

MODULE 7:

Early childhood education and gender norms

By Evie Browne

Key messages

- Early childhood is a critical time to nurture gender-equitable attitudes and behaviours in children, before biases and stereotypes become embedded.
- Early childhood educators need support, resources and training so that they can reflect on their own gendered biases to avoid transmitting these to children.
- Emerging best practices show that it is possible to challenge gender stereotypes by encouraging boys and girls to play together, and to play with non-stereotypical toys. But educational systems need resources and political will to shift towards gender-responsive play-based learning pedagogies.
- More evidence is needed on how gender-responsive pedagogy in the early years translates into learning outcomes for boys and girls, and into wider gender norm change.

About this module

This module examines how gender norms affect early childhood education. It looks at not only how unequal gender norms are often reinforced in pre-schools, but also how they can be transformed in a positive way to promote gender equality. This module should be read alongside [Module 5](#), which covers gender-transformative education in more detail.

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Early childhood education

Early childhood education (ECE) refers to formal or informal learning from birth to eight years old, in pre-school, kindergarten or nursery environments. ECE is an important formative experience, during which children are exposed to many gendered norms. Socialisation into gender stereotypes begins in the very early years, often from birth. By the age of three, children understand cultural gender stereotypes; and by the age of six, they have formed expectations about gender roles ([UNICEF, 2022](#)).

Educators' approaches to children can either reinforce or challenge gender norms. Learning materials may also reinforce unequal norms by portraying men and women in stereotyped roles in stories or encouraging girls or boys to play only with certain toys or games. Children develop their understanding of gender through these interactions.

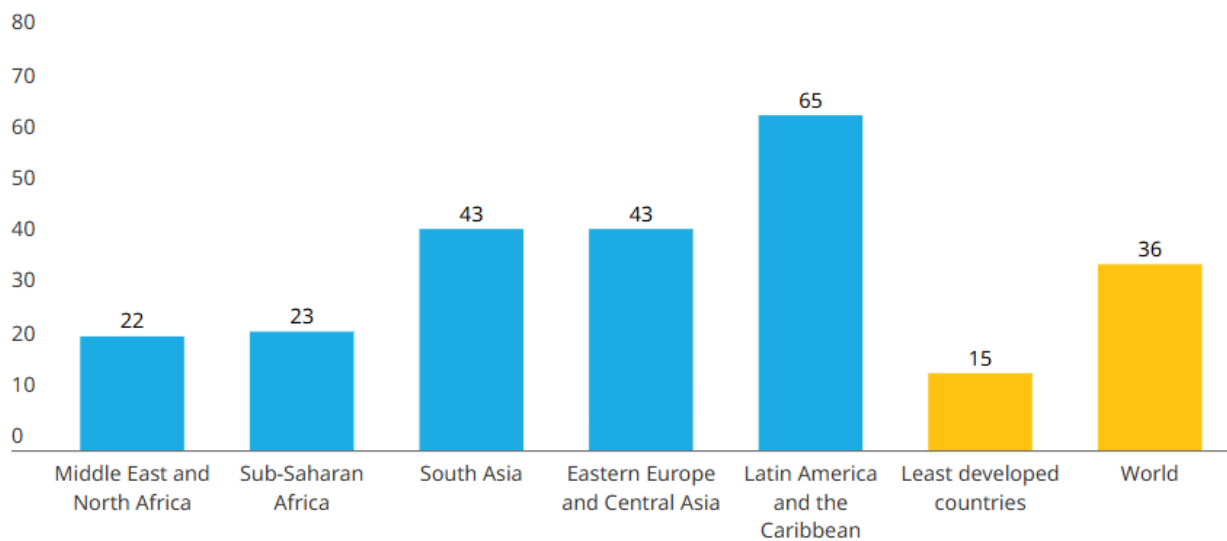
The past decade has seen growing efforts to reduce such biases by promoting gender-transformative approaches in early childhood education. This module discusses two main areas where there is evidence that gender norms can be challenged in this field: pedagogy, and learning materials and environment. It focuses on formal early educational settings, and largely on children aged three to six.

Gendered access to ECE

While enrolments in ECE have increased worldwide over the past two decades, UNICEF estimates that, as of October 2024, only four in 10 children aged three and four are enrolled, with substantial regional differences ([UNICEF, 2025](#)). Around two in every three children in Latin America and the Caribbean attend ECE compared to just under half of children in South Asia and only one in four in sub-Saharan Africa (Figure 7.1). Enrolment rates reflect

accessibility of provision – both the existence of facilities and their affordability, as shown in an ILO review (Addati et al., 2022). Children are more likely to attend ECE the older they are.

Figure 7.1: Percentage of children aged 36 to 59 months who attend some form of early childhood education programme, by region



Source: UNICEF global databases, based on Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), and other national surveys, 2015–2023 (UNICEF, 2025).

Note: The world estimate is based on a sub-set of 95 countries covering 61% of the global population of children aged 36 to 59 months. Regional estimates represent data from countries covering at least 50% of the regional population. Data coverage was insufficient to calculate aggregates for the regions not shown.

Globally, there is gender parity in access to early childhood education. But gender may not be the determining factor in access; income, rural location, class and ethnicity may be the fault lines that determine who has access to ECE and who does not (UNICEF, 2022).

UNICEF data from household surveys estimates that 90% of children from the richest wealth quintile attend ECE in the year before primary school starts, compared to only 58% of children from the poorest wealth quintile. A similarly strong rural-urban divide can be seen in some places: urban areas in West and Central Africa have 73% attendance, while rural areas have only 42%. The rural-urban split is not so evident in Latin America and the Caribbean, or in South Asia (UNICEF, 2022).

Gender, however, still has an impact in some contexts, although this is not necessarily seen in net enrolment figures. A study across 11 Asian countries found that parents attached equal importance to pre-school for both girls and boys (Plan International, 2017). In India and Nepal, however, parents with enough income would send their sons to private pre-schools that were perceived to be of higher quality, while keeping their daughters in lower-quality public institutions (Plan International, 2017). Access to ECE is complex and varies considerably by region and demographic group, making it essential to pay close attention to those variables in analysis and policy.

How are gender norms reproduced in early childhood education?

Local gender norms are brought into the classroom by both teachers and children. Norms about gendered behaviour, appearance and futures for children affect how ECE staff interact with learners, with other teachers, and with parents. Teachers may consciously or unconsciously interact differently with girls and boys, and the spaces, play materials, books, illustrations and language used convey messages about gender norms and roles ([Singh and Bipath, 2024](#)). Children develop their understanding of gender through these messages (as well as at home and in other spaces). These practices may seem harmless, but they become problematic when educators use them to frame children's mindsets about what they can and cannot do by virtue of them being girls or boys.



Gender biases are often upheld through the hidden curriculum, including *how* teachers teach, as well as *what* they teach.

Gender biases are often upheld through the hidden curriculum, including *how* teachers teach, as well as *what* they teach. Early childhood education staff might divide children into groups of girls and boys, treat them differently, assign different tasks, or hold different expectations of their abilities. Some examples of gender biases from Rwanda, South Africa and Zambia include:

- treating girls as the weaker sex by comforting a girl who hurts herself and is crying, while a boy in the same situation is told, 'Get up, boys don't cry'
- giving girls chores such as sweeping, and boys heavier physical duties, such as lifting
- not allowing girls to participate in tree-climbing or other activities considered 'rough', such as football; sending boys away when playing with a group of girls or not allowing them to play with dolls
- giving girls easy numeracy exercises while giving boys more challenging tasks ([VVOB and Fawe, 2019](#)).

While such examples are easy to understand as gendered, some gender biases can be extremely subtle. Research in Sweden found that teachers used more verbal communication with girls, while responding more urgently to boys' needs ([UNICEF, 2022](#)). Early childhood educators may also use softer language and warmer interactions with girls, and stronger language or harsher tones with boys ([VVOB and Fawe, 2019](#)).

While there are cultural differences in expectations for boys and girls, an OECD review finds that early childhood educators commonly describe girls as 'easier' and boys as 'demanding', meaning that they pay more attention to boys in order to control the class ([Brussino and McBrien, 2022](#)). Gendered expectations of girls' compliance and boys' liveliness mean that educators may treat them differently. This can include holding higher expectations of girls' academic achievements because they are seen as diligent and obedient, and calling on boys

more often than girls to answer questions ([Plan International, 2017](#)). Because biases can be so subtle, teachers may not be aware of how their practices contribute to gender inequality.

Gender inequality may also be reproduced in resources and learning materials. Learning materials are identified by UNICEF and the OECD as under-representing women and reproducing stereotypes of men and women, boys and girls ([Brussino and McBrien, 2022](#); [UNICEF, 2022](#)). In early years environments, these stereotypes can be found in storybooks, illustrations and posters that often show women as passive characters at home, with men as active protagonists ([VVOB and FAWE, 2019](#)).



At early childhood education level, play and toys are as important as the written materials that educators follow.

At early childhood education level, play and toys are as important as the written materials that educators follow. But play itself is not gender neutral; in fact, it can reinforce stereotypes ([Ramdaeni et al., 2017](#)). Learning environments can reinforce gender divisions if toys are deliberately separated into boys' and girls' categories, or if boys and girls only play with one set of resources (such as girls playing with cooking and home equipment). Gender-specific play can influence children's understanding of men's and women's roles - for example, that only women can or should cook. Different toys teach different skills, and while children may have preferences for certain

activities, it is important not to entrench these as differences that affect their aspirations and achievements ([VVOB and FAWE, 2019](#)).

OECD research on gender stereotypes in education, in general, also suggests that gender norms shape educational expectations and aspirations in different ways for boys and girls, leading to long-term consequences such as channelling girls towards low-paid, caregiving jobs ([Brussino and McBrien, 2022](#)). Dismantling gender stereotypes is, therefore, important to enable all children to reach their full potential, regardless of whether they are boys or girls.

Strategies to address unequal gender norms in early childhood education

This section focuses on two key areas through which ECE practitioners can promote equitable gender norms: pedagogy, and learning materials and environment. Both sections draw on gender-transformative approaches and recognise the importance of learning through play.

Some studies show that gender stereotypes and biases are present in ECE (including a systematic review by [King et al., 2021](#)), and some toolkits describe interventions to address them. These include, in particular, the GRP4ECE (Gender-Responsive Pedagogy for Early Childhood Education) toolkit ([VVOB and FAWE, 2019](#)); one on pre-primary systems by [UNICEF \(2022\)](#); and one on ending gender stereotypes by [UNGEI \(2023\)](#).

But there is only limited rigorous and evaluation-based evidence of the effectiveness of these efforts to remove gender biases and promote gender-equitable values. In particular, there is little evidence on whether gender-responsive approaches result in better learning outcomes or changes in children's attitudes and behaviours regarding gender in later years (Subramanian, 2019). There is more research and evidence from Global North contexts and a relative silence on gender and sexuality in ECE in Global South contexts (Bhana et al., 2023). Some of the most important evaluations are from the GRP4ECE project in South Africa (Ismail et al., 2022) and Zambia (VVOB, 2020), and from Right to Play in Rwanda and Mozambique (Flink et al., 2024).

Pedagogy

Efforts to enhance the quality of ECE often focus on improving pedagogical practices. One key element of this is promoting play-based learning, which can enhance physical, social, emotional, cognitive and social skills in both girls and boys (Parker et al., 2022). Such learning can help young children develop equitable interactions with their peers and learn problem-solving skills. A play-based approach to ECE can, therefore, help to establish gender parity in children's readiness for primary school (Right to Play International, n.d.). However, many teachers lack the capacity to apply learning through play, even for this age group, and rely on teacher-led activities at the chalkboard with the whole class (VVOB and FAWA, 2019).



A play-based approach to ECE can help to establish gender parity in children's readiness for primary school.

Recently, ECE practice has begun to integrate content on gender equality into pedagogical training on learner-centred approaches, recognising the transformative potential of challenging unequal gender norms at a critical time in young learners' development. This approach, often termed gender-responsive pedagogy (GRP), aims to enable children to develop and explore their abilities and interests without the limitations of gender-stereotyped roles, norms and ideas imposed by teachers and others. It aims to lead to more gender-equitable learning outcomes, and to more gender-equitable attitudes and behaviours in children.

Pre-school leaders also benefit from this training so that they are equipped to support teachers, and to promote gender-equitable values through a 'whole school' approach. This involves making sure that all staff and associated bodies, such as governors or parent-teacher associations, are on board, and that there is outreach to parents and caregivers.

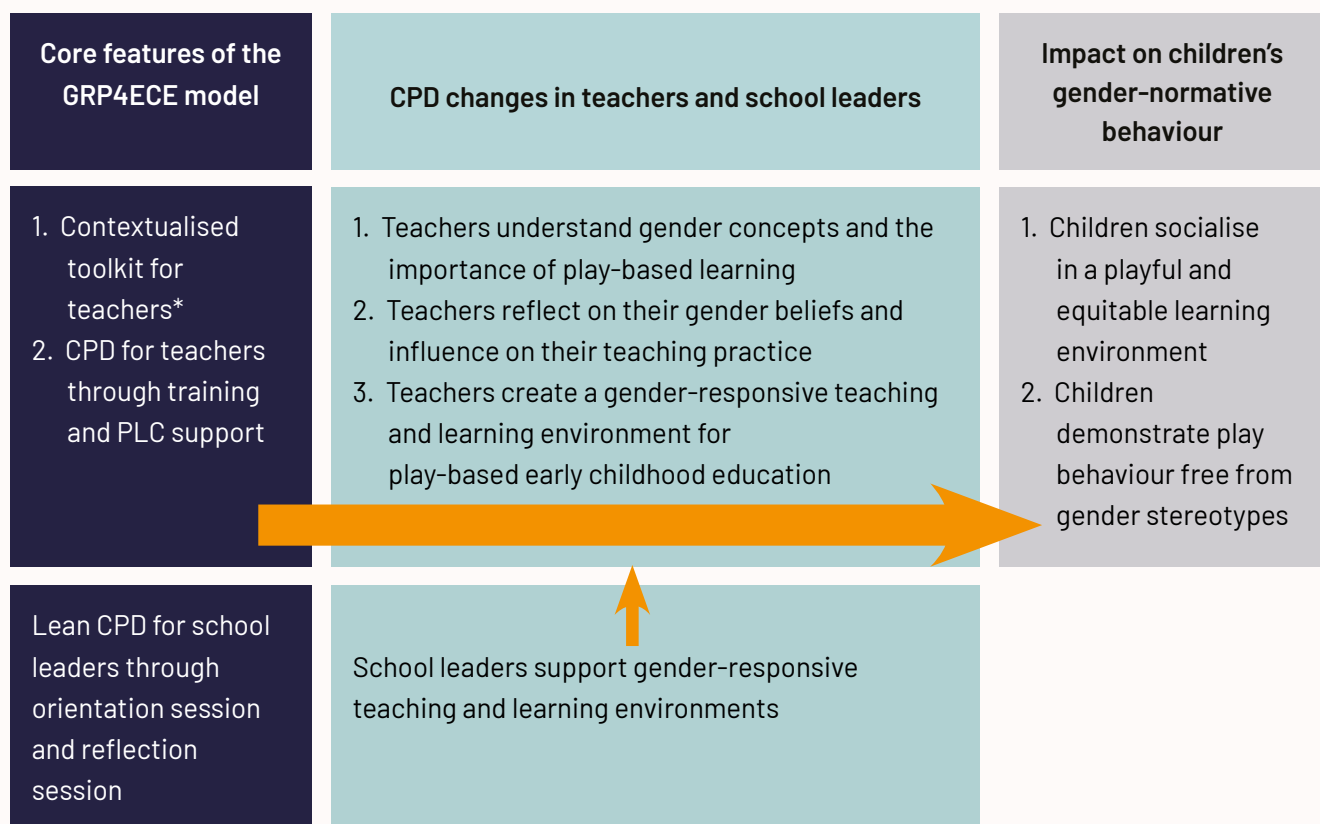
Gender-responsive pedagogy training aims to equip teachers with the knowledge and skills to teach in a gender-equitable way. It prompts teachers to:

- reflect on their own beliefs about traditional gender roles
- give attention to gender issues in teaching, and in interactions outside the classroom.

Figure 7.2, developed by the GRP4ECE project in South Africa, shows its intended outcomes in terms of teachers' understanding and practice, and children's behaviour.

While GRP training is beginning to be mandated in teacher training (in Ghana, for example – see [Ananga, 2021](#)), it is currently delivered almost exclusively through in-service training, and in only a limited number of places.

Figure 7.2: Intervention logic for GRP4ECE model applied in South Africa



Source: [Ismail et al. \(2022\)](#).

Note: *Continuing professional development (CPD); professional learning community (PLC)

Supporting teachers to challenge and overcome their own biases

Helping teachers to understand their own gender biases and stereotypes and to develop more gender-equitable practices is key to changing gender norms in the classroom. The three evaluations in this section suggest that, with support, teachers can quickly change their attitudes and beliefs about gender and begin to remove negative stereotypes in their teaching. For example, evaluations of GRP4ECE's training package reported positive results on teachers' attitudes and practices in South Africa ([Ismail et al., 2022](#)) and Zambia ([VVOB, 2020](#)).

- In South Africa, there were significant and positive changes (i.e. from 0.5 to 1 point on the Likert scale) from baseline to endline on the beliefs and practices of participating teachers on some gendered statements (e.g. 'There are some jobs that only men or women should do', or 'a boy should not behave like a girl'). This is in comparison to the control group. Teachers also reported that, following the training, children were encouraged to choose whatever clothing they liked and were no longer taught what different sexes should wear.
- In Zambia, teachers who completed the training changed their beliefs about gender roles and began to give children examples that challenged gender stereotypes, in contrast to teachers in the control schools. After the training, school leaders said they now saw boys and girls as equal, and like the classroom teachers, ensured that

boys and girls were given equal opportunities in day-to-day tasks, such as being allowed to raise the school flag.

These evaluations also found some small effects on children's behaviour in South Africa, where teachers learned to help children play with non-stereotypical learning materials and toys (Ismail et al., 2022). Teachers reported that children showed an increased ability to cross gender-stereotypical lines.

In Rwanda and Mozambique, Right to Play adapted its primary-level Gender Responsive Continuum of Teacher Training programme for use among ECE teachers. This approach does not explicitly focus on changing gender norms, but on training teachers to support boys and girls so that they are equally prepared to enter formal schooling. Interviews with teachers in Mozambique indicated that they had changed their attitudes and practices to be more gender-equitable - for example, not seeking out pink chairs for girls, and encouraging boys and girls to play together (Flink et al., 2024).



When boys or girls explore a different gender role or cross a gendered boundary in their independent play, this should be supported by educators.

The evaluations of GRP4ECE and the Gender Responsive Continuum of Teacher Training programme are among only a few in Global South countries that draw a link between gender-responsive pedagogy training for teachers and changes in children's behaviour or learning. They found small but noticeable and positive effects that increased gender-equitable practices in the educational environment. It is not yet clear whether this kind of training changes children's behaviour and attitudes about gender, or if it will make a significant difference to gender norms as children grow up.

Checking and challenging gender stereotypes among children

One of the overarching approaches to gender-responsive pedagogy is to challenge gender stereotypes and gender norms when they arise – in books and stories, in discussions and conversations, and among learners (Ismail et al., 2022). Teachers can listen in to learners' conversations and play, and use their interactions to question and challenge stereotypical beliefs. They can provide alternative examples (e.g. female doctors, male nurses, fathers who cook and mothers who work) or asking thought-provoking questions (e.g. 'can girls play football?' or 'can boys play with pink toys?').

When boys or girls explore a different gender role or cross a gendered boundary in their independent play, this should be supported by educators. Teachers can play an active role in facilitating greater gender equity in play by, for example:

- intervening if one gender is taking up all the play space or dominating a specific activity
- reserving time for one gender to play a specific game that they would not otherwise do, like a 'boys only' dressing-up time, or time for girls to play football.

In Zambia, trained teachers were observed trying these methods, actively listening to children's conversations and intervening to challenge stereotypes, unlike most teachers without such training. Teachers must be supported to learn and practise these methods, especially those they find harder.

Ingredients of effective gender-responsive pedagogy training for ECE teachers

Often, the first recommended step is for teachers to reflect on their own biases through observation of their practices and language, in dialogue with colleagues. The GRP4ECE toolkit recommends observing (or filming) a teacher and paying attention to subtle gender biases like different language or intonation when talking to girls or boys, different task assignation or questions, and counting how often boys and girls respond or participate. The toolkit contains many concrete tips and examples of what to watch out for ([VVOB and FAWE, 2019](#)).



The first recommended step is for teachers to reflect on their own biases through observation of their practices and language, in dialogue with colleagues.

Peer learning and support is also mentioned as a sustainable way to change educational practices, given that gender norm change can take a long time. Peer support can help to strengthen teachers' implementation of gender awareness approaches; for example, some Nordic countries have established networks to share gender resources online ([Chi, 2018](#)).

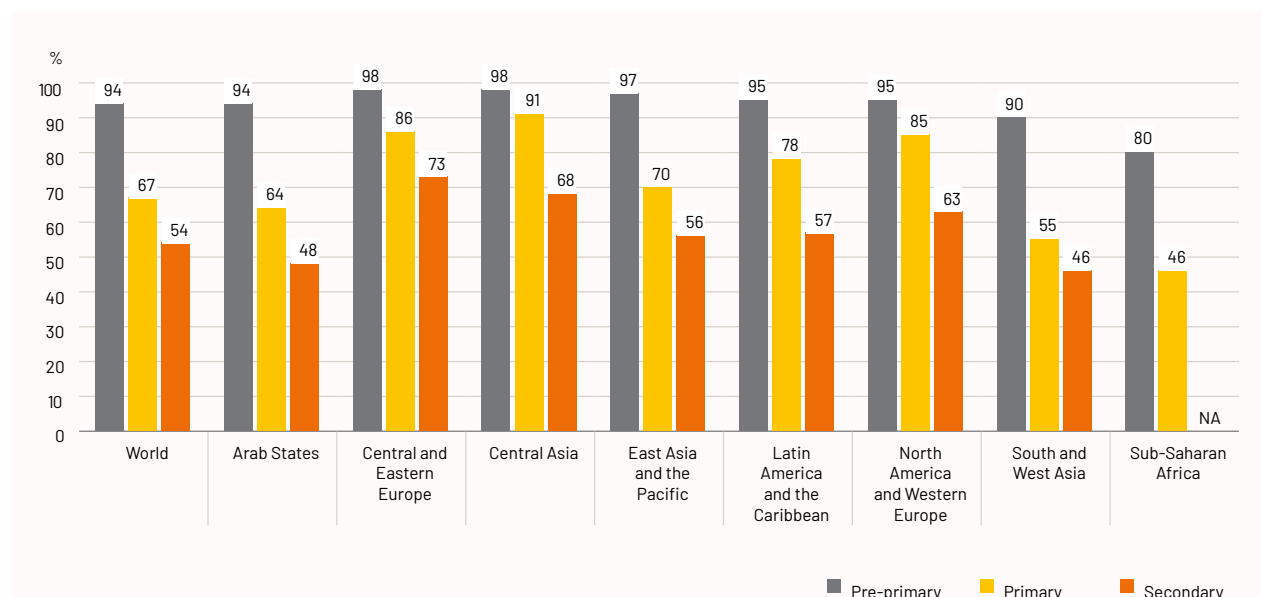
The GRP4ECE programme offered educators fortnightly suggestions and discussion questions via WhatsApp on how to incorporate GRP ([Ismail et al., 2022](#)). Follow-up observations also identified further needs and offered support through regional meetings of educators. GRP4ECE developed its 'Go, Gender Go' game for teachers to support peer learning, which was a fun way to explore stereotypes and experience learning through play. Through its GRP Training Pack, Plan International recommends reflection circles where educators share challenges, problem-solve and reflect on their practices ([Plan International Canada, 2020](#)).

Gender balance in the early childhood education workforce

Globally, the ECE sector is highly feminised (Figure 7.3). It is also poorly paid, low status, and less professionalised than other education sectors ([ILO, 2022](#)), precisely because it is often perceived as an extension of women's caregiving role ([Somji, 2023](#)).

Parents and teachers may themselves hold gender-biased views, believing men to be unsuitable as early years educators ([Ismail et al., 2022](#); [Moosa et al., 2024](#)). Some studies have found that male early years teachers are sometimes perceived to be gay or men who are not 'at ease' with their gender ([Moosa et al., 2024](#); [Mukuna and Mutsotso, 2011](#)). Others suggest that men are seen as more aggressive or more liable to use harsh discipline, and therefore not suited to early years roles, while women are believed to be more nurturing.

Figure 7.3: Percentage of female teachers by education level and region, 2019



Source: [UNICEF \(2022: 32\)](#).

The overall poor recognition of ECE as a profession contributes to its female dominance, as men tend to pursue higher-paying teaching roles. However, deliberate efforts to include more men in ECE, along with improving recognition and pay for ECE teachers, can expand the pool of gender role models for students and can help to counteract negative views of men working with children. And whatever educators' gender, the strategies outlined in this module and others can help to change gender biases.

Case study: Institutionalising gender-responsive pedagogy in early childhood education in Viet Nam



ECE has a long history in Viet Nam, with well-established childcare centres that enable women to undertake paid work. By 2021, Viet Nam had achieved gender parity in ECE and child enrolment rates of 92%.

UNICEF and VVOB worked with the Ministry of Education to develop more gender-sensitive ECE. In 2020, the country began to review ECE and develop a 10-year ECE strategy, with a strong focus on gender equality. This involved a pilot programme in 15 mountainous districts to train educators on play-based and gender-responsive education, lessons from which have been incorporated into the new curriculum.

UNICEF and VVOB have identified the close working relationship with the Ministry as central to the success of their pilots and advocacy. This relationship has allowed approaches and successes to be incorporated into the new ECE curriculum and teacher training courses. The country's existing commitments to play-based learning and gender equality provided a fertile ground for success.

Source: [UNICEF \(2022\)](#).

Learning materials and classroom environments

Learning materials and classroom arrangements may transmit gender stereotypes, or channel children in gendered directions. Small tweaks to learning materials and classroom arrangements can help prevent this.

Gender-sensitive materials

Illustrations and examples in learning materials may promote gender stereotypes, with gender bias in materials part of the 'hidden curriculum' that reflects and reinforces unequal gender norms. In storybooks, for example, boys and men are often the main characters who have adventures, while girls and women are often shown in family and caring roles, or they show women as passive and unambitious characters at home, with men as the active, driven protagonists ([VVOB and Fawe, 2019](#)).

As revision of learning materials takes time, instead teachers can avoid using specific biased texts and images, or they can use gender stereotypes as teaching moments to challenge and question gender norms ([VVOB and Fawe, 2019](#)). The GRP4ECE evaluation in South Africa ([Ismail et al., 2022](#)) shows that teachers were able to adapt materials to be more gender neutral after their training; and in Zambia ([VVOB, 2020](#)), teachers discussed with children how boys and girls, men and women, were portrayed in the teaching materials.

Toys and physical materials can be gender neutral, like building blocks, colouring books and puzzles. Indeed, toys traditionally associated with one gender can be powerful tools to promote gender equality. Encouraging all children to play with a diverse range of toys helps to break down stereotypes and broadens their understanding of different roles and activities. Ultimately, diversifying play toys helps children to see that skills and activities are not limited by gender, fostering a more inclusive and equitable mindset from an early age. This can contribute significantly to challenging and changing societal norms and biases.

Case study: Gender-neutral learning materials and classroom environments in South Africa



KwaZulu Natal province, in South Africa, participated in VVOB's pilot of GRP4ECE training in 2020 and 2021. Some findings from a study on its impact reveal that teachers were able to update their learning materials and classroom arrangements to be more gender responsive. An evaluation used classroom observations to identify the differences between the classrooms where teachers had taken part in the training and control classrooms.

In the former, teachers had updated their learning materials so that more than 50% of the classroom displays, books, games, pretend play and construction play areas promoted gender equity and encouraged free play. The play areas had been adapted to offer a range of opportunities across different kinds of play. Teachers were also careful to adapt their stories and rhymes to be more gender neutral and otherwise used gender-neutral language.

By contrast, teachers in the control classrooms did less to encourage free play and had considerably fewer materials promoting gender equality.

Trained teachers also began to use gender-neutral strategies to group children – alphabetically, randomly, or by learning ability – and then assigned chores and tasks to the groups. This helped to encourage the idea that chores are not specific to a particular gender. Teachers also said that they saw that mixed-sex groups helped boys and girls to play together and move around the different play areas, rather than sticking to one type of play.

These changes in both the learning materials and classroom environment begin to challenge gender norms by reducing the importance of gender as a type of difference between people, and teaching children that boys and girls can both be interested in all kinds of activities and play.

Source: [Ismail et al. \(2022\)](#).

Classroom arrangements

UNICEF reports that mixed-sex and mixed-ability groupings help foster cross-gender friendships and play ([UNICEF, 2022](#)), which helps children learn how to interact comfortably and equally with other genders ([VVOB and FAWE, 2019](#)). There is some evidence from Sweden that young children who favour same-sex playmates develop more pronounced gender-stereotyped interests and behaviour over time, embedding gender inequality ([Shutts et al., 2017](#)). In contrast, mixed-sex groups and play that crosses traditional gender stereotypes promotes empathetic relationships between genders and helps children develop interests that may not align with gender norms. Some options for grouping children instead of by gender are:

- children grouped by age
- equal groups at random
- groups divided by the number of tables in the class
- groups by alphabetical order.

Giving play areas gender-neutral names might also encourage mixed-sex play. For example, instead of the ‘doll area’, calling it the ‘pretend play’ area might make it more attractive to boys, as found in Zambia ([VVOB, 2020](#)). Other neutral choices include ‘games area’, ‘cosy area’, or subject names like ‘maths corner’.

It should be noted, however, that resource constraints, lack of space and large class sizes are a significant challenge in low-income contexts. In Rwanda, for example, an evaluation showed that ECE class sizes were as high as 68 children per teacher, and there was little or no room in the classroom for play space, and no outside space at all ([Flink et al., 2024](#)). But even if opportunities for free play are limited, teachers can still promote gender equality by mixing boys and girls for activities and encouraging their equal participation.

Contextualisation, stakeholder and parental engagement

When looking at gender interventions, it is important to always have in mind the specific operational context. One important first step is the contextualisation of resources, aiming to tailor the content to prevailing and specific cultural, social and economic realities. Contextualising resources and approaches helps to create more effective, meaningful and respectful content that can drive real progress in challenging and changing gender biases.

Ministries of education are crucial in this process. Ultimately if resources and approaches are to be used in official ECE classrooms, their content must be approved by the relevant authorities to whom teachers are accountable. Experience from South Africa and Zambia shows that these ministries are the first stakeholders that should be engaged when developing resources on gender, especially for ECE.



Initiatives to promote gender equality in early education often take a 'whole school' approach that involves parents and caregivers.

Parents and caregivers, however, have the greatest influence on the development of gender norms and stereotypes among young children. Efforts to challenge gender inequalities in pre-schools are likely to be more effective if they are consistent with the messages children are also receiving at home and in the wider community. For this reason, initiatives to promote gender equality in early education often take a 'whole school' approach that involves parents and caregivers.

This involves sensitising parents to common gender biases and explaining how all children benefit from less restrictive stereotypes. Inviting parents to observe parts of early education sessions to see gender-equitable approaches in practice can help to make this real and less daunting. Parent-teacher associations or similar structures such as community workers can play an important role in this kind of outreach activity ([VVOB and Fawe, 2019](#)). In New Delhi, India, for example, community-based pre-schools are run by community workers who have a holistic approach to caring, which includes supporting their health, nutrition and their lives at home ([Subramanian, 2019](#)). Community workers are more able to engage in an informal way with parents, in contrast to the often formal relationships between parents and teachers.

A Plan International study of 11 Asian countries found parent groups were almost completely women-only, reinforcing women's caregiving roles and meaning male caregivers were poorly informed about their children's needs ([Plan International, 2017](#)). ECE providers can take steps to more actively engage fathers by inviting them and making spaces welcoming to men (and other caregivers), so that institutions can help to shift the gender norm that caring for children is women's work ([UNICEF, 2022](#)).

Useful resources

These resources are based on recommendations by [UNICEF Innocenti \(2022\)](#).

[Plan International Canada \(2020\)](#) – The *Gender-responsive pedagogy teacher training (GRPTT)* pack provides materials for a 10-day teacher training programme. While it was not originally developed for pre-primary education, it is currently being adapted for ECE. The programme introduces general concepts related to gender and provides tools and guidelines for teachers in areas such as classroom management, lesson planning, and the evaluation and assessment of practices.

[UNICEF \(2020\)](#) – The *Early childhood education (ECE) accelerator* toolkit was developed to monitor and improve teaching in pre-primary education, which can be incorporated into external monitoring of system quality. It includes gender-bias indicators to measure whether teachers show gender stereotypes in the classroom by not giving children equal opportunities to participate and by expressing unequal expectations about their behaviour or capabilities, and to assess whether they challenge gender stereotypes.

[UNICEF \(2022\)](#) – *Tackling gender inequality from the early years: Strategies for building a gender-transformative pre-primary education system* consists of a full report, technical briefs and an overview of tools for the implementation of a systemic approach.

[VVOB \(2020\)](#) – *Putting SDG4 into practice: Gender-responsive pedagogy for early childhood education* is a technical brief that presents the concept of GRP4ECE in detail, with examples from South Africa, Viet Nam and Zambia.

[VVOB and FAWE \(2019\)](#) – The *Gender-responsive pedagogy for early childhood education* toolkit focuses on African countries and aims to provide ECE teachers and school leaders with a set of practical and low-cost instruments to reflect on their own gender biases, as well as tips to introduce gender-responsive pedagogy in their schools and classrooms. It has been endorsed by the African Union and UNESCO-IICBA.

[World Bank \(2021\)](#) – *Teach ECE: Helping countries track and improve teaching quality in early childhood education* is a classroom observation tool developed to monitor and improve teaching in pre-primary education and can be incorporated into external monitoring of system quality.