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**We would like to discuss our findings on scepticism of parents towards male educators (see our study *Male educators in Kitas, Chapter 5.3 Scepticism and reservations...*”, p. 57-60.**

**If you would like a short overview about the study you may read in the following comprehension.**

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### **Male Educators in Kitas (Early Childhood Education and Care Facilities)**



**A study conducted by the Catholic University of Applied Social Sciences Berlin and Sinus Sociovision Ltd, Heidelberg/Berlin**

**Download: <http://mika.koordination-maennerinkitas.de/about-us/publications/our-study/>**

**The study on ‘Male Educators in Kitas (Early Childhood Education and Care Facilities)’ funded by the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) summarizes the findings of a qualitative and quantitative survey conducted from 2008 to 2009.**

#### **Authors**

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#### **Starting point: facts and figures**

When the survey was conducted, only 2.4 percent of all educators in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) centres were men. The percentage of men employed in ECEC centres varied dramatically at state, district and municipal levels. At the state level, the city-states of Bremen and Hamburg had the highest percentage of men in ECEC centres in the country. The percentage was particularly low in the eastern German federal states and in Baden-Wuerttemberg and Bavaria. The study points to possible reasons for these regional variations.

#### **Methodology and survey group**

- Documentation of recent national and international research findings
- Statistical evaluation of state and district-level data
- 40 structured interviews with ECEC provider programme directors, administrators, educators and male and female trainees
- Representative telephone survey of ECEC provider programme directors (n=100), administrators (n=600) and parents (n=1,000)

## Key questions

- What should general learning conditions be like in respect of educator training so that men opt for such a training and can – during training – be motivated to work in ECEC centres?
- What should general working conditions in ECEC centres be like so that men opt for work in ECEC centres and (want to) remain there over a longer period?
- Is the public and political interest in more male educators also reflected among ECEC centre providers and in ECEC centres themselves?
- Are those responsible for training policy and education in these centres interested in increasing the ratio of men in early childhood education?
- Are strategies being pursued to attract men to work in ECEC centres?

## The doors of ECEC centres are wide open to men!

In this respect, the findings of the study are unequivocal. Those surveyed held the unanimous view that the few male educators currently working in ECEC make a valuable positive contribution to the educational work of the centres. The notion that male and female educators can learn from one another's teaching methods was also undisputed, with around 80 percent of ECEC facility provider programme directors and ECEC centre administrators and around 66 percent of parents sharing this view.

## Survey findings

Survey respondents reported the hope that increasing the presence and participation of men in ECEC centres would expand traditional conceptions of gender roles: caring, comforting and nurturing should be seen as masculine as well as feminine traits.

## Strategic approaches and political support

Men can discover careers as educators through positive experiences working with children and young people—for example, in compulsory civilian service or in church or volunteer programmes.

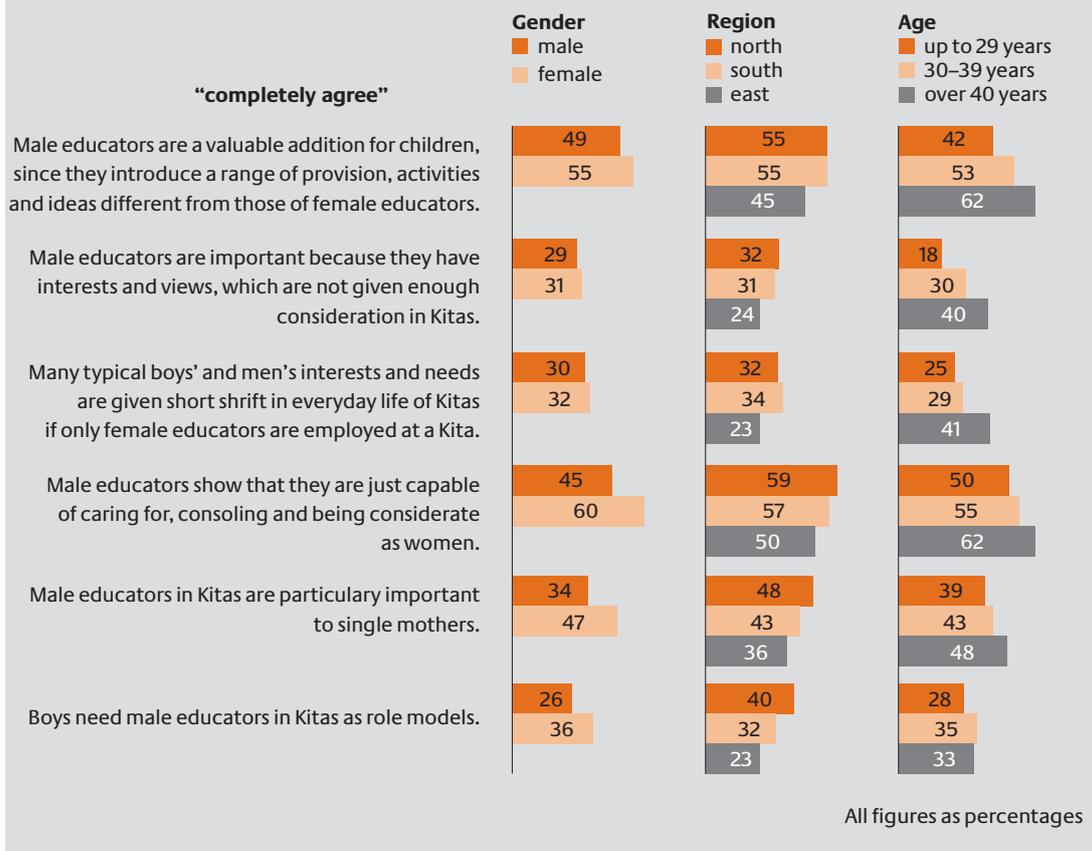
ECEC provider programme directors and administrators want to make a significant contribution to increasing the percentage of male educators. They agree that an increase in the percentage of men working in ECEC centres can only be achieved with political support.

## Recommendations to policy makers and ECEC professionals

The authors of the study recommend possible measures for policy makers and ECEC professionals in the following areas:

- Professionalising and enhancing the status of careers in the ECEC sector
- Providing career orientation for young men
- Offering basic and advanced training for female and male educators
- Providing professional qualifications to unemployed men or those seeking a career change
- Developing and expanding tangible practical measures to increase the percentage of men working in the field
- Compulsory civilian and voluntary service
- Strategies for gender awareness and gender equality
- Public relations work

**Fig. 17: Reasons for increasing the ratio of male educators in Kitas – demographic differences among parents (gender, region, age)**



### 5.3 Scepticism and reservations

#### Is there any scepticism with regard to male educators in Kitas?

“Well you always open your mouth a bit, when men in our class say: Yes, from the start, I intend to go into the crèche. If you're fully acquainted with this profession yourself, you always think: really, are you going to do it? (...) And then you think: okay, I'll have to get a little used to the idea that you're going to the crèche now. Although, of course, I have full confidence in him.”

**Female trainee, aged 22**

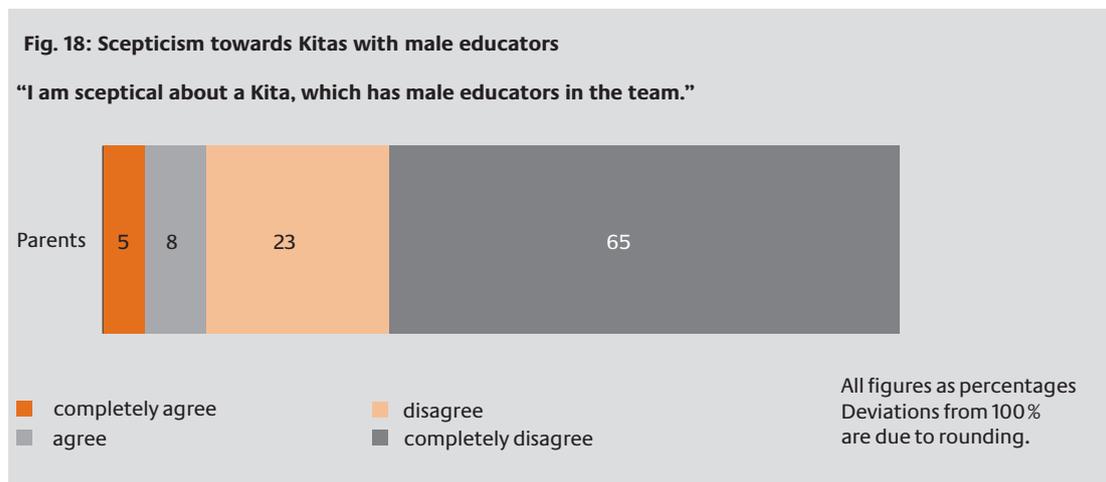
“For me there are two decisive points which made me reflect for a very long time and where I didn't know whether I really wanted to take up the career. (...) And then just the role as a man in the Kita. This handicap, as a man, that they just ... that you will be watched so closely and well that ... I have already given a lot of thought to this. Because the media always portray 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. And as a result I only did the practical placements to see what staff recognition is like there, from those working with me. (...) And, yes. If there had been any kind of resistance there, I would probably not have chosen the career at all.”

**Male trainee, aged 23**

The introductory quotes show: male educators aren't a matter of course in Kitas, they aren't a "normal phenomenon" (yet). Men aspiring to the educator profession cause a certain irritation, and they ask themselves whether they will be watched closely because men in Kitas (also) trigger ideas about possible "assault" and "malefactors". And indeed, 15% of the Kita administrators and 18% of the parents confirm the assessment of the male trainee: they state that they have thought of the risk of possible child abuse by male educators – a fact which, however, makes the overwhelming approval of male educators as revealed in both surveys even more impressive: Kita provider programme directors, Kita administrators, female educators and parents only rarely show a strong degree of scepticism towards male educators and trainees. Hardly anyone considers it a risk to employ men as educators in Kitas.

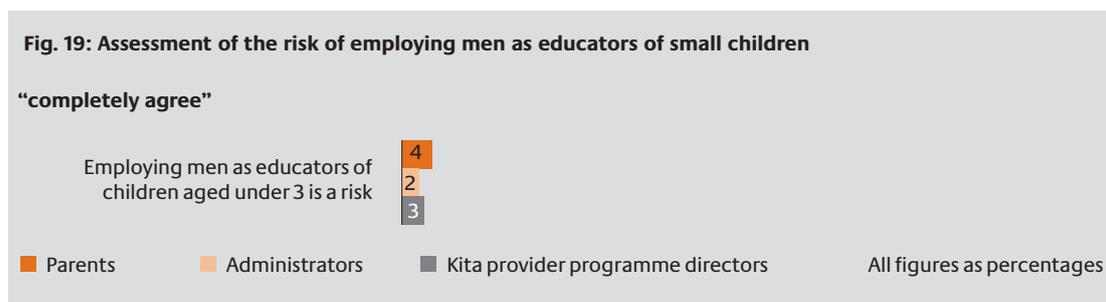
### Very low scepticism among parents

Only 5% of parents are intensely sceptical about male educators in Kitas. By way of contrast, 65% do not express any kind of anxiety.



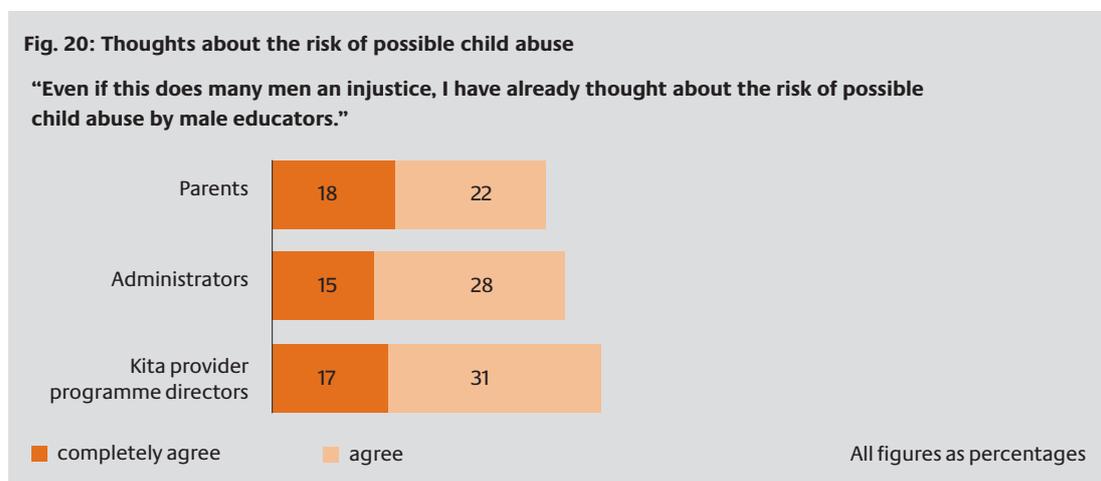
### Hardly anyone considers employing men as educators of small children to be a risk

Is it seen as a risk if male educators look after children aged less than three? Only 3% of Kita provider programme directors, 2% of Kita administrators and 4% of the parents harbour misgivings in this respect.



## Kita provider programme directors, Kita administrators and parents are aware of suspicion with regard to male educators in Kitas

As indicated, very few respondents see a risk in male educators working with children of crèche age (0 to 3 years). In fact, all respondents think that men fulfil tasks with an assumed female connotation, which arise in a Kita (comforting, caring, etc.), just as well as their female colleagues. Yet this doesn't mean that they are completely free of suspicion towards male educators in Kitas. 15–18% of the respondents (Kita provider programme directors, Kita administrators, parents) answer the following question in the affirmative: “Even if this does many men an injustice, I have already thought about the risk of possible child abuse by male educators.” Taking both answer options “completely agree” and “agree” into consideration, it is revealed that 42% of the respondents have – more or less intensely – thought about the risk of possible child abuse by male educators (Kita provider programme directors: 48%, Kita administrators: 43%, parents: 40%).<sup>33</sup>



## Well-considered approval of male educators in Kitas

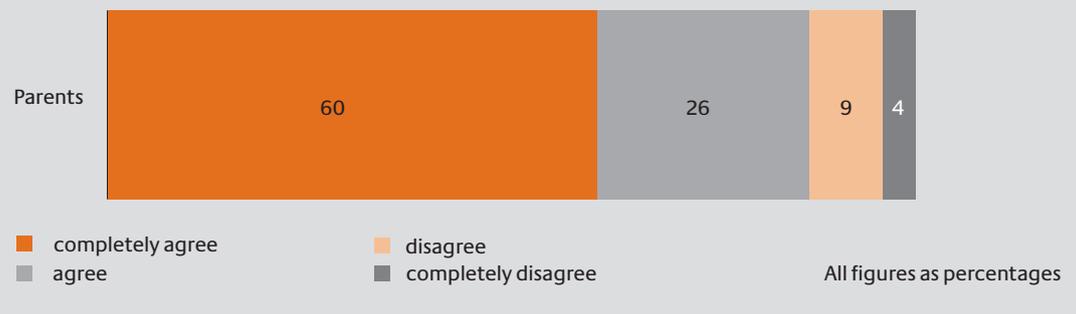
Approximately half of the Kita provider programme directors, Kita administrators and parents have thought about the risk of possible child abuse by male educators. This, however, neither causes Kita provider programme directors, Kita administrators and parents to assess it a risk to employ male educators to look after children aged less than three, nor does it cause parents to be sceptical about male educators in general.

Comparison of the findings shows: the approval of men as educators is by no means a naive, uncritical approval, but an approval based on the awareness of a special challenge due to the child abuse issue. The respondents take up a well-considered stance on male educators. In spite of having thought about the risk of possible child abuse by male educators, Kita provider programme directors, Kita administrators and parents only voice little scepticism about men as educators. This analysis is substantiated by another finding: A total of 86% of the parents completely or rather agree with the statement “I would entrust my child in the Kita to a male educator without any misgivings“.

<sup>33</sup> In addition, in the 16 Kitas and vocational colleges where we conducted surveys, there was only one facility and vocational college, respectively, where “child abuse” was not an issue.

**Fig. 21: Trust in male educators in Kitas**

**“I would entrust my child in the Kita to a male educator without any misgivings”**



### Suspicious affect the career choice of men and the pedagogical practice

In summary, it must be assumed that male educators time and again are associated with the topic “child abuse”. On the one hand, this “association” acts as a barrier to young men in their choice of training and, on the other hand, it has impacts on the pedagogical practice. In particular:

- The suspicion of abuse primarily generates uncertainties among male trainees (but also among male educators) and restricts them in their daily professional work. In order to protect themselves against suspicion, male educators and trainees are often demonstrably reserved in their work, in particular with girls. Men, for example, do not dare to take children onto their lap, kiss them on the cheek, or they abstain from giving hugs and close physical gymnastics exercises. Some of the men interviewed have also explicitly been advised by their superiors or colleagues to leave the door open when changing diapers, for example, or not to look after children alone in the sleeping area.
- The worry about being seen as a potential child abuser makes it difficult for many men to decide to enter the educator profession. Even trained male educators are very well aware of possible stigmatisation and therefore frequently ask themselves whether working in the Kita as a man is “strange”.
- Kita administrators are confronted with the subject of abuse in different ways, for example where parents do not wish to entrust their children to any male educator, or when male trainees or educators are uncertain with respect to close physical contact with children. The interviews reveal that it can be easier for male educators if Kita administrators seek direct contact with men in such situations and jointly discuss how suspicion can be dealt with.
- Female trainees and educators repeatedly report in the interviews that male colleagues have difficulties in getting a practical placement or a job in a crèche, or are not allowed to practice certain activities involving close physical contact due to suspicions, or are exposed to accusations of abuse. In general the women interviewees react with compassion and sometimes stand up for the men.