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**Gender-related challenges in European education systems–  
European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) 2016**

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**Country Report for *Denmark***  
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## FOREWORD

This Report is one of the 28 Country Reports that were drafted within the EIGE Study “Gender-related challenges in European education systems– EIGE/2016/OPER/08”.

The Country Reports refer to the **scope** of the education system that range from primary, secondary, post-secondary and tertiary education to initial and continuing vocational education training (VET), non-compulsory and non-formal learning. Pre-primary/ECEC is not considered.

Country Reports main aim is that of identifying, presenting and analyzing the **main challenges** of national education policies and systems with specific reference to the gender-related challenges and gaps. This means that the **reports necessarily do not cover all the possible data and information on the wide topic of gender in education and training field**. At the same time, Country Reports aim to identify some effective approaches developed at national level.

The Country Reports have been drafted on the basis of the **country expert’s expertise** in the field of gender and education, via **desk research** and **literature review** on academic, policy, legislative and any other relevant documents. Furthermore, a wide consultation process made of **interviews** and engagement of key stakeholders, in each Member State, was carried out, in order to learn more and better about gender related challenges and existing policies. The process of editing, revision and validation has followed and it has been implemented via national and international consultation meetings as well as via the further assessment and review provided by senior researchers and key stakeholders.

Without ignoring the different perspective of gender issues in education, the project and the country reports are focused and draw on and discuss research and data where **gender** is conceptualized in **binary terms** and provides indicators of, and discussions about the ways in which gender (defined as male or female) impacts education.

## MAIN GENDER-RELATED POLICY CHALLENGES

The main gender-related challenges identified and discussed in this report are:

- Gender stereotypes and norms in culture in general, including the education system
- Teacher’s different and stereotypical expectations to girls and boys performances, desires, achievements, learning methods
- More girls aren’t thriving at school and more boys underperform, are more likely to drop out and are overrepresented in the segregated special educational programmes
- Gender-segregated and gender stereotypical choice of study programme
- Gender-segregated and gender stereotypical labour marked

Before these issues are discussed some context and a general overview of key aspects of the gender and education landscape in Denmark are provided.

### Context and overview

The structure of the Danish system of education is, that children start mandatory preschool in August the year they turn six. The primary school system runs from class 0 to 9, which means that Denmark has ten years of compulsory school attendance. The 10th grade is an offer for students who have fulfilled the teaching requirement. After primary school the Danish education system offers:

1. **Secondary Education:** There are several upper secondary education programmes. E.g. High school, hf., hhx. or htx. These educations can all be started right after primary school, and takes two to three years. They give access to further education.

2. **Vocational Training (EDD):** There are many different vocational programmes, which are divided by industry and can all start after primary school. Vocational training lasts between 1½ - 5½ years. The content of these trainings is both school and internship.
3. **Short Higher Education (KVV):** Short-term higher education is a full-time study. They usually last for 2 years, but can last longer. Admission is a secondary education, however, there may be specific admission requirements in the form of passed subjects at certain levels. The exams combine theoretical knowledge with practical experience.
4. **Middle Higher Education (MVU):** Medium-term higher education is a full-time study. They typically last 3 - 4½ years, and are often targeted at a particular profession or job function. In many of the programmes there is an integrated internship of ½ - 1 year. Admission requirements are at least a secondary education, although there may be specific admission requirements in the form of passed subjects at certain levels.
5. **Long Higher Education (LVU):** Long-term higher education is a full-time study, typically 3 - 6 years. It is theoretical educations that have an analytical and scientific focus. Basically, the education consists of a three-year bachelor degree, followed by a two-year graduate degree. Admission requirements are a secondary education, although there may be specific admission requirements in the form of passed subjects at certain levels.
6. **Ph.D./business-Ph.D.:** A PhD degree is a three-year research possession on top of a long higher education (LVU). It can be taken at universities, business schools or other higher education institutions. It is also possible to be affiliated with a private company as a business PhD, where a thesis is prepared within the company's area of interest.

Parallel to the ordinary educational system is adult education system, which makes it possible to educate and empower oneself throughout ones life. The adult education system corresponds to the education level in the ordinary education system, but is aimed at adults who are at least 18 years old. There is a large variety e.g. Master degree, Diploma, Labour Marked education (AMU), Integration training (IGU) and dyslexia education (OBU).<sup>1</sup>

## GENDERED CULTURAL AND SOCIOECONOMIC BACKGROUND AND DISCOURSES

### Gender aspects of immigration and education

Despite the fact that all citizens of Denmark formally have access to the same educational options, every fifth Dane in their mid-20s has not completed an education beyond primary school.<sup>2</sup> Studies indicate that more than 3/4 of these people come from unskilled or skilled homes, while only 3% has an academic family background. Studies confirm and emphasize a well-known pattern; that the social heritage still has a major influence on children's and young people's educational capability. Furthermore studies show, that regardless of social background, girls manage significantly better than boys; 41% boys of unskilled parents do not have an education higher than primary school, while it is only 34% girls of unskilled parents who have not got an education. The difference between boys and girls is significant regardless of the parents' educational level; e.g. looking at children of parents with a long higher education, 9% of boys do not complete an education after primary school, while it is just 4% of girls. The proportion of boys without education is twice as high as the proportion of girls without education when the parents have a long higher education.

Nonetheless, equality of opportunity (*Chanceligheden*<sup>3</sup>) has improved in Denmark: in 2010, the chance of a child from a highly educated family getting a Master's degree compared to a child from a less-educated family was three times higher instead of four times as before<sup>4</sup>. On this matter Dorthe Staunæs, professor in social psychology and diversity at the Department of Education, Aarhus University, points out, that gender-related challenges interact with other social categories such as ethnicity, class etc., which also other studies shows<sup>5</sup>. Looking at these studies it is indicated, that also ethnicity and/or immigrant background plays a role in relation to young people's educational chances; the research paper 'The Road of Foreigner through the Education System'<sup>6</sup> shows, that about twice as many with another ethnical background than Danish fall out of

education programmes. It is most significant in vocational educations, where about 60% of youngsters with immigrant background drop out.<sup>7</sup> Similar trends are pointed out by another study, which demonstrates that young new Danes are at greater risk of not getting an education than ethnic Danes; there is 40% boys with an immigrant background who do not complete a youth education and approximately 30% girls. These numbers are somewhat higher than the approximately 18%, generally speaking, of youths in Denmark who does not complete an education.<sup>8</sup> All of the mentioned studies show, that children who are socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or have an immigrant background do not have the same access to higher education as other children.

### **Gender and early school leaving and drop out phenomena**

In Denmark, more females than males complete secondary education, and people of an immigrant background are more likely to finish with a limited education compared to the native-Danish majority; The overall drop-out rate in secondary education is 38-48% for ethnic minority men and 26-36% ethnic minority women.<sup>9</sup> In primary school, there are large fluctuations in boys' performance – boys are clustered at the top and bottom – whereas girls' performances are more evenly spread.<sup>10</sup> More boys than girls drop out from the education system in Denmark, to some extent as a result of structural barriers. In relation to this Inge Henningsen, Senior Researcher at Copenhagen University and Chairwoman at the Association for Gender Research, states, that more men than women start vocational education, which have high drop-out rates because of the lack of internships. So when boys are particularly in risk of dropping out, it is also based on the fact that the educational institutions for many of the major so-called 'female educations' are responsible for internship contracts, while the boys are often left to find the internship themselves. From an equality perspective one of the problems is therefore, that the internship system makes it difficult for especially boys with ethnic minority background to complete their educations, because they statistically are deselected when it comes to signing internship contracts.<sup>11</sup> In addition to this, it is more than twice as difficult for people with immigrant background and descendants to get an internship as for students of Danish origin. The latest statistics show, that it can be expected that there are almost 6 internship-seeking students with immigrant background every time an internship is agreed. For ethnic Danes, the ratio is 2.5 applications for each place.<sup>12</sup>

Finally studies show, that while there is no big difference between educations and trainings among boys and girls from a long-educated family background, there is a significant gender difference among young people from families without tradition of education; namely that far more girls than boys apply for upper secondary education.<sup>13</sup> So on one hand, there has been a significant offset in gender differences when looking at the vertical dimension of the education system, as men are now on the way to become a minority at each level of education. But if you look inverted to the horizontal dimension (women and men's share of students in subjects and courses of education) there are still significant gender differences; we still have strongly women-dominated and male-dominated subjects.<sup>14</sup> All mentioned studies indicate that the gender perspective has an impact on young people's educational chances, although social background seems to be an even more important player than gender.<sup>15</sup>

### **Gender and different attainments and expectations in education and training**

Boys are overrepresented in the segregated special educational programmes (6,1% boys, 2,4% girls are receiving special education in primary school compared to the total amount of boys and girls in primary school),<sup>16</sup> and girls are struggling, more than boys with stress and failure to thrive. 10% of all boys start later in school in relative to girls, and 61% of the students who has to take class 0 again are boys. 4% more girls than boys are part of the general education (in contrast to segregated educational programmes). More girls than boys have started a youth education 15 months after they have finished 9th grade. 67% of the boys thrive socially while only 57% of girls apply.<sup>17</sup> In relation to this Mette Lykke Nielsen, youth researcher at the Department of Learning and Philosophy at Aalborg University, notes that one of the problems is, that statistics often are misleading, and contribute to the idea of 'loser boys' and 'winner girls', when the real problems are the structural conditions within the education system that contribute to a huge gender split because

teachers treat girls and boys differently.<sup>18</sup> In accordance with the Danish study 'Boys and Girls in Youth Education' there are great cultural, complex discourses at stake, and gender-differences must be seen in addition to in- and exclusion processes and group dynamics.<sup>19</sup> Studies also show, that gender-differences are built on different and binary expectations, norms and recognisability of perceptions of gender, and that gender has an important impact on which students are being acknowledged and included.<sup>20</sup>

So cultural gender norms and expectations are contributing to the exclusion of certain students. In addition to this Jytte Nielsen, research librarian at the National Knowledge Centre of Gender, Equality and Ethnicity (KVINFO) explains, that more girls than boys feel like they *have to* go to high school, because virtually all so-called 'female sectors' such as nurse, teacher, pedagogue etc. require a baccalaureate, whereas 'male sectors' at same level such as bricklayer, carpenter, blacksmith etc. are completed at the technical schools where a baccalaureate is not needed.<sup>21</sup> A study from 2016 shows that the horizontal gender-segregation occurs because women and men are working in different sectors, industries and functions; almost 2/3 employees in the private sector are men today, whereas 7/10 of employees in the public sector are women (many of whom work part-time). Out of the approx. 500,000 employees in the municipalities 76% are women, of whom only 46% work full time. The same pattern applies to the different regions of Denmark.<sup>22</sup> In the course of Denmark's 2015 presidency of the Nordic Council, an initiative was launched to map gender-segregated educational choices (Focus on girls' studies in science, technology, engineering and maths fields – STEM).<sup>23</sup> This research highlighted challenges in the recruitment and retention of women in STEM subjects. A handbook of practical examples and recommendations to stakeholders (in business, institutions of higher education and primary schools) identified four particular challenges as being 1) girls'/women's confidence/ or lack of confidence in their abilities in science and technology subjects, 2) teachers' encouragement and expectations, 3) parental attitudes and 4) social reinforcement of gender roles and expectations. In addition the material points out, that there is a difference in the extent to which young women and men have confidence in whether they can do well in science and technology subject. As young students' interests are often influenced by how they perceive their own abilities, much of the reason for the gender-segregated choices of study programme is found in this perception. Another relevant issue is, that teachers expectations and encouragement influence the young students, and that teachers are more likely to expect boys to be interested in science subjects, whereas girls are expected to be interested in for instance linguistics. Therefore teachers do not as much encourage girls to study science.<sup>24</sup> Despite the fact, that more and more women in Denmark are completing master's degrees and Ph.Ds. in many different academic fields the proportion of female professors in Danish research institutes is lower than in other industrialised countries; in 2010 Denmark had just 15% female professors.<sup>25,26</sup>

### Gender-segregation in study fields/career choices and consequences on the labour market

Denmark has a very gender-segregated education system; 4 out of 10 choose an education, where more than 75% are either female or male. There is still only 1% female at the engineer programmes and 5% male in the nursing programmes. Research from Roskilde University shows, that only 35% of the girls and 16% of the boys after elementary school have considered looking for programmes or jobs that are unconventional in relation to their gender.<sup>27</sup> Dennis Kristensen, President of the Trade Union (FOA) argues that the gender-segregated labour market reinforces the idea that caring subjects are 'womanly' subjects, which is why it is challenging to recruit men to health and social care.<sup>28</sup> For instance just 3.5% of Danish nurses are male – prompting a report by think-tank Knowledge about Men (VM) that included several recommendations on how to recruit men to the field.<sup>29</sup> The gender-segregation in the Danish labour market has been repeatedly emphasized as one of the main reasons for the unequal pay between women and men in the labour market; which is approximately 17%.<sup>30</sup> When young students are faced with the question if men and women **can do** the same, 73.9% of women and 62.2% of men respond yes. An even greater percentage is corroborating on the question of whether women and men **can be** the same - 84.5% of women and 74.9% of men say yes.<sup>31</sup> This study also shows, that gender is a dimension, which young people consider when choosing study programme – whether they choose a traditional or untraditional field of work according to their own gender identity.<sup>32</sup> Although not everyone

believes that women and men are equal in terms of skills and opportunities, the answers indicate that a majority of the young people - and especially the young women - consider their opportunities and potentials to be equally good.

The study 'Boys and Girls in Youth Educations' shows some distinct gender differences when it comes to student's future plans. Girls generally experience education as more necessary than boys do in terms of coping with the labour market. More girls have more detailed education plans that extend further in the future and at the same time they experience more limitations and risks. Among other things requires the programmes that girls seek higher average and they feel more vulnerable to harassment and unemployment.<sup>33</sup> The study points to a paradox that deals with the fact, that boys generally speaking address education with a greater degree of relaxation and less worry than girls. As unfolded below, boys do have the possibility to mirror themselves in men doing good in labourmarket without or with less education. On one side this makes boys more calm and somehow robust in addition to school but at the same time the boys relaxed approach means that they to some extent underperform, have a harder time completing and using their educations. Neither the boys' relaxed approach nor the concerns of the girls so-called overperforming are solely good and show us, that the education system has too little focus on, how cultural expectations for girls and boys affect students training practices.<sup>34</sup> With the ambition of overcoming these gender-related challenges Signe Tychsen Philip, Head of the Office for Commerce and Adult Education at the Ministry of Children, Education and Gender Equality, wishes to ensure that the social culture of vocational education does not deter students of any gender, and she encourages employers to hire all genders and ethnicities, through outreaching activities by guidance counsellors.<sup>35</sup>

All of the above mentioned gender-related issues facilitate segregation, limit equal access to education and contribute to an inflexible labour market and to the pay gap between women and men. For example, women with a medium-long education earn 27% less than men with the same level of education, and women with vocational training earn 19% less than their male peers.<sup>36</sup> In addition Erik Steppat, board member of BUPL (a trade union for pedagogues) points out, that there are few male pedagogues, but at the same time a high representation of men in management positions at day-care institutions<sup>37</sup>; 84% of all staff at day-care institutions – pedagogues and leaders – are women, but at the same time men hold 25% of management positions.<sup>38</sup> This tells us, that we in Denmark still has some power-related structural challenges that puts up barriers for women and privileges to men, which is why Institute for Human Rights (IMR) among others recommends 'gender mainstreaming'<sup>39</sup> as an equality tool to help politicians and administrators in all areas to discover and solve gender issues that may be embedded in society's traditions, norms, rules and administration. It helps to develop gender equality as a policy area by supporting the objective, fairness and quality of society's gender equality efforts.<sup>40</sup>

The significant gender gap in early-childhood care is not a uniquely Danish challenge but rather a global concern due to obvious circumstances of historically patriarchal societies. Child-care accounts for an increasingly sizeable sector of the labour market, which self-fulfilling assumptions about gender roles prevent men from accessing.<sup>41</sup> A similarly gendered picture can be found across European, North American and Australian studies of early-childhood services. A study of attitudes to male early-childhood workers reveals one of suspicion, particularly in the Anglo-American research.<sup>42</sup> As a consequence of traditional and stereotypical gender perceptions and despite the Equality Act, which is meant to prevent discrimination, many day-care institutions have special rules for governing male staff, such as prohibiting their changing nappies or helping children to the toilet alone.<sup>43</sup> In Denmark, 12% of day-care institutions have specific rules/restrictions for male educators.<sup>44</sup>

The Institute for Human Rights implemented the project 'Guides show the way: gender mainstreaming in education and career guidance' in 2013<sup>45</sup>, which shows us, that there is a clear link between gender-segregated education and that of the labour market. It is stated, that one of the problems is that we teach and expect differently of boys and girls, also in their choice of education.

In 2016 the Minister of Children, Education and Equality formed a committee of organisations and experts to investigate gender-related challenges in the Danish education system.<sup>46</sup> The committee

consists of five subcommittees on day-care, primary school, educational guidance, secondary school and vocational training. The research includes surveys of grades, dropout rates and gender-segregated educational choices. The committee points out that some boys lag behind academically in transition from day-care to primary school and from primary school to secondary education some girls thrive worse than boys, and both boys and girls make gender-stereotyped educational choices.<sup>47</sup> The job of the committee was to identify and describe gender-related challenges in the education system in Denmark, in order to 1) specify a limited number of clearly defined goals on how to meet gender-related challenges, 2) prepare a detailed description of the challenges in each educational field and 3) propose initiatives to support the goals specified.<sup>48</sup>

The key recommendations in the report are, among other things, the need of implementing research-based knowledge about gender and other corresponding categories into educational practices, and that greater awareness of gender, gender equality and gender-stereotypical expectations are needed. The recommendations seek to contribute to promote well-being for children/students and create equal opportunities in primary and lower secondary education, provide a more balanced gender-distribution on education and results. The report attaches great importance to the fact that all girls and boys should be able to be who they are regardless of gender, and have the freedom to choose educational direction according to own interests, competencies and motivation. Breaking down gender stereotypes and focusing on research-based knowledge about gender and diversity, the education system can create the best framework for this.<sup>49</sup>

### **Teachers awareness and competences on gender and gender equality**

Schools today are, to a large extent, based on learning goals called 'Fælles mål' (meaning common goals). 'Fælles mål' are therefore clarified and simplified so that students' learning outcomes are clarified at the center, and the 'Fælles mål' are binding national goals for what the individual student should learn in the subjects of the school. The simplified common objectives are formulated as learning objectives, and the teaching should focus on the students' learning outcomes. In relation to gender awareness, teachers are bound to address 'Health, Sexual education and Family education' at all levels. The aim is, that pupils learn to reflect upon "gender, body and sexuality"; from grade 0-3 the student should be able to talk about diversity compared to body and gender starting from one's own life. From grade 4-6 the student should be able to analyse diversity of body, gender and sexuality. And from grade 7-9 the student should be able to assess norms and rights of body, gender and sexuality in a societal perspective.<sup>50</sup> The fact is, that it is not seen as a basic perspective for the educational and didactical practices in general, but as a specific and briefly theme. The theme is obligated to take up as much (or less) time as the theme 'traffic education'.

In addition to this it has to be stressed, that teachers in their training do not receive education in cultural gender studies, sexuality or diversity nor is there gender-related subjects on the curriculum in any mandatory way. To that extend that students touch upon this during their teacher education, they have been lucky to meet a fiery soul.

## **MAIN POLICY INITIATIVES, REFORMS, MEASURES: ASSESSMENT**

### **Mainstreaming gender awareness into education and training policies**

The Danish public-school system is built on values such as equality, but does not explicitly focus on gender equality, gender awareness or gender mainstreaming. Rather, the legal framework obligates schools and teachers to prepare pupils to participate in, take responsibility for and understand their rights and duties in a democratic society in general.<sup>51</sup> According to the Danish Act on Equality, all citizens enjoy the same rights, including the right to free public-school education, as enshrined in the Danish Constitution §76.<sup>52</sup> Secondary and higher education is also free, with



student grants and loans available to Danish citizens aged 18 and above from the State Education Grant (SU).<sup>53</sup>

The Education Act § 18<sup>54</sup> (*Folkeskoleloven*) states that teachers are obligated to engage with students as individuals, taking account of the needs and abilities of each. This is further emphasised in the reform texts of 2014, which states: “The public school must challenge all students to reach their fullest potential.” However, Denmark has a relatively small number of high-performing students. If the academic level of students and thereby the Danish public-school system overall is to be improved, it is vital that all students achieve their full potential, particularly in the context of an increasingly competitive international environment.<sup>55</sup>

The Education Act does not include measures to counteract gender stereotypes (in contrast to several other Nordic countries).<sup>56</sup> Indeed, it could be argued that the Act is ‘gender blind’, in the sense that structural gender inequalities and gender stereotypical practices are not acknowledged as a social challenge. Besides from research and others assessments in the report<sup>5758</sup> Regitze Maria Flannov, member of both the Executive Committee and the Gender Equality Committee of the Danish Union of Teachers (DLF), has pronounced, that gender stereotypes are being reproduced in the education system. Teachers, parents, medias etc. think in stereotypical gender-specific ways and intuitively divide pupils by gender. Primary schools have a future potential to focus on not reproducing gender stereotypes in order to liberate the individual pupil's potential and utilise our individual and common resources optimally.<sup>59</sup>

## The legal framework on equality in Denmark

In terms of the laws and other regulations, Denmark is a progressive country with a clear focus on human and equal rights. However, according to Ask Hesby Krogh, Team Leader for Equal Treatment at the Institute for Human Rights, serious shortcomings remain, and though the formal equality is in place there are areas where no effect of the legislation is seen. When it comes to gender awareness there are more subtle things at stake, such as how we in Denmark educate our children, how we speak differently to men and woman in public spaces, and our cultural and gendered view on harassment, assault and hate speech. All of these issues are creating gender-related challenges, and therefore the Danish Institute for Human Rights, which has a mandate to promote gender equality, produces studies trying to find out how to reduce exclusions and promoting equal opportunities for all people – irrespective of gender, ethnicity, age, sexuality.<sup>60</sup> So besides legal framework there is a so-called second structure; the social and cultural gender norms that creates barriers that are far more significant than legislation. You could also put the two different levels as the formal and the real reality. If women and men are to truly have the same opportunities, there must be a change in knowledge and cultural perceptions of gender and power-relations, in gender practices and in cultural gender discourses, ensuring equal access to the education system and equality for all genders.

## The formal acts

Danish legislation on discrimination and gender equality is mainly adapted from EU legislation. However, CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women) has expressed concern that gender mainstreaming in the Danish education sector remains limited, and in 2015 Cedaw gave Denmark remarks regarding non-promotion of gender equality in education, and recommended further work to be done.<sup>61</sup>

In addition to international obligations, Danish legislation on gender equality and discrimination is rather extensive. Discrimination on the basis of gender is prohibited under the Equality Act,<sup>62</sup> the Equal Treatment Act,<sup>63</sup> the Equal Pay Act,<sup>64</sup> the Maternity Act<sup>65</sup> and the Law on Equal Treatment between Women and Men in Occupational Social Security Schemes.<sup>66</sup>

The Danish Equality Act; The purpose of the Act is to promote equality between women and men, including equal integration, equal influence and equal opportunities in all societal functions based on the equal value of women and men. The purpose of the Act is also to counteract direct and indirect discrimination on grounds of gender and to combat harassment and sexual harassment.<sup>67</sup>

The Danish Board of equal Treatment; The Equal Treatment Board deals with complaints about discrimination in the labour market/educational system because of gender, race, colour, religion or belief, political opinion, sexual orientation, age, disability, national origin, social origin and ethnic origin. Outside the labour market/educational system, the panel deals with complaints about discrimination based on gender, racial and ethnic origin.<sup>68</sup> In spring 2014, the Institute of Human Rights (IMR) established the website sigfranu.dk (meaning 'say no now'), where discrimination and hate crimes can be registered. IMR has established the website to identify the extent of discrimination experienced in Denmark. Sigfranu.dk has been implemented with financial support from the EU.<sup>69</sup>

### **Initiatives: Gender and diversity as perspectives of education curricula**

In 2014, a new subject called 'Gender, Sexuality and Diversity' was introduced as part of a reform of the Bachelor of Social Education/Pedagogue Education (*Pædagoguddannelsen*), and added the curriculum as a new subject. The aim of the subject is to enable students to act in, assess and evaluate pedagogical environments and activities to support children, youngsters and adults in their mental and physical development, identities and relationships.<sup>70</sup> The new subject serves as a means of reducing gender-segregated educational and work-related choices, through the principle of gender mainstreaming. Accordingly, the module on Gender, Sexuality and Diversity aims to increase children's opportunities in life and to bring about a change in common-sense gender practices in Denmark, establishing professional, norm-critical approaches to gender and other identity categories, built on facts and research-based knowledge. The overall goal is to break down the gender-based norms affecting educational choice.<sup>71</sup> The hope is that the subject will open up narrow gender categories, providing children with a wider range of opportunities in terms of educational choices and in life in general, because as Jytte Nielsen, research librarian of KVINFO points out, children often choose according to what society provides and looks like, because they are sensible in relation to these expectations.<sup>72</sup>

### **Initiatives: A Gender Certificate, A Tool for Change**

A Gender Certificate is the working title for a project initiated in 2012 by Cecilie Nørgaard in cooperation with the Nordic Council of Ministers. The Nordic model in the frame of the Nordic Counsel did not succeed eventually, but the content of the certificate is currently being tested by practitioners and professors as a pilot project involving Danish kindergartens (and later on schools), now as a privately initiated offer from the company Mangfold to educational institutions.<sup>7374</sup> The certificate website is expected to be ready the 1<sup>st</sup> of October 2017.

The certificate course aims to serve as a sustainable, strategic tool to raise gender awareness, knowledge and skills in pedagogical practices around children and young people, to prevent and counteract gender stereotypes and gender-based discrimination and to promote gender equality. The optional certificate is awarded to institutions (not individuals) that meet specific requirements set out in a certification course covering research-based knowledge and practices on intersectional gender perspectives and gender mainstreaming.

The aim of the project is to professionalize knowledge and practices on gender in educational and pedagogical institutions. The certification course aims to provide new terms and concepts of language through in-service training for education staff, raising awareness of and helping to develop and make public the principle of gender mainstreaming in education. The Gender Certificate has been selected as one of six promising Nordic practices, in the research project 'Promising Nordic Practices in Gender Equality Promotion in Basic Education and Kindergartens'.<sup>75</sup> The six promising practices from the Nordic report are: Gender mainstreaming, GEP (Gender Equality Plans), External Equality Experts, Gender certificate for kindergartens and schools, Objectives on gender balance and diversity, Parenting cooperation.

## CONCLUSIONS

Despite a high level of **formal** equality, the Danish education system exhibits a high degree of gender-segregation at all levels: primary, secondary, post-secondary, tertiary, initial and continuing vocational education training (VET) and adult non-compulsory and non-formal learning.

The main gender-related issues are: Gender stereotypes and norms in culture in general, including the education system; Teacher's different and stereotypical expectations to girls and boys performances, desires, achievements, learning methods. More girls than boys are not thriving at school and more boys than girls underperform, are more likely to drop out and are overrepresented in the segregated special educational programmes. Gender-segregated and gender stereotypical choice of study programme, gender-segregated and gender stereotypical labour marked.

Overall there is a lot of research showing, that Denmark has a very gender-segregated study environment and labour marked, but very few actual specific measures are engaged. To tackle these issues Denmark only has few policies and measures, and they mainly revolve around increasing knowledge. The only systematically implemented action is the subject 'Gender, Sexuality & Diversity' that was added the pedagogue training in 2014 as a mandatory subject with the ambition of making sure, that professional caretakers are not reproducing stereotypes.

Studies show, that gender-segregated educational choices are closely connected with the segregation of occupational and hierarchical structures in education and the labour market. Women are in general more educated than men but less rewarded financially and in high job positions. In contrast, men are highly represented at both the top and bottom of society – both in the labour market and in the education system. This reflects the fact that women and men are taught differently, why a more norm critical and gender aware education system would give children and young people more educational options and options in life in general. In the educational context, all genders face a wide range of structural barriers. This is partly due to poorly thought-out norm critical and gender aware education planning: a key challenge in Denmark is to break down the traditional gender norms reflected in the education system, according to which girls and boys, men and women are confined to stereotypical roles, limiting their free choices.

The lack of norm-critical practice with regard to gender, equality and diversity in the education system means that the Danish school system continues to be influenced by common myths and assumptions. There is therefore an urgent need to take gender-related challenges seriously and build actions on research based knowledge, in order to 1) address a segregated/segregating culture, 2) develop necessary language and 3) ensure a gender-sensitive, research-based focus on intersectional gender perspectives at all educational levels. In other words, there is a need to implement actions on the principle of gender mainstreaming throughout the Danish education system, including early-childhood education and schools, in accordance with EU recommendations.

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<sup>2</sup>**Uderbjerg, A.M.** (2016) *Lige adgang til uddannelse er ikke så lige endda*. Det Nationale Forskningscenter for Velfærd (SFI). <http://www.sfi.dk/nyt/nyheder/artikler/lige-adgang-til-uddannelse-er-ikke-saa-lige-endda/>

<sup>3</sup>A new Danish term used to describe that the importance of social and ethnic background should be reduced, so that all citizens have the same opportunities

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<sup>17</sup>Ligestillingsudvalgets rapport (2017) *Rapport fra Udvalget om ligestilling i dagtilbud og uddannelse*. Undervisningsministeriet

<sup>18</sup>**Interview with Mette Lykke Nielsen** (November 8<sup>th</sup> 2016) Youth Researcher at The Department of Learning and Philosophy at Aalborg University.

<sup>19</sup>**Hutters, C., Nielsen, M.L. & Görlich, A.** (2011) *Drenge og piger på ungdomsuddannelserne – Hvad betyder køn for elevernes uddannelsespraksis?* Authors and Center for Ungdomsforskning

<sup>20</sup>Ligestillingsudvalgets rapport (2017) *Rapport fra Udvalget om ligestilling i dagtilbud og uddannelse*. Undervisningsministeriet

<sup>21</sup>Interview with Jytte Nielsen (November 15<sup>th</sup> 2016) Research Librarian at KVINFORM

<sup>22</sup>**Larsen, M., Holt, H. & Larsen, M.R.** (2016) *Et kønsopdelt arbejdsmarked – udviklingstræk, konsekvenser og forklaringer*. SFI – Det Nationale Forskningscenter for Velfærd. København

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<sup>28</sup>Interview with Dennis Kristensen (November 10<sup>th</sup> 2016) President of the Trade Union (FOA)

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- <sup>48</sup> Interview with Louise Juel Clemmensen (November 23<sup>rd</sup> 2016) Clerk at The Ministry of Children, Education and Equality, Department of Secondary Educations
- <sup>49</sup> Ligestillingsudvalgets rapport (2017) *Rapport fra Udvalget om ligestilling i dagtilbud og uddannelse*. Undervisningsministeriet
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<sup>59</sup> Interview with Regitze Flannov (November 23<sup>rd</sup> 2016) teacher and member of the Executive Committee and the Gender Equality Committee at The Danish Union of Teachers (DLF)

<sup>60</sup> Interview with Ask Hesby Krogh (November 14<sup>th</sup> 2016) Team Leader for Equal Treatment at Institute for Human Rights

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