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Advantages of gender-mixed teams - recent data, studies, and policy developments

Poster presented on the 28th EECERA Annual Conference, 29.8.2018, Budapest, Hungary.

Abstract

The paper examines recent developments in the gender distribution of ECEC staff as well as research on the relevance and effects of male participation in ECEC in European countries. It aims at informing researchers and policymakers about strategies for a better gender-balanced work force. The paper draws on recent research and theory on gender and care in ECEC (Peeters, Emilsen & Rohrmann, 2015; Brownhill, Warin & Wernersson, 2015) and connects the results to issues of policy development. European institutions (OECD, EU) have discussed the need for more men in ECEC for more than a decade, and national governments implement measures for a better gender balance. The paper intends to connect this to current research. Methods include analysis of international statistical data on male's participation in the ECEC work force, literature research for recent studies on the role of men for children's development, document analyses of policy papers from National governments and European institutions, and discussions with experts. The research follows the EECERA ethical code for research. Data analyses show an increase of male participation in several European countries which is partly connected to policies for more men in ECEC. Recent research confirms few differences between male and female behaviour towards young children, but relevant gender effects on the quality of teacher-child interactions and educational achievement in the course of transition to school. Results clearly support measures for a better gender balance in ECEC. Nevertheless, the development towards gender-mixed teams should be accompanied by gender-sensitive reflection, and strategies towards gender equality.

Keywords

gender balance, men, ECEC, policy development, work force

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Advantages of gender-mixed teams - recent data, studies, and policy developments Poster presented on the 28th EECERA Annual Conference, 29.8.2018, Budapest/Hungary

The international research network “Gender Balance in ECEC” has analyzed developments in the gender distribution of ECEC staff in the past decade, as well as recent research on the relevance and effects of male participation in ECEC in European countries. It aims at informing strategies and policy development for a better gender-balanced work force. European institutions have discussed the need for more men in ECEC for more than a decade (OECD 2006; European Commission 2011), and more and more national governments implement measures for a better gender balance.

More men in ECEC: the statistics

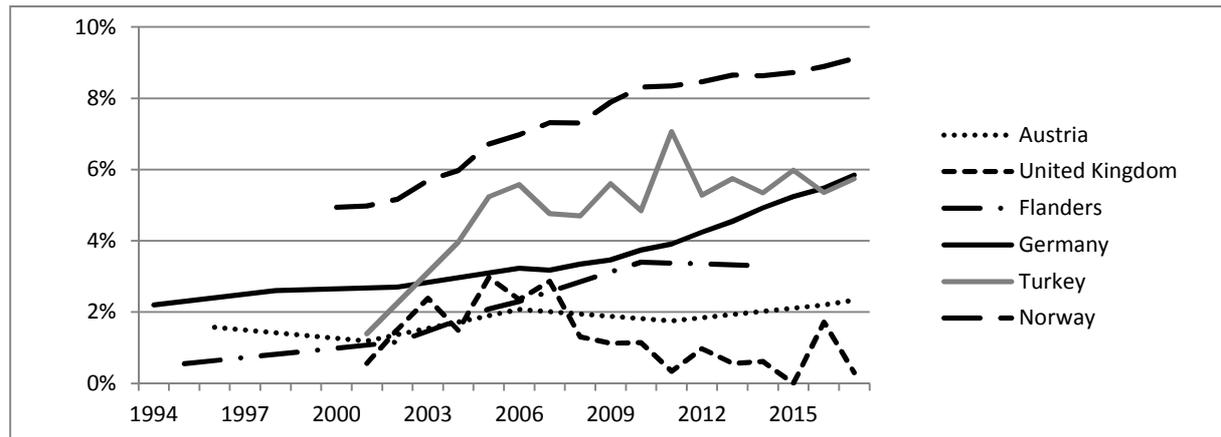


Figure 1: Proportion of male workers in ECEC staff in selected European countries

Sources: Calculations of authors from various National statistics. Because of different definitions of professions and workplaces the timelines do not present the same group of workers for all countries. Data for Austria and Germany include after-school-care. Data for UK shows caretakers/nurses/assistants, but not teachers, as pre-primary and primary teachers are not separated in national statistics. Data for Turkey shows preschool Teachers (3-6 yrs).

Some recent research results on men and women in ECEC

The Netherlands. Female and male caretakers show similar sensitive behaviors towards infants, and boys and girls develop similar levels of attachment towards men and women (van Polanen et al. 2017).

Germany, Tandem study. Male and female professionals don't differ much in dimensions of professional pedagogic behavior (Brandes et al. 2016).

Germany, NUBBEK study. Female practitioners more often report higher quality of relationships towards girls, correlated to better verbal and social-emotional competences (Mayer et al. 2014).

Austria, W-INN-Study. Male caregivers are less punitive, and boys more often seek contact and closeness to male caregivers (Huber & Traxl 2017).

Norway, Oslo. Boys and girls visiting child care centers with a higher share of male staff perform better on tests in language and mathematics in the early years of school (Dranne & Rønning 2017).

Turkey. Male preschool teachers report more organizational cynicism and lower job satisfaction compared to their female counterparts (Sak 2018).

Gender-mixed teams – rollback to stereotypes or pathway to gender equality?

Research has revealed that in gender-mixed teams, workers sometimes tend to divide tasks and activities in gender-typical ways. Moreover, an implicit gendered subtext accompanies pedagogic behavior and daily routines. Measures for more men have been criticized as leading to more stereotyping in ECEC work, thus working against the aim of gender equality. On the other hand, research shows that many men working in ECEC show less stereotyped attitudes and behavior, compared to other men and also to their female colleagues. However they are often expected to act in gender-typical ways, and sometimes do. Most important are the interrelations between children's and adults' gendered behaviors (Brandes et al., 2016).

Strategies for a better gender balance

Only few countries have developed nationwide strategies for a better gender balance.

In *Norway*, measures for more men in ECEC have been part in four National Action Plans for Gender Equality from 2001 to 2015. Programs included measures in all parts of the country and support of local initiatives as well as National network activities.

In *Flanders (Belgium)* the project 'Men in Childcare' was started in 2001 with funding from the European Social Fund and broad support of stakeholders in the field. A minor increase of male workers was achieved, but slowed down after the end of the project.

In *Germany*, a nationwide governmental-lead program was conducted from 2010-2013, including a National coordination centre, and European Social Fund model program funded with 13 million €. The National coordination and some programs are still continued on a smaller scale.

Although there have been first debates on the issue in *United Kingdom* already two decades ago, only few men work in ECEC. Recently there is new emphasis of government interest in changing this persistent pattern. 2017 a working policy document called for change and set up a working group.

In *Austria* research programs on men in ECEC have been conducted from 2010-2015, including a nationwide research project, regional action research and several national conferences on the issue. Initiatives for a national strategy or program for a better gender balance were not taken up by the government.

In contrast to the countries mentioned above, in *Turkey* there has been no public debate on gender balance, and no measures for more men at all. However, the ECEC system was strongly developed in the past decade, with an academisation of teacher qualification and good salaries for preschool teachers.

Results and implications

Statistics show an increase of male participation in several European countries which is partly connected to policies for more men in ECEC. Recent research confirms few differences between male and female behavior towards young children, but relevant gender effects on the quality of teacher-child interactions and educational achievement in the course of transition to school. Working in gender-mixed teams can sometimes result in stereotyping, but in general it will put into question established routines and can open up new ways for gender-sensitive pedagogy.

In summary, results clearly support measures for a better gender balance in ECEC. Nevertheless, the development towards gender-mixed teams has to be accompanied by gender-sensitive reflection and strategies and measures towards gender equality.

SIG Gender Balance

The SIG gender balance supports a research-based, critical and reflective approach on gender issues in early childhood. It has its focus on the relevance of men for children's development, and on ways to develop a better gender balance in ECEC. Current research issues are cultural differences, children's and parent's views, male drop-outs from ECEC, and the connections between gender balance, gender-sensitive pedagogy and gender equality in general.

→ <https://www.eecera.org/sigs/gender-balance/>



Sources

Sources are available from the authors and as well in the forthcoming publication, Rohrmann, Tim: Men as promoters of change in ECEC? An international overview. *Early Years special issue, in preparation for 2019.*

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Gender Balance

EECERA Annual Conference 2018

The European institutions have discussed the need for more men in ECEC for over a decade, and national governments are starting to implement measures for better gender balance. But what do we need to know when developing strategies and policies for a better gender-balanced work force?

Some recent research results on men and women in ECEC

The Netherlands: Female and male caretakers show similar sensitive behaviors towards infants, and boys and girls develop similar levels of attachment towards men and women.

Tandem Study, Germany: Male and female professionals don't differ much in dimensions of professional pedagogic behavior.

NUBBEK study, Germany: Female practitioners more often report higher quality of relationships towards girls, correlated to better verbal and social-emotional competences.

W-INN-Study, Austria: Male caregivers are less punitive, and boys more often seek contact and closeness to male caregivers.

Oslo, Norway: Boys and girls visiting child care centers with a higher share of male staff perform better on tests in language and mathematics in the early years of school.

Turkey: Male preschool teachers report more organizational cynicism and lower job satisfaction compared to their female counterparts.

Results and implications

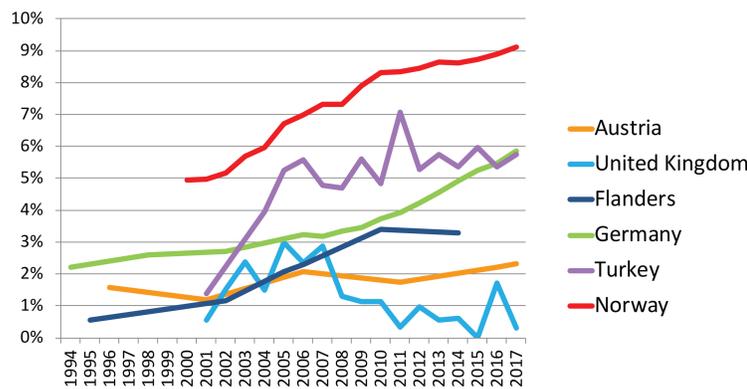
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Recent research confirms few differences between male and female behavior towards young children, but relevant gender effects on the quality of teacher-child interactions and educational achievement in the course of transition to school.

Working in gender-mixed teams can sometimes result in stereo-typing, but in general it will challenge established routines and can open up new ways for gender-sensitive pedagogy.

In summary, results clearly support measures for a better gender balance in ECEC. Nevertheless, the development towards gender-mixed teams has to be accompanied by gender-sensitive reflection and strategies and measures towards gender equality.

More men in ECEC: the statistics



Proportion of male workers in ECEC staff in selected European countries. Source: Authors' calculations from various national statistics. Definitions of "Male workers in ECEC" vary between countries.

Gender-mixed teams – rollback to stereotypes or pathway to gender equality?

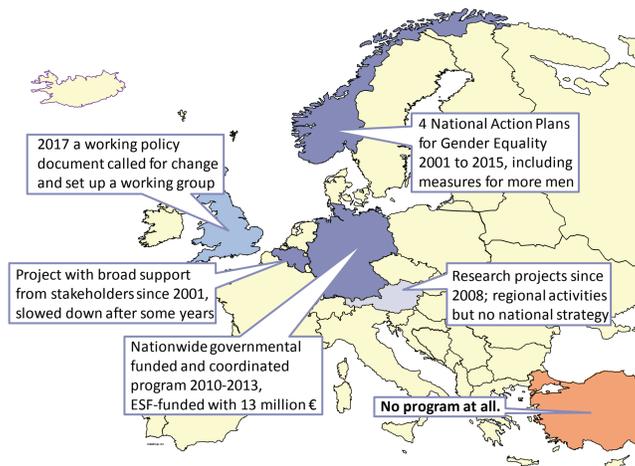
Research has revealed that in gender-mixed teams, workers sometimes tend to divide tasks and activities in gender-typical ways. Moreover, an implicit gendered subtext accompanies pedagogic behavior and daily routines.

Measures for more men have been criticized as leading to more stereotyping in ECEC work, thus working against the aim of gender equality.

On the other hand, research shows that many men working in ECEC show less stereotyped attitudes and behavior, compared to other men and also to their female colleagues. However they are often expected to act in gender-typical ways, and sometimes do.

Most important are the interrelations between children's and adults' gendered behaviors.

Strategies for a better gender balance



EECERA Special Interest Group Gender Balance

The SIG gender balance supports a research-based, critical and reflective approach on gender issues in early childhood. It has its focus on the relevance of men for children's development, and on ways to develop a better gender balance in ECEC.

Current research issues are cultural differences, children's and parent's views, male drop-outs from ECEC, and the connections between gender balance, gender-sensitive pedagogy and gender equality in general.



"Being a man is not a particular feature of quality."

ECEC counselor, Germany



Measures for more men in ECEC have to be embedded in strategies for gender balance and gender equality



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