Does the fear of pedophilia prevent men to become childcare workers?
Presentation on the 21st. EECERA annual conference, 16.9.2011, Geneva/Switzerland

Abstract
Recent research projects on men in ECEC in Austria and Germany aimed at identifying factors which make it difficult for men to enter the field of childcare. In this context it has to be reflected that the fear of pedophilia is an important theme in the public discussion on men working in the educational system. The aim of the presented research is analyzing reasons and outcome of a general distrust against males working in ECE institutions or training for this profession.

The research projects presented here build up on several international studies on male workers in ECE. The connections between gender and care are analyzed in the framework of gender and masculinities studies.

With a range of qualitative and quantitative methods a nationwide Austrian research project investigated the views of active ECEC workers, adolescents and adults in vocational training, pupils prior to career choice, and also parents. Similar research was conducted in Germany.

The results show that many men experience negative reactions on their decision for taking up a training program or a job in ECEC. The fear of being distrusted or even accused as abuser is clearly identified as one of the factors which make it difficult for men to enter the field of child care. This is especially evident in the work with infants.

From an ethical point of view, prevention of sexual abuse is a basic necessity for ECEC institutions. But, regarding this as a problem only of male workers is not only wrong, but puts all men under spell. This has to be addressed as a question of equal rights. Moreover, preventing sexual abuse by generally restricting physical contact between men and children (“no touch policies”) ignores basic knowledge about the needs of children.

Recruitment strategies and training programs have to deal with the fear of pedophilia and have to counter false accusations of (all) male childcare workers as possible child abusers. For this, it is necessary to develop strategies to prevent sexual abuse in ECE institutions regardless of the gender of workers. A general distrust towards men works against the aim of developing a diverse, gender-balanced work force.
Bibliography


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Does the fear of pedophilia prevent men to become childcare workers?

To begin with...

"And then just the role as a man in this center. 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
(Cremers, Krabel & Calmbach 2010)
Research question

Which effect has the fear of pedophilia regarding efforts towards a more gender-balanced work force?

Research background

- Research project „elementar – men in ECEC in Austria“ Innsbruck university (Aigner & Rohrmann 2011)
- Research project „Male Educators in Early Childhood centers and in vocational training for ECE“ Catholic High School, Berlin, Germany; (Cremers, Krabel & Calmbach 2010)
Austria: elementar (2008-2010)

- Pupils prior to career decision questionnaire: boys N=234, girls N=244
- Adolescents and adults in vocational training questionnaire: males N=207, females, N=258
  - in-depth interviews: males N=13, females, N=8
- Men and women working in ECE questionnaire: males N=112, females, N=154
  - in-depth interviews: males N=29, females N=20

Why are there so few men?

From interest to qualified professional: proportion of males and females at different stages of educational and job biography

(Aigner & Rohrmann 2011, 339)

- 40 semi-structured interviews
  - provider officers, managers of early childhood centres, male and female educators, male and female trainees
- Representative survey (based on telephone interviews):
  - provider officers (N=100), managers of early childhood centres (N=600) and parents of children (N=1000)

Germany: programs for more men in ECE

Programs supported by the Ministry of family affairs, senior citizens, women and youth:

- Coordination office men in Kitas (2010-2014?) (Catholic High school, Berlin)
- ESF-program „More men in Kitas“ (2011-2013) 16 regional projects funded with 13,5 million €
- Programs for job shifters (in preparation)

http://www.koordination-maennerinkitas.de
Distrust and fear of pedophilia: a common theme in research on men in ECE

Few research and no data about sexual abuse in ECE institutions

Decline of proportion of male workers after cases of sexual abuse

Consequences in practice: avoidance of touch in adult-child-relations

Differences between countries – fewer problems in the Nordic countries

New Zealand: Decline of male workers after cases of sexual abuse in 1993

PERCENTAGE OF MEN AND WOMEN IN EARLY CHILDCARE

Results from recent research

- Attitudes of adolescents
- Experiences of young men in vocational training
- Experiences of male workers
- Comparison of groups
- Parent’s views

16.9.2011 Rohrmann (2011): Does the fear of pedophilia prevent men to become childcare workers?
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Attitudes of adolescents

Prejudices against male ECE workers among adolescent pupils

„Men in kindergartens are dangerous for children“

„Men working in kindergarten are perverts / abuse children“
Distrust against men (1)

„Males basically experience distrust“

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General distrust against men in ECE
(Aigner & Rohrmann 2011, 353)

Distrust against men (2)

„I have already experienced accusations as abuser“
„In my practice, males have been accused as abusers“

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Personal experience of accusations as „abuser“
(Aigner & Rohrmann 2011, 353)
Parents’ views (Austria)

- The vast majority (89.5%) of parents want more male ECE workers.
- Parents think that men shall take charge of all activities in kindergarten as women do – including comforting, sitting on the lap, washing and toilet visits.

(Aigner & Rohrmann 2011)

Parents’ views (Germany)

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

Parents

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Kita managers

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Providers officers

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All figures as percentages

(Cremers, Krabel & Calmbach 2010)
Parents’ views (Germany)

**Conclusion:** Reasoned approval of male ECE educators

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

<table>
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<tr>
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</table>

All figures as percentages
Deviations from 100% are due to rounding

(Cremers, Krabel & Calmbach 2010)

Consequences for practice (1)

- „No touch policy“ (USA) – especially regarding male workers
- „Hands off approach“ (New Zealand: Physical Contact Code of Practice, 1998)
- Germany and Austria:
  - mostly individual „solutions“ – men avoid close physical contact
  - „keep the door open“
  - sometimes men are not allowed to change nappies or to help children (girls) on the toilet
Discussion (1)

The public discourse arises
1. from single reported cases, as there is no reliable data available,
2. from a general distrust against men and stereotypes about male sexuality

The discourse promotes and reinforces gender-related stereotypes on infant-child-relations and sexuality:
- women are seen as “caring”
- men as “dangerous”

Discussion (2)

- The fear of being accused as abuser hinders male adolescents and young males who are interested or have already stepped into vocational training – this is especially relevant in peer groups of male adolescents
- It also disturbs everyday work of male ECE workers, especially in relations to infants
- The discourse is relevant for gender relations and gender pedagogy in gender-mixed teams
Discussion (3)

- The problem is most relevant for male adolescents and their peer groups in the period of vocational orientation;
- It is also important when males make their first experiences in ECE institutions as trainees or freshly educated workers;
- It is less relevant for experienced male workers, and in gender-mixed teams which have worked together for a long time.

Consequences for practice: Netherlands

“Face it and deal with it” (Woltring, 2011):

- More men in Early Childcare and Education
- Keep the “wrong men” out

“Keeping the wrong men out by prohibiting all men in this field does wrong to all good men, deprives children from contact with men (...) and it places the full burden on women in a time when roles are happily changing.” (Woltring, 2011)
Consequences for practice: Netherlands

12-point policy program (Woltring, 2011):
- Supervision during professional education:
  - reflection of motives for interest in work with children
- Screening of ECE applicants by capable staff
- Always two professionals working together
- No exclusion of men from changing nappies, washing etc.
- Transparent working culture
- “Use your intuition, develop it and act on it”
- Regular counseling, coaching and/or supervision on the job
- Complaints and remarks of parents shall be taken seriously
- Employees have to be protected

Consequences for practice: Germany

Information and work material for teachers, trainers and institutions should include the following topics:
- Sexual development and sexuality in early childhood
- Importance of physical presence and close contact for adult-child-relations in ECE
- Prevention of sexual abuse I: institutional structures
- Prevention of sexual abuse II: parents
- Prevention of sexual abuse III: children
- Standards for intervention in cases of sexual abuse
- “General distrust” against men in ECE
- Methods for confronting gender stereotypes
Questions for further research

- Collection of reliable data on sexual abuse in ECE institutions
- Research on the variability of physical contact in adult-child-relations in ECE and its importance for children’s development
- Research on consequences of “general distrust” on behavior of male ECE workers
- Gender sensitive analysis of concepts for prevention of sexual abuse, and further development of such concepts.

Bibliography


Cremers, Michael; Krabel, Jens; Calmbach, Marc; Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen & Jugend (Hg.) (2010). Männliche Fachkräfte in Kindertagesstätten. Eine Studie zur Situation von Männern in Kindertagesstätten und in der Ausbildung zum Erzieher. Berlin: BMFSFJ.


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Links

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elementar research project
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web: http://www.uibk.ac.at/ezwi/elementar

KoME – Research network Knowledge on Men in ECE
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15.9.2011
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Thank you for your attention.