

ABSTRACT

Title: The Teachers' Union, pre-school teachers and status-raising strategies.
A gender perspective on professionalisation (Läraryrket, förskollärare och
statushöjande strategier. Ett könsperspektiv på professionalisering)

Written in Swedish, summary in English

Author: Paula Berntsson

Doctoral Dissertation at the Department of Sociology, Göteborg University
Box 720, SE-405 30 GÖTEBORG, Sweden

ISBN: 91-975404-7-1

ISSN: 1650-4313

Göteborg 2006

This dissertation concerns the strategies of professionalisation that the Teachers' Union pursues in order to upgrade pre-school teachers' work and professional knowledge. Both union actions in general and customary strategies of professionalisation have been criticised for presupposing men as the norm. This is considered to have contributed to obscuring and devaluing work and professional knowledge which are more specific to female-dominated professional groups. Therefore the strategies of the Teachers' Union are studied in the dissertation from a gender perspective. The Union's perceptions of status-raising strategies are compared with those of the strongly female-dominated pre-school teacher corps, and an analysis is made of whether the Union's strategies contribute to maintaining or to changing the value-discrimination that female-dominated professional groups' work and knowledge risk suffering. The dissertation also examines common professionalisation strategies from a gender perspective.

The analyses are based upon union documents, interviews with union representatives, a questionnaire investigation among 265 pre-school teachers, the views expressed by such teachers in newspaper letters and articles, research on professions, feminist research, and work-evaluation projects.

The results show that a majority of the pre-school teachers in the questionnaire study think that most of the strategies pursued by the Teachers' Union contribute to upgrading their status. At the same time they believe that other factors not emphasised by the Union in its strategies are also important for the profession's status. This has to do with their task of giving children more egalitarian conditions of upbringing, their work with development and care, and their emotional and social competences. These work-tasks and competences are more usual in female-dominated professional groups and have often been subjected to value-discrimination. When the Teachers' Union refrains from emphasising them, it can contribute to maintaining this value-discrimination. Nonetheless, the strategies which the Union chooses to pursue can support the upgrading of pre-school teachers' work and professional knowledge. It may, however, be that the union strategies primarily benefit those pre-school teachers who work in a pre-school class and that they thereby enhance differences in status within the pre-school teacher corps.

Keywords: Union strategies, professionalisation, gender, Teachers' Union, pre-school teachers, female-dominated professional group, value-discrimination, work-tasks, professional knowledge.