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1.6 Designing a European Project on Adolescent Masculinities¹

Kiki Deliyanni and Despina Sakka

The Arienne project focuses on the development of masculine identities in Europe. It is an international action research project funded by the European Commission and involves eight member states of the European Union. The project's aim is to develop methodologies for the study of masculinity and to identify effective strategies to broaden the traditional assumptions underlying masculinity in each country. Preliminary results show that the European teams involved differ considerably in their objectives, perspectives and research methodologies.

Introduction

Arienne is a project on masculinities involving schools in eight European countries. Its aim is to establish opportunities for school-based research and for identifying and sharing appropriate strategies to work with male pupils to promote more gender equality. The project combines a feminist perspective with an action research orientation. It is important to note that the issue of adolescent male identities (and masculinities) is complex and multidimensional and can be approached in many different ways in a broader European context. The research on adolescent masculinities developed so far has primarily been 'pure research' as it tried to gather and analyse data on how young boys experience different aspects of schooling. *Action research* on masculinities, i.e. attempts to develop intervention strategies focusing on boys, is almost unknown.

Can social concepts be changed through education? Theoretical and empirical sociology of education emphasise the role of education in reproducing dominant ideologies which also shape gender relations (Connel 1991, 1995; Haywood/Mac an Ghail 1996; Katz 1995; Kenway 1996; Mahony 1996; Parker 1996; Skelton 1996; Wright 1996). In the light of research, the possibilities to initiate conceptual changes in schools seem rather limited. Twenty years ago, Rosemary Deem pointed out the fact that "education alone certainly cannot change the social relations of production ..., but education may begin to alter people's attitudes towards ... the sexual division of labour, however limited in extent that change of attitude may be, and it can begin to extend the range of skills which children learn at school" (Deem 1978: 54). In her conclusions, Deem expresses the conviction that "the achievement of an education for both, women and men, which does not falsely and artificially

limit thought, skills and abilities on the basis of gender will not be easy in any society, but not to attempt something, because it will be difficult, is a coward's way out" (ibid.: 141). We share Deem's belief that the possibility for social transformations through education depends on the researcher's perception of change. What were our aspirations when designing an action research project and intervention strategies for the classroom? We think that an action research project can become effective in encouraging young people to challenge traditional assumptions on gender relations within the context of schools.

Project *Ariane*

In 1995, the European Commission offered to fund a project on masculinities across eight member states (Denmark, England, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain).² This project was supported under the Third Term Medium Action Programme and encouraged school-based research and sharing strategies for working with male pupils to promote more equality between women and men.³

The project was based on the assumption that gender differences in education, on the labour market and in life are linked to the construction of 'masculinity' in critical ways, so that the promotion of equal opportunities for women must engage with *male* concerns. It included a stage of investigation and a stage of intervention. During the first stage, research was carried out in schools. The results provided the information needed for designing relevant intervention strategies to be implemented during the second stage.

In 1996, the first stage was completed, and the research teams of the respective countries began to analyse their survey data. This article describes the ways in which the national teams have worked together to design their research, and to describe their similarities and differences. Our presentation is based on the national reports contributed by the research director of each country.⁴

The collaboration of the eight national teams revealed a range of common, but also different contexts, perspectives, approaches and ideas. What we shared from the beginning was the decision that *Ariane* should be a feminist action project focusing on *boys*. Our previous experience with gender and education and/or work with girls in schools were the basis for a common language when designing the project. We did, however, differ in many respects, be it in our professional backgrounds, the political situation of the countries involved, the national educational policies, the educational systems or the structure of gender relations in each society. Our analysis showed that these differences also reflect the differences between the respective European countries as regards gender relations and masculinities.

In the first meeting of the research teams we realised that it would be important for the investigation of male identities to focus on the adolescents' experiences with family life, their sexual and emotional feelings, their perspectives and choices for working life, and their ideas about gender roles. The project pursued the following aims:

- to identify effective strategies to *broaden* the traditional assumptions underlying masculinity in each participating country;
- to encourage secondary schools to *investigate* masculinity as a gender issue, to identify stresses and strains related to masculinity, and to assess the role of the school in relation to the behaviour of girls and boys regarding particular concepts of masculinity;
- to develop effective learning and evaluation strategies through collaboration and networking across the member states;
- to encourage sharing common resources, research methodologies and school reform techniques through networking and collaborative action research among the teams and teachers in the pilot schools.

With respect to the target population, it was decided that the research project should involve secondary school students aged 14–16. This age group was chosen because middle adolescence is a critical period characterised by a culmination in the development of gender identity, emotions, cognition, sexual relations and moral reasoning (Berk 1991). Moreover, it is a period of dependence in which major educational or occupational choices have to be made (Deliyanni et al. 1996).

Four pilot schools were chosen in each participating country. A team of teachers was formed in each school. The criteria for the selection of the pilot schools were established independently by the national teams.

The first stage of the project (January – December 1996) was used to study pupils and teachers. The second stage (January – December 1997) focussed on the development and application of the strategies in these pilot schools. All national teams agreed to carry out the following activities:

- to form a national team with the intention of developing action research based on the school community (including management, teaching and auxiliary personnel) and parents;
- to set up four pilot secondary schools in each member state and to form school teams;
- to link the selected 32 European schools in such a way that each school would have two partners (one in the north and one in the south of Europe);
- to collect school documents (i.e. achievement statistics);
- to create and pilot various research instruments.

All member states started by studying the teachers in the pilot schools, and then proceeded to studying the pupils. Academic achievement, domestic life and caring, the masculine experience and gender roles were defined as the major topics of inquiry.

Table 1 Objectives and Methodologies in the Participating Countries

Country	Research objectives	Research instruments	Procedures	Type of schools
Spain	To investigate masculinities through male pupils' aggression.	Qualitative and quantitative methods, open-ended questionnaires, short essays, interviews, theatre performances, etc.	Teachers as researchers, writing on activities taking place in the classrooms.	Mixed schools, urban/suburban areas, higher and lower socio-economic levels, distribution of male and female students.
France	To investigate pupils' performance, group dynamics, self-evaluation, future perspectives, and identification models. To understand the rules of behaviour and the conflict situations in the schools.	Questionnaires, exercises.	Semi-experimental setting in the classrooms (three stages).	Mixed schools, urban/rural areas, multicultural/ mono-cultural, according to level of achievement, level of problems.
Germany	To investigate boys' and girls' feelings, thoughts, values, aspirations, problems, hopes and fields of interest and their plans for the future. Emphasis on learning situations and on male/female relationships.	Questionnaires, individual interviews and written statements.	Questionnaires are answered in the classroom. The survey is carried out in a standardised form.	Different kinds of secondary school in Hamburg.
Italy	To do action research on promoting strategies in the teaching practice concerning gender roles. To make women teachers both the objects and subjects of their action. To investigate pupils' expectancies, their conditioning, interests and self-image.	Questionnaires concerning both, knowledge and relationships, discovering new awareness and measuring changes in knowledge and relationships.	Students and teachers are involved in research and subsequent action groups. Allowing teachers to participate in the project.	Selection based on school composition (only boys/mostly girls).

Table 1 (ctd.)

Country	Research objectives	Research instruments	Procedures	Type of schools
Denmark	To focus on the effects of temporary separation of boys and girls in order to facilitate emancipation processes.	Questionnaires answered by parents and teachers, drawings and group discussions with students, teachers' observations.	Students are temporarily separated by sex (in subject areas).	Urban/suburban/peripheral schools, large/small schools.
Greece	To investigate male and female identities, in order to know not only how boys grow up in secondary school, but also how girls elaborate the notion of masculinity in the context of gender relations. To develop strategies enabling schools to tackle the issues of gender relations.	Qualitative and quantitative data, questionnaires, essays, activities, semi-structured interviews, focus-group discussions.	Activities taking place in the classrooms.	Urban/rural areas, private/public schools, high or middle/working class or rural origin, educational level of parents.
England	To develop the ability of secondary schools to investigate masculinity as a gender issue. To develop effective teaching and evaluation strategies to enable schools to tackle the issues associated with masculinity in contemporary schooling.	Group discussions, school records, observation, interviews, activities, surveys, essays.	Activities taking place in the classroom.	Single/mixed sex schools, multi-ethnic/monocultural, middle-high class/working class, urban/rural areas.
Portugal	To study students' opinions, allowing them to participate in the project.	Group interviews, theatre performances, production of audio-visual material.	Teachers participate in the project.	Proximity of schools to university, adhesion to project by teachers, socio-cultural diversity. Semi-rural, suburban, urban and mining areas.

It has already been mentioned that all national teams shared the same *perspectives*. However, the emphasis on the individual aims differed remarkably (see Table 1).

With respect to the *objectives* set by the national teams, it can be said that some countries saw the *Ariane* project as an opportunity to thoroughly investigate gender identities and planned to develop strategies later on. Others understood it as an action project primarily focusing on the implementation of strategies. In their interim reports, the teams from France, Germany, Greece and Portugal indicated that their aim (in the first phase) was to understand and investigate gender relations. The other four teams stated that their objectives were either to encourage secondary schools to investigate gender relations (England, Italy) or to study masculinity through the temporary and partial separation of boys from girls (Denmark, Spain).

Taking into consideration the existing evidence on gender research in their countries, the teams from England, France and Spain concentrated mainly on masculine identities, while the teams from Denmark, Germany, Greece, Italy and Portugal studied both male *and* female identities, however, without planning to do a study on gender differences *per se*. Some research teams focused more on aggression (Spain), self-image (France, Italy, Portugal), individual as well as group (gender) identity (France, Portugal), conflict situations in the classroom (France), learning situations (Germany), and teachers' perceptions and attitudes (England, Greece, Italy, Spain). The criteria for selecting certain *types of schools* also differed from country to country. The most frequently chosen criteria were the degree of urbanisation (Denmark, England, France, Greece, Portugal, Spain) and the socio-economic level of the area the school was located in (Denmark, England, Germany, Greece, Portugal, Spain). Other criteria were the distribution of male and female students (England, Italy), the ethnic composition (England, France), the type of school (Germany), the size of the school (Denmark), private vs. public schools (Greece), and proximity of schools to a university (Portugal).

The *school teams* in each country consisted of teachers (all countries), headmasters and counsellors (Denmark, France, Italy, Portugal), parents (Denmark), university researchers (Germany), and secondary school students (Greece, Italy).

In terms of *procedure*, the degree and type of participation of the school teams differed from country to country. Some countries actively involved teachers in the research from the very beginning, either by using them as researchers (England, Greece, Spain) or by allowing them to become participants of their observation and action (Italy, Portugal). In addition, some countries involved pupils as participating researchers (Italy, Greece, Portugal). Most of the national teams used activities and questionnaires distributed in the classrooms. In France, the team opted for an experimental design.

With respect to the *instruments*, most research teams developed a combination of semi-structured and structured questionnaires (Denmark, England,

France, Germany, Greece, Italy) and essays (England, Greece, Spain). Data were gathered by various methods, e.g. focus and discussion groups (England, Greece, Portugal, Spain), exercises (France), classroom activities (England, Greece, Spain), drawings (Denmark), interviews (Denmark, England, Germany), theatre presentations (Portugal, Spain), and behaviour observation (Denmark, England).

The *composition* of the research team of each country as well as the individual interests, ideologies and professional inclinations of its members may explain the differences in objectives and methodology: a whole range of different people were involved in the project, e.g. university research/teaching staff (England, France, Germany, Greece, Portugal, Spain), independent researchers (England, Greece), government officials (Denmark, Italy), university students (Germany, Greece, Portugal), and educational administrators (Denmark, Germany). Research team members were sociologists (England, Greece, Portugal, Spain), psychologists (France, Greece, Germany, Portugal, Spain) and educators (Denmark, Germany, Portugal).

Preliminary Results

The analysis of the national reports showed that the teams were influenced by their national research traditions. The features presented in the national reports can be summarised as follows:

- despite legislation and school reforms, mixed schools have not solved the problem of gender inequality in school;
- boys are more often underachievers and face more behavioural, emotional and educational problems than girls who perform better; (this holds especially for pupils in northern and southern European countries);
- teachers deny that school promotes gender inequality or influences pupils' attitudes and values; sometimes they believe that co-education has solved the problem of gender inequality in schools; (this holds especially for southern European countries).

It is obvious from the reports that the schools participating in the project adhere to different educational traditions (centralised versus decentralised). As a consequence, two discourses prevail: autonomy (teachers' professional autonomy) as opposed to social justice (centralisation justified by the fact that it provides equal resources and opportunities).

The variety of results is in accordance with accounts showing that the study of youth in Western Europe is carried out by different disciplines. Hübner-Funk and Bois-Reymond (1995: 261) note: "The scientific approaches to youth as a social phenomenon show highly diverse traditions in Western Europe. They are either linked to educational science, pedagogy and developmental psychology or to political science and sociology." The fact that the

national school teams involved different groups of the school community enriched the composition of the action teams, but turned out to be a disadvantage in the analysis of the heterogeneous results.

Conclusion

Our project showed a great diversity of concepts of (adolescent) masculinity. We cannot possibly talk about masculinity without referring to national and cultural contexts, socio-economic factors and ethnicity. We rather have to accept multiple masculinities in the sense that different male groups experience their masculinity differently. The different perspectives and methods of the *Ariane* project tend to enhance our knowledge both in the fields of educational analysis and gender relations. An intercultural project leads to a dynamic process where people exchange ideas and experiences and share resources. It involves many learning steps, not only about the topic under investigation, but also about the social structure and culture of each country, about different educational systems and different research traditions. Trying to broaden adolescents' horizons offers the opportunity to also broaden our scientific horizons and perspectives.

One might ask whether *Ariane* is a set of eight national projects or one comparative 'European' endeavour. We are convinced of its 'European' nature, in the sense that it maps out the multicultural character of gender relations and adolescent masculinities in Europe. In terms of youth research in Europe, it is necessary to take into consideration the 'multidimensionality' and 'interrelatedness' of the concepts studied, the uniqueness of the populations analysed and the diverse circumstances they live in (Chisholm 1995: 23).

Notes

- 1 Summary of the paper presented at the *Ariane* International Project Meeting, Clermont-Ferrand, France, 25-27 September 1997.
- 2 The European team consisted of project co-ordinator Amparo Tome (Instituto de Ciencias de Educación, Barcelona, Spain); the project directors were Lisa Andersen (Aalborg Kommune, Aalborg, Denmark), Verena Aebischer (Department of Psychology, Université de Paris, France), Christa Degenhart-Marten (Amt für Schule, Behörde für Schule, Jugend und Berufsbildung, Hamburg, Germany), Kiki Deliyanni-Kouimtzi (Department of Psychology, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece), Maria-Rosa del Buono (I.R.R.S.A.E., Milan, Italy), Netercia Pacheco (Faculdade de Psicologia e de Ciências da Educação, Universidade do Porto, Portugal), and Madeleine Arnot (Department of Education, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom).
- 3 *Ariane* is financed by the Commission of the European Communities. The authors thank the Task Force/Human Resources and DG XXII for their support.

- 4 For more details about the aims of the project, the description of methodologies, the formation of the national teams, the selected schools in each country and the research instruments used see Tome (1996).

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