

Male teachers in Early Childhood Education in Germany: From Research to Action

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Abstract

The recent German research project “Male teachers in early childhood education”, financed by the Ministry of Family Affairs, analyzed whether the different stakeholders working in early childhood education are interested to increase the proportion of male teachers in early childhood centers. Secondly, the project explored which learning and working conditions in vocational training schools and early childhood centers can motivate men to choose an early childhood teaching profession.

First, 40 in-depth group and individual interviews were carried out with male and female teachers, students, directors of early childhood centers and officers of providers of early childhood centers. The findings of this qualitative survey were supported by a representative quantitative study of total 1000 parents, 600 directors of early childhood centers and 100 officers of providers of early childhood centers. Among the main findings of the survey is that the vast majority of the interviewees have made good (working) experiences with male teacher in early childhood centers and would appreciate an increase of the proportion of male teachers. The study also elaborates the barriers which prevent that more men choose the profession “early childhood teacher”.

As a consequence of the results of the study the German Ministry of Family Affairs established the coordination office “Men in early childhood education” at the beginning of 2010. The coordination office aims to develop and implement strategies to increase the proportion of men in early childhood centers in cooperation with stakeholders of early childhood education, e.g. providers of early childhood centers, vocational training schools, and unions.

Coordination office men in kitas
Catholic High School of Applied Sciences
Berlin, Germany

Male Educators in Early Childhood Centres (Kitas)

Michael Cremers, Jens Krael, Marc Calmbach

Outline

- 1 Methodical system and study questions
- 1 Acceptance and desirability
- 1 Scepticism and reservations
- 1 Barriers and obstacles
- 1 Actions, strategies and initiatives
- 1 Recommendations for activities

METHODICAL SYSTEM AND STUDY QUESTIONS

Methodical System

■ 40 guideline based interviews:

- Funding organisation officers, managers of early childhood centres, male and female educators, male and female trainees

■ Representative survey (based on telephone interviews):

- Funding organisation officers (n=100),
- managers of early childhood centres (n=600) and parents of children (n=1000)

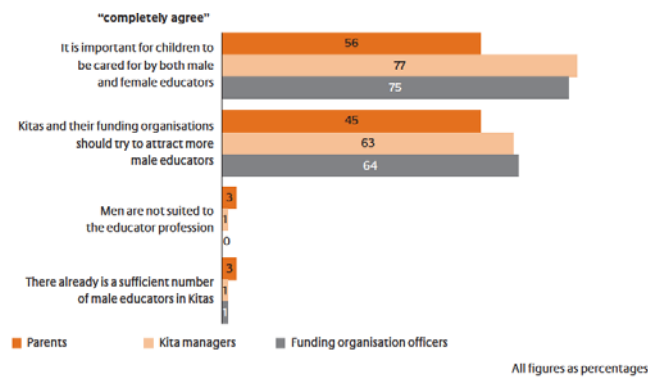
Study Questions

- To what extent are male educators welcomed in early childhood centres?
- How should working and learning conditions be procured, so that men opt for educator training and can be motivated to work in early childhood centres?
- Do funding organisations and early childhood centres pursue certain strategies to attract men working in early childhood centres?

ACCEPTANCE AND DESIRABILITY

Are male educators welcomed in early childhood centres?

Acceptance of male educators



Reasons for more male educators

■ *"Well, if you look at the Berlin framework program for early childhood centres, it says there that we should prepare children for life. Life in Berlin is colourful. And each early childhood centre really must take a look itself to see if it is colourful. And that includes men, too. And the widest possible variety of men. Big, small, fat, round, quiet, loud (...). Otherwise we won't get the framework program implemented."*

(female) manager 50 years

Reasons for more male educators

- Male educators are a valuable addition for children, since they introduce a different range of activities and ideas than female educators
- Girls and boys need female *and* male role models
- It is important, that male educators are available as contact persons for fathers
- Male educators make an important contribution to extent traditional male images

SCEPTICISM AND RESERVATIONS

Is there any scepticism with regard to male educators?

Scepticism and Reservations



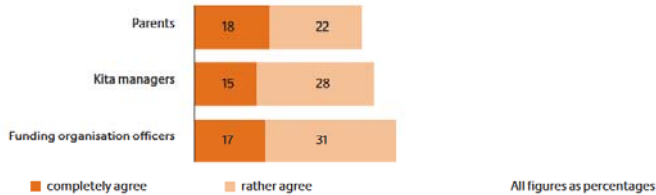
Scepticism and Reservations

■ „And then just the role as a man in this facility. This handicap, as a man, that they just ... that you will be watched so closely and well that ... I have already given a lot of thought to this. Because the media always portrays the man as an offender with regard to children. And I didn't know how this ... in my everyday job ... how this would affect me.“

Male trainee, 23 years

Scepticism and Reservations

"Even if this does injustice to many men, I have already considered the risk of possible child abuse by male educators."



Scepticism and Reservations

Conclusion: Reasoned approval of male educators in early childhood centres

"I would entrust my child in the Kita to a male educator without any misgivings."



BARRIERS AND OBSTACLES

How is the low ratio of male educators in early childhood centres essentially accounted for in the surveys?

Barriers and Obstacles

- Low pay in combination with
 - No payment for training
 - Orientation on the cultural concept of the male bread-earner
- Low opportunities for advancement
- Low social recognition

Barriers and Obstacles

- *"Recognition is quite essential. (...) And I believe that men at the centre are more insistent about recognition and want to get it. And if it doesn't come then they'll go back again. (...) Then pay is another thing. At the latest when they have children themselves, when they feel they are the breadwinner or should be the breadwinner, then it can happen that they might switch to management. Or they get out completely, and do something completely different. Well, something must be done."*

Male Kita manager, aged 35

Barriers and Obstacles

- Traditional career images
- Traditional concepts of gender
- A „female culture“ is perceived as dominant in early childhood centres

Barriers and Obstacles

- *"I don't really want to say everything here is bullshit. Which it really isn't! For Goodness sake. But I think there is something missing ... well one or two things, where you could just also ... also self-actualize somehow. Well I was just thinking now, there is no "technical" area here in the centre at all. I raised this with the management. And they said: yes, go on and do it then. But to just do it is always difficult. Without having anything... doing something, somehow. And perhaps it would be great to have another colleague, who then says okay, let's build a technical area."*

Male educator, aged 31

Barriers and Obstacles

- **However**

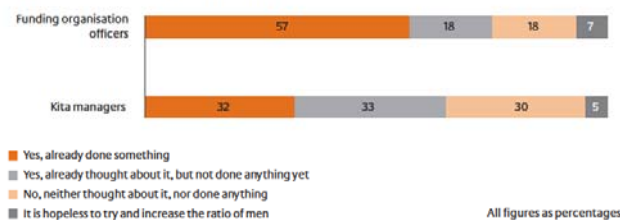
Male educators and trainees clearly assess career prospects and social recognition considerably higher than the other interview groups

ACTIONS, STRATEGIES AND INITIATIVES

Have funding organisation officers and early childhood centre managers already thought about strategies to increase the ratio of men in early childhood centres?

Activities, Strategies and Initiatives

"Have you ever thought about how the ratio of male educators can be increased or something done in this respect?"



Activities, Strategies and Initiatives

- Funding organisations and early childhood centres partly possess a set of various measures
 - Cooperation with schools, vocational schools or employment agencies
 - Male job applicants are always invited for job interviews
 - Male educators - where possible - are not distributed over various early childhood centres

Activities, Strategies and Initiatives

- However
 - Funding organisations and early childhood centres don't have compulsory internal organisational strategies to attract male educators

RECOMMENDATIONS

What kind of strategies and measures to increase the percentage of men appear to be successful against the background of the study?

Main Recommendations

- Picking up on the great level of interest in qualified male personnel
- Developing and implementing customised action strategies to increase the ratio of men in early childhood centres in cooperation with the most important professional players involved in the area of early childhood education.



Establishment of a coordination office „Men in Kitas“

Coordination Office

Activities

- Information
- Strategic consultancy
 - Model Projects
- Events
- Networking
- Publicity Work



Male Educators in Early Childhood Centres (Kitas)

www.koordination-maennerinkitas.de



Thank you very much for your attention.