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Parents' views on men in ECEC in Austria

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In Austria, the proportion of male workers in ECEC is low (1%). 2008-2010 a nationwide study on men and women in ECEC in Austria was conducted (see references). The research sample included male and female workers, young men and women in vocational training, adolescents, and parents. Quantitative and qualitative methods were used with most samples. Workers and students were surveyed nationwide (full survey), including questions on workers' impressions of attitudes of and relations to parents. The research with parents was only a small part of the project. It was conducted only in a small sample of kindergartens in two federal states of Austria.

Sample and method

A questionnaire was sent out to parents from 10 kindergartens in the federal states of Tyrolia and Salzburg. The sample included a variety of different kindergartens. The questionnaire consisted of 13 questions, several of these with more than 10 items rated with four-stage rating scales. Most questions derived from questionnaires used in other parts of the project, to make results comparable.

Of 308 questionnaires sent out, 143 were returned; 21 from fathers and 120 from mothers (2 cases gender not specified).

Some results

- A vast majority of parents was positive about male ECEC workers.
- Most parents who had experienced a male worker in their children's group, were satisfied with him, and would give their child to a group with a male worker again.
- A vast majority of parents expected male workers to fulfill the same tasks as female workers.
- Opinions about why men could be important for children differed. A vast majority agreed that children should experience men and women in daily life, and should see that men and women can do the same things. About three quarters agreed that boys need men to relate to. Around 70% meant that men's approach to children is different from that of woman (meaning that around 30% saw no difference). A minority of 30% said that children up to three should be cared for by women.
- Nearly a third of the sample thought that a general distrust against men as possible abusers is an obstacle for men who are interested to work in ECEC.

In the workers' sample, the majority (>80%) reported that both fathers and mothers reacted positively on male workers; nevertheless, there was a minority which did not share this expression. Moreover, 29% of the male workers and 18% of the female workers agreed that at least some parents felt uneasy with male workers.

References

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