

I Don't Know How I Got Here and I Don't Know How to Get out of It: Understanding Male Pre-service Early Child Education Teachers' Construction of Professional Identity

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Abstract : Unlike other professional sectors, a great deal of studies has addressed the overwhelming gender disparity phenomena in the early childhood education (ECE) workforce, which is acknowledged for the dominance of women over men teachers. The irony of ECE being a gendered working environment is not only observed in societies that are ruled by gender roles but also in Western countries that claim to margin the gender gap in several professions. The participation of male teachers in ECE across most countries ranged from 1% to 3% of the total preschool or kindergarten teachers. When it comes to a dynamic Chinese society tempered with a deep-rooted tradition and cultural ideology, the ECE has no less place for males, and males have a low place for ECE. According to the Ministry of Education of China (2020), there are over 5 million kindergarten teachers and staff members, while only 2.3% are accounted for male teachers. The traditional gender-based discourse asserts that giving care and guidance for young children related to nurturing 'mothering' labels the profession in ECE as women's work derived from originated from their 'naturalness.' Although a large volume of evidence sheds light on the cause for low male teachers, the perception of parents, female teachers working with male teachers, and the experience of male teachers working in ECE, less is known and understood before being a teacher. Hence, this study argues that the promotion of the involvement of male teachers in light of their masculinity identity asset in the children's learning environment is comprehended to understand the construction of male student teachers' (preservice) professional identity during early childhood teacher training that allows obtaining substantial evidence that provides a feasible and robust implication in the preparation of competent and professional male preschool teachers that understand, cherish, and bring harmony in Chinese ECE through professionalism socialization with the stakeholders. This study intended to reveal male ECE preservice teachers' knowledge of their professional identity, i.e., how they perceive themselves as a teacher and what factors agents these perceptions towards their professional identity.

Keywords : male teachers, Early Childhood Education (ECE), self-identity, perception of stakeholders

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