Men’s voices in ECE in Austria

First results of a research project

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ECE in Austria: Background

- profession associated to care & play, not to education
- low salaries and poor working conditions
- vocational training: secondary school level
- male students permitted only since 1980
- only 1% male workers
ECE in Austria: recent developments

ongoing debates about
• new understanding of elementary education
• raising the level of vocational training
• keeping pre-school year free of charge

The research project

• What makes men become ECE workers?
• What do men experience in vocational training and when working in kindergarten?
• Is there a specific ‘male’ way of working with children?
The research project: target groups

• Pupils prior to career decisions
• Adolescents and adults in vocational training
• Men and women working in ECE institutions

The research project: methods

• Analysis of statistical data
• Group discussions
• Paper & pencil surveys
  full survey of men in ECE
• In-depth interviews
  content analysis
  psychoanalytic approach
Gender in ECE work force

c.a. 430 men
more than 35,000 women

Pupils prior to career decision
(n = 478)

One of four boys can imagine working in kindergarten or after-school-care

One of four boys shows interest for educational professions
Prejudices against male ECE workers among pupils

"Men in kindergartens ain't no "real" men"

"Men working in kindergarten are perverts / abuse children"

Vocational training

- Secondary schools („BAKIP“) → „Kindergarten pedagogue“
- Special forms for adults
- Short-time-trainings → „assistants“
- Alternative trainings for groups run by parents' initiatives
Vocational training for ECE (BAKIP): number of males is increasing
BAKIP survey: main results (n = 465)

- Many boys report negative reactions of peers (boys) on their vocational decision
- „Male“ themes and interests fall short at school
- Boys/men interests: more nature & outdoor, sports & physical interactions with children
- Boys report subtle discrimination (35 %) and accusations as „abusers“ (12 %) in kindergarten
- Most boys feel comfortable at school, but many don’t intend to work in ECE after training.

BAKIP survey: main results

Boys in ECE vocational training are “modern” males:

- Men can raise children as well as women (94 %)
- Men and women shall equally share work and family time (78 %)
- Fathers should work less to have more time with their family (65 %)
Interviews with ECE workers: first results

• Most men like their job and feel good at work
• Clear support for more men in ECE, but...
• … many male professionals were trying hard to explain why men are important
• Men need „having their own way“
• Better general conditions are basic for motivating men – and women!

Conclusions: School

• Better information about profession
• Visits of male ECE workers in schools
• Practical training for boys in kindergartens

• Making gender an issue at school: e.g. „What is a ‚real’ man?“
Conclusions: Vocational training

• More “male” themes and interests in ECE vocational training
• Qualification on tertiary level (high school/university)
• Low-threshold programs and on-the-job training for job changers

Conclusions: ECE institutions

Yes, more money would be good, but...
it's not the only thing.

• Better working conditions in general
• More male colleagues
• Better career options
• More appreciation of ECE work from parents and politicians
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