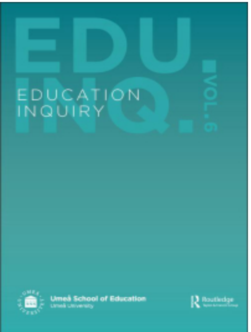

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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

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Natural disciplinarians or learning from the job? The first two years of seven male teachers in Icelandic compulsory schools

Ingólfur Ásgeir Jóhannesson [a], Andri Rafn Ottesen[b] and Valgerður S. Bjarnadóttir [a]

[a]School of Education, University of Iceland, Reykjavik, Iceland; [b]Department of Social Science Teaching, Garðaskóli lower secondary school, Garðabær, Iceland

ABSTRACT

This article presents an interview study with seven newly-graduated male teachers in Icelandic compulsory schools. We interviewed them five times during their first two years of teaching. The focus is on the ways in which the gender of the novice teachers mattered in the expectations that they experienced and how these expectations interacted with the professional demands of being a teacher. The interviews reveal that hegemonic masculinity ideas have an impact on the minds of our interviewees as they experienced various expectations, based in such masculinity. The findings also suggest a tension between the expectations of men as natural disciplinarians and the professional induction of learning to become a teacher. Male-specific expectations included that the school as well as parents expected that the students had respect for them on the grounds that they were men. While such expectations gave some a head start with positional authority, it laid a burden on them as novices. Not all of our interviewees fitted the male-specific expectations, which supports the importance of breaking down gendered stereotypes. In recruiting teachers, regardless of gender, we need individuals able to perform professional practices of care and attention to detail in managing a classroom.

KEYWORDS

Male teachers; novice teachers; gender; masculinity; bodily resources

Introduction

In many countries, the vast majority of teachers are female. The lack of males, especially in early childhood and primary education, has sparked much interest among researchers internationally (for Brody, 2014, 2021; Cushman, 2007; Martino, 2008; McGrath & Sinclair, 2013; McGrath & Van Bergen, 2017; Sargent, 2001). This shortage has given males a unique position within the school systems around the world, and they tend to be favoured in the process of recruitment, employment, and promotion (Cushman, 2007). Many studies report deep-rooted, gendereded expectations towards male teachers that rely on ideas of male-specific characteristics (e.g. Haase, 2008; Hjalmarsson & Löfdahl, 2014; Persson, 2021).

The lack of male teachers is a part of a larger problem, that is, a drop in teacher education enrolments internationally (García & Weiss, 2019; OECD, 2003, 2019).

CONTACT Ingólfur Ásgeir Jóhannesson ingo@hi.is School of Education, School of Education University of Iceland, IS 101, Reykjavik, Iceland

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Furthermore, studies from around the world give evidence that a considerable proportion of newly hired teachers leave the job in their first few years (Ingersoll, 2012; Sutcher et al., 2016). This brings attention to the importance of good induction practices of student teachers and novice teachers. While there is growing interest in this field in Iceland, there is no specific legislative frame around induction (Svanbjörnsdóttir et al., 2020).

The compulsory level in Iceland is ten years of schooling for the age level 6–16. Most schools include all grades from 1–10 although in a few places children attend separate schools in Grades 1–7 and 8–10. The compulsory school level has developed since 1908 when education first became compulsory for the age level 10–14. Historically being a compulsory school teacher in Iceland did not belong specifically men or women, and the number of male and female teachers was close to equal. For instance, from 1930–1960, men were 60% of teachers in Reykjavík (Guttormsson & Garðarsdóttir, 2012). The number of female teachers increased in the last decades of the 20th century. In 1998, men were 26% of all compulsory school teachers, while 17.5% in 2019 (Statistics Iceland, n.d.).

We originally set out with the general aim to study the experience of male novice teachers with two theoretical perspectives in mind: about gender and masculinity and about novice teachers (Ottesen & Jóhannesson, 2019). We followed seven newly graduated male teachers at the compulsory school level in Iceland for two years. Our sample included seven males teaching in the Grades 5–10 in the Icelandic compulsory school. This article deals first and foremost with a question arising from gender and masculinity perspectives: *In what ways did the gender of the novice teachers matter in the expectations that they experienced and how did the expectations interact with the professional demands of being a teacher*? By expectations, we mean from children, parents, other teachers, and themselves.

Previous research

There is much research available about male teachers and the potential differences between how men and women teach. Among others, four topics within this literature seemed relevant. First, it is a persisent view that men are better at keeping discipline and order among the children, and the prevailing image of the desirable attributes of male teachers tends to "rest on stereotypes of male teachers as disciplinarian and 'robust'" (Francis, 2008, p. 109). Some interviewees in an Icelandic study of the views of parents thought that male teachers were more stern than female teachers (Maríudóttir & Jóhannesson, 2018). The interviewees of Brody (2014) and Ashcraft and Sevier (2006) also thought that male teachers were better in discipline management than female teachers. Hjalmarsson and Löfdahl (2014), who interviewed seven male teachers in Grades 3–5 in Sweden, have suggested that male teachers benefit from being men within an educational structure that is outnumbered by women. Their minority position affords them with certain desirability because "they are expected to offer something different than their female colleagues" (p. 288).

It is safe to say that the discourse about men in teaching is thus rigged with essential ideas of how men should behave as well as with hegemonic ideas of masculinity, those of the strong and even tall teacher who needs to be a disciplinarian. If they then fail to

perform in accordance to stereotypical views, they can expect to be highly visible because of their minority position. This perspective has also contributed to the discourse of women "being viewed as poor disciplinarians, lacking … the necessary 'masculine attributes' to control older children, especially boys" (Robinson, 2000, p. 78; see also Persson, 2021).

The second issue is the alleged carelessness of male teachers, that is, male teachers can more easily allow themselves to be careless in jobs which require care and an attention to detail (e.g. Warin & Gannerud, 2014). A parent interviewee in Maríudóttir and Jóhannesson (2018) also contended this carelessness which he thought added to a nice atmosphere at the school, while some of the attention of the women teachers to detail could be both unnecessary and annoying. Adding to the variation list between male and female teachers, Jackson (2010) reported that male teachers tended to believe that being "laddish" was a good way to deal with such behaviour among the children and teenagers, especially the boys. Persson (2021) in his review of earlier studies reported an acceptance of such laddish strategies among the male teachers. While these anecdotes do not support the idea that carelessness is actually a gendered trait in teaching, the idea is a part of the stereotype of male teachers and as such it can be damaging to them.

The third issue we cite here is about "bodily resources" (Persson, 2021, p. 551): are men taller, have a deeper voice, or behave, look, and dress in a way that provides them with more respect? This would mean that simply showing up as a man can be of advantage for the teacher. Persson (2021) studied ideas among Swedish student teachers in upper secondary schools, and although there a relatively even number of male and female teachers at that school level, the view of men's bodily resources is rather strong. These bodily resources included a deeper voice (pp. 555–556). Importantly, the male student teachers in the study never mentioned the bodily resources, but the female student teachers thought they were important in authoritative work. Furthermore, Hjalmarsson and Löfdahl (2014), suggest that the male gender "seems to be regarded as a competency and implies a kind of positional authority which they are expected to use as a disciplinarian tool in certain contexts and in relation to certain groups of pupils" (p. 289).

The fourth of these issues is potential linguistic differences between men and women, in particular in relation to how teachers manage their classrooms. If male teachers were more efficient keepers of order and discipline, it would be likely that their linguistic strategies differ from those of the female teachers. Read (2008) and her research colleagues observed 51 primary grade teachers in two different locations in England, about an equal number of male and female teachers. She looked at the ways in which teachers' classroom talk could be identified as part of either of two contrasting discourses relating to the power relation between teacher and pupil: "a 'traditional' *disciplinarian* discourse, and a more 'progressive' *liberal* discourse" (p. 609). The disciplinarian discourse which was utilised to a greater extent by both the male and the female teachers is characterised by explicit ongoing affirmations via the use of language and participation in "ritualized" cultural management practices (p. 613). We also scrutinized the study of McDowell and Klattenberg (2019) who did not find gender differences in the linguistic discipline strategies in a multiple case study of 16 male and female teachers in Germany and the U.K. In contrast they argue that the teachers in the

sample used similar professional skills required for the job, not dependent upon their gender. The eight teachers employed a mixture of linguistic strategies either typical of masculinity or of femininity, regardless of own gender, and constantly adapted and shifted style. Both Read (2008) and McDowell and Klattenberg (2019) emphasise that male and female teachers use whatever linguistic strategy that is necessary to perform their professional identity rather than performing gender.

Theoretical background

Our main theoretical point of departure is that the male-specific expectations, such as men as natural disciplinarians, tend to be strongly rooted in ideas of hegemonic masculinity, while ideas of inclusive and caring masculinity seem to be more consistent with the professional induction of learning from experience in becoming a teacher. The concept of hegemonic masculinity is an attempt to describe the status of men in unequal gender relations as strong and stable and in a dominant position to women (Connell, 1987, 1995). While the concept of hegemonic masculinity has developed and been debated over time, the idea of men as stronger, more confident, and more assertive than women remains at its heart (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Elliott, 2020; Messerschmidt, 2019).

There are several ideas developing about alternative versions of masculinity, among them are inclusive masculinity (Andersen, 2009) and caring masculinity (see Elliott, 2016, 2020). The idea of inclusive masculinity is drawn from the suggestion that modern men are more likely to express their feelings in various ways (e.g. Jóhannsdóttir & Gíslason, 2018). Andersen (2009) also argues that relying on this notion of inclusive masculinity, "a culture must be free of men having to prove their heterosexuality" (p. 98). Caring masculinity as defined by Elliott (2016, 2020), suggests that men performing in such a way "reject domination and its associated traits and embrace values of care such as positive emotion, interdependence, and relationality" (2016, p. 240).

Both these alternative notions of masculinity, inclusive and caring, thus relate to teachers' work in the sense that teachers need to care for their students in various ways. Teachers must often attend to detail not only in managing the classroom but also in children's and teenager's lives. Such professional demands are often associated with care (Lingard, 2009) or care, concern, and connection (Martin, 1992, 1996) and may be prerequisite to learning.

Method

For the purpose of this study, we followed seven newly graduated male teachers at the compulsory school level for two years. We interviewed each of them five times.

Participants

We sought out male interviewees to meet two criteria: be newly-graduated from a teacher education program; and should not have worked as unlicenced teachers prior to graduation. We could not find enough participants to meet the second criteria

Table 1. Interviewees: Education and teaching position.

Pseudonym	Education	Teaching position
Egill	B.Ed. and M.Ed.	5th-7th grades, supervisory teacher both years
Gunnar	B.Ed. and M.Ed.	8th-10th grades, supervisory teacher both years
Nói	B.Ed. and M.Ed.	8th-10th grades (reports that he will become a supervisory teacher in his third year)
Ólíver	B.Ed. and M.Ed.	5th-7th grades, supervisory teacher both years
Ragnar	B.Sc. and M.Ed.	8th-10th grade, supervisory teacher both years
Unnar	B.A. and M.Ed.	8th-10th grades, supervisory teacher the second year
Viktor	B.Ed. and M.Ed.	7th-10th grades, supervisory teacher the second year

so some of the participants had teaching experience at other schools before or during their teacher education. Selection took place with several methods, and three methods were successful. Some knew Author 2 from studying with him at the University of Iceland, another small group responded to an introductory email from the Teaching Office of one of the teacher education faculties in Iceland, and we also asked relevant key persons two other universities to suggest participants. In the end, we interviewed all available candidates.

Four men were followed from 2017–2019, and three were followed from 2018–2020 (one interviewee opted out after three interviews in the second cohort). Five of the participants hold a M.Ed. degree from a compulsory school teacher education program (five years of study), and two participants had completed a masters program in teacher education with a bachelor degree in another discipline (see Table 1). For clarification, we note that a master degree (M.Ed. or another masters degree including 60 ECTS teaching methods requirement) is required to become a teacher in Iceland. However, a B.Ed. program is not a requisite, as most other bachelor degrees are a sufficient preparation for the M.Ed. programs.

Our seven interviewees taught in six different public schools that all follow the same national curriculum. Four of the interviewees taught in three schools in the capital city area, and the other three taught in schools in different locations around the country. As can be seen from Table 1, none of the interviewees taught the youngest children. However, five of the interviewees taught in a school with all the grades from 1 to 10 (6–16 years old children and teenagers); two in a school with grades 8 to 10 (14–16 years of age). And they all but one served as supervisory teachers for at least one of the two years.

The age of the interviewees was from late twenties to late thirties when the study began. All of them had some experience of working with children before they enrolled in teacher education. Egill, Nói, Óliver, and Viktor had been coaching soccer or basket ball or were coaching besides the teaching job.

The interviews

Five serial qualitative interviews (Murray et al., 2009) were conducted with each participant. We interviewed them from before they began to teach in the autumn and until late in their second year of teaching. Importance was placed on that the first interview would take place before the interviewees began to teach so the first interviews were conducted from early to mid-August. This approach gave the study a longitudinal element, by allowing us to explore change and process over time (Calman et al., 2013) and to follow up on certain issues in previous interviews.

The interviews provided valuable and extended material, altogether 35 interviews that lasted about 21 hours. In the findings, the interviews are numbered from 1 to 5. The interviews took place in various ways: in the respective school where the interviewees taught, either in interview rooms or in a classroom; in the university premises; Skype or Zoom; in a sports hall; and one interview was performed in the home of the interviewee.

In these semi-structured interviews, we asked about various aspects of their experiences as novice male teachers in relation to, for example, the school atmosphere, relationships with students, parents, and staff, and the formal induction that they received or did not receive. There was a particular focus on the gender aspect of being a male teacher in all interviews. However, we were aware of the danger of reproducing the binary categorisations of maleness or femaleness through our questions relating to gender (see Pulsford, 2014).

Analysis

The analysis of the interview material so far has been done in two rounds. First, Authors 1 and 2 published an article after analysing the first three interviews with the first cohort (12 interviews), conducted from August 2017 to February 2018 (Ottesen & Jóhannesson, 2019).[1] Author 3 joined forces to analyse the whole data set after the final interviews had been conducted.

The analysis of the data followed common recommendations from Calman et al. (2013) and Holland et al., (2006). That involved conducting both cross-sectional thematic analysis, in which all interviews were read several times to capture common themes in relation to the teachers' gendered experience over time, as well as bringing forward narratives and experiences of individual interviewees. The analysis was data-driven (Braun & Clarke, 2013) and focused on capturing how gendered expectations and the professional induction of becoming a teacher evolved. The theoretical framework and the research question of this article – about how male-specific expectations interacted with the professional demands of being a teacher – was developed in accordance with the initial analysis of the data. The process was, therefore, multidimensional during which conversations and reflections between the authors proved important.

Ethics and reliability

The study was performed according to good research practices. The interviewees were told that the researchers intended to publish the results in conferences and articles. We have hidden the identity of the schools and our interviewees by using pseudonyms and by not revealing exact information about the education of each one. We have also made minor alterations in some of the stories about particular situations and events. Our interviewees were eager participants who seemed to look forward to each interview. The fact that some of the interviewees knew [author 2 – name will be inserted after] from previous work or from within the teacher education program probably helped facilitate the first conversations, but after a few interviews the pair of an interviewee and an interviewer already knew each other anyway. However, in line with Holland's (2007)

argument that opting out might be difficult for participants in serial interviews as they often become committed and attached to the interviewer over time, we were aware of the importance of stressing that participants were free to opt out at any time. The study was reported to the Icelandic Data Authority (no S8674/2018).

Findings

In order to answer the research question, we present two themes that were generated from the analysis of the data: male-specific expectations, and the value of experience and confidence, as experienced by the interviewees.

Male-specific expectations

As previous research has indicated, it is a persistent view that male teachers are somehow better equipped to keep discipline in classrooms than female teachers (Ashcraft & Sevier, 2006; Brody, 2014; Maríudóttir & Jóhannesson, 2018). Various bodily resources, including that men are on average taller than women and tend to have a deeper voice than most women, seem to be most important in this view (Persson, 2021). The views and experiences of our interviewees reflected this discourse in various ways. Some of them capitalised on this to a certain extent, willingly but not necessarily without being critical; others represented views about their female colleagues that speak directly into gendered stereotypes of female and male teachers. The specific bodily resources were not much referred to in the interviews, but the issue of simply being male was emphasised in comparisons between male and female teachers.

As an example of male-specific expectations, it was perceived by some of the interviewees that the students, particularly the boys, had a greater respect for male teachers. For example, Gunnar said that he thought "being a male has sort of helped me most with the boys … I almost never experience back talk from them" (Interview 3). Further, Nói reported that

> the kids just respond totally differently to me and the other males than to the women … just that I am a man … particularly some teenage boys … they perhaps grow up with single moms … they just do not listen to the women at all … then all of a sudden when I am talking, even the toughest guys listen to me talk … I would never have believed that it was that obvious. (Interview 4) [2]

We also heard that parents were keen on having male teachers teach their children and teenagers. Egill explained that he had been well received in teaching a "difficult" group, simply because he was a man:

> When I took over [this class], there was talk that this class had to have a male teacher … There are a few guerillas in the group and there are six who are … really difficult … Many of them only hear their mothers nagging when women [female teachers] are just telling them off, so that I heard [he hesitated] from some parents and other teachers that it was good that a male teacher had taken over the group … I think I have been well received because I am a man. (Interview 3)

In the cases above, our interviewees reported that they were favourably received by students because of their gender. Further, they reported that parents and other teachers

preferred a male teacher for the more “difficult” students, as it was somewhat expected that they would manage the classes better, even though they were inexperienced as teachers. The school authorities also relied on the novice male teachers in this regard. Viktor reported that he had been assigned a certain class that he was not at all interested in teaching:

> They just say that, because you are male then you have to be there … I have gotten this answer a million times, ‘you always manage to reach out to the difficult ones’ … (Interview 2)

Óliver reported an example of how he used his voice, especially with the boys:

> I allow myself to be more harsh with the boys if they have done something wrong, I allow myself to raise my voice and speak with more power than to the girls. They can take that, and sometimes they simply need it. (Interview 3)

These instances indicate a strength of a discourse where male teachers are favoured just for being men. This may suggest that just being a man is a specific competency for teaching (Hjalmarsson & Löfdahl, 2014). This is consistent with the views of the female student teachers in Sweden who thought that they lacked important bodily resources (Persson, 2021). But this is not consistent with the findings of McDowell and Klattenberg (2019) which found 16 male and female teachers in Germany and the U. K. use similar discipline strategies.

In the above examples, we also see signs of a discourse that female teachers were perceived to nag, in contrast to the masculine way of being a man who, with bodily resources, had authority as such by himself (Hjalmarsson & Löfdahl, 2014). This appeared for instance in the above quotes from Nói and Egill, in which they linked the position of female teachers with nagging mothers. Viktor was extremely explicit:

> It might sound prejudiced … [the female teachers] are often … more incisive or do not manage to get their message right and therefore they sometimes offend students. (Interview 2)

We believe that this discourse about annoying and ineffective women relates not only to the specific lack of the masculine body, deep male voice, or linguistic strategies, but no less to the lack of the power of hegemonic masculinity in a society still plagued by a patriarchal gender order. The male teachers, even the novices, seemed to gain a relatively better status from being different from the women, which is also known in other studies (Hjalmarsson & Löfdahl, 2014).

One of the issues in the discourse about differences between male and female teachers is an alleged tendency of male teachers to be more careless and relaxed than female teachers (Maríudóttir & Jóhannesson, 2018; Warin & Gannerud, 2014). Viktor, the interviewee who particularly represented this discourse, noted:

> I do not care if someone comes … with a hat in class … [but] if someone is rude, then it is an ‘issue’ … I am not this guy that is just, incredibly boring, but I am still strict in some matters. (Interview 1; he used the English word issue as slang)

While it can be argued that wearing a hat is not a serious breach of order, these particular words indicate a level of masculine carelessness as opposed to firmness of women about keeping order. Later in the interviews, Viktor addressed this topic again

in relation to his way of handling issues, and described how important it was to "run before the wind and decide which fights to pick" (Interview 4), unlike some of the female teachers. In fact, he had a clear view of that, in relation to his own success in managing the more difficult boys; he claimed that "many women do not have the patience to tackle these guys that are bone-idle … " (Interview 3)

This view of Viktor towards the job did not change much over time, even though his role within the school changed when he became a supervisory teacher in the second year. He described how both female leaders and teachers spent time on unimportant issues and took things too seriously. In this context, it is tempting to connect his stance with the tendency for male carelessness reported by Warin and Gannerud (2014).

Overall, our interviewees knew well that the techniques and work of keeping discipline is not a gendered issue, depending on bodily resources alone (e.g. McDowell & Klattenberg, 2019). Nói, for instance, argued that he could learn much from one of his female colleagues:

> She is the only woman I have seen dealing with those lads correctly … I learned a little from how … she is … able to 'manipulate' them … I am trying to learn a bit how she does this. (Interview 4; he used the English word manipulate as slang)

The view that novice male teachers are somehow natural discipline keepers is based on rather traditional views of masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Francis, 2008). The words of Nói seem at once to adhere to such a view of women and acknowledge the ability of the particular female teacher, worthwhile in learning to become a caring teacher with the abiltity to atten to the needs of the particular students.

We now turn to our findings on how our interviewees valued the experience they received and how they felt it enhance their professional confidence.

The value of experience and confidence

The expectations of male teachers about the management of discipline may be an advantage for the novice male teachers in some respects. But this demand is also difficult for young male teachers. In particular two of our interviewees, Ragnar and Unnar, reported that classroom management had proved difficult for them. For Unnar, who had experience of working in a preschool, classroom management was one of the things that caused him to worry as he was starting his teaching carier in the upper grades of the compulsory school. He explained:

> I find it somehow difficult to be the strict teacher, and I do not think that one should force yourself into being something that you are really not. (Interview 1)

After three months of teaching, Unnar stated that discipline management was still the thing he found the most difficult about the job. He experienced that it was difficult to have control over his groups, particularly those that are "somewhat difficult groups" with "a difficult dynamic; I find that rather 'challenging'" (Interview 2; he used the English word challenging as slang). In the third interview, he still expressed concerns over this: "I find it boring to deal with … disciplinary issues, I kind of find that the hardest thing about this job … Sometimes you do not have a clue what to do" (Interview 3). The interviews with Ragnar also stand out in this respect. He had developed a teaching philosophy of using reflective dialogue with students. Over time,

he did not give up, but at certain times he found it difficult to have the students participate in such a dialogue. He explained:

> I have often had [he hesitated] difficulties with … for example that everyone is speaking at the same time. I think it goes a bit hand in hand with classroom management … and in some groups it is not going well … I am not optimistic about it [my classroom management skill] succeeding, but maybe that is not true. (Interview 3).

What is interesting about the perceptions of Ragnar and Unnar is that being a man was not enough for them; they both experienced classroom management as a challenging task and perceived that they needed to develop competence in classroom management. Over the two year period, Ragnar and Unnar reported increased confidence in keeping order in the classroom and in interacting with students. At the end of the second year, Ragnar, who had been worried about classroom management, felt that despite he was gaining confidence, "the improvement [in classroom management] is not happening fast enough" (Interview 5). Unnar, who discussed his troubles with classroom management during his first months as a teacher, explained in his third interview early in the spring semester in his first year how he had grown and learned from the job:

> This line dance, to know when you have to be definite, to know when you have to have humor, to know when you have to be casual … I think that these are tools … that you learn from this job. (Interview 3)

At the end of the research period, he reported that he was "much more conficent … less afraid of being [myself] … in the classroom" (Interview 5).

In the case of Unnar, it can be assumed that as he became more confident about "being himself" in the classroom, he presented to his students those caring masculinity traits that Andersen (2009) and Elliott (2016, 2020) described. That might challenge the reproduction of stereotypical views of male teachers and hegemonic masculinities, supporting McGrath and Van Bergen (2017) argument that it is preferable that students experience variations and diversity among their teachers, including who are the providers of care and nurture.

Sports were a key issue in some of the interviews, as experience of coaching supported the novice teachers in their teaching job. As reported, four of the interviewees had previous or simultaneous experience of training team sports. This experience included regular training sessions, plays with other teams, and even travelling with the groups to overseas tournaments. In this case, it was not the actual male body that mattered but a particular experience that our interviewees claimed that they were utilising.

The interviewees reported several types of skills in building relationships and working with children and teenagers that coaching had helped them with. They said they gained skills in discipline management, an ability to team building and to conduct field trips, and competence to convince participants, in our case students, that they needed to be persistent to expect good results from learning.

Óliver was confident before he began to teach that the experience of coaching would help in discipline management (Interview 1). After six months of teaching he said: "I am often asked to deal with some discipline issues in other classes, only because I am a male and with a background in sports … " (Interview 3). Óliver also

discussed the importance of team building in the classroom and within the student group, which was something that he learned about by coaching. He explained that "this 'leadership' to create a team unity; it is just as important in the class room, the cohort, and among colleagues in the school, as it is in your [sports] team" (Interview 3; he used the English word leadership as slang). Similarly, Egill explained how important it was to be able to think about and manage all the members of one's team, be it a sports team or a class: "These are organizational issues that are a part of managing a sports team; I find this similar" (Interview 2). This process was however perceived more challenging within the school environment than the sports environment, as motivation was often lacking among students. Nói explained this in the following words.

> The difference lies in that most sports practitioners choose the things that you want them to do, so they are not against your training ... In school, the kids are forced to be in school ... they are not as receptive to what you are doing. (Interview 2)

As the above examples show, Egill, Nói, Óliver, and Viktor all referred to their coaching experience in relation to classroom management and discipline. This experience was perceived by them as a valuable preparation for the teaching job and also seemed to be well received by school leaders, at least in the case of Óliver. They explained how coaching had helped them in group management and also that they had gained skills useful for instance in conducting field trips. Overall they reported that coaching had served as training in building relationships with the students. This example of the value of coaching experience, particularly in relation to discipline management, is an important contextual issue here, as it demonstrates the complexity of gendered expectations.

Another recent Icelandic study of the views of principals about the gender of teachers reports an example of a male teacher who also was a soccer coach. Coincidentally he began to teach a class with many soccer boys. "We have not heard anything of the class since he began" to teach them, the (male) principal reported (Guðnadóttir & Rúdólfsdóttir, 2019). His view was that the gender along with the coaching experience had this impact; our findings suggest that the coaching experience carried with it certain professional skills of team-building and group and discipline management.

In sum, our interviewees valued what they learned from the job as well as the experience they brought with them to the job. Especially Ragnar and Unnar reported growing confidence and in other cases the interviewees felt more confident in how they were using their previous coaching experience professionally.

Conclusion

We set out to explore the ways in which the gender of the novice teachers mattered in the expectations that they experienced and how the expectations interacted with the professional demands of being a teacher.

The interviews suggest that hegemonic masculinity ideas have an impact on the minds of our interviewees as they experienced various expectations, based in such masculinity. The stereotypical views explained by Francis (2008) of the male teacher as disciplinarian turned out to be well alive. The demands placed on our interviewees in

relation to keeping discipline and dealing with challenging behaviour of students, even though they were only beginning their teaching career, reveal stereotypical expectations towards them as male teachers. This seemed to have helped some of our interviewees to gain and utilise positional authority (Hjalmarsson & Löfdahl, 2014; Persson, 2021). Other interviewees did not benefit from these expectations. Especially Ragnar og Unnar did not find the male-specific expectations helpful but rather a hindrance, and as the interviews went on almost all interviewees, except perhaps Viktor, became less dependent upon being a male.

Some of the novice males we interviewed also had useful experience from coaching, and they seemed to develop an understanding of the relationship between coaching and group management which in turn became closer to caring masculinity (Elliott, 2016, 2020) and the professional attention to detail. They came to realise that the skills derived from coaching were professional traits. And it might be interesting for further study how coaching – and many other types of previous work with children and teenagers – can be utilised in the development of professional competence of teachers.

There appeared a tension between the rules and frameworks around teaching that expect all teachers to be able to have the same competence and the view that showing up as a male is a specific competency of a teacher (Hjalmarsson & Löfdahl, 2014). The findings also suggest a tension between the expectations of men as natural disciplinarians and the professional induction of learning from experience in becoming a teacher. Almost all of our interviewees experienced that simply showing up as a man was not enough to become a teacher. The same would apply to female teachers that showing up with "feminine" care would not suffice. We believe that our findings support that as a community, we should seek to find teachers, males or females, who are able to perform and develop professional practices of care and attention to detail in managing a classroom and other pedagogical practices. In the case of recruiting males, we may consider focusing on men who do not conform to hegemonic forms of masculinity but to alternative ones. [3]

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Notes

1. The masters thesis of Ottesen (2018) consisted of an analysis of the first three interviews with the first cohort of interviewees. Interviews with five participants were conducted by Author 2 and with two participants by Author 1.
2. Translations are those of the authors with the assistance of Þór Saari, a professional translator.
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Notes on contributors

Ingólfur Ásgeir Jóhannesson (ingo@hi.is) is a professor at the School of Education at the University of Iceland. He holds BA and cand.mag. degrees in history from the University of Iceland. He holds a Ph.D. in curriculum and instruction from the University of Wisconsin, Madison in 1991. His research focuses on education policy, teacher expertise, and gender and education.

Andri Rafn Ottesen (andriot@gardaskoli.is) is a lower secondary school teacher at Garðaskóli. He completed a B.Ed. degree in compulsory school teaching in 2016 from the School of Education at the University of Iceland and an M.Ed. degree in 2018 from same school. His areas of special interest are the status of men in teaching and guidance for novices. He has advocated the implementation of an induction year for newly qualified teachers.

Valgerður S. Bjarnadóttir (vsb@hi.is) is a postdoctoral fellow at the School of Education, Unversity of Iceland. She completed a BA degree in education studies in 2004 and postgraduate diploma for teaching in 2005 from from the University of Iceland; a masters degree in international and comparative education in 2015 from Stockholm University, and a PhD degree in in 2019 from the University of Iceland. Her research areas include educational policy analysis and social justice in education.

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ORCID

Ingólfur Ásgeir Jóhannesson http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8212-5944
Valgerður S. Bjarnadóttir http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2506-8111

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