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Gender in Pre-school

A study of how do some pre-school teachers and parents in Pakistan perceive the concepts of gender and gender equality.

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Abstract

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A study of how do some pre-school teachers and parents in Pakistan perceive the concepts of gender and gender equality.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to understand how do some pre-school teachers and parents in Pakistan perceive the concepts of gender and gender equality. The study has been completed through interviews based on four key questions, which are: How do two pre-school teachers in Pakistan understand their teaching practice in relation to gender? How do two parents think of treating their children equally regardless gender in pre-school and how do they think girls and boys should be raised?

The method I have used for this research is qualitative method. I have been interviewing two pre-school teachers and two parents in a pre-school environment, located in Karachi Pakistan. In order to analyze the result and to get a deeper understanding of the collective knowledge gathered from the interviews, theories surrounding gender equality and Vygotsky's sociocultural theory have been used. Earlier research done within this area has been used to put this study into perspective.

The results of this study shows that the teachers perceive gender as a social construction and that gender is a creation of social interaction. In the study's results, shows that parents believe that boys and girls should get equal treatment at pre-school regardless their gender.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

I am studying to become pre-school teacher at Södertörns University program *Teacher Education with an Intercultural Profile: Pre-School*. During our course unit *Pre-school and Gender* I got a task to practice at a Pre-school and to evaluate all the activities from a gender perspective. In Swedish teacher community we use a phrase “ta på sig genusglassögen och utvärdera verksamheten” means observe things through gender eyeglasses. That’s exactly what I did during my practice period at pre-school. I put on my gender glasses and observed everything through gender spectacles. During this practice period I observed very carefully how do those pre-school teachers interact with children? Do teachers treat children equally regardless of their gender?

During practice, I also got opportunity to have conversations with some parents who ethnically belong to some other developing countries like India, Pakistan, Thailand, and Syria. They shared their experience of how they were treated by their teachers at kindergartens and school regardless their gender. I also got to know how those parents think of gender equality in pre-school in Sweden and of treating their children equally regardless gender. I experienced that parents believe that some of the pre-school teachers doesn’t have understanding of their culture and believe and why parents want their sons and daughter to act in a certain way. I also experienced that pre-school teachers find it difficult to understand children and their parents attitudes and believes towards gender equality awareness who have other ethnic background.

Swedish pre-schools are highly multicultural. As a prospective pre-school teacher, I believe that children at the pre-school have different background which puts special demands on you as a pre-school teacher. In pre-school you will meet children who have other ethnical background. In order to work with gender equality awareness in pre-school it is as much important to understand other cultures view’s on gender quality and on treating children equally regardless gender.

As teachers in Sweden, we need knowledge and understanding of how people in other countries and cultures live their lives. That is one reason I chose to study at Södertörns University because they offer Intercultural profile. Intercultural profile at Södertörns University permeate all semesters of pre-school teacher education and means that you are prepared to work in complex environments where you will meet children from different backgrounds and experience. It is necessary that after passing this program all students has an Intercultural competence and be able to cope, understand and to communicate

effectively and appropriately with children, teachers and parents of other cultures within pre-school environment. The Swedish Curriculum for pre-school 98 revised 2010 states that:

Swedish society imposes high demands on the ability of people to live with and understand the values inherent in cultural diversity. Pre-school is a social and cultural meeting place that can reinforce this and prepare children for life in an increasingly internationalized society. Awareness of their own cultural heritage and participation in the culture of others is to help children develop their ability to understand and empathize with others and their values. The pre-school can help children belonging to national minorities and children with a foreign background may aid in developing a multi-cultural identity (skolverket 2010). (My translation)

Gender equality has always been a point of my genuine interest. After attending course *Förskola and Genus* made me even more interested in the topic gender equality awareness and how does pre-school teachers in other countries work on gender issue in pre-school. As teachers in Sweden, we need knowledge and understanding of how people in other countries and cultures live their lives.

I have been awarded a Minor Field Study scholarship financed by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) to carry out my research project in Karachi City, Pakistan.

1.2 Aim and Research Question

The purpose of this study is to understand how do some pre-school teachers and parents in Pakistan perceive the concepts of gender and gender equality.

- How do two pre-school teachers in Pakistan understand their teaching practice in relation to gender?
- How do two parents think of treating their children equally regardless gender in pre-school and how do they think girls and boys should be raised?

3. Theoretical framework

In this chapter I will present theories that is relevant to my research. The chapter begins with description of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, definition of gender, gender equality and gender perspective. Then address Pre-school teacher role to encourage children to break gender norm. Last is a summary of the chapter.

3.1 Vygotsky's sociocultural theory

Social interaction is crucial for human development. Säljö (2000) describes that in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, social interaction plays the most important part in human development. It is an individual process that occurs during the interaction between two individuals or between individuals and the environment. The way people act, reflect and communicate is based on their socio-cultural experiences. We create the world around us on the conditions that we have. Vygotsky's (2001) explains that from the day a child comes into world he is socially depending on other people to develop. A child gets to learn about himself by social interaction. It is through social interaction a child creates an understanding of themselves and their world.

Strandberg explains in his book *Vygotskij i praktiken: bland plughästar och fusklappar* (2006) based on Vygotsky's theory that it is as much important that we adults make effort to create positive interaction opportunities for children. By giving children positive interaction possibilities will help them to through their leaning and development. Strandberg explains that if an adult wants the child to achieve a particular behavior must be an adult himself to act for and respond to children, based on the desired actions.

Säljö (2000) explains the leaning phenomenon inspired by Vygotsky's the *proximal development zone* that the older *more competent* person has a very important function. The older *more competent* guides the younger *less competent* person in how to use cultural tools. When the more competent guides the less competent it creates opportunities for him to be able to do things that he could not do on his own and in doing so he learns something new.

3.2 Gender

The term "gender" comes from the Latin word "gender" which means "origin", "family", "tribe" "sex", "species" or "kind". Term gender exists in many languages most of the time in the form of masculine and feminine. Wedin (2009) explains that the term gender refers to the social sex. The concept of sex is in the context of biological sex, the physical body, as it has to do with biology. Gender is based on a cultural and social sex, in the sense of femininity and masculinity. Gender is based on something that is created, it is not inborn. As we grow up, we learn to act in a certain way in order to be accepted as "normal" men and women in the society. We do not want to cross the boundary between the sexes. Gender is not static our view about what femininity and masculinity changes as the society around us is changing and therefore it looks different in different cultures, eras and in various parts of the world.

Gannerud (2001) explains that the term gender is used in social science research when you want to describe a range of socially, culturally and historically rooted believes and values that has to do with human sex. Those believe and standards are used in our society as an important categorization and classification in many different context. Gender could be applied to categorize anything from large to small, from what colors we have on our clothes and the toys we give to our children, economic conditions and political values. It could also be used to describe and understand various designs and structures. An example would be distribution of men and women in different occupations and different types of tasks.

Helen & Granholm (2007) state in their book *På genusäventyr –Metod bok för drama och genus I förskolan* that gender has a significant impact on how we human beings relate to each other. The difference between sex and gender is that sex is the biological sex while gender is the social sex. Gender defines how human being shapes and molds themselves to man and woman and how it is reflected in the community. Gender is mutable and views on what works for respective sex change over time.

3.3 Gender Equality

Svaleryd (2010) explains that gender equality means that all human beings should have the freedom to develop their personal abilities and to make decisions without being constrained by strict gender roles. Gender equality is about both sexes standing side by side. It is about women and men having the same rights, obligations and opportunities and how individuals of different sexes relate to each other. It is also about the individual's ability to carry out and support democratic ideas and actions patterns that alter traditional gender roles.

Wedin (2009) states in her book *Jämställdhetsarbete i förskola och skola* that gender equality is a goal or a vision and defined as women and men have the same power to shape society and their own lives. Gender equality is thus about sex, such as women and men, girls and boys and their conditions in the community. When women and men share power and influence in all aspects of life we get a fair and democratic society. The medical care we receive, the salary we have, or the educational opportunities we have, should not depend on which gender you have but on who you are as individuals. The base should be equal treatment and non-discrimination. In order to work towards gender equality awareness in pre-school it is essential that all the staff first get together and clarifies the concept of gender equality and what aspects of it would be relevant to work with at pre-school.

3.4 Gender perspective

Gannerud (2001) explains that gender perspective can also be described as a sociocultural perspective. Our perceptions of sex and gender are created and recreated constantly by what people say and do and what we think of ourselves and others. There will always be an option to change any of the concepts of gender and gender roles. By distinguishing the concept of gender and individual sex from each other. You can observe gender stereotypes and become more aware of and reflect on the individual in interaction with their social environment. By analyzing a specific situation from a gender perspective your attention will draw towards various expressions of sex and gender. To those that are more apparent and to those which are more or less hidden and more difficult to detect. Gender perspective is not only all about finding similarities or differences between women and men as individuals or in groups. It also includes other topic such as gender-neutrality.

Wedin (2009) explains to apply gender perspective means to critically examine and evaluate the contents of activities and teaching in that institution. Is not only the psychical appearance but even an

expression could give the concept of femininity and masculinity in an institution. In a Pre-school it could be the toys children use to play with and the activities that are carried out throughout the day in pre-school by teachers. Applying gender perspective means that ideas that are related to female and male in the topic or area being treated should be highlighted and presented.

3.5 Pre-school teachers role to encourage children to break gender norm

Pre-school teacher plays a very important role to encourage children to break the gender norms. Wedin (2009) explains in order to be able to break the gender norm which exists. They need to be discussed and criticized along with children. By teacher considering children as actors who creates gender norms gives them the opportunity to learn on their own. Let the children discover gender on their own way in everyday routines. Encourage them to give their own opinion without giving them ready-made answers or guiding questions. Pre-school teacher should encourage and give children opportunities to challenge the norm and support those children who dare to break norm. Teachers should explain them how gender inequality can create hierarchy and along with children try to find solutions to diminish them.

3.6 Summary

In this chapter, studies have been referred to explain concepts such as gender, gender equality and gender perspective. In short gender could be understood as a social sex created by the society. It could look different in different societies. It is made by society to clarify and categorize gender roles, being male or female. Studies show that gender equality is about having same right and opportunities for both male and female. Gender perspective could be used to critically examine and evaluate the contents of activities and teaching in an educational institution.

4. Previous Research

In this chapter I will present studies of Kajsa Svaleryd book *Genuspedagogik* (2010) and Christian Eidevald doctoral thesis *There are no girl determiner - to understand gender as a position in the pre-school, daily routines and play* (2009). In last follows a summary of the chapter.

4.1 Consciously working on gender

Kajsa Svaleryd is a pre-school teacher and the writer of book *Genuspedagogik*. It is basically a method book for teachers who want to work actively with gender equality and gender in pre-school in order to give children self-confidence and conscious identity. The book also gives us examples of how boys and girls from pre-school age up to late teens are limited by stereotypes of what is masculine and feminine.

Svaleryd (2010) means working as teacher, gender awareness is about consciousness about beliefs and expectations, and awareness of both sexes. It is also about an attitude and an awareness of the power of your own professional role in order to maintain the present gender system or to reform them. Gender system main principles are gender-apart relation and man overpowering areas. Svaleryd (2010) explains that we have all grown up in a society marked by more or less visible performances of sex. Most of us have lie in a pushchair with sex coded pink or blue blanket. It is basically we adults in our behavior with other adults and with children, sets the standard for manners between the sexes and gives the meaning of individual identity. Research has shown that pre-school strengthen differences, relating to gender, in a way that seems limited for both boys and girls. Working consciously with gender issues in educational practice is about relationships, organization of time, space, materials, assessment criteria and power of being in the state of educator. It is about consciously observing and reflecting on everyday situations and to see the interaction between individuals.

Svaleryd (2010) clarifies in her method book that in order to work with gender equality issue in pre-schools teachers need to have willpower to change and simultaneously see their own role in a new perspective. Staff needs knowledge about gender, power systems and structures, so that they can find a common platform to start from. It is at that platform you can distinguish between structural values at society level and personal beliefs and values at the individual level. It is also important that the staff agree on the terminology; what the words gender and equality stand for. May be the term observance of equality is well known, but you staff will need to have a good climate where they together discuss and visualize the different meanings contained in word equality in relation to girl, boy, clever, mischievous,

etc. From there you can begin to start talking about the guidelines on how we wish to understand these different words in a staff. Everyone maybe not entirely agrees on meanings, but one must be able to agree on what is the educational mission, and thus what is best for children.

4.2 Understand gender as a position in the pre-school, daily routines and play

Eidevald (2009) explains in his doctoral thesis *There are no girl determiner - to understand gender as a position in the pre-school, daily routines and play* that the way pre-school teachers look on girls and boys behavior is influenced by the values that are important in society for example, about mothers and fathers roles. There is also the perception of pre-changeable and subject to constant renegotiation of what pre-school should give children. Many of the previously changes that have been implementing in the society has been focusing on strengthening women's and girl's situations. Therefore, although gender equality in pre-school comes to be associated with women's issues and special initiatives aimed at girls.

Eidevald (2009) explains that pre-school is one of the first social institution a small child attends after birth. Therefore it is responsible for the production, reproduction and improvement of gender equality in a society by shaping children's gender identities and gender perceptions of the world. When teachers usually work on contracting traditional gender patterns in childhood stages they usually do two things. One is to seek gender neutrality and the other to mix what is considered gender coded. To avoid toys become part of various gender identity developments in girls and boys. Materials which are usually not counted as gender coded is water, costumes, clay, letters, building materials, bicycles, and balls. Even forest visits are also highlighted as a neutral environment.

Eidevald (2009) explains that there are three ways to explore gender. Firstly to argue that girls and boys, women and man are given equal opportunities, second to argue that girls and boys, women and men should be given different opportunities and third o to argue that gender should not be so important when discussing the possibilities. The various assumptions will, by its arguments will leads to different self-assured way to meet and talk to girls and boys.

Eidevald (2009) introduces the following three assumptions to understand, examine and evaluate different situation in pre-school from a gender perspective.

- 1) We are born to girls and boys

2) We are made for girls and boys

3) In a continued cross-reading.

1) *We are born to girls and boys* regards to biologically given sex and gender as a social effect of physical, hormonal and chromosomes differences. It is therefore obvious that men and women, at least to some extent, will be developed in different ways. By examining situation through this assumption focus on biological differences and / or the impact of these differences means for girls and boys.

2) *We are made for girls and boys* regard sex as a biological given but gender as social constructed. Gender refers to the social sex or to what is labeled as feminine and masculine. By examining through this assumption you will need to and studying how notions of femininity and masculinity affects how you behave towards each other, what expectations you have of each other and the implications of these expectations is for. It is gender which gives the social consequences, not the sex itself.

3) *In a continued cross-reading* perceive both sex and gender as socially constructing, among other things, on the argument that it is impossible to establish a definite line of demarcation between what is nature (body) and culture (gender). Even body is interpreted and understood through notions of gender.

4.3 Summary

In short, Svaleryd highlight in her methods book that it is very important that a teacher is aware of her power and use it in a right way to maintain the present gender system or to reform it. In order to understand and work on gender equality in pre-school it is also important to discuss with rest of the staff and come up with new suggestions and appropriate solutions. Eidevald means that gender could be understood by teachers by looking at girls and boys behavior influenced by the values that are important in society such as mothers and fathers roles. He introduces the following three assumption to understand, examine and evaluate different situation in pre-school from a gender perspective 1) We are born to girls and boys 2) We are made for girls and boys 3) In a continued cross-reading.

5. Methods

This study has been carried out in a pre-school in Karachi city, Pakistan. The pre-school visit has been arranged by my contact person. In this chapter I will introduce the method that I have used to carry out study, choice of country, selection, procedure and how information has been executed and ethnically processed.

5.1 Choice of country

I have been awarded a Minor Field Study scholarship financed by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). The Minor Field Study scholarship I have received from SIDA required that the research should be done in a developing country. That is why I chose Pakistan which categorizes as a developing country. Another reason of choosing Pakistan is because I myself ethnically belong to Pakistan. I know their national language Urdu it could be an advantage for me when I will conduct interviews. I will not need interpreter and save time. I can easily interact with the interviewees. Since I have visited Pakistan few times before it will be easy for me to get local contacts, travel around, to get to the closest libraries and other educational institution. It will save my time and energy and I would use that time to focus on my research and writing thesis.

5.2 choices of Methods

The method that I have chosen to carry out research is qualitative interview. For the interviews, I have used qualitative research method. Patel & Davidson (2011) explain that the purpose of a qualitative interview is to determine and identify the uniqueness and nature of something, such as the interviewee's beliefs about a phenomenon. Bryman & Nilsson (2002) explain when you use a qualitative method; the aim is to create a deeper understanding of how different ideas and attitudes can result in human actions, behaviors or decisions. Different types of observational studies, textual analysis or interviews with individuals or groups are common methods when talking about qualitative research. One purpose with these interviews was to get deeper understanding of both pre-school teachers and parents' perception on gender equality awareness in pre-school.

5.3 Selection

I have chosen to interview two pre-school teachers. Both works at the same pre-school with children age 3 to 5 years old. Teacher A has 3 years experience of working in pre-school. Teacher A holds a certification in childcare, learning and development. It is a two year course. Teacher B has 8 year experience of working in primary school and 5 years experience of working at pre-school. Teacher B has Master Degree in Education. I wanted to interview the pre-school teachers who were positive and interested to take part in my essay. I also interviewed two parents with their permission. Both parents' children went to the same pre-school I visited. Parent A worked as a dentist and had a daughter. Parent B was a housewife and had a son.

5.4 Procedure

I had a contact person who guided me during my research in Pakistan. My contact person arranged interview at Pre-school with teachers and parents. First time when I meet teachers I started by introducing myself. I told them about my background and aim behind research. I asked them again if they are willing to give interview. I had a questionnaire with me. I asked the entire question which I think was necessary for my research. I did the same with parents. I asked them if they were willing to give interview, informed them about my background and then took interview.

5.5 Reliability & validity

Stukát (2005) explains that the researcher is seen as the measuring instrument in a qualitative study. This could lead to reduced reliability when the researcher through their interpretations may affect the results. Qualitative study reliability can be influenced by the researcher but also by the informants. Both parties can be affected by external interference and that their questions and answers can be misinterpreted. I conceded with me the Stukát expressed regarding reliability. I have not been given the questionnaires in advance to either teachers or parents which leads to that they could not prepare their answer in advance. That reduces the risk that they could prepare their responses.

Stukát (2005) describe that validity is a multi-evident concepts. Validity involves that the material that has been collected should be essential in order to investigate the aim and purpose of the research and that the researcher measures what is supposed to be measured. Keeping in mind the concept of validity I

prepared the questionnaire which were relevant to the aim and purpose of my research and processed the data collected to answer the main question of my study.

5.6 Ethical considerations

I followed the Swedish Research Council ethical principles in the paper (Vetenskapsrådet 2001) when I conduct my research. This means that in this essay I have informed the staff, principal and teachers about my thesis. I have also asked few teachers and parents who are willing to give interview. Hjalmarsson & Franzen (2011) clarify that the most important principle in research ethics involves informing respondent about the purpose of investigation, and that the person giving consent to participate, can at any time refuse to give interviews even if they agreed to participate in the beginning. I have not used the names of pre-school teachers, departments or pre-school. All notes from observations and interviews will be stored so that only I can share them. All materials that the study is based on will be unidentified and stored in a secure manner.

6. Results and Analysis

In this chapter I am going to present the result of the research. The following four main topics will be discussed. The headings are inspired from the research questions. Teacher's awareness of gender and gender perspective, Teacher's teaching practice in relation to gender, Parents views on treating their children equally regardless gender, Parents believes on how girls and boys rising. Two pre-school teacher and two parents were included in the study and will be called Teacher A, B and Parent A, B. Last is a summary of the chapter.

6.1 Teachers awareness of gender and gender perspective

The teacher's understanding of gender is that gender is socially constructed. One is not born with it. Teacher A means that gender is created by the society and Teacher B means that gender is created by social interaction. Both teacher A and B mean that their understanding of gender also has to do with how they themselves were brought up during their childhood. Teacher A and B mean that gender is deeply oriented in their culture and that people expect boys and girls to react in a certain way being girl or boy. The teachers explain:

I would say gender is basically created by society. Gender is not something we are born with. It is not about biological or physical differences. (Pre- school teacher A)

We learn and create gender by social interaction with each other. Differences between how girls should react being "girl" or how a boy should react being "boy" is deeply oriented in our culture. I belong to that culture and was born and brought up in this way. In our culture each gender has significant position. As soon as you know that it's a girl you will have different expectations from her and vice versa for boys. (Pre-school teacher B)

There is no doubt that in our culture girls and boys are treated different. I am one of them. I was brought up by my parents in a certain way due to my gender. Gender does play a role. But just because you are treated differently doesn't mean you are treated badly. At least I didn't experience that or may be because of grown up in Pakistani society I already learned things which I am allow to do and not to do because of my gender. (Pre-school teacher A)

Teachers understanding of gender is that it is social constructed and also deeply oriented in their culture. Wedin (2011) describes that gender refers to the cultural and social sex i.e. the notions of masculinity and femininity that exist in society. One does not born with it. It has been created by the society. Teachers also explain that gender is a creation of social interaction as Vygotsky's (2001) explains that from the day a child come into world he is socially depend on other people to develop. A child gets to learn about himself by social interaction. It is through social interaction a child creates an understanding of themselves and their world.

It also emerged that teachers' understanding of gender reflects on how they themselves were brought up. Teachers themselves have been brought up in a culture were girls and boys are treated different. Differences on how a girl should be like and boys should be like is deeply oriented in Pakistani culture. Gannerud (2001) clarifies that notions of what is masculine and feminine is deeply rooted in culture and is a part of our heritage. It is usually perceived as obvious and natural. Wedin (2011) explains that as we grow up we learn how to react in a certain way being girl or boy. Our brought and environments shapes ours ideas and believes. That learning process looks different according to which culture or part of the world you live in.

6.2 Teacher's teaching practice in relation to gender

Teachers had different opinion on working from a gender perspective in pre-school. Teacher A means that in order to work from a gender perspective. It is very important that teacher has an awareness of the concept gender equality. Teacher B clarifies that it is very important that all the staff sits together and share their idea on how they should work from a gender perspective in their pre-school. The teachers explain:

In order to work from a gender perspective in pre-school. Firstly it is very important that teacher has an awareness of the concept gender equality. For me gender equality is about treating both girls and boys equally regardless gender. For some other teacher may be its about making changes in the environments. (Pre-school teacher A)

It is very important that all the staff sits together and share their ideas how they should work from a gender perspective in their pre-school. We need to sum up our awareness of gender equality before we can start work on it. Of course all of us have different perception on the concept gender equality. But in order to work from a gender perspective we need to cooperate. It is very important that we teacher get along. We as a teacher also need to have an ability to examine and criticize different situations from a gender perspective and discuss possible solutions. (Pre-school teacher B)

Teacher A means that gender equality is about treating both girls and boys equally regardless gender as Wedin (2011) clarifies that gender equality in school and pre-school is about giving girls and boys equal power and opportunity for learning and development. Teacher B explains that teachers also needs to have an ability to examine and criticize different situation from a gender perspective and discuss possible solutions. Teacher B way of explaining could be understand as Helen & Granholm (2007) who say that in order to apply a gender perspective in an educational institution means to acquire knowledge about how gender works. That can be done by analyzing the activity and see what processes are occurring between staff and children, between the children themselves, and girls and boys. You can then make a plan to counteract traditional gender values in that situation.

6.3 Parents views on treating their children equally regardless gender in Pre-school

When explaining their views on treating children equally regardless gender in pre-school, both parents A and B mean that they think both girls and boys should be treated equally regardless gender. They should be given same opportunities. Parent B means that boys should not get priority and girls should be allow participating in all activities. The parents explain:

I would say that for me as parent treating children equally regardless gender would be that both boys and girls get same opportunity. One should not be neglected by the teacher because of his/her gender. In Pre-school children's gender should not define children. Both girls and boys should be able to make their own choices. (Parent A)

I believe that in pre-school both boys and girls should be treated equally. There should be no boundaries. Boys should not be considered superior. They should be no restriction on girls. Girls should be allowed to participate in all activities. Teachers should make sure both girls and boys get same opportunities. (Parent B)

Both Parents agreed that on gender equality in pre-school should be all about treating children equally. Both Parents A and B think that both boys and girls should get same opportunities to explore. Helen & Granholm (2007) explain that working on gender equality in pre-school is all about giving children more choices. Girls and boys should be allowed to develop as individuals without the constraints of traditional gender values.

6.4 Parents believes on how girls and boys should be raised

It emerged in the interview that both Parents A and B mean that parents play a very important role during children's upbringing. Parents are the one who frame their children so they can adjust in the rest of the society. Both Parent A and B mean that older play an important role as well. Older has more knowledge and experience a small child can learn a lot by being in the company of adults. Parent B also clarifies that teachers play a very important role as well. Children look at teachers and behave the way they behave. The parents explain:

We simply raise our children the way we want to raise them. We feed them with our believes and way of living. I would say in our culture we do not believe in individuality. We intend to act and mold our self in order to melt within the rest of the group. (Parent A)

I agree that we shape our children. Parents play a very important role in their upbringing. Somehow in our culture mothers plays a more dominant role in upbringing of children. (Parent B)

Pre-school is not that common in Pakistan. Majority are poor as well they cannot afford to admit their children in Pre-school. Even thou if they can parents prefer that their children get raised by their grandparents. Parents believe that grandparents have experience of raising children and know culture better. (Parent A)

In pre-school treating both boys and girls equally is must. Teachers play a very important role. They are role models to children. Small children observe them and obey them. They do as they do. (Parent B)

Parent A means that we raise our children and feed them with their believes and actions. Wedin (2011) explains that when a person is born into the world, she has no past, no experience of how she should behave no yardstick to measure their own worth with. Children's are shaped by those messages they receive from others. Both Parents A and B mean that small children need older people company. An older has more knowledge and experience of life. An older can pass it through a child. Säljö (2000) explains the leaning phenomenon inspired by Vygotsky's the *proximal development zone* that the older *more competent* person has a very important function. The older *more competent* guides the younger *less competent* person in how to use cultural tools. Säljö (2000) explains that the more competent guides

the less competent it creates opportunities for him to be able to do things that he could not do on their own and in doing so he learns something new.

Parent B means that teachers play a very important role. They are role models to children. The same as Svaleryd (2010) explains that adult role model is one of the key ingredients in children's socialization. In the meeting with adults, the children get their first reflection of the public sphere. Depending on how we reflect back builds the children's picture of themselves. Being a role model as a teacher means that you need participate in developing children's unconscious beliefs.

Parent A explains that there are biological differences between girls and boys. Parent A means those biological differences comes in between while we raise them. Parent B also agreed with Parent A and explains further that this could be the reason we raise and treat boys and girls differently. The biological differences do come in between while raising girls or boys. The Parents explain:

There are several biological differences between girls and boys. They simply look different physically as well. Those differences cannot be ignored. It is may be those differences that impact our way of raising them. (Parent A)

I do agree that there are biological differences between girls and boys. By the time they become adult's differences become more prominent. That's why we also raise them differently. Those biological differences impact their social gender. In our culture we do believe that both girls and boys should be raised in a certain way due to their biological differences. (Parent B)

Both Parents A and B agreed that the biological differences between girls and boys cannot be ignored either while raising them. This could be understand as Eidevald (2010) explains in one of his assumption *We are born to girls and boys* regards biologically given sex and gender as a social effect of physical, hormonal and chromosomes differences. That's why at some point men and women will develop in different ways. By examining situations through this assumption focus would be on biological differences and / or the impact of those differences means for girls and boys. Parents mean that it is not only society and culture that impact the way they raise their children but also the biological differences between boys and girls. As they grow older differences become more visible. As they grow their body changes in different ways such as physical appearances and hormonal changes. Those biological differences impact their social gender. It is due to that boys and girls are raised and treated unequally.

6.5. Summary

The result shows that the teachers perceive gender as a social construction and that gender is a creation of social interaction. Human beings are not born with it. It is created by the society. Their understanding of gender also has to do with how they themselves were brought up. Since they were born and grown up in the same culture. The culture has a huge impact on their perception of gender equality. Teachers interview show that in their culture people do make differences between girls and boys. But it does not necessary mean that those differences harm one another. It could be because they are use to live in that way. They know which things they are allow to do being girls or boys and which things are forbidden. Both boys and girls know their limit. Teachers mean that they treat all children equally regardless gender. They also take help of each other. Importance of knowing concept of gender equality is very important in order to maintain gender equality in pre-school. For some teachers gender equality is about giving equal treatment to all children regardless gender. For others it could be about making changes in environment.

During interview with parents it emerged that they do want their children to get equal treatment in pre-school. Boys should not get extra attention and girls should not be neglected. Parents also think that pre-school teachers are role models to their children. Parents think that boys should not be considered superior by teachers and that girl should get same opportunities. Parents also explain that they also play a very important role during children's upbringing. They shape their children and feed them with their believes. Parents also explain the impact of grandparents on their children's upbringing. Grandparents teach them culture, manners, attitudes and way of living. Parents mean that there are biological differences between girls and boys. Those biological differences impact their social gender. Parent means as children grow and become adults those differences become more visible. Parents mean that is not only the society and culture that impact the way we treat or raise our children but also the biological differences that affects while we raise our children.

7. Further research question

Something that would be interesting for further research is to make both observations and interviews with the teachers to see if they are consistent with each other. Both teachers and parents say that they treat boys and girls equally, and they want to give them same opportunities. Despite this, there are still many differences between girls and boys in Pakistani society. By doing observations I can gain insight if they do treat boys and girls equally in practice. It will also be interesting to do some home visit at children's home to observe the environment and also get interview with Grandparents whom children spend plenty of time with during their early childhood.

8. Pedagogical relevance

As a prospective pre-school teacher, I believe that children at the pre-school have different background which puts special demands on you as a pre-school teacher. When working as a pre-school teacher, it is important to consider in pre-school you will meet children with other ethnically background. In order to work with gender equality awareness in pre-school it is as much important to understand other cultures view's on gender equality and treating children equally regardless gender. We can't ignore the fact that today's the Swedish pre-schools are highly multicultural. In order to maintain and reform gender equality awareness in pre-school cooperation with parents are essential. Pre-school teachers are role models to children. It is very important to consider the way we teacher treat each other in front of children.

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10. Appendix 1

Interview questions to teachers

How do you understand your teaching practice in relation to gender?

What comes into your mind when I say gender equality?

How would you describe gender?

How would you describe gender perspective?

How do you think that you work from a gender perspective?

How can gender equality be achieved in Pre-school?

Is there gender equality in pre-school you work?

What do you think of treating children equally regardless of gender?

Interview question to Parents

What do you think of treating children equally regardless gender in pre-school

how do you think girls and boys should be raised?

What is gender equality for you?

How would you describe gender?

How do you think that teachers work from a gender perspective?

How can gender equality achieved in Pre-school?

Is their gender equality in pre-school you work?

What do you think of treating children equally regardless gender?