds.) (2005): *Ungdommers skrivekompetanse – Bind II: Norskeksamen som tekst*. Universitetsforlaget.

## 5.2.2 Possible causes of differences in learning outcomes

As we saw earlier, in addition to a general difference between girls and boys when it comes to reading skills, there are also differences when it comes to learning outcomes in general and when it comes to grades. Could this be caused by schools being more adapted to the way girls behave and that boys to a greater degree dissociate themselves from the school's values and organisation?

On commission for the Ministry of Education and Research NOVA<sup>64</sup> has tried to see if there are any grounds for these and other assumptions about boys and girls in primary and lower secondary education. A review of research literature in this field shows that there is little empirical research that examines gender and differences in achievements in schools. There are several reasons for this: Research into gender issues in schools has traditionally had girls' problems as an underlying topic. A good deal of school research has either not been interested in explaining the differences in achievement or explains the differences as being the result of conditions outside school. So, research into the correlation between gender differences in school achievements and classroom practice, pedagogy and organisation, is therefore in short supply both nationally and internationally. However the studies that do exist help clarify some aspects.

Studies show that boys, both historically and today, get more attention from the teacher than girls do. There is little to indicate that the gender difference in the amount of attention awarded is due to teachers systematically and consciously discriminating against girls. A great deal of the gender difference in attention from the teacher is due to negative response to what the teacher considers disruptive behaviour that hinders learning.

Nor is there much research into whether the schools' assessment methods are better adapted to girls than to boys. One Norwegian survey suggests that the assessment methods used by schools, and especially those based on a textual culture, help reward girls<sup>65</sup>. When it comes to the unwritten norms and rules to which the pupils are expected to adapt<sup>66</sup>, it may seem as though the girls have an advantage. There are also indications that teachers have higher expectations of girls.

It is also uncertain whether the teaching itself helps reward girls. Bakken et al. (2008) points out that there is little research into how different educational methods affect the learning results of boys and girls. The topic is important in the Norwegian school system today because the Knowledge Promotion entails that the individual school has been given great freedom of choice regarding teaching methods.

One English study<sup>67</sup> suggests that girls get more out of project-oriented mathematics teaching whereas the boys are not so dependent on how the teaching is organised. There is however some uncertainty as to whether such results can be transferred to other subjects. There is little to indicate that gender-divided teaching in itself has any negative or positive effect. Research emphasises that this depends among other things on how the gender-division is carried out.<sup>68</sup> At the same time

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<sup>64</sup> Bakken, A. et al. (2008): "Er det skolens skyld?" *En kunnskapsoversikt om skolens bidrag til kjønnsforskjeller i skoleprestasjoner*. NOVA Report 4/2008

<sup>65</sup> Evensen, L.S. and W. Vagle (2003): *Kvalitetssikring av læringsutbytte i norsk skriftlig* (KAL-prosjektet). Summarising report, Trondheim: Institute for Language and Communication Studies, NTNU.

<sup>66</sup> Connolly, P. (1998): *Racism, gender identities and young children. Social relations in a multi-ethnic inner-city primary school*. London, Routledge.

<sup>67</sup> Boaler, J. (1997): "Experiencing school mathematics. Traditional and reform approaches to teaching and their impact on student learning". Buckingham Open University Press. Boaler, J. (2002): "Paying the Price for 'Sugar and Spice'. Shifting the analytical lens in equity research". *Mathematical Thinking and Learning*, 42: 127–144.

<sup>68</sup> Bakken, A. et al.: NOVA Report 4/2008: 9

there are several researchers<sup>69</sup> that emphasise the challenges inherent in such measures, amongst them the danger of gender stereotypical attitudes becoming even more consolidated through the focus on gender itself.

Nordahl<sup>70</sup> points out that the individualised teaching methods that prevail in schools today mean that boys do not do so well, because boys on average are less able to do schoolwork on their own.

The NOVA report<sup>71</sup> emphasises that categorising girls/boys too approximately may easily entail losing important nuances. There are notable variations within each gender category. There are also many girls who do not succeed very well. There may therefore be reason to talk about pupils who become involved in learning processes in an effective manner and pupils who do so to a lesser degree – and that gender in this context is less significant than for example home background.

The researchers behind the NOVA report have discovered that there is little in the available research literature that explicitly concludes that it is the school itself that creates gender differences in school achievements. The patterns of the gender differences seem to be constant over time, across nationalities and between schools within countries. So in other words this happens despite the fact that the contexts where these differences take place vary significantly both with regard to the prevailing school policy, how the teaching is organised and which educational methods are in fashion. Altogether this indicates that schools help reproduce gender differences which already exist in the classroom. Knowledge about causes must be sought in interaction with a number of factors, both those that schools can influence directly and those that schools cannot change.<sup>72</sup>

The NOVA report concludes that even if schools in all likelihood are not a decisive factor when it comes to producing gender differences in school achievements, there is no reason to reject the idea that schools may provide a major contribution to reducing the differences. On the contrary there is reason to believe that schools have the potential to reduce the achievement gap. The English project called Raising Boys' Achievement<sup>73</sup> shows that this is possible, while at the same time emphasising that there are no easy solutions and that it is necessary to have long-term efforts oriented towards increasing the learning potential of all the school's pupils, regardless of gender, ethnicity and class background. According to the NOVA researchers a major research issue in the years to come will be whether this is the way to go here in Norway.<sup>74</sup>

However, we do know that generally speaking there are few differences between the attitudes towards school of 16-year-old girls and boys, as for instance emerges from the Young in Norway survey.<sup>75</sup> The girls are a little happier at school and have a slightly more positive attitude to the

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<sup>69</sup> Reisby, K. and S.V. Knudsen (2005): *Køn, ligestilling og skole 1990–2004*. Report with an overview of research in kindergartens, schools, upper secondary education and training, with respect to gender and pedagogical equality strategies as well as gender equality policy in the Nordic countries: Nordic Council of Ministers/ Nordic Institute for Women and Gender Studies, and Francis, B. et al. (2002), *A systematic review of classroom strategies for reducing stereotypical gender construction among girls and boys in mixed-sex UK primary schools*. EPPI-Centre Review. London: EPPI-centre, Institute of Education, University of London.

<sup>70</sup> Nordahl, Thomas (2007): "Gutter og jenters situasjon og læring i skolen". Hamar: Hedmark University College ([www.hihm.no](http://www.hihm.no)).

<sup>71</sup> Bakken, A. et al.: NOVA Report 4/2008.

<sup>72</sup> Bakken, A. et al.: NOVA Report 4/2008

<sup>73</sup> Warrington, Molly & Mike Younger (2006), *Raising Boys' Achievement in Primary Schools. Towards a Holistic Approach*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

<sup>74</sup> Bakken, A. et al.: NOVA 4/2008: 11

<sup>75</sup> Strandbu, Å. and T. Øia (eds.) (2007): *Ung i Norge. Skole, fritid og ungdomskultur*. Cappelen Akademisk Forlag, and Hegna, K. (2005).

general utilitarian value of school, but most pupils, both girls and boys, are happy at school. They agree that it is important to achieve good grades, that school will be useful in the future and that they learn a lot of exciting things in school. Boys in vocational education differ from the others as they think that there is too much theory in school but they are also the ones who are most content with the teachers and the contents of the teaching. The survey also shows that the girls are more diligent and spend more time on schoolwork than the boys do, both in lower secondary and in upper secondary education. In the lower secondary school the boys spend an average of 56 minutes on schoolwork each day while the girls have an average score of 1 hour and 13 minutes. The same applies to upper secondary education, even when we compare pupils in the same study stream. Girls in General and Business Studies spend on average 1 hour and 10 minutes on homework per day whereas the boys on the same course spend approximately 45 minutes. The same difference can be found in the vocational programmes. This could be taken to mean that girls embrace the school's objectives and values to a greater degree.<sup>76</sup> It is a challenge for schools to motivate boys for schoolwork.

For a pupil to learn something he or she must be met with expectations that he/she may achieve something. International research shows that parents and teachers often have biased preconceptions as to what girls and boys are good at, and that this affects both the learning results and the pupils' choice of subject areas in their later education. Parents and teachers who believe that mathematics and sciences are subject areas most suited for men will systematically underrate girls' abilities in these subjects, regardless of their actual results.<sup>77</sup> Boys, on the other hand, are underrated when languages and social studies are regarded as female domains.<sup>78</sup> These kinds of traditional gender attitudes affect the pupils' belief in their own abilities, their efforts and desire to study the subjects.<sup>79</sup> This could also be one reason why the confidence Norwegian 10th graders have in their own aptitudes follow gender-traditional patterns, also when comparing girls and boys who achieve equally well.<sup>80</sup>

There are some aspects of everyday life in Norwegian schools that may lead to a poorer learning development for some boys. Surveys show that unrest and problematic behaviour are a challenge in Norwegian schools.<sup>81</sup> Some classes have a lack of focus on class leadership, unclear rules, little structure in the teaching, conflicts and poor communication between teacher and pupil.<sup>82</sup> There is much to indicate that this is especially detrimental for boys that already are unruly and have

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<sup>76</sup> Hegna, K. (2005).

<sup>77</sup> Tenenbaum, H.R. and C. Leaper (2003): "Parent-child conversations about science. The socialization of gender inequities?" In: *Developmental Psychology* 39: 34–47, and Tiedemann, J. (2000): "Parents' gender stereotypes and teachers' beliefs as predictors of children's concept of their mathematical ability in elementary school". In: *Journal of Educational Psychology* 92: 144–151, and Lummis, M. and H.W. Stevenson (1990): "Gender differences in beliefs and achievement. A crosscultural study". In: *Developmental Psychology* 26: 254–263.

<sup>78</sup> Frome, P.M. and J.S. Eccles (1998): "Parents' influence on children's achievement-related perceptions". In: *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 74: 435–452.

<sup>79</sup> Steele, C.M. (1997): "Threat in the air. How stereotypes shape intellectual identity and performance". In: *American Psychologist* 52: 613–629, and Spencer, S. et al. (1999): "Stereotype Threat and Women's Math Performance". In: *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, Volume 35, Number 1, January, and Bleeker, M.M. and J.E. Jacobs (2004): "Achievement in math and science: Do mothers' beliefs matter 12 years later?" In: *Journal of Educational Psychology* 96: 97–109, and Jacobs, J.E. (1991): "Influence of gender stereotypes on parent and child mathematics attitudes". In: *Journal of Educational Psychology* 83: 518–527, and Jacobs, J.E. and J.S. Eccles (1992): "The impact of mothers' gender-role stereotypic beliefs on mothers' and children's ability perceptions". In: *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 63: 932–944.

<sup>80</sup> Lødding, B. (2004): *Hvor ble realistene av? Om valg av studieretning og prestasjoner i videregående opplæring blant ungdom med gode karakterer i realfag fra ungdomsskolen*. Skriftserie 11/2004, NIFU, Oslo.

<sup>81</sup> The Directorate for Education and Research 2004: 56.

<sup>82</sup> Nordahl et al. (2005)

concentration problems and that this may increase if there are freer working methods such as e.g. work plans. On the other hand working methods for the whole class, led by a strong teacher, seem to help them be physically quiet and interested in the learning activity.<sup>83</sup>

Classroom research indicates that Norwegian pupils have to assume too much responsibility for their own learning and that a high level of personal motivation and independence are a prerequisite for succeeding. A classroom survey from the primary level in which a research team from Volda University College observed 27 classes over three years registered relatively often that some pupils did not do any of the work they were meant to do during the time allotted in the work plan.<sup>84</sup> Observations in classes in the lower secondary school show that it is usual for a number of pupils to postpone the assignments to be done within a two week period until the last two days of the plan period. In other words many pupils do almost nothing during the whole plan period and then work intensely during the last two days (Thursday and Friday) to finish their hand-in assignments. In some of the classrooms this kind of working culture was well established, especially among some of the boys.<sup>85</sup>

As the use of work plans in many schools is linked to a great deal of independence with the pupils themselves being responsible for how they spend their time in the work sessions, the teacher has in many ways relinquished his/her tools for sanctioning and steering the pupils. One could almost say that the use of work plans, combined with the ideal concept of the teacher as a coach, has strengthened what some researchers have described as a passive teacher role.<sup>86</sup> Surveys also show that the teachers often do not check that the pupils are following the work plan, and when they do check, it takes a long time before the pupils receive feedback about the quality of the contents of the assignments they have been done.<sup>87</sup> Therefore the consequences are that the pupils do not get the necessary feedback during their work and therefore do not achieve optimal learning either. International surveys have also found that Norwegian teachers to a lesser degree than teachers in other countries follow up their pupils' learning and give feedback about the work they have done.<sup>88</sup> It may well be that this particularly affects pupils with parents with a low level of education and then especially boys and pupils with a minority background.

Report to the Storting (White Paper) no. 16 (2006–2007) “Early Intervention for Lifelong Learning” points out several areas for improving gender equality between girls and boys regarding learning outcome. Early efforts for learning, in a good, public education system, are of decisive importance for succeeding in all children acquiring basic skills. Learning opportunities are among other things based on the skills and experiences a person has acquired earlier in life. Learning leads to more learning. People who do not enter into good learning processes will be at greater risk of entering into a negative development spiral. The White Paper places emphasis on the pre-school years and the first years in school, the importance of early intervention when it is necessary, instead of a “wait-and-see” attitude which has partly characterised teaching in primary and lower secondary education.

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<sup>83</sup> Einstadblad, I. (2007): *Den urolige eleven. En case studie på kjennetegn på interaksjonen mellom lærer og vandrere*. Master's degree thesis in pedagogy, Institute for Educational Research, University of Oslo

<sup>84</sup> Haug, P. (ed.) (2007): *Begynneropplæring og tilpassa undervisning. Kva skjer i klasserommet?* Caspar forlag

<sup>85</sup> Kirsti Klette (2007): “Bruk av arbeidsplaner i skolen – et hovedverktøy for å realisere tilpasset opplæring?” *Norsk pedagogisk tidsskrift*, 91 (4): 344–358.

<sup>86</sup> e.g. Klette, K. (ed.) (2003): *Klasserommets praksisformer etter Reform 97*. Unipub AS, University of Oslo, and Haug, P. (2007).

<sup>87</sup> Klette, K. and S. Lie (2006): Sentrale Funn. Foreløpige resultater fra PISA+ prosjektet: <http://www.pfi.uio.no/forskning/forskningsprosjekter/pisa+/publikasjoner.html>

<sup>88</sup> Martin, M.O. et al. (2004): *TIMSS 2003 International Science Report*. International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA).

### **5.3 Drop-out in upper secondary education and training**

The most serious consequence of the differences in learning outcomes between girls and boys is that a significant proportion of the boys that leave lower secondary school with poor basic skills, drop out of upper secondary without completing their education or training. More girls than boys complete upper secondary education and training. Of those beginning upper secondary education in 2001, 75 per cent of the girls and 63 per cent of the boys had completed with university admissions certification or vocational competence after 5 years.<sup>89</sup>

However the correlation between gender and probability for drop-out from upper secondary education and training disappears when one compares pupils with the same results from grade 10.<sup>90</sup> In these cases there is a slightly lower probability that the boys will drop out than the girls. The high drop-out percentage for boys is in other words connected with the fact that there are more boys with a poor basis from lower secondary when starting upper secondary education and training.

There are also relatively large differences in drop-out from county to county. The three most northerly counties do worst, with a higher drop-out figure than the other counties. When all other factors are similar, a pupil attending school in Finnmark is 12 per cent more likely to drop out of upper secondary than a pupil in e.g. Østfold or Aust-Agder.<sup>91</sup> The difference between the three most northerly counties and the rest of the country with regard to drop-out is generally speaking greatest for pupils with under-average grades, for pupils with parents with a low level of education and for pupils in vocational education and training. The high drop-out figures in the North of Norway are mostly due to pupils in vocational education programmes having a poorer progression than in the rest of the country. In programmes for general studies the drop-out figures are at the same level as the other counties.

A lower proportion of pupils with a minority language background complete upper secondary education and training than pupils from a majority background. Figures from Statistics Norway indicate that of those starting upper secondary education and training in 2000, 39 per cent had discontinued their schooling without a complete certificate or had completed a planned course at a lower level in 2005. The comparable average for the whole cohort is 26 per cent. Girls from a minority language background tend to complete to a greater degree and faster than boys from a minority language background. More than half of the minority language girls who started in 2000 had completed in the standard time, while the comparable percentage for minority language boys was 36. About one half of the boys from a minority language background had not completed upper secondary education and training within five years.

Byrhagen's survey shows that the difference in completion rates between majority pupils and minority language pupils is related to the fact that minority language pupils on average have parents with a lower education level than the majority pupils, and that minority language pupils on average have lower grades from lower secondary school. It is worth noting that when one compares minority language pupils and majority pupils with equal grades from lower secondary and with parents with as high an education level, one finds that non-western minority language pupils, both descendants and immigrants, have a lower drop-out tendency than the majority pupils.<sup>92</sup> Among

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<sup>89</sup> Statistics Norway 2007

<sup>90</sup> Byrhagen, K.N. et al. (2006): *Frafall i videregående opplæring. Betydning av grunnskolekarakterer, studieretning og fylke*. Report no. 8/06. Centre for Economic Research, Trondheim.

<sup>91</sup> Byrhagen, K.N. et al. (2006)

<sup>92</sup> Byrhagen, K.N. et al. (2006)

those completing upper secondary education and training, the percentage taking higher education among immigrant young people is as high as – or higher than – the percentage for the majority youngsters.<sup>93</sup>

It is also worth noting that pupils choosing courses that are untraditional for their gender have a greater tendency to deviate from standard study progression, that is to say that they stop completely or choose a new study stream. This applies both to girls who start in traditional boys' trades and boys who start in traditional girls' trades. This may be because it is harder for a pupil to complete his/her course of studies in a group where he or she represents a gender minority.<sup>94</sup>

Drop-out figures vary greatly between the different study streams. In the case of pupils starting foundation courses in upper secondary for the first time in 2002, one can see that there is a greater probability for drop-out in woodworking trades, in hotel and food processing trades, electrical trades, mechanical trades and sales and service trades. This is mainly because some study streams have pupils with a poorer academic basis from the lower secondary school. However analyses also show that drop-out is greater in some vocational study streams than others, also after corrections have been made for the pupils' points of departure; this applies to woodworking trades, hotel and food processing trades and mechanical trades.

Poor basic skills and drop-out from upper secondary education and training is a significant problem for the persons involved and for society as a whole. The consequences of not mastering basic skills are becoming increasingly noticeable in a working life that demands continual competence enhancement. Reading and numerical understanding increase employees' productivity and opportunities in the labour market. At the same time, participation in working life means that skills are maintained and further developed. On the whole unemployed people and people with disability pensions have much poorer reading and numerical understanding than others.<sup>95</sup>

Figures from Statistics Norway show that the likelihood of being excluded from further education and working life already when a young adult is multiplied if one does not complete upper secondary education and training. Among young people between 20 and 24 who have started but not completed upper secondary education and training, about 24 per cent of the men and 28 per cent of the women have neither a job nor an education to go to.<sup>96</sup> It is only a small minority of those who have completed upper secondary education and training that do not have a job or an education to go to. A total of 15 per cent of women and 15 per cent of men between 20 and 24 have neither a job nor a place in the education system.

#### ***5.4 Girls' and boys' choice of education and career***

Nowadays it is natural for girls to get an education and make a career in the labour market. However it is still true that girls and boys make traditional choices when choosing education programmes in upper secondary education and training and subsequently in higher education. The number of applicants to Upper Secondary Level 1 (Vg1) (as of 1 March 2007, according to education programme) showed for instance 88.4 per cent girls in Health and Social Care studies J0 Tc 0.03



Construction being 95.7 per cent boys.<sup>97</sup> One result of these traditional vocational choices is that Norway still has a highly gender-divided labour market.

However, a Norwegian survey of the gender-divided labour market points out that the stability and change patterns along the gender dimension are more complex than one might believe.<sup>98</sup> On the one hand there is an almost extreme gender division in certain vocational fields. There are for instance a high percentage of women in a number of typically low status vocations within health, care and service trades. There is a correspondingly high proportion of men within trade and industry and construction – and in large parts of the private business sphere, not least in the top management positions. On the other hand there have been significant changes in gender composition in other areas.

Women are increasingly turning to traditionally male-dominated educational study programmes, such as medicine, economics and management, but also to scientific and technological educational programmes. There is no parallel tendency towards gender integration in the female-dominated educational study programmes. In fact the female percentage is actually increasing here. While the proportion of women in higher education has increased, there has in other words been little change in the educational choices of men.

However, despite the increased flow of women to previously male-dominated educational and vocational fields such as medicine, we see that gender-segregating factors may arise in new shapes within the different professions. Within medicine men and women become specialists just as often, but there are clear differences in choice of specialisation field.<sup>99</sup> This may in other words help maintain a masculine culture in parts of the medical profession, such as surgery and internal medicine.

The survey points out that we lack a systematic analysis of changes in the labour market's gender-segregated structures within a Norwegian context over the last 10-15 years. However we do know that one important factor is the difference between girls' and boys' expressed educational ambitions. In the Young in Norway survey girls say more often than boys that they wish to take higher education. Especially girls in rural districts are increasingly setting their sights towards higher education and the cities.<sup>100</sup> But at the same time boys wish more than girls to have a job that brings them prestige, salary and power, while girls to a greater degree wish to have a job that is useful for society, creative, humanist and individually adapted.

There are a number of disadvantages connected with a highly gender-divided labour market. Even though men and women gradually have got to the stage that they have equally long education paths and young women today choose longer educations than men, their choice of education paths contributes to women continuing to earn less than men with an equally long education. The wage difference between women and men is larger in groups with higher education than in groups without higher education. Figures from Statistics Norway show that for instance women in the group with up to 4 years of higher education earn 80 per cent of the wages of men do.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Directorate for Education and Research: The Education Mirror 2006. *Utdanningsspeilet 2006, Analyse av grunnskole og videregående opplæring i Norge.*

<sup>98</sup> Teigen, M (2006): *Det kjønnsdelte arbeidslivet. En kunnskapsoversikt.* Institute for Social Research, Oslo.

<sup>99</sup> Teigen, M. (2006)

<sup>100</sup> Hegna, K. (2005)

<sup>101</sup> Statistics Norway 2005: Kvinneres lønn i prosent av menns lønn per 3. kvartal 2005. Gjennomsnittlig månedslønn per heltidsekvivalent.

One of the explanations Teigen presents is that women more often choose an education such as pre-school teacher education or an education within health and social care studies, while men more often choose technical and scientific subjects, which are valued more, wage-wise. Women often find themselves in other words in low-salary groups while men get the highest salaries. There is not a distinct division between the private and public sectors in this respect. Figures from Statistics Norway show that to be a man is profitable. The monthly earnings of women amount to an average of 84.7 per cent of those of men in 2006. Some researchers claim that the most important reason why men refuse to change is precisely that a transition towards a female-dominated and gender-integrated profession will often entail a real loss of income for the man.<sup>102</sup>

This means that even though there is a need for workers in parts of the labour market such as the education system, kindergartens or in health and care services, only a few young boys choose to qualify themselves for work in these sectors. Teigen draws the conclusion that the consequence is that Norway has a labour market problem when some professions are defined as women's jobs and others as men's jobs.<sup>103</sup>

Teigen claims that it is both a labour market problem and a gender equality problem when society has a gender-divided labour market. The gender-divided labour market will end if both girls and boys make untraditional educational and vocational choices. It is especially important to get more men into professions taking care of children. It is an objective that children meet men in public care services and in schools, in the same way that it is an objective that father is present in the family.<sup>104</sup>

Gender equality is an issue that affects both sexes and therefore it is necessary to have measures designed for both women and men. The objective is not necessarily an equal distribution of women and men in all professions, but breaking down the barriers that stop young girls and boys from making untraditional choices. Gender should not limit a person's choice of vocation. The gender equality objective for education and choice of vocation will only be attained when young people in reality have the same opportunities to choose a career, regardless of gender.

Choice of education is considered vital if Norway is to succeed in breaking with its current gender-divided labour market. If young girls and boys do not make untraditional choices, the gender-divided labour market will remain. It is a challenge that a young person must choose an education when he/she is still so young that he/she does not have so much knowledge about the opportunities present in the labour market. It is a huge challenge for schools in as much as both the education provided and career and education counselling must motivate pupils to make less traditional choices regarding education and vocations.

There is not much knowledge about how teachers, school counsellors and the contents of school in general influence girls and boys in their choice of education and vocation, and whether gender-traditional choices of education reflect the attitudes of the counsellors. Girls' and boys' choice of education may indicate that the education and vocational counsellors in lower and upper secondary education communicate in different ways with girls and boys and are not sufficiently attentive to the problems connected with gender-traditional choices regarding education and vocation.

A Danish survey from 2003 shows that unless educational and vocational school counsellors have a conscious gender perspective, both the counselling and the young people's choices will remain

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<sup>102</sup> Teigen, M. (2006): 22.

<sup>103</sup> Teigen, M. (2006).

<sup>104</sup> Teigen, M. (2006)

gender-traditional.<sup>105</sup> A similar survey has not been carried out in Norway but there is no reason to assume that Denmark and Norway are so very different in this regard.

The Danish survey pointed out several significant aspects of educational and vocational counselling. A large majority of the counsellors in the Danish survey can be said to be “gender-blind”. This means that they had not related reflectively to prevailing cultural perceptions of women and men nor were consciously aware of how they admitted their own gender attitudes into their counselling.

As many as 70 per cent of the school counsellors in the Danish survey accepted a gender-divided labour market and did not believe that their counselling could influence the pupils’ choices. They therefore believed that integrating a gender equality perspective in their counselling would have no effect. Another large group of school counsellors (20 per cent) believed that the counsellors should not attempt to influence the young people in any direction and that this would be unethical and in conflict with the ideals of neutral counselling. Only 10 per cent of the counsellors in the survey considered it positive to have a conscious gender equality perspective in their counselling and believed it to be a tool to change both the individual’s choice and society’s future need for labour.<sup>106</sup>

The majority of the counsellors in the Danish survey believed that making an untraditional choice required a lot from a young person – a strong psyche, self-confidence and the courage to differ from the others. Girls with untraditional interests were often attributed mental and physical characteristics that are traditionally perceived as masculine (mannish, tomboys), while the boys were described as feminine or potentially homosexual if they for instance wished to be hairdressers. This attribution of characteristics did not apply as much if the boys expressed a wish to become teachers. References to special body and personal features are part of an explanation of interests that are contrary to a traditional gender role pattern. Some vocations are considered masculine or feminine, and this is transferred to the pupils through the educational and vocational counselling.<sup>107</sup>

The counsellors taking part in this survey warned the girls against the barriers and problems they might meet in male-dominated workplaces. At the same time pupils who carry out and stick with an untraditional choice were respected. However, while girls are described as super, brave and strong, boys are not described with equally positive expressions. Lehn claims that this might be because these boys lose status – also in the eyes of the counsellors. This is partly because their masculinity is questioned, and partly because women’s trades in general have lower status.

It turned out that a number of the counsellors lead the girls towards the more traditionally female job spheres, while the boys are directed towards the more traditionally male spheres. Generally speaking the counsellors are not aware of gender and gender equality issues. However, gender becomes significant in relation to pupils with an ethnical background that is not Danish, especially in connection with girls and education. Families with another ethnical background are perceived as people who do not have the same gender equality norms that prevail in the Danish society.<sup>108</sup>

The project “Conscious Educational Choices (1997-2000)” from the Ministry of Church Affairs, Education and Research (as it was then) concluded that the gender perspective should be

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<sup>105</sup> Lehn, S. (2003): *Kønsblind vejledning? En rapport om ligestillingsperspektivet i grundskolens uddannelses- og erhvervsvejledning*. Centre of Gender Equality Research, Denmark.

<sup>106</sup> Lehn, S. (2003)

<sup>107</sup> Lehn, S. (2003)

<sup>108</sup> Lehn, S. (2003)

incorporated as a conscious and explicit part of the school's work on educational and vocational counselling. The evaluation of the project indicated that the project's prime contribution might perhaps be the emphasis it placed on holistic efforts and chains of measures. These chains of measures entailed for instance connecting measures on – and between – different levels and collaboration between school and working life. The project took as its point of departure the assumption that young people choose their education and vocations on the basis of complex and compound processes. Few young people make a choice based on a single influential source or after a single measure or campaign in the lower secondary school aimed at attitudes or providing information.<sup>109</sup> The project showed that especially measures using positive role models and experiences from vocations and professions were successful.

In upper secondary education a good starting point for holistic work in this area was to use a more general minority perspective on pupils making untraditional choices. This involved among other things coaching teachers as well as measures for creating a positive classroom environment. Pupils in upper secondary who have made untraditional choices often constitute a minority in their own class and indeed often in the school as a whole. The project shows that some schools have had good results from dealing with the gender issue as a minority issue in line with the problems linked to pupils with a multi-cultural background. By demanding that girls or boys as a minority group at the school are to have the same rights and the same claim to respect and protection as other minority pupils, the issue was placed in a broader, more general social framework. Successful measures in some counties were to gather girls from a number of schools who had made untraditional choices at one school or in one class so that they constituted 30 – 50 per cent of the group. Another successful measure was that the teachers at these schools worked critically with their own predispositions in order to see the girls' diversity and train them to be aware of overt harassment.

The project's focus on measures just for boys also represented considerable pioneering work. Mainly they tried to use the same means that had previously been used to get girls to apply for male-dominated trades, such as separate network sessions and the use of role models. It was a success to bring girls taking "boys' subjects" in upper secondary education and training along to information activities in lower secondary schools. Experiences showed that a lot more was achieved in this manner than if the information came from "grown-up" educators, because the pupils acting as role models could tell the others what it was really like to be a pupil in untraditional trades and subjects. It also turned out that the project could help scotch the myths among pupils that those who choose untraditional paths are either "fairies" or "dykes".<sup>110</sup>

However, they found that it was difficult to find suitable role models among the boys who had made untraditional choices. As they found out in the Danish survey of educational and vocational counsellors the "Conscious Educational Choices" project found a clear tendency that the girls who had made an untraditional choice were called strong and courageous girls who had made conscious educational choices. The boys who had chosen traditional "girls'" subjects appeared slightly more often as "weak", as people who had not really made a conscious choice but had stumbled upon a "girls'" subject by chance or because they were not offered a place anywhere else. The evaluation of the project shows that it was a challenge that many of the boys in "girls'" subjects were to a lesser degree perceived as ideals, and it was therefore difficult to use them for information purposes in lower secondary schools. Nor did they themselves wish to take part in such activities. This picture is however not completely clear-cut as there were some schools that had some boys who

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<sup>109</sup> Buland, T. and V. Havn (2001): "Du trenger ikke være så steintøff for å velge utradisjonelt." Sluttrapport fra evalueringen av "Bevisste utdanningsvalg". SINTEF Teknologiledelse, IFIM, Trondheim: 45.

<sup>110</sup> Buland, T. and V. Havn (2001): 49.

were very good role models, but a number of schools chose to look for role models elsewhere, primarily among men working in untraditional vocations.

The experiences from this project show that it is continuous and holistic efforts that give results in the shape of untraditional educational and vocational choices by young girls and boys, not single events, whether organised by schools or by others. Alternative, untraditional educational and vocational choices are a result of the girl or boy's maturing processes and take place after a long process of thinking, evaluation and maturing. Single measures or single positive events have generally speaking less significance for the individual pupil's choice. Single measures may start or strengthen processes but will seldom influence a choice decisively. Some single measures such as for instance taking a week of practical in-service experience in an untraditional working area may however be influential, especially if it is part of a systematic, long-term chain of measures.<sup>111</sup>

The pupils should be encouraged to think about their choice of education and vocation as early as possible in their schooling and receive information about a broad range of vocations as possible future prospects, regardless of traditional gender role patterns. It is important to work systematically to motivate girls and boys to take untraditional educational and vocational choices. It is also important to think holistically and work continuously with these issues. The evaluation of the "Conscious Educational Choices" project also showed that it was mainly local enthusiasts that became committed to the work, which is also true of schools' general work on gender equality issues.

## **5.5 Men in kindergartens**

In 1996 the European Commission Childcare Network passed a recommendation stating that the countries should aim to employ 20 per cent men in kindergartens. Norway followed up this appeal with an early initiative to increase the number of men in kindergartens. The fact that kindergartens are female-dominated is viewed as so natural that few countries have done anything about it. Denmark, the UK and Belgium are exceptions, but none of these countries have seen a breakthrough in their work.<sup>112</sup> Compared to the EU countries, Norway has achieved the best results with its percentage of 9 per cent men and has also had the strongest increase over last few years. The OECD has praised Norway for its holistic gender equality work.

The percentage of men in kindergartens has shown a slight increase in the period covered by the Action Plan (2004-2007), and is on a national basis still far from the target of 20 per cent. Based on preliminary figures for 2007, the percentage of men has increased from 7.9 per cent in 2003 to 9.2 per cent in 2007, but this slow increase must be seen in relation to the large number of new kindergartens in the period.

However, the number of men working in kindergartens has increased significantly, by 50 per cent from 2003 to 2007.<sup>113</sup> During this period 2 394 more men have been recruited to the kindergartens. By the end of 2007 there were 7 000 men in Norwegian kindergartens.

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<sup>111</sup> Buland, T. and V. Havn (2001): 59

<sup>112</sup> OECD (2006): *Starting Strong II. Early Childhood Education and Care*: [www.oecd.org](http://www.oecd.org).

<sup>113</sup> All figures for 2007 are preliminary.

### Men in kindergartens

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Total number of men	4 606	4 845	5 715	6 202	7 000
Men as percentage of total employees	7.9	8.0	8.8	8.9	9.2
In publicly owned kindergartens	7.2	6.5	7.5	7.3	- *
In private kindergartens	9.0	9.6	10.5	10.9	- *

Source: Statistics Norway

As seen in the table above, private kindergartens have recruited a lot more men than publicly owned kindergartens. The private kindergartens have increased their share of men from 2003 to 2006 by almost 2 per cent, whereas the percentage of men in publicly owned kindergartens has remained unchanged. This may relate to the fact that the growth in building kindergartens has been stronger in the private sector than the municipal sector.<sup>114</sup>

Most men have been recruited as assistants. 2 780 men were working as nursery assistants and bilingual assistants in the kindergartens at the end of 2006, constituting an increase of 65 per cent compared to 2003. These are often younger men with short periods of employment in the kindergarten. It is a challenge for the kindergarten owner to ensure that these men experience the work as attractive thus remaining in the kindergarten, with opportunities for continued development and education.

There has been a far smaller increase in the amount of male leaders and pedagogical leaders. By the end of 2006 there were 1 350 male leaders and pedagogical leaders, which is an increase of 28 per cent compared to 2003.<sup>115</sup>

The number of men who were admitted to and completed pre-school teacher education has increased in the Action Plan period. In 2003 just over 10 per cent of the admitted students were men, and in 2007 the proportion was just over 13 per cent. The increase ceased in 2005 and was followed by a decline in the share of men, probably as a result of the boom in the labour market. The percentage of men completing the education has also increased, although it is still only just over 8 per cent. The figures also show that relatively many men, more than women, drop out from the education.<sup>116</sup> It is a challenge for the universities and university colleges to adapt their education programmes so that more men complete the course.

It is gratifying that many kindergartens have reached the target of 20 per cent men, and that several are above the target. According to data from Statistics Norway, about 830 out of approximately 6 000 kindergartens have reached the target by the end of 2006.<sup>117</sup>

The kindergartens that succeeded have used the following measures:

- marketing the kindergartens, and an active use of media

<sup>114</sup> Proposition to the Storting no. 1 (the National Budget) (2007–2008) for the Ministry of Education and Research

<sup>115</sup> Source: Statistics Norway– \* There are no available results for 2007

<sup>116</sup> Source: Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD)

<sup>117</sup> The data are somewhat uncertain

- focussing on the advantages and priority areas of the kindergarten in a manner that is attractive to men. Having many male employees makes it easier to recruit more
- formulating job vacancy advertisements that appeal to men
- using the regulations for preferential treatment of men in advertising a job vacancy and in employment
- supporting continuing and further education of male employees
- requesting male students for in-service practice periods
- recruiting boys who have chosen vocational practice in lower secondary education
- requesting male apprentices who plan to become children and youth care workers
- cooperating with the MIB (Men in Kindergartens) networks and the university colleges
- placing the topic on the municipal agenda

By working with the objectives in mind and with the use of relatively simple measures, many kindergartens have managed to recruit more men. The Ministry will use this Action Plan for Gender Equality to continue building on their successful experiences and disseminate the knowledge in the sector. The Ministry believes it is especially important for kindergartens to use the regulations for preferential treatment of men when they appoint new employees.

The fact that municipalities and private owners have anchored the target of 20 per cent men in kindergartens in their plans and strategies has proved to be an effective measure. One example of a municipality that has succeeded is Asker. In 1997, after an initiative from the newly established MIB group, the municipality started to work systematically to recruit more men to the kindergartens. At the time there were 16 men in the kindergartens, and today the number is well over 100. The municipality is the only one we know of that has established a dedicated position for the work. The target is anchored in the municipality's Action Programme, and all profit centre leaders are assessed according to results. In 2004 local quality requirements for the kindergartens in Asker were established in which one of the items is that children are to meet men in the kindergarten every day. One of the measures in the MIB group's plan is to establish recruitment patrols, visiting lower and upper secondary schools among other things.

One of the largest private kindergarten owners, Kanvas, is another example of a kindergarten owner that has firmly established the objective of more men and succeeded. In 2004, Kanvas aimed to employ 30 per cent men in their kindergartens<sup>118</sup>. This spawned a lively discussion, but is today accepted. Today Kanvas has 550 employees in their kindergartens, and about 100 of these are men. From 2004 to 2007 they have increased the percentage from approximately 9 per cent to approximately 20 per cent. Kanvas has actively advertised for men, with the advantage of already employing many men in their kindergartens. They are aware that they must initiate measures to keep men. Kanvas offers their kindergartens guidance in how they can initiate gender equality projects, and promote their own success stories.

There are also examples of other municipalities with the objective of more men incorporated into their activity plans, but not very many. This Action Plan is to contribute to more municipalities and private kindergarten owners anchoring the objective in their activity plans, as a part of the work for quality in kindergartens. This will ensure a systematic and more long-term follow-up to the work.

The MIB networks have had different tasks. Some of them have done active outward-looking work. The MIB network in Fredrikstad is one such example. With funds from the municipality and county authorities, the network has visited the lower secondary schools and presented kindergartens by

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<sup>118</sup> cf. information on [www.kanvas.no](http://www.kanvas.no)

means of a film they have made themselves, “Men in Kindergartens” as well as through talks with the boys. The film and a manual have been distributed to other municipalities. The municipality has also ensured that any boys that are interested are allowed to spend their in-service work experience week in the kindergarten.

The county governors have played an important part in the work with recruiting men. They have acted as instigators, supporters and counsellors. The county governors will continue to play this role in future efforts and have been allocated government funds for the work.

The Ministry of Education and Research will strengthen active recruitment efforts for attracting more men to kindergartens, directing such efforts towards the education system, pupils and the places young men meet, and so on. The county governors are to place emphasis on information and guidance regarding efforts to recruit more men to the kindergartens.

At the annual national conferences since 2005, the Ministry of Education and Research has presented a gender equality award as symbolic rewards to a kindergarten, a municipality and a university college that have reached the target of 20 per cent men. As a further incentive the Ministry has allocated funds for a gender equality award for good work related to recruiting men to the kindergartens.



the Database for Statistics on Higher Education show that the percentage of men successfully completing general teacher education in 2006 was 26 %. The percentage has been relatively stable over the last few years, which indicates that the institutions educating teachers for basic education are also facing challenges in recruiting and keeping men.

The Ministry of Education and Research is of the opinion that it is important to recruit more men to the teaching profession. The aim is that employees in kindergartens and schools are to represent breadth and diversity, reflecting society as a whole. The absence of male teachers may be unfortunate for boys in several ways. Bredesen points out that it could be especially unfortunate because many boys also lack male role models at home.<sup>119</sup> A foreign study also shows that boys identify more strongly with male role models than female ones.<sup>120</sup>

However, research into the impact on the pupils' learning outcomes by male and female teachers provides contradicting results<sup>121</sup>. Most surveys conclude that the teacher's gender has no significance for the difference in achievement between boys and girls<sup>122</sup> (see also Bakken et al. NOVA 4/2008).

However, a survey of American 13 year-olds found a connection between having a teacher of the same gender and the pupils' results in tests, their interest for the subject and the teacher's evaluation of the pupils.<sup>123</sup> For instance having a female science teacher may increase the likelihood that girls view sciences as useful for their future lives. Since there are a majority of female teachers, this survey concludes that the proportion of female teachers increases the boys' learning problems.

A Swedish survey from 2006 that studied the pupils' learning outcomes and the gender of their teacher at upper secondary level, did not find any strong support for the hypothesis that there is a connection between the teachers' gender and the pupils' results at upper secondary level in Sweden.<sup>124</sup> There was admittedly a larger gap in learning outcomes in subjects with a majority of female teachers, but the analyses show that there is no causal connection between the two. When they studied the effect on the pupils' learning outcomes of changing to a teacher of the same gender, they found that the change had little or no effect on learning outcomes.

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<sup>119</sup> Bredesen, O. (2004): *Nye gutter og jenter – en ny pedagogikk?* Cappelen Forlag: 28

<sup>120</sup> Duffy, J. et al. (2001): "Classroom interaction. Gender of teacher, gender of student, and classroom subject." In: *Sex roles* 45: 579–593, and Einarsson, C. (2003): *Lärares och elevers interaktion i klassrummet*. Linköpings universitet, Sverige, and Einarsson, J. and T. Hultman (1984): *God morgon pojkar och flickor! Om språk och kön i skolan*. Liber, Sweden.

<sup>121</sup> See inter alia Dee, T.S. (2007): Teachers and the gender gaps in student achievement. *Journal of Human Resources*, 42: 528–554, and Sokal, L. et al. (2007): Good-bye, Mr Chips: Male teacher shortages and boys' reading achievements. *Sex Roles*, 56: 651–659.

<sup>122</sup> Allan, J. (1993): "Male Elementary Teachers. Experiences and Perspectives". In: Williams, C.L. (ed.): *Doing "Woman's Work." Men in Nontraditional Occupations*, Sage, Newbury Park, and Butler, D. and R. Christianson (2003): "Mixing and Matching. The effect on student performances of teaching assistants of the same gender". In: *Political Science* 34: 781–786, and Carrington, B. and C. Skelton (2003): "Re-thinking role models. Equal opportunities in teacher recruitment in England and Wales". In: *Journal of Educational Policy* 12: 253–265, og Coulter, R.P. and M. McNay (1993): "Exploring men's experience as elementary school teachers". In: *Canadian Journal of Education* 18: 398–413, and Ehrenberg, R.G. et al. (1995): "Do teacher's race, gender and ethnicity matter? Evidence from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988". In: *Industrial and Labour Relations Review* 48: 547–561, and Sokal, L. et al. (2005): "Factors affecting inner-city boys' reading. Are male teachers the answer?" In: *Canadian Journal of Urban Research* 14: 107–130.

<sup>123</sup> Dee, T. (2005): *Teachers and the Gender Gaps in Student Achievement*, NBER Working Paper No. W11660: [http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=819821](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=819821)

<sup>124</sup> Holmlund, H. and K. Sund (2006): "Is the Gender Gap in School Performance Affected by the Sex of the Teacher?" December 11, 2006 Forthcoming in *Labour Economics*: [http://www.ne.su.se/research/seminars/pdf/070313\\_2.pdf](http://www.ne.su.se/research/seminars/pdf/070313_2.pdf).

A Canadian survey found that boys with reading difficulties reacted more positively to female teachers than male ones.<sup>125</sup> The boys in grades 3 and 4 in this survey developed a more positive self-image as readers when helped by women. The researchers conducting the survey concluded that the boys' reading difficulties probably had nothing to do with the low percentage of male teachers.

The NOVA report<sup>126</sup> concludes that based on the research currently available it is difficult to draw definite conclusions about how the teachers' gender affects the learning processes of the pupils. The studies show varying results. There is much to indicate that there are complex phenomena, and that in any event the teacher's pedagogical and academic qualifications are more important than his or her gender.<sup>127</sup>

However, this does not mean that it is not important to recruit more men to take teacher education and work in schools. As, among other things, the NOVA report shows, we still know too little about the significance of male and female teachers in school to draw any certain conclusions. Men and women are in the process of redefining their public and private roles. Women are generally on their way out of the private sphere and into the public sphere, while men to a larger degree than before are involving themselves in the private sphere. Society is developing a more equal distribution between men and women as regards paid work and domestic care, and perhaps children and young people more than ever need both male and female role models.

We have little concrete knowledge as to why men do not apply to teacher education and work as teachers, especially at primary and lower secondary levels. If we look back at the history of Norwegian society, these have been professions dominated by men, also at lower levels. Teacher salaries today are also competitive compared to more male-dominated professions such as for example the police. In other words, it is important to find out more about why men do not apply to education and work in primary and lower secondary school levels.

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<sup>125</sup> Sokal, L. (2007): "Good-bye, Mr Chips. Male Teacher Shortages and Boys' Reading Achievement". In: *Sex Roles* 56: 651–659.

<sup>126</sup> Bakken, A. et al. 4/2008

<sup>127</sup> e.g. Myrberg, E. (2007): "The effect of formal teacher education on reading achievement of 3rd-grade students in public and independent schools in Sweden". In: *Educational Studies* 33:2: 145–162.

## 6 MAIN ACTORS

The Action Plan will be followed up by the national authorities, the county governors, kindergarten and school owners, municipalities as kindergarten authorities, and kindergartens, schools and training establishments in accordance with the existing division of responsibilities. To achieve the objectives of the Action Plan kindergartens and basic education must collaborate with parents/guardians. The teacher education institutions are also important actors when it comes to following up the Action Plan. Other major collaboration partners are the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) and various trade and professional and industrial bodies.

The challenge is to make the different main actors aware of their responsibilities and tasks connected with work for greater equality between the sexes and facilitate necessary competence enhancement and binding collaboration.

### *The Ministry of Education and Research*

- decides overall objectives and national priorities for gender equality work in the kindergarten and education sector
- contributes special resources that are earmarked for following up the Action Plan in kindergartens and basic education
- is responsible for allocating funds to the county governors for the kindergarten sector

### *The Directorate for Education and Training*

- follows up and coordinates work on the Action Plan on the basis of annual national budgets and allocations
- is to support the county governors in their regional work for equality in kindergartens and basic education
- is to take part in collaboration forums with other directorates and actors responsible for children and young people, to help achieve an improved coordination of equality measures in the kindergarten and basic education sector
- is to initiate and follow up research and evaluations in this area and provide information and spread the results of research and surveys to the kindergarten and basic education sectors and others. One of the Directorate's duties is also to follow up Nordic and other international collaboration in this field

### *The County Governor*

- is a regional connecting link between national and local level and is to follow up the Action Plan on the basis of the annual national budgets and official duties
- is also to act as a driving force and stimulate the implementation of the plan through collaboration with the municipalities as kindergarten authority, kindergarten owners, school owners, universities, university colleges and other professional communities. This should stimulate cross-sectoral collaboration leading to better improved coordination of measures promoting gender equality in kindergartens and basic education
- allocates national funds for regional and local efforts in the kindergarten sector in accordance with the objectives of the Action Plan and in collaboration with the Directorate

for Education and Training. The Ministry effectuates supervision and control through the county governors in accordance with the Kindergarten Act and the Education Act

### *The Municipalities*

- should be encouraged to anchor the Action Plan in their own guidelines and objectives and follow up work on the Action Plan in the kindergartens, schools and training establishments
- should evaluate whether the kindergartens, schools and training establishments have the necessary competence for the gender equality work and facilitate competence enhancement and continuing education and training. Cross-sectoral efforts and local collaboration in this area are also part of the municipalities' responsibilities
- are as kindergarten authorities and kindergarten owners encouraged to include the target of 20 per cent men in their policy to ensure increased quality in kindergartens, in their HR policy and as a municipal leadership task
- are encouraged to ensure that the kindergartens have competence in how to recruit and keep men in kindergarten and are encouraged to adapt conditions so that male employees remain in the kindergarten, by offering competence enhancement and continuing education and training

### *Kindergartens, schools and training establishments*

- are encouraged to implement objectives and measures in the Action Plan of the individual kindergarten/school/training establishment's plans and guidelines as well as in their daily work
- are to follow up their legally imposed responsibility for gender equality in their daily activities, through their planning, organisation, working methods, recruitment, various collaboration bodies and contact with parents/guardians
- are to facilitate competence enhancement in gender equality among the employees and facilitate more male employees in kindergartens and schools

### *Universities and university colleges*

- are responsible for collaborating with the Ministry of Education and Research, the Directorate for Education and Training, the county governors, the municipalities and kindergarten owners and to contribute to increased interaction with the practical field on the basis of research-based knowledge. The academic staff should have the necessary academic competence and insight into equality between girls and boys and the challenges this poses for kindergartens, primary and lower secondary schools, and upper secondary education and training
- should contribute to research-based knowledge in this field and ensure the dissemination of results of research and development work to the kindergartens, schools, training establishments and other actors
- are to work to recruit more men to the teacher education programmes and adapt conditions so that there is less drop-out by men from the teacher education programmes

## 7 MEASURES

### *Main objective 1*

*The learning environment in kindergartens and basic education shall promote equality between boys and girls*

- In accordance with the Framework Plan for Kindergartens, the curricula for basic education and the Education Act, kindergartens and schools must integrate gender equality in their everyday activities.
- Gender equality competence in kindergartens and basic education shall be increased.
- The teacher education programmes shall place more emphasis on factors that are conducive to increased equality between the sexes.
- Competence in kindergartens and basic education about bullying because of gender and sexual identity shall be increased.

### *Measure 1.1 Guidance and dissemination of knowledge*

#### **Action:**

The final report from “Action Plan for Gender Equality in Kindergartens 2004–2007” provides guidance for gender equality efforts and is to be disseminated in the kindergarten sector.

Information material and handbooks will be made, containing good examples of how kindergartens and basic education can work with gender equality in all subject areas in accordance with the Framework Plan for Kindergartens, the curricula for basic education and the Education Act, in their planning, documentation and evaluation. Annual national and/or regional experience conferences will be held.

#### **Responsibility:**

The Directorate for Education and Training, the Ministry of Education and Research

#### **Timeframe:**

2008–2010

### *Measure 1.2 Research and the spreading of research results*

#### **Action:**

On the basis of existing programmes for kindergarten and educational research, and in a dialogue with universities and university colleges, proposals will be presented to strengthen research efforts in this field as well as the spreading of research results to kindergartens and basic education. The status for gender equality efforts in kindergartens and schools is to be surveyed in 2008 so as to form a basis for an evaluation of developments at a later date.

Research and development projects that have been implemented in connection with the “Action Plan for Gender Equality in Kindergartens” are to be continued and disseminated to the sector. The measure must be considered in conjunction with measure 1.3.

#### **Responsibility:**

The Ministry of Education and Research

**Timeframe:**  
2008–2010

***Measure 1.3 Strengthening knowledge about equality between the sexes in teacher education programmes***

***Action:***

National education authorities shall enter into dialogue with the universities and university colleges about how the teacher education programmes can anchor the gender equality perspective in the courses. The project called “Gender Loops” finishes in the autumn of 2008. Among other things, based on this project a resource handbook for gender equality will be made for use in pre-school teacher education. This measure must be considered in conjunction with measure 1.2 and measure 3.6 under main objective 3.

***Responsibility:***

The Ministry of Education and Research, the Directorate for Education and Training, the universities and university colleges

**Timeframe:**  
2008–2010

***Measure 1.4 Information and guidance about gender-related bullying and sexual harassment***

***Action:***

The topic bullying/harassment on the basis of gender and sexual identity will be given more emphasis in the revision of resource material about relationships and sexuality, as well as the brochures for pupils and parents issued in connection with the Knowledge Promotion. This work will be followed up in the “Strategy for the Learning Environment in Primary and Secondary Education and Training 2005–08” and “Manifesto against Bullying 2006–2008”.

***Responsibility:***

Directorate for Education and Training, the Norwegian Directorate of Health

**Timeframe:**  
2008–2010

***Measure 1.5 Surveys into gender-related bullying and sexual harassment***

***Action:***

Work is currently being done to change the regulations so that questions about bullying and sexual identity can in the future be included in the Pupil Survey.

Furthermore, as of the spring of 2008 the Centre for Behavioural Research will include questions about gender-related bullying in its national sample survey, which is carried out every fourth year. This work will be followed up by “Strategy for the Learning Environment in Primary and Secondary Education and Training 2005–08” and “Manifesto against Bullying 2006–2008”.

***Responsibility:***

Directorate for Education and Training, the Centre for Behavioural Research

**Timeframe:**  
2008–2010

***Measure 1.6 Body, sexuality and setting boundaries during school-leaving celebrations***

***Action:***

Support the School Leavers' Organisational Committee (ROK) in organising information plans for the school leaving cohorts of 2008 and 2009, concerning the setting of boundaries, issues concerning the body and sexuality during the period of school-leaving celebrations. This work is followed up among other things in the "Strategy for the Learning Environment in Primary and Secondary Education and Training 2005–08".

***Responsibility:***

The Directorate for Education and Training

**Timeframe:**  
2008–2009

***Main objective 2***

***A better gender balance when it comes to choice of education and profession – with special focus on vocational education and training and the recruitment of girls to sciences***

- Active use of gender perspective in the school educational and vocational counselling is to be increased.

***Measure 2.1 Survey of the gender equality perspective in educational and vocational counselling***

***Action:***

The attitudes of the educational and vocational counsellors to gender roles and untraditional choices of education and vocation are to be surveyed.

***Responsibility:***

The Directorate for Education and Training

**Timeframe:**  
2008–2009

***Measure 2.2 Guidance about conscious educational choices***

***Action:***

Based on the project called "Conscious Educational Choices (1996–2000)" guidance material for gender conscious educational choices is to be prepared, designed for at basic education. The target groups are teachers and educational and vocational counsellors, as well as universities and university colleges offering continuing and supplementary training courses for educational and vocational counsellors.

Educational and vocational counselling in schools is to help ensure that pupils choose their education and future vocation without regard to traditional gender roles.

**Responsibility:**

The Directorate for Education and Training

**Timeframe:**

2008–2009

**Measure 2.3 Information to pupils and parents about conscious educational choices****Action:**

Based on the project called “Conscious Educational Choices (1996-2000)” and the survey of the gender equality perspective in educational and vocational counselling (measure 2.1) information is to be prepared designed for pupils and parents, among others.

**Responsibility:**

The Directorate for Education and Training

**Timeframe:**

2008–2009

**Measure 2.4 Project Girls and Sciences****Action:**

A 3-year project about girls and sciences is to be started, which is to build on the project called “Minerva”, including its website and the regional network. Some relevant topics for the project will be the effect of various mentor schemes, the subjects’ “image” from a girl/boy’s perspective, and the dissemination of measures that have been deemed successful. The measure will also be followed up in the “Strategic Plan to Strengthen the Sciences 2006-2009”.

**Responsibility:**

Directorate for Education and Training, the Ministry of Education and Research

**Timeframe:**

2008–2010

**Measure 2.5 Research into girls’ attitudes to education in the sciences****Action:**

Commission a research institution to examine and supplement existing research into girls’ identity formation, culture for and attitudes towards taking an education in sciences. The measure is to be considered in conjunction with “Strategic Plan to Strengthen the Sciences 2006–2009”.

**Responsibility:**

The Directorate for Education and Training

**Timeframe:**

2008–2010



## ***Measure 2.6 RENATE***

### ***Action:***

In collaboration with working life and the educational institutions the Centre is to help strengthen the position of mathematics, sciences and technology (the MST subjects) in society. This work is to place emphasis on measures that improve the recruitment to MST subjects both in the short-term and the long run. The Centre is to concentrate especially on increasing the proportion of women within MST-studies and vocations. Their work will be followed up by the “Strategic Plan to Strengthen the Sciences 2006-2009”.

### ***Responsibility:***

The Ministry of Education and Research

### ***Timeframe:***

2008–2010

## ***Measure 2.7 A test bed study <sup>128</sup> of gender divides in the use of digital tools during school tests***

### ***Action:***

A two-year test bed study of gender divides when using digital tools during school tests will be carried out. The main objective of the study is to disclose, document and explain any gender divides in results when using digital tools. The study may for example be carried out by organising a series of tests as simulations of real tests, accompanied by observation, interviews and analyses of the pupils taking part in the study.

### ***Responsibility:***

The Ministry of Education and Research, the Directorate for Education and Training

### ***Timeframe:***

2008–2009

## ***Measure 2.8 Research-based survey of the use of digital tools during centrally set tests in schools***

### ***Action:***

There is to be a research-based survey about gender-divides in the use of digital tools during centrally set tests. The main objective of the study is to uncover, document and explain any gender divides in results when using digital tools during centrally set tests.

The survey is to take as its starting point available information from examinations using ICT, electronically set national tests and the electronic reading test in PISA.

### ***Responsibility:***

The Directorate for Education and Training

### ***Timeframe:***

2008–2010

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<sup>128</sup> A test bed is typically a platform for testing hypotheses, theories, new technology, etc.

### ***Measure 2.9 Gender and ICT in an international context***

#### ***Action:***

In the spring of 2008 Norway will host an international expert conference on gender and ICT. The conference is part of the OECD study “New Millennium Learners”, to be carried out in 2008 – 2009. The aim of this conference is to update the knowledge base on gender divides in the use of digital technologies and the consequences this has for the education system, primarily in basic education, as well as for the recruitment to higher education. It is also important to analyse the reasons for observed and documented gender divides, and discuss which strategies and measures can be implemented to reduce gender divides in the use of digital technologies. The work is to be followed up through the Ministry’s international ICT efforts.

#### ***Responsibility:***

The Ministry of Education and Research

#### ***Timeframe:***

2008

#### ***Main objective 3***

##### ***A better gender balance among members of staff in kindergartens and basic education***

- Increase the percentage of men in kindergartens to 20 per cent by 2010
- Increase the percentage of male teachers in primary and lower secondary education
- Increase the percentage of male students in teacher education

### ***Measure 3.1 Gender balance as a quality objective***

#### ***Action:***

The Directorate for Education and Training will, in collaboration with the county governors, KS, the Union of Education Norway and other relevant actors, work to ensure that more municipalities and school and kindergarten owners decide to include a more equal gender balance in kindergartens and basic education as a quality objective in their plans, steering documents and HR strategies. Public and private kindergarten and school owners must be given information about the national objective and how they can work in order to achieve it.

#### ***Responsibility:***

Directorate for Education and Training, county governors, KS

#### ***Timeframe:***

2008–2010

### ***Measure 3.2 Guidance to kindergartens and schools about the recruitment of men***

#### ***Action:***

Kindergartens and schools are to be encouraged to use the Regulation to the Gender Equality Act “About Affirmative Action in Favour of Men in Connection with the Education and Care of Children” (Q-07/98) when making appointments at all levels where the proportion of male employees is low.

The need for more information and guidance for kindergartens, schools and owners is to be followed up and assessed. In connection with the "Action Plan for Gender Equality in Kindergartens 2004-2007" information material has been made for the kindergarten sector, and experiences are to be disseminated throughout the sector. The website mibnett.no has acted as a source of information for work concerning men in kindergartens. Consideration is being given to whether to create a website that deals with men in kindergartens and schools.

***Responsibility:***

The Ministry of Education and Research, the Directorate for Education and Training

***Timeframe:***

2008–2010

***Measure 3.3 Demonstration kindergartens***

***Action:***

Kindergartens that have achieved the target of 20 per cent men and that have worked actively to achieve it, may apply for national funds as demonstration kindergartens. The kindergarten binds itself to inform and guide other kindergartens about how to recruit and keep men in kindergartens and to develop their own activities further.

***Responsibility:***

The Ministry of Education and Research, the Directorate for Education and Training

***Timeframe:***

2008–2010

***Measure 3.4 Recruitment teams***

***Action:***

In collaboration with the county governors recruitment teams for men in kindergartens will be established. It is an objective to have one team in each county. These teams are to do out-reach recruitment work and market kindergartens as workplaces for men, for example directed towards pupils in basic education, school owners, at educational fairs, towards the Labour and Welfare Services and other places where young men meet. The teams are to base their activities on the work done by the MIB networks in connection with the "Action Plan for Gender Equality in Kindergartens 2004–2007" and collaborate with the county governors when it comes to the kindergarten sector.

***Responsibility:***

The Ministry of Education and Research

***Timeframe:***

2008–2010

### ***Measure 3.5 Following up the teacher evaluations***

#### ***Action:***

The gender equality perspective in the follow-up to the evaluation of the pre-school teacher education programmes and in the “Strategy for the Recruitment of Pre-school Teachers 2008-2011” shall be followed up and assessed.

#### ***Responsibility:***

The Ministry of Education and Research

#### ***Timeframe:***

2008–2010

### ***Measure 3.6 Recruitment of men to teacher education programmes***

#### ***Action:***

The universities and university colleges must make efforts to achieve a better gender balance among the teacher education students. The objective is to find measures that can be implemented in the teacher education programmes in order to recruit and keep more men in the programmes. The Ministry will establish a grant pot for the three pre-school teacher education institutions that have the largest increase in the number of male candidates finishing the course. Measure 3.6 must be seen in conjunction with measures 1.2, 3.5 and 3.8.

#### ***Responsibility:***

The Ministry of Education and Research, the universities and university colleges

#### ***Timeframe:***

2008–2010

### ***Measure 3.7 Local efforts for gender equality in kindergartens***

#### ***Action:***

The county governors will be allocated funds that are earmarked for local efforts for gender equality in kindergartens. On the basis of local needs these funds are to be spent on spreading information and good practices to relevant target groups linked to the recruitment of men to jobs in kindergartens and as a support to local development work linked to practical experience. The county governors are to prioritise efforts to get more men into kindergartens. The efforts must be seen in conjunction with measures 3.1, 3.2 and 3.4.

#### ***Responsibility:***

The Ministry of Education and Research

#### ***Timeframe:***

2008–2010

***Measure 3.8 Prize for efforts to increase the proportion of men working in kindergartens***

***Action:***

In order to get more men into kindergartens the Ministry of Education and Research has allocated funds for a gender equality prize for one kindergarten and one municipality. The measure is to be seen in conjunction with measure 3.6.

***Responsibility:***

The Ministry of Education and Research

***Timeframe:***

2008–2010

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