

Foreword from the editors

The changes in our society can be identified in our educational institutions through for example, a diluted range of values and norms, blurred role definitions, new and differentiated structures of communication, differentiated forms of family organisation, and also through the increasing restriction on the ability to act. These developments lead increasingly to uncertainty and sometimes dissatisfaction in the professional action taken by teachers and educators.

The developments of recent years also indicate that educators are trying to implement gender-specific emphases in education and thus are trying to have a gender-justified and gender-specific impact. The background for this commitment is partially sobering evidence and results from different studies (PISA studies, etc.) which show that significant differences between girls and boys can be found, particularly in relation to educational results. In addition, the report of the European Commission “Gender Differences in Educational Outcomes: Current situation and measures in Europe” (2010) shows that:

- the increasing research on gender and education emphasizes the importance of stereotyping;
- gender justice is an issue in many countries, but often general equality policies are lacking;
- gender stereotyping should be counteracted, for example, through changes in the level of the curriculum, the educational and vocational guidance and the school environment;
- measures to eliminate gender differences in performance tend to focus on the underachievement of boys;
- single-sex education in public schools are an exception and
- in the lower levels of education, female teachers dominate.

In those circumstances it is not surprising that the report published by the European Commission “Gender and Education” states for example that: “*All school and college programmes, from pre-school to university, including professional and occupational training courses, should involve a core module on gender equality.*”

Within this publication, the historical aspects and current trends in gender-sensitive education of 12 European countries are shown for each country individually and questioned comparatively. The production of this book is the result of the multilateral Comenius project “EDGE: EDucation and GEndEr” that started in autumn 2011 and is to be completed by the end of 2014. This project is funded by the European Commission. At the end of this project – as described earlier in the Commission’s call – a curriculum for gender-sensitive education, which can be integrated in whole or modular in teacher training, should be available. More information can be found on the project’s website: “www.education-and-gender.eu”.

Cooperating in this project are 12 countries from North, East, South, West and Central Europe. Since not all European countries are involved in this project, there can be no definitive analysis of the current situation of gender-sensitive formation in the education of Europe as a whole. The different case studies from each country are threaded together. Whilst the studies share a common underlying structure, this structure is broken at different points due to country-specific characteristics.

The order of the text corresponds to the alphabet of the English country codes, as they are used universally by the EU institutions. Subsequent to the case studies of the 12 countries, two comparative studies will be presented:

There is the contribution “Gender-specific education in 12 European countries – a comparison”, a comparative study based on a written survey of 2,806 girls and boys aged 13 to 15 years in the Member States of the project’s participants. Aspects of personality, sexuality, interculturality and motivation are analyzed and compared. Accordingly, 280 teachers were surveyed, the results of this survey are included in this comparison.

The publication is published in German, English, Dutch and Turkish. It is therefore worth noting that, due to the translation from the original languages, various forms of address such as student, female student, students, etc. are used, whereas in other texts, there is only talk of students and teachers. The editors have – as far as this was possible – used exclusively the male form of address (which is interesting in a book about gender) as in some original languages such distinctions cannot be found.

With this publication, the authors hope to provide information and inspiration to all those who are interested in gender issues in education.

Oliver Holz and Fiona Shelton