

Bernhard Koch (2014).

The Child care centre as a workplace both for women and men

Presentation on the 24th EECERA annual conference, 9.9.2014, Hersonnisos/Greece

Abstract

This paper presents interim results of a project funded by the Austrian Science Foundation (2012 – 2015) on “Strategies to increase the number of men in ECEC”. The research project aims at developing an intervention programme to increase male representation, accompanying analysis of political, administrative and ‘interpersonal’ negotiations, and evaluating how the intervention programme affects attitudes and the proportion of men. The study is a follow-up study to the FWF-funded research project “Elementar - Men in Early Childhood Education and Care” (2008-2010). The theoretical and conceptual framework is based on gender as a social construct, child care work as “women’s work” and child care centres as “gendered institutions”.

The parties’ attitudes and behaviour are measured at the beginning and at the end of the project (face to face interviews, questionnaires, focus-groups). These groups are involved: young men and women prior to their career choice, workers in training institutions, managers and coworkers of child care centres and policy makers. Child care centres with a gender-mixed workforce are analysed with regard to concept, recruitment and attitudes. The ethical principles include the categories harm, autonomy, privacy, reciprocity, equity.


Gender politics in Austria do not appear to be at the point to promote men in educational occupations. Participating institutions did not seem to be able to start with changing the culture of care in vocational training or in child care centres. Nevertheless some findings point to “best practice examples”. Implications for policy suggest the need for a commitment to develop a collaborative and systemic approach to gender politics in ECEC

Keywords

men, women, child care worker, policy, workplace

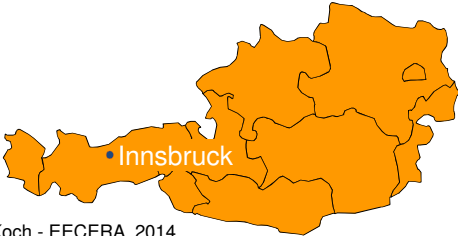
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**The Child Care Centre
as a Workplace for
Women and Men**



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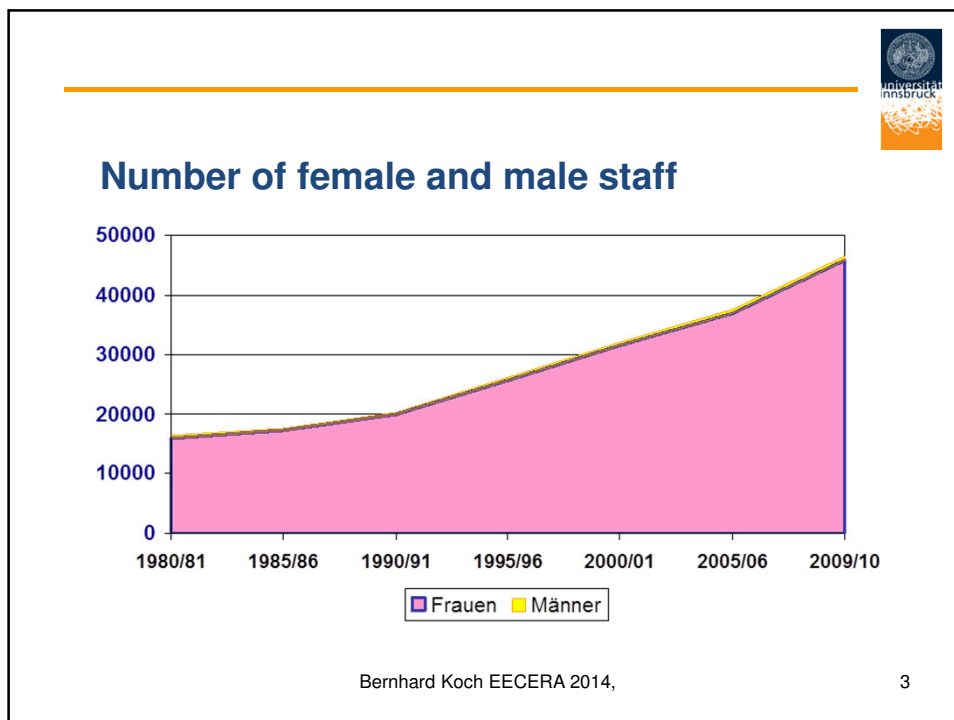


ECEC in Austria: Background


- Profession associated with „caring & playing“ rather than „education“
- Vocational training: secondary school level
- Expansion (child care centres for children under 3, number of co-workers ...)
- Staff: 60% fully trained
- Proportion of male child care workers: 1%

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Conditions/Research framework

Research on ECEC & Gender in Austria
little research about ECEC in general (a handful of researchers)
more research on ‚mothers‘ than on ‚fathers‘

Gender policy in Austria:
several programmes for girls (Girls Day), fewer for boys (Boys Day) e.f.
legal framework for equality: ‚women preferred‘ - also in child care centres?
discussions about ‚entrance test‘ for medical school (‘not gender neutral’), no discussion about entrance test for educational training for child care workers

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„Strategies to increase the proportion of male child care workers‘ (2012- 2015)* ‚Action research‘
Objectives:

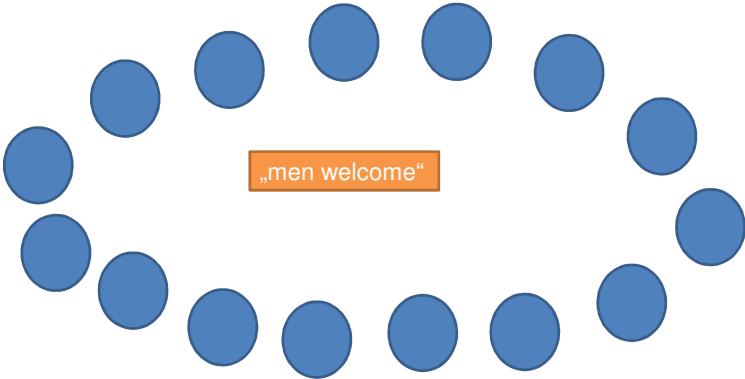
1. Developing an intervention programme to increase male representation in pre-school education together with the stakeholders of a region (Tyrol) (training facilities, regional government, owners of child care centres, child care workers and managers, employment agency....)
2. Accompanying analysis of political, administrative and ‘interpersonal’ negotiations; analysis of resistance and factors of success

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The story of the project
First meeting

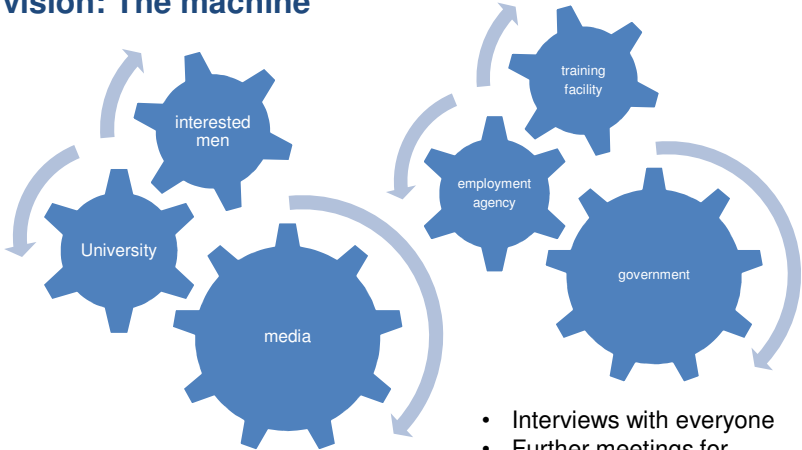


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Our vision: The machine




- Interviews with everyone
- Further meetings for discussion

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Effects: 2012 – 2014: Only little action in which organisations play an important role:

- some reports in newspapers
- 2 seminars for teachers of training facilities
- 1 seminar aimed at networking of male students with male staff
- 1 seminar for staff of employment agency (October)
- some money from the regional government for advertisements (5,000€)

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Actions and measures in which the University plays an important role

- Suggesting measures to and discussions with stakeholders (politicians, managers)
- Discussion groups with female child care workers and managers
- Many positive reports in regional newspapers
- Mentoring and advising male career changers
- Incorporating the issue in ECEC research in Austria
- Building networks for male staff

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no action took place in the fields of:

- legal framework of gender equality in educational professions
- change of vocational training (curriculum), change of image
- systematic career information with male child care workers in schools
- incorporation of the 'mixed teams' issue in advanced training for managers of child care centres
- Media campaign by the government
- 'men-only' courses (employment agency, municipality)
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Unexpected action in June 2014:
Release of study by our research team about the positive impact of male child care workers (WINN-Study) generates much media interest: As a result, the ministry of family affairs launched a campaign (promoting alternative service* [= alternative to military service] in pre-schools etc. 500,000 – 1,000,000 €).


1/2013	first report in newspaper about WINN
5/2014	release of WINN in journal
6/2014	many reports about WINN in the media, ministry announces campaign

„Scientist in favour of action plans for promoting men in education“

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Overview of qualitative and quantitative interviews:

	Target Groups	Number		
		Questionnaire	Group discussion	Interview
1	young men prior to their career choice	128	0	0
2	male job seekers	0	0	3 (1)
3	staff in training facilities	40	0	4
4	male (female) students in training facilities	35	1 (1)	0
5	managers of child care centres	29	3	4
6	female child care workers	18	3	4
7	male child care workers	0	2	0
8	policy maker team	18	2	13
9	experts from different European countries	0	0	5
10	experts from Austria (ECEC, Gender)	562	0	0
	Total	750	11	34

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Some results

1. Interviews
2. Questionnaire: young men prior to their career choice
3. Online survey with experts from ECEC and gender politics

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Interviews

1. 'We are not yet at the point to give that support to men (employment agency expert, when he was asked to fund 'men-only' courses
2. Conflicts within the team about measures (child care provider: 'I cannot do this because of my staff ...'; planned activities are withdrawn because of the intervention of gender expert ('men only' course)
3. Biography can play an important role (own children, women's movement....)
4. 'Most of them are not really interested' (teacher in a training facility about the viewpoint of her colleagues)
5. Last but not least: 'There is nobody at a top position, who thinks it is important' (ex-MP). A resolution of the Austrian parliament in 2010 was put forward again in 2014 'because nothing had happened'

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Barrier: Young men are ridiculed by their peers
The effect of a male child care worker presenting his profession to male youths in schools (age: 14-15 years; N=109, agreement in percent, pre= before the intervention (X), post = 1 year later)

	pre	X	post
Should there be more men in child care centres?	41		58*
„That’s only a job for women“	66		53
Can you imagine working as a trainee?	14		14
Men in child care are: important for children	72		88
.....homosexual	49		34
.....no ‚real men‘	42		30
.....‘real men‘ with courage	20		46
.....a ‚risk‘ for children	67		67

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First conclusions after the intervention

- 1 A higher acceptance of men in child care
- 2 No clear effect on career choice, but
- 3 Decrease of some negative images
- 4 Accusation as abuser remains high (‚risk‘ for children 2/3), (this opinion seems to be very strong)

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Online survey (April 2014): attitudes towards steps to increase the proportion of men (N= 553)*


Associates themselves with	percentage	number
ECEC	54,1	299
Women's movement	12,1	67
Men's movement	3,6	20
Education in general	30,2	167
total	100	553

(* we assume that only those people responded who are interested in that issue!)

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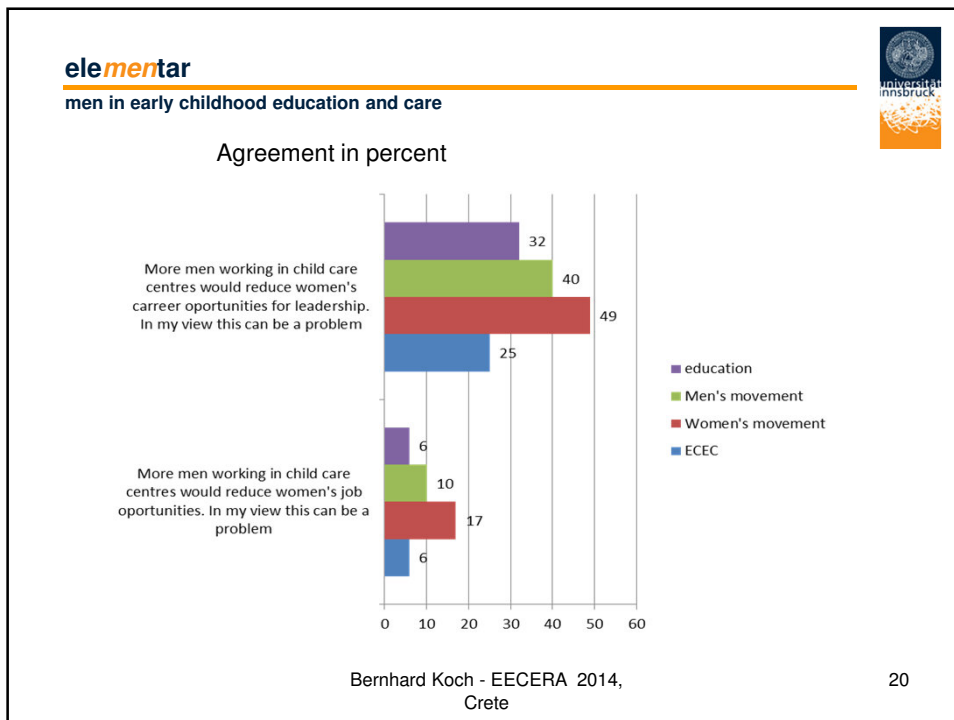
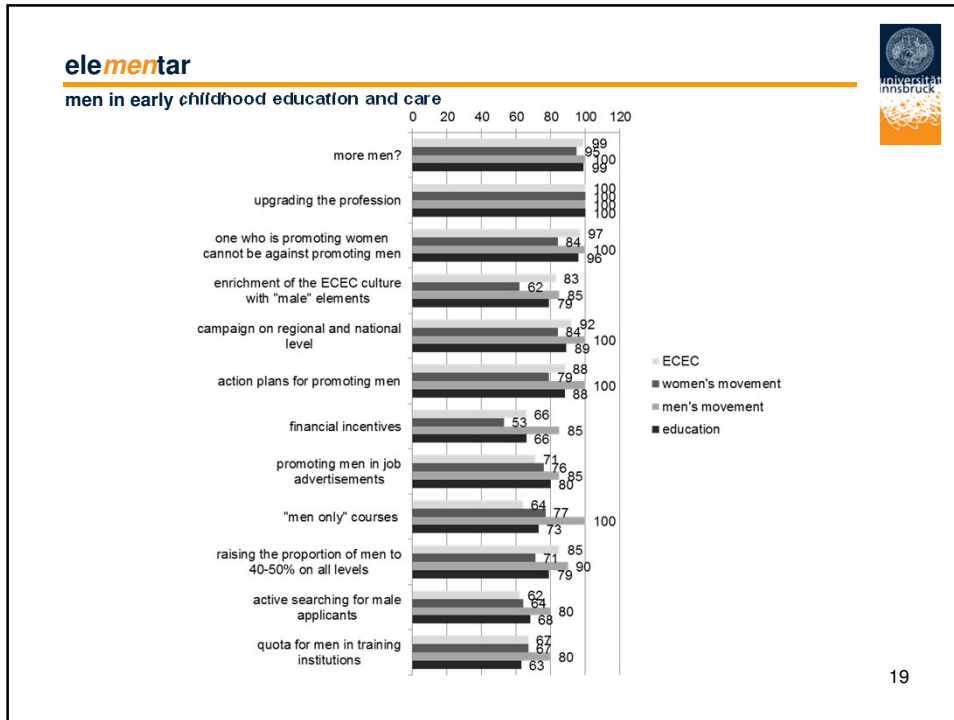
agreement in percent

Measure	Agreement in percent
upgrading the profession	100
campaign on regional and national level	90
action plans for promoting men	90
raising the proportion of men to 40-50% on all levels	80
enrichment of the culture with "male" elements	75
promoting men in job advertisements	70
"men only" courses	65
quota for men in training institutions	60
financial incentives	60
active searching for male applicants	55


Most measures are taken from policies for promoting women

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Conclusions from the online survey:

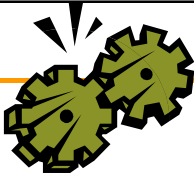

- In total there is high acceptance for measures in all groups. This can be understood as a mandate for the government
- However, there is some ambivalence in ECEC and Gender politics:
 - Women's movement: 25% say: issue is rather unimportant
 - ECEC: less agreement to measures which demand own initiative (advertisements, looking for male applicants...)
 - Men/Women: women show less acceptance than men and see more problems in the 'top jobs' issue

Question:
How is 'men welcome' understood? To what degree are men 'really' welcome?

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Conclusions

1. Expanding the ECEC sector, increasing the quality of the work and 'professionalisation' is mainly discussed without sex/gender issue
2. Lack of a 'pressure group'
3. Scepticism against measures while there is still a desire to see more men in ECEC
4. Policies are hampered or delayed out of the fear men might 'take over'
5. Subtle discrimination in staff recruitment
6. Changes in the 'pre-school culture' happen only slowly
7. Measures take place when opinion leaders and decision makers are convinced

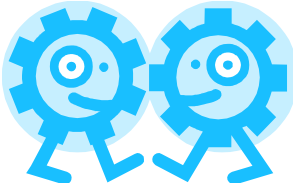
 **Discussions on all levels need to take place**

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..... we are on the way.....



Thank you for your attention

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