

Koch, Bernhard (2015).

Challenging gender policies in ECEC: the glass doors concept

Presentation on the 25th EECERA annual conference, 9.9.2015, Barcelona/Spain

Abstract

This paper presents final results of a project funded by the Austrian Science Foundation FWF (2012 – 2015) on “Strategies to increase the number of men in ECEC”. The research project aims at jointly developing, adopting and analysing measures for increasing the proportion of male child care workers, involving all stakeholders. The study is a follow-up study to the research project “Elementary - Men in Early Childhood Education and Care” (2008-2010). The theoretical and conceptual framework is based on action research. The findings lead to the “glass doors” concept. The project involved ECEC providers, training facilities, male career-changers, young men, male and female ECEC workers, gender experts, public employment agencies and politicians. The study also included a panel-design. Interviews (N=34) and focus groups (N=10) were conducted. A total of 750 people responded to questionnaires. The reactions of policy makers regarding proposals for measures were analysed in interviews. The ethical principles include the categories harm, autonomy, privacy, reciprocity and equity. Traditional views of gender roles and policies may play a part in failure to translate the ‘welcome men in ECEC’ sign into effective action. Strong tendencies of inflexibility clearly exist both within the ECEC system and with gender policies in government and the public sphere as well. It appears that the implementation of gender policies can be hampered by fears of 'men taking over'. Six main glass doors can be found. The findings will help to put the issue of “gender balance” on the political agenda in ECEC and gender policy.

Keywords

men, women, child care worker, gender, policy

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**Challenging gender
policies in ECEC:**



The glass doors concept

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Basis

The points raised in this presentation are based on research and observations in Austria and New Zealand

Focus: results from the Austrian research project:
“Strategies to increase the number of men in ECEC”*.

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„Strategies to increase the proportion of male child care workers‘ (2012- 2015)*. 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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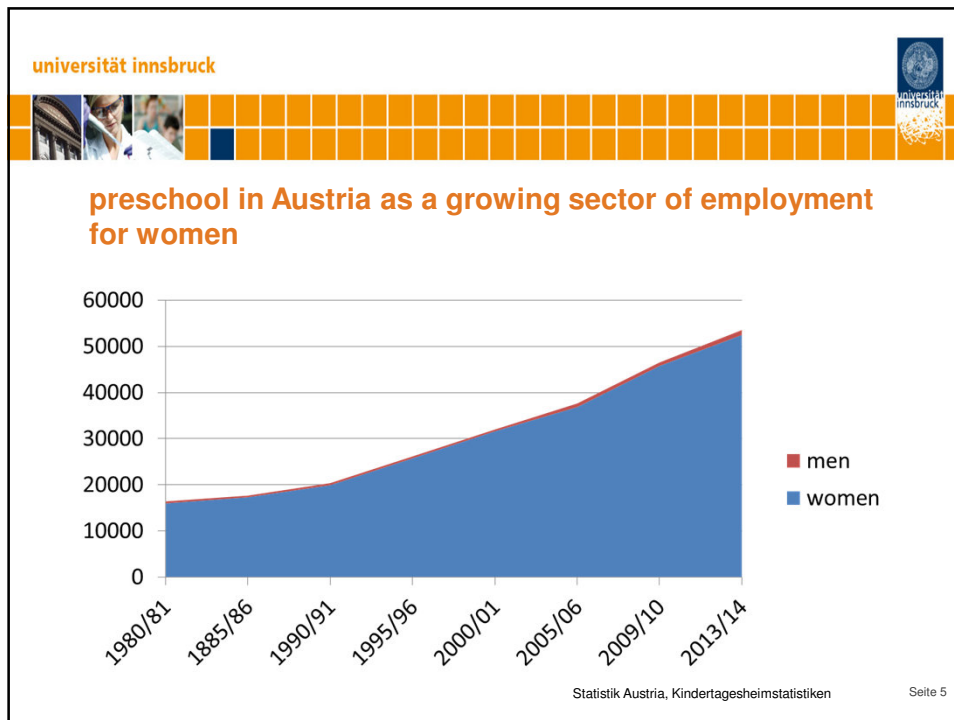
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Methods

	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

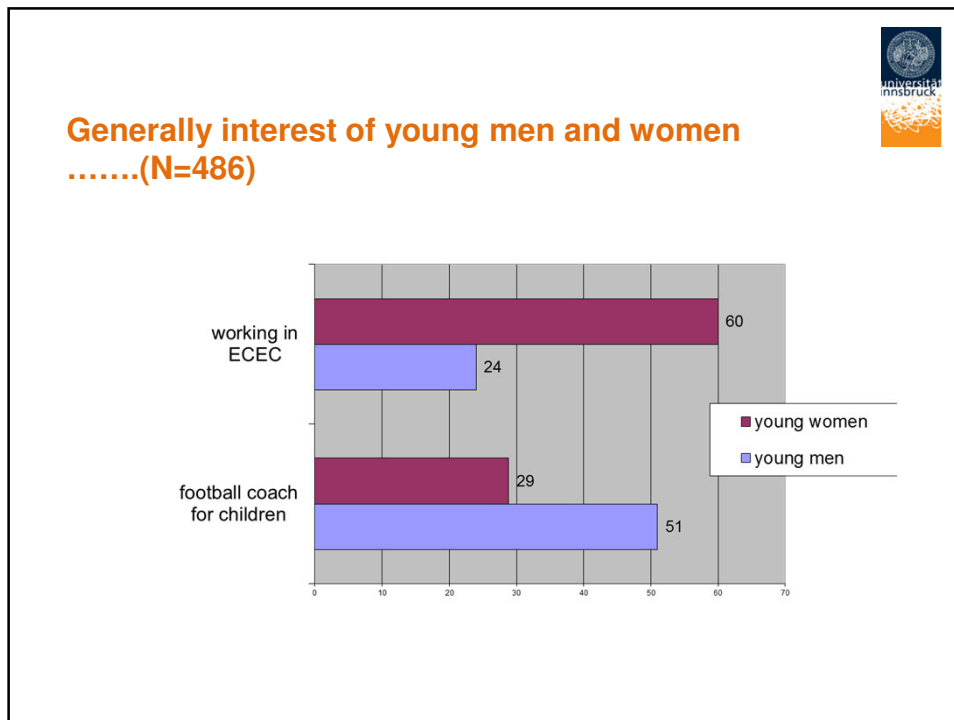
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- universität innsbruck
- Some reasons for the low proportion of men in ECEC:**
- Salary
 - Sexism (accusation as abusers)
 - Culture in ECEC and image
 - Men are less interested than women, but

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Effects 2012 – 2015:

- Some reports in newspapers (positive images)
- Some seminars for teachers of training facilities and for staff of the employment agency
- A workshop aimed at networking of male students with male staff
- Funding from the ministry of family affairs for the 9 regional governments (each 50.000 €/year; 2015 – 2017)

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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 images of the training institutions
- 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)

Scepticism in the female workforce?

Anouncement in a regional newspaper	Email to 130 child care centres in the region
„Children need men too – Do you want to work in a child care centre?.....“	„Please tell us open positions for male assistants“
30 responses	0 responses (1 year)

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Scepticism in the female workforce (directors N=111)

	agreement
„There should be more men in ECEC“	99 %
„female coworkers are sceptical towards male colleagues“	40 %

Perpetuation of female images

Willkommen im Eltern-Kind Zentrum Ein Ort zum Wohlfühlen

Sie sind Eltern eines Säuglings oder Kleinkindes und waren noch nie in einem Eltern-Kind-Zentrum? Dann bietet sich jetzt eine einmalige Gelegenheit, die Sie unbedingt nutzen sollten.



Since many years the publisher of the journal and directors of the centre say, that they wish more men in ECEC

Source: Family journal in Austria (2015).

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No need for legitimization of „Non-activity“



Chair: „In your programm for the government two years ago you say: „More men in education!“ Why nothing happened?“
Regional member of a provincial government (gender): “Paper doesn’t blush”.
„Doors are open“; „there is no barrier“.
Reason for the low proportion of men is low salary because it is a women’s job; women’s jobs are undervalued.

Slow change to child care centres as „learning organisations“

- Strict rules
- Monocultur
- Diversity as a problem



- Open for innovations
- Diversity
- Learning organisation
- „Female“ AND „male“ associated norms, rules
- ..

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No activities of gender experts

Gender experts (N=60) (agreement in %):

99% More men in ECEC

75% plans for promoting men in ECEC (men only courses,
advertisements)

50% financial incentives



Why no actions?

An answer can be:

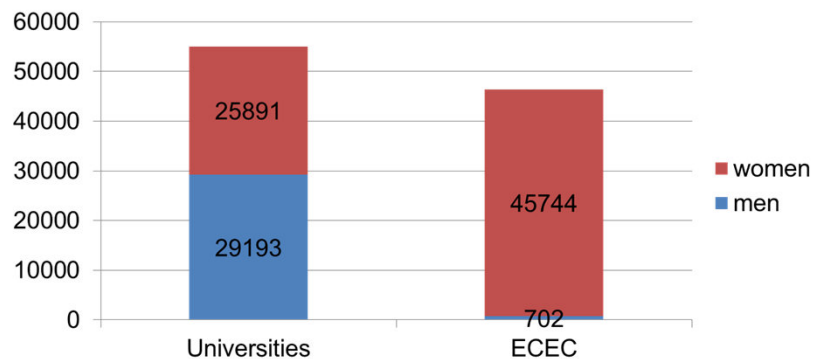
Many gender experts were accompanied by the
womens movement since many, many years.

An important aim of gender policy is to substitute
„unpaid women's work“ into „paid women's work“.

In other words: Workplaces for women has top
priority for many gender experts

Gender balance in educational institutions

„University“ and „ECEC



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In Detail

	persons (rd.)	Percentage of the minority sex	
university professor	2.300	20 %	
University lecturer	5.900	46 %	
ECEC directors*	7.000	1%	

Quelle: Wissenschaftsministerium, Uni Data, Gender Monitoring, Personal, Universitäten, Personal nach Verwendung (2014, Kopfzahlen)

<https://susprod4.doc.science.at/XL/CubeWebWebForm/ShowReport.aspx?rep=010+gender+monitoring%2001+personal+universitaeten%200e4ten%2001+personal+nach+verwendung.xml&toolbar=true>

*Statistik Austria: Kindertagesheimstatistik 2012/2013, nur Krippen, Kindergärten und altersgemischte Einrichtungen.

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Expenditures at universities for measurements for promoting women (2006 bis 2009)*: More than 10 Mio. €




- Gender – Investments take place in a field with
- high percentage of the minority sex
 - high image, high salary,
 - strong pressure group

*Bericht des Rechnungshofes. Frauenförderung an Universitäten (2009), Bund 2011, 8
<http://www.uibk.ac.at/leopoldine/gesamtbuero/aktuelles/rh-bericht-zur-ff-an-universitaeten.pdf>

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Labour Agency and Gender Equality

Professions with a lack of trained staff

Programs
Promoting women in technical professions

+

~~Programs
Promoting men in educational professions and ECEC~~ ?

FIT-program 2012*: 5000 women, 22 Mio €

*AMS (2013) Gleichstellung am österreichischen Arbeitsmarkt

Main glass doors stopping men from participating equally with women in the ECEC profession



Koch B. & Farquhar S. (2015):
"Breaking Through the Glass Doors: Men Working in Early Childhood Education and Care with Particular Reference to Research and Experience in Austria and New Zealand"

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Glass doors

The metaphor of 'glass doors' is inspired from the concept of the 'glass ceiling' which is widely used to describe the unseen barrier that keeps women from higher positions in the labour market regardless of their qualifications or performance (Cotter et al. 2001).

This discussion, which first emerged almost 40 years ago focusing on a clash between 'women welcome' slogans and real opportunities for women seems to be similar to the current discussion about men in ECEC.

The example Sweden show best conditions for a high proportion of men in ECEC with: high level of gender equality policy, high level of salary, high level of status, high level of funding for ECEC, high number of fathers in parental leave.
But: 3-4% men in ECEC

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In society there is more support for women's advancement than there is for men's

- A key reason for such ideas not getting off the ground has been a persistent institutional view that while it is essential to actively promote women's advancement into male occupations, it is up to the individual men themselves to show an interest in ECEC work
- One gender expert answered the question, if more men should be employed in preschools, as follows: 'I do think that would be interesting' but she 'would rather not provide' funding for it, since there was 'no access problem' for this area".

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The time for men's advancement into ECEC has not yet fully arrived in people's minds

- When steps like 'men-only training classes' are offered, they are withdrawn again after an intervention by the person in charge of gender policies.
- Gender sensitive career coaching strategies where a male ECEC worker presents his job and reduces prejudices ('no real man', etc.) are abandoned.
- Example: Member of the regional government (ECEC, gender, family), who really, really wanted to push the issue further, say at a meeting aimed at preparing measures for increasing the proportion of men in ECEC: "I must say, I was a little bit shocked, when you say in your presentation „promoting of men“. I come from the women's movement and this sounds very new and strange for me"

A fear men might 'take over' holds back change

- Almost one in three people in the ECEC sector and nearly half of the gender experts worried that an increased amount of male ECEC teachers may lead to female managers competing with men for their job (N= 562) .
- For example, one female manager said in an interview "[...] well, I have overheard from people actively engaged in women's advancement that they are worried that if men intrude in their traditional areas they will quickly assume management positions and the power balance will soon reverse [...] That is not what I believe personally but I did hear others saying that.

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There is subtle discrimination in staff recruitment

- A training expert talked about fears experienced by managers: 'Of course it is difficult for the managers, I do hear them say "if I hire a man, he will automatically either adapt or try to undermine my position".'
- managers (N = 639) were asked if they were interested in employing male interns or staff, but only 5% of managers responded to this question.
- In an interview one person pointed out that only a certain group of women were selected for the job, which is 'the good girls, not the ones [...] who want to change something.'

Considering women's movement as one of the driving force for enhancing the ECEC sector, there are contradictions in policies, which maintain glass doors for men in ECEC

Women's movement

argument: „equality“

“more paid work for women”
“Transforming unpaid women's work into paid women's work”



ECEC

argument: „Need of the children“(1), „equality“ (2)

„more men in ECEC”
programmes for promoting men in ECEC

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What needs to happen?

- it is important to make known the glass doors for men as the gender minority in ECEC.
- The current situation of piecemeal approaches and isolated policies that do not always have the commitment of all players has not worked in bringing a better gender balance to the ECEC workplace
- Common patterns of resistance against men entering and being in the ECEC workplace must be openly discussed and addressed head-on if real change is to happen.

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What needs to happen?

- Corresponding national objectives are needed, like the setting of a publicly agreed-on target to increase the proportion of men to 10% or 20% within a specified timeframe, and dedicated funding and resources for equity purposes in ECEC.
- **Considering the glass doors concept gender equality policies need to incorporate men's advancement in ECEC.**

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Thank you for your attention

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